Introduction to Political Science

A Basic Framework

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Chapter 1

WHY YOU SHOULD CARE ABOUT POLITICS

WHY YOU SHOULD CARE ABOUT POLITICS

In Robert Heinlein's 1956 science fiction novel, Double Star, one of the characters remarks that politics is, "rough and sometimes it's dirty and it's always hard work and tedious details. But it's the only sport for grownups. [1]All other games are for kids." Whether you agree with this view or not, politics is often perceived as dirty, hard, and tedious. Regardless of where you live or whom you regularly come into contact with, you will find there is a general skepticism regarding governmental institutions and the politicians that run them. The reasons for these views are almost as numerous as the people who hold them. Some point to the people in government while others point to the system itself. Still others will argue that outside forces like "the elites" of society are manipulating officials or coercing them into doing their bidding. Talk to every person you know (or meet), and they will generally state that politicians are corrupt, and the system is broken. Moreover, the briefest exposure to the interactions of people on social media should suffice to convince you that we live in a hyper-partisan, hyper-polarized, politically toxic environment.

So, is politics always dirty? Are all politicians corrupt and only looking out for themselves? These questions are important and worth answering, but they are also misguided. For instance, how do you define, *dirty, or, corrupt?* Are politicians just considered elected officials or does that term refer also to non-elected officials, like political appointees or party leaders? Furthermore, what does the term, *politics*, actually mean? These types of questions need to be answered before we can draw informed conclusions as to the general views of the "electorate" (which is yet another term we need to define). The fact is that most people in America, and many places around the world, actively choose to disengage from politics, either because it is hard to understand or not worth the investment. In either case, this practice is doing more harm than good to our political system. Civic and community engagement is waning, fewer people are choosing to vote on a regular basis, political candidates are seen as more extreme and more likely to choose conflict over compromise in the legislative process, and trust in government is at an all-time low. If all these statements are true (which appears to be the case based on multiple studies), the real question is: who is to blame? If fewer people are actively involved in the political process and looking to hold elected officials accountable, what is to keep these legislators from abusing the system? The core tenet of any democracy (another term we will dissect) entails participation of the people in government. Hence, if people ignore the problems in government because they do not trust the people with power (another important term to define), who is left to supply a sense of accountability? We must wrestle with these questions and seek potential solutions if progress is to be made.

For most people reading this text, the current state of politics might seem normal because it is all they have known. However, an inquisitive person might be wondering if it has always been this way or if there is any way for it to get better. In short, two vital questions come to the fore after pondering the effects of politics on society: namely, why is it like this, and does it always have to be this way? Answering these questions is the primary focus of this text. Understanding the why of politics today will help us to clarify the conditions for the possibility of change. However, answering the first question requires a thorough investigation of the who, what, when, where, and how of politics. In fact, political scientist Harold Laswell once authored a book entitled, Politics: *Who Gets What, When, and How.* [2]Suffice it to say, there are many tedious matters to attend to before we can evaluate the current state of politics. But doing so will bring with it important rewards. From the clothes you wear to the food you eat to the cars you drive to the job you have to the bed you sleep in at night, politics affect every area of life. Although this reality is lost on most people, it cannot be dismissed out of hand or ignored for too long. Rather, the greatest imperative facing citizens of every country today is to recognize the need to make the conscious choice to engage with the social world. Whether it is staying up

to date on current events or learning about the diverse cultural norms around the world, actively choosing to both learn and take part in politics and government will have the biggest impact on everyone's future.

The Concern with "Politics" Today

Arguably, most people are not very engaged in politics because they do not know what it is and how it works. Just like learning to play a new game can be intimidating when you do not know all the rules, understanding and engaging in politics can be overwhelming when you are unsure about the different echelons of government or how laws are made. What is more, individuals become indifferent to issues when they do not feel that their voice will be heard or when they come to believe that their opinions do not matter. For example, why would you continue to remain friends with someone when they constantly ignore you or quickly dismiss all your problems? In much the same way that people want to be valued by their friends, constituents want their elected leaders to be responsive to their needs. However, the reality facing elected officials is that not all their constituents want or need the same things. In many cases, what half their constituents want lies in direct opposition to the other half. Consider the debate over abortion, certainly one of most politicized issues facing our nation today. As the direct result of a candidate's stance on this issue alone, he or she may attract or repel a sizable proportion of voters in the district or state. When it comes to this issue, there is no middle ground.

Now, take a less controversial issue like property taxes. Regardless of where an individual lives, their property taxes help pay for salaries and supplies for firefighters, police, EMTs, and a range of public sector workers. Moreover, the revenue garnered from these taxes are used to support public services like schools and maintain our roads and local parks. Again, the only real options facing legislators are to raise, lower, or maintain the current level of property taxes. Yet, even if a candidate makes the argument that increasing property taxes will increase the quality of the public services provided, they are likely to lose a sizable percentage of voters who recoil from the very notion of increasing taxes. In both situations, the candidate's political future likely depends on which position they take on these issues. Although one issue (property taxes) will directly affect a larger number of voters than the other (abortion), some individuals will still cast their vote for a candidate solely or primarily on the basis of their stated position on abortion. As illogical as that might seem to some people, millions of Americans will go to the polls in an election cycle and choose a candidate based on the issue of abortion because it is more important to them than the state of their finances.

To complicate matters further, let us introduce a third issue: climate change. This issue is proving to be of greater interest to younger voters[3] and those of color. [4]Both segments of the population are more likely to live in lower income brackets, so they are more likely to be affected by an increase in property taxes (unless of course they are renters, as many of them are). Similarly, they are also more likely to feel the effects of climate change, and younger women of color are more likely to have abortions. [5]Again, when a single issue is prioritized by a voter, their preferred candidate is reasonably obvious, but factoring in other prominent issues will muddy the waters. Just to make things a little more interesting, I want to add one more issue to the list: health care. Even though some groups are more susceptible to certain diseases and illnesses, there is a universal need for adequate health care. Sure, younger people may not need to go to the doctor as often as older people, but they are just as likely to experience sickness or disease at some point in their lives. As previously mentioned, individuals who fall within lower income brackets are going to feel the strain in their pocketbooks and wallets when forking out money for monthly premiums, so to ensure they have enough to pay their monthly bills, they may be more willing to risk doing without health insurance altogether. At the same time, they may look more favorably upon a candidate who supports free health care. In the politics of today, younger voters, minorities, and women in lower income brackets are likely to coalesce around the Democratic Party while

older white men with more money have made up the bulk of the Republican Party for the last several decades.[6] As a result, it is no wonder that we are seeing a divided electorate fighting for power in government.

These types of issues point to the ever-present reality that individuals have different preferences. More importantly, those preferences are likely to conflict with those of other people who live next door to them, work next to them, sit next to them in school, or drive next to them on the road. Because people are different, they will want different things, pursue different goals, and, in general, respond to the social world in different ways. Therefore, we must learn about other people to better understand politics and draw conclusions as to its efficacy or lack thereof. If, as Dr. Laswell stated, politics is the process of determining who gets what, when, and how, then we must take the time to learn who they are, what they are getting, and when and how they are getting it. In short, we must study politics to better understand what makes us different. Doing so might unlock the key to finding out how we can work together.

Ukraine_Russia flags

Me versus We

The ancient Greek aphorism, "Know Thyself" calls upon people to understand who they are as individuals, an imposing task that involves examining one's interests, desires, motivations, ambitions, and the like. This process is commonly referred to as introspection (an examination of one's mental and emotional processes). Although the products of these reflections are likely to evolve over time, the logical next step to take after introspection occurs is extrospection, which is the process of observing the world outside one's own mind. Believe it or not, these activities form an essential part of the study of politics. In fact, it constitutes a foundational tenet of the discipline. ***Political science*** (the formal term for the study of politics) entails the study of human behavior within political institutions. Embedded in Dr. Laswell's definition is the focus on people (who) and what they are trying to obtain. Therefore, we must take great pains to know people while at the same time observing their interactions within established political systems. Such an approach will enhance our perspectives on the key issues facing our country and our world today and in the future. Similarly, it will broaden our understanding of, and exposure to, different values and belief systems that shape cultures, societies, and national identities. So, instead of viewing the study of politics as simply a matter of evaluating the merits of different political systems, we must take a comprehensive approach, one which studies all the facets of life that affect political systems or are affected by them.

What is Political Science?

Political science is essentially the study of human behavior within political institutions. These two words come from the Latin terms, polis (city, state), and, scire (to know or study). Thus, when we engage in the study of politics and government, we are pursuing knowledge about the inner workings of the state. However, we must examine not only the institutions themselves but also the integral part played by the people who carry out the specific functions that have been assigned to them within those institutions. For instance, if we were to study some recent Supreme

Court decisions in the United States, we would need to look at the powers given to the Court by the US Constitution. Additionally, we might need to study earlier cases, which established precedents that were used by Justices to guide their rulings. But, more importantly, we need to look at the actual Justices making the decisions, mainly because they are bringing their personal experiences and ideological beliefs, as well as their views on the proper role of the Court, into the decision-making process. Or consider the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and their collective decision to respond to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. In addition to examining the different articles in NATO's charter; we must look at the key decision-makers within the individual states that make up NATO. Adopting such a two-track approach or "dual vision" will allow us to determine the likely consequences each state will face if they choose to respond to Russian aggression by either imposing economic sanctions or resorting to the use of military force. In both cases, one must observe both the institutions tasked with acting and the individuals responsible for doing the actual work within the institutions. This dual vision represents a core principle underlying the study of politcal scence as a discipline.

In a more refined sense, political science is chiefly concerned with the description and analysis of political and governmental institutions and processes. Much of the field focuses on the singular state and various related entities that govern the people within a defined territory. The discipline deals heavily with both theory (ideas) and practice (actions). In short, the ideas about how government should work will guide the actions taken by the people in government. For that reason,, we will use prominent theories of government as a lens through which to observe the actions taken by elective officials, bureaucrats, and a wide range of interest groups. Such an approach looks at politics from a scientific point of view, but it has often been said that politics is more of an art than a science.

Politics as an Art. By now, most of you should be familiar with the difference between art and science. Art tends to be more abstract and creative while science is more concrete and methodical. The Arts are less rigid and tend to operate outside of established boundaries while the Sciences must adhere to established norms and processes. One of the unique aspects of political science consists in its ability to function in both spaces. It has been argued that politics is an art that involves mastering statecraft in a manner similar to how acting involves mastering[7] stagecraft. According to this perspective, it is only when you know how to handle the art of politics that you succeed in politics. However, if politics is indeed an art, then it can be learned, refined, and imparted to others. (Mastering such an art form, it should also be noted, enables its practitioners to create optical illusions and practice deception.) While this approach does have some merit, one cannot forget that the observed institutions are not as fluid and pliable as the views and opinions of people engaging in politics. Rather, there are hard lines and parameters that people must operate within to achieve their desired goals.

Politics as a Science. If art and science are construed as two ends of a single spectrum, then it is possible for political science to utilize some of the methods and processes found in the scientific community. After all, it is called political *science*. Because an entire chapter is devoted to the issue of political science as a scientific field of study, I will not go into much detail here, except to state that adequately observing human behavior within political institutions requires the employment of principles found in the realm of the social sciences. Just as the fields of psychology, sociology, and anthropology empirically observe the many facets of human behavior, political science can use similar tools and techniques to observe people within political institutions. Take, for instance, the issues mentioned earlier in the chapter. During an election cycle, political scientists will monitor the voting behavior of different demographics to predict who will win an election. This process employs both

descriptive and predictive methods found in many other scientific disciplines. For this reason, the study of politics can be considered a scientific discipline.

Politics as the Study of Power

Throughout each chapter of this text, a continual thread will be woven that allows us to identify the focal point of the discipline. Much of the study of political science revolves around the notion of power. Although power comes in many shapes and sizes and can be exercised by groups in countless ways, the discipline focuses on how power is acquired and distributed by individuals, groups, and institutions. In short, **power** represents the ability to influence an outcome or alter the will of another agent, such as a person, a state, or a nation. Arguably the defining characteristic of any government is its ability to exercise power, primarily through the willingness of the people to submit to it. For example, what is to keep you from running a stop sign or red light the next time you are on the road, or eating at a restaurant without paying for your meal? Some argue individuals refrain from doing such things because they don't want to suffer the consequences that come from violating the laws and policies imposed by the local government. Because you acknowledge the power given to government (in this case, local law enforcement), you are less likely to operate outside the bounds of established norms (laws). In other words, the fear of punishment keeps you in line. There are limits, of course, to how much such examples can tell us about how power is both acquired and dispersed. Nonetheless, they provide a window for observing how power may be exercised within the realm of political science. Therefore, monitoring how relationships of power are created, maintained, and challenged enhances our understanding of political institutions and the people working within them.

Historically, the discipline of political science has observed power primarily through the institutions of government established by the state. We will cover the definition of a state later, but for now, it is important to note that government is a component of the state. In much the same way that your arms and legs are part of your body, a government is an appendage of the state. However, throughout the 20th century, a closer look at the people serving in positions of political and governmental authority became the central point of study, mainly because government itself is a human construct. Since governments are created by individuals acting in concert, it only makes sense to also study the people that work within these institutions. This logic and rationale have given rise to different subfields of study within the realm of political science. As a result, the different parts of this text are structured in such a way that the reader will be able to learn how power is observed in each of the major subfields of the discipline: political theory/philosophy, comparative government, political systems and actors, and international relations.

Political Theory and Philosophy. Every system of government is built on a set of ideas, beliefs, or values. Throughout the Medieval era and lasting in some cases until the late 18th century, states were governed by leaders who either invoked a divine right to rule over a group of people or took their place of power by force. However, during the modern era, and especially starting with the Renaissance, a multitude of governmental systems arose. Each one was inspired by a set of beliefs proposed by individuals. In other words, these new types of government all began as concepts, ideas, or theories. This subfield of political theory seeks to understand the content and context of writings by ancient philosophers and how those writings were adapted by modern thinkers to either modify or construct new sets of beliefs on government. What is more, these theories can become codified into ideological beliefs that are used to construct a system of government. While studying this section of the text, we will look at some of the prominent political ideologies that have shaped the modern world and our understandings of how power is exercised within the state. We will also cover several social movements that have gained prominence over the last several decades, including, democratic socialism, feminism, and environmentalism, These "isms" focus primarily on either leveling the political

playing field of underrepresented groups, ike women and racial minorities, or seeking to address the harmful effects of a globalized economy.

Comparative Government. Comparative government is a vital subfield within political science because virtually every country's system of government has a story to tell. Some were forced upon a people while others were adopted through a series of compromises and concessions. In short, this subfield focuses much of its attention on the form and function of government in an individual state. Because the United States has been one of the leading liberal democratic systems in the world over the last two hundred years, there is a tendency to assume all systems of government mirror ours. However, the reality is that there are a multitude of different systems of government. While many allow the participation of the masses in determining who will serve in government, there are also dozens of countries where the people do not get to choose their leaders. Broadly speaking, every system of government fits into one of two categories: the democratic and the authoritarian. This section of the textbook compares the different types of governments around the world by looking at how power is distributed among the different branches and levels of government. Since most students reading this textbook are familiar with the American government, we will use this as the primary basis of comparison. We will also look at how authoritarian or non-democratic forms of Wgovernment are structured, and what sort of conceptions of individual freedom and liberty are found in those systems. Finally, this section will provide an overview of the subfields of Public Policy and Administration. These fields of study focus most of their observations on how laws and policies are formed and by whom. By looking first at how the American system of government is structured, we can figure out how it stacks up against other countries around the world.

Political Systems and Actors. If systems of government are different, it is highly likely that the way in which leaders are chosen will differ as well. In most democracies, the people are given the task of choosing their leaders every so often, yet the process for doing so will vary from country to country. Some may get to choose leaders for both the legislative and executive branches (as in the United States) while others might choose only their legislative representatives. Similarly, candidates for office might decide to align themselves with a political group or party to curry favor with the electorate while some might seek to distance themselves from controversial issues or causes. Within the political process, there are innumerable factors that can determine the outcome of an election. What is more, political factions or interest groups might seek to use their power and the influence they exert over segments of the population to get a preferred outcome. In every case, there are people seeking to exercise power over other people; consequently, this section of the text will examine the different actors and processes within political systems.

International Relations. The last section of the textbook will look at the issues surrounding an increasingly global society. The last 300 years have seen an ebb and flow of geopolitical structures, ranging from multipolar regional powers during the 18^{th} and 19^{th} centuries to the singular hegemonic power wielded by the United States in the waning years of the 20^{th} century. As a result, the study of how countries interact with one another has become a prominent issue in political science. Moreover, the advances in modern technology have rapidly expanded the size and scope of international activity. However, the implications of interconnectivity and interdependency are difficult to foresee. Conflicts among peoples with radically different cultures, histories, and resources have resulted in war, genocide, terrorism, and the like. This section seeks to shed light on both the good and the bad aspects of an internationalized political and economic infrastructure. It will also provide an outlook for the near future and the role you, the reader, can play in it.

Finding Your "Political Identity"

Some of you are likely taking this course because you are intrigued by politics and have a genuine thirst for knowledge; however, many of you are likely taking this course because it satisfies a requirement in your educational pathway. In either case, I am confident that

you can and will benefit from this learning because it is an important part of becoming an informed citizen. We should view higher education today as offering students much more than merely the training needed to gain competence in a chosen professional field. If primary and secondary education are designed to teach you what you need to know, higher education's purpose is to teach you why you need to know it. In other words, instead of learning the three R's (reading, writing, arithmetic), you need to focus on the four C's (communication, collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking). These skills are essential to engaging with the people around you, regardless of where you live, work, or play. Take a moment and think about the career you wish to pursue. Will you need to talk and/or work together with other people at your place of employment? Will you likely need to think critically about a task or project and/or come up with new ideas or ways of performing your work? If you answered in the affirmative to these questions (and undoubtedly you did), then you need to work on developing these skills. Now, take a moment to consider the fact that many of your potential bosses and coworkers have come from different backgrounds and have different life experiences than you, all of which have shaped their views on politics (for better or worse). In every social situation, including encounters on social media, we will make decisions that involve thinking critically about what we say and do because it involves interacting with other people.

When it comes to the realm of politics, people will have different views and opinions that are likely borne out of personal experiences. For instance, if you align yourself with a political party, it is likely that you developed this affinity because of your personal experiences. Maybe you were influenced by your family to either support one party or vehemently oppose the other. Likewise, you may be skeptical of the government as a whole because of something you read or saw on the news. In each case, your views were molded and shaped by your personal interactions and life experiences. All these variables have shaped your political identity, whether consciously or subconsciously. Your political identity essentially reflects how you view yourself in relation to the state. Depending on how you view the proper role and function of government, you may want it to perform in different ways when it comes to providing certain services or protecting particular rights. Still, the fact remains that people will always have different views on the role of government, and it is important that we seek to understand the rationale behind each one of these opinions, especially when they come into conflict with our own. Furthermore, we should seek to engage in a healthy discussion of these ideas, as doing so fosters an environment of civility and mutual respect for others.

The importance of civil discourse. One of the biggest problems we face today as a society is that there is a widespread inability to talk about our differences. Increasingly, people see their neighbors, coworkers, or classmates as "the enemy" because they do not agree with a particular stance on an issue. Such logic breeds distrust, discontent, and ultimately disharmony within society. I firmly believe that the only way to fight against this current is by creating space for people to talk openly about controversial issues without attacking the people who hold opposing beliefs. This is the essence of civil discourse, which forms the cornerstone of civil society. First and foremost, there is nothing inherently wrong with having a disagreement. People should be free to have and express their beliefs in public without fear of reprisal. That freedom is engrained in the First Amendment of the US Constitution. Although there is nothing wrong with disagreeing with an individual's stated views, we should do so while maintaining a level of respect that recognizes the humanity of the other person. Disregarding the importance of civility leads to the type of disunity and violence inundating daily news cycles. While one approach to resolving this dilemma is to simply not talk about controversial issues, such avoidance can be equally as damaging as a heated argument in the sense that it evinces an unwillingness to hear opposing perspectives. In short, ignoring these problems is akin to neglecting an open wound. Without receiving proper treatment, it will get worse. This text is intended to both foster and facilitate civil discourse in the classroom, as well as online. Each

chapter will end with several discussion questions intended to bring to light the diverse views and opinions on contemporary issues facing our nation and our world. It is important to note that many of these questions will present a point of view that some students will align with while others will not. The key to benefiting from this type of discussion is to focus on the merits of each perspective rather than on any one individual who expresses or agrees with it. In other words, these discussions should be about the position, not the person.

Read the News!

A vital component to learning about the study of political science is staying up to date on current events. Every single day, new information becomes available that is relevant to the discipline. To enhance both the teaching and learning of this field, news reports and articles should supplement the content of the textbook. For example, each chapter will have a link to one or two recent news articles to help connect a term or concept within the chapter to a current event somewhere in the world. The aim here is to help students see the various terms and concepts they are learning in a "real-world" context. Additionally, instructors will be able to supplement this text with other news reports, journal articles, or essays that are meant to enhance your experience of learning about the field of political science. In short, staying up to date on important events that are covered in the news will help the class learn how politics fundamentally affects their everyday lives. One caveat worth mentioning, though, pertains to the actual news outlets you regularly view. Within the last 20 years, the internet has been a blessing and curse when it comes to gathering information. Almost anyone can post information that can be viewed around the world. As a result, there are an overabundance of "news" sources, and some of them intentionally seek to mislead and manipulate people into believing the views that they espouse. In fact, even those news outlets deemed popular, or "mainstream" do not merely report the news but often attempt to shape how it is perceived. I am not stating this to point you towards any particular sources or sites. Rather, you should "spread the wealth" by viewing several different news sources, as this will enhance your understanding of how information is disseminated, especially when it comes to the coverage of controversial issues. Doing this will also increase your media literacy and ensure you can discern facts from opinions.

Read the news

Conclusion

The study of political science is multifaceted. Encompassing both history and current events, it even seeks to predict what could happen in the future. It observes individuals, groups, societies, and countries. It examines people, systems, processes, and institutions. It is built on theory and philosophy; studies human psychology, sociology, anthropology, and morality; and relies on economic, statistical, and scientific methods. In short, political science is the study of how almost everything impacts government and how government impacts almost everything. To study the discipline, one must not only accept that they do not know everything but also desire to learn almost anything. In the following chapters, we will break down the different terms, concepts, theories, and methods by which government is structured, how it functions, and who seeks to utilize its power for their purposes. By observing human behavior within governmental and political institutions, we can learn who gets what, when, how, and why.

Endnotes

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Chapter 2

POLITICS AS A FIELD OF STUDY

POLITICS AS A FIELD OF STUDY

In the previous chapter, I made the argument that everyone should care about politics and government because of its direct relevance to all aspects of daily life. For some, this might mean paying closer attention to news and current events. For others, it might mean becoming more engaged in issues facing your local community or state. Still others might take a greater interest in studying political science as a major in the hope of going into politics or government for their career. Wherever you are on this spectrum, the cold, hard reality is that you can never learn everything there is to know about politics and government. The field is simply too broad and diverse; however, what can easily be gleaned from it are some important tools and methods commonly used to both explain events and predict the likelihood of phenomena occurring in the future. This is usually done by using the same techniques and processes found in both the natural and social sciences. Depending on the organizational structure of a particular higher education institution, political science is likely to be found within a Liberal Arts department (alongside history, philosophy, and religion) or in the Social Sciences department (with psychology, sociology, anthropology, geography, economics, and the like). For example, the institution where I work (Pellissippi State Community College) housed political science in the Liberal Arts department until just a few years ago, at which time the decision was made to reassign it to the social sciences division. Regardless of the institution's rationale for housing political science within a particular department, these different designations provide us with yet another example of the diversity of the discipline. This chapter will focus on explaining the major tenets of political science as an academic field of study, including its creation, evolution, and value to the study of human behavior. I will begin with a brief historical overview of the origins of political science as an academic discipline, along with the major approaches to observing the practice of government throughout the 20th century. Next, I will survey the various methods, tools, and processes commonly employed by political scientists. Finally, I will make the case that political science, although a broad and diverse field, is primarily concerned with explaining human behavior and should therefore be considered primarily a social science (with an emphasis on science).

Historical Development of Political Science

Political science, as an academic discipline, is relatively new compared to other academic fields, yet the practice of politics and government has been around at least since Antiquity. Throughout Western history, government was viewed as a necessary evil, intended to maintain law and order within a specified territory or society. However, towards the middle part of the 19th century, some European scholars saw the need for a more rigorous examination of political institutions. By 1880, Columbia University officially created an academic department devoted to the study of politics as an independent field, comparable to disciplines such as history, philosophy, and economics. Some of the first professional academics of the discipline acknowledged that no one field could adequately observe or explain the effects that government can have on society. [1] These professional scholars devoted their time and attention primarily to the systems, process, and institutions of government—studying them not from a historical or philosophical perspective but rather by relying upon the methods of empiricism and social inquiry (see Box 2.1 for more information on these terms). Rejecting E.A. Freeman's sweeping view that "History is past politics and politics is present history," [2] a new guard of academics pursued a more particularized approach to observing the inner workings of government, by way of examining the people in government. For example, before serving as the 28th President of the United States, Woodrow Wilson was a professor at Princeton University (where he went on to become president) and wrote a seminal journal article entitled, "The Study of Administration." In this piece, Wilson laid out the traditional method of choosing individuals to serve in government, known as the "Spoils System," and then discussed the negative impact it had on the efficacy of government. Traditionally, supporters or political allies of the president or his political

party were given government jobs as a reward for their loyalty rather than in acknowledgement of their ability to perform the work associated with the position. What Wilson argued for instead was creating a system of government employment whereby public servants were properly trained and equipped with the knowledge, skills, and abilities to perform work that is unique to the public sector.[3] By 1903, the American Political Science Association was created for professionals in government and academia to engage in spirited debate on the practice and study of politics and government. [4] Thanks to the ambitious work performed by these scholars, this new school of thought quickly became a staple in almost every higher education institution in America.

Traditionalism (Institutionalism). Much of the research conducted during the first few decades of the 20th century centered on the formal institutions within government, including the legal aspects of statutes and policies. In much the same way that business management studies the efficacy of work performed by managers and employees, scholars sought to determine if there were more efficient ways of performing work within the legislative and executive branches. Researchers focused their time and attention on the outputs of government and after reflecting on the quantity and quality of laws, policies, and even court rulings, they would essentially work backwards to discern if the processes or structures integral to the institutions enabled individuals to perform their assigned duties and responsibilities in an effective manner. These sorts of studies have often been viewed as constituting the traditional approach to political science scholarship, although it was not called such at the time. Rather, individual researchers viewed themselves as **institutionalists.** [5] For instance, an institutionalist may focus on the passing of legislation and observe the process by which a bill is proposed in each house of Congress, as well as the inner workings of the various committees and subcommittees tasked with debating the content of the bill. Once a bill is passed by Congress and signed into the law by the President, a traditionalist may then observe how the new law is implemented by specific departments or agencies at the federal, state, or even local levels. In each case, traditional scholarship focuses its attention on the structures, systems, and processes of government.

Behavioralism. Over time, however, it became more obvious to political scientists that studying institutions formed only part of the process of observing government. They came to the determination that without looking at the human component of government, there would always be gaps in their understanding of how and why phenomena occurred. Consequently, researchers turned their attention to the people in government and began observing their behavior. Political scientists, such as Charles Merriam, Robert Dahl, and Herbert Simon, insisted that the best way to observe political activity was to use a lens that focuses on human behavior in political institutions, as this would highlight the various rationales given for committing certain actions.[6] For instance, a lawmaker may choose to vote for an issue that runs counter to the platform of their political party because doing so could allow them to curry favor with constituents during an election year. When looking solely at a political party as an institution, it would not make sense for a lawmaker to do such a thing; however, if that policy is popular among constituents and the lawmaker is up for reelection, they may choose to behave in a way that runs counter to partisan loyalty because it benefits them individually rather than the party collectively. By examining the behavior of the individual lawmaker, we can better understand individual or group decisions, especially when they go against institutionalist assumptions. In the example above, winning reelection is of the utmost importance to the incumbent lawmaker, and party leaders may be willing to forgive them for breaking ranks on the vote for a specific bill if the lawmaker aligns with the party position on other pieces of major legislation. All of these shifting allegiances make sense when we consider the human dimension and not just the institutional norms and setting.

Postbehavioralism. For all their merits, both thetraditional and behavioral approaches to studying politics remain incomplete unless we also examine the moral and ethical implications of human life. As beneficial as the empirical observations of political scientists had become, much of the scholarship was devoid of discussions that analyzed the implications of these political decisions. This is not to say that traditionalists and behavioralists disregarded ethical and moral concerns in their research. Rather, they focused primarily on those areas of political activity that could be empirically observed. A reliance upon only what can be seen neglects important and critical areas where societal values are found. Scholars like Joseph Dunner and David Easton called into question the practice of observing political behavior without considering the value judgments that are made by political actors. Instead, they argued for a postbehavioralist approach that argued for a focus on topics and issues that directly affect people—like war, healthcare, immigration, and the environment. [7] In short, political scientists need to study areas of politics that were matters of life and death. Simply examining election cycles, voting patterns, and legislation without acknowledging the effects they have on people undermines the important work of the discipline.

Throughout the 20th century, the study of political science ebbed and flowed between these different approaches. Toward the beginning of the century, scholars focused primarily on the collection of many different types of information. Since very little time and effort had been spent learning about politics and government, a wealth of information was compiled that described how governments and political systems operated. This type of information, commonly referred to as **qualitative** data, enhanced our understanding of how individual states operated. However, this information was compiled by different people over several years, which led to a broken and fragmented understanding of politics and government. To help solve this problem, scholars began to compare data collected about one country or system with another by using **quantitative** methods. By assigning a number to specific data points, researchers could employ statistical metrics to compare and contrast information between multiple variables. In doing so, the discipline was able to perform a number of functions similar to other fields of study within the social sciences that focus on explaining and predicting the behavior of human beings.

Certainly, human behavior is observed in a variety of situations; yet all of these studies have two intended purposes. First, there is the desire to explain what and why something is occurring. Whether it is understanding how people communicate with one another or what compels someone to act in a certain situation, the overarching goal of this research is to explain what is occurring and why humans are behaving in a specific way. What is more, when researchers find plausible explanations for certain human actions, it increases the chances that we can predict when someone is going to behave in a certain way in the future. For example, during each election cycle, political scientists analyze demographic data in an attempt to determine if voting patterns based upon such factors as race, gender, age, and income levels can be found within the population. If we then examine data collected from the 2020 election cycle, what do we discover? We find that women were more likely to vote for Democrats than men, and a higher percentage of citizens over the age of 50 voted than those under the age of 30.[8] While this data is important and useful, it does not tell us why these individuals behaved this way. So, we need to dig a little deeper. Throughout history, people have tended to vote more as they get older. Reasons abound for this behavior, but some of the leading explanations maintain that older people have more at stake in the decisions made by public officials. Similarly, people become more accustomed to following certain social practices as they get older, and voting is considered a longstanding civic tradition in the United States and in other established democracies. More specifically, women have traditionally supported equal rights and advocated for social programs that aid disadvantaged minorities and individuals who fall within lower income levels. These types of issues have been promoted by the Democratic party for decades. [9]Hence, women are

more likely to support Democrats in an election cycle. Although none of this data is 100% accurate all the time, it does give us an idea of what to expect from certain voters in future elections. This type of work constitutes the essence of social science research.

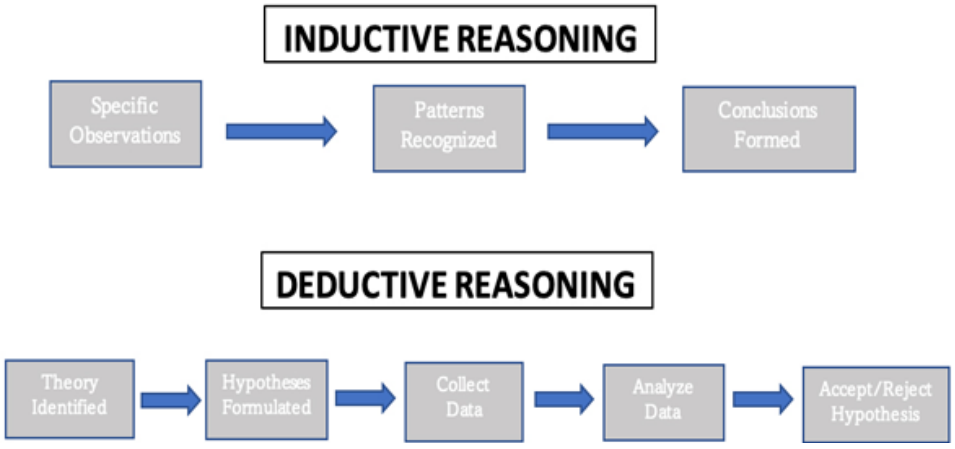
What is Social Research?

Understanding the natural world has been an age-old pursuit. For as long as humans have been in existence, they have sought to know how and why the world operates as it does. As important and noble as the development of the natural sciences is, an equally important goal should be to study the individuals themselves who are seeking to understand the natural world. In other words, since human actions take place in the natural world, we should also seek to understand the what and the why of human behavior. Moreover, the study of human behavior relies upon some of the same systems and processes that are essential for investigating objects of the natural world. While most readers are familiar with how the scientific method is used in such disciplines as biology and chemistry, this process also has direct application to social research. In fact, researchers in the natural sciences and political scientists use theoretical foundations and principles to conduct their observations. Central to both fields of study is the fundamental concept of **empiricism,** or the process of observing interactions between variables. To both verify and confirm theories about how things work, researchers must observe these interactions. This type of work can be done by physically watching chemicals interact in a beaker or by watching two people have a conversation. However, a researcher cannot physically observe every interaction between chemicals or among individuals; therefore, they must employ other methods in order to determine whether the interactions they observe form a pattern or operate in accordance with a "law.".

The Scientific Method. To gain a better undestaning of research in general, one must become familiar with the **scientific method**. This process is used in both the natural and social sciences to ensure that all research is systematic and reproducible. In short, if everyone follows the same process, the conclusions of the research can be trusted. Think about doing a math problem. When you were taught how to perform a geometric equation, your teacher gave you a process to follow that can be replicated in a variety of situations. What is more, you were likely graded on your ability to replicate the equation in a class or homework assignment and on an exam. If you did not follow the steps correctly, it is highly likely that your answer was incorrect. Similarly, by following the scientific method, researchers and those reviewing their work can feel confident in the results. The scientific method always begins with a general question, followed by a theory (idea) that answers the question. However, one cannot be sure that the idea answers the question unless it is tested. To test the theory, a hypothesis needs to be created that seeks to explain how the theory answers the question. The hypothesis identifies both **independent** and **dependent** variables that will be examined in the study. Independent variables are presented as those that affect another variable, referred to as a dependent variable. By empirically observing the interaction between the different variables in the hypothesis, one can either confirm or deny the hypothesis, which ultimately enables the researcher to determine if the theory does in fact answer the question. When creating a *causal* hypothesis, a researcher will assume that the action of an independent variable will cause a change in a dependent variable. Similarly, in a corollary hypothesis, an observed change in one variable results in a change in another variable; however, in this instance, the researcher cannot conclude that changes in the first (or independent) variable caused the change in the second (or dependent) variable. a dependent variable.

Deductive versus Inductive Reasoning

Following the process described above is commonly referred to as deductive reasoning, which uses a general theory to guide specific experiments. This line of thinking starts with the theory and works backwards to see if the theory holds up through empirical observation. Conversely, inductive reasoning is the process of drawing general conclusions based off some empirical observations. Within the realm of politics and government, inductive reasoning is a method commonly used by the average political observer. For instance, a person might generally conclude that a specific candidate will win an election because he or she talked to a handful of acquaintances, and they all expressed support for the candidate. This line of reasoning does not begin with any general theory or assumption; rather, the conclusions are drawn from a series of empirical observations.



It should be noted that neither method is better than the other. Journalists and campaign pollsters use inductive reasoning on a regular basis to interpret election results, legislative votes, court rulings, and public opinion polls. They do not begin with a general theory and create experiments to test it. Instead, they start with the observations and make estimated guesses based off the data that they have collected. Such reports are likely found in newspapers and magazines. Studies based on deductive reasoning that are conducted by political scientists focus on using established theories to guide their research, which is more commonly published in academic journals and textbooks. It is worth pointing out that an overwhelming majority of the population is more exposed to writings that use inductive reasoning, and this helps explain why the average observer is going to mimic the line of thinking to which they are most exposed.

On a more basic level, the scientific method is considered a **research process** and can be applied to almost any and every situation. Take, for instance, your decision to purchase a specific product, like a smartphone or computer. Perhaps an advertisement for one caught your eye. Or you were impressed by a friend's phone. In either case, your *observations* caused you to wonder whether or not you should get this product. Next, you devised an explanation (*hypothesis*) for why you should get this product (e.g., such a purchase will allow you to do more things than you can accomplish with your current phone or computer). However, the only way to know for sure whether you want and need the product is to *experiment* with the phone or computer by testing it out. For that reason, you will go to a store that carries the phone or computer and *empirically analyze* all the features on the product before d eciding whether that product is worth making the financial investment. Or consider the college you are currently attending. At some point, you made the decision to go to college but had to determine several factors (*variables*), including the cost, type of degree programs, location, etc. The decision you made to attend this particular college was the

result of all the observations, questions, explanations, and analyses that made you conclude this institution was the best option. These two examples point to an empirical process that can easily be extended to conducting research in the hard or social sciences.

Generally, research can be grouped into one of two categories: *basic* and *applied*. Basic research is intended to support or refute a theory. Theories are simply ideas that are intended to help us explain the natural or social world around us. In acknowledgement of the need to have full and complete knowledge of how or why phenomena occur, theories seek to provide an explanation that "fills in the gaps" in what has not been observed. Once a theory is tested, the conclusions of the study either confirm or refute its major tenets; the results also determine the overall value of the theory in relation to the phenomena that are observed. Applied research, on the other hand, addresses specific problems or areas of concern. In short, a problem is identified, and applied research tries to find a solution to it. Some applied research studies may try to evaluate the effectiveness of a new law or public policy while others might focus on capturing data on the amount of people who receive support from a social program. In either case, the focus is placed on determining the outcomes of specific actions rather than testing the principles of a theory. Both forms of research are important and worthwhile pursuits, but it is important for the researcher to consider the type of question being asked and then use the appropriate form to guide the research process.

Why Do Social Research?

The reasons for conducting social research are almost as varied as the methods employed. However, the primary benefit of studying human behavior is that it enables us to address important problems facing societies. One of the unique features of government is the ability of those working within it to create or modify public policies and legislation that directly affect the population. Practically any form of social research has the potential to influence political institutions because such studies help to identify issues that can be addressed through governmental intervention. Research that studies issues like gun-control, vaccine mandates, welfare programs, healthcare, energy, education, and transportation can all translate into laws and policies that govern our daily lives. Take, for example, seatbelts. Why do you have to wear one? Because it is the law. Why is it a law? Well, it was established as a direct result of discoveries made through social research. In short, a lawyer named Ralph Nader (the same guy who ran for president four different times) conducted a social research study that looked at the harmful effects of automobiles. In 1965, he published Unsafe at Any Speed, which provided an in-depth look at the unsafe driving practices that had been enabled and reinforced by the automobile industry. One major problem he identified was the number of deaths from car accidents. If cars had been equipped with proper safety restraints (like seatbelts), there would have been far fewer fatal car accidents. The following year, Congress passed the National Traffic and Motor Vehicle Safety Act, which in order to reduce the number of deaths and injuries caused by car accidents, instituted specific safety standards that automobile manufacturers were required to adhere to when designing their products. This piece of legislation also created the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, which was tasked with enforcing the new regulations that govern the automobile industry and maintaining traffic and safety laws across the country.x Because of the work of "Nader's Raiders," millions of lives have been saved around the world due to the installation of seatbelts in automobiles.

Types of Social Research

Due to the broad scope of topics, issues, and problems addressed in political science, the inductive and deductive reasoning methods are both of great value. Yet, the overarching goal of research is discovery, and there are indeed a multitude of questions that can and should be asked by scholars to address the major issues facing our world. By exploring unknown or neglected issues, we can discover more about the natural world and humankind's relationship to it. Furthermore, simply observing people interact in diverse settings enables us to explore possible theories to explain their behavior. To do this, it is vital that research methods align with what is being studied. Moreover, there are different levels of study that can be performed. Micro-level studies are concerned primarily with looking at smaller groups or periods of time. When looking at individuals or small groups, **case studies** will allow researchers to observe and interact with subjects to better understand their behavior. In these types of studies, researchers have an easier time collecting qualitative data that describes the variables being observed. Political scientists can also look at small segments of time by performing **cross-sectional** research. A prime example of this type of research is provided by looking at a single election cycle. Political observers can not only look at issues that motivate people to vote in a particular year but also view elections over time by conducting **longitudinal** studies. This type of research at the meso-level looks at events over a much longer period of time to identify trends in voting or other patterns of behavior. An example of meso-level research may be found by considering studies of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s. A great number of works have been written by scholars who have looked at specific activities within the African American community in the United States to better understand the dramatic changes in legislative priorities that occurred during this period of American history. These researchers also created **concept clusters,** which focus on larger groupings of people within a society. These clusters can be created by looking at several demographic categories, like race, income, gender, education, age, etc. (We can see here that it is virtually impossible to observe all individuals in these categories through the methods used in micro-level studies.) Finally, in macro-level research, scholars might look at concept clusters that extend beyond a country's borders or focus on how countries within certain regions of the world behave. The larger the studies become, the more likely it is that these studies are going to use quantitative data for measurement and analysis.

Concrete versus Abstract. One important way to distinguish between the different levels and types of research is to focus on whether political scientists are utilizing concrete or abstract concepts. When data points are small, it is much easier to create concrete ways to measure variables because they are easier to observe, whereas larger levels of research become more abstract and harder to fully describe and observe. As a result, when dealing with these more abstract levels, making estimates through quantitative measurements becomes a likelier course of action. Take, for instance, the use of **survey research**. This is a more concrete form of data collection because hundreds or maybe thousands of individuals will fill out the survey and respond with specific answers. However, it is very difficult to get millions of people to fill out a survey, which makes it harder to capture all the information needed to accurately observe the segments of a particular population. Consequently, other methods have to be used, including working with quantitative models that assign numerical identifiers to variables or concept clusters.

Major Approaches to Research

Because all research is not the same, different approaches and techniques are employed to reflect the observations that are made. Most research practices can be grouped into one of three approaches: **positivist**, **interpretive**, and **critical**. The positivist approach focuses on "hard facts" that are most often found in the natural sciences, primarily because experimentation and observation are much easier in a controlled environment. This approach is also considered nomothetic, meaning the observations

and conclusions are objective and can be generalized beyond the individual experiment that is performed since it deals with universal scientific laws. In other words, no matter where an experiment is performed, it can be replicated almost anywhere, and the results will be the same. This kind of study is to be distinguished from that carried out through the interpretive approach, which acknowledges that certain forms of social behavior can be qualitatively different, depending on the situation. For instance, people in North America tend to think and act differently from people in the Middle East, mainly because each population is largely guided by its own distinctive cultural norms. Therefore, one cannot assume that an experiment or observation in one location will have the same outcome in another geographical locale. We see then how Interpretivists will take an idiographic approach, which adopts a subjective perspective that acknowledges the uniqueness of individuals. As a result, universal laws are difficult if not impossible to create, since experiments cannot always be replicated. Finally, a critical approach seeks to put knowledge into action; its practitioners acknowledge that research is not always "value-free" because there are moral and ethical effects that must be taken into consideration. This type of research usually has an agenda that aspires to do more than merely report a set of findings; those who carry it out want to use the new information to change the status quo. This might entail creating new laws/policies or modifying existing ones.

Is Political Science a Science?

Despite the established use of the term, *science*, in its name, some have questioned whether the discipline should be classified as such. Most criticisms of this type raise either practical or philosophical objections. The practical critique argues that human behavior is extremely complex because people act differently. For example, throughout the world, sodium chloride is referred to as table salt; however, individuals will use and be affected by it in many different ways: some will add an overabundance of salt to their food while others will have an allergic reaction when ingesting a small amount of it.

What is more, people may intentionally mislead researchers when providing responses to questions or prevent pollsters from establishing representative sample sizes by choosing not to participate in a study at all. (Such refusals have led some to replace the phrase, "sample of the population" with a much less useful but more accurate designation: sample of the willing"—i.e., those willing to participate in surveys.) Even the measurements and models that are most used are generally subjective and based on the views of the researchers conducting the study. Just because they choose to employ a certain method does not mean it will provide the most accurate results. Finally, collecting data to analyze can prove to be extremely difficult, or even impossible, to obtain.

The philosophical objections also acknowledge that the research process is performed by subjective observers who lack the ability to remove their own biases and preconceptions. Just as the views or opinions of participants can skew the findings, researchers are prone to make the findings say what they want them to say. This is known as **confirmation bias**, which can distort the findings of a study so that it aligns with the researchers' original assumptions or hypotheses. When such instances occur, the fault does not lie with the process, the data, or even the methodology; rather, it rests rather with the researcher, who has a motive and is seeking to use the study to further their narrative on a given issue or problem. In short, the "facts" of political phenomena are constructed or conditioned by the observer's perceptions, experiences, and opinions. As a result, the research in question is reduced to nothing more than a tool to further their agenda. Although it is sometimes difficult for individuals to set aside their values or beliefs regarding a topic or issue when they conduct a research study, it is still possible to control for human error during the research process.

Conclusion

Although political science as a field of study is much younger than other academic disciplines, it has provided a wealth of knowledge about the institutions of government and the people that work within them. Over the last 100 years, scholars and academics have conducted hundreds of thousands of studies to better understand how and why governmental and political institutions operate as they do. More importantly, they have uncovered the importance of the people who perform the work within these organizations. Their hard work has revealed that human behavior forms the nucleus of political activity and accounts for the ebb and flow of historical change. Moreover, their work has value and directly affects the daily lives of the citizenry. By employing many of the same tactics, techniques, and procedures found in the natural and other social sciences, political science has become a prominent academic discipline in almost every modern higher education institution. While some question its place in the realm of "science" there is no doubt that the intellectual capital amassed by scholars has value and application in our world today. However, before delving into the different subfields of the discipline, it is important to establish a foundation of knowledge for the different objects of study within political science. The next chapter addresses important key terms and concepts that drive much of the field's empirical research.

DISCUSSION TOPICS/QUESTIONS

Why do you think it is important to study politics and government?

What are some important issues, problems, or policies that should be studied?

Do you think political science should be considered a science?

Imagine Congress was trying to lower the number of traffic fatalities in the United States, and you received a grant to conduct a study on the potential causes of those deaths. How might you carry out this study? What are the different factors you need to consider? (Remember to consider the research process, as well as the different variables that you should include).

Endnotes

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Chapter 3

KEY TERMS AND CONCEPTS

KEY TERMS AND CONCEPTS

Having established the major task and purpose of political science as an academic field of study, we are ready to examine the major focal points of research. As previously stated, political science is the social science concerned chiefly with the description and analysis of political and governmental institutions and processes. While the previous chapter unpacked the how of social research, this chapter will identify and describe what is being studied. To do this, we must grapple with several common terms and phrases that are found in the realm of politics and government. Unfortunately, there are a number of different ways that key terms and concepts in the field have been defined over the years. In fact, defining the discipline of political science itself has varied from time to time. Below are just a few different descriptions of the field:

- *The understanding of the state, i.e., principles and ideals underlying its organization and activities.*
- *The study of a body politic, the associa tion of people into a political community.*
- *A study of the relations of individuals and groups, individuals and groups to the state, and state to other states.*

Although these definitions have some similarities to one another, each one emphasizes a different aspect to the study of political science. The first focuses on the state (a term we will dissect in this chapter) but addresses it only in institutional terms, while the other two specify the people within the political communities and acknowledge the influence they exert over the state's organizations and activities. In reality, there is no perfect definition of political science that can be applied to every study within the discipline, but we can gain clarity on terms often used to further our understanding of the body politic. In the following pages, we are going to examine key terms that have guided much political science research over the last several decades. The reason for doing so is to ensure readers have the appropriate descriptions of words that are commonly used in the field to observe and monitor human behavior. In other words, words mean things, and we need to know what those words mean.

Words Mean Things

While the title in this heading might seem obvious, the fact is that people may not always use words in the same way. When someone uses a term to describe an object or action, the person hearing them may not always understand what they are trying to say. Depending on your age, geographic location, or social grouping, you may misunderstand a person when he or she says something is "cool."Is this term referencing the temperature of an object or simply claiming that the object looks nice? In such a situation, context is everything. Similarly, when examining specific terms from an academic or scientific standpoint, it is important to know the context surrounding the object under consideration, especially since political science studies people and institutions around the world. The diversity of languages both complicates and increases possibilities of communication. Therefore, it is vital that key terms be clearly defined and described so as not to confuse or even mislead the audience.

In political science, there are a handful of words that must be understood in their proper context if sense is to be made of their meanings. Although none of these words will be unfamiliar to you, there is a strong likelihood that a number of different definitions would be provided if every reader were called upon to explain the meaning of the term. Granted, there would be some similarities among the definitions, but there would also be some important distinctions. One person's definition may encompass more than another's or even exclude essential attributes of the term in question. As a result, many political scientists devote considerable attention to honing their definitions of terms so that a reader knows what each one means in a specific context. This process is vital when conducting social research.

Key Terms in Political Science

Even though there are dozens of important terms within the discipline of political science, four in particular are needed to build a firm foundation of knowledge. For the rest of this chapter, we are going to carefully examine the following terms: **power, state**, **nation,** and **government**. Think of these terms as either cornerstones of a building or the pillars that prop up its roof. Viewing them in such a light will allow us to see how these terms can directly affect our understanding of others that are commonly found in the discipline.

Power

Arguably the most encompassing of the four concepts, power forms the centerpiece of observation in all political science, if not all scientific research. Power is best defined as the ability to change an outcome or alter the will of another agent. This definition can be applied to both the natural and social sciences. For example, chemists often try to determine how and why one element within the periodic table has the power to change the composition of others. Likewise, when observing political actors or activities, researchers typically focus upon how power is exerted over an agent. Within the social sciences, exercising power is often described as exerting an *influence,* or having the ability to get others do something, whether they like it or not. Throughout your life, people have wielded power over you, meaning they have had the ability to influence your behavior. Parents, teachers, coaches, siblings, and friends have all had the ability to directly affect your behavior in a particular situation. Maybe your parents influenced you to clean your room because they had the power to punish you if you disobeyed them. Maybe a teacher influenced you to perform well in their class because you wanted to impress them, or you were afraid they would tell your parents if you misbehaved. Maybe you had a sports coach that convinced you to stop playing because they did not think you were good enough. Maybe you had a sibling that inspired you to learn how to play an instrument or game because you observed them doing it, and it looked like fun. Or maybe you had a friend that influenced your taste in movies or music because you thought they would like you more if you shared their appreciation for a certain director or rock band. In each one of these instances, other people (agents) had the ability to alter your thoughts or actions. In short, they had power over you.

Types of Power

According to the highly influential German sociologist Max Weber, there are essentially three different forms of *Authority,* which is the concept Weber uses to refer to the legitimate use of power. Weber's "tripartite classification of authority" consists of *charismatic, traditional*, and *legal*-rational authority.[1] Weber uses these terms to describe the means by which political order is maintained in a society. Charismatic authority is based upon an individual leader's strong personality, which exerts a powerful influence over those who voluntarily submit to the ruler out of a sense of absolute personal devotion. Traditional authority is present when the people's actions and beliefs are guided and governed by a society's customs, traditions, and established norms. In other words, the adage "this is the way we have always done it," is a byproduct of a form of rule supported by traditional authority. Finally, Weber's rational-legal authority points to a mutually agreed upon set of rules that spell out the legal consequences for disobedience. In this situation, an organization (or government) has been given the legal authority to impose rules upon the people, and everyone submits to its authority within the organization.

Recall that in the previous chapter, we saw how the discipline of political science has evolved by moving from a traditionalist to behavioralist approach. Similarly, the study of power has narrowed its focus, turning from organizations and institutions to the people in positions of leadership. For example, several years after Weber's study on authority was published, sociologists John French

and Bertram Raven expanded upon and refined Weber's work to include what they considered to be six bases for power that focus on the individual:

- ***Legitimate*** *– Formal right to make demands, and to expect others to be compliant and obedient.*
- ***Reward*** *– Ability to compensate another for compliance.*
- ***Expert*** *– A person's high levels of skill and knowledge.*
- ***Referent*** *– Perceived attractiveness, worthiness and right to others' respect.*
- ***Coercive*** *– Ability to punish others for noncompliance.*
- ***Informational*** *– Ability to control the information that others need to accomplish something.*[2]

We should note that several of these categories can overlap with one another. For example, according to French and Raven, an individual who has referent power may also have the ability to compensate for compliance or punish for noncompliance. Expert power can also be used to control the flow of information that people consume. As a result, situations and conditions can dictate how power is acquired and distributed over groups of people or the whole of a society.

Forms of Power. If the means by which power is obtained and distributed can vary, it makes sense for there to be several ways that power is exercised. First, the use of *force* (or the threat of using force) usually applies to power that manifests itself through physical means. This type of power is commonly attributed to military strength or the ability to threaten people with physical harm if they disobey. Second, power can be exercised through persuasion. Like reward and coercive power as described by French and Raven, a person can influence others by providing rewards or punishments. People can be rewarded for obedience, but persuasive power can also manipulate others when there is a desire to conceal the motives of intent, as well as coerce them to obey for fear of being harmed. Finally, informational power is exercised when more or less information is provided to people. A prime example of this occurs when the government limits people's access to the internet. Russia, China, and other authoritarian regimes have a history of preventing the flow and spread of information to the public, especially when it helps maintain order and limit protests.

Legitimacy

For power to be exercised, it must be acknowledged by others. A person can think they have power, but unless someone else recognizes and submits to it, such power does not exist. Therefore, power can only be legitimate when it is acknowledged by more than one person. This begs the question: what are some of the different ways in which power is legitimized? Legitimate power often comes from consistently producing *results.* When a person, organization, or institution meets the basic needs of the people, such as providing security, promoting the general welfare, and safeguarding human rights, it accumulates legitimacy in the eyes of the people. Hence, people can trust that it will do what it intends to do. Furthermore, when this occurs repeatedly over time, people form a habit of trusting and submitting to the power of the person, organization, or institution. Power is also legitimized over time through the development of *historical customs and traditions*. Consider religious leaders within a specific belief system. Priests have legitimate power in the Catholic church because laymen and women rely on them to perform rituals and services that are integral to the practice of their faith. Similarly, tribal elders within the Pashtuns who live in portions of Afghanistan and Pakistan have legitimate power among their people because their traditions have elevated them as leaders for centuries. Power is also legitimized when it provokes fear in the hearts and minds of others because they are afraid that disobedience will compromise their safety and well-being. Finally, procedural legitimacy comes when formal processes and protocols are followed. For example, the American justice system is legitimized primarily through the ability of judges and justices to follow the constitutional requirement of due process, which has come to mean that the accused are given adequate legal assistance and presumed innocent until proven guilty by a jury of peers.

Rethinking Political Science. Taking into consideration the concept of power as detailed above, we now have a more precise definition of political science: namely, the study of how power is achieved (or gained), shared, and used in the realm of governance and global relations. Using this definition, the primary object of study is power itself, albeit in its many different shapes, sizes, and forms. What is more, since power is not static and unchanging, we can observe the transfer of power from one entity to another. It can shift from one institution to another or one individual to another. It can also be acquired by both political and non-political actors. According to established laws, regulations, or even constitutions, certain entities are tasked with exercising power, but we must take a closer look at those entities to better understand how power is achieved, shared, and used.

State

Now that the concept of power has been introduced, we will take a closer look at those who possess or seek to obtain it. It is important at this juncture to disentangle some common assumptions about general terms that are commonplace in political discussions, particular with regard to the term, state. When you hear or read the term, state, your inclination is to think about one or more of the United States. For example, I am writing this textbook (and you are likely reading it) in the state of Tennessee. While Tennessee is one of the 50 states that make up our country, that is not the only way the term is used. While the terms state and country are interchangeable, both can be distinguished from the term, nation, which, is discussed further below. Indeed, political science scholars have identified four constitutive elements of all states:

Each one of these components is required for the formation and recognition of a state. First and foremost, a state must have people in it. While this might seem self-evident, just having people is not enough, as they must live in a specific location (e.g., a territory). However, a group of people living in a defined territory is still not enough, as there must be an authority that rules or governs the people. As we will see later, a government is needed to ensure the fourth component of sovereignty. Above all, maintaining independence from other states while exercising autonomy within its borders forms the linchpin of a state. Three of the four will get you a province or just a territory, like Puerto Rico is to the United States. What is more, the state of Tennessee (as with all other American states) does not have supreme power to command or enforce obedience among its people, since it is ultimately subordinate to the U.S. federal government. As a result, without sovereignty, there is no formal state.

Key Terms in Political Science

1. **People** – the total popultion living within the state
2. **Territory** – a fixed portion of the surface of the earth inhabited by the people of the state
3. **Government** – agency throuh which the will of the state is formulated, expressed, and carried out
4. **Sovereignty** – the supreme power of the state to command and enforce obedience

Origins of the State. Throughout both ancient and modern history, states have evolved, as wars, colonization, and migration have caused borders to be redrawn and populations to change on almost every continent. The rise and fall of kingdoms and empires created ripple effects that are still felt today, yet certain historical events have shaped much of what we now know as the modern state. The origins of a state can be traced using one of four prominent theories. First, *divine right theory* suggests that the state is of divine creation, and the ruler is ordained by God to govern the people. In short, an individual would claim to be chosen by a deity to rule over a land and its people. Prior to the Battle of Milvian Bridge in 312 CE, the soon to become emperor Constantine claimed to have received a sign from God in the form of a cross (representing the crucifixion of Jesus Christ) and believed that victory for his side meant God had anointed him to rule over the Western Roman Empire and proclaim Christianity as the official religion of the state. Second, *necessity or force theory* holds that the state was created through the use of force. While the previous example points to a spiritual ordination, Constantine nonetheless conquered the western portion of the Roman Empire using his military might. Following his announcement that Christianity was the official religion, Roman citizens were eventually forced to convert to the religion or die by the sword. Third, *paternalistic theory* claims that a state originated through the enlargement of a family. As the nuclear family grows and begins to inhabit more and more land, a state is born. Old Testament Scripture traces the origin of the nation of Israel and its possession of the Promised Land to a man named Abraham. According to the book of Genesis, Abram (whose name was changed by God to Abraham) was promised a son, Isaac] who would lead an entire people to a specific land that his descendants could live in. (Another of Abrahams's sons, Ishmael, was the forefather of the Arabs; today, a significant portion of the Middle East region, just east of the Mediterranean Sea, is disputed between these two peoples.) Finally, social contract theory asserts that the early states must have been created by people who agreed to form a compact and institute a government . When the people inhabiting a specific territory agree to establish a government that will serve as their ultimate authority, they enter into a societal agreement. This "contractual" arrangement is the primary means by which several states, including the U.S., were created. It is important to note that while some states were established by leaders who invoked divine right, relied upon force, or "inherited" their authority, many of them went on to establish a social contract. For all these reasons, studying the origins of a state is vital to understanding its current structure.

Nation and Nationality

The people inhabiting the territorial boundaries of state are also essential to its existence and preservation. We often refer to these people as a **nation** or a group of people that share certain commonalities exclusive to the territory or even the region. The word, nation, stems from the Latin, *'Natus,'* which connotes the idea of birth or race. Characteristics like language, history, culture, and religion engender a sense of unity and belonging among the larger community, whose members take on a national identity as their **nationality.** It is important to note that a nation can be distinguished from a state. Moreover, people can be part of a nation but not belong to the state, primarily because of the governmental system practiced within the state. For instance, though the Kurds, Basques, and Palestinians each comprise a nation, none of those peoples have a state; they are in fact referred to as "stateless nations."

However, a nation-state can exist when a nation adopts a system of government that rules over the territory. For example, the United States was borne out of a mutual agreement of people from many different nations to form a union built on specific principles and ideals. While many of these people spoke the same language and practiced the same religion, there were still many different nations represented throughout the 13 colonies. Immigrants tended to settle in colonies that had shared norms, such as history, culture, language, or religion, they all desired to establish a state that would respect and protect the individual rights of mankind.[1] This is fundamentally different from the practices in many other Western states during that time. Furthermore, owing to the migration of people over the last several hundred years, individuals of a particular nation may live in a state that is largely populated by a completely different nation. Colonization was a unique process

1 *We will discuss the controversy surrounding the lack of equality of among specific demographics in America, namely women and African Americans, in a later chapter.*

by which people from one part of the world moved to occupy and rule over the people of another land. In South Africa, there is a large portion of the population that is of Dutch descent, and they are there because their ancestors moved to the southern portion of the continent when it was under Dutch control. Similarly, French people migrated to Canada and continued to speak their native language, despite living amongst people of English descent. This is why the official language of Canada is both English and French. Both examples point to the nationality of people who no longer live amongst their native people, yet they still retain their nationality. Table 3.1 provides information that distinguishes a state from a nation.

State vs. Nation	
State	**Nation**
An independent political entity with fixed geographic boundaries	A large body of people unity by a commonly shared origin, history, culture, language, or ethnicity
Focus is on land	Focus is on people
People reside in a fixed territory	People do not all live in a fixed territory
Can have multiple nations	Can live in multiple states
Has governmental institutions	Has socio-cultural institutions
Cannot exist without sovereignty	Can exist without sovereignty

Government

The third vital component that makes up a state is its government. In its most basic form, a **government** is the mechanism used to rule over the people within a specified territory. Once again, people who inhabit a land, or even those who share common attributes within a society, are not considered citizens of a particular state unless there is a system in place to ensure they adhere to established rules and societal norms. Just as power tends to manifest itself in different ways, so too will systems of government. Throughout much of human history, the primary form of government has been a *monarchy*, when the supreme and final authority lies in the hands of a single person. The singular ruler of a monarchy is most commonly referred to as a king, and the people are considered his subjects. However, even monarchies have evolved over time. In an absolute monarchy, the king has complete power and is not accountable to any other group or institution in the state. When a king is checked by an internal mechanism (whether political or social), it is considered a limited monarchy. There are also instances when political power within a state is exercised by a small group of privileged elites. This is called an aristocracy. Most of the time, monarchical and aristocratic leadership is based on the *hereditary* principle of succession, according to which power is passed down through a particular family. This principle is based on the belief that certain people naturally possess traits worthy of positions of leadership, either through divine anointing or their genetic makeup. What is more, power is primarily consolidated at the national level, as the leader(s) make all major decisions for the people, regardless of their wishes or desires.

Finally, a *democracy* occurs when the masses get to either make their own decisions through majority voting or choose representatives to make decisions on their behalf. The former is considered a direct (or pure) democracy, while the latter is called representative democracy, or a republic. As will be seen in later chapters, representative democracies can take the

form of a parliamentary system, a presidential system, or some combination of the two, as is the case, for instance, in France, which has a "semi-presidential" system. For now, the important points to rmember are that systems of government will vary and often reflect the defining characteristics embedded in a nation.

Sovereignty

The fourth component of a state, sovereignty, is essentially an extension or byproduct of government. **Sovereignty** refers to the supreme authority that is held within a state. Internally, it enables a government to enforce laws, policies, and regulations; externally, it allows a government to protect its territory and people from external threats. In a sovereign nation, the people willingly submit to the authority of a government that has the ability to guard and protect both the people and their property. Throughout much of human history, the state's sovereignty was challenged through military attacks and declarations of war. If a state was defeated by its enemy, it would have to submit to the victorious state's system of government. Therefore, a vital aspect of government is the capacity to defend its borders from attacks by a neighboring state or non-state actors.

The adage, "Liberty without order is chaos," applies to the notion of sovereignty. If a government cannot maintain law and order within its borders, the ensuing chaos will jeopardize the state's ability to protect itself from outside aggressors. Likewise, if a government cannot stave off attacks from an external threat, the government will be unable to protect and preserve its people. Consider in this context the terrorist attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001. Although the United States suffered an extensive blow to our national security, our sovereignty was never in doubt. There was no attempt by the terrorists to overthrow our government and establish an Islamic caliphate. However, the subsequent decisions to invade Afghanistan in 2002 and Iraq in 2003 undermined the sovereignty of both states, as neither state was able to prevent the U.S. and its allies from occupying much of their territorial boundaries and establishing a new system of law and order, albeit for limited time period. Also, during the American Civil War, the US federal government temporarily lost its sovereign authority over the southern states that formed the Confederacy; its sovereignty was reestablished after General Lee's surrender at Appomattox. Finally, following its defeat in World War II, Japan submitted to the US-led military occupation from 1945 to 1952, during which time it lost its sovereignty. In sum, *the strength of a state's government is a strong indicator of its sovereignty.*

Key Terms in Context. The United Kingdom provides us with a particularly clear example that illuminates the importance of the distinction between a nation and state. Within the United Kingdom, there are four nations – England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland – but together they make up one state. It is also important to note that these four nations are also countries that exist within the United Kingdom, which is itself a country. That is why England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland are often referred to as "countries within a country," However, the key distinction here lies in in the fact that while the UK is a *sovereign* state or country, England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland are not *sovereign* countries.

You might be familiar with the term Great Britain and thought it could be used interchangeably to refer to the United Kingdom; however, Great Britain was only used to refer to England, Scotland, and Wales. These nations predate the existence of Northern Ireland, which was established (as a country) on May 3, 1921. In fact, the official name of the conglomerate of these nations and countries is "The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland." Prior to the unification of Great Britain and the integration of Northern Ireland, *Wales and Scotland were sovereign states*. Wales was a sovereign state until the reign of King Henry VIII instituted the Laws in Wales Act of 1535, uniting England and Wales into a singular state. By the 18th century, Scotland joined the political union with England and Wales to create Great Britain, with Parliament serving as the supreme governing body over all the nations. For a period of time, the entire island of Ireland was under the authority of Parliament until the creation of the Republic of Ireland in 1922.

As can be seen from this example, nations were (and still are) made up of people who shared a common land, heritage, language, culture, and (at times) a religion. However, none of them (except of the Republic of Ireland) have their own sovereignty. Rather, they are subject to one government, Parliament, which serves as the national authority over all the lands but also protects their sovereignty by way of a standing military force that can guard against any external threats. England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland all have distinct borders encompassing a nation of people. Each *country* has a system of government that governs its people. Yet, each country lacks sovereignty because of their ultimate subservience to the government of the United Kingdom. To complicate matters, all four countries are loyal subjects of King Charles the royal monarch! While the king holds little, if any, actual power over the people, she is technically the head of state for the United Kingdom. Dating back to the Magna Carta of 1215, which limited the power of the British monarch, power has been shared with Parliament. According to their Constitution, the king serves as the head of state while the Prime Minister is the head of government. Within the North American continent, the concepts of sovereignty and nation are also very interesting when it comes to studying Native Americans, especially when one considers their possession of land prior to the arrival of the Colonists.

State and Non-state Actors

As we have seen, political science refers to the study of human behavior within political and governmental institutions. Such studies draw upon an important distinction that must be made between those actors that work directly *for* the state and those who are *affected by* state actions. You are likely familiar with the term "politician," but do you know how to identify one? Do you know how to distinguish a politician from a bureaucrat or even a public official? These terms tend to be used in ways that unintentionally create confusion. For instance, a **politician** is often considered synonymous with someone who is actively seeking to get elected or has already been elected to a legislative or executive office. However, a politician may also be someone that was politically appointed to a position of leadership, as is the case

with a department or cabinet secretary. These types of individuals are almost always chosen for such positions because of their affiliation with a political party. A **bureaucrat,** on the other hand, is neither elected nor appointed to their position in government. Rather, they are hired to support elected officials or are tasked with implementing laws, regulations, and policies--whether than means serving as a legislative aide that assists representatives and senators or working in the county clerk's office. In short, anyone who works for the government, at any level, is considered a bureaucrat. While politicians and bureaucrats are considered *public officials* because their jobs are exclusively related to the public sector, the latter are neither voted out of office nor required to leave government after an election cycle.

If state actors are essentially anyone who works on behalf of the state, then non-state actors are by default anyone who does not work for the state. While these actors work primarily in what is often called the private sector, there is an overwhelming amount of interaction they have with state actors. Almost every private entity is required to submit an annual financial report to the government. They must also pay taxes to the federal government for individuals whom they employ. Depending on the industry, they will be regularly inspected by government agencies or departments, and fines could be imposed if they do not comply with certain regulations or laws. Conversely, organizations in the private sector can exert a considerable amount of influence on the public sector. They can influence elections or even promote new legislation (or modifications to existing laws). The rise of globalization and the increased interaction of people around the world has led to **multinational corporations** that own or control production of goods or services in at least one country other than their home country. Go anywhere in the world, and you are likely to find a McDonald's, Starbucks, or Apple store. Microsoft, Coca-Cola, Disney, and dozens more companies have offices outside the United States, even though they started here. Additionally, in recent decades, the number of **non-governmental organizations** (**NGOs**) that operate independently of any government and typically address a specific political or social issue have been growing exponentially around the world.. The International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC), Doctors without Borders, and Amnesty International are all organizations that provide support to people across the globe, yet they have no formal connection to a state. Instead, they try to supplement governmental services or even supplant them when states do not have adequate resources. Arguably the greatest non-state actors are **intergovernmental organizations** (**IGOs**), which are actually organizations intended to promote and facilitate relations among multiple states. An IGO is an entity created by treaty involving two or more nations that work with one another in good faith on issues of common interest. In the absence of a treaty, an IGO does not exist in the legal sense. The United Nations, European Union, NATO, and the World Bank are all IGOs because their primary purpose is to address important issues that affect a multitude of states. Until the 20th century, there has never been a concerted effort to establish international laws that govern the whole world. Although IGOs are structurally incapable of doing this, they can at least provide mutual agreements among states to protect themselves and respect the sovereignty of other states while also establishing collaborative relationships to benefit all parties. These non-state actors have proven to be just as important and influential as states in today's world.

Conclusion

If political science is to be considered a field of study, then power should be regarded as the focal point of much political science research. By studying how power is acquired, exercised, and distributed within a political context, one can learn the ins and outs of any political institution or system. However, the primary holder of power, both internally and externally, is the state. States are territorial boundaries, inhabited by people, who submit to a system of government that ensures its sovereignty and independence from other states. State actors work within political institutions to govern their citizens and guard the

land and people from external threats. The rise of globalization has resulted in more and more non-state actors who seek to influence state actors in myriad ways. Therefore, when observing power in action, researchers must focus their time and attention on both state and non-state actors. Finally, governments come in many shapes and sizes. While governments may look similar on the surface, the way in which power is distributed within each one provides us with a key to understanding how they operate.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

What are some examples of power that state actors have, as well as non-state actors?

Is the United States really made up of "one" nation? How might this be true/false?

Which types of non-state actors are more influential: multinational corporations, NGOs, or IGOs?

Have you ever considered being a politician or a bureaucrat? What are some examples of people that work for the government that you come into contact with on a regular basis?

Are federal judges and justices considered politicians or bureaucrats?

Endnotes

1 Weber, Max (1978/1922). Economy and Society, edited by Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich. Berkeley: University of California Press.

2 French, J. R. P., Jr., & Raven, B. (1959). The bases of social power. In D. Cartwright (Ed.), Studies in social power (pp. 150–167). Univer. Michigan.

Chapter 4

CLASSICAL POLITICAL THEORY

CLASSICAL POLITICAL THEORY

I have a confession to make. I am not a fan of classical music. I have heard of Mozart and Beethoven, of course, and I might even be able to identify some of their works, but I have no interest in listening to any of them. However, as someone who enjoys listening to classic rock, I realize that music has evolved over time, and without the works of Mozart and Beethoven, we would not have the music we like to listen to today. I have another confession to make. In all the years I have studied political science, my least favorite part has been learning about classical political theory. I can recount dozens of times when I tried to skim through historical writings, or just skipped them altogether. The fact is, reading about ancient philosophers is not that exciting for most people, unless perhaps they are majoring in Classics. Yet, I am a firm believer that we must know where we have been to understand where we are now and where we want to go in the future. So, it is important to look at the ideas and beliefs of people in the past and observe how they have shaped the views we have today.

Given that the terms discussed in the previous chapter are essential for understanding the many facets of political science as a field of study, it is also of the utmost importance to learn the origins and evolution of each term. In other words, if people are an important part of the state, and the state is represented by a government, and the government enforces laws throughout a land, then we must unpack the history of these concepts to better comprehend what we are observing and why it is worth studying. This chapter will focus on the prominent thinkers throughout the ancient world that make up what is commonly referred to as the classical period of political thought. Some of these names might be familiar to you, but we cannot look at the individuals without considering the epochs in which they wrote. Indeed, we should note that these ancient political philosophers were products of their time. That is, they did not have any supernatural gifts that enabled them to see into the future or even look beyond their immediate surroundings. What each one could do, however, was critically examine what the Greeks referred to as the polis (or the political community) in light of what, in his view, it *ought to be*.

We will begin by discussing select philosophical and historical texts from antiquity that focus on the nature of the state, its relation to society, and the task and purpose of government. These perspectives shine a light on societal norms and practices that guided political behavior. The primary purpose of this chapter is to lay a theoretical foundation for the overall purpose of the state before delving into an examination of its evolution in chapter 5.We are not providing you with an exhaustive historical overview of every ancient political philosopher or a summary of the origins of the state. Rather, our aim is to introduce you to the men who established ways of thinking or challenged the status quo of their time. These philosophers carried out such projects by analyzing existing political conditions in light of what, in their view, *those conditions ought to be*. In other words, these individuals were not merely chronicling the origins of the state and describing its many functions; rather, they were trying to answer important questions about how a society can guard against the natural tendencies of rulers to pursue their self-interest or seek personal gain. For much of our study of political theory, we will wrestle with these notions in the belief that doing so cuts to the heart of the purpose and function of the state: how to maintain order in the midst of chaos while also respecting the rights of the people.

What is Political Theory?

Before diving into the history of political thought, the concept must first be explained. As seen in chapter 2, political science deals a lot with theory, from both a scientific standpoint and a philosophical standpoint. While philosophy is concerned with the nature of human knowledge (Epistemology) and the existence of reality (Ontology), *political* philosophy seeks to understand the reason and purpose of government. Such an intellectual pursuit will inevitably encounter

concepts like justice, liberty, and equality. After all, our Western view is that government is supposed to ensure justice while promoting liberty and equality among the citizens of a state. These beliefs are foundational to our constitutional republic. Yet, where did these ideals come from? While some people will posit that such ideals reflect innate values found within every human being, even that thought or belief had to originate from somewhere. Someone had to think about them and present a case for why they matter and who should be responsible for protecting them. Answering these questions has been the primary task that political theory has set for itself. In short, before we can test a theory, we must have one. Consider the following questions:

- *What is the meaning of life?*
- *How can one find happiness?*
- *Who determines what is fair?*
- *What is the best form of government?*

Ask ten people these four questions, and you are likely to get forty different answers. This is because we have what we think are answers, but there is no way to definitively establish the truth of any of them. Some will assert that the meaning of life is to accumulate material possessions, and happiness is found when you acquire things that you want. Others will argue that this life is a precursor to another life, and happiness consists in doing the things that will enhance your status in the next life. Both notions are essentially philosophical theories because they cannot be scientifically proven. That does not mean the theories are bad or wrong; rather, they serve as guides that influence human behavior. In a similar vein, though determining notions of fairness or what constitutes the "best" form of government require observation and analysis, these intellectual pursuits are ultimately based upon *value judgements. For instance, on the floor of the House of Commons on November 11, 1947, Winston Churchill quipped, "Democracy is the worst form of government, except for all the others."* [1]*This remark opens a window into the world of political theory insofar as Churchill's statement (itself a quote from an unnamed source) expresses a theory that one form of government, no matter how imperfect, is still better than others. We will spend time evaluating the types of governments that promote certain principles, as compared to those that seek to undermine them, during the Comparative Government section of this textbook. Additionally, we will examine whether certain branches of government fulfill their duties and responsibilities better than others.*

It is also worth noting at this point what political theory is not. When someone predicts a political party is likely to win a majority of seats in an upcoming election or that war is likely to break out between two neighboring countries, they are not presenting you with a political theory. Instead, they are offering an estimation, educated guess, or just a "hunch." A theory comes about when a set of ideas is constructed in such a way that it explains what and/or why something occurs. For instance, a theorist might utilize a *thermostatic model* to explain why a political party's decisions in a certain policy area are likely to cause that party to lose its majority status in an upcoming election. Similarly, just war theory postulates that is it justifiable to declare war on a country that has committed moral or ethical atrocities. Again, theories (and philosophies) are derived not merely from observations but from underlying assumptions about the social world and the life that operates within it.

"The Big Three"

Most foundational overviews of political theory and philosophy center on three ancient Greek scholars: Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. These men are generally considered the founding fathers of political thought. (Aristotle was a student of Plato, who in turn was a student of Socrates.) Prior to the rise of Athenian Democracy in the 5th century BCE, much of Greek thought focused on the mythological figures governing the universe. The Greek gods of Zeus, Hera, Poseidon, Aphrodite, and Apollos

were deemed responsible for everything occurring in the world. All natural events were the result of decisions made by one or more of the gods. This worldview began to change during the period of the Ionians around 6th century BCE, as many began to reject the supernatural explanations for the world in favor of those discovered through human logic and reasoning (The emergence of new ways of seeing and understanding the world created great tension, a dynamic that was captured in what are known today as Homer's two most famous epic poems, *The Iliad and The Odyssey.)* Instead of attributing the causes of things to the power of mythical beings, the Ionian or so-called Presocratic philosophers attempted to explain phenomena by studying matter or physical forces.

Becoming vs. Being

The intellectual pursuits of the Ionians may be divided into two camps. The first concentrated on theories of becoming, also known as impermanence. This theory suggests that the only constant in this world is change (i.e., nothing is permanent). Similarly, theories of being assert that everything in existence is in a state of being. In other words, if it does not exist, it is not worth thinking about. Theories of being and becoming are both considered ontologies. [2]We should note here that Ontology studies the nature of reality, whereas Epistemology concerns theories of knowledge about reality--i.e., how do we know what we know.) As we will see, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle all exerted a tremendous influence on what came to be known as ontology and epistemology, two branches of philosophy that laid the groundwork for humans to evaluate aspects of society.

As ancient Greece became a global world power, the city of Athens evolved into an international city where ideas and beliefs were regularly challenged. An important philosophical counterweight to the Ionians came in the form of the Sophists, whose intellectual pursuits centered on the individual. Indeed, the Sophists may be thought of as the founders of the modern social sciences, in that they directed their studies away from the nature of the universe and toward humanity, a shift in focus that led to a greater understanding of society and how best to live amongst various groups of people. (Moreover, the Sophists popularized the study of rhetoric that is integral to many subjects within what today are known as the liberal arts.). [3] While it is unfair to claim that the Sophists made man the center of the universe, they should be credited for training their sights on matters that could be observed and explained. What the Sophists demonstrated to many was that it was easier and more immediately beneficial to promote one's self-interest than debate the meaning of justice or truth. In short, universal matters were unworthy topics because they often could not be debated with sufficient clarity. As persuasive as their arguments were, however, the Sophists' teachings did not sit well with some of their contemporaries.

Socrates. Arguably the most influential thinker of Ancient Greece was Socrates. I state this because without Socrates we would likely not have Plato or Aristotle. Both men were heavily influenced by the teachings of Socrates. Unlike his students, though, Socrates never wrote down his theories or published any seminal writings. Rather, what we know about him comes primarily through Plato. Upon completing his service in the military, Socrates took up teaching, which enabled him to engage regularly in rigorous debates with his fellow Athenians. In fact, much of our educational structure and methods can be attributed to him. Socrates agreed with the Sophists regarding the importance of studying humanity; however, he asserted that such studies could not be divorced from analyzing the society in which individuals lived. Hence, a holistic study of humanity must include an investigation into a series of commonly unexamined

assumptions. The Socratic method reminds me somewhat of interacting with children at a young age. When a child observes an adult doing something, he or she will instinctively ask what the adult is doing. However, upon receiving an explanation of the adult's actions, the child will then immediately respond, "Why?" The answer the adult gives in turn prompts the child to ask again, "why?" If you have ever had this kind of interaction with a child, you likely tried to end the conversation with either, "Because that's the way it is." or "I don't know." The first response, according to Socrates, reflects a mindset that falls short of truly understanding not only humanity but also why people behaves as they do. The second response, however, gets you to where Socrates wants you to be. Only by coming to grips with our lack of knowedge and understanding can we pursue truth. For Socrates, wisdom consists above all in knowing what you do not know.

Regarding the social norms of his times, Socrates challenged the prevailing assumptions of the Sophists in many ways--for instance, by critiquing their notion of happiness. If pleasure and happiness came in material forms like enjoying wealth, honor, and power, it was acceptable to pursue them even at the expense of another person's wealth, honor, or power. After all, self-interest was the guiding force for human behavior. What, then, is to keep someone who, in the pursuit of happiness, takes another person's wealth, or destroys their honor, or usurps their power? Are such actions fair or just? What is more, who has the power to makethese determinations? These are the types of questions that Socrates injected into public discourse, as well as into the minds of his students. According to Socrates, the pursuit of material fame and possessions only breeds discontent over one's lot in life and engenders feelings of animosity towards those who have more prestige and riches. Societies could not be sustained, much less thrive, if the pursuit of self-interest was to be left unchecked. Instead, he asserted that the "good life" consisted of *cultivating the human soul*. This method of living focused on living according to a set of ethical principles that are discernible through human reason. [4]To acknowledge and respect the rights of those around you was more fulfilling and worthwhile than to continuously seek material gain. Ironically, Socrates argued that if everyone could live this way, there would be no need for laws or even the state. Getting involved in the affairs of the state, he claimed, would corrupt an individual for a number of reasons. First, political office carried with it power, status, and possibly wealth. These were the very attributes he believed led to problems within a society. Second, to pursue public office would also require compromising or sacrificing the moral principles that are products of human reason. So, if one were to engage in politics, they would have to deny their moral values and pursue things that promoted self-interest. In sum, Socrates called for the pursuit of wisdom, not personal gain. It would then fall to his student, Plato, to imagine a political order that would stave off corrupting influences for as long as possible.

Athenian Democracy

Although in later chapters we will undergo a comparative study on different systems of government, it is important here briefly discuss the political context surrounding the writings of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. Each man, in his own way, was influenced by the established political norms of their city-state. Generally speaking, under the rules governing Athenian democracy, every man aged 20 or older was entitled to certain political rights, as well as the opportunity to directly engage in the affairs of the state.

[5] This revolutionary system of government was created by Cleisthenes, an Athenian statesman. This form of government was built on the premise that man could govern himself without the need for a supreme leader. Instead, the people were ruled by a government with three main parts: the Assembly, the Council, and the Courts. The Assembly consisted of all citizens meeting the criteria mentioned above, while the Council of 500 included only those who worked for the Athenian government. The Council *(Boule)* was a 500-member governing body whose most important task was to draft proposals that would then be submitted to all citizens in the assembly (Ekklesia), where they would debate the resolution and then vote on it, in a large amphitheater. The Boule is thus similar to a congressional committee that drafts resolutions for the entire House or Senate to vote on. However, that similarity only goes so far, because it was the entire Greek citizenry, rather than a body of elected representatives, who would vote directly on this or that bill in the Ekklesia. Another key difference between Greek "Direct Democracy and modern forms of representative democracy lies in the fact that the members of the Boule or governing council were neither elected by the citizens nor appointed by party leaders. Instead, they were selected through a process called Sortition, which functioned like a lottery. Members of the Boule were thus selected in a manner that is comparable to how, in the US today, respondents to public opinion surveys are chosen, or to how initial jury pools are created.

In Ancient Greece then, every male citizen 20 or over was eventually chosen by lot (or randomly) to serve once or twice on the Governing Council, though never for consecutive years. This rotation system and random selection process were created in an attempt to prevent the kind of corruption that is associated with having entrenched office holders remain in power year after year. As discussed below, however, Socrates argued that the attempt failed. Finally, the Courts were made up of a jury of peers that came from the Assembly and were tasked with hearing cases involving two parties. For the Greeks, the word, Democracy, is formed by conjoining the Greek noun, **Demos,** or people, and the verb, **Kratein,** or to rule, which gives us, *rule by the people,* or **Demokratia.**

As appealing as this system appeared to observers, one must take into consideration the extent to which the pursuit of self-interest contributed to its downfall, as pointed out by Socrates. This fatal flaw, he argued, hindered the effectiveness of government because those in power used their influence to manipulate the Assembly into voting for their priorities. So, what looked like direct democracy at its finest often amounted to nothing more than powerful elites scheming the system to satisfy themselves. The teachings of Socrates inevitably came into direct conflict with the political institutions of his time, particularly the common practices within Athenian democracy. Although Athenian Democracy was designed to ensure fairness, equity, and justice, Socrates criticized the endless, self-interested pursuit of wealth and status among those who entered the political establishment and pointed to the need for the cultivation of wisdom through reason. This criticism would eventually cost him his life, as Socrates was tried for impiety and sentenced to death. Both Plato and another student, Xenophon, recorded the trial and death of their teacher; however, it was Plato who continued the fight against corruption in the Athenian government.

Plato. As controversial as Socrates's teachings on the ultimate pursuit of wisdom over self-interest were, his most intimate student, Plato, took it a step further. In an early major writing, The Republic, Plato argued that ultimate happiness and contentment could only be achieved when justice is pursued over self-interest. In other words, the wisdom advocated by Socrates had to lead to something tangible within society. Only by living a just life could one cultivate the human soul, as described by his teacher. The premise of *The Republic* focuses on an imaginary discussion over the nature of justice featuring Socrates and three sophists (Polymarchus, his father Cephalus, and Thrasymachus). Thrasymachus asserted that justice was defined as promoting whatever was in the best interest of the stronger party. However, by posing a series of questions, Socrates forced Thrasymachus to concede that even the powerful make mistakes and often do things that do not serve their own interests; therefore, if individuals are supposed to benefit from acting justly, establishing justice must require a higher principle than "might makes right." Moreover, in a later portion of his writing, Plato chronicles a discussion between Socrates and another man named Glaucon over the need for some to rule over the many. In what is called *The Allegory of the Cave*, Socrates describes a scenario where a group of people have since early childhood been shackled in an underground cave, bound by their necks and legs and facing a wall, so that they can only see what lies directly in front of them. Behind them is a fire that casts shadows on the wall as people and other living creatures walk by it. For the prisoners in chains, the images and shadows appearing on the wall constitute their only reality. However, one of the prisoners eventually breaks free, leaves the cave, and explores the world around him. He later returns to the cave and describes all he has seen to his friends, telling the cave dwellers that they are prisoners living in a world of illusion. Not surprisingly, the prisoners do not take kindly to hearing such words, treating them as the ravings of a dangerous madman whom they then kill. Through this allegory, Plato suggests that the philosopher who discovers the truth and attempts to share it with others may, like Socrates, be ostracized and persecuted because the people do not want to hear a new truth (since they have become settled in their ways and do not want change). To avoid such a fate and promote justice in the community, the philosopher must familiarize himself with the world of the cave dwellers and then translate his knowledge of the truth into a language simple enough for them to understand.

[6] We should note here that through this allegory, Plato does not suggest the prisoners, whom he likens to citizens, should be liberated from the cave and the world of illusion. Only a select few are capable of discovering the truth and then governing on the basis of that knowledge. In a just community, the philosophers rule, and those who cannot directly grasp the truth obey. In that way, as discussed further below, all members of the community are assigned their proper place in order to benefit the whole. Not surprisingly, some theorists have criticized Plato on this point, arguing that his hierarchical political order is fundamentally anti-democratic. However, as discussed above, it was precisely a democratic form of government that Plato singled out for criticism.

Such a vision of course strikes us today as "elitist." Indeed, through his seminal writing, Plato envisioned a new hierarchical political system that encompassed three separate categories of people: craftsmen, auxiliaries, and guardians, with each category being governed by a particular component of the tripartite human soul, which according to Plato was comprised of reason, will, and desire or "the appetites." Craftsmen, also referred to as workers, were ordinary citizens that engaged in the day-to-day matters of everyday life and were primarily driven to satisfy their natural appetites for material possessions. Auxiliaries, on the other hand, were motivated by a sense of commitment to protect the state and its people from outside aggression and were most suitable for military service on account of their spirited devotion to others. Finally, the guardians were the noble minds who considered the best interests of each class of people and sought to establish a just society. The guardians or philosophers comprised the only class of citizens who were gifted with the ability to use reason and logic in order to preserve the core beliefs and values of the state. For that reason, Plato referred to them as "philosopher-kings." [7]

According to Plato, every person was destined to belong to one of these categories because of the abilities they were given at birth. Therefore, each should seek to fulfill their life's purpose in that category by doing

their work to the best of their ability. Workers were to perform their trade as best they could, as this would increase the productivity of the state and lead to the prosperity of everyone. Similarly, those motivated by courage and compassion for others should seek to protect their people with zeal, especially in a chaotic world where nations constantly fought against each other. Lastly, guardians should rule the state because of their innate ability to choose the best courses of action for the polis. Being blessed with superior knowledge and intellect, they could as guides educate members of the state and increase their capacity to perform. While Plato cautioned that everyone must adhere to their particular calling, there were those rare occasions when the offspring of a guardian would prove to be a craftsmen or the child of a worker would be destined to become a guardian. However, such instances were rare. For the most part, Plato presented nothing short of a caste system, where people are grouped into specific categories due to natural traits and forced to stay within their respective system, regardless of their desire to become something different. For example, workers were not allowed to join the military for fear that their self-interest – which could manifest itself in a fear of death – could compromise others on the battlefield. Similarly, an auxiliary could not serve in a position of leadership for fear that their compassion for others would motivate them to act irrationally. Instead, members of a state should act according to their *nature*, as doing so constitutes the essence of a just life. Denying or acting contrary to nature would harm oneself and other members of the state
Instead, members of a state should act according

As can be seen by the diagram above, Plato's "ideal society" in The Republic can be classified as
to their nature, as doing so constitutes the essence of a just life. Denying or acting contrary to nature would harm oneself and other members of the state
an authoritarian and hierarchical state. Workers (consisting of the vast majority of citizens) were at the bottom, with auxiliaries above them, and guardians at the top. This type of society reflected the

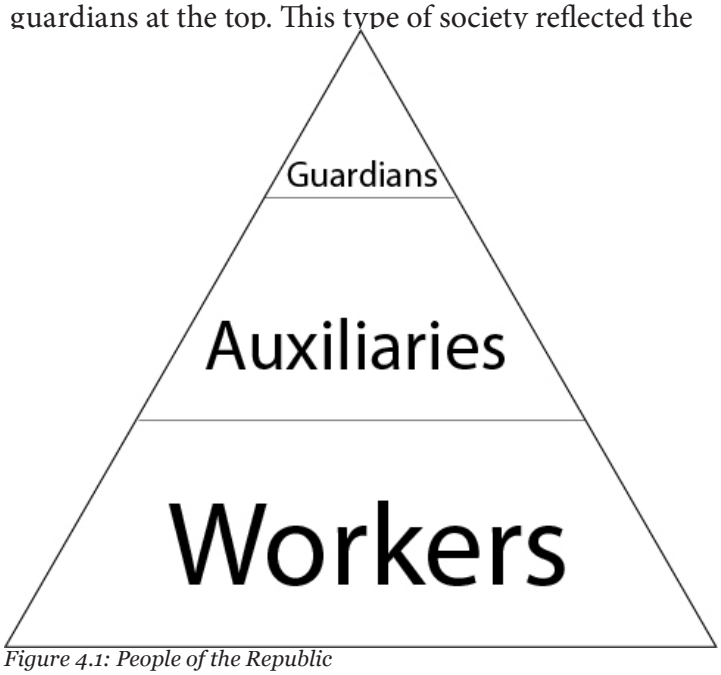

Figure 4.1: People of the Republic

aristocratic form of government in ancient Greece. An **aristocracy** places power in the hands of a few elites, like the guardians. While Plato preferred this system, he also acknowledged that all governments are fallible; though his ideal state and educational system are designed to stave off corruption for as long as possible, eventually the passions of the auxiliaries will inevitably override the rationalism of the guardians. This will lead to what he calls a **timocracy**, where society begins to value the courage and honor of men over the higher value of justice. Over time, the warrior elites will begin to desire the tangible benefits of economic prosperity and seek to satisfy their self-interested appetites and establish an **oligarchy**, where the leaders of the state focus primarily on promoting their own interests rather than those of the entire polis. When this occurs, the people will rise up against those in power and create a democracy,

where power lies in the hands of the people. However, the focus will then be placed on egoism, as individuals shortsightedly prioritize personal liberty and prosperity above all else. This chaotic environment will give rise to a tyrant who seeks to impose his will on the state and use his power for personal gain. [8]In short, the caste system will eventually be turned upside down in favor of individual self-interest for those in power, and such a transition would lead to the downfall of a state.

Thucydides

Another important character during the time of the Ancient Greeks was a military general and historian named Thucydides. Though not a philosopher, Thucydides was a contemporary of Socrates and Plato, and he provided keen insights into politics through his chronicling of the Peloponnesian War between Athens and Sparta. In the years leading up to the war, Athens was known for its superior naval power, while Sparta boasted a strong land force. What is more, Athenian democracy and its decentralized leadership structure were viewed as the way of the future, as compared to the traditional, militaristic Spartan regime. Thucydides documented this ancient clash of titans, focusing not just on the various military campaigns but also the means by which Athens was destroyed by Sparta. In *History of the Peloponnesian War*, Thucydides attests to the fact that "it was the rise of Athens and the fear that this instilled in Sparta that made war inevitable." [9] While the actual events of the war are not necessarily pertinent to the topic of political theory, his explanation for the war illuminates the universal view of the state during the classical epoch. In short, the war was a struggle for power in an anarchic international order, where Sparta feared the growth of Athenian power. It also points to an ideological conception of "international relations," known as realism, in which the world order is perceived as anarchic (the absence of a supreme authority); therefore, the state must ensure its own preservation through pursuing its self-interests. For instance, the leaders of Sparta feared that the growth of Athenian power in the region would destabilize their state; hence, the only way to prevent this from happening was to wage a preemptive war against Athens. [10]As absurd as this reasoning might appear, states have repeatedly encountered what is known today as Thucydides's trap. For more information on historical examples, see the Belfer Center's Case File at Harvard University. [11]

Aristotle. The final Greek scholar to be discussed was Plato's most gifted pupil who went on to establish an academy, known as the Lyceum, that greatly expanded the fields of study during the 4th century BCE. Aristotle also happens to be one of the most influential writers on the topic of government, as compared to his predecessors. Although Aristotle held views similar to Plato's on human nature and the need to integrate ethics into the realm of politics, he differed with his mentor on how society should be structured. For example, Aristotle posited a theory regarding the different spheres of public life (what he refers to as communities) that influence the "political animal."[12]The first is the family unit, which is man's most intimate sphere of influence. Next is the village, comprised of different families who live within an immediate area. Last, the collection of families and villages coalesce into what he calls the polis, or state. Figure 4.2 provides a visual of how these various communities relate to each other.

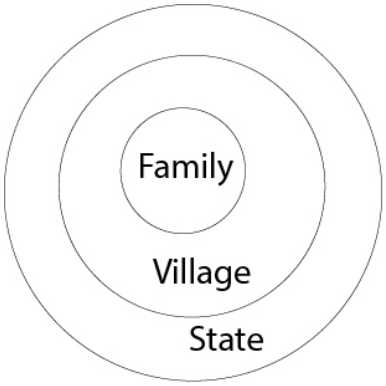

Figure 4.2: Levels of Human Community

Aristotle points to the process of procreation (creating another human being) as a natural process within the family. When two people come together and create another human, they are expanding their oikos (family). However, the family is not self-sufficient and must rely on other people within the village in order to provide for their daily needs, which means that we see in this particular kind of community exchanges of goods and services and in general a higher degree of social interaction. Furthermore, because the village is not self-sufficient and prone to attacks from outside forces, there arises a need for a state to provide them with the protection needed to sustain their way of life. The conglomeration of these families and villages into the state, and the state's ability to protect and secure them, is what leads to conditions that promote the "good life." [13]The logic presented by Aristotle points to the need for a holistic approach to society that both protects its citizens and provides for the common welfare. This leads to an analysis of the different forms of government, which includes identifying which system is the most effective at serving the interests of all people and not just of those in power.

In his Politics, Aristotle asserts that the most important attribute of any state is its ability to consider the interests of all citizens, which requires the leaders to govern in such a way that they place equal importance and value on the needs of both rulers and ruled. This position was likely influenced by Plato's account of how states become corrupt when rulers no longer value wisdom and allow themselves to be governed by their own passions or appetites. In other words, a wise and noble leader, according to Aristotle, is one who guards against pursuing merely his own self-interests. [14]Furthermore, unlike the prevailing view of the day that "might makes right" or that certain individuals possess a natural ability to govern the people, Aristotle held that individuals needed to prove their ability to rule by engaging in public debates. Through this process, individuals could promote their rhetorical skills before citizens who would then gain confidence in the politician's ability to lead. These public debates would also increase levels of accountability among leaders and bring out the best in humanity.

When it came to evaluating different types of government, Aristotle believed that the form was not as important as its function. Rather than focus on how many people were in control, he posited that the means by which they made decisions carried far more weight. For example, Aristotle argued that a monarchy, aristocracy, or politeia (polity) were preferred forms of government because the leaders could consider the interests of all its citizens when making decisions for the state. However, when a monarch began to think inwardly of his own interests and rule in such a way that he satisfied his own appetites above all else, he became a tyrant. Similarly, when aristocrats did the same thing, they regressed into an oligarchy. Finally, if a **polity**, which is considered the rule of many in the interests of all, *only ruled in favor of the majority,* it became a democracy. The latter three forms of government, Aristotle believed, were corrupt because the leaders focused only on satisfying their own wants and desires. Table 4.1 summarizes these forms of government according to their leadership structures and ruling interests.

Table 4.1: Aristotle's Categories of Political Governments

	Considers Interests of All	Considers Interests of Self
Single leader	Monarchy	Tyrant
Few leaders	Aristocracy	Oligarchy
Many leaders	Polity	Democracy

Aristotle offers us a glimpse of two important aspects of political science. First and foremost, what is the primary function of government? Although this question will be examined in more detail in the next chapter, Aristotle's notion of citizens' interests forms a vital part of the equation. If a state only seeks to serve its own interests, then it is acting unjustly and undermining its very existence. Second, how to determine the best form of government is another crucial question that philosophers and social scientists have been asking for centuries. As we continue our study of prominent political theories and ideologies, these questions will resurface, along with others concerning the form and function of teh state.

Conclusion

Political theory has been an arduous field of study for many people. It requires an open mind and a willingness to ask questions for which there are no universal answers. These questions can challenge many assumptions that we make about humankind, the nature of reality, and truth. However, without wrestling with these normative questions, we are not in a position to understand justice, equality, or even what should be regarded as "right." Engaging in these challenging discussions promotes critical thinking and cognitive growth, core tenets of the liberal arts and higher education, in general. Several ancient Greek philosophers began the process of seeking wisdom and knowledge through engaging in public debate. Socrates formulated several notions of how citizens are to behave in society, while Plato extended his work deeper into the political realm. Building upon but also departing from Plato, Aristotle charted a course for examining societal values in relation to governmental systems and how to best govern the people in a state. These fundamental questions echoed throughout history and led to the rise and fall of empires. To better understand the impact of the ancient philosophers' lives and works, we must now look at the men who influenced modern political thought, particularly in the Western world. That is the subject of our next chapter.

Discussion Questions

How do we deal with those who disagree with our understandings of what is ethical?

Is it best to uphold no single morality as the absolute truth?

Should each person decide morality for him/herself?

If so, are all opinions to be tolerated?

If we live moral lives, does our morality require us to speak out against immoral actions wherever we see them?

Should individuals be equal in every way?

Should laws pursue equality so diligently that they provide for equality of capabilities rather than equality of opportunities?

Can equality become a basis for oppression?

Endnotes

1 WChurchill by Himself: The Definitive Collection of Quotations: 9781586486389: Winston Churchill, Richard Langworth: Books.

2 Brian R. Nelson, Western Political Thought: From Socrates to the Age of Ideology (New York: Prentice Hall, 1996), 6.

3 Herbert EWrnest Cushman, A Beginner's History of Philosophy (Orlando, FL: Houghton Mifflin, 1910), 65–69; A. H. Armstrong, An Introduction to Ancient Philosophy (Boston: Bea con Press, 1959); Robert S. Brumbaugh, The Philosophers of Greece (Library of Congress, 1964).

4 Nelson, p. 10.

5 The city-state of Athens, the so-called birthplace of Democracy, covered only 700 square miles, about half the size of Rhode Island, and had a total population of about 150,000, which is a bit smaller than Knoxville's. Moreover, only 15 % of that estimated total population consisted of adult male citizens who could participate in politics. Excluded from political affairs were women, foreign nationals, and slaves.

6 Plato's Republic, Book VII (514a–517c) in G. M. A. Grube's translation of Plato's Republic.

7 Plato's Republic, Book II (558d–559c, 373d–e, 370a–b, 374a–c, 394e, 423c–d, 433a, 443b, 453b) found in Grube's translation of Plato's Republic.

8 Plato's Republic, Book VIII (547e–548c,555b–557c, 563–564a,558a) in WG. M. A. Grube's translation of Plato's Republic.

9 Finley, M. I. (editor); History of the Peloponnesian War. Translated [from the Greek] by Rex Warner; Penguin (1972)

10 Ahrensdorf, Peter J.; "Thucydides' Realist Critique of Realism"; Polity; Volume 2, Number 2; (Winter, 1997); pp. 231-265

11 The Belfer Center Case Files can be viewed at https://www.belfercenter.org/thucydides-trap/case-file

12 Aristotle's Politics: Chapter I (1253a–718) in C. D. C. translation of Aristotle's Politics..

13 Aristotle's Politics: Chapter I (1252a24-1253a38) in T. A. Sinclair's translation of Aristotle's Politics (New York Penguin Books, 1992).

14 The use of the pronoun, his, is intentional here. Unlike Plato, who wrote that women could Wbecome Guardians, Aristotle maintained that women were inherently inferior to men.

Chapter 5

MODERN POLITICAL THEORY

MODERN POLITICAL THEORY

In the last chapter, we explored the foundations of political theory through the writings of the ancient Greeks. These important figures provided a wealth of insight into our understanding of human societies and the different ways in which a political order can be established and maintained. Additionally, they created codes of conduct for living justly and treating others with respect. The only problem with their musings, according to many writers who came after them, was that their theories did not match reality. Much of the known world did not operate according to the philosophies of the Greeks, though the latter still proved instructive, in the sense that the empires that came after them often resembled the corrupt forms of government described by Plato and Aristotle.

Though it does not present an exhaustive historical account of every influential philosopher on matters of politics and government, this chapter surveys the writings of prominent theorists during the last two millennia, particularly those who helped shape Western political thought during both the Renaissance and Enlightenment. Much of what is addressed in Chapter 6 regarding political ideologies can also be attributed to these political theorists' different conceptions of the proper the role of the state. Hence, it is important to understand some major historical events that influenced how citizens should view particular forms of governmental authority and the legitimate exercise of political power. We will begin with a brief summary of key events in world history that followed the decline and fall of ancient Greece.

Christian Influences on the State

Almost everyone reading this will be familiar with the phrase, "Separation of Church and State," since it is commonly used in our country. In fact, that might have been the first thing that came to your mind when you read the section heading! However, the reality is that religion has had a tremendous impact on politics and government throughout human history, especially over the last 2,000 years. For example, what year is it right now? At this time of this writing, it is 2022. Here's my next question: 2,022 years since what? Certainly not since the creation of the earth, which is far older than that. In the West, we mark our calendars by the birth of Jesus Christ, the central figure of the Christian faith. Many of you already know this because you likely grew up in households that were accustomed to the beliefs and practices of Christianity. An important reason this religion has persisted throughout history is the influence it exerted on the state, as many kingdoms, empires, and sovereign states adopted the teachings and practices of Christianity as law. Regardless of who oversaw the state in such instances, they still acknowledged a higher authority to which they submitted.

If we look back to the philosophers of ancient Greece, we discover that it was Aristotle's student, Alexander, who created what is known today as the Greek Empire. Alexander the Great defeated the Medo-Persian Empire and established the Macedonian Empire, which enveloped much of the Northern Mediterranean, as well as parts of North Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia. However, it was soon conquered by the Roman Empire in 146 BCE.1 During the time of the Roman occupation of the region known as the Promised Land of the Jews, Jesus of Nazareth lived, and most scholars identify [3] CE(AD) as the year of this death. This is important to note because Jesus and his followers were hunted and killed by not only Jewish leaders but also the Roman government. Historians assert that the Roman Emperor, Nero, intentionally burned the city of Rome and blamed it on the followers of Jesus, known as Christians. It was also recorded that he had Christians impaled with stakes and set their corpses on fire to light the streets of Rome.[2] For roughly the first three-hundred years of its existence, Christianity was considered an enemy of the state because it promoted a higher authority than the Caesar (emperor).

Most historians point to the rise of Constantine the Great as the definitive moment when Christianity

became an integral component of the state. Prior to the Battle of Milvian Bridge in 312 CE, Constantine, emperor of the Western portion of the Roman Empire, received a vision from the Christian God that promised victory over his adversary, Maxentius. Upon winning the battle, Constantine issued the Edict of Milan the following year, which granted Christianity legal status within the Roman empire. Constantine took another important step in legitimizing Christianity in 325 CE by calling the Council of Nicaea, which formalized the orthodox beliefs of the Christian faith. Finally, in 380 CE, the Roman emperor, Theodosius, issued the Edict of Thessalonica, establishing Christianity as the official religion of Rome.[3] These seminal moments in history paved the way for the doctrines of Christianity to enable religious leaders in the Christian Church, particularly the Roman Catholic Church, to serve as leaders of the state. For much of the first millennia, the Catholic Church worked in concert with particular rulers to establish governance over specific lands and people. The ruler was essentially ordained by the Church as an instrument of God, so long as he or she adhered to the tenets of the faith. In return, the ruler would enrich the Church and consult its leaders regarding important matters of the state. However, this marriage of convenience, and sometimes necessity, hindered the legitimacy of both institutions in the eyes of the people. For example, the Protestant Reformation - led by Martin Luther in Germany, John Calvin in France, and Huldrych Zwingli in Switzerland – sought to reform the official teachings of the Church, which had not only amassed great wealth and power but also become corrupt--for instance, through the selling of indulgences. Although the Protestant reformers like Luther and Calvin did not believe in a separation between church and state, they renounced certain heretical teachings of the Catholic Church and argued that institutionalized religion should be more concerned with promoting the spiritual health of the people than directing matters of the state.[4]

The Renaissance

Despite the profound influence Christianity exerted over Western civilization during the first two millennia of the Common Era, some states operated outside the control of the Catholic Church. In fact, a precursor to both the Protestant Reformation and the Enlightenment was the Renaissance. From roughly the late 14^{th} century until the 17^{th} century, much of Europe experienced a series of cultural, economic, and political transformations that dramatically affected everyday life. For instance, the dominant form of social organization prior to the Renaissance was known as **feudalism, a hierarchical agrarian system in** which elites (referred to as lords or nobles) used their wealth, power, and status to maintain order over serfs, who lived on and cultivated the land owned by the lords. These lands fell within territorial boundaries belonging to a king or ruler and, in many cases, the lords served as the military leaders for a king because they controlled the serfs and could force them into military service should the king feel threatened by another kingdom. However, the intellectual revolution of the Renaissance gave way to what we know today as the modern nation-state system, which, as discussed in Chapter 3, is made up of single governments that rule over unified peoples living in circumscribed territories. The defining moment that bred the nation-state system was the Treaty of Westphalia, which in 1648 ended the Thirty Years' War in Europe that had ravaged almost every major political and military power in the region, including the Catholic Church. Though there has recently been some scholarly debate over this issue, many historians trace the origins of the modern sovereign state system to the Peace at Westphalia. Indeed, the new territorial boundaries that were established after the Thirty Years' War, which were acknowledged by all the Western parties involved, created the foundation for much of the modern world we see today.

Niccolò Machiavelli's Writings on Power

The period of the Renaissance is pivotal to understanding the evolution of political theory because it created a resurgence in the humanistic philosophies of the ancient Greeks. The corruption of the Catholic Church caused people to return to the notion that humanity could pursue its own destiny and did not need a supernatural being to govern worldly affairs. Just as the Ionians challenged the wisdom of the Greek Gods, many philosophers challenged the doctrines of the Christian God. Niccolò Machiavelli lived during the early years of the Renaissance and wrote about politics and history during a period of tumult in his native land of Italy. The French King Charles VIII toppled the Medici family in 1494, only to have the land reclaimed by the Medici family in 1512. During Charles VIII's reign over Florence, Machiavelli was appointed a key leader in the Florentine democratic government. However, once the Medicis recaptured the region, they tortured and imprisoned Machiavelli on suspicion of being a French sympathizer and accomplice. In a subsequent attempt to reenter politics, Machiavelli tried to woo the de facto leader of Florence, Lorenzo de Medici, with a treatise he called, The Prince. In it, Machiavelli argued that it is imperative for a ruler to preserve the state by any means necessary, which included abandoning traditional conceptions of morality. Indeed, rulers must be willing to use the right amount of cruelty against their citizens to instill fear, but not so much fear that it leads to popular vengefulness. In short, rulers must, when they deem it necessary, use cruelty to make citizens fear politicians but not hate them. By being cruel, the state was actually being kind because this style of leadership would maintain peace and order while also providing protection and security.

In The Prince, Machiavelli argued that the political order was a distinct entity whose preservation required a leader to adhere to certain rules. For Machiavelli, a leader who failed to understand these rules and instead attempted to govern on the basis of traditional conceptions of morality would bring the state to ruin. Such a theory of course runs counter to Platonic views on justice and equality, as well as the teachings of the Christian faith. Machiavelli argued that when it came to preserving the state, notions of moral truth were hindrances to rational behavior. Instead, leaders needed to act according to what they thought would result in the acquisition and maintenance of power. When viewed in the light of politics, all other virtues were irrelevant.5

Since its publication, The Prince has given rise to the figure of the unscrupulous "Machiavellian" ruler whose only guiding principle is self-aggrandizement. Machiavelli's political thought is more complex than that, however. For instance, the Discourses on Livy, written at about the same time as The Prince, emphasizes the importance of combatting corruption, cultivating freedom, balancing different political interests, and providing for the common good. How is it possible to reconcile the two works? Some, like the famous conservative philosopher Leo Strauss, have argued that The Prince is in fact a work of satire, while others, such as the French existentialist, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, maintain it should be read as a work of humanism that redefines, rather than destroys, the relationship between politics and ethical principles. Nevertheless, rightly or wrongly, Machiavelli is best known today for having inspired the concept of the Machiavellian ruler, who is committed to ruthlessly upholding the principle that the ends justify the means.

Thomas Hobbes and Social Contract Theory

Towards the end of the Renaissance, and amid the Thirty Years' War, both scientists and political theorists revolutionized the ways in which the physical and social words were perceived and understood. For instance, Galileo's observations on the universe, particularly his teaching that the sun, rather than

the earth, is the center of the solar system, heavily influenced the empirical study of the physical world. However, his work ran counter to the teachings of the Catholic Church, which charged him with heresy during the Spanish Inquisition. Galileo's conception of scientific inquiry greatly influenced the work of Sir Francis Bacon, who asserted that societies are held together by myths, which hindered the intellectual growth and progress of humanity; therefore, in the name of furthering the idea of progress, we should seek to empirically observe and discover new ways of understanding the physical world. Considered the father of empiricism, Bacon's work extended the realm of science so that it encompassed not only the natural world but also the realm of human behavior.[6] These two men had a profound impact on Thomas Hobbes, the father of modern political science.

Hobbes is best known for the Leviathan, a work published in 1651 that identified power as the most important attribute of politics. To do this, he began with a nominalist critique of the Platonic conception of objective truth, arguing that no such thing exists. Rather, humans orient themselves around particular notions of truth that suit their self-interests. This perspective views individuals as concerned above all else with increasing their own power. As Hobbes puts it, "I put for a general inclination of all mankind a perpetual and restless desire of power after power that ceases only in death." Anything that thwarts this desire is considered "evil" while that which satisfied is deemed "good." Secondly, Hobbes calls into question Plato's view on man's ability to act justly. According to the caste system created by Plato, those who are by nature fit to become guardians undergo a rigorous form of education that enables them to apply logic and wisdom to the governance of society. However, if man is only capable of viewing the world through the prism of self-interest, then it will be impossible to have a state governed by selfless guardians who seek to promote justice for the common good. In short, humans' lust for power and only seek justice when they have been robbed of power.

The resolve these problems, which can lead to what Hobbes describes as a "war of all against all," individuals must enter into a contract with a sovereign leader, whereby they agree to surrender their freedom to do as they please and submit to a government that will establish and maintain order. In short, to prevent the chaos that would allegedly ensue from having every individual pursue their unchecked passions, a **social contract** must be created to clearly define the parameters within which people can pursue their self-interests without infringing on the self-interests of others. Hobbes's theory begins with the assumption that a society before a social contract is established reflects one of chaos and mutual distrust, what he calls a **state of nature.** Because of the uncertainty, lack of order, and terror found in a state of nature, where, according to Hobbes, life is "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short," people will voluntarily seek out an environment in which an established government will provide law and order. By entering into the social contract, individuals agree to forfeit their unbounded freedom in exchange for receiving the protection of a powerful governmental authority (which Hobbes refers to as the Sovereign). Hobbes suggests that government's ultimate objective is to establish and maintain order rather than to create the type of just society that Plato envisioned in the Republic. The form of government most conducive to maintaining order, he argued, was a monarchy because a government with too many people in positions of leadership would lead to competing interests and potentially create, rather than mitigate, chaos and disorder.

Although Hobbes made a convincing argument that governments need to be concerned with fighting crime and promoting safety, he was accused of steering political theory away from questions of justice and exclusively toward issues of law and order. It is clear that Hobbes rejected the lofty and utopian dream of establishing a just state, instead concentrating on the importance of creating a state that could deter violence and prevent the eruption of a "war of all against all." Yet, according to other political theorists, questions of justice and equality still loomed large.

John Locke and Natural Rights Theory

Another English philosopher and contemporary of Hobbes, John Locke, viewed natural law as the source of a set of mores and values created by God to govern humanity. These natural laws, which were discoverable through the use of logic and reason, endowed individuals with certain **natural rights** that were present regardless of whether a government could protect or preserve them. For example, Locke believed that all humans had the right to life; therefore, everyone had to respect everyone's right to life. By taking a life, someone violates another person's right to life. Unlike Hobbes, however, Locke did not believe that individuals were driven above all else by a "restless and perpetual desire" for power. Instead, Locke viewed human nature as naturally good, albeit corruptible if exposed to certain pernicious influences. Because of such tendencies, which can lead to what Locke described as the "inconveniences" associated with the state of nature, a social contract would be necessary to protect and preserve the natural rights of man.[7]

Locke is most known for writing *Two Treatises on Government*, which laid out his views on human nature and property rights. Locke held that individuals are born with a tabula rasa (blank slate), which assumes humanity does not have any inherent flaws or innate values. Now, many interpreters of Locke find a fundamental inconsistency in his work on this point; after all, if we are born with a blank slate, then how could we be endowed with an understanding of natural law? Regardless, Locke declared that the natural laws established by God could be discerned at least in party through reason and applied to everyday life. The fundamental natural right of individual freedom and liberty was granted to all persons. Moreover, according to his Second Treatise, Locke argued that every person is also granted property rights, as evidenced by their very bodies. With the body, a person can perform labor and earn other forms of property (i.e., acquire possessions). In fact, Locke believed that work was based on a natural law and represented something all human beings should perform. Those who did so earnestly would reap the benefits of their hard work while those who did not would reap the consequences of violating a natural law. Similarly, if people sought to violate the natural rights of another person, they would need to be punished for their actions. This is where a social contract becomes necessary. Though Locke argued that individuals acting within the boundaries of natural laws and respecting natural rights would lead to a peaceful and safe society, he also acknowledged the need for an entity to regulate the behavior of those who commit transgressions. This role belongs to a government, although its focus should be on ensuring the **natural rights** of all people, rather than simply maintaining order in the face of the perennial threat of chaos, as suggested by Hobbes.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau's Principle of Political Rights

While Locke to Hobbes's notion of the social contract pushed for a more democratic form of government, Jean-Jacques Rousseau took it to the logical extreme. Towards the second half of the 18th century, France entered a period of extreme tumult, with the masses concentrating their ire on the French monarchy. Rousseau opened his treatise, *The Social Contract,* with the statement that "Man is born free, yet we see him everywhere in chains." [8] Drawing upon but also critical of the work of Locke, Rousseau placed great value on individual freedom, along with a natural tendency towards compassion for others. However, when individuals are corrupted by the appetites of the flesh, they will seek to enslave others to maximize their possessions. In short, the haves will seek to oppress the have nots, and this will lead to drastic inequalities that undermine human freedom. Rousseau attacked his predecessors' views on the Enlightenment, arguing that their views sought only to empower the already enlightened and oppress the common people, which violated their natural rights. As a result, a society should seek to create a system that promotes the equality of all, as doing so will both minimize governmental oppression and greatly reduce suffering.

Rousseau coined two terms of vital importance to the tradition of political theory. The first is what he called civil religion, which he distinguished from an official or established religion that could potentially challenge the authority of the state. According to Rousseau, a civil religion, whose primary political purpose is to reinforce the authority of the government, connoted a genuine concern for the well-being of others and a desire to help those in need. This type of compassion was commonly found in many religious teachings, but Rousseau believed it to be an inherent attribute of humanity. When people did not express this attribute, it was likely because they had become corrupted by self-interest. Only through creating a social contract could the power of individuals who attempted to promote their own self-interest above that of the political community be countered. If everyone had a say in government, the **General Will** of the people would be established. This is the second term Rousseau used to express the purpose of government. The authority governing society should be tasked with reducing inequalities and providing for the common good of all citizens. For example, if the government promoted strong public education, this would lead to a civic culture that respected the rights of all people. Rousseau's views struck a nerve with people all across continental Europe, as well as with those on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean.

Renaissance versus The Enlightenment

Two unique periods in human history are credited with catapulting civilization forward into what we know today as the "modern" world. Although they did not provide quite the technological revolutions seen in our lifetimes, the Renaissance and Enlightenment periods witnessed groundbreaking intellectual, scientific, and governmental advances. The first of these two periods were the Renaissance, which consisted primarily of the revival of art, literature, and science that took place during the Greek and Roman Empires. Starting towards the end of the 14th century, a renewed understanding of the wisdom, religion, and cultures of these ancient civilizations ignited a series of new discoveries that enhanced man's understanding of the natural world. What is more, the ability to communicate thoughts and ideas was expanding, thanks in large part to the creation of the printing press by Johannes Gutenberg. Scholars writing during this time period were pushing against the influence of the Christian leaders that used their positions of power to oppress and control the masses in much the same way that the Greeks used their mythological deities to govern time and space. In other words, the Renaissance was a reawakening that propelled both humans and states into a new age of innovation.

Similarly, although distinct, the Enlightenment leveraged the intellectual and moral standards of the time to create new schools of thought regarding science, philosophy, religion, and governance. With the ability to print and distribute their writings to the masses, scholars and academics throughout the Western world were able to exchange ideas more rapidly. Questions of equality, liberty, and authority were at the heart of the Enlightenment, in much the same way that questions of truth, reason, and wisdom guided the Renaissance. In short, the Renaissance lay the foundation for human discovery that paved the way for Enlightenment thinkers to exchange ideas and views on human nature and the role of government. Both were vital to the evolution of the modern state, as well as to the formulation of governmental systems.

Jefferson, Madison, and the Political Revolution

There is no doubt that Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau had a profound influence on many of America's founding fathers, especially Thomas Jefferson and James Madison. Both men are responsible for crafting the seminal documents that led to the Revolutionary War and the establishment of a new national government. Locke's influence is evident by way of the "inalienable rights" of "life, liberty, and property" penned by Jefferson in the Declaration of Independence, although it is important to note that the final draft was changed to "pursuit of happiness." These were the fundamental rights Locke discussed in his *Second Treatise* on Government, along with his conception of natural equality (for men). Additionally, Jefferson pointed to the proper role of government to protect these natural rights, as envisioned by Rousseau, arguing that the failure of government to protect these natural rights would justify overturning the government. In short, people have inherent rights, and the government must ensure them for everyone. Failure to do so violates the social contract, which implies that, as Locke maintained in the *Second Treatise,* citizens in such instances retain a right to revolution.

Jefferson's close ally, James Madison, went to great lengths to create the social contract underlying both the Articles of Confederation and the US Constitution, which cemented the individual rights of American citizens, as well as the government's duty to respect and protect them. However, a key factor embedded in both documents evokes the Hobbesian conception of the state of nature. In other words, to claim the founding fathers believed individuals possessed certain virtues that promoted a sense of mutual respect and admiration for their fellow citizens would be a misnomer. Several members of both Constitutional Conventions expressed the concern that, if given enough power, a majority of citizens would seek to oppress the minority. In Federal No. 10, Madison warned of the "mischiefs of factions" and the need to prevent those "who are united and actuated by some common impulse of passion, or of interest, adverse to the rights of other citizens" from abusing the power given to them by the people. To prevent such an abuse of power while also curbing the democratic tendencies that had become pervasive in the colonial era, Madison posited a system of checks and balances in which power would be divided among different branches of government. In sum, to ward off a Hobbesian war of all against all, the government must use its power to both protect the rights of all citizens and maintain order.

Both men's writings are integral not only to the governing documents of the United States but also to the fundamental purpose and responsibility of government. Up to this point, the debate over the purpose of governments has brought to the fore three seemingly distinct values: **equality, liberty,** and **authority.** If humanity is corruptible, as some philosophers have suggested, and prone to violate the interests of others in favor of their own, who can mediate these disputes? Likewise, if humanity is granted certain natural rights, who is responsible for protecting them? In the next section, we will cover other prominent theorists who sought to answer these fundamental questions.

19th and 20th Century Views on Equality, Rights, and Authority

For many years following both the American and French Revolutions, the debate over the primary role of government persisted. Notions of applying equality to more than just white, land-owning men was becoming more widespread throughout Europe and North America. For example, **Tecumseh**, a Native American theorist from the Shawnee tribe, argued that if the possession of private property was included among the "inalienable rights" given to "men," then this aspect of natural rights doctrine should apply to Native Americans as well. The established colonies, and then the westward expansion of the United States, had deprived many Native American tribes of land they had claimed for centuries. His people claimed a spiritual force placed Native Americans on their lands, to which they had

a natural right. As a result, they should be able to recover their lands based on natural rights doctrine.[9]

For the next two-hundred years, many people would argue that true equality can only be achieved through participation in the political process, especially when one considers that constitutional amendments to the US Constitution were needed in order to grant African Americans and women the right to vote. These decisions were ultimately based on the assertion that voting provides a tangible example of participation in the decision-making process. In short, participation in the process was the best means of working toward an equality of *results*.

Notwithstanding the convincing arguments discussed above, some theorists still balked at the notion of prioritizing government's role in promoting equality. More specifically, they called into question whether attempts to create equality were even possible. The most prominent theorist to do this during the 19th century was **John Stuart Mill,** who in his most famous work, *On Liberty,* asserted that governments should not be tasked with compelling individuals to do what is deemed morally right. Individuals should be allowed to judge ethical questions for themselves, rather than have such judgements forcibly imposed on them by an external authority. Therefore, in accordance with what Mill refers to as the "harm principle," governments should not interfere with individuals unless they pose a threat to others. Mill claimed that everyone benefits if the government removes itself from enforcing moral codes. Individuals benefit because they possess the liberty to live their lives as they please, and society benefits because society gains whenever it encourages freethinkers to express themselves and explore new ideas. Even if opinions are erroneous, they should be expressed, and the error exposed. Society should respect the individual's right to think any thought, no matter how outrageous or unpopular. Mill defended an expansive conception of individual freedom of thought and action and argued that government should not be seen as a moral guardian.[10]

Another noteworthy theorist on questions of morality in society was **Friedrich Nietzsche.** Born the son of a Lutheran Minister in Germany, Nietzsche became a professor of classical philology (the study of languages and literature) before writing many works that have exerted a tremendous amount of philosophical and cultural influence throughout the 20th century. Like Socrates, he challenged many societal and cultural assumptions, relentlessly investigating the origins of what is regarded as true in a philosophical, political, and moral sense. Like Socrates, he was scorned by many of his contemporaries who did not take kindly to such attacks, and like Machiavelli, his works have often been misunderstood.

We saw earlier that Machiavelli was a much more complex thinker than the Machiavellian politician. The same can be said about Nietzsche, whose ideas were taken out of context and cynically invoked by the Nazi Party during the Third Reich. Nietzsche is perhaps best known for his saying, "God is Dead." By that he was not making an ontological claim or equating atheism with the truth. Rather, he argued that many who professed a belief in Christianity merely paid lip service to its principles and teachings or used it as an instrument--as a means of reinforcing political or cultural authority. In perhaps his most frequently cited work, *On The Genealogy of Morals,* Nietzsche identified two types of morality: slave and master. According to him, the origins of slave morality (a term which is not meant literally) lie in Christianity and are based on a distinction between good and evil, allegedly made by the weak in order to gain power, while the origins of master morality lie in antiquity and are based on the more modest distinction between the good and the bad, with the "good" signifying that which is noble, powerful, and courageous, as opposed to that which is petty, weak, or cowardly. According to Nietzsche, both perspectives are self-serving, and neither can lay claim to having objective truth.1 [11]

1 *Nietzsche's conception of slave morality figures prominently in his attack on institutionalized Christianity. Selectively citing fire and brimstone sermons to support his position, he argues that practitioners of slave morality are steeped in resentment and seek to exact revenge against those who are strong (in the sense of adhering to a "master" morality).*

Conclusion

The periods of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment were instrumental in giving rise to fundamental questions about human nature, morality, and governmental authority. During these epochs, the powerful role of the church in matters of government was directly challenged. Moreover, a wealth of writings contributed to the idea that individuals could become self-governing. However, if left unchecked, the naked pursuit of self-interest threatened social stability and the less powerful, creating the need for countermeasures to ensure the rights of all within a society.

Although these issues were heavily debated by several prominent thinkers, no definitive solution was provided as to how to best define the overarching purpose and function of government. Moreover, the Enlightenment did not secure a post-Christian moral foundation that could guide human interaction. As a result, questions regarding the state and the relationship between ethics and politics persist to this day, as we will see in the next chapter, which focuses upon major political ideologies that have shaped different forms of government and guided prominent social movements.

Discussion Questions:

Is it possible to protect the rights of some without infringing upon those of others?

Should individuals be equal in every way?

Should laws pursue equality so diligently that they provide not only for equality of capabilities but also for equality of opportunities?

Can equality become a basis for oppression?

How do we deal with those who disagree with our understandings of what is ethical?

Is it best to uphold no single morality as the absolute truth?

Should each person decide morality for him/herself?

If so, are all opinions to be tolerated?

If we live moral lives, does our morality require us to speak up against immorality wherever we see it?

Endnotes

1 It is worth noting that multiple terms are used to denote historical dates. For instance, I just used the acronym BCE, which stands for Before the Common Era. After the birth of Christ, dates are referred to as the Common Era (CE). These are considered secular terms to describe time periods, while the Christian-influenced way to mark one's calendar is BC, since it refers to Before Christ and AD stands for the Latin phrase *anno Domini* (the year of our Lord). Both sets refer to the same year, with one connoting the religion of Christianity and the other secularizing the calendar.

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5 George Klosko, History of Political Theory: An Introduction (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1995), p. 7.

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Chapter 6

POLITICAL IDEOLOGIES & "ISMS"

POLITICAL IDEOLOGIES & "ISMS"

At the outset of this book, I mentioned that political scientists have as their primary focus the study of power. Thus far, we have looked at seminal writings that posited unique ways of looking at power and who should possess it. Some argued that certain groups of individuals are more capable of utilizing power for the common good than others, while their critics asserted that everyone is capable of making decisions for all of society. The last two chapters have explored the historical foundations of political theory from the ancient Greeks to the Modern era. It is important to note at this point that every political theory is based upon a certain **ideology,** which, considered in broad terms, is a set of ideas or beliefs that an individual or group holds to be true. In other words, an ideology represents a view of the world--as well as an understanding of how government is supposed to operate. For instance, terms like "democracy" or "socialism" are commonly used in political discussions. Often, they refer to a form of government, especially during the era of the Cold War, when the countries allied with the Soviet Union referred to themselves as "socialist." However, both democracy and socialism also refer to distinct ideologies--to ways of perceiving the political world. In short, theories are shaped by ideologies, which provide the basis for designing and evaluating the structure and function of governments.

We will now turn our attention to the sets of ideas that have guided the creation of states over the last two-hundred years. As we examine the concepts integral to different political ideologies, we will also refer to what some call the "isms."[1] In many cases, they are used interchangeably, especially when we consider that many ideologies end with the suffix "ism."

Within this book, the term **ideology that we introduced above** will be used specifically to describe the doctrines guiding the purpose and function of government. Viewed in this light, ideologies are sets of beliefs about *how* societies should be governed and *who* should govern them. In addition, each ideology proposes a plan of action for applying these ideas within a state. Ideologies reflect an empirical view of how the world works, as well as a normative view that establishes a set of guidelines for determining what is or is not deemed to be acceptable behavior. Ideologies also confer a sense of identity upon individuals within the state and provide them with a set of programmatic steps regarding what to do in society and how to do it. **Isms,** as they are commonly used, refer both to the type of socioeconomic policy pursued by a government (e.g., the policies of neoliberalism or state capitalism) and to various social movements that are animated by a central, guiding principle (e.g., feminism or environmentalism).

Crawl, Walk, Run. Up to this point in the textbook, you have been given a lot of information to digest. My intent has been to provide you with an understanding of major terms and concepts within the discipline, as well as an overview of how they have evolved over time. This corresponds with what I call the "crawl" stage. In much the same way that a child must learn how to crawl before they walk, and walk before they run, people new to the study of political science need to learn the basics of the study of politics before they can engage in political discourse or research. This chapter serves as the transition from "crawling" to "walking" by way of exposing you to the most prominent sets of ideas and beliefs that have guided the structure of governments around the world. The next chapters on Comparative Government will focus on providing you with a basic overview of the different systems, then challenge you to determine how power is used, who holds it, and why they are able to do so. Our goal is to enable you to put to use the information you have received and examine the content for yourself, especially when it comes to reading about current events. By the end of this course, you should be able to read about politics and understand the material for yourself instead of having someone teach it to you. This is an integral part of being a civically minded and engaged citizen.

Throughout the evolution of political theory, two fundamental purposes of government have stood out: promoting equality and maintaining order. Some argued that government should exist to maintain order and prevent chaos, while others believed that government has a responsibility to ensure equitable treatment and provide opportunity to all citizens, largely because of the universal rights that, at least in theory, each individual possesses. These different perspectives have brought about particular views on the *task* (what it does) and *purpose* (why it does it) of government. For example, if government's overriding purpose is to maintain order, then its function should look more like the police state described by Hobbes. However, if its primary purpose is to promote equality, then it should operate as a regulator of society. In either case, what government does is a byproduct of its reason for existence.

When you think of the term *equality,* several thoughts are likely to emerge. The concept of equality is commonly associated with a political situation in which everyone is treated the same. While this description is generally accurate, it is also incomplete, mainly because it does not clarify what the treatment of people looks like. For example, a tyrannical king could treat everyone the same by taking their property without offering any form of compensation or indiscriminately killing whomever he chooses. In this scenario, the oppressive king is treating everyone the same; however, such treatment violates what Locke characterizes as their natural rights of life, liberty, and property. So, a better way to define equality in this context is to maintain with Locke that everyone is granted freedom *from* governmental interference and the freedom to pursue their self-interest, so long as it does not infringe on the rights of other citizens. The first type of freedom requires the government to honor the principle that all citizens have basic rights that cannot be taken away from them. These are the "natural" or "unalienable" rights that Locke and Jefferson referred to in their writings. In short, everyone has basic rights that the government must protect and preserve. What is more, the government itself is not able to infringe on these rights unless it believes that doing so is necessary to protect the basic rights of other citizens. (We see here a fundamental tension lying at the heart of liberalism: namely, it is not possible to protect the rights of some without violating the rights of others, which gives us another indication as to why the study of power is so important.) To use another example, according to recent Supreme Court interpretations of the Second Amendment to the US Constitution, if a person wants to purchase a gun, they have this right. However, if the person then attempts to use that gun to shoot and kill another person, they of course violate the other person's right to life, and the government has the right to step in and try to prevent the loss of life. In other words, just because the person has a gun does not mean that they have the right to use it against another person. This is where the importance of the term, *order,* comes into focus. In the previous scenario, a state government many enact "red flag laws" in an attempt to prevent the loss of life, an action which can be viewed as maintaining order because the goal is to protect the right to life of possible victims of gun violence. In doing so, the government may take away an individual's gun (property), but this is necessary to preserve order in society because the loss of life is more important in such instances than the loss of property, especially when the person wants to use his property to directly violate the rights of another person.

Plenty of other examples present themselves for our consideration in this context. For instance, every time you leave your car somewhere (like a parking lot), you probably lock your doors. If you forget to do so and someone steals something out of it or takes the car itself, that person cannot claim it was fair game because you forgot to lock the doors. Similarly, if you go to the restroom and leave your belongings in the classroom, another student cannot take your stuff and claim it as their own just because you left it there. Your property is just that, yours! Note, however, that in those two examples, you might not be able to recover your property without the assistance of a third party: namely, an official representative of the government! You would get in touch with a legitimate authority

and ask them to rectify the situation by getting your stuff back for you. And the person who took it would likely be punished for violating your property rights. We see then how the government maintains order and gives all citizens equal treatment under the law.

To enable you to fully understand the major tenets of each ideology that we will be studying on a comparative basis, I am measuring them based on their views regarding equality and order. Some will have similar views on equality but view order in very different ways, and vice versa. To provide more clarity, consider the Line Graph in Figure 6.1. The X-axis reflects an ideology's emphasis on order, while the Y-axis measures its focus on equality. Those that focus on order will be further to the right on the graph, while those emphasizing equality will be higher on the graph. Conversely, the closer an ideology is to the point where the two lines connect, the less it emphasizes either. Visually representing where these ideologies lie along both lines will enable you to see how each one stacks up against the others.

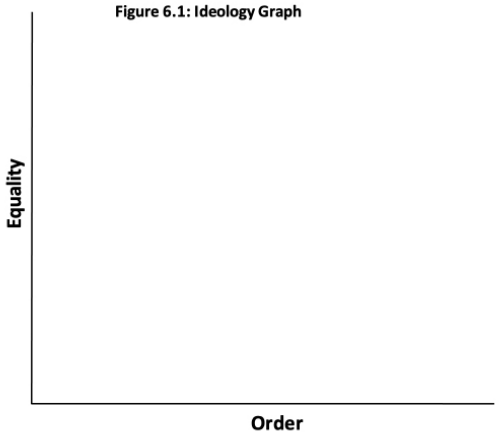

Figure 6.1:Ideology Graph

Ideas in Context

It is worth noting that each political theorist we encountered in earlier chapters lived under the authority of a particular form of government, such as a direct democracy in Ancient Greece, a monarchy during the Renaissance, and a representative democracy in the era of the Enlightenment. In each case, ideas and notions about humankind shaped the theorists' respective understandings of how to address the concepts of order and equality. What is more, one could argue that each theorist was a product of their own environment, meaning they were influenced by their surroundings and lacked the ability to think completely outside their own experiences. This is a common problem for every person, mainly because our life experiences shape our understanding of reality and how we define our individual self-interest. As mentioned in a previous chapter, we tend to view the world through our experiences, which makes it difficult to relate to people who have had different life experiences. Hence, the life experiences of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle were fundamentally different from those of Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau. Therefore, before we move forward, it is important that you, the reader, remember that your views about a particular issue are shaped by the world today.

In this chapter, we are going to explore the writings of some theorists not mentioned in the previous chapters, but their views were integral to the creation of specific ideologies and political systems. Again, these individuals were heavily influenced by their life experiences, as well as the norms and values of their societies. For example, when the American Constitution was ratified by the Colonies, women were not given the right to vote, and African slaves were not even considered whole persons for purposes of taxation and representation. We look back at this time period as overly oppressive for minorities, and such was indeed the case. While the views and actions of our Founding Fathers should not be excused or dismissed, they deserve to be considered in their proper context. Virtually no country in the 18^{th} century considered the rights of these groups to be included among the "rights of man.". In other words, it was not then a historical norm. However, over time, these

groups were given the same rights because the ideas and views of society began to change. After the Civil War, the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments were ratified, formally giving former African slaves the same rights as white men. Additionally, the 19th Amendment gave women the right to vote in 1920. This does not mean everyone acknowledged the rights of these groups, especially in the Southern states; but those in government, in direct response to escalating social protests, used their power to include the minority groups in the political process because their views, along with public opinion in general, evolved over time. By remembering the context surrounding the texts of these writers, we can better understand the *why* behind the ideas and theories they proposed.

Anarchism

If you have ever heard the term, "anarchy," it was probably associated with chaos or the lack of order. What anarchy assumes is the lack of a supreme authority to govern the interactions among people or states. This ideology believes that no governing authority should exist, and all people should be free to live as they please without submitting to any formal regulations. Apart from these core principles, there are a great many varieties of anarchism. For instance, some anarchists believe that human nature provides a foundation for cooperation and mutuality, which in the absence of a hierarchical social order will lead to peace and prosperity. Other Anarchists reject the idea of attempting to establish political equality in the belief that doing so would require an ultimate authority to adjudicate instances of inequality, which violates their foundational principle. Yet another form of anarchism operates loosely on the Darwinian principles of natural selection, or survival of the fittest. In such a scenario, people (and states) should have the freedom to pursue their own interests, independently of an externally binding set of rules, laws, or norms. As irrational or illogical as this might sound, there are regions of the world, as well as territories, that operate within an anarchic system. While some societies and communities may adhere to a code of conduct, the latter is not accepted by everyone living within that territory. The continent of Africa has experienced a number of anarchical movements that rejected a formal national government or sought to live without any restraints on their daily conduct.[2] Moreover, the study of international relations (how states interact with one another) is considered anarchical because there is no supreme authority to which all states agree to submit. Even the United Nations, which is a collaborative community whose members enter into mutual agreements, is not universally recognized as an international authority, as will be discussed in more detail in a later chapter. Suffice to say, anarchy is a real ideology that has practical implications in the world today.

Liberalism

Arguably the most prominent and widely accepted political ideology in the world today is liberalism. However, before you tune out on the term, I need to take some time and explain its original meaning and distinguish it from the ways in which the word, "liberal," is commonly used in the United States. If you have heard the term, liberal, you are likely to associate it with the so-called progressive wing of the Democratic party. However, the contemporary notion of a "liberal" is by no means synonymous with "liberalism." In fact, liberalism, focuses primarily on individual liberty and freedom from governmental encroachment. In other words, if you believe that every human being is endowed with certain natural rights, then, strictly speaking, YOU are a liberal in the original sense of that term, which comes from the theorists of the Enlightenment period, particularly John Locke and John Stuart Mill. Considered the father of liberalism, Locke views individuals as rational actors capable of recognizing and promoting their self-interests. As we saw in the last chapter, according to Locke, societies that exist in a "state of nature" work best when individuals are free to do as they wish, so long as they do not harm or violate the rights of others. But because "inconveniences" arise when such violations are on occasion committed in a state of nature, Locke argued it was necessary for individuals to enter a social contract, whereby a governmental system would be created to protect

these rights, as well as provide opportunities for individuals to pursue their own rational desires. This ideology, called **classical liberalism,** believes in the freedom of individuals to pursue their self-interests without fear of having their rights violated by another person or the government itself. Often referred to as negative freedom, it promotes *freedom from* governmental intrusions into their private lives.

Throughout the 19th and into the 20*th* centuries, liberalism evolved in many countries (especially the United States) into an ideology that espoused not only the *freedom from* state intervention but also the freedom to pursue viable opportunities, which required the government to assume the responsibility of ensuring that certain groups were not overtly disadvantaged. John Stuart Mill was one of the earliest advocates for extending rights to individuals other than white, landing owning men. His important work, *On Liberty*, made the case that modern societies must ensure individual freedom can be exercised by all citizens, regardless of their natural characteristics. In fact, the post-Civil War Amendments were intended to expand the concepts of negative and positive freedom for Black Americans, abolishing slavery, establishing equal protection under the law, and guaranteeing the right to vote to all men, regardless of race (some 50 years later, the 19th Amendment granted voting rights to women.) Because Black Americans had been denied the political, economic, and social opportunities afforded to white men, the push by "Radical Republicans" in the US Congress to grant them the same rights and opportunities fell on the shoulders of the federal government during the period of Reconstruction. One hundred years after those Civil War Amendments had passed, the ideology of **modern liberalism gained influence,** as evidenced by the passage of landmark Civil Rights legislation in the 1960s, which among other things combatted voter suppression practices that had been in effect in southern states since the late nineteenth century and repealed Jim Crow laws. Today, some "liberals" argue that extending the franchise and ending official segregation does not go far enough. Invoking the "Economic Bill of Rights" introduced by President Roosevelt toward the end of the New Deal, they maintain that one cannot be truly free if basic needs are not met. To create the conditions for this freedom, modern liberals call for greater governmental intervention in the economy, with the aim of enacting redistributive polices. This form of liberalism is more in line with the political views of the progressive (e.g., liberal) wing of the Democratic party in America.

Capitalism. There is a mistaken tendency to regard liberalism and capitalism as one and the same. However, this is not always the case. Although promoting life, liberty, and property is a fundamental attribute of liberalism, and capitalism places control of the means of production in the hands of private ownership rather than the state, it is possible to have one without the other. A prime example of how capitalism can function without liberalism is found in the People's Republic of China. This country is not governed by the tenets of liberalism; rather, it is a Communist state in which individual freedom and liberty is suppressed. (We should note that, strictly speaking, capitalism in contemporary China is referred to as "state capitalism," a system in which state-owned enterprises play a large role in the economy; the degree to which a a classical capitalist economy can co-exist with a repressive political system was perhaps best exemplified by the Pinochet dictatorship, which ruled Chile from 1973 to 1990.) Throughout much of the 19th and 20*th* centuries, liberalism and capitalism were promoted in tandem with one another, but it is possible for the state to promote individual rights while heavily regulating the state's economy or putting the means of production in the hands of private individuals without protecting their individual rights. In the latter instance, the government still has a say in economic matters, but it does not have exclusive control over what goods are produced and who gets to produce them. We will return to the issue of capitalism at a later point in this text; however, it is important to note its relevance to, and distinction from, the liberalist ideology.

Libertarianism

Although seldom viewed as a prominent ideology, **libertarianism** is gaining momentum around the world, especially in Western states. Viewed as an amalgamation of anarchy and liberalism, it promotes civil liberties (a key component of liberalism) and argues that the government should wield little authority. Some might describe it as a lighter version of liberalism and heavier version of anarchy, meaning that it gives to government an extremely limited role, which for some libertarians is restricted to maintaining a police force to preserve domestic order and a military to protect the state from outside aggression. On the other hand, Libertarians maintain that government should have no role in promoting equal opportunities or regulating the economy, a view of free-market capitalism that allows for an "invisible hand" to regulate the economy, as advocated by Adam Smith in the 18th century.[3] Although there are extremes of libertarianism on both the left and the right, the most common is considered a more conservative version of liberalism, In the United States, libertarians occupy a middle ground for people who think the Republican party is too focused on regulating social issues and the Democratic party is too focused on regulating the economy. In short, libertarians tend to be socially liberal but economically conservative.

Conservatism

Up to this point in the discussion of ideologies, the preceding forms have had a very broad application, meaning their tenets can be universally applied and are not directly connected to individual societies. However, as we move forward, some of the ideologies are going to integrate cultural norms and traditions into their understanding of the role of government and seek to empower institutions to preserve and protect a particular way of life, as opposed to certain rights and freedoms. For instance, the ideology of **conservatism** views human nature as a condition of imperfection, in which individuals are easily corrupted by the pursuit of their self-interests. As a result, society is disrupted by these imperfections, which create the need for devising a mechanism to bring about social order and harmony. This ideology holds that everyone is part of a greater whole and ought to act with the best interests of society (not just self) in mind. The need to preserve such a greater whole far outweighs the importance of progress, which means that little in the way of social-political or cultural change should occur, unless it happens slowly and cautiously. Otherwise, society could become unstable and descend into chaos. In his 1790 analysis of the French Revolution, Edmund Burke, the father of conservatism, argued that political reform can be a good thing but radical change and innovation are dangerous. Because the French revolutionaries were seeking radical change by overthrowing their aristocratic government, their misguided passions upended the established order but also ultimately destroyed the freedoms that they had sought. Burke believed that freedom is desirable only when properly channeled, which is why he sympathized with the American Revolution. He felt the colonists were trying to conserve the representative forms of government they had established prior to the Revolution, which they launched in response to acts of Parliament that they considered oppressive.

Burke's conservatism consists of four distinct features. First, it adheres to what is known as the trustee theory of representation. According to this theory, office holders should decide how to rule and vote on the basis of what *they* determine to be in the best interest of the people *and the country*. In other words, such representatives know their constituents' true interests better than the constituents themselves. This theory is often contrasted with the delegate theory of representation, in which representatives act as a mirror for what their constituents want. Burke rejected the delegate theory since it gave the people too much influence over the political decision-making process. (We should note that in this respect, James Madison was a Burkean conservative.). Second, Burke felt society should be governed by a natural aristocracy whose members inherited their noble titles or gained them through meritocratic achievements. We see then how the first two principles of Burkean conservatism reinforce one another: representatives can act as "trustees" because they are refined

individuals who have gained what Burke refers to as the "accumulated wisdom of the ages." Third, Burke had great respect for private property, as did Locke, Jefferson, and Mill. Private property owners, in this view, have a critical stake in society and are in a position to become responsible citizens. Fourth, he promoted what he called "little platoons," which were local, non-governmental associations that prevent centralized government from having too much power and restricting liberties. Some could interpret this as a form of unionization (people joining unions to fight against big government) or local governments (though they are not granted formal powers by the people).[4]

Because the conception of human imperfection does not place great value on individualism (which it would refer to as egoism or narcissism), conservatism attributes great importance to the cultivation of virtue through mores and customs. Again, since societies have different norms, mores, and customs, conservatism will look and behave differently around the world. Its desire to "conserve" social, political, and economic practices is thus historically and culturally specific. For instance, a "conservative" in the United States may have little in common with a "conservative" in Iran or Canada. Furthermore, even within one country, the ideology of conservatism is not monolithic. As we saw in our discussion of Libertarianism, there are economic conservatives who are not necessarily social conservatives (and vice-versa).

Socialism

The other most prominent political ideology that has emerged on the international stage over the last two hundred years is **socialism.** This ideology grew out of a distrust of the major tenets of liberalism and capitalism, which were criticized for being too focused on the individual. The main argument against liberalism was its disregard for the impact that capitalistic economic conditions had on social classes and the ways in which it enabled those who had wealth to use their resources to gain political power. Socialists asserted that true equality could only be achieved by removing both economic and social barriers. Therefore, government must enact policies to advance economic equality (which is a prerequisite for 'true' political equality). In such a scenario, the government serves as the mechanism to both provide these basic needs and ensure everyone receives equitable treatment. Contrary to capitalism, which limits government interference in economic matters, socialism emphasizes the need for government involvement in the means of production, planning, and distribution. Rather than have private corporations and the "free market" determine what is manufactured, produced, bought, and sold, the government needs to direct such activities, as doing so will guarantee that basic needs are met for all citizens.[5]

Though several men promoted the concept of socialism, its leading proponent was *Karl Marx,* a German theorist who wrote extensively about the social and economic evolution of societies, with an emphasis on the pitfalls of capitalism. Marx lived during a time of extensive economic prosperity in the German federation, and this had a profound impact on his understanding of the role economics played in the politics of a state. In short, Marx claimed that the development of capitalism had polarized society into two fundamentally antagonistic classes: the "bourgeoisie" and the proletariat (two important terms that we will discuss further below). Prior to the development of capitalism, class structures were still clearly hierarchical but also more complex, which was particularly the case in the feudal era that we discussed in the previous chapter. According to Marx, class struggle sets human history in motion, dating back to its origins, where there existed what he describes as "primitive communism," At this stage of human development, groups and tribes provided goods and services to one another as needed. However, owing to the rise of agriculture and the production of a surplus of materials goods, this system gave way to private ownership of property, and stark inequalities, as could be seen for instance in the rise of slave-based empires. Out the collapse of the great empires, there gradually emerged the feudal system.[6]

As stated above, at the time of his major writing in the second half of the nineteenth century, Marx referred to the two main classes within a capitalist system. The bourgeoisie, (upper class) who own the means of production, hire the proletariat (commoners) to work for them. In other words, anyone who must work for their wages, or sell their labor, as Marx puts it, is a proletarian. Marx viewed both groups as rational actors who will pursue their respective self-interests; therefore, the bourgeoise will seek to maximize their profits, while the proletarians will seek to increase their wages. Marx argues that because these antagonisms will increase under capitalism, the only way to substantially reduce inequality is for the state to step in and take direct control of the economy, which would then operate according to the principle that every individual must be fairly compensated in accordance with the contribution they make to economic production. (Marx regarded socialism as a transitional form of government that would lead to the classless, communist society, where everyone would have their basic needs met and perform whatever work best suited their ability.)

It is important to note that Marx looked favorably upon capitalism as the necessary precursor to socialism because its tremendous productive capacities swell the ranks of wage laborers, who form an overwhelming majority of the population. Though they are indispensable for the proper functioning of a capitalist economy, the need to constantly maximize profits and cut costs forces the bourgeoisie to increasingly exploit the proletariat. Such a dynamic necessarily creates a fundamental antagonism between the bourgeoisie and proletariat. Marx's examination of capitalism, both its benefits and costs, established a platform for lower classes to demand fair and honest wages, especially because of the influence they wielded in society. [7]Moreover, his writing of The Communist Manifesto paved the way for a branch of socialism that vied for global influence with liberalism for much of the 20th century.

Communism. Although communism is often considered a separate and distinct political ideology from socialism, it shares many of the same tenets. In fact, communism is also referred to as revolutionary socialism, particularly because of its emphasis on the revolution that Marx claimed must take place before classes can be abolished. One of the individuals who took his theories and turned them into a reality was **Vladimir Lenin,** a Russian Marxist theorist and revolutionary. Lenin was drawn into active politics by the execution of his brother (a leader of small group of university students who failed in their attempt to assassinate the Czar) in 1887 and became a Marxist in 1889. In 1903, he founded the Bolshevik Party, later masterminding the 1917 October Revolution that overthrew the Russian Czar, Nicholas II. Undoubtedly the most influential Marxist theorist of the 20th century, Lenin was primarily concerned with the issues of organization and revolution integral to the socialist ideology. His writings emphasized the central importance of a tightly organized "vanguard" party to lead and guide the proletarian class. He also examined colonialism as an economic phenomenon and used his political platform to highlight the historical opportunity his fellow Russians had to turn the Great War (i.e., World War I) into class war. Lenin was both a political leader and a major political thinker. His ideas reflected an overriding concern with the problems of winning power and establishing communist rule. He remained faithful to the idea of revolution, believing that parliamentary politics were merely a bourgeois sham, aimed at tricking the proletariat into believing that political power was exercised through the ballot box. Instead, power had to be seized through armed insurrection (e.g., revolution). Lenin echoed Marx's call for a transitional dictatorship of the proletariat, which would create a bridge between the overthrow of capitalism and the achievement of what they advocated for, which was "full communism."[8]

An important feature of communism is its attack on the ownership of private property, which is viewed as a violation of the principle that everything is considered the property of the "community." For that reason, the state is tasked with apportioning property based on the needs of the people. Socialism, on the other hand, does account for personal property,

though the means of production is controlled by the state. This is an important distinction because the two ideologies are often used interchangeably, when they have very different views on the role of the state. Remember, ideologies are ideas about how societies should be governed, so the role of government is very significant. As we will see in the next chapter, socialism, as an economic practice, can exist within a democratic system of government. Communism, however, encompasses both the political and economic aspects of the state, particularly its emphasis on the "vanguard party" that carries out the will of the state. In theory, this view holds that people are given everything they need in equal shares because there is no elitist or bourgeois class that has control over the means of production. Yet, much of what was observed in Russia and the Soviet Union did not line up with Marx's theory. Instead, the Bolsheviks, and eventually the Community Party, became the ruling class over the people. Hence, when people criticize communism as an ideology, they often point to the failures of the Soviet Union, when it can be argued that this system did not accurately represent the tenets of communism. Rather, it looked more like totalitarianism.

Totalitarianism

Hopefully, you have noticed a trend in the direction of each ideology away from prioritizing the protection of individual freedom and equality and towards maintaining order and increasing the state's authority. If anarchism devalues the need to establish a political order in favor of creating forms of social life that promote unbounded individual freedom, **totalitarianism eradicates political freedom and makes** individuals subservient to the state. Just as its name indicates, the state has total control and regulates all areas of economic, cultural, and political life. A person's identity is associated with the purpose of the state, and his or her actions should always be in line with strengthening the state. Furthermore, totalitarianism promotes a strong military, tasked with enforcing the will of state, whereas anarchism rejects a formal state military.

The most prominent example of totalitarianism appears in the form of Nazi Germany, under the reign of Adolf Hitler. Although this system of government was referred to as **fascism,** several Italian theorists who supported Mussolini coined the term totalitarianism, arguing that the state should have complete control over every part of life. While some political scientists might use these terms interchangeably, there are some noticeable features of fascism that are not necessarily linked with totalitarianism. First, Fascists appeal to the sense of **patriotism** (love of country) within their people, which draws upon the great things their state is known for doing or creating. Next, they will promote a distorted form of **nationalism**, which valorizes a series of attributes distinct to their culture that are deeply rooted in their history, traditions, and values. Fascists will then point to minority, outside, or "foreign" groups within a state as the source of their country's problems. These groups do not look like them, act like them, or maybe even talk like them because they are not deemed part of the state's national identity. While nationalism in itself is not bad, it can be used to create division among groups within a state that will ultimately lead to serious conflicts. Finally, fascists will inspire nationals to rid the state of these "outside groups" before they can undermine or hurt the national identity; moreover, if a state has a formidable military, it might invoke ethnic nationalism in order to rally the population into supporting invasions, which expand the amount of territory within its control, often under the pretext of protecting ethnic minorities that live in neighboring countries.[1] This was the overarching strategy of the Nazi regime under Hitler, who in the name of protecting and strengthening the German national identity, rid the country (and surrounding territories) of groups who allegedly posed a threat to the "German way of life."

[1] As we saw with Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, such nationalistic invasions are not only launched by fascist governments.

As a result, millions of Jews were exterminated, along with gypsies, gays and lesbians, political dissidents, and anyone else who spoke out against the state.

Authoritarianism. If totalitarianism maintains that the state should have complete control over society, **authoritarianism** might be considered "totalitarianism lite." Rather than aspiring to have complete control over everything and everyone in a society, the authoritarian state allows for some nonpolitical freedoms, so long as they do not pose any challenges to the authority of the state. In some cases, there may be social institutions that still exert influence within the state, but they are not seen as a rival source of authority. Authoritarian leaders are more likely to control as much as they can without oppressing the people to the point that they will revolt against the government. After the fall of Nazi Germany and the end of World War II, several authoritarian regimes arose, particularly in so-called Third World countries in South America, the Middle East, Asia, and Africa. Authoritarian leaders focused most of their attention on the consolidation of power, allowing individuals to pursue their private self-interests. It could even be argued that authoritarianism is not really an ideology, so much as a methodology for consolidating power. We will revisit the concept of both authoritarian and totalitarian governments during our study of comparative political and governmental systems.

Political Isms

Having looked at the major ideologies guiding the structure and function of government, we must now examine some sets of ideas and beliefs that seek to influence how states operate. These political isms promote values that directly affect how government carries out its duties and responsibilities. Each one advocates for either an underrepresented portion of the population or a way of life that advances specific ideals and principles. In this sense, Isms are more like social movements that call for a change to the status quo, with the primary goal of popularizing their views and properly integrating them into the norms of society.

Feminism represents a set of ideals centered on eliminating the oppression of all human beings while stressing the importance of women. It opposes political, economic, and cultural conditions that discriminate against or subjugate women. Western political philosophy, to the extent that it promoted principles of equality and human rights, helped usher in the feminist movement. Throughout the 18^{th} century, the movement for securing women's rights argued that women should have equality with men and should possess as much autonomy in society as that enjoyed by men. Feminism rejects the patriarchal system that manifests itself in intellectual, cultural, religious, or political traditions and practices. The primary argument feminists make is that throughout human history, men have been viewed (both in theory and in practice) as superior to women and have used this power to reduce women to the status of second-class citizens. As a result, women have been denied among other things political and civil rights, educational opportunities, and adequate legal protection from violence. One of the seminal moments in the feminist movement occurred at the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848. During the convention, attendees affirmed the "The Declaration of Sentiments," which expanded on the Declaration of Independence by adding the word "woman" or "women" throughout. It also called for social and legal changes to elevate women's place in society and, in the style of the Declaration of Independence, listed 18 grievances, including the inability to control their wages or property, the difficulty in gaining custody in divorce, and the lack of the right to vote.[9] While feminism includes liberal, socialist, ecological, and intersectional perspectives, the movement's main argument has been that women want the same rights as all humans, and opportunities should not be based on, or affected by, one's gender.

Another important social movement that has spanned the globe is environmentalism. This movement asserts the importance of viewing natural resources from an ecological perspective. Ecology is the study of interdependence or interconnectedness among organisms and the life-sustaining materials and processes that comprise ecosystems. Advocates of an ecological perspective emphasize the importance of protecting natural resources found within the

Earth's varied ecosystems. The main principles of environmentalism call for compassion toward other peoples, generations, and species. It argues we should drastically reduce and eventually eliminate technological methods and practices causing environmental degradation, which also means limiting certain forms of economic growth that destroy natural and ecological habitats. It is viewed as a completely new social paradigm, and with it comes a new kind of politics that promotes simpler living, innovative forms of public and private cooperation, and calls for tighter governmental regulation over private industries, particularly those in the fossil fuels sector. Other important policy initiatives include promoting energy sustainability, such as the development of renewable energy sources like wind and solar power. Environmentalists have also argued for *bioregionalism* and biodiversity across the globe. Bioregionalism is a recognition that no single policy is appropriate for all countries, mainly because each ecological region has its own, unique relationships to its land, flora, fauna, and the human inhabitants. Biodiversity asserts that each bioregion is biologically diverse and must be maintained and fostered. Much like feminism, there is great diversity (and also much factionalism and in-fighting) within the environmentalist movement, as indicated by the existence of eco-socialism, deep ecology, ecoterrorism, and ecofeminism. The more mainstream versions of environmentalism are represented by the ecologically oriented Green parties that formed beginning in the 1970s. An umbrella organization known as the European Greens was founded in Brussels, Belgium in January 1984 to coordinate the activities of the various European parties. The U.S. Green party is seen as a left-wing, pro-environment party, although it has faced many political problems due to competing interests at the national level and the many institutional factors the work against the formation of "third parties" in the US. As can be seen by the constant barrage of "extreme weather" events occurring around the world, dismissing these types of issues outright could have serious consequences in the years to come.

The last important ism we will discuss gained prominence towards the latter portion of the 20^{th} century. Postmodernism argues that any ideology that treats its principles as timeless truths should be viewed with profound skepticism. Consequently, many of the characteristic doctrines of **postmodernism** constitute or imply some form of metaphysical, epistemological, or ethical relativism. They reject the idea that moral or political values should be treated as expressions of objective reality.[2] For this reason, postmodernists emphasize the fact that all human perspectives are partial, contestable, and will always have some form of bias when receiving or transmitting information. For a postmodernist, the assertion that humanity has inherent rights, or that equality is obtainable, cannot be objectively confirmed; therefore, it is not objectively true. Instead, all that can be concluded is that different cultures and societies will hold values that should not be conflated with a universal truth. As a result, when these values conflict with one another, one cannot draw the conclusion that there is one set of values that is objectively true to everyone. A common criticism of postmodernism is that, paradoxically, its belief in relativism is itself treated as a universal truth.

2 *Many postmodern theorists do not deny the existence of objective reality as such or think the science of physics, for instance, merely amounts to another subjective perspective, of no greater value than witchcraft, they do draw attention to such recent theories as the "uncertainty principle" in the field of quantum mechanics, which call into question the objective truths associated with Newtonian physics.*

Conclusion

History has seen the rise and fall of several political ideologies, including, in the modern era, many different forms of conservativism, liberalism, and socialism. There is no universally recognized ideology that has been embraced by all countries around the world. As we have seen, the 20th Century brought about new ideological views that challenged existing political traditions. Some of these ideologies inspired Wpolitical parties (like the National Socialists in Germany) that sought to ostracize minority groups within a state in order to consolidate power and impose their values on society. This begs the question: is the United States today susceptible to falling pretty to the more oppressive ideologies, like fascism? To answer this question, we need to consider some important factors. First, both Mussolini and Hitler were elected through the democratic process. Second, according to the U.S. Census Bureau (2018), the white population will officially become the minority in U.S. by 2045.[10] Finally, the U.S. was rated a "flawed democracy" for 5th year in a row by The Economist Global Democracy Index. [11]To disregard these factors or minimize their credibility may risk a repeat of the horrific events that defined the 20th century. In the next series of chapters, we will look at how ideologies have shaped certain governments into one of two categories: democracies and non-democracies.

Discussion Questions:

Which political ideology do you think is most reflective of equality?

Place where you think each ideology is
located on the Ideology Graph in Figure 6.1.

Which of the Isms do you think is most dangerous?

Do you think liberalism in the United States is at risk
of being overtaken by another ideology or ism?

Endnotes

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Chapter 7

DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENTS

DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENTS

Now that we have addressed key terms and concepts in our study of power, as well as the ideals and principles espoused by different philosophers and political theorists, we will turn our attention to the various governmental systems that seek to put into practice different ideological conceptions of what the proper task and purpose of government should be. While the previous chapter focused on the diverse views regarding understandings of equality and order, this section will examine prominent systems that establish who should have power and how it should be exercised. The current chapter will discuss how governments are run when citizens are to some extent tasked with determining who and how they will be governed, while the next chapter looks at systems where the state treats individuals more like passive subjects than engaged citizens. However, before we begin this examination, it is important to mention that much of what was written by the theorists and scholars in the previous chapters should not be thought of as providing clear blueprints that various political leaders then use to establish and maintain different kinds of working governments. Because governments are human constructs, they are prone to the same flaws and imperfections as the individuals who serve them. Therefore, the notion that any form of government is perfect is a fantasy. The famous statement by Churchill quoted earlier will serve as a guide for this chapter. We are going to look at how the different democratic systems of government function, and whether they really do reflect the will of the people within a given state.

Democracy Defined

The term **democracy i**s one of the most common concepts associated with political science, especially in the West. Almost every citizen in America could tell you that our country is a democracy, although some would immediately begin a debate on whether it is an effective one. While the term has been mentioned numerous times thus far, no attempt has been made to define or describe it from an academic point of view, until now. The word stems from two Greek terms: demos (people) and kratía (government or rule). Combining these two words thus give us: rule by the people. At its most basic level, a democracy is a political system in which the people and the government are connected. More specifically, the people are self-governing in the sense that they have the freedom to shape governmental policies and decisions through voting, contacting officials, lobbying, and engaging in other forms of political participation. In short, democracies allow citizens to exert influence over the governmental decision-making process. However, not all democracies are identical, as some systems vary in terms of how involved people are in the actual political process. For instance, in a pure or direct democracy, all citizens meet periodically to elect officials and vote on laws. As you may imagine, instituting a direct democracy today would pose tremendous challenges. After all, the city-state of Athens, the birthplace of direct democracy in the 5^{th} century BC, covered an area less than half the size of Rhode Island, and had a voting population of only about 22,000, which made it possible to have citizens vote in a large amphitheater. How could direct democracy possibly be carried out in a country like the US? True, the internet could conceivably be used to create some form of national voting system, but a hallmark of direct democracy in Ancient Greece was that citizens were able to have extended, face-to-face discussions before voting on a particular measure. In any case, most democracies today allow citizens to choose individuals to represent them in government. This is considered a representative democracy, or a republic. Under this form of democracy, people do not rule directly, as compared to a pure democracy, but through elected and accountable representatives. If you have ever referenced the United States as a democracy, someone inevitably chimes in with a quip that we are actually a republic since we choose representatives to serve in government. In either case, the people play a vital role because without people to vote in an election, there would be no representatives, and no representatives in government means no work is done in government.

Therefore, the people exert great influence over who serves and what is done in government.

Presuppositions of Democracy. Unfortunately, we live in an age when the term, democracy, is both misconstrued and misused. As previously stated, not every democracy functions the same way; however, there are several essential components within a system of government that makes it democratic. The first regards the physical participation of citizens in the process of governing. Whether it is choosing electors or determining which laws should be implemented, every democracy entails some measure of participation by the people. Secondly, democracies do not restrict the participation of certain segments of the population. While this does not mean that every single person in the state is allowed to participate (think children and adolescents), it does imply that specific groups are not discriminated against or prevented from participating. Some have argued the United States never intended to be what is considered a pluralist democracy during its infancy since it limited voting to only white, landowning males.[1] Yet, since the passage of the Constitutional Amendments that gave African Americans and women the right to vote, universal suffrage1 has been a staple in our system of government. Democratic participation also entails a cognitive understanding among participants that they are making governmental decisions. In other words, they realize that their actions are directly "developing" both the form and function of government. What is more, these decisions are intended to protect the rights of all citizens from government encroachment or abuse. Just as several of the founding fathers feared the tyranny of the majority - whereby whatever a majority of citizens wanted done, the government was required to oblige – a protective democracy seeks to ensure that government's authority does not infringe on peoples' rights. Finally, the function of government is supposed to perform in a way that reflects the will of the people, which manifests itself through the passage, implementation, and enforcement of laws and policies.[2]

While each pillar supports the structure of democracy within a state, the existence and healthy survival of such a form of government does not require all of them in to be in place. Instead, they serve as guideposts for ensuring that the essence of democracy (rule by the people) holds constant. It should not be implied that without one pillar, a democracy will crumble. Rather, these pillars serve as safeguards to ensure that government neither overreaches nor falls short of carrying out its intended purpose. Over the last few decades, new and emerging democracies have struggled to establish a solid foundation that promotes pluralistic values or perform in such a way that reflects society's preferences. This does not make them undemocratic, but it does make them less democratic than other states where these values are present and practiced. As a result, a number of organizations have rightly focused their time and attention on monitoring the practices of democratic governments over the years in an attempt to provide external accountability by publicly criticizing leaders when they are acting in ways that run counter to democratic values. For example, the Economist Intelligence Unit's Democracy Index report measures democracies around the world on a regular basis.[3]

Essential Elements of Liberal Democracy

In the previous chapter, we looked at how liberalism's ideological principles centered on the protection and preservation of individual rights and civil liberties. For this to occur, the government must be given the task of ensuring that no one violates these fundamental rights, including members of the government itself. Furthermore, if the rights of an individual are infringed upon, it falls on the government to correct the wrong, and if the government fails to assume this responsibility, citizens have the ability to replace those in governmentwith one that will. Holding the government accountable to the people, as well as providing different segments of the population with adequate representation in government, are considered bedrocks of a liberal democracy. Furthermore, if people disagree with certain actions undertaken by the government, they have the right to express their dissent without fear of receiving punishment or

1 Universal suffrage means that the right to vote is extended to all adult citizens, regardless of wealth, income,gender,social status, race, ethnicity, political stance, or any other restriction, with only minor exceptions.

facing retaliation. In addition, the ability to express dissatisfaction with a government and hold its officials accountable to the general public via a free press is essential. Such liberties are ingrained in the American Bill of Rights through the First Amendment. There also should be various mechanisms in place that enable citizens to choose who represents them in government. Ideally, such political competition remains open to a wide variety of candidates from all walks of life who appeal to voters on a level playing field. Proof that these elements are to varying degrees present in a democracy can be seen when observing transfers of power within a state. When more than one group or party is able to acquire and exercise power in government, and when a losing party accepts an electoral defeat, democracy is more likely to be found. Finally, a democracy needs the defeated minority to recognize the legitimacy of an electoral majority, which is in turn required to respect the constitutional rights of the minority. In other words, even if a majority of Americans want to deny the basic rights of a minority group, the government will not take action because their primary duty is the protection and preservation of everyone's rights.[4]

As great as the theory of democracy sounds, the reality is that even if all the democratic criteria are met, political power will still not be evenly distributed. Instead, a few will hold most of the power, while the many will have little. This is largely due to the role of elites in a given society. Just like we saw in the days of the ancient Greeks, disparities among different groups of people create levels of inequality, and those who have more are likely to use their influence to their advantage. Elites generally consist of the wealthy, the highly educated, and those who are heavily invested in the process of acquiring power. As a result, democratic systems can be tilted in their favor even though such elites make up a fraction of the population. This topic will be covered in more detail in a later chapter, but it is worth noting now because it reveals the inevitable shortcomings of democracy, especially when those in power fall victim to the pursuits of personal gain.

Governing Democracies

A commonality among democracies is the presence of a written agreement akin to Hobbes's social contract, whereby citizens agree to relinquish their individual rights to a supreme authority (government) that is tasked with promoting law and order while also protecting the rights of the people. The document, usually referred to as a constitution, lays out the rules and regulations that govern the land. If individuals violate the constitution, the government is expected to hold them accountable and enforce the established punishments. However, if members of the government violate the constitution, they too must suffer the consequences for their actions. Often that means they face financial penalties, but government officials can be punished just like private citizens if a crime has been committed. In addition, the constitution lays out the structure and function of governmental institutions by assigning to various elective and nonelective officials specific duties and responsibilities. In the case of a democracy, a common practice is to distribute power across multiple branches of government, a process that guards against the accumulation of too much power by a single branch (or individual) and ensures adequate representation of the whole population in government. For instance, the legislative branch is intended to be the largest branch of government because it consists of individual representatives for certain segments of the population, while the executive branch is much smaller and is tasked with implementing laws created by the legislative branch. Finally, the judicial branch limits the power of both branches by ensuring that laws and policies do not violate the rights of the people. Taken together, each branch has a specific function, as well as an amount of power that can check the power of another branch. Separation of powers, as this process is commonly known, serves as the linchpin of a democracy because it is intended to limit the abuse of power by the government. The following sections will lay out the primary functions of each branch, as well as how they may differ among developing and advanced democracies around the world.

Legislative Branch. When the United States was first formed, the American colonies created a document known as the Articles of Confederation. This served as the first governing document of the land, although its flaws and imperfections forced them to reconsider its underlying principles. After engaging in about two years of intense debate, delegates from each state created what we know today as the United States Constitution. One of the biggest revisions to their system of government regarded the size of the legislative branch. Instead of a unicameral system, where each state sent two delegates to represent them, they created two separate houses: Congress and the Senate. In this bicameral system, one house was made up of individuals elected to represent a specific number of constituents within the state while the other had an equal number of representatives from each state. With this set-up in place, the Founding Fathers believed that the legislative branch would be able to adequately represent constituents in each state. This method mimicked the structure of Great Britain's Parliament, which has a lower house of elected representatives (House of Commons) and an upper house, known as the House of Lords. Although the process of getting elected to each house was different, both countries sought to create a branch of government that reflected the pluralistic views of their citizens.

These examples are important to mention primarily because they have influenced the constitutional structure of almost every democracy in the world today. **Legislatures** are supposed to be the largest branch of government because they represent the whole of a society, with all its diversity and uniqueness. While some democracies have only a single house (unicameral), others have a second branch that serves as a counterweight. In most bicameral systems, a bill must be agreed upon by both houses before it becomes a law, a requirement that is supposed to help ensure new laws are more effective and equitable. It also protects against the tyranny of the majority because a majority in a unicameral system has fewer checks on its power. Whether unicameral or bicameral, the legislative branch is likely to use **proportional representation** for selecting its officials. Proportional representation allocates seats proportionate to the population within a state, province, or territory. When the Constitution was originally created, seats in the House of Representatives were allocated in proportion to the number of constituents, or citizens, of the state. At the time, that meant one elected representative for every 30,000 people in a state. As the country grew in both size and population, that number began to increase. Within the 21st century, the general estimate has been close to one representative for every 650,000 constituents. Conversely, bicameral systems are prone to use equal representation in the second or upper house. This means each state, province, or territory receives an equal number of seats, regardless of population, which provides what is known as **equal representation**. This was the original method used under the Articles of Confederation and served as a source of contention among states during the Constitutional Convention. Larger states complained that equal representation disadvantaged them because they were not given representation commensurate with their overall size, while smaller states argued that using proportional representation would negatively impact them because the larger states would always hold more power. This controversy led to the creation of the bicameral system, which incorporated both methods of representation to ensure fair and equitable treatment for the states. This is known as the Great Compromise.[5]

Legislators are tasked with a number of responsibilities on top of making and passing laws. As delegates in government, they work for constituents by addressing individual needs and concerns. They might be called upon to assist with job placement, contact departments and agencies on behalf of constituents, or even deal with issues within their congressional district or state. Legislators also need to educate their constituents on issues being addressed at the federal level, as this will ensure legislators adequately represent their constituents' views. Another primary role of legislators is to serve as monitors of the executive branch. As will be seen later in this chapter, the executive branch consists of numerous departments, agencies, and offices that implement laws and policies, as well as regulate private industries. The legislative

branch is tasked with monitoring this work to ensure the government does not abuse its power and authority. This oversight occurs mainly through the committee system. Committees are formed to create, modify, and pass legislation, but they also monitor the bureaucracy and industries within the country. Several standing (permanent) committees regularly provide oversight, while ad hoc committees may be formed to address certain issues or crises that arise from time to time. Some committees tend to have more power over the legislative process than others because they deal with budgets, policies, or even the rules by which debates are conducted in government. For instance, one of the most influential committees in the U.S. House of Representatives is the Ways and Means Committee, which has jurisdiction over all taxes, tariffs, and other revenue-related measures that bring in federal dollars. This includes major publicly funded programs like Social Security, Unemployment Insurance, Medicare, enforcement of child support laws, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and foster care and adoption programs. This committee is so important that members are not allowed to serve on any other committee while serving on it. Similarly, matters of national security, foreign policy, or intelligence require oversight of Congress, so these types of committees will likely be prioritized over less urgent and pressing matters.

As important and vital as the legislative branch is to a democracy, its power and influence have begun to wain in many advanced countries. Legislators tend to have different agendas, which can make it harder for compromises to be made. This creates stagnation and gridlock that results in fewer policy changes. What is more, it is very hard for legislators to be subject matter experts on every issue, so they will defer to their colleagues or look to nonelective officials for support. This deference leads to the consolidation of power in the hands of a few who can manipulate the system to get what they want. To get things done in government, power must usually be concentrated in the hands of a few, and oftentimes that power may be delegated to the executive branch. However, to keep things democratic, power must be divided between an executive and a legislature.

Executive branch. Arguably the greatest distinction between democracies around the world regards the executive branch. Similarly, to how legislatures can be unicameral or bicameral, there are different ways in which executive leadership is chosen. Most democracies fall into one of two categories: **parliamentary** or **presidential.** In parliamentary systems, the executive branch is chosen from among members of the legislative branch, specifically the party that has a majority of seats. However, in a presidential system, voters choose an individual that is separate and independent from the legislature. This individual could come from either the majority or minority party in the legislature. In fact, it could even come from a party with no representation in the legislature (although this rarely, if ever, occurs). In both systems, a single leader is responsible for choosing individuals to serve as the head of departments and agencies in the executive branch. For example, in the parliamentary systems used in the United Kingdom and Germany, the Prime Minister is chosen by the majority party (or the party with the most seats in a coalition government) and he or she is then responsible for choosing the cabinet secretaries, such as Defense, Justice, Foreign Affairs, Education, Transportation, etc. In cases of a coalition government, when multiple parties have to work together to form a majority in Parliament, some minority parties will agree to form the coalition on the condition that a member of their party serves in a particular cabinet post that addresses prominent issues in their party platform. This information will be covered in a later chapter, but it merits some attention here because the executive branch can exert just as much, if not more, power as the legislature.

Presidential systems, on the other hand, have no direct connection to the legislative branch and are capable of operating independently from the majority party. In presidential elections, candidates are usually seen as the primary leader of their party, which plays a factor in how they govern. Thanks to the separation of powers doctrine, both branches of government must work together to form budgets, create or modify

legislation, and ensure policies are implemented effectively. In the United States presidential system, the president fulfills multiple functions as the head of state, chief of government, chief diplomat, commander in chief, and party chief. Presidents are often bestowed with powers that check the legislature, including the ability to veto bills and issue executive orders. Another important distinction between parliamentary and presidential systems regards the Cabinet. In parliamentary systems, the Prime Minister can only choose other members of Parliament to serve as the head of a department or agency. Yet, in presidential systems, legislators are barred from serving in both branches of government and must resign their post in one to serve in the other. Moreover, presidents can choose from any number of individuals to appoint Cabinet secretaries or agencies heads. While there are expectations that the individual has experience within a particular field related to the work of the department or agency, this is not confined to time they have served in government. In fact, individuals are often chosen to serve in government because of their successful careers in the private sector. However, this does not mean that the president can choose whomever he or she wants. Most presidential systems require a confirmation process that requires consent from another branch, mainly the legislature, which provides us with another example of the checks and balances doctrine.

Finally, some democracies have instituted a hybrid system of both a president and a prime minister. The president essentially serves as the head of state and is tasked mainly with the administration of government and foreign affairs, while the Prime Minister is the head of government (e.g., the legislative branch). Prime Ministers can be chosen from among members of the legislative branch, or they can be appointed by the President, as is the case in France. The president is elected by the people and one of his or her responsibilities is appointing the Prime Minister, which they call the Premier. This is commonly referred to as a semi-presidential system, or cohabitation, where power is shared between both branches. It has been or is currently practiced in other countries, such as Finland, Georgia, Poland, Romania, Russia, and Ukraine.

Judicial Branch. The third branch of government within democracies is intended to serve as the arbiter of laws and policies enacted by the other two branches. In other words, the judiciary is supposed to ensure that laws are fair and equitable. Within most democracies, you will find judicial systems at the national and local levels. Countries that have states, provinces, and territories are likely to have their own set of courts that are separate from the national courts. In the United States, we have federal and state courts. True to their names, the federal courts adjudicate federal laws, while state courts adjudicate their individual state laws. Furthermore, within each judicial system, there are different types of courts that hear specific types of cases. In most Western democracies, there will be courts established to hear criminal or civil cases. **Criminal law** regulates the conduct of individuals, defines crimes, and specifies forms of punishment for those who commit violations. This can include minor infractions, misdemeanors, or felonies. Federal criminal courts will hear cases where private citizens have broken a federal law or violated laws in multiple states, while state courts focus on crimes committed within their territorial boundaries. U.S. and state criminal laws are codified (compiled in an orderly, formal code) or statutory (related to or authorized by law). Federal and local judicial systems will also have civil courts that arbitrate private matters brought to court by individuals, not by governments. Some common examples of civil cases include matters having to do with marriages, divorces, child custody, or civil lawsuits. In short, these courts hear cases when a person may have violated the rights of another person but did not commit a crime. Other types of law that are adjudicated within local and federal courts (constitutional law, administrative (public) law, and international law) will be covered in later chapters.

Individuals chosen to serve in the judicial branch almost always have experience in the practice of law. This can include working in the public sector as a prosecutor or public defender, or as a defense attorney or litigator in the private sector. In either case, their experience in the legal field provides them with the knowledge, skills, and abilities to serve as a **judge.**

The process for becoming a judge can vary. Judges at the federal level are commonly appointed by the executive branch, with advice and consent from the legislative branch. This is stipulated in the American Constitution. However, judges in the United Kingdom are chosen by the British Monarch, with consent required from the Prime Minister.[6] In Canada, the federal government appoints federal judges, although they are only allowed to serve until the age of 75, a system that differs from the one in US, where judges serve lifetime appointments on "good behavior."[7] At the state or local levels of government, judges can either be popularly elected by local constituents or appointed by the governor of the state. In cases where judges are popularly elected, they will serve a limited amount of time before having to run for reelection, while judges appointed to office will have fixed terms, which can last up to 14 years. Or they may be required to retire at a certain age.

Comparing Courts. The court system varies among advanced Western democracies. While all of them tend to fulfill the same function of adjudicating laws, their processes may differ considerably. Both the United States and United Kingdom have court systems that focus on criminal and civil law, and the process for choosing judges is consistent, except for the fact that the monarchy plays a role in choosing judges to appoint. That is, under the Constitutional Reform Act of 2005, the monarch can choose to increase the number of judges. Moreover, the Act requires that a special commission be formed to recommend judges to the Supreme Court, and the Prime Minister is obliged to recommend only these names to the monarch for appointment. The American President, on the other hand, has the power to nominate anyone he wishes for any federal judgeship, including the Supreme Court. However, these nominees must be confirmed by a majority in the Senate. This process has become one of the most controversial matters in American politics, especially when one party has control of both Senate and the Presidency.

European courts, which are based on the French court system, do not differentiate between civil and criminal cases. Instead, courts may try either type of case, as it comes before them. Another important distinction concerns the means of establishing the burden of proof. In the United States, the doctrine of "innocent until proven guilty" reigns. This means the burden of proof falls on the prosecution to prove the guilt of an individual or organization. Conversely, European courts place the burden of proof on the defendant, who must prove their innocence beyond a reasonable doubt. As a result, European judges are the ones that ask questions in a proceeding, not the lawyers. Their goal is to sway the jury by pointing to factual mistakes in the case against their clients. This method is very different from the U.S. and U.K., where lawyers (or barristers) take on the responsibility of defending their clients through a series of examinations and cross-examinations. The final difference between these Western judicial systems regards the process of judicial review. For instance, The Supreme Court of the United States has the inferred right to declare a law unconstitutional, regardless of whether it was passed by the legislature or enacted by executive order. While several other countries have this power, it is not a staple of all democracies.

Rise (and Fall) of Democracies

Throughout the 20th century, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of democracies around the world. By the end of World War I, the Triple Alliance (Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy), along with the Ottoman Empire were all defeated. And after the overthrow of Nicholas II, the Czar of Russia, by the Bolsheviks in the October Revolution, the monarchical system practiced for centuries across Europe was all but destroyed. Although the rise of democratic forms of government began after World War I, it increased more rapidly after World War II. As the United States rose to become a global power, its influence began to reach every continent, mainly because of its notoriety as a democracy. In fact, part of its foreign policy strategy was to help create new democracies where more authoritarian systems of government were prevalent. A contributing factor to this evolution was the rise of the middle class. As we

have seen over the last two millennia, societies have consisted mainly of elites at the top and the masses at the bottom. However, the middle part of the 20th century introduced the lower classes to economic opportunities that greatly increased their access to resources that would enhance their quality of life. More people gained access to quality education, which equipped them with the knowledge to acquire good paying jobs. This increased individual wealth among a larger segment of the population than ever before, thus creating a middle class around the world. When this type of economic power is given to portions of the population, they develop an incentive to participate in the electoral process. In other words, as people gain stakes in an economic system, they begin to take a greater interest in politics.

The most prominent and recent example of democratization came after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. While the history of the Soviet Union will be addressed in more detail in the next chapter, the outcome of its fall led to the creation of several Eastern European democracies that have shaped world events over the last three decades. What is more, it greatly enhanced some of the supranational governmental systems and alliances that remain very influential today, such as the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Liberalizing an economy does not always lead to democratization, however. Several countries around the world have been able to open their markets to trade and growth without adopting a new system of government. Egypt managed to liberalize its market well before becoming a democracy in 2013. Moreover, Chile, South Korea, and Taiwan all opened their markets to foreign investment before transitioning to their current democratic governments.

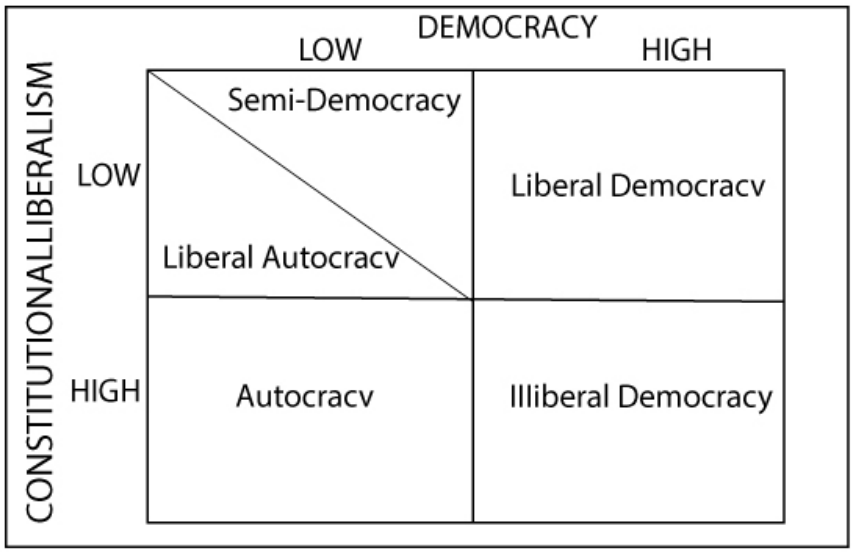
Illiberalism. Despite the rapid increase in the number of democracies around the globe, some called into question whether these new systems of government actually fostered the values inherent in a liberal democracy.Morespecifically, the holding of the existence of liberal democracy. As we saw in the preceding chapters, liberalism is a political ideology, a democratic election does not necessarily attest to while democracy is a process for determining who governs. Although these two attributes are inextricably linked, some scholars have argued that it is possible to have one without the other. The first and most prominent author to make this assertion was Fareed Zakaria. In 1997, he wrote an article for Foreign Affairs entitled "The Rise of Illiberal Democracy." Zakaria pointed to many of the newly established democracies borne out of the fall of Communism in Eastern Europe and asserted that, while they transitioned to democracy by instituting free and open elections, the governments were not protecting the civil liberties and individual rights, a trademark of classical liberalism.

Zakaria clarified that liberalism and democracy are the basic elements of a liberal democracy, although they are conceptually distinct. Democracy can be found in the existence of political liberties, which is a product of the Ancient Greek heritage, via Athenian democracy. In its most limited sense, a democracy is a descriptive term that identifies the process of selecting members of governments. These elective leaders are supposed to be chosen through a voting process that is free and fair. Moreover, the electoral process is intended to legitimize the rule of government in the eyes of the governed. Conversely, Liberalism is associated above all with the exercise of civil liberties, whose roots lie in Ancient Rome. Civil liberties are integral to constitutional liberalism, a system in which the people of a state mutually agree to cede certain individual rights to the government in order for the government to ensure the basic rights of all people. Historically, the Western tradition of politics has prioritized the protection of individual autonomy against governmental coercion, as is evident by the existence of constitutions that establish the rule of law. Liberalism is more than descriptive because it speaks of a government's goals (e.g., protecting individual rights).

Zakaria suggested there is a pervasive tendency to look positively upon governments because they are democratic. However, just because a country is democratic does not mean it is constitutionally liberal. Over time, the use of the term, democracy, has come

to encompass the notion of liberalism, to the point that liberalism has been seen as an integral part of a democracy. Yet, this is not the case. In short, they are mutually exclusive terms that can exist independently of one another. As a result, Zakaria argues that most newly minted democracies are more likely to be illiberal democracies, in that they elect governments through free and fair elections, yet the government's primary goal is not to protect individual liberties and rights. Instead, it seeks to implement the will of the majority. In fact, some governments might even use democratic processes to further illiberal conduct. Such actions can open the door for a consolidation of power that goes against both liberal and democratic principles. The Conceptual Matrix in Figure 7.1 illustrates how governments can be identified based on the presence of free and fair elections (democracy) and the level of value they place on civil liberties and individual rights (constitutional liberalism).

Figure 7.1: Conceptual



The reality is that there will always be a tradeoff between democracy and constitutional liberalism, mainly because democracy deals with the consolidation of power, while constitutional liberalism pertains to placing limits on power. Again, just because a state uses the democratic process does not make it a "good" government. As we will see in the next chapter, individuals who are elected can use their power to oppress the people and deny others essential freedoms and liberties. Therefore, the recent history of transplanting or manufacturing democracies across the globe makes up only half the equation. This is why it is important to look at more than just how leaders of government are chosen. We must also examine what they do with their power.

Conclusion

Political ideologies have played a vital role in creating systems of government around the world today. This chapter has looked at how the promotion of individual freedom and liberty is commonly expressed in democratic systems of government. While not all democracies are the same, they share several commonalities, including legislative, executive, and judicial branches of government. Having representation in government is essential for citizens to be able to have their views heard on important issues. This is where the legislative branch acquires most of its power. However, according to the delegate theory of representation discussed in the previous chapter, which is opposed to the trustee theory of representation, individual legislators are not independent actors. Rather, they serve are ambassadors for their constituents. Countries with a parliamentary system are likely to see representation mirrored in both Parliament and the Prime Minister's cabinet. However, presidential systems can have views represented in the executive branch that are opposed to the party or coalition that wields a majority in the legislative branch. Judiciaries are tasked with upholding and preserving the rule of law in a state and are usually given the ability to check the powers of the other two branches, along with the task of protecting the rights of the people. Democracies have steadily increased throughout the 20th century, but scholars have begun to question if there is more to good government than just how the leaders are chosen. Upon closer inspection, it appears that many democracies do not always adhere to the values of constitutional liberalism. This has opened up a new field of research that investigates what is called illiberalism, a form of government whose defining features will be discussed in the next chapter.

Discussion Questions:

Which branch of government do you think should have the most power? Which branch ends up having the most influence?

Does proportional representation provide a method of choosing electors that is more fair than equal representation? Briefly explain why or why not.

Is it possible for the judicial branch to be "unbiased" or "neutral?"

Do you think it is possible (or even likely) that the United States, or another Western democracy, may evolve into an illiberal democracy?

Endnotes

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Chapter 8

NONDEMOCRACIES: SOCIALIST VS. AUTHORITARIAN SYSTEMS

NONDEMOCRACIES:

SOCIALIST VS. AUTHORITARIAN SYSTEMS

The previous chapter ended by briefly introducing the concept of illiberalism, which refers to the political situation in a country where the importance of protecting the individual rights of citizens has been reduced even though the country continues to hold (or appears to hold) open and fair elections (which constitutes the essence of democracy). Such a weakening of the principal tenets of liberalism can pave the way for power to be consolidated within a government to the point that the latter enforces its will on the general populace instead of the other way around. Throughout recent history, this ideological shift towards increasing levels of institutionalized power has given rise to two separate forms of government that will be the focus of this chapter. We will examine the different types of governmental system that promote egalitarianism, a view of equality that manifests itself primarily in the forms of socialism or communism and authoritative government; in each instance, power is consolidated in the hands of a singular leader or small group of leaders within the government. In practice, both systems have very different applications, yet at times they can exhibit some similarities. However, it is important to remember that we are focusing on those who exercise power within each political system. Providing a holistic understanding of all the different shapes and sizes these systems can take is beyond the scope of this writing. Rather, the focus will be on some of the more prominent examples over the last 75 to 100 years.

Before delving into the intricacies of these governmental systems, I want you to think about your own personal upbringing. Some of you reading this have grown up with siblings, and those of you who did not are likely to have close friends with siblings. In either case, think about the relationships that your parents (or your friends' parents) had with their children. At some point, one child was likely given preferential treatment or rewarded with something, upon which time the sibling made the statement, "that's not fair!" Regardless of the situation or circumstance, there was probably an attempt made by the parents to offer some sort of justification for why "favoritism" was shown to one child. As someone with siblings, and the parent of multiple children, I have often dealt with such situations, one of which in particular stands out, at a time when I was in high school and about to turn 16. About a year earlier, my grandfather had purchased a car for my older sister to drive, but he told my father to give me that car when I turned 16. My father went against the wishes of my grandfather and allowed my sister to keep the car because he knew she needed it more than I did. What is more, we had a rule in my house that the kids had to save up money to help pay for a car, and I was broke. A pretty big argument ensued, though I could only really defend my position by declaring, "that's not fair!" After all, my grandfather paid for the car, and he wanted me to have it. However, my father (who is much wiser than me or my grandfather) chose to do what was best for the family. Even as a parent, I have had to make these same types of decisions, where I give preferential treatment to a child because the circumstances call for it. However, if I continually give preferential treatment to that same child repeatedly without any regard for my other child, it can be argued that I am abusing my power and authority as a parent. At some point, I must consider the needs and interests of both children, as well as my wife (and even my own), because we are a family. This example serves as a microcosm for understanding the different approaches to governing, especially when people are not perceived or treated as equals.

Nondemocracies

Defining nondemocracies might appear easy when one considers that in a democratic form of government, mechanisms have been established that enable citizens to elect individuals to political office. However, emphasizing the act of voting can be somewhat

misleading, especially when one realizes that elections do in fact occur in nondemocracies. Therefore, creating a working definition of a nondemocracy requires the examination of several factors and attributes within a state's system of government. Both form and function are to be evaluated before determining whether they are democratic or not. As can be seen in Chapter 6, political ideologies serve as a guiding force for the creation and implementation of governments that seek to exert power within a state, yet this does not always mean that the people within the state are given a significant role in making decisions. Nondemocratic governments restrain the populace from participating in the process of governing, albeit in different ways. For instance, some might limit who can compete or take part in the electoral process, which violates the notion of freedom of choice. For example, participation can be denied or restricted by the state. Certain groups of people may be prohibited from voting (e.g., students, political dissenters, or journalists), while in some cases people may only be allowed to vote for a specific political group or candidate. The government might even actively suppress groups in society or produce laws and policies that promote the views of a prominent demographic. In short, nondemocratic governments may have elections, but they do not produce the forms of government the reflect the will of the people, as described in the previous chapter.

Another defining feature of nondemocratic forms of government appears in their attempts to restrict choice in economic matters. Within most advanced democracies, we see limited control of the economy by governmental institutions. This is a principle of capitalism, also described in Chapter 6. However, government can and does play an active role in regulating the behavior of private economic actors. In other words, the public realm and the private sphere are inextricably linked, which of course means that the actions in one system can dramatically affect the actions of the other. In fact, much of what follows in this textbook will address the relationship between politics and the economy of a state, and vice versa. Finally, analyzing the distribution of power is another important way for us to distinguish nondemocracies from democracies. We should note, however, that nondemocracies have diverse systems of leadership. Some will have a singular leader that oversees the entirety of government, while others may distribute power within government by function or service. Some nondemocracies blur the lines between civilian and military leadership, while others use the military as a tool of the political party in power.

Egalitarianism. Much of the notion of **egalitarianism** up to this point has focused on equal participation in the electoral process (e.g., democratic elections), but there is a fiscal or economic egalitarianism that calls for the same level of opportunity or consumption of goods and services. This view can exist in both democratic and nondemocratic systems. For example, social democracies can be viewed as a hybrid system, in that they do allow for popular participation but with limitations. Social democracy dates to the 19th century socialist movement, yet it advocated a peaceful transition from capitalism to socialism, as compared to the revolutionary process carried out by Lenin and the Bolshevik revolutionists. In social democratic systems, the term "egalitarian" is often used to refer to a position that favors, for any of a wide array of reasons, a greater degree of equality of income and wealth across persons than currently exists. The most prominent form of social democracy is found in the region of Scandinavia. Commonly called the Nordic model, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden all have social democratic governments that seek to minimize (or eliminate) socioeconomic disparities by controlling industries to ensure equal access to essential services like health services and workers' compensation. While there are privately owned segments of the economy, the state has been granted powers that extend beyond the types of regulation seen in many capitalist states in the West. In common with those states, however, they also have democratically elected governments.

Egalitarianism is a contested concept in the political and economic realms. An egalitarian might be one who maintains that people ought to be treated as social and moral equals. In this sense,

a non-egalitarian would be one who believes that people born into a higher social caste, or a favored race or ethnicity, or with an above-average stock of traits deemed desirable, ought somehow to count for more than others in calculations that determine what ought to be done.[1] Moreover, proponents of *economic or material* egalitarianism argue that every member of society should have equal access to wealth (e.g., the ability to make money), whether through various forms of investing, entrepreneurship, or income wages from employment. All these efforts should translate into everyone in the state having similar levels of income and money.

Socialist Governments

It is hard to fully and accurately define a socialist state because the meanings and interpretations of the term, *socialism*, have evolved over the years. If socialist governments use political and economic institutions to close the gap between a nation's rich and poor, then the bar is set relatively low. However, if this is done by ensuring that the means of production, distribution, and exchange of goods and services are publicly owned (the profits are shared by all), then the threshold for making this determination is much higher. Even still, this basic definition encompasses a wide range of real-world variations on socialism. In its purest form, socialism is distinctly progressive and focused on tenets akin to modern liberalism. In practice, however, socialist countries can range from impressively progressive to staunchly conservative, depending on the level of corruption within the government.

Unlike social democracies, pure socialist states have aligned themselves more directly with both the political and economic systems of socialism. There is no specific set of criteria that are necessary to establish a socialist state. Rather, a country just needs to identify itself as socialist. Therefore, a state can claim to be socialist or even have a constitution stating that they are based on socialism, even if they do not rigidly follow the economic or political systems associated with socialism. In short, if a state believes that the foundation of their political and economic policy rests on the principles of socialism, it can identify itself as a socialist state. Similarly, states that might appear to follow some socialist or "progressive" principles (e.g., instituting universal health care or providing free college tuition) yet do not openly declare themselves as socialist are not regarded as socialist. While this might sound rudimentary, think about those countries that claim to be democratic because they hold elections, despite not being a democracy (I'm looking at you, Russia!).

At present, there are four overtly socialist states that follow a form of Marxism-Leninism: China, Cuba, Laos, and Vietnam. While each one of them has the term "republic" in their official names, each state has a unitary system of government that is controlled by one party. (China and Vietnam, we should also note, are fully integrated members of the global capitalism economy.) Several countries around the world have constitutional references to socialism (as described above), although they do not consider themselves to be a socialist state. Dozens of states adhered to a form of Marxism-Leninism at one point in time with several more following another derivative of socialism. It is also worth pointing out that a number of states currently have a ruling party that aligns with socialist or communist principles.

Communist Governments. Most self-proclaimed socialist countries base their political system on the Marxist-Leninist model created by the Soviet Union, as described in Chapter 6. On account of the fact that these countries follow that model, some of them are mistakenly thought to be communist states, when in reality communism is a more refined form of socialism that actively works to eliminate private ownership entirely, end class conflict, and work toward the dismantling of the state. To complicate matters, many political scientists argue that no country has ever succeeded in implementing a purely socialist or communist government, since in every such instance, some degree of capitalism and/or governmental overreach becomes an integral part of the socioeconomic system. What is more, there exist hybrid democratic socialist systems that combine democratic governments with

socialist economies in which aspects of production and wealth are to varying degrees collectively owned. The end result is that many nations are considered socialist, but only a few are currently considered communist by the world at large—and even these countries often refer to themselves as socialist rather than communist nation-states.

Soviet Union vs. Communist China

Arguably two of the most prominent communist governments over the last 100 years are the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and the People's Republic of China. Both political systems identified as Communist, yet their political and economic systems were vastly different. After the October Revolution in 1917, the Bolshevik Party took control of the Russian Empire and established the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR). Roughly five years later, they signed a treaty with Soviet Republics in Belarus, Ukraine, and the Transcaucasia (modern day Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan) to form the USSR. By 1956, the number of Soviet Republics had increased to 15 and was governed by two separate assistance treaties. The first was the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon), the regional economic organization for the socialist states of Central and Eastern Europe. A military complement to this agreement was the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance (commonly known as the Warsaw Pact). These two pacts served as the framework for the Union until its dissolution in 1991 and were intended to rival the Committee of European Economic Cooperation in western Europe, along with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Taken together, these economic and military alliances divided continental Europe into two rival factions, with the United States and Canada aligning themselves with Western European countries. Under the Soviet structure, each state republic served as an individual member of the collective union; however, joining it came at the cost of relinquishing their individual sovereignty. The Soviet government was led by a chairman, known as the "premier", who was nominated by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) and elected by delegates at the first plenary session of a newly elected Supreme Soviet (central legislative body) of the Soviet Union. Certain governments could have over 100 government ministers, serving as first deputy premiers (deputy head of government), deputy premiers, government ministers or heads of state committees/commissions. Each was chosen by the premier and confirmed by the Supreme Soviet. The Government of the Soviet Union exercised its executive powers in accordance with the constitution of the Soviet Union and legislation enacted by the Supreme Soviet. As evidenced by its structure, state governments and the central union government were chosen by the party rather than elected by citizens.

A similar, yet distinct, system of government has been employed in China since the founding of the People's Republic in 1949. Mao Zedong led the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to victory over the nationalist party and established it as the ruling political party of modern China. The CCP has maintained a political monopoly since its founding a century ago, overseeing the country's rapid economic growth and rise as a global power. Political influencers were inspired by the October Revolution in Russia and founded the CCP in 1921 on the principles of Marxism-Leninism. This led to tensions between the Communist party and the nationalist Kuomintang, its primary rival, which finally erupted into a civil war won by the Communists in 1949. Despite a series of market reforms in the late 1970s, the modern Chinese state adheres to the Leninist conception of the vanguard party, which in this respect makes the governmental system similar to the ones in Cuba, North Korea, and Laos. The party relies on three main pillars: central control of personnel, dispersion of information (propaganda), and the People's Liberation Army (PLA). As the armed forces wing of the CCP, the PLA's main objectives include protecting the party's rule and defending the party's interests.

The National People's Congress (NPC) is the national state legislature, controlling the constitution and basic laws, as well as overseeing the election and supervision of officials of other government

entities. The legislature meets annually for about two weeks every March to review and approve major policy directives, laws, the annual budget, and any major personnel changes that are needed. The NPC's Standing Committee (NPCSC) is tasked with adopting most national legislation, as well as interpreting the constitution and laws, including constitutional reviews. The President (currently Xi Jinping) acts as a head of state in compliance with decisions made by the NPCSC but is also able to exercise an independent power to nominate the Premier (their version of a Prime Minister), who acts as the head of government. Elected separately by the NPC, Vice-presidents have no power themselves, but assist the President. The State Council, known as the Central People's Government, is China's executive branch, headed by the Premier of China. Besides the Premier, the State Council has a variable number of Vice Premiers, five State Councilors (similar to vice premiers but with a narrower scope of authority), the Secretary-General (similar to a cabinet secretary), and 26 ministers and other cabinet-level department heads. The State Council has other ministries and agencies with specific responsibilities. It is primarily tasked with presenting most initiatives to the NPCSC for consideration after previous endorsement by the CCP's Politburo Standing Committee, which is headed by the CCP General Secretary, who also happens to the President of the PRC. The NPC generally approves State Council policy, although it has the power to enforce revisions to proposed laws. China's judicial system performs prosecutorial and court functions. China's courts are supervised by the Supreme People's Court (SPC), headed by the Chief Justice. The Supreme People's Procuratorate (SPP) oversees and supervises prosecutions at the provincial, prefecture, and county levels.

Authoritarian Governments

Authoritarian governments are distinct from other systems, in that their elective officials are not chosen by the people and have the power to govern as they see fit, unencumbered by any need to consult with the general citizenry. The number of rulers at the head of these governments can range from one person who wields the power of a dictator to a small group that leads a certain political party. Dating back to Greek antiquity, authoritarian governments have existed in some form or fashion. They are normally characterized by their ability to suppress any and all forms of dissent among the people, as well as their ability to control the dissemination of public information. All types of media are either heavily censored or produced by the state. Either way, the policies of the government are justified, distorted, and promoted through various form of state propaganda that attempt to instill a sense of fear and/or loyalty in the general population.

The origins of authoritarian governments are as diverse as their various methods of governing. Oftentimes, they have emerged through the use of physical force, whereby a faction commits coordinated acts of violence in order to accumulate power over the people within an established territory. Authoritarian governments can also establish themselves through the democratic process—for instance, when a charismatic leader gets elected and then gradually consolidates power to the point where there is little to no opposition to their rule. It is even possible for a person to become an authoritarian ruler by being anointed (or appointed) as the successor to a previous authoritarian ruler. Along with absolute monarchies, authoritarian governments can be controlled through military dictatorships, as seen throughout the continent of Africa and Latin America. This particular method usually occurs when a country's armed forces overthrow a civilian-led government. This power grab happened in the country of Burma in February 2021, when the state's military forces arrested senior leaders of the party who were poised to win national elections and replaced the civilian-led government with a military junta led by the person in charge of the country's army. An authoritarian government can also come to power following an armed conflict, such as a civil or proxy war. This is how the Communist party came to power in China, after they defeated their nationalist adversaries in a civil war that ended in 1949. An authoritarian government can also come to power by means of popular uprisings. A new government can assume

power when masses of people demonstrate and engage in campaigns of civil disobedience in protest of the current government. This allows the new government to seize control of the state and suppress opposition to its rule. This happened in 1979, when the Shah of Iran was removed during the Islamic Revolution, and the Ayatollah Khomeini was installed as supreme leader. A popular uprising pressured the Iranian monarch and ruler, the Shah, to flee the country. In his absence, the Ayatollah Khomeini seized power and installed an Islamic theocracy, where an Islamic fundamentalist dictator imposed Islamic-based laws on its people and violently suppressed any opposition to its rule.

Peaceful transfers of power from one authoritarian ruler to another can take place, particularly when the current ruler chooses someone to succeed them. Throughout the last two millennia, absolute monarchs have transferred power to their offspring, other members of their family, or whomever else they choose to succeed them upon their deaths. This occurred in 2015, when, under Saudi Arabia's absolute monarchy, King Abdullah was succeeded upon his death by his younger brother, King Salman. It is likely that when King Salman dies, he will likely be replaced by the Crown Prince, Muhammed Bin Salman. However, such lines of succession are not only established under absolute monarchies. For instance, in North Korea, which is a one-party, communist dictatorship, Kim Jong Il succeeded his father Kim Jong Un. There have even been instances when an authoritarian government rose to power through democratic, parliamentary elections. The most infamous authoritarian leader in the 20th century, Adolf Hitler, came to power as part of a winning coalition, following a series of democratic elections, which enabled him to consolidate power within the government and declare himself *Der Fürher* (single leader) of Germany.

Authoritarian regimes can also spring up when a military regime, in which the armed forces of the country, control the government. One of the most notorious instances of a military *coup d'etat* was the al-Fateh Revolution or the 1 September Revolution in 1969. It was carried out in Libya by the Free Unionist Officers Movement, a group of military officers led by Colonel Muammar Gaddafi, which led to the overthrow of King Idris I. Similarly, Saddam Hussein seized power on July 22, 1979, in Iraq. As vice president, Hussein staged a coup and replaced Hassan al-Bakr as president. In both instances, leaders used the state's military forces to secure power, upon which time it became a tool for them to suppress internal dissent and control the whole government.

Illiberalism Revisited. As we discussed in the previous chapter regarding the concept of illiberalism, it is possible for democracy (free and open elections) and authoritarianism to coexist. Traditionally, the main distinction between a liberal democracy and an authoritarian government is that in the former, people have a greater say in political affairs. For example, they get to choose who leads them, and there are checks and balances that limit the power of the different branches of government. Yet, in authoritarian governments, power is concentrated under one person or a group of people who restrict popular participation in government. The state also tends to place limits on the media (free press), on the judiciary's independence, or on the powers of the legislative branch. Where democracy is intended to represent pluralism, authoritarianism relies upon repression. Elections in a democracy are freer, promote more choices, and the government does not interfere in the outcome. In an authoritarian style of government, there may or may not be elections, but the choice will inevitably be more limited, and it will be subject to covert or overt interference from the incumbent government, which will almost never accept the results if it loses.

Within Western democracies, a free press, an independent judiciary, and a well-functioning civil society are all equally considered pillars of democracy. Each of these essential features provide citizens with a means of holding government accountable. Liberal democracy makes it possible for people to speak their mind, which in turn encourages creativity, innovation and socio-political reform. Conversely, an authoritarian government can make it very difficult for journalists to do their job. For instance, by restricting

their ability to operate or even encouraging attacks against the media, authoritarian leaders can make it harder for a narrative different from the government's version or framing of events to emerge. In other words, the media becomes a propaganda tool of the government, used to manipulate the population. Authoritarian governments inevitably hinder a society's progress, both economically and politically, because they impose limits on civic engagement.

Conclusion

Nondemocracies consist of governments in which the people and the government are not connected in terms of both the input and the output dimensions of government. In other words, the people are not tasked with self-governing in terms of input (freedom to put ideas into government and to shape government through elections, contacting officials, lobbying, etc.) and they do not receive the benefit of an "output" (in the form of laws and policies) that is supposed to promote the public welfare. This lack of participation is a key indicator that government is not in the hands of a self-governing people. Nondemocracies typically come in the form of either socialist/communist systems or outright authoritarian systems where power is consolidated under a single individual or small group of leaders. Throughout the 20th century, many countries have tried nondemocratic methods of governance, with varying degrees of "success." Although countries have the freedom to declare themselves a certain form of government, a proper and thorough examination of its structure and practices enables us to determine how closely they adhere to the ideological principles that they espouse.

Authoritarian governments can, it is true, experience economic advances and prosperity. Russia and China provide great examples of authoritarian regimes that have enhanced the national economy. Russia has leveraged much of their natural resources to gain a foothold on continental Europe, while China has made its institutions inclusive, encouraging entrepreneurshipand wealth creation. On a political level, however, neither regime is willing to share power with a new class or political party. Moreover, they both have repeatedly intervened and dictated to companies what is possible and what is not. This type of leadership places limits on the ability of individuals to thrive. At some point, the paths towards further economic progress and that of continued political control are likely to diverge, especially when their economies become ever more finely interwoven with liberal democratic states. History has proven that authoritarian governments are more than willing to place limits on people's economic opportunities, primarily as a means to silence dissenters. This has occurred in several European countries, like Hungary, Poland, and Turkey, where leaders have placed restrictions on what their political opponents can and cannot do to raise money.[2]

Discussion Questions

Do you think Aristotle would classify a nondemocrcy as a proper or improper form of government?

Can a nondemocracy be democratic? Explain your answer.

What are the main distinctions between democracy and authoritarianism?

Do you think it is possible for the United States to become a nondemocracy?

Do you see any positives to a nondemocratic form of government? Why or why not)?

Endnotes

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Chapter 9

THE PROCESS OF GOVERNING:PUBLIC POLICY AND ADMINISTRATION

THE PROCESS OF GOVERNING: PUBLIC POLICY AND ADMINISTRATION

While the previous two chapters have explained the types of governments around the world, especially how the various branches of government are structured and tasked with different duties and responsibilities, this chapter focuses its attention primarily on the function of government. Much of the literature that we have covered thus far has dealt with the theories, ideas, and views regarding the purpose of government, whereas this chapter seeks to unwrap the operations within government. This field of study is most commonly referred to as **public administration.** What is more, the effect or result of governmental activity is usually called **public policy.** Hence, the realms of public policy and public administration represent the sum total of legislative and executive operations. Public departments and agencies exist to carry out the will of each branch of government, regardless of the political system. This chapter is broken down into two separate sections. The first describes the intricacies of public policy, including the process of creating, implementing, and evaluating its effectiveness. The second addresses the administrative state, also known as the "bureaucracy." This term is viewed by many in a negative light, yet it is an essential part of government at every level. Bureaucrats (a technical term for non-elected government employees) are public sector employees (administrators) that carry out the day-to-day functions of government within the constraints imposed on them by elected officials. They are also responsible for ensuring that policies are properly implemented and evaluated, based on the directions given to them by officials within either the legislative or executive leadership. In short, public administrators are tasked with carrying out public policies. Within this section, we will also examine the administrative state and its impact on democracy.

Public Policy

Public policy consists of the network of agreements, rules, regulations, and laws produced by governmental decisions and non-decisions (i.e., policy is what government chooses to do or not to do). This expansive definition suggests that public policy encompasses the sum of all activity within the governmental process as it relates to addressing an issue that affects the public. There are also different types of public policies that should be considered. *Distributive* policies focus on the distribution of public resources, while *redistributive* policies deal with changing the allocation of existing resources. *Regulatory* policies are intended to regulate activities within a society, while constituent policies either create or reorganize institutional resources. Finally, there are some symbolic policies that are primarily intended to project *the distribution of values* that signify the status, dignity, and worth of certain individuals and/or groups. Of course, these categories are not airtight, and a given type of policy may contain one or more of these different elements.

We see then that the **public policy process** refers to the set of activities through which demands and support for governmental action are developed, promoted, formulated, implemented, evaluated, and refined. In short, the means through which government entities engage in the activities surrounding issues that affect the general population is known as the public policy process.

Systematically studying the public policy process is important because it provides a broad yet also in-depth understanding of the complexity of a public policy issue, as well as the environmental variables that affect its creation and implementation. For instance, virtually every public policy will affect people in many ways. As a result, there are likely to be winners and losers and the risks involved will compel actors to seek to influence the creation of the policy along with its implementation. By observing this interaction, we can better understand the reasons a policy is created, as well as how it is implemented. Studying the public policy process also enhances our capacity to determine why a policy is achieving the intended goal. Moreover, since public policies are created andimplemented

within the public arena, multiple political actors can exert an influence upon their design and enactment. While the legislature is commonly seen as the originator of public policies, political actors outside of government, such as interest groups, can influence them. What is more, the administrative state has been delegated with the authority of making certain rules that will affect how a policy is executed. Finally, the judicial branch also has the ability to determine if a policy violates either the civil liberties or civil rights of a group of citizens. In sum, it is vital that we study the public policy process because doing so will provide a holistic understanding of our governmental system and enable us to determine how and why a particular policy is a success or failure.

Within the public policy environment, there are several significant factors to consider. For example, since the United States is a representative democracy, the people have entrusted the policymaking process to elected representatives at the local, state, and federal levels; however, the public policy process does not take place in a vacuum. Rather, it occurs within an environment where actors other than elected representatives can exert influence. The policy environment can include multiple policy processes, but any one of these processes can also occur within a larger one. For instance, while the national security process may be viewed as a self-contained entity, it also falls within the domestic policy process; it can, in addition, directly affect the foreign policy process. Similarly, while there is a local policy process as such, it is also directly affected by both the state and federal policy processes. What is more, the international policy process directly affects the American policy environment, as other nation-state actors can affect how policies are created and implemented within our borders. Finally, social issues can affect economic issues, which in turn can affect security issues. In short, the sum of all these processes is the policy environment, and the creation and implementation of a public policy is dramatically affected by each of these environmental variables.

Because public policies affect the people within a political system, one cannot discount the importance of social groups as significant influencers. People influence the policy process in a variety of ways, primarily because these policies can affect them once they are implemented. Out of the diverse social system operating within the United States there emerge divergent beliefs and values that will compel people to desire different policy outcomes. Therefore, the political system will be affected by the expression of these beliefs and values, resulting in a public policy that will likely have winners and losers. It is also important to point out what is meant by "the public." In the US, there is an elite group of people who in many cases are able to exert a tremendous amount of influence over policy outcomes—to a degree far greater than what is possible for members of the general public. At the same time, there is an attentive segment of the public that monitors political activity to a much greater extent that the average person. There is also a smaller group that is not only attentive but also intimately involved in the policy process. Finally, there are those stakeholders that have a vested interest in certain policy outcomes. As a result, these groups wield varying degrees of policy influence within the policy environment.

What is more, given the number of different classes in our country, the economic system is another significant factor that shapes the policy process. Those who have a lot will likely wield more influence than those who do not, and this can result in economic policies that benefit one group more than another. Economic policies also directly affect the ability of a government to perform its primary functions because it takes money for any organization to accomplish its mission. For instance, when a person is employed by an organization, they will receive financial compensation for the work they perform. If the government is unable to pay its employees to perform certain functions, then public services will not be provided. Moreover, the government regulates the economy, and this activity will directly affect how people and organizations engage in commerce. Hence, the interaction of both people and money is likely to have the greatest impact on the policy environment and, by extension, the public policy process.

Public Policy Process. The public policy process consists of five primary stages: agenda setting, policy formulation, policy adoption, policy implementation, and policy evaluation. The first, agenda setting, entails identifying and defining a specific problem. Both elected officials and influential members of the public can help play a key role at this stage. Interest groups that help certain officials get elected will likely try to help influence the agenda for each session of the legislature; they may also support a candidate for executive office. Next, a policy is formulated, whereby potential solutions to the problem are identified, studied, and debated. The intended goals of a public policy are also established at this stage. Once a potential solution is identified, the governing body adopts the policy through either a formal vote or a delegation of authority to those who will oversee its implementation. Again, both elected and unelected officials can play a role during this stage, but it should also be noted that the experience and expertise of bureaucrats could come into play here as well. Since the administrative state is responsible for implementing a policy, it is possible (and likely) that they will have some level of influence in this formulation process. Once that authority is granted, those tasked with implementing the policy are responsible for ensuring that the policy is properly executed as defined by the governing body. This is where government agencies can have a predominant influence; however, this is does not mean they have sole authority or autonomy. It has been shown that organized interest groups can also affect changes in the implementation stage through the rulemaking process. The judicial branch can also make determinations on the equitable implementation of a policy. Finally, after the policy is effectively executed, a range of actors will evaluate the policy to determine if the desired end has been achieved. If the desired goal was not accomplished, then the policy is refined in a way that will hopefully achieve the desired effect. At this stage, a multitude of actors can provide input into a policy's success or failure, and it falls primarily on the legislature to determine what steps, if any, should be taken. This can come through enacting new legislation or conducting oversight of particular environmental variables. [1]

The policy formulation stage is arguably the most important part of the policy process, as this is where identifying the proper solution to the problem takes place. This is also where the biggest problems with a policy can come into play, primarily on account of the diverse interests vying to influence it. First, identifying a problem is relatively easy, in comparison to finding the proper solution. If the answer to the problem is not properly identified and formulated, the rest of the process will become moot. For instance, implementing a policy that was improperly formulated will likely lead to failure, since by that point it is too late to modify the proposal, a responsibility that rests with the body tasked with formulating and adopting the policy: the legislative branch. Moreover, while evaluating a policy can of course help diagnose any problems with it, there remains a need to go through the formulation process again, even if that means merely refining what was originally proposed. In any case, the different stages in the process are all directly affected by the formulation of a policy. It should also be noted that who makes the policy should be considered because the party in power is usually given the upper hand in determining how policies are written and who is most likely to benefit from them. A policy cycle refers to the complete process of the five stages in the policy process. However, a policy cycle does not end with the evaluation stage; rather, it initiates a new policy cycle by way of beginning the policy maintenance/ modification or termination stage of a policy. There are also different types of policy cycles. For instance, in a constitutional republic, the government actively engages in the basic policy cycle, as it begins the process of determining new policies. However, the nature of evaluating public policies will inevitably lead to some form of modification, whether it results in the termination or modification of an existing policy. Regardless of the outcome, any steps taken after the evaluation stage will lead to the creation of a . This cycle can either be sequential or continuous. It is sequential if it leads to the creation of a new policy; continuous if it modifies the existing policy. In either case, the new policy cycle will entail the same stages as the previous one because all stages are necessary for ensuring that the cycle is full and complete. However, it

is possible that each policy cycle could have more stages than the basic cycle. In this case, the cycle is a more dynamic or complex iteration of the previous one.

Rarely are existing policies terminated. Instead, they are likely modified or updated to reflect the current environment. For this reason, when a subsequent policy cycle is initiated, it is more effective to see the overall process as a series of policy cycles that are interconnected with one another. In other words, the series of cycles could be regarded as different generations of the same cycle, with the initial cycle representing the first generation, and each subsequent cycle standing in for another generation. Because societies change and evolve over time, it is only natural that certain policies will adapt to the changes in the policy environment, which does not always mean that a brand-new policy cycle is created; rather, a new generational cycle may begin to take shape. This way of viewing a policy cycle is beneficial because it encourages observers to regard policy cycles as inextricably linked, given the fact that they contain similar characteristics and attributes. For example, if the first attempt at addressing a problem in the policy formulation stage was deemed ineffective at addressing the overall problem, actors should take heed of this valuable information and not replicate the same mistakes in the next iteration of the cycle. Whether it was not having the right support in the adoption stage or delegating improper authority to those tasked with implementing a policy, these issues must be considered in subsequent iterations. You have probably heard the saying that doing the same thing over and over again but expecting different results is a sign of insanity. Well, seeing the policy process as a series of cycles is helpful in ensuring that the same mistakes are not repeated.

With the expansion of governmental activity regarding the public policy process, some observers have sought to engage in the analysis *of* policy, as well as the analysis *for* policy, a distinction that is rather significant when it comes to understanding the role of policy in government and the impact it has on the citizenry. Analysis *of* policy focuses primarily on understanding the various aspects of a policy, whereas analysis *for* policy examines the quality of these policies after they have been adopted and implemented. In other words, one concerns the ends and the other concerns the means. Embedded within these typologies are multiple ways of looking at a policy. When attempting to discern the impact of a policy, one must look at several components of it in order to include the contents or the inputs that go into the implementation process. Moreover, one cannot look solely at a specific set of outputs; rather, one must also consider the outcomes or effects that stem from the policy over time. In sum, there must be a holistic analysis of a policy, from start to finish, before effecting, analyzing its impact, and determining which next steps need to be taken. In a similar way, there are several aspects of analysis for policy that must be considered. A proper evaluation of a policy must be conducted, and the information retrieved from the evaluation should guide any follow-up activity, such as modification or termination. Furthermore, when determining the changes to be made, it is important to delineate between the policy and the process. For instance, a good policy could be poorly implemented. Conversely, the implementation of a policy could be done in a relatively efficient and equitable manner; yet it cannot overcome any problems inherent in the actual policy. In either case, it is important to precisely diagnose the issues of a policy before acting, as this will ensure a better policy cycle in subsequent iterations. Such a diagnosis requires proper advocacy of the policy, the process, or in some cases both.

The Administrative State

The term “bureaucracy” continues to be seen as a dirty word in American politics. Over the years, the stereotypical complaint is that bureaucracies behave as they do because they are run by unqualified personnel2 whose incompetence creates unnecessary rules, inefficiency, and "red tape.” However, understanding how bureaucracies work requires a closer examination. In short, a public bureaucracy is any organization within the executive branch of government, whether at the federal, state, or local level. Although the

executive branch is not explicitly mentioned in the Constitution, its powers are inherently vested through Article II, Section III, where the President "shall take Care that the Laws be faithfully executed." These laws are, therefore, executed by various executive departments and agencies created through legislation or administrative action. Political scientist James Q. Wilson identifies four types of bureaucracies: production agencies; craft agencies; procedural agencies; and coping agencies; each of these types are present at every echelon of government in some form.[3]

To explain why government agencies behave as they do, it is crucial to recognize that they are public entities, not independent businesses, a distinction that gives those working within them a a distinct set of incentives. Each public agency must operate under three types of environmental constraints that are specific to the public sector. Unlike private businesses, public bureaucracies: 1) cannot lawfully retain and contribute to the private benefit of their members the earnings of the organizations; 2) cannot allocate the factors of production in accordance with the preferences of the organization's administrators; and 3) must serve goals that are not of the organization's own choosing. Moreover, bureaucrats do not (legally) profit from their positions. While normal businesses try to limit expenditures and raise revenues to generate profits, bureaucrats have no such incentive. As a result, perceived inefficiencies of public agencies are likely a byproduct of the constraints that are imposed on them.[4]

Public bureaucracies are primarily made up of three groups of actors: operators, managers, and executives. The traditional top-down approach assumes that executives receive their guidance from the legislative branch and then hand the responsibility for the policy implementation down to managers, who oversee the day-to-day work of the operators. Operators are considered "street-level bureaucrats" and responsible for engaging the public and providing the public service, whereas managers are the ones who must ensure the organization is pursuing its intended goals.[5] Executives are high ranking individuals responsible for ensuring constituent services are provided, as well as projecting a compelling vision of the tasks, culture, and importance of their agencies. Each organization also has a set of unique characteristics that can guide and influence its efforts. The organization's culture, which is made up of beliefs, interests, and historical or institutional circumstances specific to it, can greatly impact the power and discretion with which it carries out its mission.[6]

Politics-Administration Dichotomy. In an effort to maximize the efficacy of the administrative state, public administration theory began with the notion that the implementation of policy was separate and distinct from politics. In short, this theory held that if certain political factors were removed from the administrative function of government, it would become more effective and provide greater efficiency. Before becoming the 28th President, Woodrow Wilson, along with other scholars like Frank Goodnow and Luther Gulick, are considered the forefathers of this school of thought, and others expounded on their work to present an idealized public bureaucracy that is both uncorrupted by politics and filled with expert administrators.[7]

Although a professional bureaucracy was supported by both scholars and practitioners throughout the first half of the 20th century, some political scientists aptly warned that an increasingly powerful administrative state with unchecked discretion could pose a grave threat to democracy. Goodnow and Gulick were writing during a period when the main effect of the New Deal was the development of an expansive and more powerful bureaucracy. They argued that a philosophy based upon democratic principles must become engrained in states, which would enable public agencies to set up administrative functions that are sufficiently democratized.[8] While there is a great need for technical expertise and professionalism within the executive branch, the latter's elective officials must still be held accountable to the people. Yet, during this time, there was a widespread perception that the federal branches of government were[1]

argely unconcerned with the bureaucracy, a lack of oversight which allowed agencies to run rampant.[9]

Principal-Agent Theory. Principal-agent theory, also known as agency theory, is widely accepted as having provided an accurate way of interpreting what political control of the bureaucracy entails. This model, which originated in economics, has often been applied by political scientists in an effort to understand the relationship between bureaucrats and politicians.10 In its simplest form, principal-agent theory assumes that social life consists of a series of contracts. In political science circles, the bureaucracy is viewed as the agent, and it is controlled by elected officials, who are considered the principals in this process. Simply stated, agency theory—which assumes there is a politics-administration dichotomy—posits that bureaucracies are either out of control or are at least difficult to control. As a result, the relationship between elected leaders and civil servants or bureaucrats is hierarchical. Moreover, this relationship gives rise to a form of interaction that occurs through a series of contracts or transactions between a buyer of services and a provider of services. In other words, the theory seeks to explain how the principal can motivate the agent to behave in the principal's interest, despite the fact that the principal cannot completely control or monitor the actions and behaviors of the agent. Therefore, the legislator seeks to buy services through enacting a set of laws, regulations, and executive orders in order to establish some manner of co-management between himself and the provider. The bureaucratic "seller" of the services then attempts to provide the service within the confines of the rules established by the buyer

Within the realm of public administration, the principal-agent model makes several key assumptions regarding the relationship between elected officials and bureaucrats. First, the theory assumes that both the elected officials and bureaucrats are interest- maximizing and opportunistic. The second assumption is that the interests, or goals, set forth by both the principal and the agent are divergent. Depending on the situation, these goals are either misaligned or in direct conflict with each other. Third, the information about what is needed to accomplish the task is asymmetrically distributed; hence, the agent has greater information than the principal. In other words, there is an informational gap in favor of the agent. This is in large part because they understand the policy and organizational procedures required for implementation. As a result, agents can use their informational supremacy to manipulate the politicians or the processes (or both) to benefit their desired goal.11 These assumptions suggest that elected officials are at a significant disadvantage when it comes to effectively controlling bureaucracies and ensuring that they implement the laws given to them by elected principals. What is more, the inability of the principal to continually monitor the daily operations of the agent opens the door for the agent to utilize more discretion, which can be used to either do something outside the wishes of the principal or to not do anything at all. This practice of non-compliance is commonly referred to as shirking. To regain the upper hand, politicians can overcome these difficulties through enacting better oversight or making more savvy appointments. These are some of the relevant tools at their disposal to keep bureaucracies in check.

Congressional Control Measures. According to Articles I and II of the American Constitution, the legislative branch of government is given the responsibility of creating laws and policies that are then handed over to the executive branch, by way of the president, to be "faithfully" executed. At first glance, a reading of this process lends support to both the politics-administration dichotomy, as well as the principal-agent theory; however, a closer look at this relationship reveals several major issues that need to be addressed. The scholarly work that has observed this relationship suggests that there are several constraints placed on both the principals and the agents. As it relates to Congress, elected officials are responsible for more than just ensuring the execution of laws. Conversely, agents have more than just one principal to worry about. For instance, the president is also considered a principal, as well as the judicial branch. What is more, there is empirical evidence that shows bureaucrats are

influenced by lobbyists, interest groups, and individual citizens. All these principals play either a direct or indirect role in the political and administrative process of policy making and implementation.

In the spirit of the Constitution, congressional scholars have asserted that legislators are the most important actors, since bureaucrats are responsible for watching the rewards and sanctions flowing from Congress. However, they also suggest that congressional control is difficult to observe, seeing how the mechanisms are automatic and indirect.[12] Instead, legislators will rely on or delegate decisions to bureaucrats when dealing with uncertainty, especially when they are working with policy-motivated agents.[13] In short, while the legislative branch does have available mechanisms to constrain the bureaucracy, they will relinquish those powers when placed at a disadvantage. Yet, some point out that should discontinuities occur between legislative preferences and bureaucratic activities, Congress has the power to influence the process by exercising its control over resources, legislation, and appointments. Bureaucracies know this, and will seek to avoid alienating their legislative principals.[14] It is also worth pointing out the Congress can hinder its own effectiveness by seeking too much oversight. For example, although Congress has the power to create committees to oversee the work of bureaucracies, having several committees involved in this process decreases the power of Congress and places it in the hands of the President.[15]

Conclusion

Even when operating under the most optimal top-down conditions of political control, bureaucracies can still exert a level of influence on policy outcomes that fall outside the intended purposes of political leaders. Their work highlights the present reality that the administrative state wields considerable power, in some cases more than any other actor. Yet, the notion that they exercise too much power and are largely unaccountable to the public via our democratic institutions remains a contentious issue. While it is possible for them to exact more influence on the policy process than was intended by the Founding Fathers, it is unlikely that every accountability measure in place will simultaneously fail to provide an adequate check and balance. Instead, of greater concern is the potential capture of agencies by other political actors. Public agents are given few options to exert their influence when opposing the will of political actors. In this case, the greater concern is underperforming (i.e., neglect) and not over-reaching. In sum, while it is possible for bureaucracies to run amok, it is not likely. Too many safeguards are embedded within our system of government to control for this possibility. Moreover, with increasing amounts of literature suggesting agency responsiveness to political actors, agents do not seem to be pursuing an agenda in direct opposition to principals.It is necessary here to emphasize a shortcoming of principal-agent theory: namely, agents have multiple principals to support and not just one. As a result, they are faced with the difficult matter of considering the preferences of multiple actors while also staying true to the mission of the organization.

Discussion Questions:

Do you have negative thoughts when you hear the word "bureaucracy"? Why (not)? Has this chapter changed your perception of who bureaucrats are and what they do?

Which step in the public policy process do you think is most/least important?

Do you think there is a problem with holding bureaucrats accountable, or do you think they should have unchecked power? What can/should be done to safeguard against a potential abuse of power by the administrative state?

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Chapter 10

THE ELECTORAL PROCESS

Political Parties, Voting, and Elections

Vote Icon

Political parties, or factions, as they are sometimes called, are about as old as human history itself. Throughout American political history elected officials have primarily gravitated to one of the two major parties, while other countries regularly present to their voters a greater variety of competitive parties, However, some observers have argued that political partisanship has been waning over the last several decades, in the U.S. and other developed democracies, almost to the point that parties have become irrelevant within the governmental landscape. This chapter, which focuses primarily on the US, provides an overview of the party system, and assesses the debate over the proper role of political parties within democratic forms of government, as well as their relevance in the modern political landscape. In the sections that follow, I will first seek to provide an overview of the different definitions of a party, as doing so will provide a holistic view of their role in the political process. While these systems vary from one country to another, they are primarily intended to allow political parties to function in government, which is why the second half of the chapter will address the ways in which elections are conducted.

What is a Party?

Although this question might seem elementary, determining the structure and content of a **political party** is something that has been debated for years. Throughout much of the scholarly literature published on the history of party development, there is a consensus when it comes to identifying the essential constructs of a party; however, there are still some significant aspects to parties that give rise to differing interpretations. In general terms, a **political party** can be viewed as a multilayered coalition of several broad and diverse groups seeking to accomplish a common goal.[1] In other words, it is a loose network of people with different interests that join for a specific purpose: n*amely*, to win elections and govern the people. As James Madison rightly pointed out in *Federalist 10*, society is made up of people with many diverse interests, so, if individuals want to carry out concerted action, it is necessary for them to band together into groups. Viewed in this light, competition between factions appears as a natural byproduct of the human condition. Upon closer inspection, parties can be seen as ever-evolving organizations that are shaped by those in positions of power. That is, parties should not be regarded as concrete or static; rather, they are shaped and altered over time by those in charge. What is more, since political actors will come and go, parties will not always look or operate in the same way.[2] Much like the human body can undergo alterations to its shape and features over time, parties are malleable organisms, susceptible to change in their ecosystems. In short, just as societies and cultures change over time, parties are affected by the people within them, as well as by their surroundings. When examining the organization of a party, some scholars argue it is important to focus on the collection of leaders that seek to influence local, state, and federal elections. Such individuals include current politicians, activists, interest group leaders, and business owners (distinctions that we will discuss further in the next chapter).[3]

As similar as these definitions might seem, there are some marked distinctions. For instance, political scientist John Aldrich addresses the question of who should be considered a member of a political party. According to Aldrich, only those who are either currently in office or those on the outside of government running for office can be considered part of the party. In other words, if parties exist to govern,

then only those who seek to govern should carry the title of a party member.[4] On the other hand, Cohen et al. expand and broaden the ranks of parties to include so-called "policy demanders" who attempt to gain control of government on behalf of a particular set of goals.[5] As we can see, Aldrich takes a narrower approach to determining who makes up the party, while Cohen broadens party membership to include any leader that seeks to influence government. In both cases, however, the emphasis is placed primarily on those who hold some form of decision-making power, owing to their respective positions inside either government or an organization that seeks to influence government.

It is also worth noting that the interpretations put forth by Aldrich and Cohen deviate somewhat from more traditional views of a political party. For example, Edmund Burke defined a party as an association of persons united around a common principle.[6] Similarly, Ansun Morse considered parties a durable organization consisting of a single group of citizens united by common principles and ideals.[7] These two authors define parties in more expansive terms because they do not limit party membership only to office seekers or organizational leaders. Instead, they open party membership to any individual (regardless of ambition or position) who upholds common principles or shared ideals. In contemporary circles, some scholars have also defined the party as the embodiment of an organized attempt to obtain power in government,[8] while others see it as nothing more than a loosely organized group that seeks to help individuals gain elective office.[9] It should now be clear that there are multiple interpretations of what constitutes the defining features of a political party. *Ultimately, however, the issue boils down to whether the individual voter is part of the party.* While the older definitions tend to factor in those who cast ballots in favor of their preferred party platform, the more recent definitions consider them consumers rather than active participants in party matters.

Function of Political Parties

In their most basic sense, political parties serve as a bridge between the people and the government. If candidates face the electorate during campaign season, then the parties help citizens determine for whom they should vote. Parties promote specific values and preferences, and they choose candidates to run for office who are likely to implement policies that reflect those values and preferences. Individual values are aggregated through parties during elections, a process that helps orient and integrate voters into the political system. For example, in the U.S., both major political parties present a **platform** of issues to citizens in hopes of gaining their electoral support. Instead of having to conduct extensive research to learn about every issue or political candidate, voters can make their decisions based on their party affiliation. In doing so, political parties can mobilize voters during an election to help get the party's candidates elected to governmental office. What is more, when those individuals are in government, the parties serve the function of organizing elected officials to focus on addressing the issues that reflect the values and preferences of their constituents— or at least the values of the ones that voted for them.

Parties in democracies are normally organized through a centralized system at the national level. While there are different levels of *party leadership*, a cohesive party platform requires members to focus on the same priorities, which can only be done through centralized planning and coordination. Therefore, every political party has a national party office that helps organize and support the state parties across the country. This process requires that a degree of control be exercised from national headquarters, primarily because elected officials must organize themselves once they begin the process of governing. For instance, when setting legislative priorities, political parties must determine what support they have from their members, as well as how much opposition to expect. What is more, the executive branch and legislative branch must work together to both pass and implement

legislation. Political parties serve as the glue that holds elections and government operations together.

When it comes to electoral systems, political ideologies are mapped along a linear spectrum, with liberal parties on the left and conservative parties on the right, a division found in all representative democracies, though the spectrum is in each instance tailored to a particular country. For example, while the Democratic party in the U.S. is considered the more liberal party in the country, when compared to political parties in other democratic states, it is more moderate to conservative. This variability occurs primarily because many advanced democracies hold more liberal views on the role of government in economic and social matters. Another distinction between parties in the U.S. and in other democracies lies in the emphasis placed on singular policy issues. Because America has traditionally been dominated by just two parties, both are likely to hold positions on any number of important issues. However, in other countries with multiple parties, single-issue parties are more likely to have a greater impact on an election cycle. Consider the Brexit party in the United Kingdom, which focused exclusively on securing their withdrawal from the European Union. Although the party has focused on other issues related to the UK's relationship to the rest of Europe, they were created with a singular goal in mind. Several green parties have sprung up in recent years with the expressed goal of addressing environmental concerns in their respective countries. While this cause has several policy implications, they focus primarily on preserving the environment and not taking on unrelated issues that might interfere with attempts to curry favor with the electorate. This tendency reveals some of the downsides of single-issue parties, in that they struggle to attract supporters that have myriad concerns with government.

Types of Party Competition. Regardless of the number of parties in a political system, there are two primary forms of competition. The first is considered *moderate pluralism* and, just as its name implies, reflects competition that pushes the parties to the middle of the spectrum. In countries where t here appears to be a higher volume of moderates (or those unaffiliated with an individual party) in the electorate, the trend among parties is to vie for the votes of those citizens. Hence, they will seek to portray themselves as moderate to appeal to constituents who might have diverse views on the major political issues facing the country. However, *polarized pluralism* reflects the opposite approach, one in which parties move to the extremes and ignore moderate voters. While this might appear counterproductive, the approach seeks to attract voters by showing how they are different from their opponents. After all, if both parties are portraying themselves as close to the center, what difference would your vote really make? Instead, parties may flee the center to highlight their differences and promote viewpoints that could attract voters with more extreme views on important issues. The main problem with this approach is the effects it can have on stability within a country.

Another form of competition regards the process of choosing winners in an election. In America, we use the single member district system of choosing who wins. In other words, whoever receives the plurality or majority of votes in a race is crowned the victor. This system tends to favor a two-party system because it is very difficult for third party candidates to obtain that high a percentage of the vote. Rather, when there are only two major candidates, the chances of getting the most votes, if not a majority, is much higher. In electoral systems where there are more than two major political parties, the system of choice is one of proportional representation. This model is not to be confused with the proportional representation system in the House of Representatives, where seats are allocated based on each congressional district's population. Instead, this form of proportional representation allocates seats to parties based on the number of votes the party receives in an election. In this scenario, individual candidates are less important, and the party platform is emphasized. By using multi-member districts, more than one person can represent a political district, but the number of representatives is chosen based on the

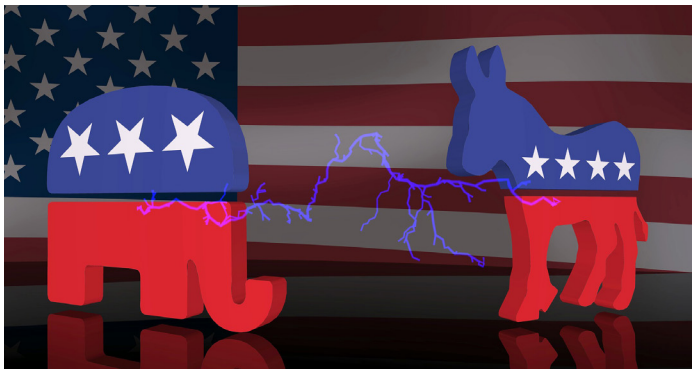
percentage of voters that support the party. There are certainly pros and cons to each system, but parties play a vital role in determining the winner in both.

Are Parties in Decline?

If one accepts any of the definitions of a political party mentioned above, the main issue at hand is whether they have any relevance in the modern political process. Prior to the mid-20th century, the two-party system in America (often referred to as the American Duopoly) was seen as essential and necessary for several reasons. First, the Democratic and Republican parties shared a close competitiveness with each other, dating back to the election of 1868, between Republican Ulysses Grant and Democratic Horatio Seymour. Next, voter turnout was exceptionally high, and so was party loyalty across all levels of government. Third, there was a militantly partisan press that advocated for or against the parties. Finally, there were high levels of party cohesion in Congress.[10] Taken together, these characteristics support the notion that parties were prominent and influential within the political process.

Fast forward to the 1950s and 1960s, when party strength and influence appeared to be weakening. Voter turnout was declining, as well as a sense of party loyalty among members of the electorate. Fewer people were identifying as either Republican or Democrat, choosing instead to call themselves Independents. Moreover, there was an increase in split-ticket voting, as well as public expressions of negative attitudes towards both parties. If these variables were used to determine party strength in the 19th century, then one could only conclude that their rise and fall meant that parties were in decline. In short, both parties seemed to be losing their influence among the voters, and the causes of this shift were structural in nature. For instance, starting in the 1970s, candidates were no longer chosen by party leaders during primaries. Instead, direct primaries held by states allowed voters to choose the individual they wanted to represent their party in the general election. This change in the electoral process appeared to lessen the power of the party to pick its leaders and created a more "candidate-centered" approach to voting. Some scholars have argued that this change meant candidates had more freedom to sell themselves directly to constituents, who in return could vote more for the person and not the party platform.[11]

Another indicator of party decline is the surge of interest groups that burst onto the political scene during the second half of the 20th century.[12] Whether single issue or ideological in nature, these groups steered their members toward specific candidates that vowed to represent their interests in government. What is more, these organizations have also become gold mines for both direct and indirect financial support. No longer do candidates have to rely solely on party money; instead, they can curry favor from a host of interest groups ready to dole out money to those who, once elected, will take special care of their interests. These groups are also willing to provide support to candidates through various forms of campaign advertising. During an election cycle, they may pay millions of dollars to run attacks ads against their candidates' opponents or even serve as some of the most committed volunteers in a campaign.[13] In sum, interest groups have supplanted parties as resource-rich entities that can help secure victory for a given candidate.



Party Identification and Polarization

Although scores of public opinion polls have suggested that voters are growing weary of the major parties (especially in America), there have been no signs of a decline in party identification. For example, Green and Palmquist provide data that shows how party identification remains a strong indicator of party strength. Throughout their study on partisanship, the authors point out that party

loyalty is intricately linked with social identities. As a result, partisanship is something that will continue to be passed down to future generations. So, those who continue to promote the need for a less partisan electorate face an imposing task, in the sense that the evidence provided by these authors seems to refute that notion that voters are not invested in a party.[14]

Bafumi and Shapiro also provide further evidence of party resurgence in their study on partisanship among the electorate, especially when one considers the evolution of policy issues over the last several decades. Much of the evidence used to support party decline was primarily based, in their opinion, on circumstances stemming from World War II. However, since such issues as race relations, abortion, and LGBTQ rights have become so polarizing, partisanship has become more pronounced. This study speaks to a growing level of polarization within government and the electoral system.[15] As a result, the schism between the parties is now largely based on ideological divisions, as a Republican is another word for conservative and a Democrat is essentially a liberal voter. (Whereas into the 1980s, there were still a significant number of conservative Democrats and a few remaining liberal Republicans to be found in Congress.)

The seminal work of Mann and Ornstein represents yet another key study of partisanship in America. Their in-depth study of the rise of the Republican Party over the last 30 years points to a growing level of partisanship in the federal government. These authors suggest that Republican ideologues are responsible for the gridlock in Congress because of their blatant inability to work with Democrats on the most pressing issues facing the country. Rather than look for ways to compromise on issues like healthcare and climate change, they have chosen to stick to their (young) guns and hold the federal budget hostage until their demands are met.[16] Such behavior, in the eyes of Mann and Ornstein, is wholly unbecoming of a Republican leader, but their study lends much credence to the notion that at least one party is stronger than it has ever been. This interpretation supports the widespread claim that parties are becoming more and more aligned with ideologies, something that was much less evident decades ago. In sum, party identification is becoming more and more pronounced at virtually all levels of government. What is more, the distinctions between the parties continue to grow stronger each election cycle, with the notable exception of issues concerning military appropriations and national security (though there are signs that continued support for Ukraine may prove contentious, following the 2022 congressional midterm elections.)

Elections

Elections take many forms, from grade school elections where a group of peers elect one of their own to represent their interests within their student body, to a national election that selects a country's president. An **election** is a formal decision-making process in which groups determine which individuals will hold public office in a representative democracy. Holding frequent elections allows the people to express their approval of the government and gives them the opportunity to select representatives and policies. Elective officials are thus held accountable by citizens who determine which ones are better suited to represent their values and interests. As James Madison argues in Federalist Paper No. 52: "As it is essential to liberty that the government in general should have a common interest with the people, so it is particularly essential that the branch of it under consideration [i.e., the House of Representatives] should have an immediate dependence on, and an intimate sympathy with, the people. Frequent elections are unquestionably the only policy by which this dependence and sympathy can be effectually secured."[17] Put another way, if voters are expected to rely on and trust their elected representatives, regular elections are an effective means to ensure the government understands the electorate's wants and needs. Elections can also be seen as competitions where interest groups and political parties use their resources to convince electors to vote for specific candidates.[18] The competitive nature of elections also allows voters to compare candidates based on their objectives and plans they intend to pursue if elected. Competitive elections

allow voters to make important decisions about who serves in government, and these collective decisions should work in a representative democracy to move elected officials in one direction over another.

Types of Elections

As previously stated, there are two primary forms of elections. The single member district elections choose a single individual to represent a percentage of the population. These elections are commonly found at all levels of government in the U.S., except for the United States Senate. Within that legislative chamber of Congress, two individuals are elected to represent the entire state. In all other cases, a single individual represents a percentage of the population in their respective chamber of government. Even at the state level, both representatives and senators only represent a certain number of people, a percentage which is largely based on the overall population of the state. The most important downside to this electoral system is that the minority parties within a district are not given any direct representation in government. Rather, they hope that the elected representative will consider their interests when making policy decisions. As evidenced by the level of polarization in our country, such considerations cannot be guaranteed. The other electoral option to consider is proportional representation, which allocates seats to parties based on the percentage of votes received in an election. Unlike single member districts, minority parties can be given representation in government despite not winning a majority or plurality of the votes. In these instances, seats in government are likely to reflect public opinion and party strength. However, these systems can lead to greater instability in government, especially when there is lack of willingness on the part of various parties to form coalitions. Where such intransigence occurs, it is often necessary to conduct another election and begin the process starts all over again.

Who Participates and Why? The number of eligible voters who cast a ballot in a given election is referred to as **voter turnout.** It is important to note that there is a difference between **eligible voters** and **registered voters.** In the United States, the *voting eligible population (VEP)* includes all *citizens* who have reached the minimum age to vote, regardless of registration status, with the exception, in certain states, of convicted felons. The VEP should also be distinguished from the VAP, which refers to the Voting Age Population. Included in this category, in US elections, are lawful permanent residents or green card holders 18 and over. Prior to 1926, however, such residents could vote in many states, a practice that has long since become politically untenable. And yet, in the summer of 2021, the Vermont legislature endorsed voter-approved changes to two city charters, so that noncitizens in those cities may now vote in local elections. Those Vermont cities (Montpelier and Winooski) are not alone. In San Francisco and nine cities in Maryland, noncitizens are allowed to vote in local and school board elections, and proposals to adopt similar voting laws are currently under consideration in New York City and Illinois. What sort of case has been made for allowing noncitizens to vote? Essentially, proponents of such measures have drawn upon one of the oldest political slogans in American history: no taxation without representation. By once again allowing noncitizens to vote in this country, argues Illinois State Senator Celina Villanueva, permanent legal residents (often referred to as green-card holders), who must pay income taxes, will receive political representation. (It takes a minimum of five years for a permanent legal resident to gain citizenship.) As you might expect, many are opposed to extending the franchise to noncitizens. Indeed, over the past three years, ballot initiatives that explicitly prevent noncitizens from voting passed in four states. "The idea that we would give legal voting rights to people who have not shown the loyalty to choose the United States over another country is stunning," said John Loudon, director of the interest group, Citizen Voters, which opposes giving voting rights to noncitizens.[19]

Registered voters, on the other hand, are voters who have reached the legal voting age, have their names on a voter registration list, and meet the requirements set by their state or jurisdiction to vote. As can be expected, the number of registered voters in the

United States is lower than the number of eligible voters, and the number of registered voters who vote is even lower. When it comes to who actually votes in the U.S., election results have shown that they tend to be wealthy, older, educated Whites, while Asians, Hispanic Americans, those with less than a high school degree, and voters under the age of 24 have among the lowest turnout rates in recent history. In general, a disproportionately high number of nonvoters fall within lower income brackets. According to a Pew Research Center study whose results were released in the summer of 2021, 62 percent of nonvoters in 2020 were from families that made less than 50K, while only 10 percent of families making over 100K were included among the ranks of nonvoters. Though the number of eligible voters has grown throughout the nation's history, the disparity among groups still exists for many reasons. Low electoral participation means that many Americans are turning away from the political system. Reasons include a sense of disenfranchisement, whereby individuals do not feel adequately represented under the current system. Or they do not feel as though their individual votes can make a difference in an election where thousands, or even millions, of other voters are participating. Some are even choosing not to engage at all because they do not want to take the time to learn about important issues. Instead, they just accept that they do not have the capacity to make the right decisions for themselves or their communities.

When it comes to the question of what motivates people to participate in an election cycle, the focus is more often on short-term variables, including hot button issues that are prominent in an election year or the individual candidates that are running for office. Ever since the Watergate scandal that brought down the Nixon administration, the *moral character* of an elected official has been a guiding principle in the minds of many voters, although, in this heightened period of polarization, there are several people who care more about party affiliation than the character or lifestyle of a party's particular candidate. Voters tend to continually vote for the same party over time, and this has brought about a level of stability within the political system that favors the two-party system. Throughout our nation's history, there have been important events that have propelled partisan realignments among specific demographics. For example, until the Civil Rights movement paved the way for legislation that protected and enshrined political rights for African Americans, the South was predominantly made up of Democrats. What is more, the seminal court decision of *Roe v. Wade* pushed many faith-based voters into the Republican party when they wrote a Pro-Life stance into their platform. These series of events have shaped the makeup of both parties today and have defined much of their policy initiatives over the last several decades.

Election-1920

The role of Campaigns. From the viewpoint of the voter, Sniderman, Brody, and Tetlock posit that campaigns are important because they organize electoral choices in two different ways: either as a referendum on the **incumbent** or as a choice between two candidates competing for an **open seat**. According to this perspective, campaigns help provide information to the voter who is either evaluating the incumbent's performance while in office or determining whether someone else deserves to be elected. Sniderman et al. suggest that poorly educated voters tend to make decisions based on their views of the incumbent candidate while those with more education tend to consider the position of the incumbent's opponent.[20] Yet, in order for voters to make decisions, they must have the information they feel is important, and it

is the responsibility of the campaign to make sure the voter gets the right information—or, at least the information they want the voter to have. Still, this theory must confront the question of whether the voter actually uses the information that has been provided to make their decisions. With the perfection of *political spinning*, it has become more difficult to discern what information is accurate and what amounts merely to campaign rhetoric and outright propaganda. It should be noted that some voters truly do not know whom they will support until they receive the information they need; however, this number has steadily decreased in recent election cycles. Many voters that identify with a political party are more inclined to only look for the information that supports their point of view and dismiss any information that runs contrary to their beliefs.

One argument routinely made against voting is that the process is not rational because the costs of voting outweigh the benefits. Hence, voting is irrational because individuals will not receive enough of a good to offset the cost of taking time out of their day to go down to the local precinct and cast their ballot in favor of a candidate.[21] Nevertheless, Markus and Converse assert that the power of persuasion exerted by a candidate can lead voters to make rational decisions. That is, if a candidate convinces voters that their vote will make a difference, some will alter their positions on issues in favor of the preferred candidate, which establishes a rational basis for the decision to go out and vote. Therefore, one can make the argument that campaigns do matter because they can alter the opinions of voters, which might not be achievable through the legislative process.[22] Were it not for the campaigns, voters' minds would not change, and certain candidates might not get elected.

From the candidate's perspective, campaigns make all the difference in the world. While this might be seen as an individualistic point of view, it nonetheless contributes to the argument because candidates have everything to gain by running a campaign. Even though some incumbents do not need to campaign as much as those seeking office for the first time, the initial campaign run by each incumbent is what got them into office. So, they too would conclude that campaigns matter, especially since they help reinforce the influence political parties exert over a political culture.

Now, there are some that argue campaigns make little difference because of the vast amounts of **gerrymandering** that have taken place across the country, where Congressional districts have been redrawn to include pockets of voters that strongly align with a particular party. In these cases, campaigns run between Republicans and Democrats may not be as important because one side may have a monopoly in a particular district; however, when a seat opens, the ruling party will most likely consist of several candidates seeking the primary nomination. Moreover, in those primary elections, there may exist just as much ideological diversity among the candidates as may be found in general election campaigns in the US. So, one can see that, depending on the circumstances, political campaigns can have an impact on who is elected and what they do while in office.

Conclusion

Political parties have been and continue to be a fact of life in both the electoral process and the halls of government. Based on the research conducted on the topic, they continue to play a vital role in politics, and there is little evidence to suggest that parties are in (or ever were) in serious decline. The political process as a whole has evolved over the last several decades, so it should be expected that parties have adapted to these changes in their own ways. The increase of both cable news and social media has led parties and candidates to promote their ideals in different ways. Moreover, the changes in elections laws and campaign financing have forced parties to develop new and creative ways to support their candidates. While there has been a growing emphasis on the individual candidates running for office, the party label next to

their name is still the most defining characteristic of their campaign. The increasingly partisan behavior among officials in all levels of government is not likely to dissipate anytime soon. Elections, as well, have served as the mechanism by which the public expresses their (dis)approval of government. Depending on the level of change they seek, the electoral process can serve as a catalyst for change, or more of the same.

Discussion Question:

Do you think the US Party System more closely resembles a form of "moderate pluralism" or "polarized pluralism"?

Several representative democracies have compulsory voting laws, including Belgium and Australia. Do you think such a system should be adopted in the US? Why or why not?

Some elective officials and interest groups, including the National Youth Rights Association, have recently called for lowering the voting age to 16 in the US. Would you support such a measure? Why or why not?

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Chapter 11

NON-STATE ACTORS

Interest Groups and the Media

NON-STATE ACTORS
Interest Groups and the Media

In a well-functioning democracy, many different interests will vie with one another to influence government policy in ways that create a competitive balance and promote the public good. The analysis of how that form of power operates is known as pluralism, the focus of this chapter. In it, we will examine the evolution of pluralist theory and assess the merits behind the claim that such an idea can provide a benefit—not only to those who seek to have their interests advanced but also to society as a whole. This chapter will also analyze pluralism's practical effects on American public policy.

Political clashes between opposing groups are as old as time itself. Knowing this, in 1787 James Madison sought to warn his colleagues about the dangers competing interests posed to a representative democracy. In *Federalist 10*, Madison argued that powerful factions could successfully promote the interests of one group above all others. Madison defined a faction as "a number of citizens, whether amounting to a majority or a minority of the whole, who are united and actuated by some common impulse of passion, or of interest, adverse to the rights of other citizens, or to the permanent and aggregate interests of the community." While one might not at first glance see anything inherently wrong with the idea that individuals unite around common passions or interests, Madison draws attention to the nature of the threat such action may pose to the public interest.

What concerned Madison most was not simply the expressing of a group's opinion but the deliberate attempt on the part of that group to impose its views on the rest of the country. His hope was that the US Constitution could establish a government that could control these factions and prevent them from infringing upon the rights and benefits of the citizenry. By creating a mechanism to contain this threat, a state of equilibrium could be created to prevent a particular group from always being on the losing end of public policy debates. Individuals will always have some reason to come together in a group, and the only way to prohibit such a form of association would be to limit civil rights, which, according to Madison, is inimical to the concept of political freedom. To take away someone's interests or commonalities is to take away the very essence of who he or she is.

Interest Groups

At its most basic level, an **interest group** is made up of individuals who organize around a common interest or concern to seek to influence a political outcome or alter public policies. The world of interest groups is both deep and wide. Several groups may focus on a single issue, while others may focus on many different ones. Moreover, some interest groups will work on behalf of a certain class of people, such as workers in a particular industry or a portion of the population distinguished by gender, race, ethnicity, or age. For example, in the United States, AARP has nearly 38 million members and advocates on behalf of Americans aged 50 and older on issues such as drug prices, health insurance, taxes, and retirement.[1] Meanwhile, several interest groups (mainly private groups) will focus their efforts on only one of those issues. While the term, interest group, is not mentioned anywhere in the U.S. Constitution, the framers were keenly aware of the likelihood that individuals would join to exert influence upon governmental actions. In *Federalist No. 10,* James Madison warned of the dangers of "mischiefs of factions," small groups with a minority opinion who would organize around issues they felt strongly about, possibly to the detriment of the "public interest.". Yet, Madison believed that restricting the ability of such factions to form in the first place would hardly provide a solution to the problem. In fact, it would create a greater one by violating the core republican principle of liberty. To protect individual freedom while simultaneously limiting the deleterious effects of factionalism, Madison argued that a republican form of government should allow interest groups to

flourish and compete against one other. In short, he believed that if everyone had an equal opportunity to promote their views, it would be exceedingly difficult for the voice of one party or interest to be consistently heard above all others. The proliferation of interest groups in the United States indicates that many are indeed thriving. They regularly compete with similar groups to attract new members and vie with one another to gain greater access to policymakers. Some people suggest there may be too many interests in the United States, while others argue that some have gained a disproportionate amount of influence over public policy, leaving many groups and opinions underrepresented in government.

Types of Interest Groups

Interest groups can be organized into two broad categories: *economic groups and public interest* (noneconomic) groups. Economic groups generally focus on issues relating to the economy, from the perspective of a corporation, a union, or a consumer. The issues involved may include wages, industry protections, job creation, and profit maximization, to name a few, which can be further sorted into subcategories like business, labor, the agricultural sector, and legislation concerning primarily the professional classes. For example, the United States Chamber of Commerce is a business group that describes itself as the world's largest business organization, representing companies of all sizes and promoting policies that help create jobs and grow the economy.[2] In Canada, the Canadian Federation of Independent Businesses lobbies for lower tax rates on small businesses and credit card interest rates, among other issues.[3] Other types of economic groups include labor groups like the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO), which seeks to ensure all working people receive decent paychecks and benefits, perform their tasks in a safe environment, get equal opportunities, and are treated with dignity.[4] In Germany, which has a long history of labor playing an influential role in the political process, the German Trade Union Confederation (DGB or Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund) acts as an umbrella organization for eight labor groups and represents the interests of close to six million German workers. It is the largest labor group in Germany and one of the largest trade organizations in the world.[5] Interest groups like the American Farm Bureau Federation,[6] or the Irish Farmers Association,[7] which works on behalf of agricultural workers in Ireland, are referred to as *agricultural* groups. Similarly, the National Farmers Union has worked with Congress to make school lunch programs permanent and to increase country-of-origin labeling protocols, to name a few of their policy initiatives.[8] Other types of interest groups include professional groups like the American Medical Association (AMA),[9] which promotes the interests of working medical professionals, such as surgeons and physicians in the United States, and the Japan Medical Association, which, with 170,000 members, is considered the largest and most politically powerful medical lobby in Japan.[10]

Noneconomic groups do not organize themselves around economic or business-oriented purposes. Rather, they seek to advance noneconomic issues related to the environment or education. For example, Greenpeace International is an umbrella organization representing individual offices in 27 regions and 55 countries, all of which work together to promote policies that preserve the environment.[11] Groups that are not concerned exclusively with economic issues include *public interest* groups, *single-issue* groups, civil rights groups, and ideological groups. The Trust for Public Land, a registered nonprofit that creates public parks and preserves outdoor spaces for public use, can be considered a public interest group.[12] Similarly, the Sierra Club seeks to educate and enlist citizens in the movement to protect and restore the quality of the natural and human environment.[13] Both organizations focus on preserving the environment, although they prioritize different policy issues related to the natural world. As the next category's name suggests, single-issue groups concentrate upon one policy or issue. The National Rifle Association, one of the most prominent single-issue groups in America, focuses exclusively on protecting Second Amendment rights. Even though the group spends a significant amount of time and energy promoting gun-owner safety and education, all

their efforts center around protecting and preserving the rights of Americans to own firearms.[14] Similarly, groups such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)[15] and the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples (CAP)[16] work to champion the rights of specific minority groups across North America. Some even work to promote a particular ideology that guides the actions of government. For example, the American Conservative Union[17] and the Heritage Foundation[18] are two conservative interest groups working to promote limited government (except for military defense spending) and defend civil liberties, particularly those associated with "economic freedom." While those two interest groups are highly influential, there are others across the world who either exercise little influence or pose such a threat to established authorities that they are forced to cease their operations altogether. For instance, the Civil Human Rights Front was a pro-democracy group in Hong Kong that pushed for democratic representation and voting rights in Hong Kong. However, members of the Civil Human Rights Front were eventually arrested and prosecuted by the Beijing government, which claimed that pro-democracy protesters had been "inciting violence."[19] In the face of an intensified crackdown on dissent, the group was forced to disband in August 2021.[20]

What Interest Groups Do

In addition to pursuing their primary goal of attempting to influence policy, interest groups regularly monitor the activities of different governmental entities. They also offer a means of participating in politics to members and provide information to the public, as well as to lawmakers, through lobbying efforts. For instance, consider the work of the ACLU regarding voting regulations in the US. Currently, 35 states have laws requesting or requiring voters to show some form of identification at the polls. The remaining 15 states and D.C. use other methods to verify the identity of voters. Usually, other identifying information provided at the polling place, such as a signature, is checked against information on file.[21] A civil rights group like the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) will keep track of proposed voter-identification bills in state legislatures that might have an effect on voting rights.[22] This organization will contact lawmakers to voice their approval or disapproval of proposed legislation (**inside lobbying**) and encourage group members to take action by either donating money to it or contacting lawmakers about the proposed bill (**outside lobbying**)**.** As a result, a member of the ACLU or even a citizen concerned about voting rights does not need be an expert on the legislative process or understand specific details about a proposed bill to be informed about potential threats to voting rights. Other interest groups function in similar ways. For example, NARAL Pro-Choice America monitors attempts by state legislatures to implement laws that restrict access to abortion.[23]

Interest groups facilitate political participation among citizens in a variety of ways. Some members become active within a group, as a volunteer or chapter officer, working on behalf of the organization to promote its agenda locally or throughout a particular state. Some groups work to increase membership by promoting their work to people that are likely affected by the policies or issues they care about. They also inform the public about issues the group deems important or organize rallies and promote get-out-the-vote efforts during an election cycle. Sometimes groups will even create special events to mobilize existing members and encourage others to join. For example, the AARP focuses their efforts on issues that affect people 50 or older; however, there is no minimum age requirement that must be met to join the group.[24] This policy helps ensure that they can recruit people outside their target demographic in hopes of ensuring their support once a person turns 50. Interest groups also organize letter-writing campaigns, stage protests, and sometimes hold fundraisers for their cause or even for political campaigns.

Interest Group Formation Theories

Three major theories about interest group formation allow us to better understand how interest groups form, as well as how they function within the political sphere. The first of these is the pluralist theory, which posits that diverse interests compete

for attention, resources, and, in general, the ability to exercise varying degrees of political power. Competition among interests allows for the representation of disparate views and prevents single issues from dominating public discourse. In other words, individual interests can be advanced through collective action, and multiple groups compete against one another to put themselves into a position to promote change or preserve the status quo. Thus, according to pluralist theory, interest groups form to provide individuals with a means of engaging in collective action in support of common goals, a theory posited with clarity by Mancur Olson.[25]

Collective Action and Freeriding. Collective action problems exist when people have a disincentive to act.[26] In his classic work, *The Logic of Collective Action*, economist Mancur Olson discussed the conditions under which collective actions problems would exist, and he noted that they were prevalent among organized interests. People tend not to act when the perceived benefit is insufficient to justify the costs associated with engaging in the action. Many citizens may have concerns about the appropriate level of taxation, gun control, or environmental protection, but these concerns are not necessarily strong enough for them to become politically active. In fact, most people take no action on most issues, either because they do not feel strongly enough or because their action will likely have little bearing on whether a given policy is adopted. Thus, there is a disincentive to call your member of Congress because rarely will a single phone call sway a politician on an issue. Why do some students elect to do little on a group project? The answer is that they likely prefer to do something else and realize they can receive the same grade as the rest of the group without contributing to the effort. This result is often termed the **free rider problem** because some individuals can receive benefits (get a free ride) without helping to bear the cost. For example, when National Public Radio (NPR), engages in a fund-raising effort to help maintain the station, many listeners will not contribute. Since it is unlikely that any one listener's donation will be decisive in determining whether NPR has adequate funding to continue to operate, most listeners will not contribute to the costs but instead will free ride and continue to receive the benefits of listening.

Although theories predating Olson's work primarily focused on why groups formed, they did posit that size directly affected collective mobilization. More specifically, they argued that the bigger the group, the more likely it was to act in a collective manner. Pluralists, such as Arthur Bentley and David Truman, argued that when individuals experience a "disturbance" in the status quo, they are likely to form into groups that seek to bring about a return to normalcy or something close to what they previously experienced. As for optimal group size, Bentley held that the larger a group is, the more likely it would be able to mobilize supporters.[27] What is more, in his examination of labor unions, such as the American Federation of Labor and the Industrial Workers of the World, Truman argued that their effectiveness stemmed in part from their size. Both groups emerged out of periods of intense conflict between workers and employers. These groups were created to prevent the oppression or subjugation of the workers, and their large size appeared to enhance their overall effectiveness.[28]

Truman's work on **disturbance theory** suggests that interest groups form in response to the changing complexity of government and society. In other words, external factors, or "disturbances," cause people to form into groups. These factors include shifts in social norms, changes to environmental conditions, or various technological developments.[29] For example, 50 years ago, the idea of legalizing marijuana was unthinkable. As social and medical norms around the use of cannabis have changed, groups such as NORML, the Marijuana Policy Project, and the Drug Policy Alliance have formed to promote the legal use of marijuana in a controlled market and

to reduce "the harms of both drug use and drug prohibition."[30] As global climate change continues to make media headlines, newer and more radical groups also continue to form, such as Britain's Extinction Rebellion, which engaged in "the biggest act of peaceful civil disobedience seen in London for decades."[31]

The third major theory, transaction theory, refutes the idea of pluralism. For instance, less than a decade after Olson published his book, Robert Salisbury wrote in "An Exchange Theory of Interest Groups" that "Olson does not examine how groups are first organized but assumes [they form part of] an ongoing system." Salisbury, a contemporary of Olson, argued that while some people may join groups for the purposes of obtaining selective benefits, there are groups that are initially formed by individuals seeking to alter a wide variety of public policies. In other words, contrary to Olson's logic, people can join groups for more than just economic or monetary reasons. This is important to note regarding group size because Salisbury argued that 1) people do in fact join for reasons favoring the collective over self-interest, and 2) there is a give and take between the group and the individual for reasons that have to do with factors other than those operative in the realm of pure economics. For these reasons, it is possible for groups to mobilize in a collective manner that does not adhere to the "economic man" thesis proposed by Olson.[32]

Pros and Cons of Interest Groups

Interest group participation in politics has many benefits, as well as drawbacks. In *Federalist Paper No. 10,* Madison argues that a healthy representative government will ensure that no single interest monopolizes the government's attention and that competition among interests (pluralism) will ultimately enhance democracy. According to this perspective, interest group activity can be seen as an ideal way to serve the common good because it allows more voices to engage in the political process. Ultimately, citizen participation in government is essential primarily because it enables political actors to discern what various segments of the public consider important. Interest group activity is one way in which the people help the government understand what issues are of the greatest concern to different members of society. Additionally, the act of mobilizing citizens is thought to produce social capital, a process whereby relationships forged in political and other social networks help citizens resolve collective problems. Finally, interest groups can take up issues that are marginalized by traditional political actors.

Theoretically, pluralism should work to protect the interests of the many: when multiple interests strive to be heard by governmental actors, a great number of interests are also addressed. However, this dynamic can bring about problems associated with factionalism, where small groups of people animated by shared interests work to have their wishes represented in government despite on some occasions facing opposition from most of the population. In other words, as discussed by Madison in *Federalist Paper No. 10*, while a multitude of interests may be represented, not all have an equal voice, and a narrow interest may unduly influence the political process at the expense of a majority's needs. (It should also be noted, however, that in *Federalist # 10* Madison was concerned above all with how a majority can threaten the socio-economic interests of a minority, which is why he thought that when addressing certain issues (e.g., property redistribution, debt relief, and monetary policies) a system of checks and balances was essential in order to thwart the public will in a representative democracy,) Furthermore, the more powerful an interest is in terms of its financial resources and ties to major political and/or economic institutions, the more influence it enjoys, regardless of how narrow or seemingly obscure it might be. This latter problem, known as economic bias, exposes an underlining weakness of the interest group system. As Wesleyan University professor E. E. Schattschneider explains: "The flaw in the pluralist heaven is that the heavenly chorus sings with a strong upper-class accent."[33] Groups that represent business or professional interests tend to be better resourced, and though lower-class interests can also be represented, interest group membership itself is mostly skewed toward those who fall within upper-middle and upper income brackets,

since individuals who belong to those classes tend to have more time and money to commit to this type of political activity. In addition, the "chicken or egg" question is applicable when studying interest group membership in that, if upper-middle-class and upper-class interests are represented, these groups naturally attract individuals from these populations and not those from more disadvantaged groups.

The theory of interest group liberalism highlights another noted weakness of the interest group system.[34] That is, instead of viewing it as a pluralistic ideal, in which issues important to various groups compete against one another in the public realm, interest group liberalism suggests that officials respond to well-organized groups not because they are good for society but because well-organized interests simply do a better job of demanding governmental action.

The Media as a Political Institution

The term, **media,** refers to multiple mediums through which information is transmitted from one source to another. The term covers several different communication formats, including television media, which share information through broadcast airwaves, and print media, which rely on printed documents. The collective sum of all forms of media that communicate information to the public is called mass media, including television, print, radio, and the Internet. One of the primary reasons citizens turn to the media is to receive updates on recent events, whether in the halls of government, across town, or around the world. We expect the media to cover important political and social events and information in a concise and neutral manner. To accomplish its work, the media employs several people in a variety of positions. *Journalists* and *reporters* are responsible for uncovering news stories by keeping an eye on areas of public interest, like politics, business, and sports. Once a journalist has a lead or a possible idea for a story, they research background information and interview people to create a complete and balanced account of the events that unfolded. *Editors* work in the background of the newsroom, assigning stories, approving articles or packages, and editing content for accuracy and clarity. *Publishers* are people or companies that own and produce print or digital media. They oversee both the content and finances of the publication, ensuring the organization turns a profit and creates a high-quality product to distribute to consumers. *Producers* oversee the production and finances of visual media, like television, radio, and film. Part of the media's role is to serve as a **watchdog;** in that capacity, it watches over and investigates the government and powerful institutions. Performing this function is also referred to as **muckraking,** a term coined during the Progressive Era in the United States, when reform-minded journalists exposed the wrongdoings of private industry leaders. In short, watchdogs or muckrakers act as a check on governmental action and expose corruption. They play an essential role by making up a part of a free press, which is a cornerstone of a functioning democracy. As Yale University professor and member of the Council on Foreign Relations Timothy Snyder writes, "If nothing is true, then no one can criticize power, because there is no basis upon which to do so."[35] The media allows the public to understand what is happening in government to hold elected officials accountable. Or, in the words of James Kirchick: "A free press is important because it is the freedom upon which all of our other freedoms are contingent."[36]

It is important to note that reporting done by the news media is distinct from (or should be distinct from) the work performed by **public relations firms,** which disseminate information with the aim of improving the image of companies, organizations, political candidates, or elective officials. In other words, the practice of public relations does not constitute a neutral form of communication. While journalists write stories to inform the public, a public relations spokesperson is paid to help an individual or organization get positive press. Public relations materials normally appear as press releases or paid advertisements in newspapers and other media outlets. Some less reputable publications, however, publish paid articles under the news banner, blurring the line between journalism and public relations.

Those who perform public relations activities within the political sphere focus their attention on helping promote a positive view of politicians, issues, or events. They work to show their "client" in a positive light that could mislead observers or give them an inaccurate picture of reality.

The Fourth Estate. The press is the only profession explicitly protected under the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. Many attribute this protection to James Madison and his writings in the *Federalist Papers,* but the idea of a free press long pre-dates the essays Madison wrote in support of the US Constitution. The origins of the free press in the United States can be traced back to Cato's letters, a collection of essays written in the 1720s by two British writers, John Trenchard, and Thomas Gordon. Using the pseudonym Cato, they published their articles in the British press, criticizing the British monarchy for its corruption and tyrannical practices. Decades later, American colonists drew upon these letters during their own struggles against the Crown,[37] and in 1776, Virginia became the first state to formally adopt a constitutional provision to protect press freedom.[38] Though some might question why the Founding Fathers went to such great lengths to protect freedom of the press, others maintain that such a right is integral to any democratic system of government. No matter its origins, the established right to publish information on the actions of government remains vital today. Protecting a free press can be boiled down to a single sentence from esteemed University of Illinois at Chicago lecturer Doris Graber's seminal work, **Mass Media and American Politics:** "The mass media . . . serve as powerful guardians of political norms because the American people believe that a free press should keep them informed about the wrongdoings of government."[39] Another common way of defining the media's role is to say that it acts as the **fourth estate,** or the unofficial fourth branch of government that checks the others. The term, fourth estate, is credited to Scottish writer Thomas Carlyle, who in 1841 wrote, "Burke said there were Three Estates in Parliament; but, in the Reporter's Gallery yonder, there sat a Fourth Estate more important far than they all." [40] In other words, people look to the media—the fourth estate—to keep the government in check. The role of the media must be protected if it is to carry out that task.

Mediating Political Information

The political information most people receive is mediated information. In other words, unless they work directly in government, most citizens' understanding of politics comes completely from various media sources, which is one reason why the media is often referred to as a storyteller. As a result, information received from the media amounts to a carefully manufactured or view of the political world. Professionals who create the news have traditionally followed routines and are influenced by long-held values that manifest themselves in media content. As Columbia University professor Herbert Gans writes in his study of the American media: "The news . . . contains values, or preference statements. This in turn makes it possible to suggest that there is, underlying the news, a picture of nation and society as it ought to be."[41] This statement acknowledges that professional journalists try to be objective; however, news reports inevitably include value judgments and value statements—sometimes explicitly. Whenever events are reported on, the journalists covering them seek to connect what transpires to the values within a society. For instance, crime news alerts viewers to the idea that there are undesirable actors within society, and that criminals should be punished. This type of coverage typically does not acknowledge the extent to which it employs ideological judgments that necessarily carry with them a particular bias. Rather, they focus on the rule of law within our society and infer that individuals who do not abide by the rule of law should face the consequences of their actions. Viewed in this light, media figures report on such events through a particular ideological prism that, for instance, treats some crimes as much worse than others. (Compare, for instance, the much different ways in which white-collar criminals and burglars

are portrayed.) Formative cultural assumptions underlying certain value judgments also often come to light when foreign events are covered by American journalists or reporters. In such instances, journalists may impose what they regard (consciously or unconsciously) as their superior values on another society or culture, a process that social scientists refer to as **ethnocentrism.** This ideological practice manifests itself most clearly in war coverage, where the press rarely questions American involvement—as to do so would appear unpatriotic. When airing or publishing pieces on other countries, the American news media might also hold those governments to a certain standard that is set by political principles that are hegemonic in the United States. [42] In these ways, the media may present certain political news through a lens that imposes or reflects value judgments that are commonly accepted within a given society.

Related to the idea that the media in large part decides what is a good news story is the concept of the *media's gatekeeping role,* which means that they determine what information is communicated to the public. On any given day, dozens of important events occur, yet the media only has a certain amount of time, energy, and money to devote to reporting on some of them. As a result, it must decide what should count as newsworthy material. Some events will be more interesting than others, so news sources will focus on events likely to appeal to the broader public (think the major headlines on a website or the front-page article of a newspaper). Like that gatekeeping role are the media's *agenda-setting powers.* In other words, according to **agenda-setting theory,** the media decides both what to ignore or filter out and what to show. As University of Texas professor Maxwell McCombs and University of North Carolina professor Donald Shaw write: "In choosing and displaying news, editors, newsroom staff, and broadcasters play an important part in shaping political reality. Readers learn not only about a given issue, but also how much importance to attach to that issue from the amount of information in a news story and its position."[43]

Whether it is a producer who selects the topics for the evening news or an algorithm that creates a social media news feed, media actors determine what is considered newsworthy. The public does not make these decisions; instead, professionals within the news industry make them for the public. Perhaps that is why, particularly in the US, public opinion surveys consistently find high levels of dissatisfaction with the mass media. Why? The media (especially the legacy media) is viewed unfavorably in part because many citizens do not think it pays sufficient attention to the socioeconomic issues that matter most to them.

If the media decides which stories to present, it also has a hand in deciding how stories are presented. According to **framing theory,** the way the media frames political information can affect people's understanding of it. For example, a study on gubernatorial races found that female candidates were more likely to be framed in terms of personal characteristics than their male counterparts, who were more likely to be framed in terms of their positions on policy issues.[44] By highlighting certain aspects of a story and ignoring others, frames can affect people's judgments and opinions on policy issues, and, as is the case with agenda setting, elected officials fight to make sure they are framed in the best possible light.

The public, or individual viewers, should know that while the media is a critical institution that may aid people's political decision-making, it is guided by professional values that dictate the content. Individuals can lessen their dependency on any one news source and develop a more nuanced picture of the world by turning to a variety of media outlets and becoming aware of what goes into story selection. While internal pressures, (professional standards) or external forces (governments) can influence how the media portrays information, it is likely that ownership will also affect what the public sees. Many will argue that maintaining trust in the media is important because people need to rely on the media to make informed decisions as citizens. If the media does not serve citizens in such a way, many will either lack essential information or fall

prey to disinformation campaigns. The decreasing levels of trust in the media that we mentioned earlier indeed signify a troubled relationship exists at present between the producers and consumers of news.

Conclusion

Interest groups play an integral role in the political process because they bring many diverse views and demands before a popularly elected government. Interest groups also foster the development of social capital, or the maintenance of relationships and networks that allow citizens to solve collective problems. However, interest groups have their downsides. One is factionalism: while a multitude of interest groups may represent many problems, only a small number of them garner the government's attention. Such inequality among interest groups stems in part from the economic bias in the interest group system, where moneyed interests are more likely to be represented and have their concerns prioritized. Interest groups work to influence government through inside lobbying, which occurs when groups create formal relationships with governmental officials.

Like interest groups, the mass media does not form a part of the government; however, it serves as a powerful guardian of political norms because the free press should keep the public informed about the wrongdoings of government. Another common way of defining the media's role is to say that it acts as the fourth estate, or the unofficial fourth branch of government that checks the others. For the media to fulfill its role as "watchdog," governments must protect the freedom of the press—and some countries do a better job of that than others. Protecting the press is also important because it serves as an information conduit between the government and the people. The vast majority of people cannot acquire information on governmental affairs themselves and as a result rely on the press to act as a mediator. However, the media report stories based on their own journalistic values and practices, and this can affect how the news agenda is set and how pieces are framed.

Discussion Questions:

In what ways might interest groups be more influential than political parties?

Do you think interest groups help or hurt the democratic process and/representative government? Explain your answer.

Should all activities of the government be open to media coverage? Why or why not? In what circumstances do you think it would be appropriate for the government to operate without such transparency?

Have changes in media formats created a more accurate, less biased media? Why or why not?

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Chapter 12

GLOBAL POWER: THEORIES & STRUCTURES

GLOBAL POWER THEORIES & STRUCTURES

Throughout this textbook, the primary focus has been on the interactions among actors within a state. Whether it is the leaders in government, or the people who get to choose the ones to serve in government, the struggle for power has been concentrated within the parameters of a singular state. Now, we turn our attention to the interactions among the states themselves. From this perspective, the individual actors take a backseat as points of observation while we train our sights on the collective whole of a state. This chapter will address the foundational tenets of the study of international relations, which is the subfield in political science that focuses on the interactions among states. Simply defined, in **international relations,** power consists in the ability of a state to pursue its preferred outcome in each situation. States aim to protect their sovereignty—their authority to govern themselves—and guard against attacks from other countries. Developing and projecting their strength is the means through which they achieve this goal, which can be done bilaterally between two states, multilaterally through alliances, or internationally through supranational organizations. In the realm of international relations, the most professed goal of states is to work toward creating a global system of peace that rests upon a certain balance of power. As with all things related to politics, however, the actors who have the means to exert their power over other members of the political community determine who gets to set the terms of "peace" and oversee what "balance" looks like. Under these circumstances, power can best be defined as the ability to establish and enforce the rules to which all other actors in a system must adhere. In doing so, we will look at the different players in the international system and how they interact, as well as examine the principles that guide the establishment of the political, social, and economic environment in which these interactions take place.[1]

The means by which a state discerns its place within the larger geopolitical system—based on the worldview its policy makers adhere to—serves as the foundation for the state's power. The theories discussed in this chapter will help illuminate the role power plays in international interactions. They describe the different methods states use to exert their power and how the application of the levers of state power can lead to an increase in a state's ability to chart its own course and induce other states to support the attainment of its preferred outcomes. At the same time, the theories describe how other states characterize the state's actions and determine their responses to them. A state exercises military, political, economic, and so-called "soft" power. The more states attend to and invest in the development of each of these elements of the power they wield, the greater their potential to have an impact on the international stage.

Foundations of International Relations

Prior to 1918, international relations, as a topic or field of study, did not formally exist in the US. Issues now considered a part of international relations were then seen as parts of other subjects, such as political theory, history, economics, and international law. The disciplinary study began as an attempt to make sense of the Great War, which was arguably the most significant event in world history. In the decades following the war, leading up the onset of World War II, international relations scholars struggled with establishing a generalizable theory to observe interaction among sovereign nation-states. For several scholars and researchers, particularly in English-speaking countries, a new approach was necessary to understand the underlying causes of this catastrophic event that destroyed much of the European continent. These thinkers felt there was a need to explain how the great powers could fight one another in such a disastrous war, the likes of which they hoped the world would never see again. This concern led both scholars and practitioners to argue it was imperative to establish an international body that would help ensure transparency and accountability among states, efforts which culminated

in the creation of the League of Nations. The creation of this international organization, headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland, was intended to provide a forum for resolving international disputes through mediation and, if needed, direct intervention. Though it was first proposed by President Woodrow Wilson during his second term in office as part of his Fourteen Points plan for an equitable peace in Europe, the United States never actually joined the organization. In a speech to Congress on January 8, 1918, Wilson laid out a Fourteen Point plan to establish an international rule of law. His final point called for a "general association of nations" that would adhere to a series of covenants to ensure greater accountability of leaders and states. Since many of his previous points required regulation or enforcement, it only made sense to create an institution that would ensure adherence to this set of norms. In calling for the formation of the association of nations, Wilson advanced the wartime opinions voiced by diplomats and intellectuals on both sides of the Atlantic. They believed there was a need for a new type of standing international organization dedicated to fostering international cooperation, providing security for its members, and ensuring a lasting peace. With all of Europe's population exhausted by four years of total war, and with many in the United States optimistic that a new organization would be able to solve the international disputes that had led to war, Wilson's proposition was initially very popular. However, it proved exceptionally difficult to create to carry out, and Wilson left office never having convinced the United States to join the ill-fated League of Nations.[2]

Liberal Internationalism

The political views espoused by Wilson and his contemporaries regarding cooperation among sovereign states is commonly referred to as **liberal internationalism.** This theory identifies specific causes for conflict and then posits specific ways to prevent their recurrence. Proponents of the theory trace the origins of the Great War to two primary causes. The first was an absence of democracy in domestic politics. Liberal internationalist scholars argued that rational actors do not want wars, and any wars that occur are initiated by autocratic regimes. Second, there are inherent flaws in existing international institutions. The international order is one of anarchy where secret diplomacy guides state to state interaction; hence, there was no mechanism in place to prevent war. In short, Liberal Internationalism may be understood as an extension of a liberal ideology, which focuses on preventing conflict through advancing democratic principles alongside liberal norms. So, if the absence of democracy caused war, then the aim of liberalism was to promote democratic political systems. Liberal Internationalists believed that if all states were democracies, there would be no wars. These ideas owed much to the earlier claims of Thomas Paine (Common Sense, 1776) and especially Immanuel Kant (Perpetual Peace, 1795).

In Perpetual Peace, Kant examines why, when it comes to questions of war and peace, the inhabitants of a particular nation, as well as people throughout the world, benefit from living under representative forms of government, rather than under the rule of monarchs or dictators.

According to Kant, "[Under] the republican constitution . . . if the consent of the citizens is required to decide that war should be declared . . . nothing is more natural than that they would be very cautious in commencing [one, because they would then directly suffer] the calamities of war [including, above all,] having to fight. . . But, on the other hand, in a constitution which is not republican, and under which the subjects are not citizens, a declaration of war is the easiest thing in the world to decide upon, because war does not require of the ruler . . . the least sacrifice of the pleasures of his table, the chase, [or] his country houses. He may, therefore, resolve on war as on a pleasure party for the most trivial reasons."

Kant reasoned that, if citizens rather than autocratic rulers are responsible for introducing troops into combat, then they, or rather their representatives, who are accountable to the voters, would be more judicious when determining whether to declare war. In other words: one is much more reluctant to vote

in favor of a war when you or your loved ones must fight in it. According to Kant's logic, war would be declared only as a last resort— for instance, to defend a nation against an external attack.

Assumptions (and Problems) of Liberal Internationalism

The Liberal Internationalist belief is based on a series of important assumptions. First, democratic systems and international cooperation is built on a "harmony of interests," whereby all parties involved have a set of commonalities and share a desire to work together to strengthen (and benefit from) these interests. However, when there are not shared interests, no harmony can be achieved, which inevitably results in conflict. Second, liberal internationalism assumes that international politics is not a zero-sum game, a situation in which one state can gain or win something only if another loses it. Rather, liberal internationalists believe it is possible for all sides to "win." Finally, if all states are democracies, and no democracies go to war with one other, then these states can always find peaceful solutions to problems brought on when their national interests appear to clash. While these assumptions are not far-fetched or unrealistic, they tend to overvalue democracy and minimize the extent to which the interests of various states may diverge from one another. What is more, although liberal internationalism distinguished itself by appearing as the first theory within the emergent field of international relations, many viewed it as dead on arrival, especially since it was not widely accepted by its proponents. For instance, not only did the United States view the League of Nations with skepticism, but specific events in Europe and elsewhere undermined the central tenants of liberalism. Socialism was on the rise in many advanced and developing democracies. At the same time, several undemocratic regimes enjoyed obvious popularity, and many of these regimes glorified war. As a result, the very proposition made by liberal internationalists in the form of the League of Nations was powerless to prevent aggression, which in turn prompted the need for war to restore peace. In sum, it seemed they had been mistaken about states and about human nature.

Collective Security. One branch of liberalism, institutionalism, views international institutions made up of multiple states as essential to the functioning of the international system.[3] By creating international institutions, the existence of which runs counter to the claim that the global system is fundamentally anarchic, sovereign states establish alliances, which are designed to create formal channels through which countries support one another in times of need. A more specific form of institutionalism, known as *collective security,*[4] encourages allies to strengthen the security of each member within the alliance—especially those members who are not strong enough to defend themselves. These arrangements are especially beneficial for states with limited resources to put toward their own protection. NATO provides a real-world example of an institution designed to promote collective security.

Smaller states, like the Baltic States, Luxembourg, and Montenegro, have a limited ability to divert their respective country's GDP for investment in modern military armaments. By joining NATO, these smaller countries agree to allow more formidable powers, such as the United States or the United Kingdom, to install military personnel and weapons in their countries and to use them as a base of military operations in exchange for the promise that they will receive protection should the need arise. In the case of a joint military engagement, the smaller country contributes personnel and financial resources. With the promise of support from more powerful countries, smaller states can deter other states from taking actions against them. All states within the pact, however large or small, are obligated to take part in joint actions, and because all the states in the pact see an attack on one member as an attack on all members, smaller states are assured of protection. Thus, NATO provides a true example of liberal international theory in practice.[5]

Realism

Despite the efforts of many world powers to prevent a repeat of the Great War, Europe once again plunged into the horrors of armed conflict after Adolph Hitler rose to power in Germany. To understand how

nation-states failed to prevent another world war from erupting, Hans J. Morgenthau produced what is considered the standard work of classical realism, entitled, Politics Among Nations: *The Struggle for Power and Peace* in 1948. Morgenthau's work dominated international relations theory for an entire generation, mainly because he used ideas from older political thinkers, such as Thucydides and Machiavelli, to support his positions. According to Morgenthau, realism was built upon three main principles. The first is statism, the idea that states are the most important actors on the international stage. All other actors are less important because their interests are not reflected independently of the state. Second, all states must do their best to survive in a dangerous world, a condition attributable to the inherent flaws of human nature. Therefore, states must concentrate above all else on ensuring their survival. Finally, states must rely solely on themselves, since no other state or institution can be counted on to come to their defense, especially when all other states are similarly focused on the need for self-preservation.

Classical realists used ideas from older thinkers to support their concepts. For example, in Ancient Greece, Thucydides' account of the Melian Dialogue stressed the importance of power and the dangers associated with appearing weak, asserting: "The strong do what they have the power to do and the weak accept what they must accept."[6] What is more, classical realists also recalled the ideas of Machiavelli in *The Prince*. In it, Machiavelli stressed two principles deemed necessary for safeguarding the rule of a wise leader: policies are more important than principles, and the ends justify the means.[7] As can be seen by these ancient writings, realism is wholly bound up with the concept of self-interest. According to realism, states consider policy options with a go-it-alone mentality that focuses solely on preserving their own safety and security. From this perspective, the state is the primary actor in the international system. According to realists, self-interested states do what they can to gain power and increase their ability to tailor the rules of the system to their advantage. In general, realists believe that states withhold information regarding their goals and aspirations in each situation out of fear that, if publicized, such information could be used against them. Revealing its capabilities and conveying how far it is willing to go to get what it wants in a completely transparent manner could make a state vulnerable to other self-interested states.[8] This blatant distrust of others underlies the thinking of a realist state, and because a state cannot trust other states, realists consider diplomacy and negotiations unreliable if not irrelevant ways of conducting foreign affairs. Therefore, realists try to implement policies that send a clear, strong message about the ability of a state to protect itself.

Realist Theories

Several prominent theories have guided the study of realism within the subfield of international relations. If sovereign nation-states are prone to act in their own self-interest, how might their interactions with each other play out? One of the most common ways of understanding this form of activity is **game theory,** which maps out various scenarios to anticipate how self-interested political actors may attempt to secure what they deem to be to their advantage. Based upon the idea that it is possible to determine how likely it is for players in a specific situation to take certain actions, game theory helps illustrate a realist view of state strategy in international relations. Consider any form of game that two of more people can play together. No matter what the rules are, the objective is usually to obtain more (or divest yourself) of an item before your opponents can do so. To do this, you must try to anticipate and consider all the information you have about the current situation and determine what moves other players might make. From the realist perspective, states have the same mindset in their interactions with each other.

Every decision a state must make is part of a complicated equation, which inevitably results in an action that another state will need to take. Therefore, states must weigh the risks and rewards associated with each course of action and determine which is likely to benefit them the most. Because states are

forced to rely on sources that provide them with incomplete information, they must base their strategic decision-making on limited forms of knowledge. For example, intelligence information about another state's true motivations is usually based on ideas and assumptions rather than verifiable facts, and if that information is faulty or inaccurate, the chosen course of action may not achieve the desired results. This dynamic can lead to what is called strategic interaction, where a state must determine its relations with another state by predicting the others state's behavior.

Realism assumes that states are rational actors, meaning that all the actions they take or policies they implement are a function of what they see as the desired outcome of a situation. Realists see the international system as a zero-sum game, in which a gain one state makes, whether that be control over a physical resource or greater power in an alliance, necessarily leads to a loss for another state. In other words, in a zero-sum game, one "player" (i.e., a nation-state) can win something only if another nation-state loses it. Moreover, when all aspects of a system are finite, one state can control all a particular resource, preventing any other state from having that resource. This idea can be applied to everyday life. Suppose you and your friend are hungry for a snack and there is only one bag of chips that is readily available. If this situation were a zero-sum game, whoever got to the bag of chips first would have all the chips, and the other person would have none.[9]

Problems with Realism

Despite its prominence as a theory, each major assumption of realism has come under fire. Whereas realists point to anarchy as a basic condition that can cause conflict, others see anarchy as only one of many characteristics of international politics. According to this view, international organizations and international law reduce the degree of anarchy at the international level. Similarly, many argue that the treaty of Westphalia, which is often referred to as the origin of the anarchic system of independent sovereign states, is itself evolving in ways that substantially limit sovereignty and increase the threat of armed conflict. Even some scholars who agree that the system has traditionally been anarchic believe that it has changed over time. Another major assumption of realism, namely that the state is the fundamental unit of analysis, has been criticized for similar reasons. A growing number of nonstate actors has obtained varying levels of influence on a wide variety of issues. In sum, if the conduct of major international wars is the focus of study, it may still make sense to regard the state as the unit of analysis. However, critics assert that an increasing amount of what is interesting and important about geopolitics, from human rights to terrorism, concerns actors whose areas of influence range far beyond the borders of any given state.

Another series of critiques targets the assumption that the state is unitary and rational. This assumption implies that, about foreign policy, it simply does not matter what kind of government or society a country has. Many critics reject this assumption. We routinely assume that with a different party in power, a state's foreign policy would be different. Critics also attack realism based on its usefulness. That is, they question the extent to which it can be applied practically, as well as its ability to predict when wars will occur. Such critics argue that realism merely tells us that when wars do occur, the distribution of power at any given point should prove to be the ultimate cause. However, to the extent that theories are evaluated in terms of their ability to offer clear, testable predictions about the particularities associated with many different forms of armed conflict, realism appears weak.[10]

Global Power Structures and Systems

When it comes to the nature of power on the international stage, several factors should be considered. For instance, a country can have a unique status by way of the amount of influence it exerts in military, diplomatic, cultural, and/or economic spheres. A state can also have power because of securing military victories or possessing the ability to defend and promote its national security interests in the international system. In many instances, a state

may exercise such power in a particular region that constitutes its sphere of influence. Other states can join to establish an alliance that enhances the security of each member. By doing so, such sovereign states are considered "great powers," since they are recognized as having the ability and expertise to exert their influence on a global scale. However, if there is a state occupying a dominant position that is characterized by its extensive ability to exert influence or project power on a global scale, then it is referred to as a *superpower.*

The global balance of power reflects the classic realist way of understanding the structure of the international system. Realists see the world as populated by states forever striving to make the system work in their favor. Because the international system is inherently anarchic, different poles, or centers of power, will develop around the states that have the largest amount of power (as determined by the system). Those states will then gather other states to their side. Three different types of polarity emerge in an anarchic system: *unipolar, bipolar, and multipolar.* In a **unipolar** system, the most powerful country (the hegemon), sets itself up as the main player who decides the rules of the international system. By virtue of having the strongest economy, largest military, or most stable political and social institutions, the hegemon can use its position to maintain and increase its power. A hegemon might choose to use its military might to extend its power or employ less aggressive means to accomplish that goal. When a hegemon expands the institutions that it benefits from to include other countries, it encourages those countries *to be like the hegemon.* In so doing, the hegemon expands its sphere of influence, a process whose underlying premise holds that states who are similar in culture, economy, and political structure are less likely to fight one another. While these states share many similarities, they have varying abilities to create systems capable of allocating various essential goods and services. When a hegemon expands its sphere of influence, it expands its access to resources, goods, and services in areas where it lacks a comparative advantage. Facing an imbalance in comparative advantage may drive a country to trade for a good or service that it needs.

A **bipolar** system, by contrast, features two superpowers—two powerful states with different governmental systems and/or ideologies who vie with one another to create opposing spheres of influence. In this system, two groups of allied countries allow the states at the center of the poles to expand their power with the support of other actors in the system, giving those two states comparable strength, as if each were a hegemon. In a **multipolar** world, multiple states form many smaller spheres of influence, creating a pared-down version of a unipolar or bipolar system. Since realism assumes the international system is inherently anarchic, a state is motivated to create an environment that contributes toward the maintenance of a balance of power that serves its interests. Rational actors prefer order, which given them a reliable way to establish a set of goals and decide upon the best ways to achieve them. Essentially, states—especially the bigger, stronger, more powerful ones—see anarchy as an opportunity to create order in a way that favors their interests and fits their long-term objectives. The balance of power existing among states provides them with a way to understand who succeeds in creating a world that benefits them the most.

The relationship between the United States and Russia from World War II to the present gives us perhaps the clearest example of how shifts in polarity occur in the international system. Before World War II, colonial European powers had divided up the world, and the United States and Russia were doing what they could, in smaller ways, to expand their own reach. After World War II, the United States and the Soviet Union emerged as the two major powers at opposite ends of the ideological spectrum, thus creating a bipolar world. The interactions between the Soviet Union and the United States during the Cold War provides a glimpse of the best and worst of decisions states have made. The Cold War represents a period in world history in which there was a slowly simmering conflict on multiple fronts between the Soviet Union and the United States, the two nations who had emerged from World War II with the economic strength and political stability needed to exert their influence and preferences on other states in the international community.

The intense competition between these two major world powers for global supremacy spilled into all parts of society, from the propaganda and policies of the United States focused on weeding out suspected communists in all aspects of society and government to the race to see who could make the greatest advancements in space exploration, which spurred a steep increase in scientific and technological development. In the context of foreign relations, the conflict between the Soviet Union and the United States was more tangible and led to several proxy wars, conflicts in which each of the warring parties in a particular country is supported and funded by two larger parties who have a vested interest in the outcome of the conflict. In the Vietnam War, for instance, the US-backed South Vietnamese government fought the insurgent Viet Cong, who had the support of the Soviet Union; in Afghanistan, the United States supported the Mujahideen rebels who fought against the Soviet-backed government of Afghanistan. These are the two most often-cited examples of Cold War–era proxy wars.

The 1990s brought an end to the Cold War, with the United States emerging as the hegemon, a position that came with its own challenges. In the era immediately following the Cold War, newly independent former Soviet states looked to the United States for monetary, political, and military support, developments that illuminate the sort of responsibilities that lie with the hegemon: that is, when you are the victor in a conflict, you may then be seen as the only stable, strong power in a geopolitical region, and with that status comes a sense of obligation to help less powerful, less stable states.

The security dilemma is the byproduct of a system in which states are motivated to act in their own interest. As states implement security policies that aim to either expand or solidify their position in the system, other states may perceive those actions as provocations, which may in turn lead those other states to preemptively respond in the interests of enhancing or preserving their own security. We can see then how such a dynamic potentially ratchets up tensions between two or more states that belong to an international system marred by an underlying sense of mistrust. The conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War offers a direct long-term example of what may happen when two states exist during a security dilemma. States that see the actions of another state as an offensive provocation seek to respond in as proportional a manner as possible, but in some cases, as in the hypothetical situation of nuclear war, the response can have consequences that negatively—and in the case of nuclear war, catastrophically—impact the entire international community.[11]

Neorealism vs. Neoliberalism

A contemporary offshoot of realism, known as **neorealism** (or structural realism), refers to states that take a middle path when conducting their foreign affairs. Because the international "community" is viewed as an anarchical realm, with the creation of a universally recognized centralized body with strong enforcement mechanisms nowhere to be seen any time soon, it is difficult to determine the likelihood of cooperation between two or more countries. The neorealist assumption is that fear and uncertainty stand in the way of meaningful cooperation, and countries are deterred from creating mutual agreements because of the potential losses associated with pursuing certain forms of strategic interaction. If another country could gain something by not cooperating, the assumption is that they will take the gains and another country would incur the losses. Neorealists believe that the potential for this to happen deters countries from cooperating. Because they view international cooperation as something that is hard to achieve and maintain, they become more dependent on state power than their counterparts, the **neoliberals.** This view asserts that cooperation between two states on the international level is possible, and even fruitful in its ability to integrate both actors' economies. However, it is evident that the focus of each program is somewhat skewed or biased in its approach to cooperation since neorealists tend to study security matters, while neoliberalists predominantly observe

economic issues. What we see here is an attempt by each theoretical camp to detract from the other's ability to explain and predict historical phenomena; yet, neither side can point directly to the shortcomings of its counterpart with respect to a particular topic under discussion. Neoliberals will argue that neorealism overemphasizes the idea of anarchy and neglects interdependence, but much of their evidence is based on economic data. This approach neglects much of the underlying presumptions made by neorealism, since it focuses more on the issue of security. Conversely, neorealists assert that neoliberalism has failed in its attempt to surpass neorealism as the dominant theory in the field, but only because there are issues of security that it fails to address. This argument too overlooks the fact that much of neoliberalism is founded on economic presuppositions.

On the one hand, there are some similarities between these two perspectives. For instance, both agree on the fact that the international community is anarchical, while at the same time conceding that world politics does exhibit some order. Moreover, both argue that national security and economic welfare are important, which is why these two areas are the only ones focused on in much of the field's research. Despite disagreements over the significance of international institutions and regimes, they also find common agreement over their existence and growth throughout the past 50 years. On the other hand, both theories have varied approaches within themselves, some of which spawned new and different models to use when interpreting international cooperation, or lack thereof.

Since neorealism is a deviation of classical realism, it holds several assumptions that form corollaries to the current neorealist approach, although it tends to view security and economics in a somewhat Darwinian manner, whereby only those strong nations that sought more power would survive the test of time. This classical perspective of international affairs differs from neorealism, which focuses more on the international system rather than human nature. Although nations are still the primary actors under study, neorealists look more at the structural forces or levels of analysis as variables of observation. Furthermore, neorealism's approach to conflict diverges from the classical one in that it only sees military force as something that should be present but not actually utilized unless necessary. **Neoliberalism** is also a by-product of a more classical approach, which focuses more on individual rights and sovereignty, with particular interest placed on the economic realm. Most of the predominant authors of classical liberalism emphasized that entrusting economic decisions to individuals or the private sector would lead to greater economic progress. Taking this approach and applying it to the world market, liberal institutionalists view the usage of regimes on the international level as beneficial in building and maintaining economic stability and political security on the international stage. Although there are some minor variations found within each program, what remains constant is the fact that realism, in all its forms, focuses primarily on national security, while liberalism and its subsets revolve around economics.

Conclusion

The international stage has undergone a series of marked changes and evolutions over the last 100 years. Scholars studying the relationships among states have posited several prominent theories to explain their behavior. After the end of the Great War, liberalism, as a theory of international relations, sprang up and acknowledged that states are part of a larger system, working in concert with various other institutions to create an environment through which all people and states can benefit. This view holds that states work together to achieve collective security. What is more, these interactions occur as an ever-changing one, and such conditions are determined by how states see themselves, other states, and the system as a whole. The norms of the system to which all states tend to adhere are usually heavily influenced by the most powerful states. Conversely, realism places states at the center of the system. Its proponents and

practitioners choose to enact policies focused on maintaining the security of their state. As a result, the states with the most power tend to have the most influence over other states in the system, whereby they play the greatest role in creating global security. Unless there is one state with much more power than all the others, realists describe the maintenance of world order as requiring a balance of power among two or more great powers, each one of whom have their own sphere of influence. Just as the most powerful states tend to dominate the international system, the perspectives of those in power have tended to dominate the study of international relations.

Discussion Questions:

Which theory do you think best describes the current state of International affairs?

Does one theory have more flaws than the other?
If so, what are they?

Which balance of power theory best explains the world today?

What country (or countries) do you think are capable of becoming a hegemony in this century?
What factors need to be considered?

Endnotes

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Chapter 13

GLOBALIZATION AND POLITICAL ECONOMY

GLOBALIZATION AND POLITICAL ECONOMY

There was a time when most communities were economically self-sufficient. Locally produced foods, fuels, and raw materials were generally processed for local consumption. As a result, trade between peoples was quite limited. Today, the economies of most countries are so interconnected that they form part of a single, interdependent global economy. The complexities of economic interdependence on the international level have given rise to much intriguing scholarship. For instance, some research has focused on the extent to which governments are motivated to limit and alter market outcomes for the benefit of specific political or social ends. Although governments can limit the rise in prices of some products, they cannot control how much people want to buy or how much private firms are willing to sell. *Trade policy* offers us an example of how regulations can redirect economic forces, but it cannot stop them from manifesting themselves elsewhere. Within the academic community that observes international behavior of states, there are some major theoretical and empirical problems surrounding the study of economic cooperation. Some question the very basis of a theory, while others assert the lack of empirical data weakens research conducted within the field. This chapter will address the causes and effects of globalization, as well as how the economics of a state can shape international relations.

Globalization

The growth of interdependence among state economies can be viewed as part of a trend toward globalization that began more than a century ago. As states' economies have become more closely linked, traditional ideas about states, currency exchange mechanisms, trade, and markets have had to be reexamined in a new light. Today, the economies of most countries form part of a single, interdependent global economy. In the later decades of the twentieth century, scholars and practitioners found they needed a term to describe the rapid number of changes occurring during that time period. Businesses were buying and selling more goods in distant places than ever before. International organizations began regularly bringing together representatives from many different communities. The exchange of ideas between people around the world increased rapidly, as technological advances made travel and communications easier. As these networks expanded at a rapid pace, their activities became more intense. People could not only communicate more regularly but also travel to places on a more regular basis. These developments enabled people to have relationships with others living thousands of miles away that seemed closer than those they had with people who lived next door.

A general term, globalization refers to how the world has become more connected economically, politically, socially, and culturally over time. In this general sense, its roots go back to the era of agrarian societies when empires expanded, and trade networks grew. These connections accelerated and triggered developments that encompassed the whole world after the Columbian Exchange. When people, plants, goods, diseases, and ideas were shared across all continents, the lives of humans everywhere changed—in some regions, for the better. For example, the introduction of more caloric food increased life expectancy. However, in other regions, the effects were more negative and included the rise of the slave trade, as well as the systematic exploitation of land and resources, a feature of colonialism that created starkly unequal relationships of economic dependency.

Globalization has touched all aspects of human existence. In the modern era, voluntary migration as well as forced migration have resulted in a diverse human population in many parts of the world. America, which is often called a "melting pot," provides a prime example of how the mass movement of people has shaped the modern world. Today's Americans come from all corners of the globe. But equally diverse populations can be found in parts of Mexico, South Africa, Indonesia, and many other places. And as people move, they bring with them their language, culture, and customs. These

political parties generally support protectionism.[3]

Global Banking. Modern communication technologies allow vast amounts of capital to flow freely and instantly throughout the world. The equivalent of up to $US1.3 trillion is traded each day through international stock exchanges in cities such as New York, London, and Tokyo.[4] Global banking encompasses a broad variety of transactions, including international loans, foreign aid, remittances, and currency trading, as well as cross-border investments such as the purchase of stocks, bonds, or derivatives. It also includes financial services that are conducted across borders. Another major facet of global finance consists of *foreign direct investment* (FDI). These are transactions "involving significant control of producing enterprises," ranging from the purchase of a substantial share of a foreign company's stock to setting up production facilities in another country.[5] The most fundamental characteristic of this emerging system of financial arrangements is that it is not centered on any single state. Thus, globalization implies the growth of a single, unified global market. Whereas telecommunications specialists talk about the "death of distance," financial specialists talk about the "end of geography" because geographic location no longer presents a barrier to finance.

Advocates of globalization usually focus on the benefits of economic interconnectivity. They stress that the contributions made through international trade stimulate economic growth. Eventually, this becomes a net benefit for rich and poor alike. They also emphasize the degree to which international competition serves as a means of inspiring innovation that often results in better products and more efficient processes. Economic growth tends to strengthen and expand a country's middle class, which can then act as a long-term force for political and individual freedom. Critics of globalization point to workers who are threatened by low-cost imports, the reliance of many multinational corporations on overseas sweatshops, and the frequent presence of child labor in the developing world. They paint a picture of a world of mobile capital, in which the prospect of overseas investment puts downward pressure on industrial countries' wages; moreover, critics argue that foreign direct investment is designed to take advantage of the developing countries' low wages and weak labor laws, as well as their relative lack of strong and enforceable environmental standards. Other critics see globalization as a threat to national cultures because it exposes indigenous peoples to outside influences that could corrupt or disrupt established norms. Critics often see the advocates of globalization as tools of self-serving capitalists who are focused solely on maximizing profits at any cost, willing to exploit children, and remain, at best, indifferent to the global environment. On the other hand, critics of globalization present themselves as advocates for the poor, feeling that such criticisms endanger the poor by being either ill-informed or largely uneducated about the realities of economic growth.[6]

Understanding International Cooperation. Given the anarchic tendencies permeating the international community, the idea of two or more countries cooperating with each other to address economic and security matters is a very difficult pill for some scholars to swallow. Recall that according to the school of Realism, international anarchy makes cooperation difficult because agreements cannot be centrally enforced; however, over the years some researchers have posited new and unique perspectives through which to observe strategic interaction among nation-states. Several studies on the subject have dealt primarily with how and why some countries might be willing to cooperate with their competitors—or, in some cases, even with their adversaries. These cooperative bargains normally take place in economics, with some also occurring in matters of security. For instance, Kenneth Oye addressed the issue of why cooperation emerges in some cases and not in others. Oye compiles the work of several authors to critique the traditional boundaries established between the studies of international political economy and security. These articles use both explanatory and prescriptive characteristics to address the above question, which Oye breaks down into two parts. First, what circumstances favor the

become interwoven within an existing society and create diversity, which should be celebrated. The world wars globalized us even more. In fact, these major conflicts proved to the world that working together across global networks could be good and bad. After World War II, many global organizations were formed to help to bring peace, stability, and economic prosperity to the world. The United Nations, NATO, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund are all global organizations that have greatly affected interactions among states.[1]

Causes of Globalization

With the advent of several technological advances, we have seen a marked increase in the interconnectivity of countries across the world. These new innovations have spawned a greater dependence on the exchange of goods and services, mainly because of the exposure that people have to items produced by various manufacturers in specific regions. There are five primary causes for the rise in globalization. These causes have affected the interactions among states in several ways, but they have also had several unintended consequences that dramatically shaped the global economy. Although some regard globalization as little more than a euphemism for capitalism, it is a multifaceted phenomenon that encompasses the development of interconnected material relations, the increasing rapidity with which they take place, and the shifting public perceptions of these changes.[2]

Improved Communications. The development of communication technologies such as the internet, email, and mobile phones has been vital to the growth of globalization because they help multinational corporations operate throughout the world. The development of satellite TV channels such as BBC, Sky, and CNN have also provided worldwide marketing avenues for the concepts and products of globalization. What is more, virtual video conferencing systems have allowed individuals to work remotely and perform normal duties without the direct oversight of a supervisor. Email, text, and phone have become the primary means of communication instead of face-to-face contact with co-workers, customers, or clients.

Improved Transportation. The development of refrigerated and container transport, bulk shipping, and improved air transport has allowed for goods to be moved on a massive scale throughout the world. These changes assist globalization by enabling items to be transported in a manner that both preserves perishable items and ensures they are delivered in a reasonable time. The rapid increase in supply chain logistics has enabled the movement and distribution of goods within a few days a regular occurrence. However, overdependence on these services has also crippled corporations seeking to expand their reach into different markets on other continents.

Growth of Multinational Corporations (MNCs). The rapid growth of big MNCs such as Microsoft, McDonalds, Google, Apple, Nike, and thousands more are a vital cause, as well as a consequence, of increased globalization. The investment of MNCs in farms, mines, commercial distribution centers, and factories allows them to produce goods and services and to sell products on a massive scale throughout the world. They also provide local jobs to people and enhance their prospects for an increased standard of living, especially among the working class. They are also important conduits for exporting Western cultural norms to non-Western states. What is more, they have allowed people to work outside the countries where the corporations were founded, something that has expanded their reach into other competitive markets.

Free Trade Agreements. MNCs and rich capitalist countries have always promoted global free trade as a way of increasing their own wealth and influence. International organizations such as the World Trade Organization and the International Monetary Fund both promote free trade. **Free trade** is a form of economic policy that does not restrict imports or exports among states. It can also be understood as the free-market idea underlying capitalistic economies that is applied to international trade. In government, free trade is predominantly advocated by political parties that hold economically liberal positions while economic nationalist and left-wing

emergence of cooperation under anarchy? Second, what strategies can states adopt to foster the emergence of cooperation by altering the circumstances they confront? Oye constructs three separate dimensions for which one can account for cooperation and conflict in the absence of a centralized authority, as well as strategies for enhancing the prospects of cooperation. The first section discusses how altering payoffs may affect the prospects for cooperation. Oye's second section deals with how continuing interaction affects cooperation and suggests strategies that can provide direct paths leading to cooperative outcomes that can lengthen such interaction. In his third and final section, Oye attempts to explain why cooperation becomes more difficult as the numbers of actors increase; he also addresses the possibility that reducing the number of cooperating states will promote the realization of common interests.

Conversely, Joseph Grieco argued that neoliberal institutionalism has been unsuccessful in its attempt to seriously challenge realism. By critiquing the works performed by a few of his contemporaries, as well as a defense of his previous works on international cooperation, Grieco asserts that many of the argument made against realism are based on flawed assumptions about the theory; however, he also concedes that realism cannot explain some things that neoliberal institutionalism does help us to understand. The author's general conclusion is that realism will remain the superior approach if no centralized authority is created; yet, both theories offer some understanding of cooperation among sovereign nations.

International Political Economy

International political economy (IPE) is a broad field of study occupied with observing the interaction between political processes and their economic consequences, both of which can have domestic and international effects. IPE describes and explains the extent to which politics and public policies define winners and losers among different groups in a society.[7] The activities of a state that result in specific public policies is referred to as political factors. These can be domestic—such as the organization of the electoral system, the nature of the legislative process, the level of economic development, and the power associated with various institutions; yet they can also be international. For example, many states have felt pressure to pursue globalization and trade liberalization policies, which have increased since the 1990s. Domestic and international political factors compel politicians to establish certain public policies, especially if it can affect their ability to stay in power. As previously discussed, such policies shift benefits and costs across different groups, establishing winners and losers in what appears to be a zero-sum game.[8] Yet, political factors are constantly changing, and as they do so, policymakers redesign policies that inevitably create new winners and losers. During the Enlightenment period, there were major transformations in Western Europe that paved the way for the rise of capitalism. These transformations also prompted the establishment of **political economy** as the field dedicated to the study of the relationship between politics and the economy. Among the most influential of its early works was Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* (1776). Given the influence his writings exerted on the development of the field, he became known as the father of political economy.

Despite the interconnectivity of politics and the economy throughout the world, it did not emerge as a field of study until the latter part of the 19th century. In short, political economy has been around for as long as politicians have been making decisions that favor some groups at the expense of others. However, the changes in politics and the economy that occurred during the Enlightenment deeply altered political and economic practices domestically and internationally. The centralization of political power in the hands of the monarch in Western Europe during the 17^{th} and 18^{th} centuries, known as absolutism, illustrates the impact of these changes and how they laid the foundations for the market economy. During the absolutist era, the belief in divine providence—that God had chosen the monarch to govern—was widespread. Monarchs who lay claim to having absolute political power made decisions with the aim of increasing it still further. At the time, power and wealth were interchangeable concepts: power begot wealth and wealth begot power.[9]

IPE: External (Structural) Influences

Understanding the complexities of economic interdependence on the international level has been an intriguing field for many researchers, especially given the various technological advances that have been made over the last 50 years. Some have argued this phenomenon is necessary to create a stable global infrastructure, while others assert it is incompatible with a nation's ability to achieve its primary goal of maintaining security. Several scholars have provided insight into the debate over which theory, *hegemony, or economic interdependence,* best encompasses the state of international cooperation. While some argue hegemonic stability more accurately explains bilateral or multilateral cooperation among states, others assert it inadequately explains the nature of interdependence.

Stephen Krasner challenged the notion that the state is trapped by a transnational society created by non-state actors and that interdependence arises through political and economic forces whose power lies beyond the control of any state or system. He argued that such a perspective is misleading, and even though it may explain developments within a particular international economic structure, it cannot explain the structure itself. By analyzing the structure of international trade, the author identifies four basic state interests that are essential for assessing the degree of openness for the movement of goods: aggregate national income, social stability, political power, and economic growth. In a hegemonic system, where one state is larger than its trading partners, the dominant state has symbolic, economic, and military capabilities that can be used to entice others to accept an open trading structure. This is most likely to occur during periods where the hegemonic system is in its ascendancy.[10]

Similarly, Charles Kindleberger asserted that the line between dominance and leadership regarding economic foreign policy is often blurry, as evidenced by the fact that large, influential countries are often able to effectively "entice" smaller ones to cooperate, albeit forcefully or through bribery. However, without these actions, public goods are less likely to be adequately allocated. Kindleberger's research also concluded that world leadership must manage foreign-exchange rates and coordinate domestic monetary policies. For instance, while both Britain and the U.S. have fulfilled this role for much of the past 100 years, neither country has the capability of doing so any longer, primarily because of the problem of *free-riding.* As a result, the international community needs to be organized based on leadership, not dominance. Furthermore, without a stabilizer, the international economic system is highly unstable.[11]

Duncan Snidal took a more cynical view of hegemonic stability theory, arguing that its applicability is limited to conditions. His argument was broken down into two perspectives. First, the public goods hypothesis for understanding many issues in international politics is severely limited, primarily because many view dominance as "leadership" while others argue it bears more resemblance to exploitation. Many countries see hegemony more as an elitist club than a model designed to provide for a public good. These attitudes reflect doubts within the international community about just how "public" benefits associated with American hegemony really are. Second, there is a flaw in the implicit assumption that collective action in the international system is impossible to achieve without a dominant state. Because it is possible for collective action to take place without the presence of a hegemonic power, Snidal asserts that the preservation of such a system should not be seen as the only cure to geopolitical ills. Although he does not completely discredit the theory's applicability, Snidal stresses that the basic presumptions upon which the theory stands should be rejected; therefore, new theoretical approaches should be sought.[12]

Some theorists, like Joanne Gowa, have defended hegemonic stability theory by presenting counterarguments to three recurring criticisms of it. First, since hegemons are not forced to pursue tariffs, they can reject them if they so choose. Second,

small groups do not enjoy as much of an advantage as privileged groups, which is why the two cannot be discussed interchangeably. Finally, open international markets do in fact provide public good problems that are distinct from excludable goods in that the enforcement, or policing of a cooperative agreement, itself is a public good. Gowa concludes by pointing out that hegemonic theory's greatest flaw lies in its neglect of the very domain to which it is applicable: politics of international trade in an anarchic world. The theory must include the issue of how the need to safeguard national security relates to a state's decision to open its borders to trade; addressing such a vital concern is crucial when determining the success or failure of international trade.[13]

David Lake offers a unique vantage point from which to study hegemonic stability theory by breaking it down into two separate and distinct parts. The first, leadership theory, adds to public goods theory and focuses on producing international stability, which he redefines as the maintenance of the international community's economic structure. Second, hegemony theory seeks to examine international economic openness in greater detail. Focusing solely on national trade policy, the author tries to bring together three distinct variables: 1) states possess multiple objectives, at least one of which is either increasing political power or tightening security, 2) free trade may not be the most optimal policy for every country all the time, and 3) a state's international position and domestic politics should be broken down into domestic actors and their interests. Despite identifying a few weaknesses and shortcomings associated with each variable, Lake contends that they provide an adequate portrait of the reality of both theories and argues that an outright rejection of the theory is unwarranted. Moreover, because aspects of leadership and hegemony have not been properly distinguished from one another in previous empirical studies based upon hegemonic stability theory, neither concept, according to Lake, has been adequately studied to date. Only by refining the theory can we accept or reject its propositions.[14]

Regarding international cooperation via economic interdependence, Keohane and Nye attempted to discern two major questions: 1) what are the major features of world politics under conditions of extensive interdependence, and 2) how and why do regimes change? The authors tried to find those conditions where each model is likely to provide the best predictions with the most explanatory power. In a critique of realism, Keohane and Nye construct another model, which they refer to as *complex interdependence*. This theory also consists of three major assumptions: 1) multiple channels—such as interstate, trans- governmental, and transnational relations—connect societies, 2) interstate relationships consist of multiple issues that are not arranged in clear or consistent hierarchies, and 3) military force is not used by governments toward other governments within a region when complex interdependence prevails. Although the authors argue this approach is better at mirroring reality, they stress that both perspectives portray ideal types, and most situations will fall somewhere between these two extremes. As a result, one must look at the patterns of political behavior under each condition before determining which one is more appropriate.[15]

The meanings of scientific concepts should be allowed to evolve; yet those who conduct research on them should clearly justify the need for a new or alternate definition. Constructing a new meaning because one disagrees with the original framework without providing the empirical rationale for it is not scholarly research and should be recognized as such.[16]

IPE: Domestic-International Linkages

IPE scholars have argued that to understand the issues affecting domestic politics, one must consider extant international factors. Others maintain that domestic politics and international relations, particularly with respect to trade, are so inextricably linked that it is difficult to tell them apart. Moreover, some scholars argue that the debate over which realm exerts more influence over the development of trade is one that may never lead to a definitive resolution. For example, Gourevitch focuses on three separate, yet important, variables when comparing domestic and international politics. First, he states

that two aspects of international relations affect domestic regimes: the distribution of power among states or the international system, and economic activity and wealth (international economy). Next, he addresses the exact opposite observation, how domestic politics affects foreign policy. In his view, previous work on the topic has taken a very apolitical approach, which hinders the efficacy of the research because political conflict within a state plays a significant role in shaping its foreign policy. Finally, Gourevitch stresses that questions regarding the interdependence of foreign and domestic policy should be analyzed simultaneously, not separately.[17]

In a case study of the distribution of power between Congress and the President in the United States, Lohmann and O'Halloran developed a model of delegation and accommodation. Their primary objective was to find out exactly how foreign policy decisions regarding international trade were distributed between the legislative and executive branches in American government. Their main argument holds that Congress may at times transfer trade policymaking authority to the President in attempts to implement better outcomes; however, under a divided government, the majority party in Congress may be inclined to hinder the President's use of that authority. The authors also assert that while divided government may generally constrain the President's authority, particular economic conditions can determine the extent to which his power is restricted. Furthermore, while other hypotheses suggest that procedural constraints may hinder Presidential discretionary power, the authors do not find this to be the case. Only when constraints imposed on the President are binding must he accommodate the demands of Congress. In this case, one can again see how domestic politics can significantly affect international trade policy.[18]

Bernard and Leblang argue in their research on exchange rates that electoral politics affects the degree to which legislators are willing to commit to or denounce a fixed exchange-rate system. When costs of electoral defeat are high, politicians are less likely to pursue a fixed exchange-rate policy, while the opposite is true when electoral costs are low. Using certain international systemic variables (such as trade dependence, vulnerability to shock, and capital mobility) in conjunction with various political factors (like partnership and election cycles), Bernard and Leblang argue that politicians must respond to the demands of the international economy, not to the preferences of non-elected bureaucrats. As a result, the actions of politicians should be expected to reflect the interests of the people who elect them.[19]

In their examination of domestic and international linkages, Frieden and Rogowski revisit the argument that domestic politics cannot be understood without observing the interconnections between national economics and the world economy. Focusing not on its causes, but instead the effects of **internationalization** (i.e., the processes generated by underlying shifts in transaction costs that produce unobservable flows of goods, services, and capital), the authors attempt to expose how economic integration affects domestic politics, policies, and institutions by using international trade theories to determine group preferences within societies. The authors consider five aspects of change that lead to increasing levels of international trade: transport costs, infrastructure, government policies, economies of scale, and factor productivity. These independent variables were observed to determine their effect on economic policies enacted by individual states, as well as the roles played by the political institutions involved in the policymaking process. In this view, economic forces outside the borders of a state could increase pressure for trade liberalization from actors that compete globally, regardless of their system of governance. While their study cannot predict the most likely policy outcomes, it provides a systematic structure for understanding why states make certain trade policy decisions. It also helps students of IPE better understand which international variables are likely to affect the domestic interactions among the various political institutions and the actors that work within them.[20]

Conclusion

States do not operate in isolation. They exist in a global community of sovereign states. As in all communities, each individual actor has their own motivations or goals and is affected by events taking place in the sphere of geopolitics. Though the international system is anarchic—that is, there is no overarching international authority to help promote peace and prosperity among states—each state's efforts to achieve its goals is to some degree dependent upon the actions of other states in the system. Recognizing that the achievement of prosperity and security requires shared action, the global community sets rules and norms of behavior to give some structure to the anarchic system. Three key issue areas have risen to prominence in contemporary IPE: globalization and international trade; international financial crises; and exchange rate regimes. International political economy examines the ways in which political factors shape public policies and define who the winners and losers of these policies are. With the emergence of a globalized society, the impact of domestic politics on international behavior (and vice versa) has become a topic of debate and scholarly study.

Discussion Questions:

What are some examples of current events in the news today that show the direct connection between domestic politics and international relations?

Can you identify two ways in which Globalization currently affects your daily life?

To what extent do you think Trump's 2016 electoral victory was made possible to a great extent by negative perceptions of Globalization in the US? Was Biden's 2020 victory aided in part by changing attitudes in the US toward Globalization?

Endnotes

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Chapter 14

WAR, CONFLICT, AND TERRORISM

The debate over which issue, economics or security, is more important could forever be a part of the study of international relations. Realists suggest that an anarchical international society hinders the ability for two or more countries to cooperate, while liberalists assert that through economic trade countries can find common ground that benefits both sides. For this to occur, some argue that international structures must be present to liaise these transitions, and others believe that domestic influences will be sufficient to both implement and enforce the agreements made between sovereign nations. Understanding why countries go to war has been a staple in the international relations literature. Much of the field's history has focused on observing those conditions that make armed conflict the most preferred option for a sovereign nation. Ancient theories have suggested that war with another country (aggressor or not) is the only way to ensure safety, while contemporary theories posit that a country's governing system determines its likelihood of going to war. Democratic peace and diversionary theory are two more prominent approaches to understanding international conflict; yet their basic assumptions have been critiqued over the years in many different ways.

In previous chapters, we have examined the two most prominent theories, *realism* and *liberalism* (in all their many forms), have inadequately performed the functions of understanding how and why countries are willing to cooperate with each other. To overcome these obstacles, some scholars have attempted to construct new theoretical models for observing such interaction. These studies have made the argument that one is likely to find domestic influences to be the central factor in a country's decision to cooperate or not cooperate with another sovereign state. Such theoretical approaches transcend both areas of study (economics and security) and clarify the notion that the study of international relations is mostly a by-product of domestic politics. How one country interacts with another country is based on its internal idiosyncrasies, and through domestic observations one can discern how that country is likely to act or react towards another.

Democratic Peace vs. Diversionary Theory

The notion that democracies do not fight wars is a relatively new concept. However, the concept has been narrowed down to the argument that democracies do not fight wars against each other. It appears many accept this argument as the more credible theory and use writings from hundreds of years ago to support their notion. One theory, **liberal pacifism,** asserts that war is only desired by those who can profit from it or those military aristocrats who seek to maintain their relevance in society. Democracy and capitalism are forces of peace and are antithetical to the notion of imperialism. According to this view, it is irrational for a democracy to pursue war with another country because the costs associated with doing so outweigh the benefits that could be gained. While this view is not exactly democratic, it does consist of characteristics one would expect to find in democratic capitalism, such as social equality, popular liberty, and political participation. However, it is these traits that imperialists believe should be spread throughout the world, for fear of having them taken away by another foreign entity. Kant's notion of liberal internationalism posits that peace will be guaranteed through 1) the acceptance of a republican constitution, 2) cooperating through means of a establishing a union, which promotes peace amongst each other, and 3) multinational law that breeds a form of universal hospitality and mutual respect. According to this notion, liberal democracies are different from non-democratic states and are more likely to treat others, democratic or not, with an equal amount of respect. They are less likely to go to war with each other than non-democratic states; yet they are just as capable of finding reasons for going to war. In all of these, a democratic system is the primary variable being observed.[1]

Democratic Peace Theory

Despite its relative infancy as an academic field of study, the concept of democratic peace has been narrowed down to the argument that democracies do not fight wars against each other. It appears many accept this argument as the more credible theory and use writings from hundreds of years ago to support their notion. Michael Doyle examined three specific views of liberalism found within international political science and how each tends to act within the international system, primarily towards non-democratic states.[2] Doyle asserted that the actions of liberal democracies can best be explained through Kant's internationalism. According to this notion, liberal democracies are different from non-democratic states and are more likely to treat others, democratic or not, with an equal amount of respect. They are less likely to go to war with each other than non-democratic states; yet they are just as capable of finding reasons for going to war. This differs markedly from Machiavelli's *imperialism*, which contends that democracies are not pacifistic, but instead the best method for imperial expansion. While this view is not exactly democratic, it does consist of characteristics one would expect to find in democratic capitalism, such as social equality, popular liberty and political participation.

Christopher Layne's study of "near misses" – where two democratic states almost went to war with each other – posits a different conclusion than Doyle. Using four well documented cases in which two democratic powers were on the brink of war between each other, the author argues that democratic peace theory does not explain the lack of military conflict. Instead, realism – the absence of authority in the international community and the presence of fear, distrust and competition – provides a better understanding for the lack of conflict between two democracies. Layne argues that if a democracy, with its moral ethos of respect for others, can be at war with itself via a civil war, one cannot conclude that it is incapable of going to war with another democracy. Such reasoning supports Machiavelli's idea of interstate competition and the need to defend oneself from any potential threats.[3]

Maoz and Russett conducted a study supporting the idea that democracy leads to a lack of conflict by examining two principal explanations that have been applied to account for the democratic-peace phenomenon. In this regard, the normative model assumes that democratic states project peaceful behavior, unlike non-democratic states that are characterized by an anarchic nature. On the other hand, the structural model assumes that international challenges require political leaders to develop support for their policies by mobilizing those groups that provide legitimacy for action on the international level, which can only be done by projecting a sense of urgency for action. These views differ in two major ways: 1) the normative approach takes time to develop and it not as time sensitive, and 2) structuralism implies variation among the type of democratic system. In the first, one would expect older democracies to be less likely to clash with one another than newer ones; while in the second, presidential systems or single party systems would be more likely to pursue war because they do not require as much support from their legislative bodies. Through their research design, Maoz and Russett conclude that there is a strong, robust correlation between democracies and their relative lack of conflict with each other. Moreover, both the political constraints imposed on leaders and democratic norms are strong explanations for this phenomenon; however, the democratic norms hold greater explanatory power than do political constraints.[4]

Blending informational asymmetry with the notion of political constraints, James Fearon argued that the side with the stronger domestic audience is less likely to back down from conflict than the side with a weaker audience. Since democracies have a responsive electorate, their ability to project their intentions in a clear manner is far greater than an authoritative regime because the people in the democracy stand to lose more than those under authoritarian rule. The author concludes that publicly committing to action in a conflict increases the costs of backing down and these costs are felt by the people, who are historically prone to support their political leaders in times of

crisis.[5] Kenneth Schutlz added to this discussion by distinguishing between the informational and institutional constraints by testing them against data collected on militarized disputes from 1816 to1980. Using the crisis bargaining model, Schultz concludes that there is less resistance from a target when the initiator is a democracy, which is consistent with the informational perspective approach. Hence, increased transparency of a county's political process in a crisis enhances the credibility of their threats. However, Schultz emphasizes two caveats worth mentioning. First, his results could instead suggest that democracies are simply more likely to select weaker targets and not that their signaling is credible. Second, it is possible that these two approaches are not mutually exclusive and could both provide adequate explanatory power.[6]

Building on the notion that democracies do not fight wars with one another, Bruce Bueno de Mesquita et al. assesses seven additional empirical regularities related to democracy and war. They find that survival of political leaders in a democracy hinge on successful policy more than in autocracies, partly because of their sense of respect for each other as compared to autocracies. As a result, democrats are more likely to invest a larger number of resources to prepare for war and are thus seen as less attractive targets. In short, democracies still fight wars, they are just less likely to lose because they have more at stake and the survivability depends on their success.[7]

The work of Schultz and Bueno de Mesquita et al. are very relevant to today's state of international affairs, particularly because their findings contradict much of American foreign policy over the past several decades. Like the aforementioned authors, Farber and Gowa similarly concluded in their study of democracy and war that democratic states are just as prone to war as non-democratic states; however, their overall results differ markedly from previous studies in that the authors found that wars between democracies are just as high as those between non-democracies. Furthermore, they also concluded that their analysis does not support the notion that systemic variables like domestic politics explain incidence of war or disputes short of war.[8] In a similar manner, Paul Senese found that when observing the breaking point between dispute and war, democratic pairs are just about as likely to move towards war as non-democratic pairs. Once the threshold into conflict is crossed, democracies resort to uses of forces just as frequently as non-democracies.[9]

An interesting conclusion made in the last two articles as compared to the previous ones is that they challenge the foreign policies of every American presidential administration over the past 60 years by asserting that spreading democracy throughout the world does not ensure peace, much less decrease the likelihood of conflict. If democracies are just as likely to fight each other as non-democracies, one cannot conclude that establishing such a form of government in a previously adversarial country (i.e., Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran, North Korea, etc.) leads to long-term peace and stability. Using this data, one could easily make the argument that the short-term instability and uncertainties associated with nation-building are potentially more of a threat than the non-democratic regime that is trying to be replaced. Therefore, one could argue that any attempt to spread democracy by way of military intervention and nation building is futile. Despite the evidence presented in these articles, such rationale is overlooked in today's current state of international affairs.

Diversionary theory has also gone through its own evolutionary period, originally positing that domestic politics can directly affect a country's decision to go to war. While political decision-makers, as well as their civil and military advisors, proclaim a nonpartisan posture and sincere devotion to the defense of the national interest; in reality, they are still political utility maximizers seeking to exploit their power and influence. During times of internal dispute and disagreement, political elites may be inclined to look elsewhere to help quell domestic tensions. Over the years, American theorists of international politics have postulated that governing elites under great pressure

tended to resort to heightened external tensions or even to war in order to preserve or bolster their precarious internal position. Arno Mayer argued in favor of diversionary theory that the causes and objectives of war cannot be deduced from the bilateral and multi-lateral interaction between two or more nations' foreign affairs offices. In times of instability, both international and external, this pervasive politicization is proof that international relations, including war, have become an extension and tool of domestic politics.[10]

After making these assertions, several other scholars began to refine the theory and pick apart its inaccuracies. For instance, although some scholars do not discredit the notion there exists a strong link between civil strife and international conflict, they stop short of agreeing with this contention because there are many historical instances that contradict the theory's basic assumptions. Wars occur without internal turmoil and vice versa; therefore, scapegoat theory does not hold true in all cases. In other words, these links were not the causes of war. Another study attempted to fine-tune the theory's tenets, concluding that diversionary actions are more likely to occur under some domestic and internal conditions than others, but those conditions had not been analyzed up to that point.[11] Other studies have focused primarily on the Presidency of the United States to empirically assess diversionary theory's validity. One concluded that political variables seem to have the largest impact on the use of force in the model, with domestic influences also making a significant contribution;[12] while another found that presidents facing an opposition Congress are more likely to pursue an aggressive foreign policy agenda to divert the public's attention from the economic woes being suffered at home.[13] In much of the literature throughout the course, there seems to be a majority of scholars who believe that domestic politics plays a significant role in a country's use of military force abroad. Both theories make that argument; yet they differ with respect to the explanatory variables. Democratic peace looks at the governmental institution as its independent variable, while diversionary theory looks that the internal politics of a country. Empirical findings have contradicted the notion that democracies do not go to war, but they are still less likely to go to war with each other. Studies have also concluded that war is still waged without the presence of internal conflict; however, others have found diversionary theory to be plausible in some individual cases.

More recent cases seem to suggest that both contain some explanatory power and can even affect one another. One prime example of this is the decision to invade both Afghanistan and Iraq by the United States, after the attacks on September 11, 2001. The series of events that led to the invasion of Afghanistan and then Iraq seem to correlate with the tenets of both democratic peace and diversionary theory. Even though the U.S. was attacked by a non-state actor, it identified that the terrorist organization was provided a safe haven in Afghanistan. The attacks compelled the U.S., and subsequently NATO, to invade the country and destroy the terrorist network. However, shortly after the invasion and in the middle of the upcoming midterm elections, there was a mass following to invade Iraq because of its supposed link to Al Qaeda. In a strategic move by the Bush Administration, they diverted attention away from both economic concerns and maintain the national unity of the 9/11 attacks by pushing for a vote on invading Iraq. These events also support some of the assertions made by diversionary theory. Hence, both theories carry weight among these events that took place over roughly a one-year period.

Although the "Greatest Generation" thought they were fighting the war to end all wars, we have seen over the past 60 years that wars still occur and they are not always the result of internal disputes. However, much of the past ten years has consisted of constraints being placed on countries to wage war on each other. Apart from the armed conflicts previously mentioned and some of the aftershocks felt in post-Soviet Union countries, there has been little armed conflict in the world, especially with democracies. The continual growth of democracies throughout the world and the economic interdependence found between them seems to create a deterrent from waging war. It is expensive, extremely controversial, and rarely ever productive.

Furthermore, the incentives for doing so are becoming less attractive to people because of the economic incentives that are more common via trade agreements. The compilation of these factors makes diversionary theory more of a Cold War approach to studying conflict and not one that can lead us into the future.

Strategic Bargaining and War

Throughout world history, how a country fights in a war have been a very controversial and long debated topic and understanding *why* a country goes to war is even more difficult to understand. Much of the international relations academic research has focused on the topic of deterrence and three rationalist approaches – *information asymmetry, bargaining indivisibilities, and commitment problems* – to help explain what motivates a country to either wage war on another country or find a more peaceful, diplomatic solution. This section summarizes the thematic views posed by prominent authors, to include assessments on their validity and strength, as well as where they fall short in their explanatory power. The main themes posited by authors in this field of study can be categorized into three broad rationalist approaches to the study of war. First is the problem of a country's willingness to commit itself to war should it fail to receive the benefits for not pursuing war. Second, wars are a result of informational inconsistencies. Because countries do not have complete information about another's capabilities or intentions, they are more likely to pursue war as a means of settling a dispute. Third, bargaining indivisibility is the inability of a country to provide its adversary with enough incentives to prevent them from choosing war. While all these variables carry a fair amount of explanatory weight on the issue, scholars are still at odds with each other on exactly how much power each theory holds.

Thomas Schelling laid the groundwork for the conversation by asserting that a country's ability to commit itself to an armed conflict with an adversary when faced with the uncertainties of war will lead to its preferred outcome. He assessed the intentions of an adversary seeking to influence them. In other words, what will country A have to do to deter country B from attacking? Using several historical examples and analogies, Schelling makes the case that the art of commitment involves just that, making a commitment. In doing so, one puts the fate of the situation in the country's hands. Two phrases come to mind that can summarize his point regarding committing to a course of action, "burning the bridge" and "rocking the boat". In both scenarios, one of the individuals committed itself to the riskier decision, in hopes of deterring the other from following through with the original plan. By burning the bridge, the defender has told the attacker what he intends to do; however, he assumes that there are only two options, win or lose. Nowhere does he address the issue of bargaining power or misinformation. In his view, neither is important because committing to a particular action gives complete information and renders bargaining obsolete, or at least a moot point. Schelling is only concerned with two choices, fight or flight, which results in either winning or losing. By burning the bridge, the defender chooses to fight, but if the attacker chooses not to fight, the defender wins because he does not have to make any concessions. While this is a risky option to take, the underlying goal of this approach is to pressure the attacker into backing down.[14]

In his study on rationality and deterrence, Frank Zagare assesses the inability of some theoretical models to properly explain the concept of deterrence. While some scholars have inadvertently commingled the rational actor model with rational choice, Zagare views them as mutually exclusive. Rational actor is a form of procedural rationality – making decisions based on complete information – while rational choice is a form of instrumental rationality – the idea of making choices based on one's preferences. This ordered list of preferences will induce an individual to make choices based on those preferences. Instrumentalists do not concern themselves with the ethics of a decision, only the order of preferences in the decision-making process. The set of assumptions associated with rational choice are inapplicable to deterrence because they cannot explain cooperation. If one's preferences could be gained by not cooperating,

it is irrational for someone to cooperate, according to rational choice. This is obviously not the case with nuclear deterrence; therefore, rational actor and rational choice are not one in the same. Instead, one must look at the rational actor model and address the notion of incomplete information. Since information about an adversary is most important in the rational actor model as it is applied to international conflict, Zagare views informational symmetry as the greatest deterrent to war.[15]

Additionally, Paul Huth examined 58 historical cases of conflict and concluded that bargaining power plays a significant role in a country's ability to deter an attack. However, that is not the only characteristic that must be present for deterrence to take place. Military power also must be present to prevent a potential attacker from forgoing any negotiations and attacking automatically. A country is more likely to negotiate if the costs associated with war exceed the potential benefits of victory. It is important to note here that Huth emphasizes military capabilities do not always have to come from the defender but can come from a stronger ally. This notion of extended deterrence, that another country's military power can deter an attack on its ally, carries as much weight in international conflict as a country having its own military might. Lastly, Huth concludes that a history of backing down under pressure can lead to an attack, thus rendering negotiations obsolete.[16]

Although Huth brings to light the notion that another country can aid another in deterring an adversary, he fails to identify why a stronger state would meddle in the affairs of an allied state. Vesna Danilovic took the study one step further by arguing that the importance of the region where the protégé of a power nation resides determines the credibility of its threats. What is more, a major power with strong regional stakes in its protégé's region is less likely to agree to another power's demands, thus establishing the type of threat credibility needed to deter an attack. However, if both the defender and the attacker are both major powers, war is more likely to result if both have a strong interest in the region. In this case, commitment problems are more of an issue than bargaining when determining whether to aid another country in its defense against an attacker because the major power must commit to providing military assistance if it values the role of the protégé in its region.[17]

Harrison Wagner supported the idea of bargaining power in promoting deterrence by constructing a model of a war in which states attempt to disarm each other by way of a negotiated settlement. While this model supports the role of bargaining as a deterrent, Wagner also recognizes the importance of information in the process. Although he argues in his article that Clausewitz was right in his claim that negotiated settlements of war are possible, he states that just as in other bargaining situations, "private information plays a key role in explaining why agreement on a negotiated settlement as an alternative to war is not immediate." Similarly, James Fearon addressed the three main methodological approaches and develops their relevance to deterrence and war; yet he makes two major claims that counter some of the arguments made above. Regarding bargaining or negotiated settlements, Fearon states that the costs and risks associated with fighting a war implies that there must be some broad agreements that rational states would prefer instead of war. Therefore, bargaining always exists in conflict, only the size and extent are what vary. Instead, private information and a state's inability to commit to uphold a deal are two more reasonable traits for explaining why rationally led states choose war. What is more, both can be supported with historical empirical data.[18] Robert Powell differed slightly from this view by asserting that bargaining indivisibilities should be seen more as commitment problems. In most cases, war is preferred over accommodation, so countries find themselves more willing to fight a potential adversary than try to bargain with them and run the risk of settling for less than they desire. War can still take place even when complete information is present, just like in the burning bridge analogy. The defender told the attacker that he was going to fight when he burned the bridge, although historically one can find an instance where complete information still resulted in armed conflict. A

country's willingness to bargain can also be construed as their inability to commit to war.[19] James Morrow takes a more all-inclusive stance by arguing all three of these problems in the same light, arguing that they are interconnected in many cases and used the examples of alliances and crisis bargaining to equate each of the approaches. Building alliances is beneficial, but costly. They take compromise and commitment to work, as well as complete, accurate information for continuity. Even though Morrow did not view them as one in the same, they all play an important role in understanding how to build an alliance as well as deter an attack from a potential adversary.[20]

Terrorism on the International Stage

Terrorism is the use or threat of violence by non-state actors to influence citizens or governments in the pursuit of political or social change. In the wake of the September 11, 2001, attacks on the United States, terrorism became a global security concern. Globalization and advances in technology have allowed terrorist organizations to access funding and recruits from far beyond the organization's headquarters and to spread their message via social media. Just prior to the 9/11 attacks, CIA official Paul Pillar published an article stating, "In today's globalizing world, terrorists can reach their targets more easily, their targets are exposed in more places, and news and ideas that inflame people to resort to terrorism spread more widely and rapidly than in the past."21 Like most other transnational issues, terrorism is a threat to all states, and it is impossible to envision a single-state solution.

Terrorist organizations are usually motivated by some combination of nationalism, ideology, and religion. Islamist terrorist groups like al-Qaeda, the Islamic State (ISIS or ISIL), and Boko Haram have been responsible for the deadliest terrorist acts in the 21st century.22 Like other religious extremist groups, Islamist terrorists want to impose their version of their religion on all spheres of life, including the political state. The desire for national independence in places like Palestine and Northern Ireland, as well as extremist ideological beliefs such as White nationalism or neo-Nazism, can also motivate terrorist attacks. International cooperation is crucial to monitor and prevent terrorist activities. Following 9/11, the UN Security Council formed the Counter-Terrorism Committee, which coordinates international counterterrorism measures.23 In 2006, the UN General Assembly called on member states to focus on the underlying factors that contribute to terrorism, including weak institutions, ongoing conflict, and human rights violations. Most regional IGOs have counterterrorism programs. INTERPOL, the International Criminal Police Organization, is an IGO that coordinates the efforts of the police in countries around the world. NGOs contribute to counterterrorism activities as well. IGOs and NGOs work in tandem to help states implement global counterterrorism strategies.[24]

Conclusion

Contemporary observations of the relationship between democracies and conflict abound with discussion over both the process leading up to war and the effects of going to war. If a democracy goes to war with itself via a civil war, one cannot conclude they are incapable of waging war on another country, much less a democracy. Others contend that if a democracy is forced into conflict with another country, they are just as likely as non-democracies to commit its resources to engaging in armed conflict. What is more, some studies have found that democracies are not seen as promising targets because of their unwavering commitment to defend their homeland from foreign aggression. As a result, the democratic peace argument has evolved from the notion that democracies do not go to war, to democracies are just as likely to wage war as non-democracies, just not with another democracy. What is more, even non-state actors like terrorist organizations can engage in war-like activities on an international scale. Therefore, it takes cooperation and collaboration with supranational and international organizations to prevent another world war from occurring.

Discussion Questions:

Do you think Democratic Peace Theory should guide foreign policy decisions?

Should democracies preemptively declare on an adversary if they feel threatened?

Among the research studies mentioned in the chapter, are you surprised by any of the conclusions made regarding democracies and war?

Is terrorism still a concern today? If so, which is more problematic, external or internal threats? Explain your answer.

Endnotes

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Since its inception as an academic discipline in the late 19th Century, political science has been perceived as both a liberal art and a social science. It has struggled to find its relevance in both realms, while also having to market its importance to the everyday lives of citizens. The overarching purpose behind Introduction to Political Science: A Basic Framework is to expose readers to the limitless ways in which politics and government affect individuals, groups, societies, and the world. This text examines the historical premises used to create governmental systems, as well as the myriad ways in which power (the primary object of study) is acquired and dispensed by individuals. Readers will be exposed to the different subfields of political science and how each one seeks to shed light on human behavior within political institutions.

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