

# COMPARATIVE GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

**ROD MARTIN JOHN  
HAGUE HARROP McCORMICK**

**11TH EDITION**



‘This new edition does not simply update a classic resource for teachers and students. In exploring universal questions of comparative political science from the dual perspective of democratic backsliding on the part of elites, and declining trust on the part of the people, it compels us to consider those questions anew.’

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# COMPARATIVE GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

AN INTRODUCTION

11TH EDITION

ROD  
HAGUE

MARTIN  
HARROP

JOHN  
McCORMICK

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# PREFACE

In North Korea, the ruling regime carries out a nuclear test. In Zimbabwe, the military removes the leader from power. In India, the one-time dominant ruling party records its worst ever election defeat. In Britain, the government struggles to negotiate its country's exit from the European Union. In Russia, Vladimir Putin is re-elected for a new term as president. Across the northern hemisphere, millions of people experience record heat. In the United States, the president opens a trade war with his country's major trading partners, while baulking at an investigation into Russian interference with the presidential election.

Why is all this happening, and what does it mean? To provide an answer, we must first locate specific developments within a broader framework. Why do different political systems operate on different rules, how do the powers of different governments explain their actions, and how do their citizens feel about the changes they see? Why are some countries ruled by presidents and others by prime ministers? Why do some countries have a single dominant political party while others have dozens? And what is the difference between a supreme court and a constitutional court?

These are the kinds of questions addressed by comparative politics. As well as helping us identify the rules of government and politics, comparative analysis also helps us make sense of political news from around the world. Keeping up with that news is one thing, but being able to understand it and place it in context is quite another. And as advances in technology, trade, and science bring us all closer together, so developments in one part of the world can have effects on many others, making it more important that we understand the changes we see. By studying different governments and political systems, we can better understand not just the country in which we live, but also other countries, their governments, their political decisions, and their people.

This is a book designed to introduce you to the study of comparative government and politics. The goal of the chapters that follow is to provide a wide-ranging and accessible guide for courses and modules in this fascinating and essential sub-field of political science. We will look at the methods and theories of comparison, at the differences between democracies and authoritarian systems, at the many different forms in which the institutions of government exist, and at the ways in which ordinary people take part – or are prevented from taking part – in government and in shaping the decisions that affect their lives.

As with the last edition, the book takes a thematic approach to comparison, with chapters divided into three groups.

- ◆ The first group ([Chapters 1–6](#)) provides the foundations, with a review of the key concepts in comparative politics, followed by chapters on the theories and methods of comparison, on the meaning and the reach of the state, and on the features of democracies and authoritarian systems.
- ◆ The second group ([Chapters 7–12](#)) focuses on institutions, which constitute the core subject matter of political science. It opens with a chapter on constitutions that assesses the power maps that help us make sense of how institutions work and relate to one another. This is followed by chapters on executives, legislatures, bureaucracies, and government at the sub-national and local level, before closing with a chapter on political culture that helps us understand the broader context within which government and politics works.
- ◆ The third group ([Chapters 13–20](#)) looks at political processes, beginning with a survey of political participation, then looking at political communication, parties, elections, voters, and interest groups. The book ends with chapters on public policy and political economy.

The book is designed to meet the needs of students in different countries, approaching the study of government and politics from different perspectives. You may be using it as part of the first (and perhaps only) course or module you are taking on government and politics, as part of a course you are required to take outside your major subject, as part of a course you are taking simply because you are interested in politics, or as part of a course you are taking in your major course of study. Whatever your background and motivation, the chapters that follow are designed to help you find your way through the many different forms in which politics and government exists around the world.

## TWO KEY THEMES: DEMOCRATIC REVERSAL, DECLINING TRUST

Politics is always full of drama, and rarely stands still. There is a ceaseless jockeying for power and influence, a constantly changing set of needs and demands, and a cast of heroes and villains whose efforts to govern can sometimes inspire and at other times infuriate. At few times in recent history have the changes been as intense and as rapidly moving as they are today, producing numerous possibilities as new pressures and opportunities take countries in different directions.

Among all the changes we are witnessing, two in particular stand out:

- ◆ *The reversal of democracy.* Not long ago, democrats were encouraged by the end of the Soviet Union and its control over Eastern Europe, by the end of military governments in Latin America and then in sub-Saharan Africa, and by the democracy movements in North Africa and the Middle East that gave rise to the Arab Spring. One scholar (see [Chapter 5](#)) was even inspired to declare the triumph of liberal democracy and the ‘end of history’. More recently, though, democracy appears to have been struggling, with challenges to political rights and civil liberties even in countries with strong democratic credentials, including the United States, Britain, France, and Japan. Meanwhile, in many countries that were once democratizing, such as China, Russia, and Turkey, there has been a reversal in trends as authoritarian leaders and political parties have become more powerful.
- ◆ *Declining trust in government.* The citizens of countries in many parts of the world have expressed new levels of discontent with the performance of their governments, and have shown less trust in their leaders while feeling more politically and economically marginalized. Many worry about what they see as threats to the political, economic, and social values they once thought they could take for granted. Those threats may be real, or they may be imagined, but the result in many cases has been a rising tide of populism as new political leaders point fingers of blame at the political and economic elite. Political and economic divisions have come to the fore, there have been demands for a return of power to ‘the people’, and new appeals have been made to nationalism as opposition to immigration and globalization grows, along with support for the creation of walls and barriers, whether in a physical or legal sense.

These two themes run through the chapters that follow. We will examine not just the structure of political systems and the ways that citizens relate to them, but we will look also at the ebb and flow of democracy and authoritarianism, and of populism, nationalism, and globalization. In so doing, we will gain more insights into some of the broader and more universal questions of comparative politics: who has power, who does not, how do power relationships evolve, and how do political systems work.

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Finally, John McCormick sends his love to Leanne, Ian, and Stuart for everything they bring to his life.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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## GUIDE TO SPOTLIGHT FEATURES

These focus on the 18 country cases from which examples are most often quoted in the body of the text. They include a brief profile of each country (or regional organization, in the case of the European Union), brief descriptions of their political features, some key demographic and economic data, and a short case study of each country in the context of the topic of the chapter in which the Spotlight appears.

<b>Form of government</b>	A general description of the form of a government, including dates on state formation and the adoption of the most recent constitution.
<b>Executive</b>	Form and structure of the executive.
<b>Legislature</b>	Form and structure of the legislature.
<b>Judiciary</b>	Form and structure of the judicial system.
<b>Electoral system</b>	Form and structure of the electoral system.
<b>Parties</b>	Outline of the party system and the major parties at work in the country.
<b>Population</b>	Data for 2017 from World Bank (2018).
<b>Gross Domestic Product</b>	Total value of goods and services produced by a country, in US dollars. Data for 2017 from World Bank (2018).
<b>Per capita Gross Domestic Product</b>	Total value of goods and services produced per head by a country, in US dollars. Data for 2017 from World Bank (2018).
<b>Democracy Index rating</b>	From the Economist Intelligence Unit (2017), which divides states into full democracies, flawed democracies, hybrid regimes, and authoritarian regimes.
<b>Freedom House rating</b>	From Freedom House (2018), which divides states into groups rated Free, Partly Free, or Not Free.
<b>Human Development Index rating</b>	From the United Nations Development Programme (2017), which divides states into groups rated Very High, High, Medium and Low.

# GUIDE TO THE ELEVENTH EDITION

It has only been three years since the last edition of *Comparative Government and Politics* was published, and yet much has changed in the world during that time. This new edition is an opportunity to reflect on those changes, but it also remains true to the core purpose and personality of earlier editions: to provide an introductory survey of comparative politics, while integrating some fresh perspectives to the study of the topic.

**Structure and features.** There are five key structural changes to the new edition:

- ◆ The two chapters on theories and methods have been moved up so that they are more closely connected to the opening chapter on concepts.
- ◆ The chapter on executives has been moved ahead of the chapter on legislatures so that the parliamentary system can be explained in more depth ahead of the discussion on legislatures.
- ◆ The chapter on political economy has been rewritten and restored in response to requests from several instructors.
- ◆ The coverage of authoritarian states has been greatly expanded, with more examples inserted throughout the text and the chapter sections on authoritarian rule expanded by two-thirds or more.
- ◆ For the first time, *Comparative Government and Politics* appears in full colour, allowing improvements to the reproduction of figures and tables, with supporting photographs added to illustrate key political phenomena.

All the new features introduced in the last edition have been kept and developed, including the Focus features, the Previews to each chapter, and the closing sets of Key Arguments. Also, the Spotlight features have been redesigned, along with new maps and new sets of further reading.

**Length.** The phenomenon of textbooks that expand with each edition is well known, but *Comparative Government and Politics* remains one of the notable exceptions. Even with the addition of a new chapter on political economy, the eleventh edition remains only slightly longer than the tenth edition.

**Classification of political systems.** The last edition saw the introduction of the Democracy Index and the Freedom House ranking *Freedom in the World*. This dual system of classification has been expanded in this edition, with more examples used in the body of the text to illustrate the features of both systems.

**Country cases.** As with the last edition, this one focuses on a selection of case study countries, enhanced in the new edition so as to provide political, economic, social, and geographical variety, with Turkey added as an example of a hybrid political system. The cases are as follows:

Full democracies	Flawed democracies	Hybrid regimes	Authoritarian regimes
Germany	Brazil	Nigeria	China
Sweden	France	Turkey	Egypt
UK	India		Iran
	Japan		Russia
	Mexico		Venezuela
	South Africa		
	USA		

Note: This classification is drawn from the Democracy Index. The European Union is not classified separately in the index, but all its member states are either full or flawed democracies.



**Sources.** As always, great care has been taken to use the most recent scholarship and the strongest possible range of sources. The vast majority of the research in political science is published in English by publishers based in Europe and the United States, which has the effect of producing a somewhat lop-sided view of the world. As well as working to include a wide variety of case examples, additional efforts have been made with this edition to seek out scholarship (published in English) from as great a variety of scholars and countries as possible.

## MAJOR CHANGES TO THIS EDITION

Throughout the book, arguments have been developed, definitions have been tightened, links have been made to different theories, a wider range of country examples has been added, and the results of new research have been integrated.

	Theme	Key changes
<b>Chapter 1</b>	Key concepts	More country examples injected, new terms defined, and the sections on politics and power have been combined.
<b>Chapter 2</b>	Theoretical approaches	Moved up from its previous position, new details added on the range of political theories, and a new section added on cultural approaches.
<b>Chapter 3</b>	Comparative methods	Moved up from its previous position, details expanded on different methodologies, and expanded sections on nationalism and globalization.
<b>Chapter 4</b>	The state	Expanded section on political authority, new maps added, more discussion of the effects of nationalism on the state.
<b>Chapter 5</b>	Democratic rule	Expanded discussion on democracy and modernization, and rewritten section on the prospects for democracy.
<b>Chapter 6</b>	Authoritarian rule	Expanded explanation of the features and effects of authoritarianism, with new sections on despotism and coercion, and a wider range of country examples.
<b>Chapter 7</b>	Constitutions and courts	New coverage of codified and uncoded constitutions, and considerably expanded section on authoritarian states.
<b>Chapter 8</b>	Executives	Moved up from its previous position, expanded section on heads of state and government, and a new category of unlimited presidential executive.
<b>Chapter 9</b>	Legislatures	Moved back from its previous position, new coverage of models of representation, new discussion of levels of trust, and expanded section on authoritarian states.
<b>Chapter 10</b>	Bureaucracies	Coverage clarified, more detail on new public management and e-government, and considerably expanded section on authoritarian states.

	Theme	Key changes
<b>Chapter 11</b>	Sub-national governments	Expanded coverage of local government, new maps, a greater variety of country examples, and additional depth on authoritarian states.
<b>Chapter 12</b>	Political culture	New clarity to the discussion of political culture, new sections on multiculturalism and identity politics, more depth on political trust.
<b>Chapter 13</b>	Political participation	Expanded discussion of who participates and why, and new coverage of women in government and politics.
<b>Chapter 14</b>	Political communication	Updated to take account of developments with social media and to account for the problem of fake news, and considerably expanded section on authoritarian states.
<b>Chapter 15</b>	Elections	Many new country examples integrated into the chapter, with a considerably expanded section on authoritarian states and the dynamics of their party systems.
<b>Chapter 16</b>	Political parties	New details on legislative elections, updated election results, and considerably expanded coverage of the dynamics and purposes of elections in authoritarian states.
<b>Chapter 17</b>	Voters	Reduced detail on discussion of how voters choose, more detail added on voter turnout, and new detail added on voters in authoritarian states.
<b>Chapter 18</b>	Interest groups	Expanded section on lobbying, new examples of the work of interest groups, more country examples, and new detail on the work of groups in authoritarian states.
<b>Chapter 19</b>	Public policy	More comparison injected into the discussion, new emphasis on issues designed to illustrate the dynamics of policy, and authoritarian section largely rewritten.
<b>Chapter 20</b>	Political economy	New chapter restored from earlier editions, but almost entirely rewritten, with coverage of all major approaches and a new section on authoritarian states.

# GUIDE TO LEARNING FEATURES

## Key arguments

Each chapter begins with six key arguments, chosen to underline some of the more important points made in the chapter.

## KEY ARGUMENTS

- ◆ Interest groups come in many shapes and sizes, with a wide variety of objectives, methods, and levels of influence.
- ◆ Much like political parties, interest groups are a relatively recent addition to the formal processes of government.
- ◆ Interest groups use a combination of direct and indirect channels of influence. Where ties with government are particularly strong, the danger arises of the emergence of sub-governments enjoying preferred access.
- ◆ Pluralism is closely associated with studies of interest groups, but there are reasons to question whether it describes how groups operate in practice.
- ◆ Interest groups are often complemented by wider social movements, whose activities challenge conventional channels of participation.
- ◆ Where the governments of democracies may be too heavily influenced by powerful groups, the problem can be reversed in authoritarian states.

## Overview

Each chapter includes an overview of the subject of the chapter, placing it within its broader context and introducing some of the key themes.

## INTEREST GROUPS: AN OVERVIEW

**Interest groups** are bodies which seek to influence public policy from outside the formal structures of government. They do this through a combination of direct pressure on government and the bureaucracy, and indirect pressure via the media and public opinion. They come in many different forms, including employer organizations, consumer groups, professional bodies, labour unions, and single-issue groups. They work primarily at the national level, but can also be found in local and international arenas. Like political parties, interest groups are a crucial channel of communication between society and government, especially in democracies. Unlike parties, they pursue specialized concerns, working to influence government without becoming the government. They are not election-fighting organizations; instead, they typically adopt a pragmatic approach in dealing with whatever power structure confronts them, using whatever channels are legally (and sometimes illegally)

## Interest group

A body that works outside government to influence public policy. Also known as a non-governmental organization (NGO).

## Concepts

The first time a key term is used it appears in boldface and is separately defined. The definitions are kept as brief and clear as possible, and each term is listed at the end of the chapter in which it is defined.

## PREVIEW

Where most of the institutions of government are listed in a national constitution, interest groups (like political parties) are mainly founded and operate outside these formal structures. They have evolved separately, their core purpose being to influence the shaping of policy without becoming part of government; another example of governance at work. They come in several types, and use different methods – both direct and indirect – to achieve their goals. A vibrant interest group community is generally a sign of a healthy civil society, but where the influence of different interests and the groups that support those interests is unbalanced, it can also become a barrier to the impleme elections.

## Preview

Each chapter begins with a 250-word outline of the contents of the chapter, designed as a preview of what to expect in the pages that follow.

## Protective group

An interest group that seeks selective benefits for its members and insider status with relevant government departments.

moting the rights of women and ethnic minorities, and campaigning on behalf of issues such as human rights and the environment.

Interest groups today come in many shapes and sizes, with a wide range of objectives, methods, and levels of influence. Many have been founded for practical or charitable purposes rather than for political action, but have developed a political dimension as they have worked either to modify public policy or to resist unfavourable changes. Some will have a few hundred members focusing on a short-term local issue and working with local government, while others will have millions of members and work in many different countries, targeting national governments or international organizations. Their variety, in fact, is so great, their methods so varied, and their overlap so considerable that it is not easy to develop a list of discrete types (Figure 18.1).

Type	Focus of interest
Economic	Groups of people with material economic interests, such as business, industry, producers, trades, and workers.
Public	Public concerns, such as consumer, public health, human rights, and environmental interests.
Professional	Specific professions, such as lawyers, doctors, and university professors.
Single-issue	Distinct and narrow issues, such as animal rights or domestic violence.
Religious	Causes and issues tied to particular religions, often with a significant moral element.
Government	Represent the interests of city, local and regional governments to the national administration.
Institutional	Public organizations that influence government even though they are not organized as interest groups. Examples include hospitals, universities, and the armed forces.

## Figures

A wide range of figures is used throughout the book to provide visual support to topics covered in the body of the text.

Figure 18.1 Types of interest group

**Tables**

These display statistics or key features of a topic in the nearby text, or summarize lists of subjects covered in the text.

Table 18.1 Comparing protective and promotional interest groups

	Protective	Promotional
Aims	Defends an interest	Promotes a cause
Membership	Closed: membership is restricted	Open: anyone can join
Status	Insider: frequently consulted by government and actively seeks this role	Outsider: consulted less often by government; targets public opinion and the media
Benefits	Selective: only group members benefit	Collective: benefits go to both members and non-members
Focus	Aim to influence national government on specific issues affecting members	Also seek to influence national and global bodies on broad policy matters

**Spotlights**

Each chapter includes a spotlight case study that covers a nation's background and other statistical data.

## SPOTLIGHT EGYPT

**Brief profile**

Egypt has long been a major player in Middle East politics, thanks not only to its pioneering role in the promotion of Arab nationalism but also to its strategic significance in the Cold War and in the Arab–Israeli conflict. It was also at the heart of the Arab Spring, with pro-democracy demonstrations leading to the fall from power of Hosni Mubarak in 2011. Democratic elections brought Mohammed Morsi to power in 2012, but he was removed in a military coup the following year. Egyptians now face uncertainties that resulted in its recent downgrading in the Democracy Index from hybrid to authoritarian. Egypt has the second biggest economy in the Arab world, after Saudi Arabia, but is resource-poor. It relies heavily on tourism, agriculture, and remittances from Egyptian workers abroad and struggles to meet the needs of its rapidly growing population while seeking to offset the potential threat of Islamic militancy.

<b>Form of government</b>	Unitary semi-presidential republic. Modern state formed 1952, and most recent constitution adopted 2014.
<b>Executive</b>	Semi-presidential. A president directly elected for no more than two four-year terms, governing with a prime minister who leads a Cabinet accountable to the People's Assembly. There is no vice-president.
<b>Legislature</b>	Unicameral People's Assembly (Majlis el-Shaab) with 567 members, of whom 540 are elected for renewable four-year terms and 27 can be appointed by the president.
<b>Judiciary</b>	Egyptian law is based on a combination of British, Italian, and Napoleonic codes. The Supreme Constitutional Court has been close to recent political changes in Egypt; it has 21 members appointed for life by the president, with mandatory retirement at age 70.
<b>Electoral system</b>	A two-round system is used for presidential elections, with a majority vote needed for victory in the first round, while a mixed member majoritarian system is used for People's Assembly elections: two-thirds of members are elected using party list proportional representation, and one-third in an unusual multi-member plurality system in two large districts.
<b>Parties</b>	Multi-party, but unsettled because of recent instability. Parties represent a wide range of positions and ideologies.

**95.7m** Population

**\$135bn** Gross Domestic Product

**\$2,412** Per capita GDP

**Democracy Index rating**

- ✗ Full Democracy
- ✗ Flawed Democracy
- ✗ Hybrid Regime
- ✓ Authoritarian
- ✗ Not Rated

**Freedom House rating**

- ✗ Free
- ✗ Partly Free
- ✓ Not Free
- ✗ Not Rated

**Human Development Index rating**

- ✗ Very High
- ✗ High
- ✓ Medium
- ✗ Low
- ✗ Not Rated

**Focus 18.1**  
**Lobbying**

Even though it has moved far beyond its origins in the lobby of the British Parliament, lobbying remains the key means by which groups try to influence law-makers (see Godwin, et al., 2013, and Bitonti and Harris, 2018). Lobbyists are usually professionals, often working for corporations or even for lobbying firms consisting of hired guns in the business of interest group communication. Such services are offered not only by specialist government relations companies, but also by divisions within law firms and management consultancies. These operations are growing in number in democracies, with some companies even operating internationally.

Lobbying is on the rise for three main reasons:

- ◆ Government regulation continues to grow. A specialist lobbying firm working for several interest groups can often monitor proposed laws and regulations more efficiently than would be the case if each interest group undertook the task separately.
- ◆ Public relations campaigns are becoming increasingly sophisticated, often seeking to influence interest group members, public opinion, and the government in one integrated project. Professional agencies come into their own in planning and delivering multifaceted campaigns, which can be too complex for an interest group client to manage directly.
- ◆ Many corporations now approach government directly, rather than working through their trade association. Companies, both large and small, find that using a lobbying company to help them contact a government agency or a sympathetic legislator can yield results more quickly than working through an industry body.

**Revolving door**  
The phenomenon in which personnel move between roles as law-makers and as members of industries impacted by laws and regulations.

The central feature of the lobbying business is its intensely personal character, reaching its most troubling degree in the United States where the **revolving door** is well established. Lobbying is about who you know, and a legislator is most likely to return a call from a lobbyist if the caller is a former colleague. One study of the revolving door phenomenon, however, suggests that rather than seeking privileged insider access, special interests are more focused on how lobbyists with personal experience of the political process can act as a form of insurance for their clients against a political system that is increasingly dysfunctional and unpredictable (LaPira and Thomas, 2017).

**Focus**  
Each chapter includes two Focus features that provide in-depth treatment of a topic related to the subject of the chapter.



**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- ◆ What do interest groups add to democracy, and what do they subtract?
- ◆ Is there a hierarchy of interests, giving some groups advantages over others, or does the sheer number and variety of groups result in a balancing of interests?
- ◆ To what extent do special interests limit the functioning of the market of political ideas?
- ◆ Is lobbying a natural and inevitable part of the democratic process?
- ◆ Does pluralism exist, or is it just a theoretical possibility that has been undermined by the unequal influence of different interests?
- ◆ To what extent is corporatism found in democracies as well as authoritarian regimes?



**KEY CONCEPTS**

- ◆ Civil society
- ◆ Peak association
- ◆ Corporatism
- ◆ Pluralism
- ◆ Density
- ◆ Promotional group
- ◆ Interest group
- ◆ Protective group
- ◆ Iron triangle
- ◆ Revolving door
- ◆ Issue network
- ◆ Social movement
- ◆ Lobbying
- ◆ Think-tank
- ◆ Nimby



**FURTHER READING**

Bitonti, Alberto, and Phil Harris (eds) (2018) *Lobbying in Europe: Public Affairs and the Lobbying Industry in 28 EU Countries* (Palgrave Macmillan). An assessment of lobbying in the European Union, including short chapters on each of its member states.

Cavortora, Francesco (ed.) (2012) *Civil Society Activism under Authoritarian Rule: A Comparative Perspective* (Routledge). One of the few recent studies of the activities of interest groups in authoritarian settings.

Edwards, Michael (ed.) (2011) *The Oxford Handbook of Civil Society* (Oxford University Press). An edited collection of studies on civil society, including chapters on different sectors and on different parts of the world.

Staggenborg, Suzanne (2016) *Social Movements*, 2nd edn (Oxford University Press). A textbook survey of social movements, their methods, and their effects, with cases including the women's, the LGBTQ+, and the environmental movements.

**Discussion questions**

Each chapter closes with a set of six open-ended discussion questions, designed to consolidate knowledge by highlighting major issues and to spark classroom discussions and research projects.

**Key concepts**

Designed to help reflect upon and memorise key concepts, a complete list of the main terms defined in boxes across the preceding pages is included at the end of each chapter.

**Further reading**

An annotated list of six suggested readings is included at the end of each chapter, representing some of the most recent, important and helpful surveys of the topics covered in that chapter.

# GUIDE TO THE WEBSITE

This book is accompanied by a website which provides an array of resources for students and instructors. See: [www.macmillanihe.com/companion/HHM-CGP-11](http://www.macmillanihe.com/companion/HHM-CGP-11)

## FOR STUDENTS

### Spotlight Map

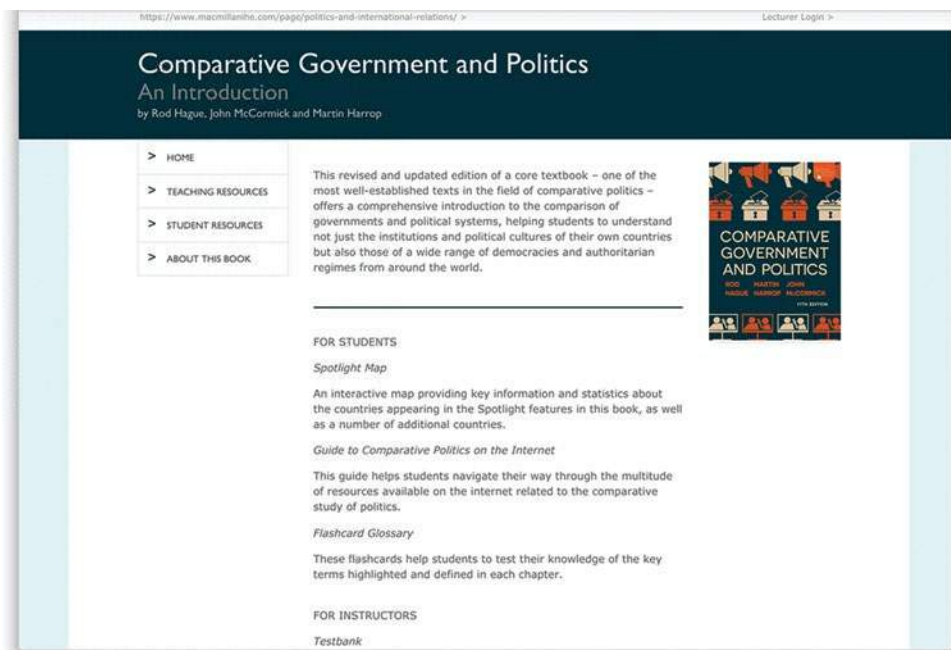
An interactive map providing key information and statistics about the countries appearing in the Spotlight features in this book, as well as a number of additional countries.

### Guide to Comparative Politics on the Internet

This guide helps students navigate their way through the multitude of resources available on the internet related to the comparative study of politics.

### Flashcard Glossary

These flashcards help students to test their knowledge of the key terms highlighted and defined in each chapter.



## FOR INSTRUCTORS

### Testbank

The testbank comprises a total of 500 pre-prepared multiple-choice and true or false questions relating to the coverage of each of the book's chapters.

### PowerPoint Slides

A corresponding set of PowerPoint slides has been prepared for each individual chapter, ready for instructors to adapt and customize to suit their weekly lectures.

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- ◆ SAGE Publications for Tables 1.2 and 17.1.
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- ◆ The Swiss Economic Institute for Figure 3.4.
- ◆ The Center for Systemic Peace for Figure 5.3.
- ◆ The World Values Survey for Figures 9.7 and 12.4 (The Inglehart-Welzel Cultural Map, WVS-6 (2015). Source: [www.worldvaluessurvey.org](http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org)).
- ◆ The World Economic Forum for Figure 10.7.
- ◆ The International Telecommunication Union for Figure 14.2 and [Table 14.2](#).
- ◆ The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) for Figures 18.3 and 20.2.
- ◆ The World Bank for [Table 19.5](#) (World Bank Group. 2016. Doing Business 2017: Equal Opportunity for All. Washington, DC: World Bank. © World Bank. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/25191> License: CC BY 3.0 IGO.).
- ◆ The Fraser Institute for Figure 20.1 (James Gwartney, Robert Lawson, and Joshua Hall (2017), 'Exhibit 1.2a: Summary Economic Freedom Ratings for 2015', Economic Freedom of the World: 2017 Annual Report, Fraser Institute, pp. 7-8. [www.fraserinstitute.org/studies/economic-freedom](http://www.fraserinstitute.org/studies/economic-freedom)).
- ◆ The Fund for Peace for [Table 4.3](#).
- ◆ The Comparative Constitutions Project for Figure 7.3.
- ◆ The International Labour Organization for Figures 10.2, 10.3, and 10.6.
- ◆ Taylor & Francis for Figure 17.1.
- ◆ Oxford University Press for Figures 4.2 and 16.3.

# KEY CONCEPTS



Source: iStock/araelf

## CONTENTS

- ◆ Key concepts: an overview
- ◆ Government and governance
- ◆ Politics and power
- ◆ The state, authority, and legitimacy
- ◆ Ideology
- ◆ Comparative politics
- ◆ Classifying political systems

## PREVIEW

The best place to begin the study of any topic is with an exploration of key concepts. Most of the political terms which interest us are embedded in ordinary language; *government*, *politics*, *power*, and *authority* are all familiar terms. But – as we will see – this does not mean that they are easily defined, or that political scientists are agreed on how best to understand or apply them.

This opening chapter begins with a discussion about the meaning of *government* and *governance*, which are related terms but quite different in the ideas they convey: the first focuses on institutions while the second focuses on processes. We then go on to look at *politics*, whose core features are relatively easy to identify, but whose boundaries are not so clear: does it imply a search for a decision, or a competitive struggle for power? This is followed by a review of the meaning of *power*, *authority*, *legitimacy*, and *ideology*, all of which lie at the heart of our understanding of how government and politics work.

The chapter then looks at some of the core purposes of comparative politics, whose value – above all – lies in helping us broaden and deepen our understanding of politics and government, taking us beyond the limitations inherent in studying a single political system. The chapter ends with a review of the challenges involved in classifying political systems, and looks at some of the typologies available to help us make better sense of a complex, diverse, and changing political world.

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## KEY ARGUMENTS

- ◆ Like all fields of study, political science uses concepts whose definitions – while often disputed – are important to understand.
- ◆ While *government* describes the institutions and offices through which societies are governed, *governance* describes the process of collective decision-making.
- ◆ An exact definition of *politics* is difficult, because the term has multiple nuances. But it is clearly a collective activity, occurring between or among people.
- ◆ *Power* is the capacity to bring about intended effects, and is central to understanding both government and politics. *Authority* and *legitimacy* are key related concepts.
- ◆ *Ideology* may have lost its original meaning as the science of ideas, but it remains useful as a way of packaging different views about the role of government and the goals of public policy.
- ◆ *Typologies* help us compare, imposing order on the variety of the world's political systems, and helping us develop explanations and rules.

## KEY CONCEPTS: AN OVERVIEW

### Concept

An idea, term, or category.

### Political science

The study of the theory and practice of government and politics, focusing on the structure and dynamics of institutions, political processes, and political behaviour.

### Social science

The study of human society and of the structured interactions among people within society.

Every field of study is built on a specialized vocabulary made up of terms or **concepts** that need to be understood and defined in order to provide us with our points of reference. **Political science** is no exception. In trying to understand the features which a political system (see later in this chapter) must possess in order to qualify as a democracy, for example, we can agree that some measure of popular control over the rulers is essential; if there were no ways of holding the government to account, there could be no democracy. A good definition of a democracy as a concept, then, is a political system in which government is based on a fair and open mandate from all qualified citizens of a state. As we will see in [Chapter 5](#), though, there are many facets to the discussion of what should – at first glance – be an idea that we can all understand without too much trouble.

This opening chapter reviews several of the most important concepts involved in comparative government and politics, providing the foundations for understanding the chapters that follow. We will start with *government* and *politics*, two concepts that are routinely used interchangeably, but not necessarily applied correctly. We will then look at *power*, a concept that comes in several different forms. We also begin looking at the meaning of the state (covered in much more depth in [Chapter 4](#)), and how it relates to *authority*, *legitimacy*, and *ideology*.

These concepts are all central to an understanding of the manner in which governments are organized and the way in which politics unfolds. We will find, though, that their precise meanings are routinely contested. This is a problem found not just in political science, but throughout the social sciences; there is even some dispute about the meaning of the term **social science**. It is used here in the context of studying and better understanding the organized relations and interaction of people within society. Social scientists study the institutions we build, the rules we agree, the processes we use, our underlying motives, and the outcomes of our interactions.

Ultimately, we need to understand these concepts in order to constructively make comparisons. In turn, we need to make those comparisons in order to better understand human behaviour. Comparison is one of the most basic of all human activities, lying at the heart of almost every choice we make in our lives. No surprise, then, that it should be central to research in the social sciences as a whole, and political science in particular. We can study government and political processes in isolation, but without comparing different cases, examples, and situations, we can never really hope to fully comprehend them, to draw general conclusions about what drives people to act the way they do, or to be sure that we have considered all the explanatory options. Only by looking at government and politics across place and time can we build the context to be able to gain a broader and more complete understanding of how they work.

## GOVERNMENT AND GOVERNANCE

Since this is a book about comparative government and politics, the logical place to begin is with a review of the term **government**. Small groups of people can reach collective decisions without any special procedures; a family or sports team can reach an understanding by informal discussion, and these agreements can be self-executing in the sense that those who make the decision carry it out themselves. However, such simple mechanisms are impractical for larger units such as towns, cities, or states, which must develop procedures and **institutions** for making and enforcing collective decisions. By doing so, they give themselves a government.

### Government

The institutions and structures through which societies are governed.

### Institution

A formal organization or practice with a political purpose or effect, marked by durability and internal complexity.

The term *government* is usually used to describe the highest level of political offices in a society: presidents, prime ministers, legislatures, governors, mayors, and others at the apex of power. But government actually consists of all organizations charged with reaching and executing decisions for a community. By this definition, the police, the military, bureaucrats, and judges are all part of government, even if they do not come to office through the methods usually associated with government, such as elections. In this broader conception, government is the entire community of institutions endowed with public authority. The term *government* can also apply to the group of people who govern (as in the Japanese government), a specific administration (the Putin government), the form of the system of rule (centralized government), and the character of the administration of a community (good government).

The classic case for the institution of government was made in the seventeenth century by the English philosopher Thomas Hobbes (see Focus 1.1). He argued that government provides





## Focus 1.1

## Hobbes's case for government

The case for government was well made by Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679) in his famous treatise *Leviathan*, published in 1651. His starting point was the fundamental equality in our ability to inflict harm on others:

For as to the strength of body, the weakest has strength enough to kill the strongest, either by secret machination, or by confederacy with others.

So arises a clash of ambition and fear of attack:

From this equality of ability, arises equality of hope in the attaining of our ends. And therefore if any two men desire the same thing, which nevertheless they cannot both enjoy, they become enemies; and in the way to their end, which is principally their own conservation, and sometimes their own delectation, endeavour to destroy or subdue one another.

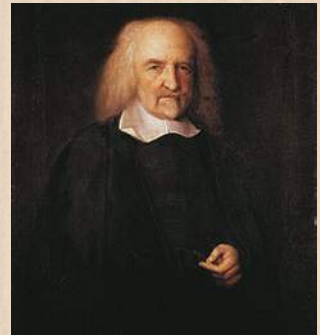
Without a ruler to keep us in check, the situation becomes grim:

Hereby it is manifest, that during the time men live without a common power to keep them all in awe, they are in that condition which is called war; and such a war, as is of every man, against every man.

People therefore agree (by means unclear) to set up an absolute government to avoid a life that would otherwise be 'solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short':

The only way to erect such a common power, as may be able to defend them from the invasion of foreigners, and the injuries of one another ... is, to confer all their power and strength upon one man, or one assembly of men, that may reduce all their wills, by plurality of voices, unto one will ... This done, the multitude so united is called a COMMONWEALTH.

Source: Hobbes (1651).



Thomas Hobbes.

Source: Getty Images/De Agostini Picture Library

us with protection from the harm that we would otherwise inflict on each other in our quest for gain and glory. By granting a monopoly of the sword to a government, we transform anarchy into order, securing peace and the opportunity for mutually beneficial cooperation.

In a democracy, government supposedly provides security and predictability to those who live under its jurisdiction (see [Chapter 5](#)). Citizens and businesses can plan for the long term, knowing that laws are developed in a standardized fashion, take into account competing opinions, and are consistently applied. Of course, nothing is ever that simple, because governments create their own dangers. The risk of Hobbes's commonwealth is that it will abuse its own authority, creating more problems than it solves. As John Locke – one of Hobbes's critics – pointed out, there is no profit in avoiding the dangers of foxes if the outcome is simply to be devoured by lions (Locke, 1690). A key aim in studying government, then, is to discover how to secure its benefits while also limiting its inherent dangers.

In democracies, government is influenced by wider forces, such as interest groups, political parties, the media, corporations, and public opinion. In authoritarian systems, meanwhile, the government may lack much autonomy, and effectively becomes the property of a dominant individual or clan. In both cases, the forces and influences surrounding government come together to form a **political system**. This concept takes us beyond mere institutions and helps us pin down all the factors involved in the political life of a given state or community. It has a hard edge, as reflected in the adverb *authoritatively* in the famous definition of a political system offered by the political scientist David Easton (1965):

A political system can be designated as the interactions through which values are authoritatively allocated for a society; that is what distinguishes a political system from other systems lying in its environment.

### Political system

The interactions and organizations through which a society reaches and successfully enforces collective decisions. See also discussion in [Chapter 4](#) about regimes.

**Governance**

The process by which decisions, laws, and policies are made, with or without the input of formal institutions.

The ‘Swedish political system’ means more than ‘Swedish government’; it is the space in which most of the activity of Swedish politics – positive and negative, in the public or private interest – takes place. It has many similarities with the political systems of Finland, Denmark, and Norway, but many differences with those in Mexico, South Africa, or India, even if all these countries have governing institutions that have approximately the same purpose. (See Chapter 3 for details on how comparative politics goes about assessing the similarities and the differences.)

Another related concept is **governance**. Where the concept of *government* suggests a rather static account based on organizations, the concept of *governance* highlights the process and quality of collective decision-making. The emphasis is on the activity of governing, so that we can – for example – speak of global governance: there is no such thing as a global government, but there is a large community of international organizations (such as the United Nations), thousands of treaties that form the basis of international law, and a constant interaction involving governments, corporations, and interest groups, all of which amount to a process of governance. Governance directs our attention away from government’s command-and-control function towards the broader task of public regulation, a role which ruling politicians in democracies share with other bodies. We need the concept of governance as a supplement, rather than a replacement, for the notion of government.

The notion of governance has been prominent in discussions about the European Union. This regional integration association has several institutions that look much like an EU government – they include an elected European Parliament and a Court of Justice – but which are better regarded as a system of governance (McCormick, 2015). Their job is to develop policies and laws, and to oversee the implementation of those policies and laws, but they can only do as much as the foundational treaties of the EU, and the governments of its member states, allow them to do. They are better seen as servants of the process of European integration than as the government of the EU.

Because governance refers to the activity of ruling, it has also become the preferred term when examining the quality and effectiveness of rule. In this context, governance refers to what the institutions of government do and to how well or badly they do it. Good governance should, at a minimum, be accountable, transparent, efficient, responsive, and inclusive, but these are all ideals; even those countries that rank at the top of political rating systems (see later in this chapter) have flaws. The kind of bad governance that we so often find in authoritarian systems is much more clearly evident; see Spotlight Nigeria as an example.

## POLITICS AND POWER

While government is tangible in the sense that we can see most of the people in government, and the buildings that institutions inhabit, politics and power are much less easy to identify and to measure. In the debate over the meaning of **politics**, for example, we can easily list and agree examples of political activity. When the President and Congress in the United States engage in their annual tussle over the budget, for example, they are clearly engaged in politics. When the Spanish region of Catalonia held non-binding independence referendums in 2014 and again in 2017, politics was again on view. When thousands of Iranians took to the streets during 2017–18 to protest rising food prices (and also to express their opposition to the government), they too were taking part in politics. The political heartland, as represented by such examples, is clear enough.

However, the boundaries of politics are less precise. When one country invades another, is it engaged in politics or merely in war? When a dictatorship suppresses a demonstration by violence, is it playing or preventing politics? When a court issues a ruling about privacy, should its judgment be read as political or judicial? Is politics restricted to governments, or can it also be found in businesses, families, and even university classrooms?

A crisp definition of politics – one which fits just those things we instinctively call ‘political’ – is difficult, because the term is used in so many different ways. But three aspects of politics are clear:

- ◆ It is a collective activity, occurring between and among people. A lone castaway on a desert island could not engage in politics, but if there were two castaways on the same island, they would have a political relationship.
- ◆ It involves making decisions regarding a course of action to take, or a disagreement to be resolved.
- ◆ Once reached, political decisions become authoritative policy for the group, binding and committing its members (even if some of them continue to resist, which is – in itself – a political activity).

**Politics**

The process by which people negotiate and compete in the process of making and executing shared or collective decisions.

Politics is unavoidable because of the social nature of humans. We live in groups that must reach collective decisions about using resources, relating to others, and planning for the future. A country deliberating on whether to go to war, a family discussing where to go on holiday, a company deciding where to locate a new factory, a university deciding whether its priority lies with teaching or research: these are all examples of groups forming judgements affecting their members. Politics involves assessing different opinions, and ideally brings them together into a compromise course of action.

Once reached, decisions must be implemented. Means must be found to ensure the acquiescence and preferably the consent of the group's members. Once set, taxes must be raised; once adopted, regulations must be imposed; once planned and funded, highways must be built. Public authority – and even force if needed – is used to implement collective policy, and citizens who fail to contribute to the common task may be fined or even imprisoned by the authorities.

As a concept, then, politics can be defined idealistically as the process of making and executing collective decisions based on the pursuit of a group's common interest, or at least on seeking peaceful reconciliation of the different interests within a group. This interpretation of politics as a community-serving activity can be traced to the ancient Greeks. The philosopher Aristotle (384–322 BCE) argued that 'man is by nature a political animal' (1962 edn), by which he meant not only that politics is unavoidable, but also that it is the highest human activity, the feature which most clearly separates us from other species. His view was that people can only express their nature as reasoning, virtuous beings by participating in a political community which seeks to identify the common interest through discussion, and tries to pursue it through actions to which all contribute. In Aristotle's model constitution, 'the ideal citizens rule in the interests of all, not because they are forced to by checks and balances, but because they see it as right to do so' (Nicholson, 2004).

This idea of politics as a peaceful process of open discussion leading to collective decisions acceptable to all stakeholders in society is all well and good, but the reality rarely measures up to the ideal. Perhaps more realistically, politics can also be seen as a competitive struggle for power and resources between people and groups seeking their own advantage. From this second perspective, politics can involve narrow concerns taking precedence over collective benefits when those in authority place their own goals above those of the wider community, using methods that can spill over into manipulation, corruption, and perhaps even violence and bloodshed.

In this view, politics is a competition for acquiring and keeping power, a process that yields winners and losers. This is reflected in the famous definition by the political scientist Harold Lasswell (1936) of politics as 'who gets what, when, how'. In short, it is anything but the disinterested pursuit of the public interest. Taking the cynical (or perhaps realistic) extreme, the Prussian general Carl von Clausewitz once said that 'war is the continuation of politics by other means', a view backed up by Chinese leader Mao Zedong when he said that 'war is politics with bloodshed'. But we could as easily turn these ideas around and argue that politics is the continuation of war by other means, or that politics is war without bloodshed.

Politics, then, has many different facets. It involves shared and competing interests; cooperation and conflict; reason and force. Each concept is necessary, but only together are they sufficient. The essence of politics lies in the interaction between conceptions, and we should not narrow our vision by reducing politics to either one. As Laver (1983) puts it: 'Pure conflict is war. Pure cooperation is true love. Politics is a mixture of both.'

Meanwhile, at the heart of politics is the distribution and manipulation of **power**. The word comes from the Latin *potere*, meaning 'to be able', which is why the philosopher Bertrand Russell (1938) saw power as 'the production of intended effects'. The greater our ability to determine our own fate, the more power we possess. In this sense, describing Germany as a powerful country means that it has a high level of ability to achieve its objectives, whatever those may be. Conversely, to lack power – as do many poor or unstable countries – is to fall victim to circumstance. Arguably, though, every state has power, even if it is the kind of negative power involved in obliging a reaction from bigger and wealthier states; Somali pirates, Syrian refugees, and illegal migrants from Mexico may seem powerless, but all three groups spark policy responses from the governments of those countries they most immediately affect.

Notice that the emphasis here is on power *to* rather than power *over* – on the ability to achieve goals, rather than the more specific exercise of control over other people or countries. But most analyses of power focus on relationships: on power over others. Here, the three dimensions of power distinguished by Steven Lukes (2005) (see Table 1.1) are useful, because they help us answer the question of how we can measure a group's power, or at least establish whether one group is more powerful than another. As we move through these dimensions, so the conception of power becomes more subtle – but also, perhaps, somewhat stretched beyond its normal use.

### Power

The capacity to bring about intended effects. The term is often used as a synonym for influence, but is also used more narrowly to refer to more forceful modes of influence notably, getting one's way by threats.

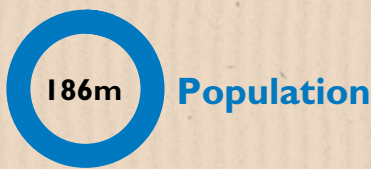


# SPOTLIGHT NIGERIA

## Brief profile

Although Nigeria has been independent since 1960, it was not until 2015 that it experienced a presidential election in which the incumbent was defeated by an opposition opponent. This makes an important point about the challenges faced by Africa's largest country by population, and one of the continent's major regional powers, in developing a stable political form. Nigeria is currently enjoying its longest spell of civilian government since independence, but the military continues to play an important role, the economy is dominated by oil, corruption is rife at every level of society, security concerns and poor infrastructure discourage foreign investment, and a combination of ethnic and religious divisions pose worrying threats to stability. Incursions and attacks since 2002 by the Islamist group Boko Haram, have added to the country's problems, but it has still – nonetheless – been recently upgraded from authoritarian to a hybrid on the Democracy Index.

<b>Form of government</b>	Federal presidential republic consisting of 36 states and a Federal Capital Territory. State formed 1960, and most recent constitution adopted 1999.
<b>Executive</b>	Presidential. A president elected for a maximum of two four-year terms, supported by a vice-president and cabinet of ministers, with one from each of Nigeria's states.
<b>Legislature</b>	Bicameral National Assembly: lower House of Representatives (360 members) and upper Senate (109 members), both elected for fixed and renewable four-year terms.
<b>Judiciary</b>	Federal Supreme Court, with 14 members nominated by the president, and either confirmed by the Senate or approved by a judicial commission.
<b>Electoral system</b>	President elected in national contest, and must win a majority of all votes cast and at least 25 per cent of the vote in at least two-thirds of Nigeria's states. Possibility of two runoffs. National Assembly elected using single-member plurality.
<b>Parties</b>	Multi-party, led by the centrist People's Democratic Party and the conservative All Nigeria People's Party.



**Democracy Index rating**



**Freedom House rating**



**Human Development Index rating**



President Muhammadu Buhari addresses members of the Nigerian National Assembly in Abuja after submitting his annual federal budget.  
Source: Getty Images/Sunday Aghaeze/Stringer.

## Government and politics in Nigeria

Many of the facets of the debate about government, politics, power, and authority are on show in Nigeria, a country that is still struggling to develop a workable political form and national identity in the face of multiple internal divisions.

Understanding Nigeria is complicated by the lack of durable governmental patterns. Since independence in 1960, Nigerians have lived through three periods of civilian government, five successful and several attempted military coups, a civil war, and nearly 30 years of military rule. The first civilian government (1960–66) was based on the parliamentary model, but the second and third (1979–83, and

1999–present) were based on the presidential form. Since 2007, Nigeria has twice made the transition from one civilian government to another, and the long-term political prognosis has improved. Still, considerable uncertainties remain.

Political doubts reflect economic drift, and vice versa. The country's growing population is expected to double in the next 25 years, straining an infrastructure that is already woefully inadequate to support a modern economy. Nigeria's core economic problem is its heavy reliance on oil, which leaves the size and health of the economy – as well as government revenues – dependent on the fluctuating price of oil. To make matters worse, much of the oil wealth has been squandered and stolen, feeding into the corruption that is rife in Nigeria, and there have been bitter political arguments over how best to spend the balance.

Nigeria's problems are more than just economic. In social terms, Nigeria is divided by ethnicity, handicapping efforts to build a sense of national identity. It is also separated by religion, with a mainly Muslim north, a non-Muslim south, and controversial pressures from the north to expand the reach of sharia, or Islamic law. Regional disparities are fundamental, with a north that is dry and poor and a south that is better endowed in resources and basic services. Regional tensions have been made worse by oil, most of which lies either in the south-east or off the coast, but with much of the profit distributed to political elites in other parts of the country.



### Further reading

- Bourne, Richard (2015) *Nigeria: A New History of a Turbulent Century* (Zed Books).
- Campbell, John (2013) *Nigeria: Dancing on the Brink* (Rowman & Littlefield).
- Campbell, John, and Matthew T. Page (2018) *Nigeria: What Everyone Needs to Know* (Oxford University Press).

**Table 1.1** Lukes's three dimensions of power

Dimension	Core question	Core quality
First	Who prevails when preferences conflict?	Decisions are made on issues over which there is an observable conflict of interests.
Second	Who controls whether preferences are expressed?	Decisions are prevented from being taken on potential issues over which there is an observable conflict of interests.
Third	Who shapes preferences?	Potential issues are kept out of politics, whether through social forces, institutional practices, or the decisions of individuals.

Source: Lukes (2005).

The first dimension is straightforward: power should be judged by identifying whose views prevail when the actors involved possess conflicting views on what should be done. The greater the correspondence between a person's views and decisions reached, the greater is that person's influence: more wins indicate more power. This decision-making approach, as it is called, was pioneered by the political scientist Robert Dahl (1961a) in his classic study of democracy and power in the city of New Haven, Connecticut. In the United States, for example, and in spite of repeated mass shootings, the successful lobbying of the gun lobby has meant that most leaders of the two major political parties have refused to impose meaningful limits on gun ownership, forming what amounts to an elite conspiracy to make sure that guns remain widely available. So far, at least, the gun lobby has prevailed; it has the power (see Chapter 18). The approach is relatively clear and concrete, based on identifying preferences and observing decisions, and connecting directly with the concept of politics as the resolution of conflict within groups.

The second dimension focuses on the capacity to keep issues off the political agenda by preventing the emergence of topics which would threaten the values or interests of decision-makers. As Bachrach and Baratz (1962) once put it, 'to the extent that a person or group – consciously or unconsciously – creates or reinforces barriers to the public airing of policy conflicts, that person or group has power'. In China, for example, fear of government reprisals currently discourages many people from expressing their support for a transition to democracy. By narrowing the public agenda in this way, the ruling communist party renders democracy a non-issue. In order to address the problem of control over the agenda, we need to both study the groups that gain the most from political decisions or the status quo, and those whose views are not heard.

The third dimension broadens our conception of power by extending it to cover the formation, rather than merely the expression, of preferences. Where the first and second dimensions assume conflicting preferences, the third dimension addresses the idea of a manipulated consensus. In war time, for example, governments often seek to sustain public morale by preventing news of military defeats or high casualties from seeping into the public domain. In this and similar cases, agenda control is achieved by manipulating the flow of information so as to prevent any conflict from arising in the first place. So this third dimension of power focuses on manipulating preferences rather than just preventing their expression.

The implication of these examples is that the most efficient form of power is one that allows us to shape people's information and preferences, thus preventing the first and second dimensions from coming into play. Denying people access to information is one way of achieving this, as in the example of the selective briefings initially provided by the power company responsible for operating the Japanese nuclear power station which leaked radiation after the 2011 earthquake. Power, then, is not just about whose preferences win out; we must also consider whose opinions are kept out of the debate and also the wider context in which those preferences are formed.

## THE STATE, AUTHORITY, AND LEGITIMACY

We will look at the state in more detail in Chapter 4, but a brief preview is needed here so that we can grasp two other concepts that lie at the heart of our understanding of government and politics: *authority* and *legitimacy*. The world is divided into nearly 200 states (the exact number, as we will see, is debatable – see Focus 4.1), each containing a population living within a defined territory, and each recognized by its residents and by other states as having the right to rule that territory. States provide the legal mandate for the work of governments, allowing them to use the

authority inherent in the state. We can compare government and politics at multiple levels, from the national to the local, but it is the state that provides us with our most important point of reference as we work through the complexities of comparison, and states need both authority and legitimacy in order to function effectively.

**Authority** is a concept that is broader than power and, in some ways, more fundamental to comparative politics. Where power is the capacity to act, authority is the acknowledged right to do so. It exists when subordinates accept the capacity of superiors to give legitimate orders, so that while Russia may exercise some *power* over Russians living in neighbouring countries such as Ukraine, the Baltic States, and Kazakhstan, its formal *authority* stops at the Russian border. The German sociologist Max Weber (1922) suggested that, in a relationship of authority, the ruled implement the command as if they had adopted it spontaneously, for its own sake. For this reason, authority is a more efficient form of control than brute power. Yet, authority is more than voluntary compliance. To acknowledge the authority of your state does not mean you always agree with its decisions; it means only that you accept its right to make them and your own duty to obey. In this way, authority provides the foundation for the state.

Just as there are different sources of power, so too can authority be built on a range of foundations. Weber distinguished three ways of validating political power:

- ◆ By tradition, or the accepted way of doing things.
- ◆ By charisma, or intense commitment to a leader and his or her message.
- ◆ By appeal to legal–rational norms, based on the rule–governed powers of an office, rather than a person.

This classification remains useful today, even in democracies where we might think that legal–rational authority is the dominant form. We can also add to Weber’s ideas: much of what a leader can or cannot achieve, for example, comes down to competence – or at least, to the perception that a leader actually knows what they are doing – and to the extent to which leaders are able to represent the moral values and ideological goals of their followers.

**Legitimacy** builds on, but is broader than, authority. When a state is widely accepted by its citizens, and by other states with which it deals, we describe it as legitimate. Thus, we speak of the *authority* of an official but the *legitimacy* of a state. Although the word *legitimacy* comes from the Latin *legitimare*, meaning ‘to declare lawful’, legitimacy is much more than mere legality: where legality is a technical matter, referring to whether a rule is made correctly by following regular procedures, legitimacy is a more political concept, referring to whether people accept the authority of a state, without which its very existence is in question.

Legality is a topic for lawyers; political scientists are more interested in issues of legitimacy: how a political system wins, keeps, and sometimes loses public faith in its right to function. A flourishing economy, international success, and a popular governing party will boost the legitimacy of a political system, even though legitimacy is more than any of these things. In fact, we can think of legitimacy as the credit a political system has built up from its past successes, a reserve that can be drawn down in bad times. In any event, public opinion – not a law court – is the test of legitimacy. And it is legitimacy, rather than force alone, which provides the most stable foundation for rule.

### Authority

The right to rule. Authority creates its own power, so long as people accept that the person in authority has the right to make decisions.

### Legitimacy

The condition of being legitimate. A legitimate system of government is one based on authority, and those subject to its rule recognize its right to make decisions.

### Ideology

A system of connected beliefs, a shared view of the world, or a blueprint for how politics, economics, and society should be structured.

## IDEOLOGY

The concepts reviewed so far have mainly been *about* politics, but ideas also play a role *in* politics: political action is motivated by the ideas people hold about it. One way to understand this is via the notion of **ideology**. This is a term that was coined by the French philosopher Antoine Destutt de Tracy during the 1790s, in the aftermath of the French Revolution, to describe the science of ideas. Its meaning has long since changed, and it now denotes packages of ideas related to different views about the role of government and the goals of public policy. An ideology is today understood as any system of thought expressing a view on human nature, the proper relationship between state and society, and the individual’s position within this order.

Which specific political outlooks should be regarded as ideologies is a matter of judgement, but [Figure 1.1](#) offers a selection. In any case, the era of explicit ideology beginning with the French Revolution ended in the twentieth century with the defeat of fascism in 1945 and the collapse of communism at the end of the 1980s. Ideology seemed