

Understanding the POLITICAL WORLD

A Comparative Introduction to Political Science

Twelfth Edition



James N. Danziger • Charles Anthony Smith

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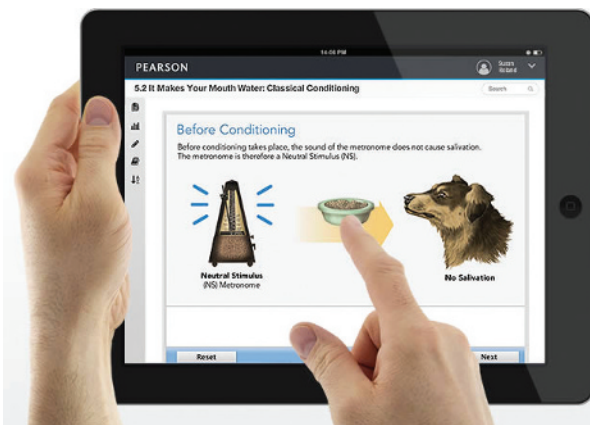
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Preface

During early 2014, opposition to Ukrainian President Yanukovich escalated from demonstrations, to protests, to bloody confrontations and more than 200 deaths. On a February night in 2014, opposition leaders took the stage in Kiev to announce triumphantly that a deal had been reached with the president to end the increasingly violent conflict. The deal, brokered by the European Union, called for elections in the fall. A 26-year-old protester named Volodymyr Parasiuk climbed onto the stage, took the microphone, and gave an impassioned impromptu speech criticizing the peace deal and chastising the opposition leaders for “shaking hands with this killer.” The crowd of thousands, and then many Ukrainians, turned against the peace accord, and that night President Yanukovich fled the capital. After several days, the legislature stripped him of his power. One young man had commandeered a microphone and altered the course of Ukrainian, Crimean, Russian, and even interstate politics, despite the extensive efforts and agreements of high-ranking diplomats in the European Union and the Ukraine.

Our theories and research findings in political science cannot predict this sort of event. Yet that does not frustrate or embarrass us on behalf of political scientists everywhere. One endlessly fascinating aspect of the study of politics is that there are always new challenges to our explanations. This makes politics intriguing. Albert Einstein commented that politics is more difficult than physics. The political phenomena that we attempt to study and explain include many variables and can spin in unexpected directions, especially while unpredictable humans try to control them. Yet all is not chaos. There are patterns, and

some actions and outcomes are much more likely than others.

A central goal of political scientists is to identify and communicate what happens and why it happens and then to offer generalizations that capture the broad processes and underlying dynamics of politics. This is how political science attempts to enhance our understanding of the political world: hence the title of this book.

The book provides you with some of the tools—key concepts, research findings, explanations—to help you better understand both politics and how political science approaches its subject matter. It offers you a path. After a brief consideration of how we decide what we know, the book explores what we do know about the political beliefs and actions of individuals. It then advances to the country level of analysis, examining political institutions and political processes. This is followed by a consideration of politics at the level of the global system. The final chapters draw together all the themes of the book while examining the politics of three broad clusters of countries around the world.

We hope the events that are unfolding in the political world have persuaded you that it is essential to understand it and to act sensibly within it, because politics is arguably the most critical domain in which our futures are being shaped. In this book, you will be encouraged to consider whether the information, insights, and concepts of political science are useful. Can they help us understand the political world? Can they inform our value choices and normative judgments about public policies? Can they guide our policies and actions in ways that improve the quality of our lives, individually and collectively?

New To This Edition

Given the extraordinary rate of change in the political world, there is a systematic and thorough update of the quantitative data in almost every figure and table and extensive updates to most of the in-depth examples that are embedded throughout the text. Professor Tony Smith is the most notable addition in this edition. He brings broad political science knowledge, with particular strengths in international relations, political institutions, and judicial politics (he was a practicing lawyer before he returned to academia). Here are some additional significant differences from the previous edition:

- Among the vignettes that open every chapter by introducing a major theme of that chapter are new ones. One explores the financial crisis associated with the euro and the European Union, with particular attention to Greece, and another discusses Canada as an example of the complexity of the contemporary developed countries of the Global North.
- Chapter 4 has been revised substantially to include an extensive new discussion of explanatory approaches associated with political psychology, including rational choice, cognitive psychology, intergroup relations, personality approaches, and biopolitics.
- Chapters 6 and 7 contain an expanded discussion of institutionalism and revised sections on judicial politics, constitutions, and regime types.
- Chapter 8 reworks the analysis of political economy, with a new section on state capitalism, significant revision of the discussion of statism and corporatism, and a pared down treatment of communism.
- Chapter 10 now incorporates and updates the analytic framework (previously in Chapter 13) employed to classify the world's countries into the groupings examined in Chapters 13–15.
- Chapter 11 brings in current debates and approaches in international relations, including revised sections on international law, globalization, and transnational systems.
- Chapter 12, on political violence, reflects the evolving role of terrorism and its causes and consequences and expands the discussion of separatist violence.
- Chapters 13 and 14 have been revised to reflect the emerging challenges to both the Global North and the Global South, including such topics as the impact of the global economic crisis and the apparent “rise of the South.”
- Chapter 15, on the transitional developed countries, has been significantly revised to emphasize the recent evolution in both the post-communist developed countries and the newly industrialized countries in Latin America, and it includes a completely new discussion of the five BRICS countries.
- New data and graphical analyses are presented to illuminate such issues as the crossnational measurement of the level of democracy, the comparative rates of economic growth in transitional developed countries across two decades, and the relationship between level of democracy and level of economic development.
- On the Web, a list of useful and relevant Internet sites, and For Further Reading suggestions at the end of each chapter have been updated and expanded.

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Features

The twelfth edition of *Understanding the Political World* retains the conceptual framework of previous editions, focusing on politics at every level, from the individual person to the global system. To enrich the reader's understanding, it employs a comparative perspective, considering evidence and examples from many countries in all regions of the world. This approach is guided both by Aristotle's wise observation that all thinking begins in comparison and by a recognition that the political world is now truly global.

As noted above, the book is organized to provide the reader with a brief characterization of how political scientists study politics in a comparative framework. It then uses such a framework to focus on how to understand politics at the level of the individual and the group, the different ways in which political institutions are organized, the dynamics of important political processes, and the key patterns of politics in major clusters of countries.

Chapter 1 and the Appendix introduce the logic of political science and the methods of comparative political analysis.

Chapters 2–4 examine both normative political theory and the empirical study of political behavior at the individual and group levels, describing and explaining the causes of political beliefs and actions.

Chapters 5–8 emphasize the structural and institutional elements of political systems, offering concepts and examples that characterize the different ways in which people organize themselves politically.

Chapters 9–12 analyze crucial political processes, such as public policymaking and the exercise of power, political and economic development, politics across national borders, and political violence.

Chapters 13–15 explain in detail how important groups of countries try to achieve their broad goals of prosperity, stability, and security within the complex international environment. These chapters provide specific analyses of the developed countries, the developing countries, and

three sets of transitional developed countries—the postcommunist developed countries, the newly industrializing countries in Latin America, and the BRICS countries.

In addition, the twelfth edition retains most key features of the previous edition:

- Many discussions and debates provide memorable applications of key concepts, such as power, democracy, political violence, equality, and globalization, and key issues, such as whether terrorism is ever justifiable and whether interest groups are good for democracy.
- Continual use of country-based examples grounds every topic in relevant, specific realities.
- Numerous presentations of current data, often in graphical form, facilitate analysis and comparisons on many topics.
- Captioned photographs illuminate themes in a way that complements the textual discussions.
- A recurring focus on political economy emphasizes the significance of linkages between the political system and the economic system.
- Eight excellent, full-color maps display the geographic relations of countries in all areas of the world.
- An engaging, readable style draws in the reader.

Supplements

Pearson is pleased to offer several resources to qualified adopters of *Understanding the Political World* and their students that will make teaching and learning from this book even more effective and enjoyable. Several of the supplements for this book are available at the Instructor Resource Center (IRC), an online hub that allows instructors to quickly download book-specific supplements. Please visit the IRC welcome page at www.pearsonhighered.com/irc to register for access.

INSTRUCTOR'S MANUAL/TEST BANK This resource includes learning objectives, chapter

overview and lecture suggestions, multiple-choice questions, essay questions, and discussion questions for each chapter. Available exclusively on the IRC.

PEARSON MYTEST This powerful assessment generation program includes all of the items in the instructor's manual/test bank. Questions and tests can be easily created, customized, saved online, and then printed, allowing flexibility to manage assessments anytime and anywhere. Available exclusively on the IRC.

POWERPOINT PRESENTATIONS Organized around a lecture outline, these multimedia presentations include photos, figures, and tables from each chapter. Available exclusively on the IRC.

LONGMAN ATLAS OF WORLD ISSUES (0-205-78020-2) From population and political systems to energy use and women's rights, the *Longman Atlas of World Issues* features full-color thematic maps that examine the forces shaping the world. Featuring maps from the latest edition of *The Penguin State of the World Atlas*, this excerpt includes critical thinking exercises to promote a deeper understanding of how geography affects many global issues.

GOODE'S WORLD ATLAS (0-321-65200-2) First published by Rand McNally in 1923, *Goode's World Atlas* has set the standard for college reference atlases. It features hundreds of physical, political, and thematic maps as well as graphs, tables, and a pronouncing index.

Acknowledgments

Many sources of ideas and information constitute the basis of my understanding about politics. Broadly, you should know that I was born and have been educated primarily in the United States. I have also studied, lived, and/or spent significant periods of time in more than 70 countries in Western and Eastern Europe, Central and South America, Asia, the Middle East and North Africa, and Sub-Saharan Africa.

I have circumnavigated the globe twice as part of five global voyages on Semester at Sea. The people I met and the events I experienced in all these places certainly have influenced my perceptions about politics.

More direct contributions to this book have come from the work of my colleagues in political science and from the many students and others in the political world with whom I have interacted. I have drawn deeply and often from the ideas of these groups. By the publication of the twelfth edition, the layers of contributions and ideas to the construction of this book are deep, rich, and indescribable. In every edition, there is a list of people who added positively to that edition, and I continue to be grateful to them all. Explicit guidance and advice regarding the writing of this particular edition have come from several valuable sources: scholarly colleagues who have offered useful suggestions, especially Richard Coldwell, C.B.E., and students who have provided feedback on the book, including Sanaa Khan and Aaron McCullough. The reviewers, who offered very thoughtful and constructive commentaries for this edition, include Charles Ellison, University of Cincinnati; Daniel Masters, University of North Carolina, Wilmington; Brian Anderson, Mississippi University for Women; and Kurt Messick, Ivy Tech Community College.

I am very grateful for the help provided by all these (and many unnamed) sources. Regarding the roads not taken and the missteps in this book, the responsibility is mine.

James N. Danziger

The privilege of using the earlier editions of this book to bring political science and the world to thousands of students has been a true joy. I am now honored to join Professor Danziger in his quest to bring the next edition to fruition. I echo his gratitude to the many colleagues, friends, family, and students who provided feedback and support along the way.

Charles Anthony Smith

From the Reviews:

“Danziger and Smith have written the perfect book for an introduction to political science. Presenting a full range of domestic and international issues plus detailed scenarios that make students think critically, they balance the academic approach to political science with the practical need to be fluent in real world politics.”

—*Krista Wiegand, University of Tennessee,
Knoxville, Tennessee*

“This book remains the gold standard for introduction to the breadth of topics that animate political science. Encompassing topics such as political ideology, democracy, protest, domestic and interstate politics, and newly industrializing countries as well as developed, the book takes the student on a journey through the discipline itself as well as its subject matter. Because it is accessible to beginning undergraduates and because of its explicit application of comparative methods of inquiry, this book remains the key recommendation I always offer to my colleagues.”

—*Matthew Shugart, University of California-Davis,
Davis, California*

“Danziger and Smith bring a fresh and exciting pedagogical approach. Their terrific book presents cutting-edge topics with current data in a compelling narrative.”

—*Heather Smith-Cannoy, Lewis & Clark College,
Portland, Oregon*

“Danziger and Smith have written a current and impressive textbook. It is empirically rich, but still accessible and engaging.”

—*Royce Carroll, Rice University,
Houston, Texas*

“This is an innovative approach to teaching introductory level political science. It challenges the students with up-to-date information presented in an analytical framework that helps lay the foundation for a comprehensive understanding of how the political world actually works.”

—*Shawn Schulenberg, Marshall University,
Huntington, West Virginia*

To the Reader

The aim of this book is revealed by its title: It is meant to help you understand the political world. It assumes that you are willing to think about politics. It does not assume that you have substantial knowledge about politics or political science or even that you know the difference between politics and political science. We hope that when you complete the book and any course in which you are reading it, you will feel that you have increased your knowledge about the contemporary political world.

The study of politics is full of fascinating questions. First are the questions about *what is*, such as: Who exercises political power, and what values and purposes guide them? Why do people accept political authority? How do people organize themselves politically? What factors are associated with political violence? A second set of questions concerns *what ought to be*: Who should exercise political power, and what values should they pursue? Why should people accept political authority? How should political structures be organized? When is political violence justifiable?

People disagree sharply about answers to both these descriptive (what is) and normative (what ought to be) questions. In addition, the study of politics provokes a third set of questions

regarding *what we can actually know* about the political world. Here also there are major disagreements about the appropriate methods for describing and understanding politics.

Although this book cannot resolve the underlying disputes, it offers you the basis for making sense of politics at all three levels. As the authors, we make some basic assumptions: that you can think systematically about politics and make general statements about how politics works; that you will learn more about politics by considering the politics of many different places; that every observer of politics (certainly including you and us) has biases, only some of which can be understood; that you need a variety of sources of ideas and information before you can make informed and sensible decisions about the value disagreements pervading politics; and that this book is one such source that can be helpful to you. Our efforts will be successful to the extent that *you* ultimately judge our assumptions to be correct (especially the last one).

It is inevitable that you will be frustrated with the treatment of politics at some (many?) points in this book. We would say: Reader, be merciful! The study of politics is very complex. Gather bits of understanding where you can find them.

Maps



NORTH AMERICA







EUROPE



THE MIDDLE EAST



EAST AND SOUTH ASIA



AUSTRALIA AND OCEANIA



Chapter 1

Politics and Knowledge



Learning Objectives

- 1.1** Define politics within a public context.
- 1.2** Analyze three types of political knowledge.
- 1.3** Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of different sources of political knowledge.
- 1.4** Identify techniques and approaches used to gain political knowledge and assess whether they constitute a science.

Imagine you have a 13-year-old sister in eighth grade. She has quite the day at school: The vice principal comes into her math class unexpectedly and asks her to bring her backpack and accompany him to his office. In his office, she sees a planner, a knife, a lighter, and some white pills on his desk. The vice principal lectures her about the importance of telling the truth, then asks which of the items belong to her. She tells him that she had lent the planner to another girl a few days earlier but that the other items are not hers. The vice principal responds that the other girl had reported your sister for giving her the pills, which students are not allowed to possess at school.

The vice principal asks if he can look through your sister's backpack, and she agrees. A female secretary enters the office and searches the backpack. Your sister is then told to follow the secretary to the nurse's office, where she is asked to remove her jacket, socks, and shoes. She follows their directions. They next ask her to take off her pants and shirt, and again she follows their directions. These clothes are searched, and when nothing incriminating is found, they order your sister to stand up, pull her bra away from her body and shake it, then pull her underwear loose and shake it. No pills drop out when she complies. She is allowed to put her clothes back on and sits outside the principal's office for several hours. Finally, she is sent back to class.

What do you think of the events just described? Is this situation *political*? Do the actions of the vice principal seem appropriate? What about the actions of the school's secretary and nurse? Did your sister do the right thing by complying with each of their requests? Did she have a choice? What would you do in a similar situation?



Search me? Are there fundamental political issues when a school searches its students? When is a search legal?

13-year-old Savana Redding of Safford, Arizona, in 2003. Here are some additional facts in this case. This public school has a responsibility to ensure the safety and health of all its students. The previous year, a student nearly died from drugs taken without permission at the school. The school district has a zero-tolerance policy for all drugs—no student is allowed to possess any drugs at school, whether over-the-counter, prescription, or illegal. The vice principal acted on information from another girl who reported that Savana had given her pills that day. It was not really a “strip search” because Savana never took off her underwear. All of these considerations seem to justify the actions that occurred.

However, there are valid points on the other side of the issue. The Fourth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution seems to protect Savana from this kind of search unless significant evidence indicates that something illegal is occurring (probable cause). The vice principal’s actions were taken based on questionable information from another girl who was already in trouble for possessing the pills. And the search occurred despite Savana’s claim that she had no pills, without parental approval, and before any further investigation of the situation was attempted. Then there is common sense: The pills are merely extra-strength ibuprofen (pain killers). Is this really a legitimate reason for adults in authority positions to force a 13-year-old girl to submit to a humiliating strip search?

Savana’s mother was outraged. With the assistance of a lawyer from the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), she sued the school officials on the grounds that they had subjected her daughter to an “unreasonable search.” Savana’s lawyer argued that, while a search of her backpack might be reasonable, a strip search was not, given the flimsy evidence of guilt and the minimal threat associated with ibuprofen. The school district’s officials responded that the vice principal’s actions were justified and consistent with numerous court cases that uphold the rights and responsibilities of schools to prevent dangerous behavior among their students, including searches for drugs or weapons.

Initially, a judge in Tucson ruled in favor of the actions by the school officials; however, on appeal, the circuit court reversed the decision by the narrowest of

Stop and think about these questions briefly before you continue reading. You will be asked many such “reflection questions” as you read this book. Your attempt to answer them, either with a quick note in the margin or at least a mental note, will help you better grasp your own understanding of issues that are raised. As E. M. Forster commented: “How do I know what I think until I see what I say?” So, what do you think about this situation?

Of course, this did not happen to your little sister (if you have one), but it did happen to

margins (6–5). The court concluded that the strip search of an eighth grader while looking for prescription drugs was a violation of her constitutional rights, and it held that the family could sue the school officials for damages. The school’s lawyers then appealed the case to the U.S. Supreme Court. In 2009, the court majority (8–1) held that the search of Savana was unconstitutional. The majority reasoned that the particular drugs suspected in this case were not sufficiently threatening to justify the search. However, the court did not allow the family to sue school officials, leaving open the question of how it might rule if school officials suspected a student of possessing something more dangerous than ibuprofen.

Toward a Definition of Politics

1.1 Define politics within a public context.

The first step in our journey toward a better understanding of the political world is to establish what we mean by politics. The Savana Redding search captures some of the crucial themes related to politics:

Politics is the competition among individuals and groups pursuing their own interests.

Politics is the exercise of power and influence to allocate things that are valued.

Politics is the determination of who gets what, when, and how.

Politics is the resolution of conflict.

All of these definitions share the central idea that **politics** *is the process through which power and influence are used in the promotion of certain values and interests.* (The **bold** type indicates a Key Concept; these terms are listed at the end of the chapter and are included in the Glossary beginning on page 461.) Competing values and interests are clearly at the heart of the search of Savana Redding. The values that guide a zero-tolerance policy regarding drugs at the school are balanced against values that protect a student against an illegal search. Other groups might have a stake in this conflict, as did the ACLU, which intervened to promote its views about individual liberty, and the courts, which asserted their responsibility to interpret the laws.

As individuals, groups, and governmental actors make decisions about what is good or bad for society, and as they try to implement their decisions, politics occurs. Every individual holds an array of preferred values and interests, and that individual cares more about some of those values than others. What values is each individual willing to promote or yield on? If the values of different individuals come into conflict, whose values and rights should prevail? And, if people cannot work out their conflicting values privately through discussion and compromise, must the government intervene? How does the government exercise its power to resolve the conflict? Who benefits and who is burdened by the policies of government? These are all *political* questions.

For our purposes, politics is associated with those aspects of life that have *public* significance. Other aspects of life, in contrast, are understood to be private and thus are beyond the domain of politics. However, what is considered “private” in

one country may be considered “public” in another. It is relevant that the search of Savana occurred in the United States. There are many other countries (e.g., Cuba, Iran, Zimbabwe) where the kind of search conducted on Savana would be well within the standard practices of government authorities and few, if any, citizens would publicly challenge the action.

In the political context of the United States, the school board—a political body elected by the citizens—has the right to establish policies regarding which behaviors will be unacceptable by the students (e.g., possessing drugs, using profane language) and by its employees (e.g., using corporal punishment, teaching creation science). The vice principal, as a public employee, exercises power when he implements those policies. The courts—another political institution—are active in the case as its judges, also public employees, attempt to resolve the conflict in values and interests between Savana’s family and the school’s employees. The court’s judgments are based on interpretations of politically created rules, including the U.S. Constitution, which ensures each citizen of certain rights but also grants government certain powers.

Even your choice about the job you take, the religion you practice, or what you read on the Internet can be either a private choice or one within the public domain. Can you see why a government might conclude that each of these choices has public significance and is thus political? Within each country, there is a constant debate about the appropriate areas for governmental action and the domains of life that should remain private and unrestrained by political action. Sometimes the term *politics* is used even more broadly than in this book to refer to competition over values in domains that are not truly public, such as the “politics of the family” or “office politics.”

In almost every contemporary society, the domains that are subject to politics are very large. Politics, usually via government, determines how much education you must have and what its content will be. Politics establishes the words you cannot utter in a public place, how much of your hard-earned income you must give to government, and how various governments spend that money to provide different groups with a vast range of benefits (e.g., education, roads, fire protection, subsidized health care, safe food, national defense, and aid to another country). Politics determines whether you are allowed to use a certain drug; the amount of pollutants that your car can emit; how secure you feel against violence by others within your neighborhood and within the global system; and whether you receive unequal treatment in the allocation of benefits because of your ethnicity, gender, ideology, or some other factor.

On Political Knowledge

1.2 Analyze three types of political knowledge.

Types of Political Knowledge

Clearly, politics can affect your life in many ways. Yet people differ greatly in their understandings about the nature of politics, the uses of political power, and the distribution of political benefits and burdens. If you have discussed politics with

your friends, you probably have noticed that they differ, both in how much they know about politics and in their opinions about what constitute good and bad political actions. Your understandings about politics and your decisions about whether to undertake specific political actions are grounded in your knowledge of politics. Every individual's understanding of politics is composed of three general types of political knowledge: (1) *descriptions* of political facts; (2) *explanations* of how and why politics occurs as it does; and (3) *prescriptions* of what should happen in the political world.

Description

Many bits of political knowledge offer a *description*, which focuses on *what* questions and is usually based on one or more "facts." (The **bold and italic** type indicates a Key Concept; these terms are listed at the end of the chapter but are not in the Glossary at the back of the book.) Descriptive political knowledge is mostly composed of relatively straightforward political facts such as these:

The date Hosni Mubarak resigned as President of Egypt: February 11, 2011

The number of states in Nigeria: 36

The country with the highest GDP (gross domestic product) per capita (PPP) in the world in 2014: Qatar at \$102,100

But on many questions about the political world, there are no indisputable answers. On some questions, it is difficult to get precise information. Suppose you want to know which countries have operational nuclear weapons. Six countries acknowledge having operational nuclear devices: France, India, Pakistan, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States. However, the precise number of such weapons in each country is a state secret. China clearly has nuclear weapons but claims that none are operational. Experts conclude that Israel has nuclear weapons, although Israel does not confirm this. North Korea claims to have operational nuclear weapons, but there is no publicly available evidence about this capability, and Iran is suspected of having a secret nuclear weapons program. Twenty other countries, including Algeria, Argentina, Belarus, Brazil, Kazakhstan, Libya, South Africa, and Ukraine, are "potential proliferators" that had or were close to having nuclear weapons but are now assumed to have backed away from nuclear ambitions (Federation of American Scientists 2014). Thus, even the experts cannot reach consensus on the straightforward issue of which countries belong to the so-called nuclear club.

On other questions about politics, description requires assessments that raise complicated issues about power, interests, and values, making it difficult to reach agreement about the facts. Here are two examples:

Do nonwhites and whites in the United States experience equal treatment before the law?

Can a country legally invade another country that has not used military force against it?

This discussion on “Description” briefly refers to 21 countries on five continents. Do you have a clear sense of where they are? There will be detailed discussions of many countries in this book. Knowing the location of a country and its geographic relationship to other countries in its region is sometimes extremely important for understanding its political choices and actions. When a country is discussed and you are not sure where it is, you are strongly encouraged to locate the country on a map. For this purpose, a set of maps is included in this book. Several recent studies have shown that students in the United States are more ignorant of world geography than students in most other countries. If that applies to you, help change the situation by referring frequently to the maps.

Explanation

A lot of political knowledge is more complicated than just description because it is in the form of *explanation*, which attempts to *specify why something happens* and to *provide the reason or process by which the phenomenon occurs*.

Why is one in seven people “poor” in the wealthy United States? What causes a country (e.g., Zimbabwe) to have inflation higher than 10,000 percent in a single year? Why does a popular uprising rapidly overthrow the government in one country (e.g., Tunisia) but not in another (e.g., its neighbor, Syria)? Responses to these kinds of questions require explanation, not just descriptive facts. Such questions can be among the most fascinating in politics, but adequate explanation is often difficult because patterns of cause and effect can be extremely complex.

Prescription

Statements about politics often include claims or assumptions that certain choices and actions are more desirable than others. These represent a third form of political knowledge: prescription. A **prescription** is *a value judgment that indicates what should occur and should be done*. Thus, a prescription deals with answers to questions about what ought to be, not merely description and explanation of what is.

For example, there are many possible prescriptive responses to this question: What should be the government’s role in the provision of health care? Answers vary from the viewpoint that government should take absolutely no action that interferes with the private provision of health care to the viewpoint that government should meet the full range of health care needs at no direct cost to patients. You can probably think of many positions between these two extremes.

The prescriptive position that you select on a political issue is an element of your **normative political knowledge**—*your value judgments*. Notice that normative political knowledge combines three types of understanding: (1) your descriptive knowledge of certain facts (e.g., the alternative ways that health care could be provided in a particular society); (2) your explanatory knowledge about why certain outcomes occur (e.g., the reasons why people don’t receive equal health care); and most important, (3) your priorities among competing values (e.g., your preferences regarding equality, lower taxes, and limited government).

Throughout this book, you will be encouraged to clarify your own understandings about politics. You will be offered a variety of descriptive, explanatory, and prescriptive knowledge claims. It is hoped that as you absorb more of this information, you will become more knowledgeable about politics! Let's explore some of your views about politics by means of a thought experiment we term "the acid test".

Assume you were born 20 years ago in either the country of Gamma or the country of Delta. You do not know about your personal situation: whether you are male or female; your ethnicity, education level, and social class; your parents' wealth; whether you reside in a city or a rural area; your religion; your mental or physical skills; and so on. Table 1.1 provides a variety of indicators of some *current* conditions in Gamma and Delta with regard to each country's prosperity, security, and stability. Here is the "acid test" question: *Now that you know the current conditions in Gamma and Delta, into which country would you prefer to have been born 20 years ago?* The Compare in 1 (there will be a Compare box in each chapter) considers some of the issues regarding this acid test. Make your choice from the data in Table 1.1 *before* you read the Compare in 1!

Table 1.1 The Acid Test I

	Gamma	Delta
Governmental type	Nondemocracy	Liberal democracy
Democracy index (148 countries)	142 nd	38 th
Political rights (1–7; 1 = most extensive)	7 (very low)	2 (high)
Civil liberties (1–7; 1 = most extensive)	6 (low)	3 (moderately high)
Press freedom (among 194 countries)	181 st : Not free	72 nd : Partly free
Economic freedom (among 177 countries)	136 th : Partly free	119 th : Partly free
Government restrictions on religion	Very high	Low
Social hostilities involving religion	High	Very high
% women in national legislature	21%	11%
Gender Equality (186 countries)	35 th	132 nd
Political stability	High	Medium
Rate of crimes against the person	Low	Medium
Life expectancy	74 years	66 years
Literacy rate (adults)	94%	63%
Infant mortality/1,000	16	48
% population with access to essential drugs	85%	35%
Internet users/100	28.8	5.0
% below the national poverty line	2.8%	22.9%
Unemployment rate	6.5%	8.5%
Wealth (GDP: gross domestic product) per capita	\$9,300	\$3,800
GDP per capita annual growth: 2000–2012	10.6%	7.7%
Inflation rate	2.3%	9.3%
Public debt as % of GDP	31.7%	49.6%

Compare in 1

The Acid Test I

As you examined the indicators in Table 1.1, you perhaps noticed significant differences between Gamma and Delta. The economic prosperity (indicated by measures such as the country's wealth per capita and its economic growth rate) is noticeably higher in one country. The probability you would be poor, uneducated, and live a shorter life is higher in one country. Your likely freedom of action, in domains such as politics, religion, and access to information, varies considerably. There also seem to be differences in gender equality between the two countries. What differences are most striking to you?

The acid test asks you to decide, after considering all the data provided about Gamma and Delta, into which country you would prefer to be born. Which one did you choose?

Gamma and Delta are pseudonyms for two real countries, and the data are recent. Both countries have a variety of broad similarities—population, climate variability, social history, period of time since independence, violent interactions with neighboring countries, and so on. These are arguably the two most important countries in the developing world. Each country has a rich history, including a remarkable ancient culture; extensive colonial exploitation; a fickle climate; deep social cleavages, especially those based on religion, gender, and class/caste; and each has more than 1 billion people.

However, since the independence of India in 1947 and the communist victory in China in 1949, the two countries have followed very different paths. Under the long and tumultuous rule of Mao Zedong (in power from 1949–1976), China (Gamma) attempted to implement a pervasive system of communism with a command political economy and totalitarian one-party government. The Chinese leadership after Mao engaged in a steady introduction of market economics, transforming China into a global economic power while still retaining tight Communist Party rule over the government. Initially, India (Delta) attempted to implement strong government control of key sectors of the economy, and it introduced democratic politics, although one party

was very dominant. Eventually, both experiments evolved in India as the economy shifted much more to private firms and the political system became more competitive with multiple parties.

Some results of these two different approaches to government and policy are reflected in the measures in Table 1.1. The strong commitment under Mao to egalitarianism and providing benefits to all citizens led to public policies that reduced inequalities based on gender and social class with broad improvements in literacy and health for most of the population. The Indian government did not provide extensive policies to address inequalities based on caste, gender, and urban–rural differences; thus, these inequalities have lessened much more slowly in India, resulting in continued disparities in domains such as literacy and health. China has sustained remarkable levels of economic growth for several decades as it has become a global power, while India's growth has been more sporadic but high since 2000. India proudly proclaims itself the “world's largest democracy” with a rough-and-tumble political system characterized by broad political rights, a relatively free media, a professional apolitical military, and an independent judiciary. In contrast, China's leadership continues to use a combination of state military and security forces, political socialization, severe censorship, and rewards to those who conform to sustain its oppressive Communist Party domination of political and social life.

Despite many similarities in their resources and history, China and India have significantly different current profiles. While many explanations can be offered for these differences, it is reasonable to claim that the most powerful explanation is *politics*—the decisions and actions taken by those with political power and authority in each country. As you develop your understandings of politics in this book, some of the key points underlying this acid test will be persistent themes.

First, a people and its government can pursue numerous desirable goals. While every country (and you) might like to have very positive scores on every

indicator in Table 1.1, you will discover that the reality is starker: Most countries cannot have it all. Various trade-offs must be made due to limited resources, the incapacity of people and their institutions to control their environment fully, and other factors related to human failures and impacts of the global system.

Second, the acid test challenges you to decide what aspects of political, social, economic, and personal life are more important to you. The book will assist you in clarifying your own thinking about what you value and what role you think government should play in helping you achieve those values.

And third, your choices and your values will not be the same as everyone else's—even among your peers and certainly among people around the globe. You will gain greater awareness of the different

mixes of approaches and values that are part of the debate about how government can help individuals and societies pursue a variety of desirable life conditions such as security, prosperity, stability, freedom, equality, justice, democracy, and well-being. Disagreements about ends and means are at the heart of politics in every country.

Further Questions

1. Which broad value seemed to most influence your choice between Gamma and Delta?
2. Did your knowledge of the identities of Gamma and Delta change your evaluation at all?
3. What assessment(s) might cause another person to select the country that you did not select?

Sources of Political Knowledge

1.3 Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of different sources of political knowledge.

This chapter has already made many knowledge claims—statements about what is accurate or correct. Table 1.1 and the Compare in 1 are loaded with such claims. When you are confronted by such claims, how do you decide what you know and what you believe? That is, where does your political knowledge—your unique combination of descriptive facts, explanations, and prescriptions about politics—come from? This section describes three important sources of your knowledge: (1) authority; (2) personal thought; and (3) science.

Authority

The method of **authority** involves *the appeal to any document, tradition, or person believed to possess the controlling explanation regarding a particular issue*. Knowledge about politics can be based on three kinds of authority sources: (1) a specific authority; (2) a general authority; or (3) “everyone.”

SPECIFIC AUTHORITY SOURCES A particular individual (but few others) might place great confidence in the knowledge he derives about politics from a specific authority source such as a parent, teacher, friend, or famous person. Young people and those minimally interested in politics are especially likely to rely on specific authorities for much of their political knowledge. Chapter 4 will argue that specific authority sources powerfully influence some important political beliefs of most individuals. Can you think of a significant piece of your own political