1 GETTING STARTED: INCLUSIVITY AND BUILDING A FOUNDATION WITH CONCEPTS AND DATA

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter, you will be able to

1.1 Define the subfield of comparative politics on its own terms and in relation to two other subfields of political science.

1.2 Name and locate the major super regions of the world and identify in which regions we tend to see the highest and lowest outcomes on the democracy, human development, and gender empowerment indices.

1.3 Define the essential concepts for studying comparative politics inclusively: politics, power, feminism, gender, intersectionality, patriarchy, nation, state, and regime.

1.4 Explain what theory is, how inductive and deductive reasoning leads to theorizing, and what the most similar and most different systems research designs are.

1.5 Explain the benefits of inclusive comparative political analysis.

AN INCLUSIVE APPROACH TO COMPARATIVE POLITICS

Getting started studying comparative politics can be a bit hard. While you may have an idea of what you are going to learn about when you pick up an American politics or international relations text, the term "comparative politics" doesn't mean much to most people. The first word, "comparative" indicates *how* to study, by comparing *and* contrasting. The second one, "politics" identifies *what*. Since "politics" is such a huge topic, you might still be scratching your head. So, a brief starting definition is that **comparative politics** systematically investigates struggles for power inside countries all over the world. Notice that what is being compared is politics, not simply government. Comparativists are curious about and seek to explain not simply how politicians, judges, political parties, interests groups, activists, and bureaucrats compete over power and policy. They also believe that interactions in *informal spaces* such as corporations, industries, educational institutions, ethnic groups, families, and many other social arenas have political significance. Thus, comparative politics investigates competitions for power inside various governmental systems *and* throughout their corresponding societies,[1] with the goal of better answering questions like

- what kinds of governments exist and what is the nature of politics in various systems;

- how and why those political systems come into being, persist, evolve, and break down;

- who exercises power in the government, economy, *and* society of various countries and how and why those who are important attained that power;

- how the powerful exert control in their systems, as well as how ordinary people participate in formal and informal politics to enable and constrain leaders;

- how and why some systems deliver a variety of positive political, economic, and social outcomes and others don't; and

- what helps us understand the nature of politics and policies around the world so that we can prescribe approaches that will lead to better outcomes for people.

While a comparativist *can* study the United States, that country is just one of the many possible instances or "cases" of analysis. Comparativists seek to understand what is universal and distinct about politics in various places. Americanists, on the other hand, will spend their time investigating multiple different phenomena in the United States. Some are experts on the different branches of government at the federal, state, and local levels. Others examine the political behavior of individuals, such as voting, running for office, participating in social movements, or joining organizations. Americanists also study the way groups in the United States, like political parties, social movements, unions, and pressure groups, affect politics. Some Americanists become experts on public policy or legal campaigns to promote or deny equality or a healthier environment, and others spend their careers studying the political development or political economy of the United States. Through it all, however, Americanists keep a laser focus on the United States. Comparativists who study the United States investigate that country along with others in order to have a better understanding of not only the specifics of the American system but of politics more broadly.

While the similarities and differences between comparative and American politics might be easy to grasp, students tend to have more trouble with the distinctions between comparative and global politics, sometimes also called international politics or international relations (IR). Global politics focuses on *cross-border* interactions between countries, societies, and other actors (like international organizations, corporations, or groups as diverse as al Qaeda, Human Rights Watch, and the World Wildlife Fund), while comparative politics investigates what is going on *inside* countries. That means global politics courses examine phenomena like interstate wars, the trading system, and the dissemination of human rights norms, while comparativists might study how democracy develops within countries, why and how authoritarianism is resilient in some places, or where and how equitable development occurs. In other words, in comparative politics, *domestic* developments around the globe are of primary importance and the focus of analysis. Certainly, global processes affect national politics, but comparativists keep their eyes trained on how those international pressures play out in various countries.

Given this focus, you are likely unsurprised to learn that the subfield of comparative politics has been around for a long time,[2] but recently it and all of political science have been grappling with inclusion. Unlike sociology and psychology, political science has often alienated students from disadvantaged groups (e.g., women; working class people; minority races, ethnicities, and religions; and LGBTQ people). In earlier decades, the field emphasized government, which has often seemed the purview of the privileged. In addition, students with little travel experience or access to information about the rest of the world can find comparative politics particularly off-putting, uninteresting, or esoteric. Perhaps you even know such individuals who have been disinterested in politics as a whole or comparative politics in particular because they think it isn't about "people like me" or doesn't investigate topics "important to me."[3]

International relations courses focus on cross-border interactions between countries and international organizations, such as the United Nations.

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This book asserts that comparative politics is relevant and can be fascinating to everyone. It tries to convince you of that assertion using four strategies. First, the text provides you with high-quality data to create a level playing field in informational terms. Students start a course like this with different background knowledge. Some classmates have traveled or lived around the world. Others might have taken related coursework or established a habit of paying attention to global affairs. Such background is valuable, but it is not determinative of how well someone can master the material in this text. In fact, sometimes those who think they "know it already" find themselves highly disappointed as they realize they haven't learned the key concepts and relevant corresponding information. Thus, while recognizing that some of you have starting advantages, this text provides all of you with the information you will need to succeed.

Second, the approach here—active learning—recognizes that some people are more comfortable talking while others aren't, but getting everyone's brain engaged is essential for mastering the materials. In the early days of the course, the talkers might mention the various places they've visited and lived, reveal the deep historical knowledge they have, and discuss relevant concepts they've learned in other classes. Others might just talk as if they are experts because they are comfortable in the classroom. Still, the more some talk, the less others feel empowered or inclined to contribute. While personality differences—extroversion versus introversion—explain some of the differences in willingness to participate in class, studies show that people from certain groups—typically women, working class people, people of color, LGBTQ people, and those with multiple of these identity markers—are more likely to be silent or at least quiet. When they are, those same studies show, *everyone's learning loses out* because class members never hear the perspectives of those who feel disempowered. Thus, this book will occasionally ask you to stop, think, and remark about what you are reading and seeing. In that way, all of you will have the opportunity, before someone else jumps in with a "good answer" in class, to develop your own understanding, conclusions, or questions. By preparing and thinking beforehand, more of you will be ready to participate in class, sections,

or on discussion boards because you will have had time to gather your thoughts so that you can provide your own insights on a variety of environments.[4]

Third, and continuing on this goal of being inclusive, the text gives attention not only to the powerful in politics, economies, and societies around the world, but also examines the marginalized. It seeks to show the ways that a variety of people have contributed to their countries, fought for inclusion, and/or continue to be excluded from much of its public life. In our studies of politics around the world, you'll pay attention to the roles that laws, norms, and practices around gender, as well as class, race, ethnicity, religion, and other factors, play in creating the powerful and disempowered in various societies. This emphasis is designed to show you that politics matters to, and is about, you or people you care about.

Finally, while presenting you with a good deal of high-quality data, encouraging active learning, and expanding your notions of what is political and who are key political actors, this book also takes concepts very seriously. Being exposed to a lot of data is not very helpful if you can't remember it or don't see its significance. To organize and recall the information, you need concepts and contexts. That's why we always begin our study of new topics and countries with relevant ideas and regional information. By having an appreciation of what is typical (or not) in a global neighborhood, you will be better positioned to understand the politics of that country. Moreover, abstract ideas give you power; they allow you to comprehend many places, even ones we don't have the time to cover here.

Really Think and Explain

What is comparative politics? How is it different from other subfields in political science? In what ways does an inclusive and active learning approach provide a fuller understanding of comparative politics?

LAYING THE FOUNDATION: FOUR GLANCES AT THE WORLD

To get off to a good start, let's look at some information about regional geography and where you are more likely to find democracy, development, and higher levels of gender empowerment around the world. These concepts—regions, democracy, development, and gender empowerment—are important for your future studies. Thus, this section creates a baseline of knowledge for your studies.

First Glance: Regional Geography

Knowing how to refer to parts of the world, as well as where key countries are located is very important. Without this information, making observations and discussing patterns in political phenomena are extremely difficult. Unfortunately, American education has de-emphasized geography over recent decades, so you might need some basic knowledge. Identifying the continents is a start, and large parts of them are **super regions**—large areas with some commonalities. Within them are **regions**, territories composed of sets of countries with far more similarities, like shared histories, politics, economies, geographic features, and/or cultures. In fact, regional maps (Figure 1.1 and Table 1.1) are created based on one observer's notion of the "important" similarities, and classifications of countries into such areas can blur distinctions. Over time, you will learn why these places are grouped together, and you will come to know some of these regions very well.

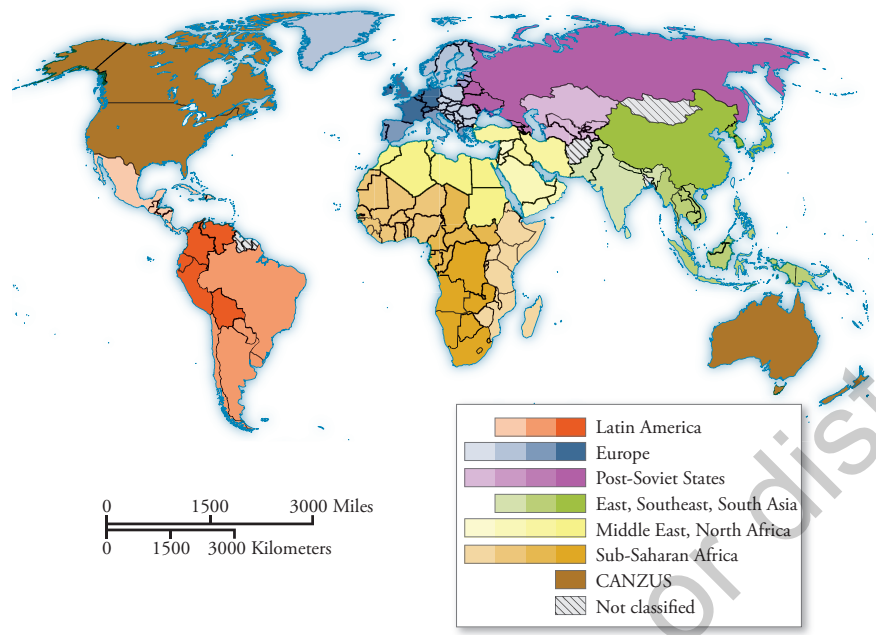**FIGURE 1.1 ■   Super Regions and Regions of the World**

	Latin America
	Europe
	Post-Soviet States
	East, Southeast, South Asia
	Middle East, North Africa
	Sub-Saharan Africa
	CANZUS
	Not classified

0   1500   3000 Miles
0   1500   3000 Kilometers

TABLE 1.1 ■   Super Regions and Regions of the World

Latin America (Reds)	Europe (Blues)	Post-Soviet States (Purples)
Mexico & Central America	West Europe	Slavic Core + 1
Caribbean	Southern Europe	Caucasus
Bolivarians	Nordic States	Central Asia
Southern Cone	East-Central Europe	(Baltic States)
	Baltic States	
East, Southeast, & South Asia (Greens)	**Middle East & North Africa (Yellows & Greens)**	**Sub-Saharan Africa (Oranges)**
East Asia	North Africa	Southern Africa
Southeast Asia	Gulf States	East Africa
South Asia	The Levant	Central Africa
	MENA "Outsiders"	West Africa
	CANZUS (Brown)	

Really See and Explain

What do you notice when you look at the map and table? Jot down at least three things that you notice and are "remarkable," i.e., worthy of remarking. Be ready to share those remarks with your classmates and to help you remember some world regional geography.

The map and table are not for you to skip over, but to look at and remark on. Oftentimes a request to comment on data makes students freeze. You might think that your points have to be brilliant! Actually, keeping track of what is obvious—that is, clearly visible—is very important, *especially if the material is new to you*. So, you should write down what is evident. If you are still stuck on what to write, you might have an easier time if you imagine your job is to summarize some elements of the figure or table for someone who doesn't have access to them. Another strategy is to jot down some unanticipated information as well as points that confirm expectations. All of these remarks will be useful in multiple ways. Developing substantive knowledge, learning how to describe, and analyzing information are all goals of this book. Remember, *comparative* politics has a methodology in its name, so the subject actually takes the learning and discovery process seriously. If you haven't done so already, please write down three points that reflect remarkable—worthy of remarking on—elements about Figure 1.1 and Table 1.1.

So . . . what did you *see*? Among the *many* points you *might have* recorded are:

- Africa and Asia, both very large and diverse continents, are divided into multiple regions, many of which are identified by compass directions. Asia is the home to several different super regions; Africa contains two. These physical locations correspond to places with common experiences, cultures, physical geographies, and politics that produce the similarities that lead cartographers to place these countries into a region.

- There are two unusual regional names here. The "Post-Soviet" designation reflects this book's emphasis on the political, and its assertion (developed in full later) that Soviet communism had an important impact on the contemporary politics, cultures, and economies of countries that survived it. Relatedly, CANZUS (**C**anada, **A**ustralia, **N**ew **Z**ealand, and the **U**nited **S**tates) emphasizes the similar historical origins of a geographically dispersed group of countries. They were each former British colonies, and their growth and development occurred as a result of centuries of immigration and other policies that displaced and led to the decimation of indigenous peoples.

- A few countries are not placed in any region. The reason a small number of countries are not classified is that they might fit in more than one category depending on which element of the "political" the cartographer wants to stress. An emphasis on the recent political-historical past might put them in one group, while a focus on either levels of wealth or culture could put them in others.

- Other countries are very big and highly diverse, yet they are categorized in one region that reflects the dominant culture. Here, consider China, because not all of that country is physically located in the compass point of "East Asia."

You will notice that sometimes after you see a "Remark" prompt, the text provides summary comments (like the ones just noted), but other times it won't. The point is: Don't rely on some "expert" to tell you what to think. You are capable of making "good" observations. There are many possible points to make when looking at data, paying attention to and thinking about the information presented will help you better understand the material as we go along. It will also allow you to talk with your classmates about the material. Both of these processes—understanding and conversing—are related to mastering the material you will need to succeed on papers, quizzes, and tests.

Second Glance: Regime Types

The next set of information is about regime types or what might also be called political systems. The data here comes from the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), a research organization associated with *The Economist* magazine, a well-respected weekly publication from the United Kingdom that is considered more sophisticated and more globally focused than US publications like *Time* or *Newsweek*. It is an excellent source of information for this course, and you can likely obtain "free" access (through your tuition dollars) to it through your library databases. This highlight of a source is designed to encourage you to pay attention to both what is being shared and where that information is coming from. Of course, this text consults "good" sources that come from recognized experts or high-quality organizations. Thus, you shouldn't be overly wary that the information is biased or problematic. But still, you may want to study exactly which data different experts choose to use. Establishing the ability to appraise data and sources critically is an important skill to develop in today's world.

The EIU places the countries of the world into four categories that I will call full democracy, flawed democracy, veiled authoritarian, and full authoritarian.[5] It determines these types by evaluating each political system along five dimensions and measuring how open, fair, and uncorrupt political systems are, the extent to which citizens have rights and protections, and how engaged citizens are in politics. So as not to become too bogged down in the differences in regime types just yet (and yes, the textbook will walk through that swamp later on), let's stipulate that according to EIU, full democracies do not systematically exclude any of their people and have vibrant political and civil societies where multiple ideas, values, and interests are organized into parties and other organizations. Their institutions allow citizens to hold their elected officials accountable by voting them out of office if desired, and the government can do its job of implementing laws and policies. Not surprisingly, corruption levels are relatively low, and citizens are (at least modestly) politically engaged. Citizens in full democracies have internalized norms of democratic participation and governance and believe that violence has no place in political contestation.[6]
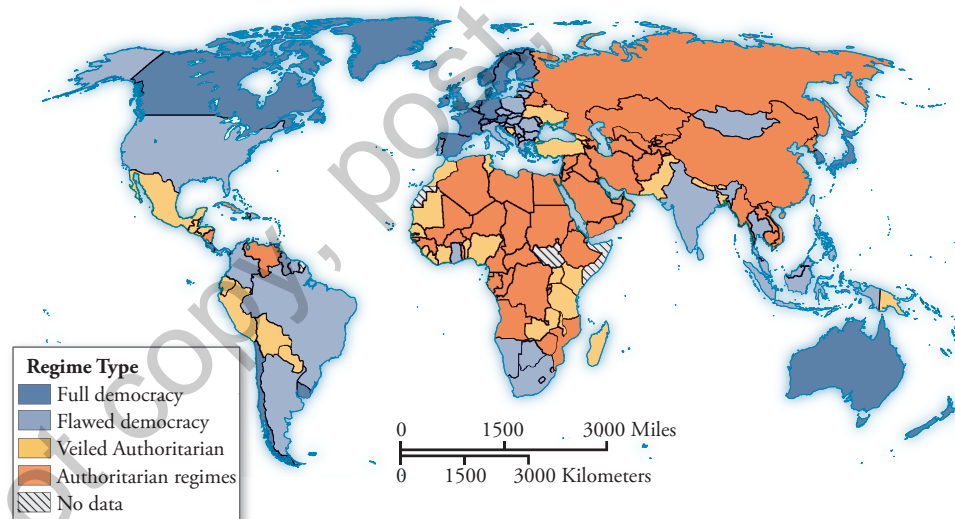

Full democracies, such as Japan, allow citizens to hold their elected officials accountable, and the government can do its job of implementing laws and policies.

Pool/Getty Images News/Getty Images

Stepping down through less fair and more repressive regime types (from flawed democracy to veiled authoritarian to full authoritarian), the systems become less institutionally inclusive, protective of individual rights, accountable, and peaceful. Power is progressively concentrated into the hands of smaller and smaller groups of people, and citizens are less independently engaged in the public sphere. In politics, the law, and the economy, rules and their enforcement gradually become more arbitrary and violent. In the final category of full authoritarian regime, politics is highly centralized in the hands of leaders, with very little independent space for individual action, thinking, and expression outside of government- approved norms. In full authoritarian systems, people generally obey and accept their lot as subjects. These systems regularly use violence or threats of it for social control, and people often support or at least accept violence in the polity as a normal way of maintaining order. Reality is defined by the rulers, regardless of what citizens can observe; the government determines what is true. Government officials, their families, and friends regularly become incredibly rich by taking advantage of insider knowledge, abusing their connections, or siphoning off state funds. They steal elections, rig the outcomes of court cases, and harass, jail, and even kill critics.[7]

Figure 1.2 and Table 1.2 show that there is a good deal of regime diversity, and it might not be the distribution that you expected. Being surprised is just fine; one point of this book is to expose you to quality data so you know more about the world.

FIGURE 1.2 ■ Regime Types around the World, 2022

Regime Type
- Full democracy
- Flawed democracy
- Veiled Authoritarian
- Authoritarian regimes
- No data

Source: Economist Intelligence Unit, "Table 2: Democracy Index," *Democracy Index 2022: Frontline Democracy and the Battle for Ukraine* (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2022), 7–11, https://pages.eiu.com/rs/753-RIQ-438/images/DI-final-version-report.pdf.

TABLE 1.2 ■ Democracy Index 2022, by regime type

Regime Type	Number of Countries*	% of Countries in Sample	% of World Population*
Full Democracy	24	14.4	8.0
Flawed Democracy	48	28.7	37.3

Regime Type	Number of Countries*	% of Countries in Sample	% of World Population*
Veiled Authoritarian	36	21.6	17.9
Full Authoritarian	59	35.3	36.9
	167	100%	*slightly off from rounding*

Source: Economist Intelligence Unit, "Table 1: Democracy Index by Regime Type," *Democracy Index 2022: Frontline Democracy and the Battle for Ukraine* (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2022), 3 https://pages.eiu.com/rs/753-RIQ-438/images/DI-final-version-report.pdf.

*As of 2022, the United Nations has 193 member states, but those represented include the vast majority of the world's population.[8]

While there are *many possible* takeaways from a first glance at this map and the summary data, here are just four striking ones that you might have noted:

- In 2022, the full democracy category contains the fewest countries and smallest share of the global population.

- Most (but not all) regimes in Africa and Asia are in the authoritarian categories, while most (but not all) in Europe and the Americas are some kind of democracy.

- More than a third of countries belong in the full authoritarian category. The flawed democracy group is relatively close behind.

- According to the EIU, in 2022 the United States was not a full democracy, and its standing dropped throughout the 2010s (something you can't see from the data provided here).

That last point might make some of you question the quality of this data and/or it might raise the question: How did the EIU arrive at that (surprising) conclusion? This is an excellent query. In this era of nontrustworthy information sources, being suspicious about data is a good reaction. However, the EIU is not some fringe organization, and you can confirm the quality of the source as well as examine its methodology.[9] This data and ranking system represent some developments that many have been noting in American and world politics for the past ten years: Democratic institutions, democratic political cultures, and democratic governance have been eroding around the world.[10] Thus, this first experience of simply looking at regime types identifies two of this textbook's central questions:

1. *Why* has democracy eroded within societies?

2. *How* has democracy eroded within societies?

If you were taking this course thirty years ago, you would have likely seen two very different motivating questions, ones that reflected optimism about the spread of democracy throughout the globe at that time. In place of that hopefulness, today more experts, policymakers, and citizens see threats. Some observers also recognize the serious challenges that authoritarian countries (like Russia and China, among others) are experiencing. Are politics *everywhere* in flux right now, and how might these changes matter to citizens around the world and to you in particular?

Third Glance: Economic Conditions as Measured by Human Development Levels

A third map gives us a snapshot of economies and policy choices around the world. Starting in the 1990s, some organizations that collect global economic data began to conclude that measuring development by focusing only on the size and complexity of the economy (captured by **gross domestic product** or GDP) was inadequate. The reason? GDP, even when it is scaled by the population (**gross domestic product per capita [GDP PC]**), does not capture how well people are actually living in that country. These critics maintain that living conditions should be the utmost concern for those who study and seek to promote development.[11]

Thus, economists from the United Nations (UN) created a new measure called the **Human Development Index (HDI)**. Underpinning this index is the notion that development should benefit people. Thus, the UN created the idea of human development, which measures whether citizens live "well" via good health over a long lifespan and have access to adequate education and a decent standard of living. The HDI seeks to capture this multidimensionality by examining data about infant mortality, life expectancy, education levels, and size of the economy, among other factors. It then translates them into a measure on a scale of 0–1.[12] This index not only captures the quality of the economy but how political leaders choose to use it to affect citizens' lives.

While the UN's data and methodology is widely respected and consulted, HDI is not perfect.[13] Despite its flaws, HDI provides an accepted measure of the national quality of life, and it gives another view of the world (different from regime type), showing where a typical person lives better or worse. Like the EIU, the UN places countries into categories, while also creating actual scores for each one. Those groups are Very High Human Development, High Human Development, Medium Human Development, and Low Human Development. Figure 1.3 shows how those development levels are dispersed around the world, and Table 1.3 summarizes the data numerically.

FIGURE 1.3 ■ Economic Conditions around the World, as Measured by Human Development, 2021
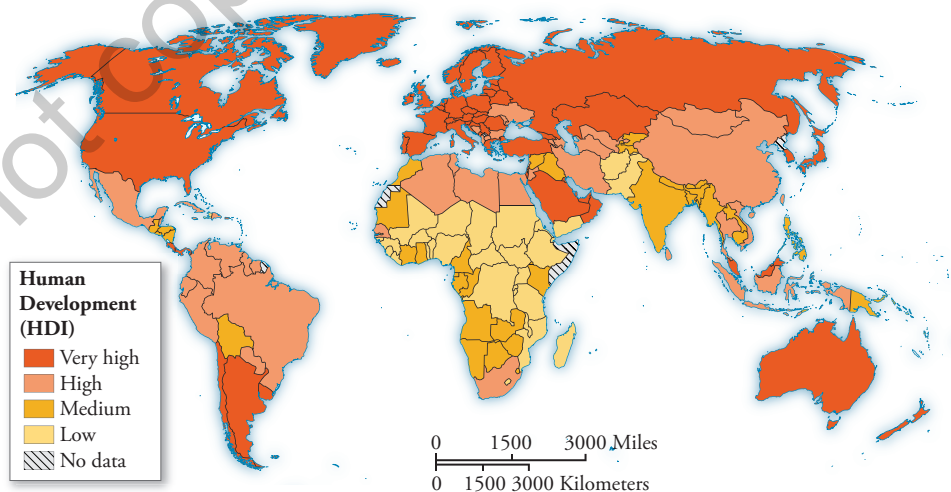
Source: Based on data from United Nations Human Development Programme, "Table 1: Human Development Index and Its Components," *2021/2022 Human Development Report: Uncertain Times, Uncertain Lives: Shaping our Future in a Transforming World* (New York: United Nations, 2022), 272–275.

TABLE 1.3 ■ Summary of Human Development Data, 2021		
Category and Minimum Score	Number of Countries (not all included)*	% of Countries in Sample
Very High Human Development (Green – .896)	66	34.6
High Human Development (Yellow – .754)	49	25.7
Medium Human Development (Orange – .637)	44	23.0
Low Human Development (Purple – .518)	32	16.8
Total	191*	100%

Source: Based on data from United Nations Human Development Programme, "Table 1: Human Development Index and Its Components," *2021/2022 Human Development Report: Uncertain Times, Uncertain Lives: Shaping our Future in a Transforming World* (New York: United Nations, 2022), 272–275.

* A few countries do not disclose their data. That is why some are gray on the map and there are fewer than 193 listed here in the total.

Again, there are myriad "good" points to make in looking at Figure 1.3 and Table 1.3. Here are three possible ones:

- The countries of the Global North (those closely allied during the Cold War and identified as the "West," as well as most of the post-Soviet states—the opposing side in that four-decade long conflict) tend to have very high human development levels.

- Latin America has a diversity of human development levels, with excellent ones (very high) in parts of the Southern Cone and Panama, and poorer ones (medium human development) in the countries of Central America from which migrants recently have been fleeing to the United States.

- Despite all the media attention on China's and India's economic progress, China is ranked in the second (high human development) and India in the third (medium human development) categories.

Considering the two sets of data (regime type and HDI) together reveals that:

- Countries that have more accountable systems and more protections of citizen rights tend to also have higher levels of human development.

- One exception to that observation is that the oil-rich states of the Middle East have very high levels of human development.

Fourth Glance: Gender Empowerment as an Indicator of Culture around the World

Finally, the last characteristic we'll examine is gender empowerment. Throughout this text, we'll be asserting that an overlooked but very important indicator of national cultures is their sets of norms, attitudes, and policies toward gender. This way of measuring culture is admittedly unusual for political science, but not unprecedented.[14] Other formulations include equating culture with the dominant religion in a country[15] or levels of citizen respect for and participation in democratic institutions and processes.[16] Throughout the book, we will also examine those

more typical notions of culture, but here let's zero in on gender cultures as measured by the Gender Gap Index (GGI) that the World Economic Forum (WEF) calculates. Best known for its annual meeting each winter in Davos, Switzerland, when the "movers and shakers" of the world economy meet with top government officials and societal activists, the WEF is a well-respected source of information.[17] This measure gives a concreteness to the cultures of (in)equality, at least with respect to gender, that exist around the world.

You have probably heard "**gender gap**" before in the context of American politics. In that usage, the term means the differences in the voting behavior or partisan preferences of US men and women. The WEF's index captures a much broader measure of gendered realities in countries, measuring the extent to which men and women have similar access to educational and economic opportunities, political power, and healthy, long lives.[18] When the sexes have more equal access, then the GGI is closer to 1; as inequality mounts, the GGI approaches 0. Unfortunately, the WEF doesn't create corresponding levels (like full democracy or High Human Development) for understanding the quality of systems. Because the GGI can be thought of as a percentage, like a test score, we'll display state performance as grades, with those 90 percent (.9) receiving an A, in the 80s a B, all the way through to Fs. Thus, represented in Figure 1.4 and Table 1.4 are five categories in the GGI, just like most of you can receive five possible letter grades, A–F.

FIGURE 1.4 ■ Gender Empowerment, as Measured by WEF's Global Gender Gap Index, 2022
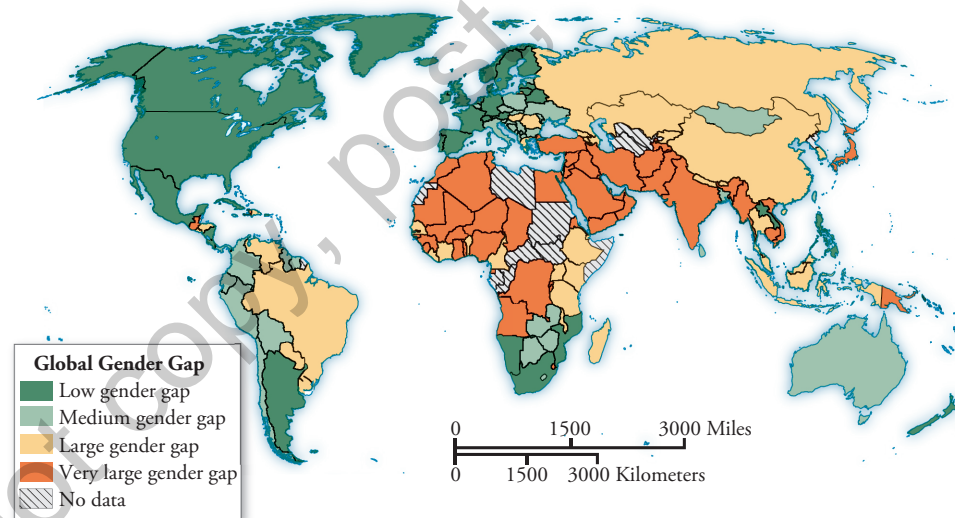
Global Gender Gap
- Low gender gap
- Medium gender gap
- Large gender gap
- Very large gender gap
- No data

Source: Based on data from World Economic Forum, "Table 1.1 The Global Gender Gap Index 2022 Rankings," *Global Gender Gap Report 2022: Insight Report*, July 2022, 10. https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2022.pdf.

TABLE 1.4 ■ Summary of the Gender Empowerment Data, 2022

	Number of Countries (not all included)*	% of Countries in sample	% of Countries in World
A in the .9s	1	0.7	0.5
B in the .8s	9	6.2	4.7

	Number of Countries (not all included)*	% of Countries in sample	% of Countries in World
C in the .7s	77	52.7	40.0
D in the .6s	54	37.0	28.0
F < .6	5	3.4	2.6
Missing/No Score	47	N/A	24.4
Total	146	100%	*slightly off/rounding*

Source: Based on data from World Economic Forum, "Table 1.1 The Global Gender Gap Index 2022 Rankings," *Global Gender Gap Report 2022: Insight Report*, July 2022, 10, https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2022.pdf.

*Again, there are 193 countries listed by the United Nations, but some regimes fail to make data available. Moreover, that availability was worse in 2022 than in 2021, so that forty-seven are missing.

Thinking solely about Figure 1.4 and Table 1.4 might elicit these four points:

- Only one country in the world earns an A, and a small number earn Bs.

- Most of the world (close to 90 percent of the sample) earn Cs and Ds.

- More countries fail to collect or make available data relevant to the GGI than they do for the two other (regime type and HDI) measures, and that number increased by ten between 2021 and 2022. (For example, in 2021, Russia earned a C, while Venezuela and Indonesia earned Ds. In 2022, they are missing.)

- Five countries earn a failing grade.

Jacinda Ardern was Prime Minister of New Zealand, which is one of only nine countries to score a B in gender empowerment.

Kai Schwoerer/Stringer/Getty Images News/Getty Images

Now you have some concrete information about the world at your fingertips. If a classmate starts talking about the history of or a recent trip to some faraway place, you don't need to worry that those travels make that person more knowledgeable than you about the material in this

course. You have excellent and timely data on a variety of different national characteristics. Of course, these maps and tables provide you with a *lot* of information, *too much to master or remember at this moment*. Still, if a place is mentioned that you don't know about, you can go back and look at these data.

> ### Really See and Explain
>
> *Take a few moments to remember and record what you learned about regions and how political regime types and human development and gender empowerment levels are distributed around the world. Considering these data, in which regions are people living well? Where are they living poorly? Is anything surprising about what you have learned here? Please record your thoughts.*

FOUNDATIONAL CONCEPTS IN COMPARATIVE POLITICS

You have just been exposed to high-quality **empirics**—data or observable facts—about conditions in the world. While this information is an important start, your studies will also focus on explaining and better understanding processes and conditions. For those tasks, you need concepts and theories. In popular culture today, abstract thinking often has a pejorative connotation, but intellectual advances are what bring about new medical and technological developments, as well as political, economic, and social improvements. Comparativists, like other scholars, seek their own breakthroughs. To do so, they observe the world carefully, as well as develop **concepts**, terms that represent phenomena that are complex and worthy of study both abstractly *and* empirically. Comparativists spend enormous amounts of time trying to pinpoint essential elements of politics (concepts) in order to better explain (theories) the realities they see. We will start here identifying concepts and then later discuss theory. You will have an easier time learning if you develop your vocabulary; pay close attention to concepts and memorize the most important ones.

Why Be Persnickety about Concepts?

Having "good" concepts that are precise and carefully defined is extremely important. Imprecise concepts can lead to costly policy and political mistakes. As a way of thinking about the importance of accuracy in concept definitions and observations, consider a famous example from Clifford Geertz, a highly influential scholar. As a way to illustrate how behaviors and practices *aren't* universally the same, Geertz famously asked, when is the rapid closing of the eye an involuntary twitch or a wink?[19] A twitch is meaningless for interpersonal communication, but a wink between friends can signify an inside joke or a hello, while an unexpected wink from a stranger, especially one of a different gender, race, and/or class, can be threatening or disrespectful. What might happen if a person misinterpreted a wink that was actually a twitch? Sometimes misunderstandings lead to silliness or embarrassment, but they can also be deadly.

Similarly, in comparative politics, creating concepts, defining them carefully, and using them in the appropriate cultural context are essential for both developing clear understandings and being able to compare accurately across places and time. In fact, effectively engaging the subject matter is impossible without the appropriate terms; it's as difficult as communication between two people who don't speak the same language. For instance, imagine trying to watch a basketball game and understand the commentary without knowing what the "post," "pick-and-roll," or "screen" means. Without those definitions, a spectator misunderstands much of the play-by-play as well as the analysis of the game.

As students of comparative politics, you also have to learn the meanings of central words in the field, and you each need to take special care. Many political science terms are bandied about at dinner tables or in media coverage, and people are often lulled into thinking that they already understand these words. Unfortunately, popular usage of these concepts is typically *not* equivalent to their definitions in political science, just like a "screen" in basketball is not the same as a "screen" in a house. Thus, pay attention to the concepts and learn the appropriate definitions (check the glossary) because they bestow the power to understand, describe, and analyze as a political scientist. Not using the right concept or using it incorrectly weakens your ability to understand, debate, and do well on graded class assignments. Moreover, learning the concepts and then using them correctly in your discussions and analyses are important ways to show your mastery of the material in this book.

The Starting Points in Political Science: Politics and Power

The essential starting point for any political science course is a definition of politics and power. Here, we will move beyond the basic one provided at the outset to build on Robert Lasswell's famous insight: **Politics** is both a *process* of deciding and the *outcome* of decisions that determine *who gets what, when, why, and how*.[20] As you have already learned, politics occurs in both **formal** settings (those in or related to government or characterized by contractual relationships) and **informal** arenas (e.g., in clubs, on golf courses, in schools, and among families and friend groups). In all these settings, various rewards and punishments are decided and distributed. Thus, there is never an unimportant arena for understanding politics, and in each one, politics is always about power.

Power is the ability to get others to act in ways that the power wielder compels, prefers, suggests, or even makes appear necessary, sensible, or desirable. Power constrains some and enables others. Not simply the tool or resource of an individual or entity, power can be embedded in relationships and broader institutions that condition how people think and act. Some divide power into its "**hard**" and "**soft**" forms, where hard power is typically related to the overt use or threat of violence and soft power entails other methods in which the object of influence, for various reasons beyond hurt and threats, seeks to conform to the power wielder's wishes. While this binary distinction is a start and it emerged in studies of international relations, the use of power is more complicated in both global and comparative politics, so let's pull it apart into five different elements.[21]

When most of us think about power, we tend to conceive of a practice in which one entity is forcing another to act or think in a particular way. Certainly, **coercion**, employing brute force or threats of violence or unpleasant outcomes, is a variant of power. Some refer to this method as a power-over, threat-based, or deterrent approach. One side wields power and the other relents to its will because the outcome hurts (causes some kind of harm) or will be unpleasant. In the case of coercing with menacing promises of what is to follow, the one who gives in believes that the power wielder has the ability and the will to carry out the punishment.[22]

While coercion is an important method of exercising power, so too are the four other variants: **constitution**, **enticement**, **empowerment**, and **inspiration**.[23] Interestingly, these other approaches are in varying degrees more likely to be used by those with fewer resources, those who often cannot employ coercion. **Constitution** means the ability to create, name, and define for others what is important, valuable, and worthy of consideration. It provides enormous control over whose needs are met and who is noticed in the world.[24] Let's note right here that in our studies of political systems, we'll also be talking about constitutions as documents that spell out the institutions in a political system, the ways governmental organs interact, and the nature of

the relationship between the government and the governed. These constitutions (founding and organizing documents) are different from the idea of *constitution as a variant of power*. Still, you likely can see that founding documents do constitute power relations. The people who write them create a system of government that defines who governs, how, and for what purpose, as well as the role of and protections for citizens.

The US Constitution defines the system of government in the United States, as well as the role of and protections for citizens.

iStockphoto.com/giftlegacy

To understand constitution as a method of exercising power distinct from a framework for organizing a political system, consider the idea of race. Race is a concept that has been constituted and used to divide people, privileging some to the disadvantage of others. What if that concept didn't exist today? Or what if a different group of humans (not European-descended men) had created another set of racial hierarchies and norms? Certainly, the world would be different without the current idea of "race" constituted as it has been. As understood now, the notion creates structures of control that affect behaviors and attitudes. In that sense, the structures of power become almost invisible to those in relationships because they don't "see" an actor actually asserting control. Via constituted hierarchies, inequality persists without individuals seeming to exert any power or take any direct action.[25]

While constitution is an important tool of the powerful, weaker parties can also seek to constitute new definitions and institutions (in other words, power arrangements) by appealing to different notions of science, conscience, or even self-interest. For instance, abolitionists worked for decades to undermine the idea that slavery was an acceptable institution, although they did not fully eliminate notions of racial superiority and inferiority. Still, their activism succeeded in overthrowing an important institution that tortured, oppressed, and limited human beings. Over time the ideas of abolitionists, and not their force or coercion, carried the day in many parts of the world. (In the United States, of course, the Civil War, in part, decided the issue.)

A third form of power is **enticement**, which means to alter another's calculations of what is a good option, often promising and providing incentives or rewards for the change behavior. If conceiving of enticement as a method of wielding power seems far-fetched, consider common practice. Faculty members use enticement when they encourage students to attend outside events for extra credit or grade students for participation in class based on quality and quantity of contributions. Students might not, on their own, be inclined to go to that extra lecture or want to

speak up in class, but the promise of a better grade incentivizes them to behave as the professor desires. In effect, the professor has wielded power over them. What forms of enticement are your professors using this term?

A fourth method is **empowerment**, making others feel capable of acting and accomplishing what they never thought possible. Many people join self-help groups or talk to others who give them confidence in order to achieve long sought and seemingly impossible goals. Students of politics often look to charismatic and empowering leaders (ranging from Joan of Arc to Adolf Hitler to Mao Zedong to Rosa Parks to Nelson Mandela) as people who empowered their followers to achieve what looked like unimaginable objectives. Often these leaders started with few resources and built movements to change history. Of course, given the examples of leaders mentioned here, empowering people does not always lead to positive political outcomes, but empowerment does embody a particular kind of power.

The final variant is **inspiration**, causing another to act because a follower seeks to emulate another or is motivated to act because of another's vision or behavior. In politics, leaders of all kinds of citizens can inspire if they convince others to change what they are doing and behave as they do. When people are inspired, they act because they each think, "I want to emulate or be like X," and *not* "because someone has convinced me or shown me a better way, I now believe I can achieve Y" (empowerment). Leading by example, if it is a good one, can bring about tremendous positive change. Obviously, large-scale inspiration of "bad" (e.g., corrupt, illegal, discriminatory, or violent) behavior can have an impact. Again, you can't assume that inspiration only produces normatively good outcomes.

And that is an important concluding insight: While power and politics have a bad reputation in some circles, exerting power in any of its forms is neither always clearly good nor bad for individuals or a country's politics. Thus, you have seen that power is also more than the issuing of commands or threats (i.e., coercion); there are four other types. By disaggregating the methods of wielding power, you can see that politics *can* be subtle, clean, and even a positive endeavor with mutually beneficial (for the parties involved and the society as a whole) outcomes. Also, taking time to explore power in all its variants shows that it is not only about force, but about how institutions, interactions, and ideas affect behavior and thoughts. This analysis shows that the weak have ways to exercise influence too. Thus, politics and power are for and about all of us.

Essential Concepts for Inclusive Political Analysis: Feminism, Gender, Intersections, and Patriarchy

To have a full understanding of politics, we need to include everyone as subjects of and participants in the analysis. In this textbook, inclusion leans heavily on feminist insights that consider various other elements of identity and their intersections. The term "feminist" likely needs clarification for many of you. While there are multiple forms, **feminism**, at its core, is both a contention that all people have the same fundamental human capacities *and* a movement to achieve and maintain gender equality.[26] Despite what you might hear from and read in some sources, the vast majority of feminists don't see achieving women's equality as **zero sum** (with women's gains necessarily translating into men's losses). Most feminists argue that traditional gender notions *also hurt men*. These stereotypes force women *and* men into distinct boxes that are not fully human. Feminists recognize, however, that the "man" category comes with more power and privilege than the one for "woman" does. For feminists, eliminating gender straightjackets is necessarily a **positive-sum** endeavor, meaning everyone will be better off. Such a situation contrasts with a zero-sum outcome in which there's no mutually beneficial result.

Feminists also understand that **gender** is the social construction of "manhood" and "womanhood," and it varies by time period as well as social and geographic location. Gender also includes and allows for people who don't identify with either of these categories. In other words, gender is not simply "natural" or "biological" and determined by one's physiological sex. Most contemporary, academic feminists argue that individuals (regardless of society's pressures) should have the right to determine for themselves where and how they fit into various gendered social arrangements and even break down the gendered nature of those institutions.[27]

Insights about the complexity of gender started percolating throughout much of the feminist movement in the 1970s, although people and societies have long identified, felt, and behaved in ways that were different from the traditional norms. With the increased globalization of the feminist movement and its interaction with other groups involved in racial, ethnic, class, religious, sexuality, gender identity, ability, and other equality struggles in the 1970s, academic feminists began to realize that gender is simply one marker of privilege and disadvantage. In fact, there are *many others*. Kimberlé Crenshaw, a feminist lawyer and sociologist, coined the term **intersectionality** to capture the idea that social identities are affected by gender, race, class, religion, ethnicity, national origin, and sexual orientation, among other characteristics. Some people have multiple dimensions of privilege or oppression, and when there is more than one source of oppression, people experience the effects of intersectionality as more than the sum of their parts.[28]

Kimberlé Crenshaw is a sociologist and lawyer who coined the term intersectionality.

Willy Sanjuan/Invision/AP

Perhaps you are thinking that this discussion of identity is unnecessary and included only to be trendy. Renowned feminist comparativist Cynthia Enloe admitted to a previous, similar reluctance to engage in such analysis. She changed her mind, however, and became convinced about the importance of intersectionality as she confronted patriarchy in her daily and professional life, when despite her best efforts, others were defining her and other people to their disadvantage. In brief, **patriarchy** means any system of beliefs, relationships, and practices that privileges the dominant masculinity in a society (those characteristics associated with the most influential men) and simultaneously subordinates anything and anyone considered feminine or outside of the powerful race, class, gender, sexuality, and other markers. Thus, men who are not from the "right" race, class, religious, sexuality, or other groupings are often tarred with feminine

characteristics in patriarchy, revealing its intersectional nature. Women experience patriarchy differently from men and in various ways, depending on their other (besides sex) social identities or intersections.[29]

In addition to considering how men and women of various classes, races, ethnicities, and religions experience politics, Enloe's work is also concerned with **heteronormativity**—the assumption that all people are, *and* the reality that privilege comes from being, heterosexual and **cisgender**, having one's gender and biological identity align. **Sexual orientation** (to whom one is attracted) is simply one component in the complex configuration that comprises gender. There are three others—**anatomical sex** (chromosomes, genitalia, and other physical characteristics), **gender identity** (how people think of themselves), and **gender expression** (how people present themselves to the world). Researchers understand that none of these exists in a simple **binary**—e.g., male or female, masculine or feminine. Instead, a continuum captures the full range of human biology, understandings, and feelings, including the perspectives of those who identify in the previously only two acceptable categories, as well as others calling themselves **gender fluid** (moving along the spectrum at different times) in each of the dimensions or **gender nonconforming**, rejecting any single, "standard" characterization. Another, more generic word for those who reject the traditional binaries is **queer**. Queer is an important term that applies to any of the dimensions, as well as all simultaneously, and it is part of the "Q" in LGBTQIA+ where Q can also mean questioning, as in, not completely sure about or fixed in these various elements of gender. The whole acronym refers, respectively, to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, asexuality, and the final "+" means any other nonbinary and nongender conformism, that is, not fitting society's traditional expectations across any of the sex and gender dimensions, including physicalities, self-understandings, performances, and behaviors. Throughout this text, I will tend to use the shortened abbreviation of LGBTQ and consider queer a synonym for that term.[30]

Recognition of these realities of nonbinary biologies, identities, expressions, and sexualities is becoming mainstream. People's email signatures and the forms you fill out when you interact with various government organizations or go to a doctor's office reflect the newly *acknowledged* complexity of gender.[31] These key qualities and possibilities of gender are summarized in Table 1.5.

TABLE 1.5 ■ The Possibilities Regarding Sex and Gender		
Element	**Source**	**The Possibilities (along a continuum)**
Biological Sex One's physical nature	Anatomy, hormones, chromosomes	Female, Intersex, Male
Gender Identity One's self-perception of one's place in the social world	The mind	Woman, Nonbinary, Man
Gender Expression How one presents to the outside world	Outward appearance	Feminine, Androgynous, Masculine
Sexual Orientation To whom one is attracted	The heart	Heterosexual, Bisexual, Asexual, Demisexual, Homosexual (one's orientation also might not be fixed, so in that sense these categories can be fluid)

Sources: Based on data from *National Geographic* (January 2017), 56, 58–59 and Sam Killermann, "The Genderbread Person v4.0," https://www.genderbread.org/ (accessed February 1, 2021).

But what does gender *really* have to do with politics in general and comparative politics in particular? Gender as the most basic of hierarchies (intersecting with other social differentiators) does a lot of work in constituting power relations and affecting what is possible for so many people. Traditionally, political science ignored the importance of gender, sexuality and the other intersections. While many factors explain the discipline's lack of attention to identity and intersections, an important one is that the "old" way of doing political science dismissed the **private sphere** as a place for study. Generations of thinkers and policymakers said the home was apolitical, i.e., where no power had to be or was wielded. In contrast, the **public sphere** was the "rough-and-tumble" world of politics, government, business, and socializing, where people were always competing to achieve their goals. In that world, they had to struggle against the ambitions of others. On the other hand, the home was "harmonious and peaceful," and the interests of all were aligned.[32]

The inappropriateness of this thinking is obvious when you consider a particular type of home, a plantation in the American South in the 1840s, but it applies to many other domiciles. It's hard not to see that owners exerted enormous power over their land and all those residing there—enslaved people, overseers, family members, and other beings. In conceptualizing various homes, the traditional supposition was that families lived in domestic harmony. The lack of conflict resulted because observers believed the dominant *male* (in his various positions)—sovereign, lord, plantation owner, or even father—*always* had the best interests of those residing under his *rule* (often innocuously and incorrectly referred to as his "care") at heart. There was no concept of domestic violence, that married couples might have different political views and interests, or that children might have rights. In fact, the idea that women are full legal persons with rights equal to men is a relatively new phenomenon which actually does not exist everywhere in the world to this day. Thus, looking at historical and contemporary practices shows that even when *not* considering the extreme of a slaveholding plantation, this premise of social harmony and aligned interests in the home is fatally flawed. In other words, the private sphere was and is far from apolitical. Then and now individuals practice politics in their various domiciles as ways of protecting themselves from and advancing their interests against the "king of the castle" and others in the home.[33]

Still, the public-private split has been used to keep women and others from subordinated races, classes, sexualities, and other identity markers in their place in their homes (private sphere) and out of what is commonly thought of as formal politics and the paying economy (public sphere). The fight for inclusion and equality in public spaces, which continues today, is an important part of this book's political analysis. Too many people still refuse to accept equality because they reject the notion, or they profit or benefit from inequality. Thus, these struggles are never over, never fully achieved. They were and are political, i.e., battles for power.[34]

Essential, Traditional Concepts for Studying Comparative Politics: States, Nations, and Regimes

While gender's impact on formal politics might still not be clear, you'll be seeing the ways gender and other hierarchies affect national political outcomes in every region and every country that we study. As we perform those investigations, three other terms will be central to our analysis: the **state**, **nation**, and **regime**. You may be surprised that these terms are only now appearing in the text, but they were strategically absent earlier to both underline the importance of the inclusive approach and because "regular people"—journalists, students, even politicians—typically don't use them the way political scientists do. By waiting to introduce them to you, I am signaling their significance and the preeminent goals of having you (1) learn the correct, political science definitions of these (and other) terms and (2) use these concepts precisely from this point on.

Many Americans or people living here often think of states primarily as the units that make up the United States. You may even imagine places like California, Texas, or New York when you hear the word "state." Of course, these are states, but in comparative politics, as well as international relations and political theory, the state typically has a different meaning. A generally accepted definition comes from the highly regarded German sociologist of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Max Weber.[35] Weber wrote that a state is "a human community that (successfully) claims the *monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force* within a given territory."[36] States are communities with **sovereignty**, in other words legal and political authority, over a territory that their people and other states recognize. The fact that states are the members of international organizations reflects their legal status and bestows on them special rights. For instance, as Weber explained, only states possess the **legitimacy**, recognized *right*, to use violence to maintain peace and security on their own territory. That's why states have police and military forces. A rival faction, perhaps a breakaway territorial grouping, an alternative political party, or a disgruntled group of citizens cannot *legitimately* or legally use force in public spaces.

In addition to discussing the sovereignty and legitimacy of states, comparativists also refer to their strength, typically using a continuum from weak to strong. Unlike IR specialists who conceive of state strength as the power resources—military and financial holdings, status, and human and natural resource wealth—countries use to influence external actors, comparativists conceive of **state strength** as the state's ability to accomplish goals *domestically*. They ask whether states can implement policies such as building infrastructure, improving health care, educating their citizens, or fighting corruption. State strength depends on both **autonomy** and **capacity**. Autonomy means that the state—comprised of decision makers acting in an official capacity within institutions (like courts, legislatures, the executive branch, or police forces)—has the independence to carry out its will regardless of the private preferences of influential individuals, families, businesses, ethnic groups, or others. Autonomy is not the only element of strength, however; capacity is necessary too. Capacity means the possession of the resources or tools for acting. These may be human, financial, technological, military, or institutional, among others. For instance, in effectively fighting COVID-19, a state would need not only capacity to develop and distribute vaccines and other mitigation measures but also the autonomy to ignore powerful anti-vaxxers or those who want to restrict vaccine distribution to only *their* supporters. Note that in comparative politics, strong states are not necessarily "smart" or "good" ones. Strength just means that the state *can* accomplish its identified goals; whether and for whom state goals are "good" are issues distinct from strength. In fact, some ideological positions assert that state strength necessarily impinges on individual liberty, while others disagree.[37]

Different from the state and absolutely not a synonym for it, a **nation** is a group of individuals who think they are "a people" who belong together as a collective. Typically, members of a nation believe they share common genetic material, history, language, culture, and/or other qualities, even including a commitment to a set of ideas. Sometimes, nations have states; for instance, the leaders of the People's Republic of China preside over a multi-ethnic state that they assert is the home of the Chinese nation. The example of China highlights the often complex relationship between nations and states. Within China, there are groups, like Tibetans, who deny that they belong to the Chinese nation. Because Tibetans see themselves as a distinct people, they have sought their own state. Since the 1950s, China has rejected and squelched Tibetan national aspirations. Similarly, Chinese leaders would like to incorporate other peoples and territories into their state because they assert those peoples and their territories are part of the nation. For instance, although many Taiwanese are ethnically similar to those on the mainland, they do not consider themselves Chinese nationals or desire to be citizens of the People's Republic. Thus, China shows the complexity of the term "nation," and why political scientists, unlike people in the media or political leaders, use the word nation very carefully and *not* as a synonym for state.

Tibetans are a people who have sought their own nation-state, but the Chinese state rejects their assertion.

Just as states vary in their strength, so too do nations. Here the important criterion is the level of cohesiveness of the people, in other words, the extent to which they agree they belong together. National unity is typically a positive quality for states, but having a strong sense of nation is not the same as having no policy disagreements. In fact, states with lively political debates can be very cohesive nations, particularly if part of the national narrative stresses the importance of pluralism. Unity and the sense of nation is threatened when some groups of people begin feeling like outsiders or when others work to exclude or subjugate certain groups that had previously been part of the community. In today's world, growing polarization in many countries has created "nation problems," where some people are increasingly perceived to be or feel as if they are "other," i.e., outside the national "family." Similarly, ultranationalism is a problem when a particular subgroup abuses people or when the nation adopts extremist notions of its glory to subjugate or control other citizens or territories beyond its frontiers.

These difficulties in and dilemmas regarding creating *appropriately* "strong" states and nations underline not only the distinctions in the concepts but also the types of policies needed to establish or enhance them. Political scientists call such processes **state building** and **nation building**. Countries engage in these processes when new ones emerge or after crises, wars, or disasters that erode or destroy political units and identities. State-building efforts are designed to create the institutions that make governing possible, such as representative legislatures and chief executives at local and national levels, as well as the law, courts, police, military, and the bureaucracy. Today, in the United States especially, to be called a "bureaucrat" is often considered an insult, but states cannot thrive without these qualified officials. Government bureaucrats have specific expertise, for instance, as law enforcement officials, diplomats, agronomists, epidemiologists, and civil engineers, who help keep the country safe, well-fed, healthy, and moving safely across roads and bridges.[38]

Nation building can also be undertaken after independence or traumatic events, but the jobs involved in achieving this goal are different. These tasks focus on developing citizens' sense of belonging together. In the case of new countries born after an independence struggle, nation

building is arguably easier than state building. The people in that territory have already been through a battle for independence and usually made their case for sovereignty based on their shared identity and struggle. Maintaining that sense of belonging together and creating symbols of their unity—writing new textbooks and national songs, building monuments—are the essence of the nation-building process.[39]

(Re-)Creating national sentiments after internal conflict or abuse can be more difficult and time-consuming than establishing state institutions, however. After civil bloodshed, convincing various parties—perpetrators and victims of violence—that they are one people and constitute a nation is complicated. Sometimes these efforts entail holding the worst abusers accountable, having truth and/or reconciliation commissions, providing amnesty for those involved in the violence, developing new national narratives, stories, and symbols, or even brutally repressing those who lost in the violence and tolerating only one official story of belonging. Nation building, as well as state building, is inherently political. Depending on the goals of the winners, it can fall anywhere on a spectrum between a highly violent and exclusive process to a primarily collaborative and inclusive one.[40]

The approach to state and/or nation building, therefore, depends on the nature of the regime that is either implicitly or explicitly directing the process. A regime is the type of governmental system, practices, and norms that organize the state. More than two millennia ago, Aristotle characterized regimes by the numbers of rulers (the one, the few, and the many). You saw a different categorization scheme in Figure 1.2 that identified full democracies, flawed democracies, veiled authoritarians, and full authoritarians. As you proceed through this book, you will learn more about these regime types, how they work, and how politics vary between them.

Really Think and Explain

What is power and what are the five methods for wielding it? What is gender and why is it more complex than a simple box to check off on a form? What are ways, new to you, in which gender and power affect informal and formal politics? What are the differences between regime, state, and nation, and why would they be central to the study of comparative politics?

BASIC THEORY AND METHODS IN COMPARATIVE POLITICS

The final building blocks for creating the foundation of our comparative politics edifice are theory and methods. While students often view studying theory and methods as esoteric at best and, more likely, boring, theory is both interesting and useful and methods allow us to be confident that our theoretical findings are "good."

What is Theory and Why Bother with It

Theories are contentious statements that seek to explain an aspect of the way the world works. They are answers to questions that scholars have yet to solve. To determine the utility or accuracy of the theory, political scientists evaluate whether data support or are inconsistent with the claim. Examples of three important queries in comparative politics that have theoretical ambitions behind them are

- what makes democracy occur and last,

- how and why might development be achieved sustainably, and

- why do levels of gender empowerment differ around the world?

Comparativists have, therefore, produced theories to answer these questions which are both interesting for their own sake and have important policy and normative implications. If leaders, activists, and international organizations seek to create democracy, enhance sustainable development, or promote gender empowerment, they need "good" answers to these questions. Policy inspired by well-substantiated theory can lead to the betterment of societies. Certainly, "bad" theories, ones that are poor explanations of reality, can cause failures or unsatisfactory results. Thus, theories matter normatively. If employing them leads to better outcomes for people, then the project of advancing and applying theory is a force for good. What better or good means, of course, depends on one's perspective, but this book will take the stance that democracy, sustainability, and gender empowerment are clear normative "goods" to be desired. Thus, having accurate theories isn't simply an academic exercise but can positively affect the ways people live.

In physics, theories, like Newton's Second Law of Motion, are expressed as equations, for instance $F = ma$, or Force (F) is equal to mass (m) times acceleration (a). While the theories investigated here will not be presented in mathematical formulas, many of them can be. Moreover, political science theories make similar assertions to Newton's. They posit that some factors exert pressure on others which then lead to particular, predictable outcomes. Our theories will focus on explaining regime types and the occurrences of political uprisings, for instance. These concepts are arguably much harder to conceptualize and/or measure than the mass and acceleration of a particle. Thus, you can see the importance of concept precision.

The idea that concepts in political science can take on different values, i.e., are **variables**, might sound strange to some of you. We haven't seen equations or many numbers so far, yet we have still seen values that are both qualitative and quantitative. In fact, this textbook has already acquainted you with different possibilities for regime types: full democracies, flawed democracies, veiled authoritarians, or full authoritarians. Just thinking about sustainable development, we can imagine a range of unsustainable to highly sustainable. Thinking in terms of gender empowerment, the WEF has created a measure for how well women are doing (economically, socially, and politically) compared to men. In other words, regime type, sustainable development level, and gender are all variables that can take on different values.[41]

The United Nations Commission on the Status of Women seeks to promote gender equality and empower women around the world.

Pavlo Gonchar/SOPA Images/Sipa USA/AP Images

We have actually already started the process of theorizing by positing relationships between concepts. For instance, some of you might have noticed that the gender gap and regime types maps seemed similar. In other words, those factors appear to vary in predictable ways, with very large gender gap countries more likely to be authoritarian and low gender gap countries tending to be full democracies. Thus, once those concepts take on values in the real world, we see how they can vary and might be associated with other phenomena. That's why political science seeks measurable variables. Sometimes these measures are categorical (e.g., "high gender gap" or "full authoritarian"), other times they are numerical, like the GGI and EIU scores. Taking a cue from Newton, one might assert that GGI causes Regime Type (RT) and map out the proposed relationship as GGI→ RT.[42] The question for political scientists is, can such a theory withstand scrutiny, in other words, hold up on evaluation of the data? Future chapters will examine this theory, as well as many others. The key insights are that

1. ideas for theorizing can come from thinking about data,

2. political scientists develop theories that link concepts together,

3. theorists posit ideas about how and why those concepts are linked,

4. investigators can find data to know the values of their variables, and

5. comparativists' theories are only as "good" as their ability to account for the real world.

Developing Theories: Inductive and Deductive Reasoning

Where do theories come from?[43] You have actually been using one approach already. The book has exposed you to data, and you have found some patterns in variables. Those patterns suggest theories which you arrived at via **induction** and **active learning**. Induction emphasizes exposure to information, and then demands active learning where you make connections between the data. Induction in this book also serves another purpose of democratizing the classroom. When everyone has access to good information, there aren't only a few "experts" or "smart people" with knowledge. Proceeding inductively and actively also gives everyone a chance to find something of interest. Having a spark or a reason to learn helps keep you motivated because *you* notice something *you need* to understand.

A second approach in theory generation is to start from known principles, not from data, and it is called **deduction**. Some of you might bring concepts and ideas (perhaps from previous courses in American or global politics, economics, sociology, or management, or even from your own reading or media consumption). In other words, you might engage in deduction, by starting from existing knowledge about concepts or theories to deduce what *should result*, i.e., what you expect to happen based on what those concepts mean or what those theories assert. For instance, you might have learned in a management course that businesses with diverse workforces tend to perform better, benefiting from the variety of perspectives and experiences of their employees. Then you might deduce that diverse and inclusive polities (or political communities) might be more likely to have "better" politics, i.e., be full democracies that will address policy problems more effectively. Conversely, diverse yet noninclusive politics are more likely to be authoritarian. If you engaged in this thought process, you took your knowledge of a theory about business organizations and deduced an analogous relationship and outcome in politics. Thus, where induction starts by examining a lot of information and then making a generalized claim, deduction begins with understanding theories, concepts, and definitions to make an assertion that you can apply to data.

Comparativists engage in both induction and deduction, and often they do so simultaneously.[44] Particularly as researchers have increasing experience in their fields, their ability to assimilate specific data points and theoretical knowledge into generalized claims grows.

Logics for Evaluating Posited Theories: Most Similar and Most Different Systems

While induction and deduction are basic approaches to hypothesizing theories, **Most Similar Systems (MSS)** and **Most Different Systems (MDS)** are two methodologies that guide comparativists in evaluating theoretical claims. In the first instance, the goal is to compare the most similar situations, and in the other, the task is to compare the most different. Underlying both is the idea that comparativists are engaged in *building knowledge* (not simply stating opinions, feelings, or beliefs) and that they are *seeking to isolate causes and effects* to find out which factors are leading to specific political outcomes.

Let's return to the idea that comparativists are seeking to explain political phenomena. In other words, they are trying to develop theories that assert a relationship between variables. In the simplest terms, we can represent a theory as

$$X \rightarrow Y.$$

X is some cause, and Y is an associated outcome. In an MSS approach, the idea is that (at least) two environments (they might be countries, political parties, revolutions, etc.) are as similar as possible except for ONE factor (one cause or X) *and* that X seems to lead to a difference in the outcome, Y. For instance, Australia and New Zealand are similar in all sorts of ways—their past history as settler states that displaced and subjugated indigenous people with the arrival of Europeans to their shores, their parliamentary systems, their high human development levels, their dominant religion (Christianity), and geographic location. In all those ways, they are similar, yet the EIU classified Australia as a flawed democracy and New Zealand as a full democracy. What could account for this difference? Researchers then must go looking for that factor (that characteristic about these countries) that doesn't match and could be responsible for this different outcome. They see that Australia belongs in the medium gender gap category and New Zealand is in the low gender gap one. Could variation in gender equality be the reason? Here, a most similar systems comparison takes states that are alike in many relevant ways and tries to identify the singular (or very few) differences that account for the surprising deviations in their politics. To confirm your hunch, you would have to study carefully whether gender equality really does exert a force on regime type in each country, while making sure that other potential causes weren't really producing this outcome.[45]

An MDS tact proceeds with the insight that places can be as *different* as possible and yet somehow create similar results. In the barebones statement above, MDS says some very important X leads very different places to produce the same Y. An example of an instance where the MDS approach could lead to interesting insights would be to compare Rwanda and New Zealand to investigate why they both have such a high proportion of women elected to their parliaments (Y). Rwanda has the top level (61.3 percent) and New Zealand is tied for fifth (50 percent). These two differ the most (compared to the others in the top five as of March 2023—in order, Cuba, Nicaragua, Mexico, and the United Arab Emirates—also tied for fifth[46]) because they vary greatly in regime type, history of outside domination, development level, and world region, among other factors. What might the *common* factor be that these two systems share that could account for this similarity in high levels of women elected? MDS looks for these

surprising commonalities between highly varied cases for answers. Researchers subject their best guesses about what is responsible for the similar outcome to careful analysis.

MDS designs can sometimes lead to frustrating results because there might be so many differences that the similar outcome could have happened by chance. In the case of Rwanda and New Zealand, there are reasons unique to each one and not common to both that explain their high levels of women in parliament. Still, MDS is a valuable tool in important situations. You will repeatedly see the value of comparing across differences and will find more similarities among our case study countries than you might have expected at the outset.

Rwanda has the highest proportion of women in parliament in the world.

AP Photo/Jason Straziuso

Before we leave MSS and MDS behind, we must recognize that we have used this logic to inspire **case study analysis**. The comparisons mentioned earlier involved only a few (here, two) instances of the relationships we were interested in. We could, however, design studies with many cases, what the discipline calls **large N studies**. In these situations, theorists collect data from multiple instances ("N," the number of cases, often hundreds but at least more than thirty) to evaluate their contentions using statistical analysis.

How to Compare: Concluding, Remarking, and Active Learning

People intuitively use many of the methods described here to explain and understand events in their lives. Stomach not feeling right, but everyone else ate at the cafeteria and feels fine? Then, perhaps the problem was that snack you grabbed from the convenience store (MSS thinking). Everyone scored poorly on a paper assignment, despite writing about very different topics? The fact that everyone ignored the rubric is likely the difference (MDS thinking). These everyday examples highlight not only the pervasiveness of these approaches but also that the comparisons are not always simply between two different countries. Comparativists consider many different units (political parties, labor unions, voters, etc.) and the surprising outcomes they see.

The members of those sets for comparative political analysis (called **cases**) might be defined by geographic region, regime type, or some other characteristic. Comparativists can investigate countries or instances of a key political phenomenon within states; they might examine a few cases or examine hundreds of them.

Also important to recognize is that contrary to everyday analysis, comparativists employ these methods with care, and their investigations can take months, years or even decades to think through the concepts and the theory, study how previous scholars have understood the terms and their relationships, collect data, and analyze them. Still, the basic ideas of comparison are the same.

Really Think and Explain

In what ways are you a natural comparativist? What kinds of global political developments do you want to understand better? Do you tend to think inductively or deductively or does your mode vary? When was the last time you used either MSS or MDS thinking in explaining a puzzling outcome in your daily life?

WHY COMPARE IN AN INCLUSIVE AND SYSTEMATIC FASHION

As a result of the previous discussion, you might be thinking that comparative politics is a lot of work and wondering why anyone bothers with it. Remember that (a) to do anything well takes determination and (b) the benefits can be personally and socially great. Comparativists seek to produce knowledge that is not only interesting on its own merits but that has applications for solving problems and making policy recommendations. The quality of the understandings and recommendations are only as good as the basic research underpinning it. Thus, comparativists work hard and carefully to be "right" and useful.

Recently, scholars and policymakers have found that gender- and identity-*neutral* information is not as applicable and accurate as the world needs. That's why we're going to engage in inclusive investigations. Perhaps the best example of this general notion comes from medicine. All studies about the symptoms and treatments for health issues (take heart attacks) can't simply be done on white adult men in the United States if the goal is to take care of all people. Increasingly, scientists have learned that they have to take seriously the health of many different types of people (in their intersections) and develop various, sometimes different, treatments for them.

Still, my answer about the utility of knowledge might fall on some deaf ears in an era when experts and specialized knowledge are repeatedly discounted and culture wars rage over whether to take gender and identity seriously. So, why perform inclusive and systematic comparative analysis? First and foremost, comparativists study politics globally in order to develop better descriptions of the world around us. Then, they think carefully about the data to define useful concepts that provide those superior pictures. Proceeding carefully ensures quality findings. Thus, comparativists develop concepts to capture the essence of classes of characteristics or behaviors in order to communicate quickly and clearly what is embodied in many situations.

With excellent data and concepts to describe the world, scholars are then well-positioned to explain how and why conditions are as they are. Explanations give observers power because they uncover the factors that influence events. Knowing the causes and the purported nature of the relationships between variables makes the prevention of negative developments and change toward positive outcomes possible. In other words, accurate theories built on good data and concepts allow comparativists to prescribe policies to deal with challenges and take advantage

of opportunities. "Good" prescriptions lead to improved policies and better lives for citizens. On the other hand, implementing a change based on faulty data and explanations can lead to policy disasters. Again, if researchers are only taking the experiences of some people into account, they won't create accurate theories or appropriate solutions, leaving too many problems unsolved. In those cases, even well-intentioned investigators can create new or additional misfortunes because they base their policy prescriptions on incomplete pictures of reality and inadequate theories.[47]

Thus, comparativists seek to know inclusively not only for esoteric reasons, but also because such information is useful in solving problems around the world or in a neighborhood close by. Theory provides more power than simply knowing many facts. Why? Those details are often not recall-able or identifiable when they are just floating in our brains. We remember instances when those details are linked to significant concepts or theories. With those tools, comparativists are positioned to explain what they observe, suggest ways of promoting positive developments, and design policy initiatives for achieving additional "good" outcomes. As you proceed through this book, you will be able to better describe and explain politics in different global settings. By the end of the semester, your familiarity with information, concepts, and theory will allow you to make prescriptions for persistent problems and even some predictions about the futures of our case study countries.

Really Think and Explain

Why is an inclusive and systematic approach a "good" one for studying comparative politics?

CONCLUSION: STARTING TO BUILD OUR EDIFICE OF COMPARATIVE POLITICS

This chapter started you on the project of building your understanding of comparative politics. You have begun amassing information that you need about the regions of the world, current regime types, and human development and gender empowerment levels. You also have come to realize that this book will expose you to a good deal of data and ask you to take time to make some sense of them before proceeding.

Concepts will be key to our analysis. We started by defining comparative politics, as well as politics and power. With our interest in inclusive analysis, we examined feminism, gender, intersectionality, and patriarchy along with the standard notions of state, nation, and regime so that you will be adept at analyzing the interplay of informal *and* formal politics. Finally, you were introduced to the basics of theory and method.

The next wing of our comparative politics building is about democracy and Europe. We will turn to the nuts and bolts of formal politics that tend to characterize democracies. In these chapters, you will learn about the social and economic conditions that have underpinned the creation of European states. As we examine how democracy has spread on that continent, global processes and contrasting ideologies will become important in our investigations. You will also see that today antidemocratic proponents seem to be waging their battle with renewed vigor. Thus, Part II will examine why democracy has been experiencing stress in Europe and how the United Kingdom has been struggling with democracy, prosperity, and inclusion for more than a decade now.

This organizational blueprint—chapters on concepts, regional details, and country case studies—will be standard throughout the book. This presentation allows us to clarify concepts and theories, account for regionwide conditions and commonalities, and investigate important developments in national settings, with special attention to gender, racial, ethnic, religious, and class inclusion. In the country case studies, you will learn about geography (physical and human), political history, economic achievements, and cultures, with the goal of giving you similar types of information for each country. At the end of our case studies, we will pose and answer a specific question that probes an important contemporary political challenge for that state. Together, these activities help accomplish our goals of understanding both the politics in our case study countries and the utility of our concepts and theories for explaining political phenomena around the world.

When you finish this book, you will be a sophisticated consumer and analyst of global news, commentary, and information. This accomplishment will prepare you to be a better citizen of your communities, country, and the world. In fact, your studies will illuminate the most important political questions of the day, so that you can do your part in helping preserve and strengthen democracy.[48]

Think and Remark

What surprised you in this first chapter regarding what and how you'll be learning? How did this first chapter meet your expectations? What else would you like to share about this first chapter?

KEY TERMS

active learning

anatomical sex

authoritarian regime

autonomy

binary

capacity

case study analysis

cisgender

coercion

comparative politics

concepts

constitution

deduction

demisexual

empirics

empowerment

enticement

feminism

formal politics

gender

gender fluid

gender gap

gender nonconforming

gross domestic product

gross domestic product per capita (GDP PC)

hard power

heteronormativity

Human Development Index (HDI)

induction

informal politics

inspiration

intersectionality

intersex

large N studies

legitimacy

Most Different Systems (MDS)

Most Similar Systems (MSS)

nation

nation building

nationalism

nonbinary

patriarchy

politics

positive-sum game

power

private sphere

public sphere	state
queer	state building
regime	state strength
regions	super regions
sexual orientation	theories
soft power	variables
sovereignty	zero-sum game

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is comparative politics and how is it different from American politics and IR?

2. What are the major super regions of the world? Can you identify them on the map? Which super regions tend to have the highest and lowest outcomes on the democracy, human development, and gender empowerment indices?

3. Define the essential concepts for studying comparative politics inclusively: politics, power, feminism, gender, intersectionality, patriarchy, nation, state, and regime.

4. What is theory? How do inductive and deductive reasoning lead to theorizing? What are the differing logics of Most Similar and Most Different Systems research designs?

5. What is an inclusive approach to studying comparative politics and why might it matter?

CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS

1. What were two or three of the more interesting things you learned in this chapter? Why were they interesting? How were they political and about power?

2. What patterns might you see in levels of democracy and authoritarianism and human development? In some parts of the world, does the link between HDI and levels of democracy break down? If so, where and what do you think could be accounting for the mismatch?

3. What patterns might you see in levels of democracy and authoritarianism and gender empowerment? In some parts of the world, does the link between gender empowerment and democracy break down? If so, where and what do you think could be accounting for the mismatch?

4. Which patterns in the data in this chapter (regions of the world, democracy index, HDI, GGI) are most interesting to *you*? Why? Which factors do you think are best at accounting for the patterns you see? Do you believe there are other explanatory elements that we should be discussing? Why?

5. Feminists claim that the personal is political. Think about something (not an overtly political act, like winning an election) that has happened recently to you, to someone you know, or someone in the news. Can you now see that politics (an exercise of power in any of its forms) might be at work in this event? In other words, can you see that what you experienced was not simply the result of luck or bad timing but reflects the way that power structures opportunities and challenges for people?

6. Using a country with which you are relatively familiar, think about whether it has state and/or nation problems—are either too weak or too strong? Why? What are the sources of

these difficulties, in your estimation? What is the evidence that indicates these challenges exist? If you see no or very few problems, discuss the appropriate strengths in the state and nation, being sure to keep the two types of strengths (of state and nation) distinct.

7. Pick a country of the world in which you are particularly interested. Find the data and consult the blurbs about it in the most recent EIU Democracy, Freedom House, Human Development, and Gender Gap Index reports. What did you learn?

8. This week pay attention to the news from a high-quality source (*Wall Street Journal, The New York Times, The Washington Post, The Economist, PBS NewsHour*, National Public Radio www.npr.org, or the BBC www.bbcnews.co.uk). Identify a theory related to democracy, sustainable development, or gender empowerment that is either explicit or implicit in the stories you are accessing. Identify a cause (X), outcome (Y), and the logic underpinning the relationship of the variables. What values are you seeing in those variables?

9. This week pay attention to the news from a source that has a clear political orientation, such as Fox News or MSNBC. Identify a theory of comparative politics that is either explicit or implicit in the analysis. It might relate to why a country is democratic or authoritarian, why a protest is brewing, or why a country is developed or underdeveloped. Identify a cause (X), outcome (Y), and the logic underpinning the relationship of the variables. What values are you seeing in those variables?

10. In either the news or your normal life this week, look for whether people (reporters, news analysts, politicians, your family, friends, or yourself) use the logic of Most Similar or Most Different Systems as they account for their experiences. Write down their question and their logic for coming up with an answer. Explain whether this logic follows MSS or MDS.