2 UNDERSTANDING DEMOCRACY: DEFINITION, INSTITUTIONS, IDEAS, AND NORMS

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter, you will be able to

2.1 Define liberal democracy and explain why each part of the definition is central to the concept.

2.2 Describe a variety of governmental, electoral, party, and territorial systems, their incentive structures, and how political leaders earn positions of power in each.

2.3 Define capitalism, industrialization, globalization, and the middle class, and two opposing theories on the relationship between industrialization and democracy.

2.4 Explain what the political spectrum is, its components, and the basic ideas of the Left, Center, and Right in contemporary democracies.

2.5 Explain three perspectives on the kinds of political cultures that support democracy.

GETTING STARTED: UNDERSTANDING DEMOCRACY IN EUROPE AND ELSEWHERE

We start our study of democracy in Europe, a super region with many democratic states and the home of the United Kingdom, our first case study. The UK is also one of the first states to have that modern system. Our goal in this chapter is to understand the meaning and mechanics of democracy and begin exploring why and how it emerges and lasts. While political institutions and processes are important to comprehending the system, so too is the nature of the economy. No modern democracy has succeeded without having some form of capitalism. You may have noticed that point or hypothesized about a relationship between democracy and the market after comparing maps in Chapter 1. Here, you will learn about capitalism and see various forms that exist in contemporary European democracies. You'll also see how important debates on the relationship between the state and the economy and the state's role in balancing the promotion of individual rights and the nation help to define ideological positions on the political spectrum. We'll finish our exploration of the spectrum by examining two important contemporary ideological challengers to democracy, fascism and populism.

No modern democracy has succeeded without having some form of capitalism.

Brian Smith/Sputnik/AP Photo

Then, you'll investigate another important building block of political systems, culture. There's debate about which types of value systems are most important for sustaining a free and fair political system. While cultures can be hard to "see" because they lack the easily visible phenomena of legislatures and elections or economic statistics, some analysts have been measuring culture for years now. You'll use their data as we investigate why and how some value systems are conducive to democracy and others aren't. In fact, just as some experts emphasize that countries have to get their economy "right" to become and remain a democracy, other scholars claim that democracies can't flourish and survive without a "good" culture.

Before leaving our study of democracy, you'll examine one important concept that uses political institutions, economic structures, cultures, as well as global pressures to explain inclusion, an important element of democracy. Despite laws and rules that say that men and women are equal in politics, women have generally not served to the same extent as men have. The Political Recruitment Model (PRM) helps us understand why women—a group that makes up about 50 percent of the population globally—has long been politically disempowered. We will return to the PRM repeatedly over the course of our studies so that you can better make sense of the sources of women's achievements in representation.

While you might be surprised with our care in studying democracy, a system most of you believe you know very well, this attention is especially important now. Contemporary opponents to democracy have been gaining strength around the world. Some explicitly attack it, asserting that democracy has failed and can't deliver the leadership, freedom, prosperity, and social goods that citizens deserve. Others pretend to be its friend, but are undermining key elements, as they centralize of power, weaken the rule of law, and erode individual rights. That's why developing a robust understanding of democracy is especially important today.

WHAT IS DEMOCRACY?[1]

Most Americans learn from an early age that democracy means "rule of the people," the literal translation of the Greek "*demos*" (people) and "*cratia*" (rule of). Ordinary dictionaries (i.e., *not* specialized ones for political scientists) like Merriam-Webster define the term as "rule of the majority." While these literal and popular definitions have a kernel of truth to them, specialists know that ***full democracy*** (as the Economist Intelligence Unit names it) or ***liberal* democracy** (as political theorists call it and as you will begin using) is more than that. Remember, political science uses terms differently from the media and ordinary people. That's why you should *always use your textbooks, course materials, or specialized dictionaries* (you can find them here in the glossary or in the online databases on your institution's library website) *when you need a definition for a key term*.

As scholars will explain, **liberal** refers to philosophical or classical liberalism, a body of thought that emerged in the seventeenth century and had a great impact on the American Founders and other liberals around the world. These ideas are still embodied in the *democratic* left *and* right today. Basically, liberals believe that all individuals have dignity, are equal in their political station (if not in their social and economic ones), and are "endowed by the Creator with certain inalienable rights," as Thomas Jefferson wrote in the US Declaration of Independence. Therefore, the law applies to every person in the same way. Thus, full or liberal democracy is not simply the rule of the people because it also requires that individuals are politically and legally equal and have the same rights. Moreover, those rights and the law are precisely what protects popular power. Without having rights and the fair application of the law, people would not be able to perform their *necessary* participatory and oversight functions to maintain democracy.

As outlined in the US Declaration of Independence, liberal democracies are systems in which all individuals have dignity, are equal in their political station, and the law applies to every person in the same way.

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Defining Democracy

Let's look at a more formal definition of democracy[2] and work through its three central elements. Democracy is a political system in which

1. ***all adults*** *are empowered as citizens and have the ability to* ***hold officials accountable*** for their actions, typically *through free, fair, and frequent elections*. In those electoral contests, no entity (e.g., the military, religious authorities, political parties, certain groups or militias, powerful families, organized crime, terrorist organizations, other countries or international organizations) can undo or reject the citizens' choice.
2. the ***rule of law*** (i.e., that everyone is subject to laws in the same way and political leaders cannot use the law as a weapon against opponents or for their own protection from legal accountability for criminal actions) prevails.
3. ***each citizen's fundamental rights*** *are protected* from encroachment by the state and by other individuals, even if those others hold a majority view.

This definition is complex and deserves more attention. Let's start by noticing that *each* of these points depends on both "people rule" (democracy) and "individual dignity and equality" (liberal) principles. That's why we need a two-word name to capture the essence of this system—liberal democracy.

Part I: ***Popular Sovereignty***. In the first part of the definition is the guarantee that citizenship is broadly inclusive and all citizens decide who governs them. It also asserts citizens and elites agree that violence has no place in competitions for political office or policy disputes. Elections are *contests* not battles; citizens remove officials through legal, nonviolent, and predictable means in stipulated processes. Notice, too, the stress that in democracy, *all adults* (typically as citizens) have the ability to hold officials accountable. When leaders can control who chooses them by excluding some, true accountability is lost. In fact, restricting suffrage and limiting those who *select* officials is a common way that authoritarian leaders subvert democracy while trying to keep a democratic veneer. Also recognize that the emphasis is not simply on the mere fact of holding elections, but on making sure that all the people have a vote, those who want to participate as candidates are able, *and* that the process is **free, fair, and frequent (FFF)**.

Why each one of those "Fs"? They are all essential for protecting the ability of citizens to unseat officials when they deem them no longer the best choice for governing. In a democracy, *uncertainty* of election outcomes is a *positive* attribute. Elected leaders have to be unsure of holding onto their positions in the next contest and must believe that citizens can oust them when they don't meet expectations. In free elections, people not only vote, but they can organize, have their voices and their messages heard, and have access to a wide variety of truthful information. There's also no place for threats or pressure from officials or others that voting a certain way could lead to dire consequences for individuals or the system. Thus, this criterion of "free" very much rests on key (philosophical) liberal values of the equality of individuals, the importance of a free press/free media, the right of assembly, the right to criticize the government, and the free exchange of ideas, all without violence and threats.

"Fair" means that the process occurs without interference and without untoward actions. In other words, no one affects the ability of citizens to participate (e.g., creates arbitrary rules for registering to vote or be a candidate, doesn't open or appropriately staff certain polling places, or interferes with the official vote count). Lies and disinformation campaigns impede fairness by circumventing participation. They trick voters into voting a particular way on false pretenses or

convince others to stay home because they wrongly believe they have no "good" choice. Fairness is deeply rooted in the idea that all citizens must have a say (the democracy part) and deserve a say because they all have dignity (the equality part).

For Americans, "frequent" might be a surprising last criterion because many likely take the timing of elections for granted. But, what if elections were held every twenty years or even every ten? Would such long terms be *democratic*, that is, help to maintain popular power and oversight? While there is no set term that is ideal, most democratic national political systems around the globe require contests at least every four to six years, determining that such a period is long enough to guard against instability in a government and short enough to ensure that people can turn over officials in a timely and regular fashion if the population decides the leadership needs to go.

Finally, notice that last provision in the first clause of the definition: *no other entity is able to undo citizens' choices*.[3] This point might be very surprising to many readers, and some might consider those just extra words. Au contraire! They are here to emphasize that in political systems where citizens believe that some grouping will install that group's chosen candidate regardless of the vote, full democracy doesn't exist. Outsiders (such as a foreign country or organization) or a small, powerful group of insiders vetoing the decision of citizens violates the idea of popular control as well as individual equality, because some individuals (those who constitute that privileged or threatening group) are "more equal than others."[4]

Part II: ***Rule of Law***. While the first provision takes both the "people rule" and "liberal" elements of the definition seriously, so, too, does the second element, even though it might appear to be solely concerned with the law. The whole people can't rule if subsets of them are above the law and/or others don't have legal protections. A fundamental and distinguishing characteristic of a full democracy, the rule of law insists that everyone is equal before the law, regardless of their political, economic, and social status. Many of you reading this line perhaps winced because you know equality before the law has been hard to achieve in many democracies. Likely you can think of cases where the rich, powerful, and those from the dominant race or ethnicity have had a much easier time avoiding harsh penalties than have those from nondominant groupings. Despite these imperfections, the rule of law is a fundamental ideal that democratic systems should continually seek to achieve. It means that leaders are subject to the law, as are "important," wealthy, or other privileged people. The rule of law also embodies the notion that justice isn't a tool to be used by officials against their opponents or for their own protection. In some settings, using the law as a weapon has been called "**telephone justice**," where political leaders demand (make the phone call instructing) the arrest and conviction of "troublesome" rivals and citizens on trumped up charges. Judges then dutifully make sure that those individuals receive the "appropriate" sentence, regardless of whether a crime was actually committed. When the law can also be applied or changed to protect the powerful from consequences of criminal action, there's a problem too. If influential people use the law to protect themselves, then the rule of law isn't operating.[5]

Part III: ***Universal and Inalienable Rights***. In addition to applying the law fairly, the third provision explicitly highlights the tensions between the popular-rule and liberal elements of democracy. Because certain individual rights are so important, they are *inalienable*, i.e., cannot be trampled on or taken away by the state *or* by a popular majority. Again, American readers are likely very familiar with the idea of rights they have against the state and individual rights that the state can't impede. But majorities in democracies can't pass laws that infringe on the rights of others. This point, frankly, is often forgotten when that minority is or certain rights are "unpopular." Here, the idea of individual integrity and the sanctity of rights says that majority

Russian President Vladimir Putin famously used telephone justice to jail his dissenter and political rival Alexei Navalny.

Mikhail Svetlov/Contributor/Getty Images News/Getty Images

rule might determine who governs but it doesn't decide, in liberal democracies, which news organizations exist or which groups may meet because the free press and right to assemble are fundamental.[6]

Thus, in the language of political science, *full democracy is liberal democracy*. It rests on the idea of individual integrity and rights that enable the public at large, without arbitrary or political exclusions, to select leaders and maintain or remove them in an open, just, and regularized fashion. No entity can interfere with the people's decision, either subtly, with threats, or by using violence. Without the rule of law, rights protections, and the commitment to individual equality, citizens can't be sovereign and hold leaders accountable for their actions. As noted when thinking about the rule of law, no state yet has achieved the liberal democratic ideal, and this (among other points) is why, when the EIU rates them, none has earned a perfect 10.[7] Still, several are in the range (scoring between 8 and 10) of liberal democracy, and by having this ideal to shoot for, citizens and officials, if they desire, can identify weaknesses and establish solutions in order to move closer to that perfect score.

Really Think and Explain

What is new to you about this understanding of liberal democracy? Why are both "liberal" and "democratic" principles essential? Was there anything that surprised you or that you found troubling in this discussion? Thinking about the challenges in liberal democracies today, which elements of this complex definition do you think are most under threat in countries you know about? Why?

WHAT ARE THE BASIC POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS OF DEMOCRACY?

In an influential essay, Philippe Schmitter and Terry Lynn Karl explain that many different types of institutional arrangements can satisfy the definitional criteria of democracy. In other words, democracies can have a variety of different institutions. Some arrangements are better for achieving accountability and inclusion depending on characteristics of the polities, while others help maximize different goals. Not every society has the same values and objectives, and history often affects the choices elites and citizens make about the "best" institutional arrangements and policy outcomes for them.[8]

Political systems have three important elements: governmental, electoral, and territorial systems. For each of these, there are several institutional variants that can characterize democracies. We will examine some of the more important ones, highlighting the rules and the key posts. This knowledge of the rules is essential for your being able to understand how various democracies work in practice. Without knowing the rules, analyzing democracy is as hard (very) and as interesting (not!) as watching a sport that you know nothing about.

Governmental Systems

Governmental systems are those that characterize the nature of executive-legislative relations, as well as the relationship between the judiciary and the other two branches. Here the questions revolve around which bodies exert legislative power, execute the laws, and even interpret them. Is any of that authority shared between bodies, and if so, how? How efficient or easy should lawmaking be and how concentrated should power be? Do courts have the ability to arbitrate between the branches and determine whether laws are consistent with the constitution? Among democracies, there are three major institutional arrangements for governing: presidential, parliamentary, and mixed (also called dual-executive or semi-presidential) systems.

Presidential Systems. As American readers know, presidential systems are based on the separation of power and the idea that legislating should be relatively challenging. In order for a new law to emerge, majorities in both houses of the legislature[9] need to pass a bill (with identical language), and the president has to sign it. When presidents oppose a law, they can typically be overridden by a legislative supermajority in a second vote on the bill. A democratic presidential system usually has a coequal third branch, the Supreme Court. Through the process of **judicial review**, the court decides whether any laws or executive actions are in violation of the constitution (with its enumerated, fundamental rights) or previous laws and court decisions. The court rules on disagreements between branches of government, and if the system has subunits (like US states), the court resolves disputes between those entities and between subunits and the federal government. Presidential systems are found in much of Latin America, as well as in parts of Sub-Saharan Africa. Remember: Not all democracies have presidential systems, *and* not all presidential systems are democracies.

Parliamentary Systems. A second form of governmental system that many democracies use is a parliamentary one. In parliamentary systems, voters select their national legislators (members of parliament, abbreviated as MPs) for the lower house (the more important house), and the MPs choose who will be the chief executive. The person is usually called the **prime minister (PM)**.[10] The PM creates a cabinet of officials, most of whom are also members of the lower house of parliament, and they form the government. In other words, they are the chief decision makers and the heads of the various bureaucracies (such as the foreign, defense, justice, or treasury ministries) while *also serving in the legislature*.

Where power is divided in a presidential system, authority is fused and concentrated in a parliamentary one. This system is designed to make legislating easy so that the government can quickly and effectively deal with issues that are affecting the country. Why? Because the prime minister is selected by a majority of parliamentarians who "have **confidence**"—literally, that is the term—in the leader and the government. That means those MPs, a majority of the parliament, will vote for the PM's bills.

In parliamentary systems, such as that found in India, authority is fused and concentrated to make legislating easy so that the government can quickly and effectively deal with issues that are affecting the country.

ISHARA S.KODIKARA/Stringer/AFP/Getty Images

A few additional points to note here: In parliamentary systems, the word "government" has a special and specific meaning, different from the ones that Americans typically use. "**The Government**"[11] means the prime minister and those members of the cabinet *at a particular moment in time* whose job is to manage governmental affairs, write legislation, and pass it into policy. In fact, the prime minister is the **head of government**. Thus, regarding past British politics, you might hear people talk about the "Thatcher Government" (after Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher who led the country from 1979 to 1990) or the "Labour Government" (referring to a time when the Labour Party was in control). Those references stress the roles of the prime minister and cabinet officials, typically from a certain party, that are pressing forward their policy priorities.

While the PM sits in the lower house and that body is the key place for legislating, if there is an upper house, it typically has the power to delay, amend, and even approve legislation. In some countries, however, parliament is unicameral, meaning there is only one body that represents and legislates. The bicameral legislature generally came about for two historical reasons. The first is an older tradition of thinking of society as divided into various classes of people, each of whom deserved representation in a body. The upper house was the place where the more influential (because of their social rank, wealth, or place in the religious hierarchy) were represented, while the lower house gave "commoners" a say. Prior to the worldwide victory of the democratic

ideal in the twentieth century, upper houses were often the more important one. The second and more recent source for the upper house was its role in guaranteeing a voice to certain types of people or territorial areas in diverse or geographically large countries. Sometimes, members of the upper house are chosen indirectly (for instance by virtue of their position in society or in a regional government). Other times, they are elected directly.

Returning to the discussion of the parliamentary system, there are times when a member from the upper house can sit in the cabinet. Usually, the upper house has less power over legislation and can use the power of delay in an attempt to force the lower house to change a provision. In parliamentary systems, the opposition of the upper house can typically be overcome in time. Why then have an upper house? Those in the upper house can represent historically special societal groups or serve as the voice of the units (what Americans call states). The idea is that including them in the process and listening to their concerns will improve the laws passed. Still, these people are typically not coequal members because they don't directly select the prime minister. Table 2.1 helps you compare presidential and parliamentary systems.

TABLE 2.1 ■ Comparing the Presidential and Parliamentary Systems

	Presidential	Parliamentary
Terms	**Fixed**, election is always on a certain day after a fixed time period	**Partly flexible**, but before period of rule has elapsed (usually four to six years between elections); the prime minister can often choose precisely when elections are called within that time frame
Power is	**Divided** between the three coequal branches	Executive and legislative power are **fused**; note that the prime minister and most government members are members of the lower house and rely on the majority to follow them. In some cases, courts cannot exercise judicial review.
Executive is chosen	In a **separate ballot** from the legislature	**As a result of the election for the lower house**. Thereafter, the newly chosen MPs select the PM. *(If there is a change in the middle of the term, selection depends on specific country/party rules.)*
Members of the cabinet/cabinet responsibility	Don't sit in the legislature and must resign a seat if selected for the cabinet because of separation of powers. Cabinet officials might also come from many other places such as business, unit-level governments, and the military. They serve at the pleasure of the president who can ask them to resign. "The Buck Stops Here" means **the president is responsible** ultimately for policies of the administration.	Are members of the legislature (usually lower house). All members of the cabinet typically have **collective responsibility** for policy. Cabinet officials are high-ranking members of their party, influential, and ambitious politicians in their own right. Sometimes, they are rivals of the PM and would like to be PM themselves someday.

(*Continued*)

TABLE 2.1 ■ Comparing the Presidential and Parliamentary Systems (*Continued*)

	Presidential	Parliamentary
Election for executive	Is **direct**, on a **separate ballot** from that of the legislature. Exactly how elections work varies.	**Results from the lower house election** and, if necessary, post-election bargaining to form a coalition. Prior to elections, parties select their leaders. (These selections can be done in a variety of ways.) At election time, party leaders are known, as are their proposed programs. Voters choose their MPs, knowing that the MPs will support their own party leader to be PM (**indirect election**).
Besides election loss or death, executive can be removed through	Resignation or impeachment, when the president is accused of serious wrongdoing and convicted. See country-specific rules for more guidance.	Resignation, a revolt within the parliamentary majority against the PM, or a vote of no confidence. (Rules on confidence vary around the world.)
Besides head of government, executive also acts as	Head of state, ***typically also*** head of party	Head of party, but is *not* head of state. In some parliamentary systems, the official who serves as head of state is called a "president," *but this president does not have the power of one in a presidential system!*

Really See and Explain

Take time to carefully process the differences in these governmental forms. Write down what you see that surprises you about each one. Also consider what is "good" and problematic in each system. How did you arrive at those judgments?

In these systems of fused executive and legislative power, prime ministers are very confident that their bills will pass. The reason is that the PM has majority support in parliament, because more than half its members select this person to be leader. By doing so they are pledging support for the government's programs. To reject a main bill (on defense, foreign affairs, or the budget) is called a **vote of no confidence**. By voting no, legislators are showing they aren't willing to follow the PM's lead. When that happens, we say that the **government falls**, and elections for a new parliament are held in a very short time span.[12] In other words, when PMs lose the confidence of the majority of parliament, they have to turn the decision back to the people to resolve the issue. With votes of no confidence, not only is a PM's position at risk, but ordinary MPs can also lose their *seats*. That's why rejecting bills tends to happen infrequently; it is risky for everyone in the majority.

After a no-confidence vote, a brief campaign follows and voters choose a new parliament. That group selects a new prime minister. While voters might elect a legislature that chooses the very same leader, the new elections make the PM and parties appeal to the voters and get their feedback on the direction of the country. The campaign is usually fought on the issue that prompted the no-confidence vote, and people choose how they want to handle the policy disagreement.

Both citizens and parliamentarians generally understand how this system works and, therefore, the significance of their ballots. Voters realize that when they go to the polls they are indirectly voting for the prime minister and the government. Parties make their **platforms** (also called **manifestos**) clear. These are their policy priorities and resulting plans they will enact if they win a majority and can form the government. They also make their PM candidates clear during the contest; it is usually their party leader. Voters also know that senior party officials will earn top cabinet posts. In typical elections, the party in power keeps many of its previous leaders, although some cabinet officials might change posts or be demoted and others moved up. For the opposition, the members of the "**shadow cabinet**," those who have been speaking about and offering alternatives to the government's policies in their respective issue areas during parliamentary debates, are typically the potential cabinet members. When it comes time for the vote on the prime minister, **party discipline**—the control of parties over how their parliamentary members vote—is relatively high. Thus, a typical MP will vote for whom the party leadership decides should be PM and will support the party manifesto.

Similarly, MPs know that if they vote against their party in a vote of confidence they are sending multiple important messages. They are showing they lack faith in their party's leadership, and they are telling voters they are willing to stand for election again. Such communication is typically fraught.[13] Because of party discipline, disobedient members are risking their standing in the party and perhaps even their ability to run for reelection. Parliamentarians are endangering their jobs in another way. If the parliamentarians of the ruling group don't have confidence in the PM and government, why should ordinary people re-elect *any* of its members? Not surprisingly, votes of no confidence are not common and are typically considered momentous. No-confidence votes say that the parliament and particularly the majority has lost faith in the government's (PM's and cabinet's) policies, and a new approach is needed. While this is a serious step, it's not as serious as a guilty verdict in an impeachment trial of a president in a presidential system. A decision against a president is a conclusion that an executive acted unconstitutionally or illegally. That president may not stand for office again.

Prime ministers can lose their posts in less dramatic fashions too. In democracies, parties are always gauging public opinion and hoping that they can stay in or win power. If a PM becomes unpopular, the parliamentary party could convince or try to force the PM to resign. They could also unseat the leader. The precise way a new leader is selected from this kind of intraparty revolt varies by circumstances, country, and even party.[14] When PMs change without a general election, government positions are usually shuffled around among high-ranking officials; the new PM and cabinet serve out the term.

A great advantage of incumbency in parliamentary systems is that PMs typically have the right to call elections at a time of their choosing *before* the end of their terms. Let's imagine that after two years in office, the PM has won a great policy victory and has very high approval ratings. Then, that leader might call for a vote to secure the hold on power when the political climate is good. These decisions to **dissolve** parliament and have **snap elections** (usually held in about a month) can still be risky, as even during a short campaign public opinion can shift and the electoral outcome can be worse for the leader, delivering a smaller majority, no majority, or even the loss of the prime ministership.[15]

While you might disagree, Richard Rose famously argued that knowing who is responsible for policy successes and failures is much easier in parliamentary systems than in presidential ones.[16] Because of the separation of powers in presidential systems, the inability to pass legislation can be blamed on many actors. You have likely heard many complaints about American gridlock. In addition, to pass a bill in the United States, many entities have to compromise;

the resulting policy is a mix of approaches and can be unsatisfactory to many. Which compromises had a positive impact? Which ones caused the problems? Partisans and members of various institutions can levy blame and take credit as they wish, while voters are left to sort out the charges.

In a parliamentary system, on the other hand, the government is controlling the legislation and is clearly responsible. Moreover, the opposition is arrayed against it during debates over major issues. Thus, even though the opposition has little legislative power, it still highlights alternatives and holds the government accountable by forcing it to explain its actions in public. Because these functions are so central to parliamentary democracy, those out of power are called the "***loyal* opposition**." Parties not in office prefer alternative policies from the government, yet they are loyal to the democratic system and the country. The idea that the opposition plays an important part in governance is strikingly different from the demonization of political opponents (calling them "enemies" or worse) in authoritarian systems.

From this discussion, you can see that partisanship and party discipline is important in parliamentary systems. Therefore, prime ministers are chief executives and the party leaders, but they are typically not **head of state**, the symbol of the state, the unifier, and consoler in times of trouble. Of course, prime ministers seek to perform those roles as ways to broaden their appeal, but parliamentary systems usually have another individual in that position who presides over state banquets, accepts the credentials of foreign diplomats, signs treaties, and performs other types of ceremonial duties in the name of the whole country and all its people. The head of state can be selected in many ways. Some countries use a member of a royal family. Others designate[17] someone as a "president" for a fixed term, often a retired former politician, a beloved cultural figure, or someone else who has transcended politics. This kind of president does *not* have the power of one in a presidential system or a mixed system, as we will see next.

Really Think and Explain

Thinking about that last sentence, explain why just knowing the names of the "key posts" in a political system is not enough for understanding how it works. What's essential, so far, for understanding the differences in the ways that presidential and parliamentary systems work?

Mixed, Dual-Executive, or Semi-Presidential Systems. A third type of governmental system has multiple names, each reflecting the fact that this system combines elements of the presidential and parliamentary systems with the sharing (sometimes more intensely than others) of executive power. In contemporary times, France instituted this system at the end of 1958 when voters supported a referendum authorizing a new Constitution. Starting in the late 1980s and thereafter, many post-communist states in Eurasia and some countries throughout Sub-Saharan Africa have implemented it as they tried to build democracy.

In a *democratic*, **mixed system**, the president and the parliament are chosen on separate ballots. Presidents win elections and form a cabinet. The extent of their independence in choosing these other leaders and advisers depends on whom the parliament chooses to be prime minister, also called **premier**, reflecting the system's French roots.[18] The parliament's selection of PM occurs as it does in a parliamentary system, with voters choosing their MPs and then members choosing the PM by majority vote. When the president's party and allies don't control a majority in the parliament, then the president has to share power with a

premier from a rival party. In this case, the PM has significant power over policy making and in choosing cabinet members. Thus, the president is weaker than when the premier is from the same party.[19]

France instituted a democratic mixed system of government in which there is both an elected president and a prime minister. Here, President Emmanuel Macron gives a speech with Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne in the background.

THOMAS PADILLA/Contributor/AFP/Getty Images

While the system was initially designed with the assumption that voters would choose members of the same party or with similar ideological leanings to be president and prime minister, this partisan alignment has not always been the case. Because these positions are filled using different ballots and even in different years, voters can be fickle. When presidents and PMs are of the same party, presidents typically are the dominant figure and put their stamps on the overall policy agenda, even though the two technically share the executive. PMs are responsible for moving that program through the legislature. When they are from different parties, observers call the situation **cohabitation**. The president is formally head of state, technically sharing executive power with the PM, but given the premier's role in the legislature and the fact that its members have selected that leader, the PM typically has more power to achieve policy outcomes. Under cohabitation, both the president and PM are battling for citizen support. The fact that they have to share the executive means that both are trying to achieve positive outcomes. This situation can lead to grandstanding and a real separation of spheres of responsibility for the president and PM, but it can also amount to problem solving, as each wants to show competence.[20]

Table 2.2 summarizes some of the similarities and differences in each of the governmental systems. Realize that any of these forms can be co-opted by authoritarians so that the institutions are not democratic. Moreover, even when these systems are democratic, note that the same name, e.g., "president" has different functions in each environment. Thus, you must be very careful when encountering new systems. Not all presidents are created equal!

TABLE 2.2 ■ Qualities of Three Governmental Systems

	Governmental System		
Quality	**Presidential**	**Parliamentary**	**Mixed, Dual-Executive, or Semi-Presidential**
Efficiency—ability to respond to problems (indicates a lack of gridlock)	Not designed for efficiency, though when broad-based consensus exists, can be efficient. Good potential for gridlock.	Highly efficient, gridlock is unlikely because a majority of parliamentarians usually work together to legislate.	Variable, depends on whether the legislature and the executive are controlled by the same party, as well as the level of agreement between president and PM/legislature on policy solutions.
Nature of executive-legislative relations	President and legislature can work together, but relations can also be highly conflictual, even when the legislative majority is of the same party as the executive, particularly when parties are broad-based groupings.	PM and cabinet sit in the legislature. PM and cabinet often dominate the rest of the legislature. Moreover, they typically have means for disciplining junior members of their party in the legislature.	Has elements of both cooperation and confrontation. PM's ambitions (whether from the president's party or not) may affect relations.
Relative prominence of/population's familiarity with elected officials	President is well known. Whether people pay attention to the legislative leaders and elected representatives varies. Citizens are often unclear about which branch and/or leaders are responsible for policy or obstacles.	PM and cabinet members leading prominent ministries are usually well known, so, too, are the chief opposition leaders.	The president and prime minister are well known if cohabitation exists. Otherwise the president tends to dominate. PM and cabinet members may gain attention depending on issue area, personality, and overall contentiousness.

Really See and Explain

Take time to process the information in this table and what you've learned about the three different governmental systems. What did you find surprising or interesting? Record those thoughts. What do you think are the strengths and weaknesses of the different systems?

Electoral and Party Systems

Because of the importance of free, fair, and frequent elections for ensuring accountability, electoral systems are our next focus. In contesting elections, **political parties** are the vehicles that organize and aggregate interests, positions, and candidates. Thus, **election systems** and parties interact to affect who governs.[21] You will learn about three types of contests here, although there are additional ones. Again, remember, having elections or using a certain system does not guarantee democracy. Rather, whether the contests are implemented in an FFF fashion, satisfying the popular sovereignty, rule of law, and rights-based principles central to democracy are the determining factors.

Single-Member District, First-Past-the-Post (SMD FPTP) Elections. While this system is a mouthful (and the shorter abbreviation of **FPTP** is therefore very helpful), it is one with which

many of you are already familiar. In these competitions, candidates stand for election in a territorial district, and voters in that territory select the candidate that they prefer for the one position (single-member) that is up for grabs in that constituency (district). When all the votes are tallied, the candidate with the most votes (who crosses the "post" or "finish line" first) wins the contest and is elected. Notice that the candidate with the most votes has not necessarily won majority (more than 50% +1 votes) support in the district. Thus, this arrangement is typically referred to as a **plurality system**, where plurality means winning more votes than anyone else.

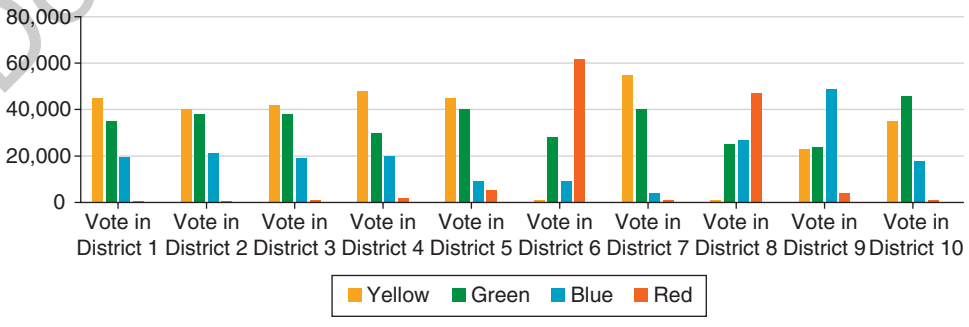
Several decades ago, French political scientist Maurice Duverger noticed that these plurality electoral contests tend to produce (a) two-party systems over time as well as (b) parties with broad-based ideologies that are centrist or moderate. Even if a system starts out with many ideologically varied parties, the FPTP rules will "teach" both elites and citizens to act more rationally.[22] This "**rationality**" means that parties and voters will converge into two different but moderate groupings in the hope of appealing to the most people.

Duverger claimed that the logic of FPTP elections among both elites (candidates and party officials) as well as voters leads to two dominant parties that seek to be "**big tent parties**," where many different kinds of voters feel "at home" and "comfortable." For elites, the FPTP contests mean that in order to win, they need broad appeal; therefore, Duverger asserted a centrist ideology will attract more voters and lead to victory. For the individual candidates, having the support of a large, established organization (as opposed to a small, newly formed party) will give voters an instant understanding of their "brand" and will potentially provide them with resources to conduct and win the contest. From a voters' perspective, because they know that a candidate needs the most votes to win, they have an incentive to pick the candidate from the biggest party that aligns most closely with their views and has the best chance of winning. In a sense, both officials and voters have the motive to merge toward the larger and more ideologically amalgamated, moderate groupings. Therefore, smaller, more radical parties die out (because they don't win seats and so candidates look for another party home) and voters come to identify with one of the two major partisan groupings because they don't want to vote for losers. Of course, not all individuals are entirely rational, and thus, there might be some smaller parties, but these often don't affect the outcomes very much, or so the logic expects.

But Duverger's ideas don't always hold. Sometimes candidates and voters are very attached to the ideology of their smaller parties, and/or they don't care whether they win or lose in this particular year. They might want to support "their" cause and focus on the future. Also, sometimes emerging challenges provide openings for new parties.[23]

With that understanding of FPTP, let's turn to how it might translate into electoral outcomes. Figure 2.1 shows some FPTP contests across ten districts with 100,000 voters in each. These results highlight some key characteristics of plurality systems.

FIGURE 2.1 ■ Results of SMD FPTP Contests



Really See and Explain

What do you see here that is interesting? For which parties does this system work well? Which parties and partisans are likely unhappy with this system? Why does the situation turn out the way it does and which parties (if any) are likely to die out or grow stronger and why?

Of course, there are an infinite number of possibilities for how elections in ten different districts could play out. These results show that FPTP systems *can* create legislative majorities (60 percent of the seats going to the Yellow Party), although a system-wide popular majority is lacking. They also reveal that when a party can concentrate its vote in a district (like the Reds do), it can win some seats even if its overall popularity is limited. Yellow's and Red's good fortune are paired with problems for Green and the Blue. Their votes are spread over multiple districts and their total appeal (especially Green's) is relatively high, but they didn't win commensurate seats. Are Blue and Green similar enough to join together or should they merge with one of the other groupings? If so, combining could greatly enhance their abilities to win. To merge with others, party leaders likely have to compromise their positions and could become less important. They also need to worry about whether their voters will follow them if they make these changes.

Thus, what many American readers have typically thought of as a "simple" and even the "normal" electoral system is neither uncomplicated nor universal. While one could argue that this system is fair (as long as it is conducted fairly) because voters know the way the game is played, it is not necessarily highly representative. Instead of mirroring voters' preferences, this system seeks to aggregate votes at the district level, reflect the will of the plurality by district, and create majorities at the level of the legislature as a whole. That legislative majority makes governments more stable, as legislatures will more easily pass bills. Stability and efficiency in legislating can be positive attributes, but the downsides are potentially too much stability (difficulty in unseating an unpopular majority of legislators who represent an overall minority of voters), too much ease in passing legislation that might not have majority support of the voters, and misrepresenting the population's sentiments. If these particular territorial borders have significance to the people living there, then perhaps this method of contesting is fine, but what if the district lines are arbitrarily drawn and don't reflect some important identity or commonality of the residents?

Of course, there will be times using FPTP when winners achieve majorities (even in this multi-party configuration) or parties drop away (as Duverger expects) to leave two parties standing. Then, this system creates majority victories in all districts. Still, if the districts aren't all the same size or if one party is very popular in only a few districts, but competitive in others, the total seat and vote percentages could be mismatched. Thus, FPTP has both advantages and weaknesses as a voting system.

Proportional Representation (PR) Elections with Fixed Lists and Thresholds. Another popular voting system prioritizes representativeness of voter's ideologies and compromise in governance over legislative efficiency and governmental efficiency. This system is **proportional representation (PR)**. The name indicates the relationship between voters' preferences and legislative seat assignments. Just think: PR translates to *percentage of votes determines percentage of seats* awarded—representation is proportional to voters' preferences. Voters pick a party on their ballot (not a candidate), the votes are tallied, and then their percentage of the vote is used to determine that parties share of the seats in the legislature. Table 2.3 shows one example of some PR contests.[24] In this example as in real life, rounding means that the vote and seat percentages do not always match exactly, but they are extremely close. One seat totals are calculated, parties name the people to serve in the legislature.

TABLE 2.3 ■ Results of a PR Contest: How Are the 100 Seats Apportioned?

Party	Vote Totals	Percentage of Votes	Percentage of Seats	Seats
Yellow	335,000	33.5	34	34
Green	344,000	34.4	34	34
Blue	196,500	19.65	20	20
Red	124,500	12.45	12	12
Total	1,000,000	100%	100%	10

Really See and Explain

What's noticeable here? Take some time to think about these results on their own and in comparison to the FPTP example for ten seats. Do you like one better than the other? Why or why not?

One concern you might be having (besides those related to rounding) about PR is where do the candidates for these seats come from? In PR with **fixed lists**,[25] political parties publish their lists of possible candidates prior to the election, and they rank order their standard-bearers. When it comes time to decide who is elected, the winners come from the top of the list. In the above example, both Yellow and Green send the first thirty-four people on their lists to the parliament; Blue sends its top twelve and Red its top ten. Clearly, such a system gives party leaders a good deal of control over their legislators. If some of those candidates have been annoying or disloyal to party leaders, they might find themselves at the bottom of the list, particularly if they don't have their own source of popular appeal.[26]

The fixed list gives party leaders the ability to shape their parliamentary delegation in other ways too. Leaders can arrange candidates in ways to discourage or encourage ethnic, class, gender, sexuality or other types of diversity. In the past thirty or so years, many states using PR fixed list systems have made gender equity a priority. Thus, they include more women near the top or employ what are called "**zippered**" or "**zebra**" lists, where the candidates alternate by gender (woman, man, woman, man, woman, etc.) down the list. Such a configuration means that if a party were to choose twelve representatives, the top twelve would necessarily be half women and half men, assuring gender parity in that delegation. Of course, this approach adopts that older, binary understanding of gender, but you know that parties could consider "other stripes" too to slot for various kinds of gender and other intersectional diversities.

Comparing the electoral outcome to the FPTP one, you likely noticed that no party has a majority and, thus, that legislating effectively requires reaching across partisan lines. To form a government often requires compromise in PR systems; no single party typically wins a majority and can choose a prime minister on its own. In that case, the party with the most votes (here, just barely the Green Party because of its higher vote total) has the *first* opportunity to form a government within a certain period of time. To form a government, leaders must typically ensure they will have at least 50 percent + 1 of the MPs voting with them on major policy issues. Therefore, Green leaders would have to negotiate with other parties to see whether they could agree on policy priorities and sharing seats in the cabinet. Such a compromise, when two or more parties coalesce to govern together, is called a **coalition agreement** and it creates a **coalition government**. Typically, the larger party's leader becomes the prime minister, and the smaller

party's leader wins an important seat in the cabinet (maybe foreign, treasury, or defense minister, depending on the expertise or priorities of that politician and significance of the post in that country). Typically, large parties like the Greens look to one or more smaller parties to achieve majority control over the legislature. They seek partners that allow them to stay *as true as possible* to their policy goals and prefer fewer partners so as not to have to compromise on issues and share too much power. In this example, assuming the Blues are ideologically close enough, they are the Greens' best choice. In that case, the Blues have some roughly similar policy priorities and hold enough seats for the Greens to lead a coalition government.

In 2022, a coalition government was formed in Israel between six parties, including the Likud Party led by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (seen on left), and the Religious Zionist Party led by Bezalel Smotrich (seen on right).

AP Photo/Tsafrir Abayov

In times of great national challenge, parties sometimes create a "**grand coalition**," when the major parties find common ground to govern. While unusual, grand coalitions are not impossible. In our example, a grand coalition would mean that Green and Yellow compromised and formed a government together.

In general, coalition governments are not surprising in countries that use PR with fixed lists. But proportional representation is not only used in parliamentary systems; some presidential and mixed systems around the world use it to elect their legislatures. When in place, as Duverger would tell us, PR typically produces a multiparty system because even small parties win seats. In parliamentary systems, those small parties often have influence over the executive and policy by becoming part of a coalition government. In our example, a Green-Blue coalition would give the Blue party more influence over policy than Yellow, a grouping that performed far better than Blue did. Is that fair? Perhaps. This outcome (Green-Blue coalition) together reflects the preferences of a greater percentage of the voters than could happen in a contest like the one we saw earlier in our FPTP ten-seat example. Arguably, PR is better at representing the ideological preferences of more citizens.

One last point about PR fixed list systems. Typically, there is one other condition under which they operate: Parties often have to achieve a certain **threshold** of support to win even one seat in the legislature. The reason for the threshold is to prevent the formation of too many very small parties. If ambitious and popular leaders keep breaking off to lead their own organizations, then our hypothetical 100-person parliament could have an enormous number (possibly up to 100) of parties.

In order to make forming a government and governing easier while also seeking to represent the sentiments of "significant" groups of voters, most countries using PR set a minimum level of popular support—a threshold—for including parties in the legislature. A popular (but not the only) threshold that exists is 5 percent, meaning that if parties win less than 5 percent of the list vote, they forfeit their seats. Table 2.4 shows what would happen if a 5 percent threshold governed another hypothetical election with multiple parties earning a variety of shares of the vote.

TABLE 2.4 ■ How Thresholds Affect Seat Distributions

Party	Vote Totals	Percentage of Votes	Seats	Percentage of Seats
Yellow	335,000	33.5	34 + 7 = 41	41
Green	344,000	34.4	34 + 8 = 42	42
Navy Blue	100,000	10.0	10 + 2 = 12	12
Sapphire	43,500	4.35	0	0
Turquoise	53,000	5.3	5	5
Crimson	43,000	4.3	0	0
Scarlet	41,500	4.1	0	0
Maroon	40,000	4.0	0	0
Total	1,000,000	100%	100	100%

Really See and Explain

What's noticeable when you compare Tables 2.4 and 2.5*? Why might thresholds be good? Why might they be bad? What do these examples have you understand about multiparty systems and thresholds? Write down these or other thoughts.*

While Green and Yellow garnered significant support, in this case, 16.75 percent of voters chose parties (Sapphire, Crimson, Scarlet, and Maroon) that did not reach the threshold. That means seventeen seats (16.75 percent of 100) are not going to be awarded to those parties and are re-apportioned to the bigger winners. The table above shows one way of distributing those seats based on relative size of the winning parties, rewarding extra seats (+8) to Green as the biggest vote-getter, with Yellow not far behind (+7), and Navy (+2) receiving a little boost, too. Thresholds penalize very small parties and their voters, but the logic is to change the behavior of those very party leaders and voters in future elections. By showing them that they won't win seats, the goal is to force leaders and voters of small groups to look to coalesce with and vote for bigger parties. Such responses would mean that partisans with "Reddish" ideas should coalesce around one party, as should the Blue (or at least, Sapphire loyalists should pick one of the other Blues to join).

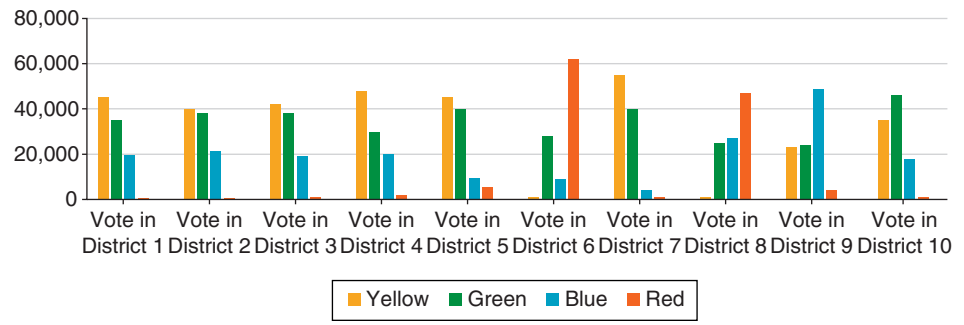
Thresholds became popular after World War II as some new democracies reflected on the disaster that befell Germany in the interwar period. With PR, no threshold, high ideological diversity, and many parties, German elections in the 1920s and early 1930s yielded parliaments with many parties and no partisan majority. Coalition governments couldn't stay together. Repeated votes of no confidence, rising economic problems, and increasing political violence paved the way for the rise of Adolf Hitler.

Majoritarian Systems. The last way of organizing elections that we will examine is a **majoritarian system**. The idea here is that to win a candidate must have the support of a majority of voters. Because that outcome can't be guaranteed when multiple parties are participating, voting frequently requires two **rounds (of voting)** before a candidate emerges with a majority, at least 50 percent + 1 (note: *not* 51 percent of the) votes. Candidates vie in districts, and if no one earns the majority of votes cast, then there is another round of voting. In the **second round**, voters choose among the more popular candidates to fill the seat in another election, usually scheduled a week or two later. Those who perform poorly are forced out of the contest. Exactly who is excluded in this **runoff election** depends on national rules; sometimes only the top two vote getters are allowed to proceed, other times, there is a particular level of support that candidates have to earn to move forward. Even when there is a threshold, parties often encourage candidates who didn't perform that well to withdraw so that the party leadership can throw its weight behind others of (more) similar ideological leanings. Then, in the next round, usually the candidate with more than 50 percent + 1 votes wins or the procedure is repeated, excluding additional candidates, again until a majority victor emerges.

Observers have said that these types of majoritarian systems lead citizens to vote with their hearts in the first round and then to use the runoff ballot to vote *against* the person they absolutely don't want elected.[27] Not surprisingly, **turnout** in later rounds is important. In the runoff, party leaders do their best to motivate their voters and discourage those who oppose them. They also try to appeal to citizens whose ideas are "near" to theirs, making agreements to support some ideologically similar candidates and withdraw weaker ones of their own, in order to encourage their voters to participate and to maximize the number of possible seats that sympathetic partisans win. Perhaps surprisingly, elites are used to cooperating across party lines in the second round and making short term "deals with devils," i.e., other groupings that they might not always agree with. Voters, too, either stay home or learn to "hold their noses" and vote in the runoff to prevent candidates they fundamentally oppose from coming to power.

Let's take one last look at our example data, but this time imagine that the system is a two-ballot majoritarian system in which only the top two candidates proceed to the second round. The

FIGURE 2.2 ■ First Round Results in a Majoritarian System



information in Figure 2.2 reflects the results of that first round. You can see that two districts chose winners in the first round, but the other eight will have runoffs between the top two vote getters. The dispersal of the votes in those remaining districts shows you just how important getting our "your" voters, appealing to other partisans, and convincing ideologically opposed voters to stay home is for winning.

Really See and Explain

What is interesting or notable here? Compare the benefits and disadvantages of this system with those of the other two. Imagine how you would feel as a Yellow or Red voter in each one. How do your emotions (and sense of inclusion and fairness) change with the system, as well as with your partisan affiliation?

Reflections on Party Systems. This discussion shows that electoral institutions, as well as the nature of the governmental system, can affect both how many parties exist or are important in political systems, how ideologically restrictive they are, and to what extent systems promote cooperation. In other words, *rules matter a lot*; they affect the ways elites seek to win and how voters make their choices. Perhaps a good way to underline the importance of these rules is to think about how adding a designated hitter and pitch clocks (baseball) or a three-point line (basketball) has affected those sports. Changes in the rules change the way political and athletic contests are played and won.

Really Think and Explain

Why do some say institutions affect politics and policy? Compare the previous data to explain how different election systems produce different results.

Territorial Systems

A last set of institutions has an important impact on the way a country is governed: **federal**, **unitary**, and **confederal** territorial systems. What differentiates territorial systems is how much and which powers are concentrated at the center of the state (in the national capital and in the hands of national-level officials) and how much authority is devolved to officials at lower levels of government.[28]

Federal systems assert that the central government is important, while certain powers should also be reserved for the units. These reserved powers give units the right to decide local policies, *as long as those decisions do not contravene national law, the rule of law, and individual rights*. The United States is a federal system, and its units are called "states." Other countries with federal systems give their entities different names (such as provinces in Canada). No matter their names, in federal systems the units have their own sets of elected officials who are able to make decisions regarding policies that may be distinct from those in other parts of that country. However, this policy diversity is limited by federal law. If unit-level decisions violate federal provisions, then the federal law prevails. Federal systems make sense when a country is big or when different territorial pieces have unique histories and identities. Thus, giving the units some limited say over their own rules helps to satisfy popular sovereignty while also maintaining national unity and protecting legal equality and rights.

States with unitary systems, despite sometimes being large or having units, do not divide power in this way. In France, the constituent elements of the state, the "*departements*," do not have reserved powers. Instead, the units are for administrative purposes only. The central government determines policies and these are enacted below; local level officials (such as mayors or town councils) have some authority but most important policy is set from the top and administered down. Uniformity in politics characterizes these systems, and unitary systems tend to work best in places that are smaller or where past history meant that a centralizing state brought restive regions under its control. The legacy of that battle for asserting central authority can mean that devolving power might be dangerous for maintaining the unity of the state. Thus, maintaining a unitary state can be perceived as the only way of keeping the whole country together.

A last territorial arrangement, one that is highly unusual in world politics, is the confederal one. In confederations, the units have the prime power and the central government's authority is limited. When there is a contradiction between unit-level and central law, the smaller entity's law prevails. Most power is reserved for the pieces, reflecting "units' rights." This system was the type established under the old US Articles of Confederation. It was also the form that existed in the Confederacy during the American Civil War. As the USSR was collapsing, the leader Mikhail Gorbachev tried to create a more confederal solution, and the old Yugoslavia also had confederal elements. As the examples suggest, success in confederal systems is difficult to achieve because the units often wonder why they should remain together, and the center is too weak to achieve positive outcomes for its constituent parts.

Really Think and Explain

How is federalism important to democracy? How might federalism be abused in democracies? Similarly, how might a unitary state be "bad" for democracy? When might a unitary structure be good? Why? And what about confederal systems? How might they be consistent with and problematic for democracies?

ECONOMIC INSTITUTIONS AND DEMOCRACY

While you might have expected to learn about a variety of political structures that underpin democracy, our focus here on economies might be a bit of a surprise. The links between capitalism and contemporary democracy, however, cannot be denied, although scholars debate the precise ways in which they are related. Two of the questions they ask are:

- does democracy require a particular kind of capitalism, and
- is the relationship between liberal economics and politics causal or correlational?[29]

To start answering these important questions, let's define **capitalism**. Very basically, capitalism is an economic system in which individuals own and possess productive assets—e.g., land, natural resources, tools, machinery, and manual and intellectual skills—that they employ to earn more money and grow their wealth.[30]

That simple definition actually leads us to a political minefield because some people think there is only one way to have a capitalist system. For believers in **laissez-faire** capitalism, the

economy exists without interference from the state. Individuals must be free to use their assets *any* way they wish and are *necessarily* motivated to earn as much profit as possible. In this version, there's virtually no room for government regulation and redistribution. There's also blindness to all the ways that governments create infrastructure, including roads, communications technologies, the law and able workers. Some adherents of the unfettered market might also deny that some individuals might prefer creating meaning or beauty or having leisure time instead of earning more money. Although this understanding of laissez-faire capitalism was common before 1935 and was revitalized in the 1980s, this type of system is hard to find in actual contemporary economies.

In fact, there are a variety of capitalist political economies in today's world, some of which exist inside democracies and others characterize the economic systems in authoritarian states. That term **political economy** might surprise you, but it is one that political scientists, if not economists, use frequently. It captures the reality of politics and the agency of real-life humans (not some assumed "economic *man*") in economic systems. The political economy is the intersection of political forces and productive capacity. Political leaders and economic agents, affected by their ideologies, ambitions, and national assets, create structures, processes, and value systems that affect ownership, production, and the distribution of wealth and resources within their countries. For political scientists, all economies are necessarily political because they affect and create new opportunities for gaining, losing, and distributing power.

In Europe today, you will see a variety of democratic and capitalist political economies, most of which are greatly influenced by previous traditions, accomplishments, and traumas that each country experienced. While you will learn about these political economies in the next chapter, here let's explore the links between the economy and politics.

Does Capitalism Produce Democracy?

As you noticed in exploring the maps of democracy and human development in Chapter 1, places with democracy seem to be better at delivering human development. In fact, those human development leaders are virtually all capitalist,[31] and those with higher levels of human development appear to be found in countries with higher scores on the democracy index. Is there some kind of relationship between capitalism and democracy? Scholars have been exploring that question for decades, and their earliest efforts placed the causal arrow from the economic system to the political one, examining whether capitalism produces democracy.[32]

An argument that has been extremely influential since World War II is that the transformation of an economy to a "modern" one has to occur to create democracy. Modernization, according to these theorists, means industrializing the economy, changing the major type of production from home-based business and subsistence agriculture to an economy with big factories, large-scale and mechanized farming, and urban (and later suburban) living for workers. This economy provides many more goods and services so that more people can be better off. That's why as technology changes and industrial capitalism characterizes economies, economic transformation will necessarily create a sizable **middle class**, according to this approach. This segment of society is defined by its level of resources, types of jobs, and values. Middle-class people can pay unexpected bills, work in the professions or well-remunerated trades with good benefits and pensions, and have attitudes that reflect a respect for learning and/or expertise. Some definitions emphasize one of these factors more than others and some people can be middle class without satisfying all three criteria.[33]

Modern economies typically produce a sizable middle class.

iStockphoto.com/skynesher

From the perspective of theorists emphasizing the capitalism-democracy link, the middle class is essential to democracy. Before industrialization and a productive economy exist, the vast majority of people are peasants. A tiny minority of people are large landowners, nobility, upper clergy, bankers, high-ranking military officers, and global traders who make up the upper class. The middle class—skilled craftspeople, professionals like lawyers and accountants, and merchants—is a small segment. Inequality in these societies is great. Enthusiasts of modernization assume that the social and economic changes that come with industrialization produce a relatively large middle class, by creating owners of small- and medium-sized businesses, professionals, and bureaucrats. This new group seeks to protect its assets and property from unfair seizure and legal abuse of the wealthy and powerful. Those demands for a say in politics and for rights mean that the middle class demands democracy. Therefore, modernization theorists claim that industrial capitalism leads over time to democratization, transforming the system into an accountable, law-based, rights-guaranteeing one.

Other scholars emphasizing socioeconomics note that the middle class can and has played an opposing role in places when industrialization occurs but *leaves the overwhelming majority of people poor*. In other words, modernization might not produce a middle class that is a very big sector of the population. If the majority remains poor after industrialization, democracy is frightening to most of the middle class and the elite. Both these groups fear that if empowered, the majority will use politics to take and redistribute assets to the poor. In these situations, the middle class will support authoritarianism as a means of securing their positions and staving off revolution. In other words, an opposing camp of political scientists say there's nothing automatic about industrialization's creating a large group of people who are doing well, have assets to protect, and favor democracy. They insist that states must take additional steps to institute policies that create that big middle class. State must ensure that education is widely

available, skilled workers earn a good living, and former peasants can move off the land and into decent jobs. Only with state involvement will large groups of people achieve middle-class status. Thus, this second group of scholars are skeptical of the "natural" majority status of the middle class and its demand for democracy. They say capitalism and the changes it brings support democracy only *if* the transformation is equitable and broad-based, pulling a sizable proportion of society out of poverty.[34]

As Table 2.5 shows, while many scholars agree that capitalist industrialization creates a middle class, they disagree on whether that group is sizable and whether it becomes an advocate for democracy. In theoretical terms, they posit the same variables, but assert different **hypotheses**, different underlying logics and relationships between them. These are just two opposing hypotheses that explain democracy. You will see a few more at the end of this chapter and later on in the book.

TABLE 2.5 ■ Industrialization and Democracy: Centrality of the Middle Class

Theoretical Flow Diagram and Corresponding Hypotheses
Success of industrialization → size of the middle class → P (democracy)
H_1: The more industrialized, the larger the middle class, and then the higher the probability of democracy
H_2: The more industrialized and the more state intervention to ensure equity, the larger the middle class, and then the higher the probability of democracy

Really Think and Explain

What are capitalism, the political economy, and the middle class? What is interesting to you about the relationship between capitalism and democracy?

IDEOLOGY IN THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM IN EUROPEAN DEMOCRACIES AND BEYOND[35]

In this introduction to political economy, you have learned that debates around what constitutes a "good" society have often revolved around issues at the juncture of politics and economics. These arguments can be organized in coherent ways, into **ideologies** that fall along the **political spectrum**. While previously imagined as a line, today's spectrum is more complicated (Table 2.6). We'll continue to use the terms "**Center**," "**Right**," and "**Left**," but conceive of the spectrum in at least two dimensions.[36]

The contemporary political spectrum has its roots in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century as democracy was emerging in nation-states. You can see the impacts of later "big historical" conflicts on the spectrum too. To start learning about this ideological dispersal, let's go back in history. Two central questions among political philosophers and the politically engaged of that era are still important today:

- To what extent should the state be used to promote political, economic, and social equality of individuals?
- For whose benefit should any state intervention be used? Is "the nation" the prime concern or should individuals or other communities or groups be beneficiaries of state action?

TABLE 2.6 ■ Basics of the Political Spectrum

		Placements on the Spectrum		
		Left	**Center**	**Right**
State should	Promote equality for individuals?	Yes. Early emphasis was on expanding political rights and inclusion to all men. They acknowledge the barriers (poor laws, no education, horrible work conditions, no social protections) that disadvantage ordinary men. Leftists call for justice in the economic system that will come about if ordinary men are included in the political system. Of course, the original perspective did not address color, ethnic, or gender equality, but over time, including all people (at the intersections) is a common left stance. At the extreme, leftists will call for the end of capitalism and will acknowledge (if not implement) racial, ethnic, and gender equality.	No, because the state can't act effectively or efficiently. Better to use incentive structures in the market or in the political system to allow those with ambition, intelligence, and diligence to rise to the top. Those who have risen to the top will be able to effectively compete without the state's "help" as long as "good" institutions are in place. Achievements not lineage define a person's ability to contribute and worthiness to participate in politics.	No, because equality is neither a fact nor a virtue; in fact, individuals are inherently unequal. Folks should recognize their "place" (based on race, ethnicity, class, gender, intelligence, etc.). The "betters" should lead, others should follow. If states accept equality when it doesn't exist, states will be weak and poorly led.
	Promote the nation?	No, because the "nation" is the wrong concern; typically, exclusive definitions of "nation" divide people within a country and around the world. Better to remember that certain groups (based on class or other principles) can be "disadvantaged" within states. Therefore, states should instead remedy collective disadvantages by addressing structural (based on class, race, ethnicity, gender, or other differences) inequalities.	Again, using the state to "socially engineer" or prioritize a collective over individuals is wrong. Far better to promote "fair" market mechanisms and "good" political institutions that allow for competition and promote better outcomes for individuals. In this way, individuals will advance, and their improvements will positively impact individuals and the nation as a whole. Thus, by promoting freedom of interaction and the ability to compete for persons, the nation will be the best served.	Yes, because "this" nation is better than others; national difference (like race, ethnicity, class, gender, etc.) is one of those "natural" differences, reflecting the hierarchies of people. "This" nation is more special than others, and the state should use its power to further promote the status, wealth, and pride of "this" nation.

If we imagine one spectrum that can apply anywhere and then place any country on the appropriate portion of it, we can designate the "true" Center as the place where adherents celebrate liberal philosophical ideas. Remember, classical liberals stress the fundamental dignity and equality of individuals and have faith in free and fair competition to produce good outcomes. Centrists seek to create political and economic institutions which incentivize "good" behavior. That's why they prefer laissez-faire capitalism, believing that markets will lead to "fairer" and more efficient outcomes than will government intervention. They argue elections will allow the "better" candidates to win. Motivating early centrists was the desire to undo

seventeenth-[37] and eighteenth-century notions of social hierarchy that maintain the privileged places of the royals, landed aristocracy, the military leadership, and clerics. In the early days of liberalism, centrists were trying to force the political inclusion of self-made men (from the dominant race or ethnicity and religion) who through their intellectual and entrepreneurial successes had achieved wealth and skills. In the nineteenth and early twentieth century, Europeans struggled with giving working class and peasant men nationals political power. Two centuries ago, however, only some philosophers and activists were thinking that social hierarchies based on gender, race, ethnicity, and national origin merited re-thinking. They also didn't recognize that their advantages might be based on the absence of rights and dignity of others.[38]

The Early Democratic Spectrum and the Effects of Industrialization. With the American Revolution and after, the primary argument in emerging democracies was between the Center and the Right, where liberals in the center sought to provide equality and inclusion for all men of the dominant race and the Right sought to *conserve* the social and political system (and structures of power) as they were. Remember, two centuries ago, those in power tended to be privileged men who had property and title (via noble status or military service) or a religious office. Conservatives did not want to open the system to allow business people, small or large ones, to have the power that they did. They also could not fathom that other men, who worked their properties, in factories, in the vast troops of states' militaries, or were indigenous to their colonies should be considered their equals. Only after World War I (1918) were some monarchies and empires dismantled in Europe, and the idea that all men should have the right to vote became accepted on much of the continent. In many but not all European states, women won the right to vote after the Great War too.[39]

The battle between the Center and the Right was not the only one, however. As the Industrial Revolution progressed in the nineteenth century, people began organizing for economic, as well as political, rights.[40] Those of you who have read or seen *Oliver Twist* or *Les Misérables* understand the terrible conditions for workers. As industrial economies spread in the developed world, the issues of inclusion and whether the state would promote political and economic opportunities for men of all classes (but not all races) became central. Workers and their intellectual allies demanded not only political rights, but also access to a "good" life. They argued that men are created equal and have the right to participate in politics *and* live a decent life. These notions came to occupy the Left of the political spectrum. Some activists for the rights of workers adopted more comprehensive critiques of the capitalist system and wanted to do away with private property and provide far more power to industrial working men. These ideas lead to the expansion of the spectrum to the left. In other words, the spectrum developed a left segment, part of which was consistent with democracy (Center Left), and another part further away which would be the basis of the antiliberal vision of communism.

While men were organizing to achieve their political inclusion and economic rights, so too were women and people of nondominant ethnic and racial groups. In Europe, the societal divisions of the nineteenth century were primarily around social class and gender. While on opposite sides of issues of working class power, men unionists and political leaders could generally agree that they didn't want women's status to change. Men's labor organizers generally feared that women's activism would interfere with their ability to earn better wages and working conditions for their members. They were often hostile to expanding opportunities to men of other ethnicities and races. Americans are likely familiar with the struggles around abolition and then full political inclusion of Black and formerly enslaved people in the United States. As we will learn later in this book, there were also efforts demanding racial justice and the end of discrimination

throughout the Global South at this time. Of course, virtually the whole world was blind to gender exclusion, although women won the right to vote in many (but not all) parts of Europe and CANZUS by the 1920s.[41]

Democratic Spectrum in the First Half of the Twentieth Century. These successes in inclusion didn't last long however, as liberal democracy and capitalism came under attack in many places as a result of the Russian (Communist) Revolution in 1917 and the **Great Depression** (starting in 1929). The political spectrum expanded outward in both directions. In Europe, many nondemocratic parties began competing in elections with the goal of undoing democracy. The Far Left, inspired by the USSR, saw **communism** as the way of the future. They hoped that state power would ultimately create a classless society where all people lived in virtually equal living conditions, equal social status, and equal political opportunity. As you will learn in Part III, those promises were in name only.

A different nondemocratic alternative is called **fascism**.[42] An extreme right-wing variant of authoritarianism, fascism divides people by ethnicity, religion, gender, and/or other qualities, and it asserts the superiority of one particular nation. Typically, a single, charismatic leader defines who can belong in the political community and then creates a single mass party and violent security forces to abuse those now excluded from the nation, inculcate the remaining population in these values of national supremacy, and engage in violence at home and abroad. Fascist states deny the value and equality of individuals and seek the glory of that nation, creating distinct roles for men and women in the community. Hierarchy is so important—everyone is subordinate to the ruler, and there is a preferred and superior ethnicity, religion, and political view. Gender traditionalism and heteronormativity prevail. Fascism treats any "outsiders"—in the polity and beyond its borders—with the worst of cruelties, for instance expelling, enslaving, experimenting on, or even exterminating them.[43]

Spain was under the fascist rule of leader Francisco Franco from 1936 to 1975.

AP Photo

Within the parts of the world that did achieve liberal democracy after 1945, the trauma of the Great Depression and **World War II** had a dramatic influence over the political spectrum, delegitimizing laissez-faire capitalism and fascism.[44] Because of the horrors of 1929–1945, the mainstream had come to accept the role of some state intervention in the economy and in society as ways to prevent both fascism and communism. Most believed that economic inequality and dislocation, extreme nationalism, disrespect for human dignity and individual rights, and the belief that countries could "go it alone" had allowed extremism to emerge. After the war, then, the political spectrum in liberal democracies primarily coalesced around the Center Left through the Center Right. There was a widespread recognition that the Depression showed that markets can fail and that if the state doesn't address economic inequality, regulate businesses, and ensure some adequate living conditions, democracy can be threatened. Soviet brutality in their eastern neighbors undermined support for communist alternatives in Western Europe too.

The Postwar Democratic Spectrum. These ideas were called the "**Keynesian consensus**," named after Nobel Prize–winning economist John Maynard Keyes. He claimed that states can and should provide income protections (like unemployment insurance and old-age benefits) as well as regulate markets to, among other things, prevent monopolies. Keynes argued that states should spend during bad times and save during good times because the economy was necessarily cyclical. In the "bad times" (downturns in the **business cycle**), states should invest in citizens and public works projects as ways to employ workers and keep private businesses going. These state supports not only help families survive through hard times, but keep businesses open because people have money to spend. If former customers are impoverished and cut way back on their spending, businesses fail too, and economic misery spreads. Formerly successful businesses go bust, meaning more people are unemployed and bankrupt. Keynesians argue that during boom periods (upturns in the cycle), the state should spend less since the private sector has the wherewithal to fuel growth through investment and job creation. Instead of spending, the government should be saving in order to have the funds to cushion a future downturn.[45]

From about 1945 to 1980, elements of the European democratic left and right could concur on many things. The question was always about how much to spend and on which priorities. On the democratic left, most partisans were committed to equalizing opportunities based on class and ensuring that all citizens had a decent living, based on a gendered assumption that breadwinning men would provide for each household. Unions and collective bargaining, which in some states involved not only labor unions and corporations but the government, too, were seen as important and positive players in the economy for delivering this good life.

On the Center Right, Christians (Mainline Protestants and Catholics) in Europe, came to understand that their previous religious competition had been used to manipulate the political dialogue and divide them. Christian Democracy, a political grouping of the moderate right, united these religious people. Their adherents believed that their religion called for the care of the weak, aged, and sick, as well as for strong (heterosexual) families headed by a father. Moreover, particularly in continental, Western Europe, **Christian Democrats** saw what economic desperation and extreme nationalism had done to their countries in the 1930s and 1940s. Though conservative, they did not want to risk the return of Far Right policies and violence. Thus, the postwar period was a time when **welfare states** (those that provided unemployment insurance, old-age and disability supports, and forms of national health insurance) were supported throughout most of the *democratic* left *and* right.[46]

In this era, European political leaders and publics generally agreed that "important" issues concerned heterosexual men and the dominant national ethnicity and religion. Other people were generally invisible, or at least unimportant. The fact that people of color, women, LGBTQ,

and others didn't have the same political power and economic opportunity in these "liberal democracies" was swept under the rug because it seemed to be part of some natural order. Those who were invisible were supposed to be satisfied with national commitments to class equality and with the great accomplishments that their states had made in empowering heterosexual, cisgender, and ethnically "appropriate" men of all classes.

The End of the Keynesian Consensus and Renewal of Liberal Enthusiasm. Over time, however, the promises of equality along with the exclusion of many caused trouble. In the 1960s and beyond, two very different developments occurred simultaneously in Western democracies, both of which helped to invigorate the Center, revitalize the Right, and splinter the Left. First, economies lost their vitality, while workers became insistent on maintaining their living standards. Second, other leftist projects (including opposition to the Vietnam War, environmentalism, demands for racial justice, women's liberation, anti-colonialism, and LGBTQ equality) arose, and adherents took to their streets. This activism scared and offended people for whom the old social hierarchy "worked" and seemed "natural." The activists were not agitating around traditional economic issues. Instead, they were clamoring for what Ronald Inglehart has called **post-material values**—the promotion of social, racial, and gender justices, the ability to self-actualize, the safeguarding of the environment, and calls for engaging in foreign policies that promoted human rights.[47]

In recent years, people around the world have taken to the streets to call for greater environmental protections—a showing of modern post-material values.

iStockphoto.com/DisobeyArt

For many industrial workers and older white Europeans, these post-material values made no sense or were even offensive. Traditionalists feared these new priorities would undercut their jobs or privileged access to work and status. Moreover, in this period of economic downturn when globalization meant jobs were leaving for lower-wage areas within their states or around the world, the traditional democratic left became incapable of protecting the gains that workers

had earned. Thus, industrial workers who had long been stalwarts of the Left, began looking for new party homes.

By the late 1970s, the idea that governments had moved too far Left in promoting social change gained acceptance, just as others were making opposite demands. They were calling for more government intervention to address social inequality to undo gender, racial, and other hierarchies. Their movements made traditional values and the protection of religion relevant political issues. Thus, the spectrum in Western democracies moved rightward. Many (but not all) people in the Global North lost faith in the state's ability to play a positive role in people's lives, as captured in Ronald Reagan's famous phrase, "government is not the solution to our problem, government is the problem."[48] A decade later, the end of communism in Eastern Europe and the USSR (1989 and 1991, respectively) helped to further strengthen the classical liberal Center, as market solutions, the dignity of the individual, and the power of political competition to resolve inequalities became accepted as "magic bullets" for solving various problems throughout the world, including those in post-Soviet and post-colonial states.[49]

More recently we have seen the political spectrum widen further, as people rethink whether the democratic center is working for them. Many observers blame this dissatisfaction on **globalization**, the cross-border interconnections of economies, societies, polities, and individuals. While globalization is not a new process, the perception of increasing levels of migration, global terrorism, and inequality have arguably had an enormous impact on politics worldwide, and we'll learn more about it as we continue our studies. For now, remember that traditional democratic parties on the Left, Center, and Right have recently been losing out to groupings on the ends of the spectrum.[50]

Really See and Explain

What about the political spectrum surprises or interests you? What was the democratic political spectrum like before 1980? What is different about the democratic political spectrum today?

Two Important Contemporary "-Isms": Populism and Socialism

While the renewed popularity of fascism is one way that the spectrum has widened, two others— populism and socialism—have also become more salient today too.

Populism. **Populism** is a set of beliefs that asserts that "the people" are uniquely virtuous and wise. Well, that starting point doesn't seem to contradict liberal democracy, does it? A populist leader, however, tells a subset of the people that the group needs *him* (in history, we have seen few populist females, although they are becoming more common today)[51] to help protect it from and remove the evil, corrupt, and dangerous elites and certain out-groups that are misdirecting the country and causing policy disasters that harm the "true" people.[52]

With those clarifications, the difference between populism and democracy becomes clearer. For the populists, the leader is uniquely positioned to be the voice and the will of the people. There is no sense that he (we will keep this gendered pronoun on purpose) needs to be held accountable or that other institutions except, perhaps, those that preserve security, are necessary. In fact, he can and should govern without checks on his power and without accountability because he is so attuned to safeguarding the needs of the nation. Second, the leader demonizes other elites, denying that their expertise and experience are valuable. These elites could be other politicians with different political leanings or even rivals in the leader's camp, members of the

bureaucracy, corporate executives, bankers, scientists, lawyers, policy experts, and journalists, among others. In fact, not only is their knowledge discounted, but the leader often asserts that their training actually *makes them suspect* of not serving the *real* people. This point leads to a third—populists divide the polity into some folks who are *worthy* (the "true" or "real" people) and others who are not. Those who don't belong are demonized as having the wrong ideas and being dangerous to and even *enemies* of the people. Often, other out-groups receive this status because either they possess the "wrong" identity markers—they aren't from the "right" class, gender, ethnicity, religion, country, or part of the country, or they don't hold the "correct ideas" that match the conventional wisdom, regardless of whether that "wisdom" is accurate. When people hear populist leaders assert that these elites and out-groups are disloyal or even treasonous, then they may engage in violence or approve of violence being done to protect the "real people" from the imagined dangers that these supposed traitors pose.

In the past decade or so, populism has been on the rise in Western democracies and elsewhere. Populists are neither exclusively on the Right nor Left of the political spectrum. Right-wing populists generally rail at those they see as outside of the "nation," because of their ethnicity, religion, national origin, feminist values, sexual orientation, gender identity, or other personal characteristics deemed inconsistent with "true" national attributes. They also despise professionals who insist on using data to make decisions, following democratic processes and principles, preserving the rights of all individuals and targeted groups, or asking questions about the populists' definition of the nation. Because of their abilities to expose the truth and the mismatch between populists' behavior and principles, scientists, the free media and the legal profession (attorneys, judges, and activists) tend to be the targets of populists. Populists want to replace them with yes men and women, propaganda organs, and rubber-stamp courts. In many democracies, globalizing forces—like the European Union, World Trade Organization, and United Nations—are also perceived to be dangerous to right-wing populists because of those groups' cosmopolitan values.

Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, elected in 2022, is the head of the right-wing populist Brothers of Italy party.

Mondadori Portfolio/Contributor/Getty Images

On the left, the demons are likely to be big corporations and big banks, as well as those just-mentioned international institutions that have made the flow of goods, services, and people across borders easier. The problem according to the analyses of left-wing populists is that this openness has created a growing gap between the rich and the poor, leading to a hollowing out of the middle class and a desperate situation for many ordinary people. Right- and left-wing populists identify some of the same types of people (immigrants—though for the left immigrants are an issue because they "take away jobs" or depress wages, not because of their racial or ethnic identity), organizations that have promoted globalization, and certain free-market elites as enemies, so they sometimes join forces to discriminate against, harass, or inflict violence on those they define as dangerous "others."

Populists of each variant both tell and "sell" their followers a simplified story about political problems and their solutions. They assert that national challenges result from past policy decisions made without the consent of the people and with evil intent. They also claim that the great leader can solve all their problems and that the key to making the changes is to centralize power, undoing democratic accountability, the rule of law, and rights protections. These changes allow the leader and his party to act, as well as to punish or remove those evildoers from power (elites) or those outsiders from the country (out-group ordinary people). Populists dismiss the importance of institutions and process. They also claim that complicated problems have easy solutions that don't require compromise or tradeoffs. Experts who call for careful consideration, cooperation, and making tough decisions are identified as traitors whose solutions will hurt the people.

Why has populism re-emerged recently? Scholars have multiple different explanations but they all recognize that globalization and technological change are important as either causes or symptoms of the problem. Why those two factors matter depends on real changes in political institutions and technologies, economies, and cultures. Regarding institutions, some stress the creation of certain institutions that promoted globalization (not only the EU and the WTO, but also social media). Simultaneously, propaganda outlets have replaced or competed with independent, truthful media, and political parties and election systems have weakened. Populists thus had easy targets to identify as enemies, openings for spreading their messages, and opportunities to win power. Populists blame those outsiders for the problems, communicate directly and easily to the aggrieved without fact checking, and press their points in the political system, as campaign financing and measures for selecting official candidates changes, new media sources have fewer requirements and/or lack norms to be truthful, and the growing use of referenda having weakened the power of parties and other gatekeepers[53].

Really Think and Explain

What is interesting and remarkable about this discussion of populism? How does it help you understand or think about contemporary politics?

Socialism. In addition to populism, **socialism** is another term that has resurfaced recently. With the emergence of "progressive" forces in American politics, personified in Bernie Sanders and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Americans are hearing this term, and they may be either attracted to or horrified by it. Regardless of their opinion, many can't define the term, so let's start there. Originating in the nineteenth century, socialism is a system in which governments, not individuals or private groups, own the major industries and businesses. Socialism contrasts with capitalism in which private ownership characterizes the economy. Those advocating state takeovers of industries asserted that governments would run these firms in more humane ways than did those private

owners, ensuring decent pay and working conditions. Advocates also called for the profits that those enterprises made to go into the government's coffers to be used to pay for adequate living standards for ordinary people, instead of the enrichment of the very few. Some of these left-wing advocates believed in socialism as an economic partner with political democracy. That's why socialism, if combined with liberal democracy, is also called **social democracy** or **democratic socialism**.[54]

This type of socialism, however, is not the only variant. Once the Soviet Union came into existence and referred to its efforts as "building socialism," the confusion between socialism in the USSR and what was meant by Western, democratic adherents of socialism grew. The distinction was especially blurred after World War II when *many* Eastern European states put the word "socialist" in their names: Czechoslovak *Socialist* Republic, *Socialist* Republic of Romania, and, of course, the Union of Soviet *Socialist* Republics, for example. To distinguish and identify this politically repressive variant of socialism, most specialists refer to it as "**state socialism**" or simply "communism," with the recognition that none of these states achieved Marx's utopian final stage. Most people in the West called those systems communist.[55]

From the end of World War I and with more vigor after 1945, leftists in Western Europe and elsewhere sought to create *democratic* socialism, not the Soviet variant. Democratic socialism combines state and private ownership in the economy *and* demands both economic rights (e.g., old-age support, health insurance, unemployment compensation) and the civil and political rights we associate with liberal democracy. These ideas had great influence in the first three decades after World War II, but as we saw earlier in our discussion of the political spectrum, the Keynesian consensus began and support for social democracy began to erode in many places in the 1970s. By the 1980s, countries—especially the UK and US—began cutting back state ownership and social supports. These liberal (i.e., in favor of the unfettered market and minimal government intervention) began to spread.

While few contemporary social democrats call for the end to private ownership, they remain committed to the idea that the state can and should do more to promote not only economic opportunity but equality. They also have come to understand the ways that gender, racial, ethnic, and other identities intersect with class to create inequalities. Therefore, social democrats today typically seek mixed ownership (public and private) and to use the government to address those equity deficits based on intersections. Consistent with their stance on the democratic left of the spectrum, social democrats believe that economic and social rights exist in addition to political and civil ones. In other words, social democrats assert all people have *a right* to benefits such as housing, health care, and old age and unemployment support, among other resources that allow people to live a decent life.

Thus, socialism *can* mean—if the context is pre-1989 *Eastern* Europe and the Soviet Union—a kind of system that is hostile to both capitalism and democracy. So, you'll use "*state* socialist" or "communist" to refer to those repressive and anticapitalist systems. During the Cold War, very few western European or North American supported this type of system since Westerners could see precisely how difficult life was for their neighbors in state socialist systems. Those calling for state socialism are even fewer and farther between today. Social democrats or democratic socialists, on the other hand, seek to remedy unfettered capitalism's tendency to create economic, social, and political inequality which they believe interferes with the proper functioning of democracy. Social democrats are also, however, enthusiastic fans of guaranteeing rights such as rights to health care or housing. Thus, while one can assert that democratic socialism/social democracy is the "wrong approach" to contemporary problems in democracies, calling it inherently anti-democratic is wrong. Its adherents accept the fundamental tenets of liberal *democracy*, if not all of those of a liberal *economy*.

Really Think and Explain

What is interesting and remarkable about this discussion of socialism? What have you learned here that is useful for understanding politics? How can you apply this new knowledge to some of the contemporary debates around populism and socialism today? Then, think back to the earlier discussion of fascism, another term that is frequently bandied about today. What insights does considering the three terms together give you?

DEMOCRACY, POLITICAL CULTURE, AND THE CHALLENGE OF INCLUSION

Underpinning these debates about politics and policy are not simply arguments about resource distribution, but also value preferences regarding how members of the polity should interact with formal institutions and with one another. In other words, the spectrum and indeed the politics of any state reflect notions of any country's **political culture**. Popularized in Gabriel Almond's and Sidney Verba's landmark 1963 study, political culture characterizes citizens' beliefs and values t*oward the institutions and traditions of a political system* as well as their *attitudes and inclinations regarding political participation*. This concept varies from **culture**, because that term means the values and norms that inform interactions and underpin social, political, and economic institutions of a people, as well as their artistic and scientific achievements. Some political scientists will use elements of culture to stand in for measurements of its political variant, but others seek to isolate it. Where the political spectrum highlights elite-level ideas, political culture examines how these filter through the system and are represented in the ways that ordinary people engage in and think about politics. To characterize national political cultures, then, scholars perform extensive surveys and interviews to identify citizens' views on participation and government.[56]

Recently, some observers have been raising doubts about whether a *national* political culture can exist, because co-nationals can exhibit such great variations in what they value and how they act politically. Certainly, **polarization** is an important development in contemporary politics, and scholars debate its sources and implications.[57] Divisive political disagreement is not, however, a new phenomenon. In fact, political extremism with a disappearing middle opened the door to fascism and communism in the 1930s. In the postwar era, experts like Almond and Verba were trying to determine which kinds of political cultures would best support democracy. Not only were they hoping to consolidate democracy in Europe, but they were also seeking to help democracies take root throughout the Global South as new states emerged after being held as colonies.

According to Almond and Verba in the 1960s, the "best" kind of citizen, one who would support democracy, was in line with Goldilocks' preferences: possessing a "just right" amount of engagement and passion for politics. Too much intensity would lead to conflict, as all the passionate, involved people would battle dangerously, and too little meant citizens didn't really care, thereby ceding their oversight functions. Each extreme would lead to nondemocratic outcomes. In more recent studies from the 1990s on, Robert Putnam further explained the "right" kind of civic involvement. Putnam thinks a good mix is for people to be (accurately) informed about politics, trust institutions, regularly and in various ways participate in politics, and be motivated beyond narrow self-interest. These understandings about political culture tend to stress what people engage in and feel about the mechanics of democracy and are thus what we might call procedurally focused.[58]

The study of the "right" kinds of citizen values and engagement in democracy has continued to grow. In the twenty-first century, scholars began taking attitudes toward equality and inclusion more seriously. These students, led by Ronald Inglehart and Pippa Norris, argued that the most important sentiments were related to social equality, particularly gender equality. If citizens did not see every member of the polity as fully human and entitled to legal equality and rights protections, then states were likely to fall down the slippery slope of allowing various kinds of "exceptions" to deny participation and rights to *all* kinds of citizens. Inglehart and Norris asserted that political cultures of gender egalitarianism (including women and LGBTQ) were the ones that produced and supported democracy, while those that rejected the humanity of all genders were the least likely to become and remain democratic. As scholars began examining the other identity markers that lead to marginalization—race, ethnicity, religion, etc.—they created an intersectional feminist argument that contended that the more egalitarian (in all ways) and inclusive a political culture was, the more likely that society was to consolidate democracy.[59] These understandings of the relationship between political culture and democracy are illustrated in Table 2.7.

TABLE 2.7 ■ Political Cultural and Democracy: Procedural or Inclusive

Theoretical Flow Diagram and Corresponding Hypothesis
Type of political culture→ P (democracy) *H_1: a culture that reflects a "moderate" (compared to a highly passionate or a disinterested) level of citizen activity and interest is the more likely to sustain democracy* *H_2: the more "civic" the culture (regarding community well-being and moderate levels participation), the more likely to sustain democracy* *H_3: the more egalitarian and inclusive the culture, particularly with respect to gender and intersections, the more likely to sustain democracy*

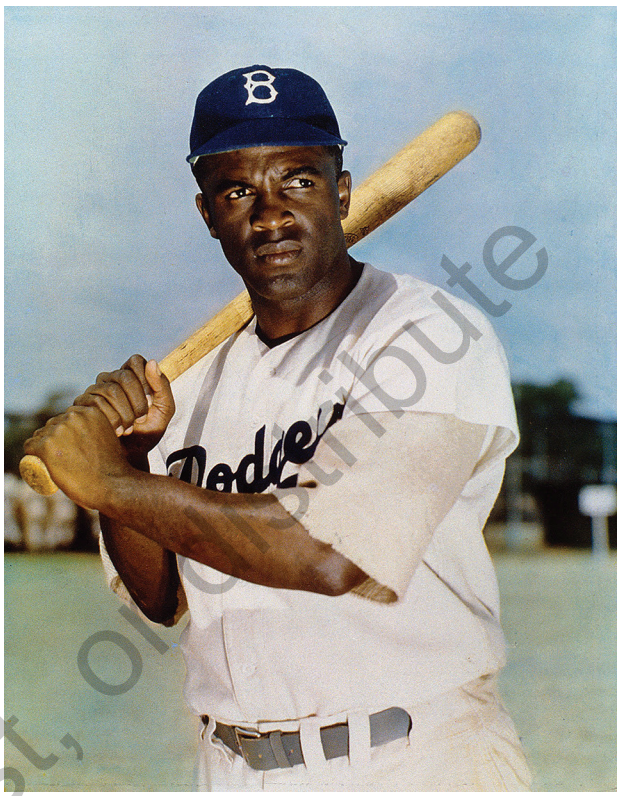
These feminist perspectives might be causing some of you to be scratching your heads. You could be saying, but by definition democracy empowers all citizens in the political community, requires the rule of law, and asserts equal rights for all. However, the reality is that democratic systems have struggled with seeing all individuals as equally human, dignified, and worthy of rights' protections. Repeatedly, observers have called systems "democracies" even when they have denied rights to huge and varied social groups, e.g., working class men of all ethnicities, all women, people of the "wrong" race, ethnicity, gender identity, or sexual preference. Inglehart and Norris and many others show, using troves of data, that cultures of exclusion lead to undemocratic realities, regardless of rhetorical and even legal promises.[60]

Rules Are Nice, but Practices Matter Too

What this discussion of political culture highlights is the contention that having good institutions isn't enough for ensuring democracy; not only do rules matter, but so do cultures. Think back to baseball before April 1947 when Jackie Robinson integrated the game.[61] As a member of the Dodgers, Robinson was subject to unfairness from umpires, abuse by teammates, violence from opposing players, and psychological warfare and violence from some fans. The game was different for Robinson and for the other Black players who followed him in the early years *even though the rules didn't technically change*. What was different? The vast majority of baseball officials, players, and fans tolerated the unfair application of rules and appallingly poor sportsmanship. Inclusion was technically achieved in allowing Black players in, but values

regarding who belonged and racial equality didn't immediately change. Politics in democracies have had analogous problems including people of all classes, ethnicities, genders, religions, and sexualities and their intersections. Democracies may assert individual equality but whether folks experience an equal playing field is subject to how the rules are applied and which norms prevail.

In addition to violations of the egalitarian *spirit* of the law, sometimes laws are unjust. Elites in democracies might pass discriminatory legislation and uphold these provisions in court. Recall that in the United States Jim Crow laws prevented Black individuals from using public amenities (that they paid for with their tax dollars), living where they wanted, voting, and serving on juries, among other violations of their full citizenship. The United States also had laws on the books that restricted women from voting, serving on juries, or pursuing various professions. Thus, we have to be sensitive that "formal" doesn't necessarily mean "just." Unfair and illegitimate ideas can be codified into law in democracies and elsewhere. Thus, the antidemocrats can cloak their unjust behavior in legality, and that law can be inconsistent with the true spirit and nature of democracy.



Baseball player Jackie Robinson provides a prime example of what happens to individuals when democracies do not live up to their promises of rights protections for all. His perseverance is a testament to his strength and character and helped bring the promise of equality and fairness to everyone in the game.

New York Daily News Archive/Contributor/Getty Images

The bottom line is that on its own, *democracy does not automatically deliver the sharing of power with all kinds of people*. The liberal emphasis on popular power, rule of law, and the rights of individuals often makes folks believe that everyone has equal opportunities and protections. But democracy does not erase the advantages of wealth, color, ethnicity, gender, religion, or sexuality, for instance. To achieve those goals, inclusion, the rule of law, and rights protections must be priorities. Thus, the story of inclusion and empowerment in democracy is one of continuing struggle. Norms of "good sports-personship" and laws that are truly fair are not automatic. Moreover, their maintenance requires constant vigilance. Robinson wasn't asking for "special rights" when he was playing baseball. He was simply asking that the rules be applied to him fairly and people treat him the way they would any white man. Because many people were blind to the dehumanizing behaviors he experienced and trusted that the rules were fairly applied, Robinson's asking for normalcy and respect was often perceived as wanting "more" or even "too much." But protection, support and empowerment were simply necessary for him to play the game. Remember Robinson and the legacy of exclusion in sports over the course of this term, as you consider what has to happen for democracies to live up to their promise of popular sovereignty and rights protections for all.

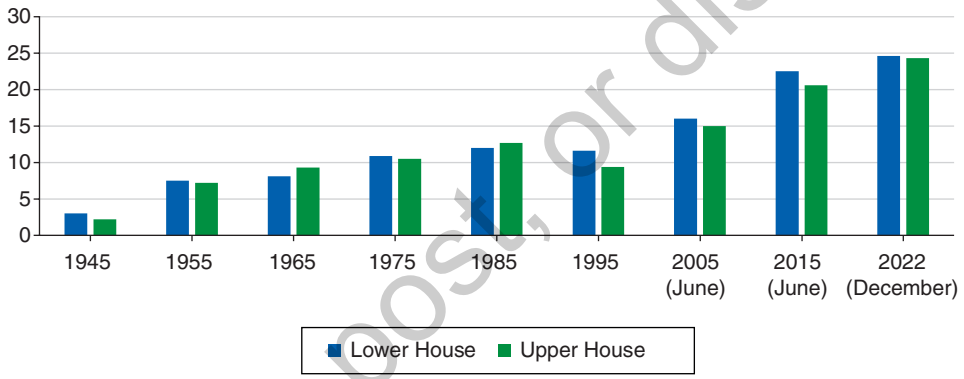
Really Think and Explain

What is interesting or surprising about what you learned from this discussion? How can it be that democracy doesn't automatically achieve inclusion and equality?

The Political Recruitment Model: Why Haven't Women Been More Successful in Politics?

Reflecting on this interaction of institutions and cultures, scholars have developed the **Political Recruitment Model (PRM)** to account for why women, in particular, have a harder time winning elected office around the world (Figure 2.3).[62] If everyone is equal and rules are fair, it's not surprising to think that women would be as likely as men to be involved in politics, but for most of history and in virtually all countries, women have been disproportionately absent from the halls of political power. The PRM explains that women are both less likely to supply themselves as candidates for office and less likely to be demanded by elites and citizens. It also shows how to overcome the imbalance, by remedying the supply and demand deficits that result from sociocultural, socioeconomic, political institutional, and global factors.[63]

FIGURE 2.3 Global Average of Women's Share of National Parliaments, 1945–Present



Source: Based on data from "Women in National Parliaments: Historical Archive," Interparliamentary Union, accessed April 23, 2023, http://archive.ipu.org/wmn-e/history.htm; "Women in National Parliaments," Interparliamentary Union, accessed April 23, 2023, http://archive.ipu.org/wmn-e/arc/world010615.htm, http://archive.ipu.org/wmn-e/arc/world300605.htm; and "Women in National Parliaments," Interparliamentary Union, accessed April 23, 2023, http://archive.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm.

As you have learned, until the late twentieth century, most cultures were inhospitable to women as political actors. Societies did not allow women to be active and vocal in the public sphere. Those women who tried to act and speak often faced severe consequences. Even earning the right to vote, let alone serving as an elected official, was a struggle. While women's voting is now accepted as normal in most parts of the world, many cultures still have problems seeing women as leaders and political officials. Thus, culture is an obstacle from both the supply and demand sides. If neither women nor society think they are ready or capable of serving, then women will not be able to succeed in politics.[64]

In addition to sexist cultural values, socioeconomic structures, in other words, the way that society is organized and the roles women play in it, have tended to limit women in the roles they play at home, the workplace, and other parts of the public sphere. In other words, gender stereotypes have political implications. If women have no free time because they have enormous child- or home-care responsibilities, then they can't go into politics. Similarly, politicians are aided by having certain work experiences—many politicians come from the legal profession, own small businesses, serve in militaries, are activists, and have an interest in the larger world. Politicians

generally need the financial wherewithal to be able to mount a run too. That means they often have to forgo some income or have great independent means to be able to run. Successful candidates often have webs of connections to other powerful people in the community. Each of these factors—time, profession, finances, networks—are elements of the socioeconomic structure, and traditionally women have been in relatively disadvantaged positions. Those inequities affect women candidates on both the supply and demand sides. Those who are in "good" places in the social structure are in the position to "supply" themselves and society is more likely to react positively to (i.e., "demand") them because they seem to be the "right" kind of person for the job.

Another factor that affects the success of nontraditional candidates like women are political institutions. As we have already seen, some institutions force elites to demand women. If a country has a constitutional provision or parties have internal rules which mandate an equal or a certain percentage of women candidates, then parties will be forced to make sure that women appear on the ballot in the appropriate proportions. The parties do this by recruiting and running women in sufficient districts and/or arranging them on their lists so that women have a chance to be elected. In these systems, there is more demand for women candidates. In addition, women-friendly institutions can also encourage more women to run (supply themselves) as well as win. Thus, political institutions matter greatly.

Finally, international conditions are important too. In 1975, the United Nations began having its every-ten-year conferences on the world's women, and these have been both a product of the women's movements and a spur to more activism. Homegrown women's movements always have their own agendas, but they often benefit from various moral, financial, and political support from outsiders. In fact, the UN and global women's rights and women's empowerment groups, along with the actions of some countries, have spread the idea that women's rights are human rights. They have advanced the norm that "developed" and "prestigious" states have female political leaders. Thus, countries seeking that kind of status are encouraged to look more favorably at women in politics. In addition, certain kinds of development, security and training initiatives that outsiders like the UN, the EU, the Gates Foundation, and other generous donors sponsor can prepare women for positions of power in the economy, politics, and society, helping to meet the supply side of the equation. These efforts and incentives from global actors increase the demand, because they exert pressure or help convince elites and publics that women can be good political leaders.[65]

These insights allow us to understand why women don't enter the candidate pipeline as often as men and tend to drop out more frequently.[66] The data show that in the United States, at least, women have to be asked many more times to run than do men.[67] Women tend not to imagine themselves in elected offices, despite having relevant experience, whereas men don't have that same inhibition. In democratic places where there are high levels of women in elected politics, we can typically expect both a supportive culture and economy, as well as institutions that are open to women. If you see a relatively large proportion of women elected in countries with cultures that are typically unsupportive of female ambitions outside the home and women have not generally achieved positions in the economy that give them "relevant" experience, look for ways that the institutions require female representation. Ask yourself: are there quotas and how and why were they instituted? If increased women's representation came about because of women's activism and campaigns to elect more women, the increase of women in office is likely a sign of improved inclusion. However, if women officials are suddenly appearing in higher numbers in authoritarian systems, be skeptical. The leadership might be trying to show its "modernity" by giving women seats in relatively powerless legislative bodies. In fact, in the past twenty or so years, many undemocratic states have increasingly begun to see that having women in office makes them seem modern and less repressive. We will call this practice **pinkwashing**, when states try to make their gender

inclusivity and overall inclusion look better than it actually is by giving women positions in political institutions that have little actual say over who gets what, when, why, and how.[68]

While gender is certainly important, we can use the PRM to think through the impact other identity factors have on the ability of various kinds of people to win political power. Considering the impact of intersectionality is more complex. This explanation of the PRM assumes that all women are the same. In other words, it doesn't examine the ways that intersectionality affects supply and demand factors. Sometimes, being from a nondominant class, sexual orientation, or ethnicity could provide supply- and demand-side advantages. Think here of the success of women of color in the US Congress and in state legislatures. In their districts and their communities, they could have all of the "right" characteristics and support to both supply themselves and be demanded. At other times, we could imagine more barriers as women from non-dominant races, ethnicities, religions, sexualities and other identity markers try to imagine themselves running, throwing their hats in the ring, and then actually facing voters to win.

Thus, the PRM helps account for why women aren't as present in electoral politics and governing bodies as their proportion in the population suggests they should be. It also helps us pinpoint what needs to happen to achieve more equality—cultural values need to change, women have to occupy socioeconomic positions that provide the resources to run, political institutions have to give women a realistic chance of winning, and global and regional norms have to be consistent with putting more women in office.

Really Think and Explain

What is interesting or surprising about the PRM? How does it help you think about women's representation in your country or your locality? Where would you expect women to be more likely to win elections?

CONCLUSION: DEMOCRACY AND ITS POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS, POLITICAL ECONOMIES, AND POLITICAL CULTURES

Politics is like sports; there are essential, definitional elements of the endeavor, and the rules affect the way the game is played. In addition, the attitudes of the participants influence the nature and conduct of the enterprise. Because of this emphasis on knowing the basics and the rules, we started by defining democracy and then learning about different institutional arrangements for democratic governments, elections, and territories. We then turned to the economic institutions because the economy establishes such an important foundation for democracy. In that analysis, you learned about capitalism and investigated different ideas about how market systems might produce democracy.

After this emphasis on structures, we turned to ideas and values. Many players are motivated by ideas, as well as the pursuit of power, wealth, and prestige. That is why we introduced the political spectrum and how it developed in democratic polities. You learned about the extremes—fascism and state socialism—on the spectrum and saw what the democratic Left, Center, and Right believe. You now also have an understanding of populism and socialism.

As we wrapped up this chapter on democracy, you learned more about political culture and the ways experts think that values and norms can support or hinder democracy. While some political culture scholars emphasize attitudes and interaction with the formal institutions of government,

others stress whether citizens are believers in egalitarianism and inclusion in general. You saw that sometimes rules and talk about fairness actually mask what really happens in a society. In fact, despite formal equal rights and egalitarian rhetoric, some places systematically exclude certain people. Creating democracy in these circumstances is possible by instituting rules and behaviors that require the polity and citizens to honor the dignity and equality of all individuals. One way to see how structures and processes interact to create inequalities that often appear "natural" is to understand and apply the Political Recruitment Model. The PRM showed us why and how women have tended not to be involved in politics at levels reflecting their proportion of the population.

With this understanding of democracy and its elements, we are now ready to study it in Europe and the United Kingdom.

KEY TERMS

big tent parties
capitalism
coalition government
cohabitation
culture
democratic socialism
dissolve
dual executive
election systems
fascism
federal system
fixed lists
free, fair, and frequent (FFF)
FPTP
full democracy
globalization
The Government
grand coalition
head of government
head of state
hypotheses
ideologies
liberal
liberal democracy
loyal opposition
majoritarian system
manifestos
mixed system
party discipline
pinkwashing
plurality system
political economy
political parties
Political Recruitment Model (PRM)
political spectrum
popular sovereignty
populism
post-material values
presidential systems
prime minister (PM)
proportional representation
rounds (of voting)
rule of law
runoff election
semi-presidential systems
shadow cabinet
social democracy
state socialism
threshold
unitary system
vote of no confidence
welfare states
zebra list
zippered list

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is democracy? Why do we offer a two-part definition? Why is the idea and system of liberal democracy (used as we do in this book) something that American liberals and conservatives (as they are popularly defined) can agree on?

2. Explain the differences in the way that presidents and prime ministers come into office and how they interact with their cabinets and legislatures.
3. What is a vote of no confidence, and why are they rare? Consider, in particular, why votes of no confidence are risky for MPs in the governing majority.
4. How does a mixed (also called semi-presidential or dual-executive) system work? In what ways, if any, does it take the "best" from both the parliamentary and presidential systems? In what ways, if any, does it take the weaknesses from parliamentary and presidential systems?
5. How do FPTP, PR, and majoritarian electoral systems work, including the logic that affects party leaders, candidates, and voters in each? What types of party systems are typically associated with each type?
6. What are the differences between federal, unitary, and confederal systems? Why does federalism make sense for the United States? Does a unitary state in Japan, the People's Republic of China, and/or Guatemala make sense? Why or why not? (Go to the CIA World Factbook to look up one or more of these countries to learn more about them and be able to answer the question.)
7. What is capitalism? What is the middle class?
8. What is political culture?
9. Why are women traditionally not in the "supply chain" for politics? Why are women traditionally not demanded in politics? What can be done to change who is supplied and who is demanded?

CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS

1. Compare and contrast presidential, parliamentary, and mixed systems on the criteria of efficiency (in terms of addressing policy problems in a timely manner) and clarity (as in, who or what institution is responsible for policies).
2. Compare and contrast FPTP, PR, and majoritarian electoral systems on the criteria of representativeness (accurately reflecting the votes of the population), efficiency (addressing policy problems), and stability (avoiding political change and upheaval).
3. Would the American Framers have been wiser to have created a unitary system? Why or why not? Given the differences between "Red" and "Blue" states in the United States today, do you think that the United States should consider a confederal option? Why or why not?
4. Two sets of theorists disagree about the relationship between industrialization and democracy. Explain each argument. Consider a country that you know something about. Which hypothesis do you think better accounts for that country's path? Why? (If neither is better, justify that judgment.)
5. Theorists debate how political culture affects democracy. Explain the three arguments provided in this chapter. Consider a country that you know something about. Which political culture hypothesis do you think best accounts for that country's path? Why? (If neither is best, justify that judgment.)

6. Think about the Political Recruitment Model. What efforts would you suggest to enhance the supply and demand for women?

7. Work through the implications of the Political Recruitment Model for a gay man of color running for the legislature in an American-style political system (presidential, FPTP)? Work through the implications of the implications of the Political Recruitment Model for a female factory worker from a minority ethnic group running for the legislature in a parliamentary system with a PR system that has a 30 percent quota for women.