



UNDERSTANDING POLITICS

IDEAS, INSTITUTIONS, AND ISSUES

12th
EDITION



THOMAS M. MAGSTADT



Understanding Politics

Ideas, Institutions, and Issues

TWELFTH EDITION

THOMAS M. MAGSTADT, Ph.D.

*The Johns Hopkins School
of Advanced International Studies (SAIS)*



Australia • Brazil • Mexico • Singapore • United Kingdom • United States

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P R E F A C E

We live in a global age. Events anywhere in the world affect people everywhere. Terrorist acts, wars, natural disasters, economic downturns, banking crises, and volatile stock markets are everyday occurrences. Signs of entropy are all around us. Climate change and rapidly disappearing biodiversity threaten the planet and raise questions that cross over into a dark region where eschatology trumps science. Seismic events in the Indian Ocean, western Sumatra, or northern Japan are localized, but if they disrupt the global economy, the indirect effects can be far-reaching.

The same applies to political events. The 9/11 terrorist attacks happened in New York City—they were local—but led to costly wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. The “war on terror” is now a global phenomenon.

Things change with blinding speed in this age of globalization. We now have smart weapons that make it possible to use unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), called “drones,” armed with guns and bombs to kill from a safe distance, one of the recent developments explored in Chapter 15. Remote-controlled warplanes take the risk out of flying combat missions—a big change in the art and science of war fighting.

The same technological revolution is also changing the way we make things—all kinds of things. For example, it’s now possible to use a 3D laser printer to produce everything from medical implants to high-quality musical instruments, to racing-car parts, and, yes, guns.

Another big change is the rise of a global elite. There were more millionaires in the world than Australians in 2015—over 35 million according to Credit Suisse (a Swiss multinational bank and financial services holding company). An Oxfam study published in 2014 found that the world’s wealthiest 1% control half of the world’s wealth (\$110 trillion). This global trend toward greater economic inequality and concentration of wealth is also happening in the United States, where the top 1% control 43% of the nation’s wealth.¹

The rise of a new global meritocracy is brain-power driven. In today’s world, more than ever before, the wealth of nations and individuals is based on entrepreneurial science and engineering—that is, ideas converted into products for a global marketplace. For example, Chapter 14 looks at the role Facebook played in the Egyptian uprising in early 2011.

Technology is revolutionizing politics as well as business, but the basic nature of the decision makers—the people who run things—remains unchanged. Conflict in the world—the struggle for power—continues unabated, as does the search for peace, order, and justice.

Paradoxically, the limits of power, even in its most concentrated forms, are everywhere apparent—from ancient places, such as Palestine and Iraq in the Middle East and Afghanistan in Central Asia, to Europe, where the “euro crisis” threatens to undermine a supranational project six decades in the making, and the United States with its relatively short history and even shorter memory. The cost of failed policies and corrupt, incompetent leadership is also apparent in our world—and our nation’s capital.

But when it comes to the quality of citizenship, the implications of recent advances in telecommunications, Internet access, and social networking are not so clear. It’s easier than ever in our wired world to learn more about what’s going on in the world, be more attuned to the news, and vote more intelligently than ever before. Despite this ease of learning, studies show a *decline* in civic knowledge and education in the United States.

This double deficiency—both at the top and bottom of political society—is a kind of stealth crisis, one that, not unlike a stealth bomber, gives ample evidence of its existence but continues to go largely unnoticed. Meanwhile, there is no absence of injustice, intolerance, misguided idealism, zealotry, and

human suffering—proof enough that the ever-more polluted and crowded planet we inhabit has not changed for the better, even though the West's fortunate few are far more secure and comfortable than the vast majority who live in the so-called developing regions of the globe.

Since *Understanding Politics* made its debut in 1984, nothing has shaken my conviction that politics matters. I still believe now, as I did then, that as citizens in a country that claims to be a model democracy, students need to acquire a working knowledge of the political and economic forces that shape our world. Ironically, as news and information have become more and more accessible—thanks in no small part to the Internet—interest in public affairs and a willingness to get involved have declined. Indeed, many Americans are not engaged in the political process except perhaps to vote.

The study of politics is a gateway to a broader and better understanding of human nature, society, and the world. This idea is what originally inspired the writing of *Understanding Politics*. It is also what has sustained my own interest through multiple revisions—that, plus a sense that the book was, is, and always will be essentially a work in progress.

A successful introduction to politics must balance two key objectives: (1) dispel anxieties associated with the attempt to understand political science, especially for the uninitiated; and (2) provide the intellectual stimulation necessary to challenge today's college students. This book is testimony to the fact that the science and philosophy of politics fall squarely within the liberal arts tradition.

Mention of the science and philosophy of politics points to one of the deepest cleavages within the discipline: analysts who approach politics from the standpoint of science often stress the importance of power, whereas those who view it through the wide-angle lens of philosophy often emphasize the importance of justice. But the distinction between power and justice—like that between science and philosophy—is too often exaggerated.

Moral and political questions are ultimately inseparable in the real world. The exercise of power, in itself, is not what makes an action political; rather, what makes power *political* is the debate about its proper or improper uses and who benefits or suffers as a result. Thus, whenever questions of fairness are raised in the realm of public policy (for example, questions concerning abortion, capital punishment, or the use of force by police or the military), the essential ingredients of politics are present. Excessive attention to either the concept of power or that of morality is likely to confound our efforts in making sense of politics or, for that matter, in finding lasting solutions to the problems that afflict and divide us. It is necessary to balance the equation, tempering political realism with a penchant for justice.

Similarly, the dichotomy so often drawn between facts and values is misleading. Rational judgments—in the sense of reasoned opinions about what is good and just—are sometimes more definitive (or less elusive) than facts. For example, the proposition that “genocide is evil” is true. (Its opposite—“genocide is good”—is morally indefensible.) It is a well-known fact that Adolf Hitler and the Nazis committed genocide. We can therefore say that Hitler was evil *as a matter of fact* and not “simply” because mass murder is abhorrent to our *personal* values.

Other value-laden propositions can be stated with a high degree of probability but not absolute certainty. For example, “If you want to reduce violent crime, first reduce poverty.” Still other questions of this kind may be too difficult or too close to call—in the abortion controversy, for example, does the right of a woman to biological self-determination outweigh the right to life? It makes no sense to ignore the most important questions in life simply because the answers are not easy. Even when the right answers are unclear, it is often possible to recognize wrong answers—a moderating force in itself.

This book gives due attention to contemporary political issues without ignoring the more enduring questions that often underlie them. For example, a voter's dilemma as to who would make the best mayor, governor, or president raises deeper questions: What qualifications are necessary for public office? What is wrong with a system that all too often fails to produce distinguished—or

distinctive—choices? Similarly, conflicts between nation-states or social groups raise philosophical as well as empirical questions about why human beings continue to fight and kill one another on a mass scale.

Although I have tried to minimize the use of names and dates, political ideas cannot be fruitfully discussed in a historical vacuum. The choice of examples throughout the text is dictated by a particular understanding of the relationship between politics and history. The consequences of certain events in the first half of the last century—World Wars I and II, the October Revolution in Lenin’s Russia, the Holocaust in Hitler’s Germany—are still present today. We too seldom think or talk about “living history”—about all the ways antecedents (decisions and actions in the past) influence the present and constrain the future.

Inevitably, some themes and events are discussed in more than one chapter: The world of politics is more like a seamless web than a chest of drawers. In politics, as in nature, a given event or phenomenon often has many meanings and is connected to other events and phenomena in ways that are not immediately apparent. Emphasizing the common threads among major political ideas, institutions, and issues helps beginning students make sense of seemingly unrelated bits and pieces of the political puzzle. Seeing how the various parts fit together is a necessary step toward understanding politics.

Understanding Politics employs a foundation-building approach to the study of politics and government. It begins by identifying political phenomena, such as war and terrorism, that students find interesting and then seeks to describe and explain them. In an effort to build on students’ natural curiosity, I try to avoid much of the jargon and many of the technical or arcane disputes that too often characterize the more advanced literature in the field of political science.

Rather than probe the deepest recesses of a single discipline, the book unapologetically borrows insights from various disciplines, including history, economics, psychology, and sociology, as well as philosophy. It is intended to be a true liberal arts approach to the study of government and politics. The goal is ambitious: to challenge students to begin a lifelong learning process that alone can lead to a generation of citizens who are well informed, actively engaged, self-confident, and thoughtful and who have a capacity for indignation in the face of public hypocrisy, dishonesty, stupidity, or gross ineptitude.

Chapter 1, “Introduction: The Study of Politics,” defines the basic concepts of politics and centers on how and why it is studied. This chapter lays the groundwork for the remainder of the text and stands alone as its introduction. Chapter 2, “The Idea of the Public Good: Ideologies and Isms,” deals with basic belief systems, including ideologies of the Right and Left, such as communism and fascism, and “isms” of the Right and Left, such as liberalism and conservatism.

Part 1, “Comparative Political Systems: Models and Theories,” analyzes utopian, democratic, and authoritarian forms of government, as well as political systems caught in the difficult transition from authoritarian to democratic institutions. This part, which comprises Chapters 3 through 6, looks at different kinds of political regimes in a theoretical light.

Part 2, “Established and Emerging Democracies,” consists of three chapters that examine parliamentary democracies (Chapter 7), transitional states (Chapter 8), and developing countries (Chapter 9). Virtually all governments in today’s world either aspire to some form of democracy or claim to be “democratic.” This amazing fact is itself irrefutable evidence of the power of an idea. Though often abused, the idea of democracy has fired the imaginations of people everywhere for more than two centuries. In an age when bad news is written in blood and body counts are more likely to refer to innocent civilians than armed combatants, we would do well to remember that democratic ideals have never before been so warmly embraced or so widely (if imperfectly) institutionalized.

In Part 3, “Politics by Civil Means: Citizens, Leaders, and Policies,” four chapters (10 through 13) focus on the political process and public policy. The United States is featured in this section, which examines citizenship and political socialization, political participation (including opinion polling and

voting behavior), political organization (parties and interest groups), political leadership, political ideologies (or divergent “approaches to the public good”), and contemporary public policy issues.

Part 4, “Politics by Violent Means: Revolution, War, and Terrorism,” examines conflict as a special and universal problem in politics. It divides the problem into three categories: revolution, terrorism, and war (corresponding to Chapters 14, 15, and 16, respectively). Viewed from the aftermath of 9/11, when the president of the United States declared international terrorism to be the preeminent threat in the world and blurred the distinction between counterterrorist policy and all-out war, Part 4 is guaranteed to stimulate the curiosity of students and provoke spirited class discussions. Invading and occupying a country (Iraq) that had nothing to do with the 9/11 attacks, did not possess “weapons of mass destruction,” and did not pose a threat to the United States was a curious response to the problem posed by the existence of a malevolent terrorist network (al Qaeda) harbored by a fundamentalist regime (the Taliban) in a land (Afghanistan) virtually impossible to subdue by conquest and notoriously impervious to outside influence. Indeed, this response affords ample opportunity for contemplation about the motives, causes, and consequences of war at the beginning of a new millennium.

Finally, Part 5, “Politics without Government,” introduces students to key concepts in the study of international relations, describes key patterns, and discusses perennial problems. Chapter 17 examines the basic principles and concepts in international relations, the evolving structure and context of world politics, certain key global issues, international law, and role of the United Nations. The Afterword, “The Power of Knowledge,” is a single paragraph. Students are encouraged to read it first and then read it at the end of the semester. My hope is that some will remember and apply it.

In this new edition—the twelfth!—I have retained the pedagogical features found in previous editions with one exception: a short list of learning objectives replaces chapter outlines in this edition. Each chapter ends with a summary, review questions, and websites and readings resources. For this edition, the glossary is posted on the book’s website, which you can find at www.cengage.com/login. As in the past, endnotes for each chapter precede the index at the back of the book. In addition, the text contains a wide variety of photos, figures, maps, tables, and features, many of which have been revised or replaced with updated materials.

NEW IN THE TWELFTH EDITION

The twelfth edition has three kinds of features, one of which is totally new. I’m hoping that “Politics and Pop Culture” will stimulate class discussion and demonstrate how movies and music play an important role in reflecting or challenging our ideas and opinions, shaping our perceptions, and heightening our awareness of the issues. Key events and major achievements of enduring importance are highlighted in “Landmarks in History.” The feature “Politics and Ideas” give students a bird’s-eye view of perennial questions and key issues in political theory and philosophy.

As always, major developments in the United States and on the world stage have intervened since the last edition went to press. The previous edition covered the 2012 presidential campaign and the reelection of the country’s first African American president; the battle of the budget and acrimonious partisan politics surrounding the so-called fiscal cliff; the use of the filibuster to block votes in the U.S. Senate; and the deep divisions in U.S. society over such issues as gun control, income inequality, immigration, abortion, health care, tax fairness, gay rights, and gender equality. The new edition covers the 2014 midterm election, the war in Ukraine, the rise of the Islamic State (ISIS) in the Middle East, and various recent events at home and abroad.

Coverage of the “euro crisis” is expanded and updated. The “agenda” samplers for the four liberal democracies featured in Chapter 7 (Great Britain, France, Germany, and Japan) reflect developments through 2012 and the first half of 2013. The material covering India and Israel, two of the world’s

most challenged representative democracies, is updated but, sadly, the existential circumstances—the predicaments and realities they face—have not changed for either country (and are not likely to change anytime in the expectable future).

There are other revisions, text enhancements, and new features too numerous to mention. I personally selected much of the art work appearing in recent editions—a lot of work, but worth the effort and fun to boot. Many of the photographers featured in these pages are amateurs with a good camera, a great eye, and a generous spirit.

Finally, I also encourage readers to visit my Facebook page, (<https://www.facebook.com/thomas.magstadt>), where I regularly post articles and comments.

Supplements for Students and Instructors

AUTHOR: Thomas M. Magstadt

ISBN: 9781305641174

TITLE: **Instructor Companion Website for Magstadt, *Understanding Politics, 12e***

This Instructor Companion Website is an all-in-one multimedia online resource for class preparation, presentation, and testing. Accessible through Cengage.com/login with your faculty account, you will find the following ancillaries available for download: book-specific Microsoft® PowerPoint® presentations; a Test Bank compatible with multiple learning management systems; an Instructor's Manual; Microsoft® PowerPoint® Image Slides; and a JPEG Image Library.

The Test Bank, offered in Blackboard, Moodle, Desire2Learn, Canvas, and Angel formats, contains specific Learning Objective multiple-choice and essay questions for each chapter. Import the test bank into your LMS to edit and manage questions, and to create tests.

The Instructor's Manual contains chapter-specific learning objectives, an outline, key terms with definitions, and a chapter summary. Additionally, the Instructor's Manual features a critical thinking question, lecture launching suggestion, and an in-class activity for each learning objective.

The Microsoft® PowerPoint® presentations are ready-to-use, visual outlines of each chapter. These presentations are easily customized for your lectures and offered along with chapter-specific Microsoft® PowerPoint® Image Slides and JPEG Image Libraries. Access the Instructor Companion Website at www.cengage.com/login.

AUTHOR: Thomas M. Magstadt

ISBN: 9781305641198

TITLE: **IAC Cognero for Magstadt, *Understanding Politics, 12e***

Cengage Learning Testing Powered by Cognero is a flexible, online system that allows you to author, edit, and manage test bank content from multiple Cengage Learning solutions, create multiple test versions in an instant, and deliver tests from your LMS, your classroom, or wherever you want. The test bank for *Understanding Politics, 12e* contains specific Learning Objective multiple-choice and essay questions for each chapter.

AUTHOR: Gale

TITLE: **CourseReader 0-30: Introduction to Political Science**

PAC ISBN: 9781133232162

IAC ISBN: 9781133232155

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Thomas M. Magstadt earned his doctorate at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS). He has taught at the Graduate School of International Management, Augustana College (Sioux Falls), the University of Nebraska at Kearney, the Air War College, and the University of Missouri–Kansas City, and, most recently, the University of Kansas. He has also chaired two political science departments, worked as a foreign intelligence analyst, served as Director of the Midwest Conference on World Affairs, and lectured as a Fulbright Scholar in the Czech Republic. In addition to publishing articles in newspapers, magazines, and professional journals, Dr. Magstadt is the author of *An Empire If You Can Keep It* (Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly Press, 2004); *Nations and Governments: Comparative Politics in Regional Perspective*, fifth edition (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/ Cengage Learning, 2005); *Contemporary European Politics* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/ Cengage Learning, 2007); and *The European Union on the World Stage: Sovereignty, Soft Power, and the Search for Consensus* (BookSurge, 2010).



CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The Study of Politics

Learning Objectives

- 1 Discuss the value of studying politics.
- 2 Identify the three basic elements of politics, as well as the dynamics of each.
- 3 Analyze the methods, models, and approaches for studying politics.
- 4 Evaluate whether politics brings out the best or the worst in human nature—or both.

Politics is not for the faint-hearted. There is virtually never a day without a crisis at home or abroad. Whenever we catch the news on our radio, TV, or computer, we are reminded that we live in a dangerous world.

In 2008, the spectacle of the world's only superpower paralyzed by extreme partisanship and teetering on the brink of a "fiscal cliff" loomed like a gathering storm. No sooner had that danger receded than a new threat arose in the Middle East in the form of the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). There were even rumors of a coming end-of-the-world apocalypse—December 21, 2012, to be exact, the final day of the old Mayan calendar.

The politically charged atmosphere and the pervasive sense of an impending crisis was nothing new, but two events dominated the news in 2008. First, a financial meltdown and plummeting stock market wiped out fortunes and rocked the global economy to its very foundations. Second, Barack Obama became the first African American elected to the nation's highest office.

Political culture plays a big role in shaping public policy, and optimism is part of America's political DNA. Despite a deepening recession, there was a new sense of hope—perhaps it was the beginning of the end of two costly wars and the dawn of a new era in America. But by 2012 hope had given way to anger and disappointment.

What happened? In 2009, President Obama had moved to revive the U.S. economy, which had fallen into the deepest recession since the Great Depression of the 1930s. But the economic stimulus package he pushed through Congress, where the Democrats enjoyed a solid majority in both the House and Senate, was widely viewed as a Wall Street "bailout"—a massive multibillion dollar gift to the very financial institutions that had caused the problem. It was also criticized as a "jobless recovery"; unemployment rose to nearly 10% and youth unemployment (16- to 19-year-olds) rose about 25% in 2010. Nearly half of young people aged 16 to 24 did not have jobs, the highest number since World War II.

The conservative media (most notably FOX News) and the amorphous Tea Party movement eagerly exploited growing public discontent, handing the Democrats a crushing defeat in the 2010 midterm elections. Republicans regained control of the House and cut deeply into the Democrats' majority in the Senate (see especially Chapters 11 and 13).

Obama also spearheaded a controversial health care reform that satisfied few, confused everyone, and angered many voters on both sides of the acrimonious debate. His decision to order a "surge" in Afghanistan, committing 30,000 more U.S. troops to an unpopular and unwinnable war, did not placate Congress or greatly improve his standing in the opinion polls, nor did his decision to withdraw the last U.S. combat troops from Iraq in December 2011.

Despite a constant chorus of criticism and a vicious media campaign of attack ads from the right, Obama was elected to a second term in 2012. He defeated Republican Mitt Romney by a margin of 5 million votes (51% to 47% of the popular vote) while taking 61% of the electoral votes. The embattled president's troubles in dealing with a recalcitrant Republican majority in Congress, however, continued unabated. His decision in the fall of 2014 to launch

a major bombing campaign against ISIS in Iraq and Syria—in effect, resuming a war that had officially ended three years earlier—did not appease the opposition or boost his popularity, which fell to new lows in 2014.

The president's popularity—or lack thereof—was a major factor in setting the stage for the Republican victory in the 2014 midterm elections when voters gave the GOP a majority in the Senate. Republicans also gained seats in the House (where they had won back control in 2010). But President Obama acted decisively in the days following the election, confounding his critics and commentators who had branded him a “lame duck.”

We know politics is something that happens in Washington, D.C., or in Austin, Texas, and other state capitals, but some of us forget that politics is a pervasive fact of life—others never forget it. That very fact often gives those “others” a big advantage, which can be the difference between success and failure.

For any democracy to succeed in the long run, it is vital that citizens pay attention, learn to think for themselves, and vote intelligently. Political literacy is vital to a viable and sustainable representative government—what we commonly call “democracy.”

The alternative is revolution, a drastic measure and a last resort—one American colonists chose in 1776 and the Confederate South chose in 1860. As we will see in Chapter 14, revolutions are convulsive and quixotic. They often result in less freedom for the people, not more.

A popular slogan (and bumper sticker) reminds us that “Freedom Isn't Free.” It's true. At a minimum, being a good citizen requires us to have a basic understanding of the ideas, institutions, and issues that constitute the stuff of politics. This book is an attempt to foster just such an understanding.

WHY STUDY POLITICS?

The belief that anybody with a college education will have a basic understanding of political ideas, institutions, and issues is wishful thinking. There is a mountain of evidence showing it's simply not true; moreover, there is a mountain of empirical evidence to prove it. To begin to understand the power of politics—and the politics of power—we have to make a careful study and, above all, keep an open mind.

Self-Interest

Because personal happiness depends in no small degree on what government does or does not do, we all have a considerable stake in understanding how government works (or why it is not working). Federal work-study programs, state subsidies to public education, low-interest loans, federal grants, and court decisions that protect students' rights are but a few examples of politics and public policy that directly affect college students. For farmers, crop subsidies, price supports, and water rights are crucial policy issues. Environmental regulations are often the target of intense lobbying on the part of power companies, the oil and gas industry, and mining interests.

Taxes are a hot button for nearly everybody. Most people think they pay too much and others pay too little. Do you know *anybody* who wants to pay *more*

in taxes? Can you think of one wealthy individual who argues that people in his income bracket ought to pay more? (*Hint:* His initials are W.B.)

Through the study of politics, we become more aware of our dependence on the political system and better equipped to determine when to favor and when to oppose change. At the same time, such study helps to reveal the limits of politics and the obstacles to bringing about any major change in a society. It is sobering to consider that each of us is only one person in a nation of millions (and a world of billions), most of whom have opinions and prejudices no less firmly held than our own.

The Public Interest

What could be more vital to the public interest in any society than the moral character and conduct of its citizens? Civil society is defined by and reflected in the kinds of everyday decisions and choices made by ordinary people leading ordinary lives. At the same time, people are greatly influenced by civil society and the prevailing culture and climate of politics. We are all products of our circumstances to a greater extent than most of us realize (or care to admit). Politics plays a vital role in shaping these circumstances, and it is fair to say the public interest hangs in the balance.

BASIC CONCEPTS OF POLITICS

Politics has been defined as “the art of the possible,” as the study of “who gets what, when, and how,” as the “authoritative allocation of values,” and in various other ways. Many people think politics is inherently corrupt and corrupting—hence the term “dirty politics.” Is this true? Can you think of any exceptions?

We may not agree on how to define politics, but we know what it is when we see it—and we don’t like what we see. We are quick to blame “politics” as the main cause of problems not only in society but also in families, schools, and the workplace. Likewise, college students are typically unaware of the anger and tumult that often animate campus politics.

Like other disciplines, political science has a lexicon and language all its own. We start our language lesson with three words that carry a great deal of political freight: *power*, *order*, and *justice*.

Power

Power is the currency of all politics. Without power, no government can make and enforce laws, provide security, regulate the economy, conduct foreign policy, or wage war. There are many kinds of power. In this book, we are interested in *political* power. Coercion plays an important role in politics, but political power cannot be equated with force. Indeed, the sources of power are many and varied. A large population, a booming economy, a cohesive society, and wise leadership—all are examples of quite different power sources.

We often define power in terms of national wealth or military spending. We once called the most formidable states Great Powers; now we call them “superpowers.” Power defined in this way is tangible and measurable. Critics of this classical view make a useful distinction between “hard power” and “soft

politics

The process by which a community selects rulers and empowers them to make decisions, takes action to attain common goals, and reconciles conflicts within the community.

power

The capacity to influence or control the behavior of persons and institutions, whether by persuasion or coercion.

power.” Hard power refers to the means and instruments of brute force or coercion, primarily military and economic clout. Soft power is “attractive” rather than coercive: the essence of soft power is “the important ability to get others to want what you want.”¹

Power is never equally distributed. Yet the need to concentrate power in the hands of a few inevitably raises three big questions: Who wields power? In whose interests? And to what ends?

The most basic question of all is “Who rules?” Sometimes we have only to look at a nation’s constitution and observe the workings of its government to find the answer. But it may be difficult to determine who really rules when the government is cloaked in secrecy or when, as is often the case, informal patterns of power are very different from the textbook diagrams.

The terms *power* and *authority* are often confused and even used interchangeably. In reality, they denote two distinct dimensions of politics. According to Mao Zedong, the late Chinese Communist leader, “Political power flows from the barrel of a gun.” Political power is clearly associated with the means of coercion (the regular police, secret police, and the army), but power can also flow from wealth, personal charisma, ideology, religion, and many other sources, including the moral standing of a particular individual or group in society.

Authority, by definition, flows not only (or even mainly) from the barrel of a gun but also from the *norms* society accepts and even cherishes. These norms are moral, spiritual, and legal codes of behavior, or good conduct. Thus, authority implies **legitimacy**—a condition in which power is exercised by common consensus through established institutions. Note this definition does not mean, nor is it meant to imply, that democracy is the only legitimate form of government possible. Any government that enjoys the consent of the governed is legitimate—including a monarchy, military dictatorship, or theocracy.

The acid test of **legitimate authority** is not whether people have the right to vote or to strike or dissent openly, but how much *value* people attach to these rights. If a majority of the people are content with the existing political order just as it is (with or without voting rights), the legitimacy of the ruler(s) is simply not in question. But, as history amply demonstrates, it is possible to seize power and to rule without a popular mandate or public approval, without moral, spiritual, or legal justification—in other words, without true (legitimate) authority.

A military power seizure—also known as a *coup d’etat*—typically involves a plot by senior army officers to overthrow a corrupt, incompetent, or unpopular civilian ruler. One well-known recent example happened in Egypt in July 2013, following many months of turmoil and the outcome of a presidential election that became unacceptable to the military.

Power seizures also occurred in Mauritania and Guinea in 2008 and in Thailand as recently as 2014; many contemporary rulers, especially in Africa, have come to power in this manner. Adolf Hitler’s failed “Beer Hall Putsch” in 1923 is a famous example of an attempted power seizure. Such attempts often fail, but they are usually evidence of political instability—as the case of Weimar Germany illustrates.

Claiming authority is useless without the means to enforce it. The right to rule—a condition that minimizes the need for repression—hinges in large part on legitimacy or popularity.

authority

Command of the obedience of society’s members by a government.

legitimacy

The exercise of political power in a community in a way that is voluntarily accepted by the members of that community.

legitimate authority

The legal and moral right of a government to rule over a specific population and control a specific territory; the term *legitimacy* usually implies a widely recognized claim of governmental authority and voluntary acceptance on the part of the population(s) directly affected.

Legitimacy and popularity go hand in hand. Illegitimate rulers are unpopular rulers. Such rulers are faced with a choice: relinquish power or repress opposition. Whether repression works depends, in turn, on the answer to three questions. First, how widespread and determined is the opposition? Second, does the government have adequate financial resources and coercive capabilities to defeat its opponents and deter future challenges? Third, does the government have the will to use all means necessary to defeat the rebellion?

If the opposition is broadly based and the government waivers for whatever reason, repression is likely to fail. Regimes changed in Russia in 1917 and 1992 following failed attempts to crush the opposition. Two other examples include Cuba in 1958, where Fidel Castro led a successful revolution, and Iran in 1978, where a mass uprising led to the overthrow of the Shah. A similar pattern was evident in many East European states in 1989, when repressive communist regimes collapsed like so many falling dominoes.

If people respect the ruler(s) and play by the rules without being forced to do so (or threatened with the consequences), the task of maintaining order and stability in society is going to be much easier. It stands to reason that people who feel exploited and oppressed make poorly motivated workers. The perverse work ethic of Soviet-style dictatorships, where it was frequently said, “We pretend to work and they pretend to pay us,” helps explain the decline and fall of Communism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, dramatized by the spontaneous tearing down of the Berlin Wall in 1989.

Order

Order exists on several levels. First, it denotes structures, rules, rituals, procedures, and practices that make up the political system embedded in every **society**. What exactly is society? In essence, society is an aggregation of individuals who share a common identity. Usually that identity is at least partially defined by geography, because people who live in close proximity often know each other, enjoy shared experiences, speak the same language, and have similar values and interests. The process of instilling a sense of common purpose or creating a single political allegiance among diverse groups of people is complex and works better from the bottom up than from the top down. The breakup of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia in the early 1990s, after more than seven decades as multinational states, suggests new communities are often fragile and tend to fall apart quickly if there are not strong cultural and psychological bonds under the political structures.

The Russian-backed secessionist movement that threatened to break up Ukraine in 2014-15 also illustrates the obstacles to maintaining order in a newly independent country where a national minority group is geographically concentrated. Russian-speakers in parts of eastern Ukraine bordering on Russia constitute a solid majority and remain fiercely loyal to Moscow. The same is true in Crimea (previously part of Ukraine), where most people welcomed Russia’s armed intervention. Russia annexed this strategically important region (the whole of the Crimean Peninsula) in March of 2014.

The idea that individuals become a cohesive community through an unwritten **social contract** has been fundamental to Western political thought since the seventeenth century. Basic to social contract theory is the notion that the right

order

In a political context, refers to an existing or desired arrangement of institutions based on certain principles, such as liberty, equality, prosperity, and security. Also often associated with the rule of law (as in the phrase “law and order”) and with conservative values such as stability, obedience, and respect for legitimate authority.

society

An aggregation of individuals who share a common identity. Usually that identity is at least partially defined by geography because people who live in close proximity often know each other, enjoy shared experiences, speak the same language, and have similar values and interests.

social contract

A concept in political theory most often associated with Thomas Hobbes, Jean-Jacque Rousseau, and John Locke; the social contract is an implicit agreement among individuals to form a civil society and to accept certain moral and political obligations essential to its preservation.

to rule is based on the consent of the governed. Civil liberties in this type of community are a matter of natural law and natural rights—that is, they do not depend on written laws but rather are inherent in Nature. Nature with a capital N is a set of self-evident truths that, in the eyes of social contract theorists, can be known through a combination of reason and observation. A corollary of this theory is that whenever government turns oppressive, when it arbitrarily takes away such natural rights as life, liberty, and (perhaps) property, the people have a right to revolt (see Chapter 14).

Government is a human invention by which societies are ruled and binding rules are made. Given the rich variety of governments in the world, how might we categorize them all? Traditionally we've distinguished between **republics**, in which sovereignty (see below) ultimately resides in the people, and governments such as monarchies or tyrannies, in which sovereignty rests with the rulers. Today, almost all republics are democratic (or representative) republics, meaning political systems wherein elected representatives responsible to the people exercise sovereign power.²

Some political scientists draw a simple distinction between democracies, which hold free elections, and dictatorships, which do not. Others emphasize political economy, distinguishing between governments enmeshed in capitalist or market-based systems and governments based on socialist or state-regulated systems. Finally, governments in developing countries face different kinds of challenges than do governments in developed countries. Not surprisingly, more economically developed countries often have markedly more well-established political institutions—including political parties, regular elections, civil and criminal courts—than most less developed countries, and more stable political systems.

In the modern world, the **state** is the sole repository of **sovereignty**. A sovereign state is a community with well-defined territorial boundaries administered by a single government capable of making and enforcing laws. In addition, it typically claims a monopoly on the legitimate use of force; raises armies for the defense of its territory and population; levies and collects taxes; regulates trade and commerce; establishes courts, judges, and magistrates to settle disputes and punish lawbreakers; and sends envoys (ambassadors) to represent its interests abroad, negotiate treaties, and gather useful information. Entities that share *some* but not all of the characteristics of states include fiefdoms and chiefdoms, bands and tribes, universal international organizations (such as the United Nations), and regional supranational organizations (such as the European Union).

In the language of politics, state usually means **country**. France, for instance, may be called either a state or a country. (In certain federal systems of government, a state is an administrative subdivision, such as New York, Florida, Texas, or California in the United States; however, such states within a state are not sovereign.)

The term *nation* is also a synonym for *state* or *country*. Thus, the only way to know for certain whether *state* means part of a country (for example, the United States) or a whole country (say, France or China) is to consider the context. By the same token, context is the key to understanding what we mean by the word *nation*.

A **nation** is made up of a distinct group of people who share a common background, including geographic location, history, racial or ethnic characteristics, religion, language, culture, or belief in common political ideas. Geography heads this list because members of a nation typically exhibit a strong collective

government

The persons and institutions that make and enforce rules or laws for the larger community.

republic

A form of government in which sovereignty resides in the people of that country, rather than with the rulers. The vast majority of republics today are democratic or representative republics, meaning that the sovereign power is exercised by elected representatives who are responsible to the citizenry.

state

In its sovereign form, an independent political-administrative unit that successfully claims the allegiance of a given population, exercises a monopoly on the legitimate use of coercive force, and controls the territory inhabited by its citizens or subjects; in its other common form, a state is the major political-administrative subdivision of a federal system and, as such, is not sovereign but rather depends on the central authority (sometimes called the “national government”) for resource allocations (tax transfers and grants), defense (military protection and emergency relief), and regulation of economic relations with other federal subdivisions (nonsovereign states) and external entities (sovereign states).

sovereignty

A government’s capacity to assert supreme power successfully in a political state.

country

As a political term, it refers loosely to a sovereign state and is roughly equivalent to “nation” or “nation-state”; *country* is often used as a term of endearment—for example, in the phrase “my *country* ’tis of thee, sweet land of liberty” in the patriotic song every U.S. child learns in elementary school; *country* has an emotional dimension not present in the word *state*.

sense of belonging associated with a particular territory for which they are willing to fight and die if necessary.

Countries with relatively homogeneous populations (with great similarity among members) were most common in old Europe, but this once-defining characteristic of European nation-states is no longer true. The recent influx of newcomers from former colonial areas, in particular the Muslim majority countries of North Africa, the Arab world, and South Asia, and post–Cold War east-west population movements in Europe have brought the issue of immigration to the forefront of politics in France, Germany, the United Kingdom, Spain, Italy, the Netherlands, and even the Scandinavian countries. Belgium, on the other hand, provides a rare example of a European state divided culturally and linguistically (French-speaking Walloons and Dutch-speaking Flemish) from the start.

India, Russia, and Nigeria are three highly diverse states. India’s constitution officially recognizes no fewer than eighteen native tongues! The actual number spoken is far larger. As a nation of immigrants, the United States is also very diverse, but the process of assimilation eventually brings the children of newcomers, if not the newcomers themselves, into the mainstream.³

The **nation-state** is a state encompassing a single nation in which the overwhelming majority of the people form a dominant in-group who share common cultural, ethnic, and linguistic characteristics; all others are part of a distinct out-group or minority. This concept is rooted in a specific time and place—that is, in modern Western Europe. (See “Landmarks in History” for the story of the first nation-state.) The concept of the nation-state fits less comfortably in other regions of the world, where the political boundaries of sovereign states—many of which were European colonies before World War II—often do not coincide with ethnic or cultural geography. In some instances, ethnic, religious, or tribal groups that were bitter traditional enemies were thrown together in new “states,” resulting in societies prone to great instability or even civil war.

Decolonization after World War II gave rise to many polyglot states in which various ethnic or tribal groups were not assimilated into the new social order. Many decades later, the all-important task of **nation-building** in these new states is still far from finished. Thus, in 1967, Nigeria plunged into a vicious civil war when one large ethnic group, the Igbo, tried unsuccessfully to secede and form an independent state called Biafra. In 1994, Rwanda witnessed one of the bloodiest massacres in modern times when the numerically superior Hutus slaughtered hundreds of thousands of Tutsis, including women and children. In early 2008, tribal violence in Kenya’s Rift Valley and beyond claimed the lives of hundreds of innocent people following the outcome of a presidential election that many believed was rigged.

In India, where Hindus and Muslims frequently clash and sporadic violence breaks out among militant Sikhs in Punjab and where hundreds of languages and dialects are spoken, characterizing the country as a nation-state misses the point altogether. In Sri Lanka (formerly Ceylon), Hindu Tamils have long waged a terrorist guerrilla war against the majority Sinhalese, who are Buddhist.

Even in the Slavic-speaking parts of Europe, age-old ethnic rivalries have caused the breakup of preexisting states. The Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, and



THE PEACE OF WESTPHALIA (1648): The Origins of the Modern Nation-State System

FIGURE 1.1 Dawn of the Nation-State System: Europe in 1648.



(Continued)