

Governments are more transient than states. A government is made up of the temporary occupants who control a state's more lasting institutions. States are the ongoing institutions that exist from regime to regime that govern a specific area. A government is more like the use of the word "administration". For example, President Obama's term in office is called "the Obama administration" because President Obama is the head and leader of it. In the U.K. they call the government, "the Cameron government" after current Prime Minister David Cameron.

Sovereignty is broadly the ability to govern oneself. The family of states, legally recognizes a nation that is "sovereign", as the sole legitimate governing authority within its territory, and as the legal equal of all other states. Sovereignty in comparative politics should be viewed in two ways. The first is internal sovereignty, or the ability to have a monopoly on the legitimate use of force, and to be able to enforce the laws the state creates through the political institutions the state controls. If a state is not the only authority within a territory capable of creating and enforcing policies, the state is not internally sovereign. The second aspect of sovereignty is external sovereignty, or being recognized by other states as the legitimate representatives of the state's people.

For example, Somalia lacks internal sovereignty. Inside its borders is mainly anarchy, but it is still recognized by other nations as the legitimate government of the territory known as Somalia. Somaliland, an area within the territory of Somalia, has internal sovereignty, has rules that are enforced and the beginnings of a sovereign state. However, this government is not recognized by other governments, and thus lacks external sovereignty.

Politics is the arena in which different groups and individuals enter in order to pursue their own gain. Politics is the process of collective decision making necessitated by human nature and interactions. The political process happens in every society, and examining the different methods is a central aspect of comparative politics.

Because humans live in communities, certain problems will arise. These problems will necessitate group action to solve, either because of their scale, or in order to make a fair and unbiased decision. These collective action problems lead to the need for politics as a way to solve these problems.

Social Contract Theory is a philosophical justification and explanation of the purpose of government, which arose in the 17th century. Notable contract theorists include John Locke, and Thomas Hobbes. The main precepts are that a government is only legitimate if the people consent and agree to the social contract. Social contract theory is the philosophical underbelly of liberal democracy and liberalism in general. The emphasis on individual rights and freedoms in political theory finds its home here.

Authoritarian regimes are regimes that lack democratic legitimacy, but justify their rule through other means such as divine right, or providing political goods to their members. 16th century English kings are excellent examples of authoritarian regimes. These regimes also often have traditional legitimacy in the place of democratic legitimacy.

A single member of the government controls everything in this system. North Korea is an excellent example of a supreme ruler that has absolute power. Authoritarian regimes derive their legitimacy from different sources than do some governments, and it's important to understand these differences before decrying these regimes as illegitimate.

Totalitarian regimes are regimes that control everything and try to destroy any and all vestiges of civil society, meaning no citizen organized soccer clubs or bird watching clubs. Instead, all attention is focused into the state in attempts to further the goals of the society as a whole.

One example is the Soviet Union under Stalin, which sacrificed many of its citizens in order to quickly industrialize and modernize the society. North Korea, is another example. The media is controlled, the

Internet is controlled, religion is controlled, and everything else in between is regulated through the government.

Anarchy is a society with no functioning government. Whether a state exists and simply can't enforce its laws through its institutions, or there is no government, both are circumstances of anarchy.

Somalia is an example of anarchy in the status quo. Right now the government is only recognized externally by organizations like the U.N. Usually, anarchy results in disorder and violence, as evidenced by Somalia.

Charismatic legitimacy is one of sociologist Max Weber's three forms of legitimacy. Weber admits that no state is actually purely one form of legitimacy. Charismatic legitimacy is rule because of a special virtue or personal heroism. Charismatic legitimacy generally helps add legitimacy to regimes.

President Obama is an example of charismatic legitimacy.

Rational or legal legitimacy is the form of legitimacy, and the right to rule, stemming from consistency with a rational or legal system. If a leader rises to power through the process which laws call for then she or he has legal legitimacy.

For example, winning the popular vote in the U.S. is not necessarily enough to win the presidential election because the requirements for winning the Electoral College, and thus the presidential election, are not simply related to the popular vote.

Traditional legitimacy is the right to rule based on long standing traditions and customs. If females have always ruled a certain society, than a female ruler will have "traditional" legitimacy simply by virtue of being in line with the way things "have always been done".

Kings in 16th century England had traditional legitimacy, and African kings who rule because they are blessed by their ancestors have traditional legitimacy.

States are made of the long-standing political institutions that govern a certain territory and exist even when there is a change in government or regimes. These institutions create laws, and control the legitimate use of force over a certain area, and implement those laws and public policies in the state's territory.

The more transient governments should contrast states, which are lasting. States and their institutions are the essential building blocks for countries, and of the study of how they interact. For example, states can be: authoritarian, totalitarian, democratic or many other types, and looking at how these different types of states interact and function is the basic ideas of comparative politics.

A nation is a group of people who share a common history or culture, desire to live together in a state, and control that state. Nations should be contrasted with ethnic groups, as ethnic groups do not care about controlling a state, but rather about having autonomy and freedom within an existing state. For example, Jews are an ethnic group because they share a common religion, but not, a nation because they do not seek to control a state.

Nations are the fundamental building blocks of the global political system. Each state claims to be the legitimate representative of a nation, and all nations claim to control a particular state.

A failed state is a state that lacks legitimate control over the use of force within their own territory. Usually failed states lack internal sovereignty, meaning that their citizens don't view the government as legitimate, or do as the laws of the country dictate. These states often still have external sovereignty, meaning that other countries recognize that state or government as being the legitimate governing power over that state's territory.

For example, Somalia is an excellent example of a failed state. The government there has no control over the territory, and its people do not respect the laws to such a great extent that some areas have set up their own

governments. Somaliland has created its own government over a certain area in Somalia. Unfortunately, this government lacks recognition by foreign power, or external sovereignty.

Absolutism is the complete concentration of power in the hands of one monarch. It developed out of feudalism, and helped shape the modern state, adding aspects such as the bureaucracy and collection of taxes.

North Korea is one of the existing absolutist states. Kim Jon Un has power over everything and anything. The people worship him as if he was a form of deity, and there is nothing that he cannot command. The U.S. based satirical news source "The Onion" wrote a story on him, claiming that he had been voted "sexiest man alive". This was then published as legitimate news in North Korea. Because of the absolutist state, few people in North Korea know this, and even fewer would dare to say it, while most believe it wholeheartedly because of the adoration that they have for their "supreme leader".

A political system in which legislative and executive authority is vested in the person of the sovereign, with little or no role for democratic representation.

Rational Choice Theory is a theory that attempts to explain why the individual acts in certain ways.

Specifically, rational choice theorists assume that individuals attempt to pursue their goals, and are gain maximizing creatures. Theorists usually take this theory and apply it to individuals and to the state as a general rule. Individuals are the unit of study in rational choice theory. They perform a cost benefit analysis, and pursue actions that have benefits greater than the costs.

There are flaws involved with the theory. For example, cultural values may differ, meaning that one culture's rational choice is irrational in another society, if rational choice theory begins to include too many things it won't be a useful model anymore because it will be too difficult to use it. Other problems like the prisoner's dilemma show that the theory doesn't apply well to all individuals, but generally it still is a valuable set of assumptions and useful for simplifying complex problems.

For rational choice theorists, history and culture are irrelevant to understanding political behavior; instead, it is sufficient to know the actors' interests and to assume that they pursue them rationally. Whereas the earlier decision-making approach sought to explain the decisions of elite groups, rational choice theorists attempted to apply their far more formal theory to all facets of political life.

Correlation is the process of linking two variables together, seeing how one value corresponds to the other. However correlation is not the same as causation, just because one thing happens after or during another thing does not mean the first caused the second. For example, certain years of the Chinese zodiac correspond with better economic performances by countries. This doesn't mean that those years are better for the economy, but rather that those years happen to occur at years when the economy does better. Assuming that the correlation between the zodiac's years and the performance of the economy would be a logical fallacy. It is important to distinguish instances where variables simply happen at the same time as others, and where one causes something else to happen in order to determine what truly causes things to happen.

Political ideologies are consciously crafted sets of empirical and normative theories dealing with how society and government ought to be structured and shaped. Ideologies are the central part of any state, helping to predict what states will do. Ideologies are often a cause for conflict and violence. For example, the fear of Communism spreading led the U.S., a liberal democracy, to intervene in Vietnam.

Political ideology should be contrasted with political culture, in that political culture is not as consciously crafted.

Fascism is a political ideology that places the society before the individual. It treats the people as simply a way to further the well-being of society. Overall the society is treated as a living organism and the state is the brain, controlling what the parts of society do and how they help the society. Fascist states are usually