

## 4: Know ... THEORY

Unlike economics or psychology, comparative government and politics theory is in its infancy. All social scientists want to develop accurate generalizations and correlations about the topics under consideration. Those conclusions should help us better understand how things work. And, if research can demonstrate how some things cause others, people with power might find ways to bring about changes they desire.

Some scholars work diligently at constructing a meaningful theory built around fundamental concepts like "legitimacy" or "justice." But most contemporary theory used is just now moving beyond descriptive.

The comparative process begins by being quite descriptive. After all, how can you do analysis without adequate description? However, even description must be done within a theoretical framework.

It is theory that answers questions like

- What should be studied?
- How should those things and processes be described?

- What questions should we ask?
- How can we evaluate answers to those questions?
- How much correlation is required to demonstrate causation?
- What data is needed to support generalizations or confirm apparent similarities?

Theories are based on concepts like legitimacy, justice, sovereignty, and democracy. The glossary at the end of this chapter offers definitions of many important concepts and useful labels, but it's not comprehensive. You should recognize that there are hundreds of concepts used in the study of comparative politics. Check your textbook's glossary, index, and end of chapter summaries for more help in preparing for the AP exam.

Most often comparative analysis begins with the definition of government as an institution which makes policy decisions and implements those policies for the people and territory within the jurisdiction of the government. The answers to the questions of what should be studied and described, then, are the **people, institutions, and processes** by which policy decisions are made

### One Common Aim, Methods That Vary

Governments have many aims and functions in common. How they accomplish those goals differs widely, however. For instance, leaders of every political unit want to be seen as legitimate holders of authority. The ways they achieve legitimacy vary widely. The Iraqi regime of Sadaam Hussein used repression to maintain social order. His Baathist Party used near-totalitarian methods to distribute everything from food to electricity and their version of national pride. The level of legitimacy they earned was pretty low.

In industrial democracies, leaders depend largely on competitive elections and the rule of law to earn legitimacy. The provision of public goods like education, law enforcement, social security, and transportation are also part of the system that wins and maintains public trust.

and implemented for what's commonly called a "nation-state."

If all governments make and implement policy, then we can compare the ways they do that. What we need to do is find the people, processes, and institutions that decide on policy in one nation-state and compare them with the people, processes, and institutions that make policy in other nation-states. For the purposes of the AP exam, you can do that with carefully defined concepts like "interest articulation" and "interest aggregation" or you can do it with generic labels like "lobbying" and "political participation."

But you should be a bit more sophisticated in your responses than the simplistic idea above. You might refer to Locke's idea that there are three functions of legitimate government, i.e., one that represents the people: legislation (making policy), administration (implementing policy), and adjudication (resolving conflicts peaceably). These three functions turned into the legislature, executive, and judiciary in the American regime. How are those functions performed in other political systems?

(Did you notice what I did there? I just asked a conceptual comparative question and provided you with a theoretical context in which to answer it. As an example, it makes a general point. Comparative government and politics promotes the description and comparison of analogous features of different systems.) Identifying and naming those analogous features is the beginning of comparative theory.

Speaking of systems, we can make these ideas a bit more so-

phisticated by expanding our focus from government to include the **environments** within which governments operate and with the **resources** that governments have.

If government is the **place** where policy decisions are made and put into action, what does the government have to work with? Does it matter if the country is resource rich (like the USA) or resource poor (like North Korea)? Does it matter if the country has a huge population like China or a small population like Canada? Does it matter whether people value fairness and justice (as they do in the UK) or whether they value religious or ideological purity (like many people do in Iran)?

I hope that you're now saying something like, "Those are blatantly obvious questions. Of course, those things matter." What I'm trying to get you to think about are governments' **environments** and the **inputs** to the governmental **system**.

Another way to think about the environments within which nation-states function is to distinguish between **domestic environments** and the **global environment**. A major part of the domestic environment is what political scientists call **the state**. The state includes the government and all the other actors in the nation-state that wield power and influence. So it's not only the natural

or demographic features that make up a government's environment, but it's the people and organizations in the nation.

The global environment includes all those other nation-states in the world, international organizations like the UN and the EU, military and economic alliances like NATO and NAFTA, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) like Amnesty International, Doctors Without Borders, and

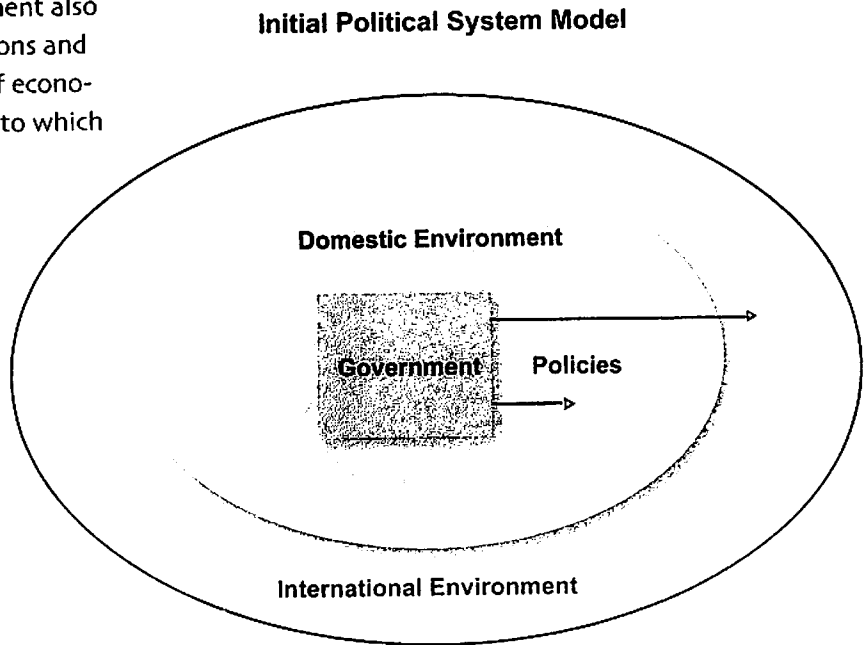
### **Be Sure to Compare the Environmental Factors, Too**

The mineral resources, the talents and education of the people, international organizations, climate, and many other things are all part of the environment within which a government operates. Some of those things empower a government; other things impinge on its operation. They are valuable to consider when making comparisons.

the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN). The global environment also encompasses the conflicts between nations and other organizations, the general state of economies and trade, and any other situation to which governments must respond, like global warming or terrorism.

**A POLITICAL SYSTEM**

What do we have so far? A government that makes policies and puts them into practice. This government operates within a domestic environment and an international environment. Do you have an image of that? Here is my image. How does it correspond with yours?



If we're close to having the same images, then we can proceed (and you can skip the rest of this paragraph). If we're not on the same page with this model, let me explain mine. The international environment includes everything outside the nation-state. Everything! The domestic environment includes everything in the nation-state except the government. The government is made up of all those organizations, institutions, and offices (and the people who hold those offices) involved in making and implementing public policies. It is also all those public laws, rules, regulations, standards, and red tape.

**public:** "of, belonging to, or concerning the people as a whole; of or by the community at large"  
 — Webster's New World College Dictionary

If you're confused about the arrows representing policy, there are two because some policies affect only the nation-state and others affect the world beyond the nation-state. In a rich and powerful country, many affect both. If you're still having trouble with this, think about it and hang in here.

I'm going to elaborate. And that may actually help make sense of this idea.

**ELABORATION**

Newton's Third Law of Motion states that for **every** action there is an equal and opposite reaction. As much as some social scientists would like to, none of us has found universal laws like that for political science.

**Universal Laws of Social Science**

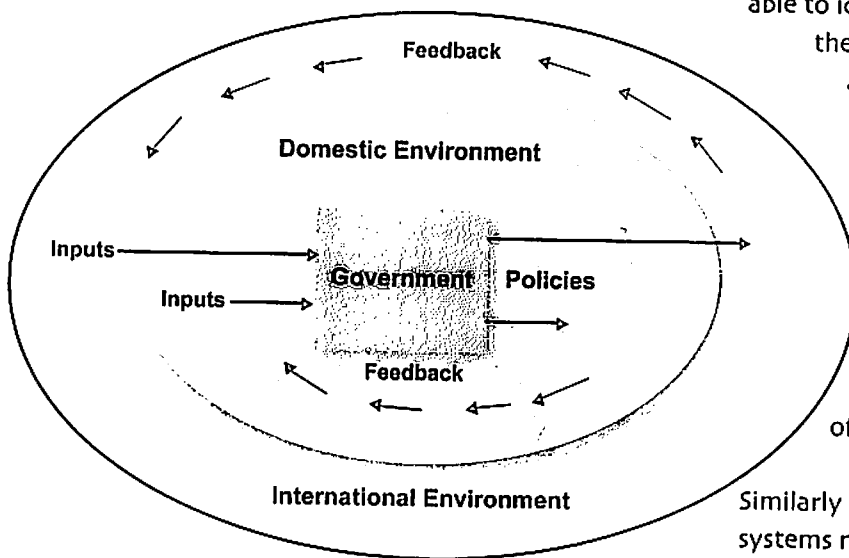
Justice is one of the values most discussed — especially by philosophers — as a candidate for a universal law of social science.

We are, however, able to state emphatically that effective policy will produce results. If policy is effective, the consequences will change the environment within which the policy maker resides. That means that policymaking in the future will take place in an environment different from the one in which previous policymaking took place. Right! Huh?

In other words, if three countries (say Canada, Mexico and the USA) choose, in 1993, to follow a policy of free trade between and among themselves (say a North American free trade association), then the domestic and international environments of all three nation-states would be altered. After the 1993 agreement, policymaking would be different. How do we include that in our model?

Borrowing what we can from other scientists, social scientists label those changes caused by policy decisions "feedback." The feedback becomes part of the environments for future decision making-decision-making. So here's a new sketch.

#### Expanded Political System Model



The final elements of the model are the inputs. Inputs are the political acts that can be identified as directly contributing to the policy-making process. This might (in the case of a US policy on petroleum) be interest aggregation and articulation like the lobbying of the Sierra Club and the Wyoming Independent Producers Association.

The effects of these inputs on the administration of the Energy Department or the legislative committee work of Wyoming Representative Barbara

Cubin are direct. As you can see, the model is designed to show that some inputs come from the international environment and others come from the domestic environment. Make sense?

So what? What do **you** do with this descriptive model of governing?

If theory tells us to compare analogous features of policymaking in various countries, a systems model should help you determine what is analogous to what.

If, as the 1999 AP test did, this year's test asks you to compare ethnic conflict in two countries and "how the government" in each nation-state "has dealt with ethnic conflict," you should be easily able to identify the environments within which the conflicts took place and the inputs that affected policymaking. That ought to make your comparison of differences between government policies in Russia, Mexico, and Nigeria clearer.

You probably won't use the words "environment" and "feedback" in your free response (though you could), but the theory will help you make sense of the question and frame your response.

Similarly this systems model might have helped you respond to the 2006 question about "how a decentralized unitary system differs from a federal system." You would focus on which policy-making elements of a

#### Distractions

Some would argue that incidental acts with political consequences (the increasing use of low-mileage SUVs by American consumers, for instance) are also inputs. You can make a case for that in a free-response answer, but don't get distracted from your main point.

unitary system are analogous to policy-making elements in a federal system. Then you could describe differences between, for instance, the devolved bodies in the UK and the states in the USA.

Some years ago, comparative theory moved toward **behaviorism**, like most social sciences. This was a step beyond description. Behavioral studies focused on individual decision making within the institutional and political frameworks described earlier. It assumed that most people made rational, informed decisions in their own self-interests.

The focus of much comparative political science shifted from government to politics; from institutions to people's behavior. If you've studied economics, this should sound familiar.

This change in theoretical emphasis also made quantitative studies more realistic, since statistical analysis depends on large numbers of examples (i.e. people's decisions) for accuracy.

If making verifiable generalizations using descriptive comparisons was difficult, behaviorism also had its limitations. People don't always seem to make rational decisions. Sometimes they make choices that are more beneficial to others than themselves. And globalization began making it more and more difficult to be well informed about the consequences of choices.

More recently, some comparative political scientists have begun integrating descriptive and behavioral methods with a **cultural approach**, borrowed, in part, from anthropology. This newest theoretical approach to comparative politics is the most nebulous. How do you take into account institutional, political, behavioral, and global cultural variables when comparing political systems? The answers to that question are only beginning to appear.

**inputs:** the ways average citizens and the groups they form (interest groups and political parties) affect political life

**policies:** regulatory, redistributive, assertive, and symbolic, actions (and actions not taken) by government

**environment:** everything outside the political system

**feedback:** the ways in which people's reactions to policy help shape the next phase of political life

— Hauss,  
*Comparative Politics,  
Domestic Responses to  
Global Challenges, 2003*

**legitimacy:** "the sense that the political system in place not only has political power, but ought to have this power"

— Theen and Wilson,  
*Comparative Politics,  
An Introduction to  
Seven Countries, 1992*

#### COMPARATIVE METHODOLOGY

All of these theoretical approaches rely on comparative case studies.

If you compare events in different political systems using case studies, you're looking for causes and effects. The effects are like the results of experiments (i.e., dependent variables). The causes are like the experimental processes (independent variables).

If you choose events carefully (say the promotion of private enterprises in Russia and China), you can identify the results, label some causes as constants (because they're the same in both countries), and label other causes as independent variables that account for the differences in outcomes.

However, if you don't choose carefully and try to compare essentially disparate events (say an ideological and social revolution in China with a theocratic revolution in Iran), there may be so few constants and so many independent variables that coming to any reasonable conclusions about the causes of results is virtually impossible.

There are two basic approaches to case studies: most similar systems (MSS) comparisons and most different systems (MDS) comparisons.

In MSS analysis, you want to look at similar governance systems and look for correlations between differences in the systems and differences in policies and/or government actions.

In MDS analyses, you seek correlations between system similarities and policy similarities when governance systems are quite different from one another.

Both approaches are valuable for descriptive, behavioral, and cultural theories. Quantitative and qualitative approaches also use either approach or systems theory.

Case analysis might be very useful in the AP exam's "free-response" section. Questions will ask you to make comparisons and the topics are likely to imply some similarities as well as some differences.

If you can limit the **independent variables** (the differences between the causes in one country and the causes in another), you might have a nifty outline of a response to the question.

Be sure you're not overlooking any significant details or minimizing political, economic, or cultural differences.

### Sorting Out the Categories

Number of Rulers	Rule in the General Interest	Rule in Self Interest
one	monarchy	tyranny
few	aristocracy	oligarchy
many	democracy	ochlocracy

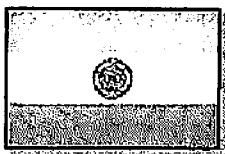
### A CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM

Another bit of theory you should master is part of the process of making generalizations. What systems have in common is as important as how they differ. When generalizing, we try to put countries into meaningful categories that describe how members of a category are similar. None of the variety of attempts to sort nation-states into groups is entirely satisfactory, and people use different systems for different purposes.

The old classifier, Aristotle, probably began this process. In fact, if we can agree on how many is a "few" or a "many," the categories at right may still be useful theoretical tools.

The modern standard system has deep historical roots. In Europe and the USA, it began as "us and them." Before World War II, there were the Western and non-Western Worlds. At the beginning of the Cold War there were democracies ("the First World") and communist countries ("the Second World"). Both of those classification systems, based on politics, were loaded with ethnocentric assumptions — something political scientists strive to avoid.

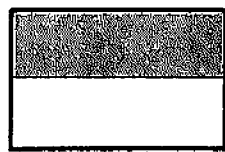
Even without the biases, such a static and simplistic view of the world was doomed.



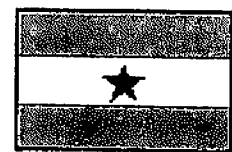
India



PRC



Indonesia



Ghana

- In 1948, India became an independent country with an elected government. Did that make it part of the First World?
- In 1949, China switched from "us" to "them" and became a Second World country.
- In 1955, Indonesian President Sukarno hosted the Bandung Conference of Non-Aligned States in part to assert that there was more to the world than "us and them."
- In 1957, Ghana became the first of Europe's former African colonies to become an independent nation. The number of nation-states grew rapidly in the 1960s.

Politicians and political scientists responded by adding a new category, "the Third World," to the "us and them" categories.

By the 1970s, it was obvious that the assembly of Third World nation-states was pretty diverse. Industrialization happened rapidly in some Asian countries. In the 1990s, democratization was an identifiable trend in Asia and Africa. Some people began using an additional category, "Fourth World," to distinguish between the countries that were desperately poor and those that were a bit better off.

The collapse of communism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe made the communist countries category obsolete. Some political scientists have continued to talk about communist and former communist countries because those nation-states do share some important characteristics.

(As a sidelight, the AP Comparative Government and Politics exam has gotten beyond including "the former Soviet Union" in the curriculum. However, because it is the direct ancestor of contemporary Russia, you'll need to know about the USSR.)

### MORE COMPLEXITY

The recognition of more and more complexity led to new ways of categorizing nations. One popular categorization put nation-states into groups based on descriptions of their primary economic activity: industrialized, industrializing, non-industrial. Other people tried labels like developed and developing or underdeveloped categories. You will see labels like LDC (less developed countries) or the G8 (the Group of Eight most industrialized) countries. In other

contexts you'll see the labels north and south applied to "developed" and "developing" countries.

### The Dividing Line

The north-south dichotomy is based on the fact that the richest nations tend to be north of the equator while the poorest nations are south of that line.

None of these systems has proved totally satisfactory for describing groups of nations. Nonetheless, the terms are still used because in certain contexts, they're useful descriptions. (Ambiguity. Remember?)

**The primary implication is that if you label a nation-state, you're telling your audience something about it.** If someone tells you that Singapore and Sudan are Third World countries, they're not communicating much of anything. In fact, such a statement would cause confusion since Singapore and Sudan have so little in common. If they say that Sudan, Somalia, Laos, and Nicaragua are Third World countries, you should be able to understand several possible messages (ambiguity raises its head again) and to be able to ask for clarification.

**What you have to do is become conversant with these labels and their limitations.** You must understand what the test writers mean when they use them. If you use them in a free

response, you must use them properly. Otherwise, you'll not get credit for your ideas.

If you look at your textbook, you may well find some categorization. Here's what it probably means.

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**First World Countries /  
Industrialized Democracies /  
Durable Democratic Regimes /  
Early Developers**

When authors or test writers use these terms they are usually talking about rich, Western countries with relatively long histories of political development. The countries have some form of representative government. That means there are regularly scheduled competitive elections. The elections are run and broad policymaking is done transparently. In other words, there is relatively meaningful political accountability and reliance on the rule of law.

These countries also have an active (but not too active) civic culture. People are free to form and join public and private organizations which contribute to the communities they are part of. There is also in these countries, a general sense among citizens that the government and the elites who wield political authority legitimately have power.

**Causes and Results: Keep Them in the Right Order**

One of the biggest problems AP test takers have is maintaining clear, logical relationships between causes and results. Given the pressures of testing situations, the complexity of cause and effect relationships, and the desire to show they know "things," test takers regularly confuse causes with results and vice versa. It doesn't matter whether it's sloppy thinking or sloppy writing, you probably won't get any points for describing a public policy as causing public opinion in a republican system. In a republican government, policy is usually a result of public opinion.

However, the nature of feedback implies that a policy might cause the aggregation and articulation of opinion. If you're going to assert such a relationship, you must describe it completely.

It's ambiguity again. Keep your thoughts clear and your writing precise. Describe relationships fully — especially if that relationship goes beyond the common sense simplicity of the obvious.

Nearly all these countries have mixed economies that rely on markets and private property to greater or lesser degrees. All the governments exert power over private economic activity and all provide at least basic public and social services. The social services and the taxation to pay for them usually have the effect of reducing class-based cleavages and increasing social mobility. The governments of all of these countries provide subsidies to agriculture and to other "desirable" industries.

The economies may be called industrial, but post-industrial is more accurate. The service sector is becoming more and more important. They are becoming "post-industrial." The transition from industrial to service economy is creating problems of structural unemployment in many of these countries. In addition, post-materialist values are becoming more important as awareness of environmental and other quality of life issues grows.

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**Second World Countries /  
Communist and Former Communist Regimes /  
Middle Developers**

Most of the countries in this category share authoritarian/totalitarian political histories. Politics was open only to self-perpetuating elites. These countries also shared command economies,

and relatively short-lived. Many of these states, even when not democratic are called "failed" states. The institutions of the state are ineffective and inefficient. Those characteristics together with dramatic poverty mean that there is a lack of even basic public services (clean water, law enforcement, schools, roads). There is also the absence of rule of law. Elections, if they take place, and policymaking are not likely to be transparent. Political scientists would say these countries have to deal with a low level of political integration. That means there's little sense of national identity. People identify themselves primarily by their ethnic heritage or religion rather than their citizenship. There is likely serious ethnic conflict (even if it's not violent). In these countries there is likely to be a relatively wide gap between the elites and the rest of society in wealth, education, and attitude. All these characteristics and non-democratic politics are encouraged and facilitated by patron-client relationships that are prominent features in these countries. Patron-client relationships are important in all political systems, but in these countries the unequal linkages dominate politics.

Besides poverty and dependency, countries usually placed in this group are facing the problems of rapid population growth and environmental degradation. Greater resources must be allocated to feeding people, and the resources of these countries are limited. Thus there's even more temptation to make long-term ecological sacrifices for short-term economic gains.

### POLITICAL ECONOMICS

One of the major areas of policymaking governments must deal with is economics. Even for countries with powerful economies and strong states, domestic economic issues have global implications. And those policy decisions are also made within the context of global politics and economics, which limit the choices of all sovereign nation-states.

where planning the use of publicly-owned assets substituted for markets and private ownership. They also shared systems that provided relatively high levels of social services and promoted egalitarian economic and social policies. These countries also have relatively old infrastructure and industrial capital.

Today, these countries are at various stages of change. People in all these countries are trying to establish stable, legitimate regimes. Some might be called transitional democracies. Others continue to be ruled by small, closed elites. Nearly all are giving market-oriented forces more legitimacy. Many of these countries are faced with large-scale social and economic problems ranging from ethnic warfare to shrinking economies and high inflation. People are trying to find ways to adjust to an economic/political system that does not guarantee jobs, housing, health care, and security. Two of the world's remaining communist countries, China and Vietnam, are actually confronting the problems of economic growth.

### Third World Countries / Less Developed Countries / Newly Industrializing Countries / Late Developers

Test writers and textbook authors usually are talking about countries that were once colonies of Western industrialized countries when they use this category. The variety of regimes and economies among this group is great. Generally, the dependency of colonial status continues for these countries. Their economies are dependent upon exports and foreign investments, which limit the choices of governments and states. The power of multinational corporations (MNCs) in these countries is great. So is the power of international organizations like the IMF, the World Bank, and the World Trade Organization.

If the power of outsiders is great, the power of governments is weak. Regimes tend to be unstable

economies. They also make regulatory policies that affect the efficiencies and trustworthiness of their domestic economies.

All of this domestic policymaking is done within an environment that includes global markets for goods and services, global markets for currencies, over 200 nation-states, cartels that distort markets (like OPEC), international trade pacts (like NAFTA and the WTO), supranational organizations (like the EU), and global interest groups (like the Center for Global Justice).

In spite of the fact that economists and politicians don't agree on exactly what effects result from economic policies, you probably need to know that

- fiscal policies affect economic growth
- monetary policies affect economic growth and trade
- trade policies are limited by global markets, international treaties, and supranational organizations
- regulatory policies affect growth, efficiency, and trade

Review the economic terms in the glossary. Make sure you have a clear idea of what they mean and how they're related to each other and to politics.

The distinctly economic terms are agricultural sector, balance of trade, budgetary deficit, capitalism, command economy, currency markets, distributive policies, economic liberalization, extractive policies, fiscal policy, foreign exchange rates, gross domestic product, import substitution, industrial policy, industrial sector, Keynesian economics, monetary policy, national debt or surplus, parastatal, political economy, post-industrial, privatization, redistributive policies, regulatory policies, rent seeking, service sector, social democracy, social welfare, socialism, structural adjustment, supply side economics, and welfare state.

**Jargon:**  
 1 incoherent speech ...  
 4 the specialized vocabulary and idioms of those in the same work, profession, etc.  
 — Webster's New World College Dictionary

In order to be prepared for the AP exam, you'll have to have a grasp of basic economic policies, how economic policy decisions are made, the implications of those policies, and limitations imposed on policy makers by the global economy. If you need to review this in detail, check out the "macroeconomics" article in a good encyclopedia.

Domestic economic policies center on taxation and government spending, usually referred to as **fiscal policies**. The highest level policies have to do with how much government should spend and how much of the money to be spent should come from taxes, how much should come from the sale of state resources, and how much should come from borrowing. Debates on these issues center on what effects fiscal policies will have on economic stability, growth, prosperity, efficiency, trade, and often how much "profit" will be returned to those in power.

The underlying issues, often decided before the highest level ones, have to do with things like who is taxed, who is subsidized, and at what levels, who loans money to the government, what goods and services are public, and who benefits from government spending — legitimately or not. Debates on these issues focus on winners and losers as well as on the larger issues of stability, growth, prosperity, efficiency, and trade.

Other domestic economic policies center on money and interest rates. These are usually referred to as **monetary policies**. While all the issues mentioned above are part of debates about monetary policies, international trade becomes an issue since the value of a nation-state's money is directly related to trade issues.

In addition, governments make **trade policies**, which affect their own and other nation-states'

**JARGON**

The word "jargon" carries pejorative implications. Perhaps we should use the label "scientific terminology." The idea is that by using carefully specified names for carefully identified features, communication will be facilitated. In other words, telling someone to "watch out for the yucky green stuff in the woods" may not be adequate warning about poison ivy. And telling him not to "let the oleoresin urushiol from *Toxicodendron radicans* (L.) Kuntze contact your epidermis" might be equally ineffective. However, there are contexts in which each warning might be appropriate.

The grand theory ideas above are aimed primarily at the general-to-specific thinkers. This bit is aimed at the specific-to-general specialists.

There is a bit of scientific vocabulary in the study of comparative politics, and using it correctly means you are knowledgeable. It also helps com-

**accountability:** the concept that government officials are responsible to and serve at the pleasure of constituents or elected officials (and that they may be removed from office by those electors or officials) (see **collective responsibility**)

**adjudicate:** to resolve a matter in dispute; when backed up by the authority of government the decision can be enforced

**agricultural sector:** that part of a country's economy that is involved in the production of farm products

**autarchy:** complete self-sufficiency

**authoritarianism:** a system of governance based on coercion rather than political legitimacy

**authority:** the legal right to exercise power on behalf of the society and/or government

**autocracy:** a system of governance in which a small group has absolute power

**autonomy:** the degree to which a state can implement policies independent of the

communicate within the context of an AP exam.

Outside of class, the textbook, or the exam, this vocabulary might appear to be jargon. Once again, context helps determine what's best.

**WHAT VOCABULARY DO YOU NEED TO KNOW?**

Begin with the index of your textbook and the lists of terms at the ends of chapters. Many of the words in those parts of the book that are not proper nouns are valuable terminology.

My incomplete list of comparative concepts and terms are noted on the pages that follow. If you're not sure what they mean, look them up in your textbook. If you don't find them in your textbook, do a search on the web for the words in a political science context.

You don't have to know all of these terms. You should know the ones your textbook uses.

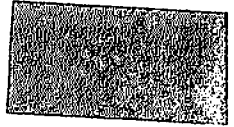
populace or the amount of sovereignty a nation-state can exercise in the global environment

**balance of trade:** comparison between the value of exports and the value of imports for a nation-state; usually figured by subtracting the value of imports from the value of exports (a positive balance of trade means that exports were worth more than imports; a negative balance of trade means the value of imports exceeded the value of exports)

**bicameral:** describing a legislative body with two houses

**budgetary deficit:** the result of government spending in any one fiscal year exceeding the government revenue in that year (national debt is the total of yearly deficits)

**bureaucracy:** a hierarchically structured organization charged with carrying out the policies determined by those with political authority



- cabinet:** in a parliamentary system, the group of ministers who direct administrative bureaucracies (ministries) and make up the government, which is responsible to the parliament (see **accountability**); in a presidential system, the administrative directors responsible to the president
- capacity:** the degree to which a state or government is able to implement its policies
- capitalism:** an economic system that emphasizes private property rights and market mechanisms
- catch-all party:** a political party whose aim is to gather support from a broad range of citizens through a de-emphasis of ideology and an emphasis on pragmatism, charismatic leadership, and marketing
- causation:** a correlation in which a change in one variable results in change in others
- checks and balances:** a system of governance in which divisions of government can restrain the political authority of other divisions
- citizen:** a member of a state who is legally entitled to full civil rights and is legally obliged to perform defined public duties
- civic culture:** a political culture in which citizens widely share a belief in the legitimacy of their regime and a trust in the government; therefore the citizens demonstrate restraint in their demands on the government
- civil servants:** employees of the government who administer (not make) policy; expected to serve any and all governments (see **civil service**)
- civil service:** a system of carefully describing the tasks involved in performing government jobs, evaluating applicants for those jobs (civil service examinations), and hiring people from among those applicants based on skills and experience rather than political factors; civil service also protects incumbents in civil service positions from politically based retribution
- civil society:** all those organizations outside of government and (according to some authorities) commercial arenas, which provide avenues of public participation in society
- class:** the divisions of society into groups according to economic roles and status attributes (also called social class); see **cleavage**
- cleavage:** factors that separate groups within a society; may be cultural, historic, geographic, economic, ethnic, racial, etc.; the wider and deeper the cleavages, the less unified the society; cleavages which coincide with one another can reinforce each other; cleavages that don't coincide can weaken the divisions between groups
- clientalism:** an exchange system in which clients offer support and loyalty to patrons who offer material and intangible benefits
- coerced participation:** political action organized by ruling authorities rather than by interest groups or civil society groups
- collective responsibility:** in a parliamentary system, the concept that all cabinet members agree on policy decisions and that all will be responsible for the results (see **accountability**)
- command economy:** an economic/political system in which government decisions rather than markets determine resource use and output
- compromise:** a decision-making (policy-making, law-making) process in which all parties concede some of their goals in order to reach other of their goals through agreements with other political actors
- conflict:** a situation in which values, goals, or policies are contradictory or incompatible with each other
- consensus:** a decision-making (policy-making, law-making) process that emphasizes win-win outcomes while seeking to avoid zero-sum or win-lose situations by seeking unanimous agreement

- constant:** any of those things in comparative case analysis that are essentially identical in studied examples
- constitution:** a supreme law that defines the structure of a nation-state's regime and the legal processes governments must follow
- co-opt:** win support by granting special favors to an individual or a group (clientalism or corporatism); there is often an implication that those receiving benefits abandon important goals when offered less-important benefits
- corporatism:** a system of governance in which the government is dominated by representatives of groups within society; may or may not be democratic to some degree
- correlation:** an apparent association between variables
- coup d' état:** the forceful replacement of a regime or a government by a small elite group or groups
- currency markets:** markets in which traders buy and sell currencies; the values of currencies set in these markets have a powerful influence on **foreign exchange rates**
- decolonization:** the process by which colonial powers (mostly European) divested themselves of empires (not always voluntarily)
- demand:** pressures from people and interest groups on the government and state for change
- democratization:** the spread of representative government to more countries and the process of making governments more representative
- dependent variable:** a result of political decision making which is determined by the inputs, institutions, and processes (independent variables)
- developed countries:** nation-states which have industrial and post-industrial economies
- developing countries:** nation-states which are industrializing
- devolution:** a process in a unitary system of delegating some decision making to local public bodies
- distributive policies:** government policies that allocate valuable resources
- economic liberalization:** policy designed to remove political controls over economic activity (see **Keynesian economics** and **supply side economics**)
- empirical analysis:** consideration of agreed-upon facts gathered by observation or experiment
- ethnic group:** a group of people seen by themselves and/or others as belonging together because of ancestry, religion, linguistics, and/or other cultural features of the group; often the basis of a nation
- ethnic identity:** cultural and social characteristics that distinguish one nation from another — especially in the minds of the members of the ethnic group
- executive:** the people and agencies, which implement or execute government policy (from the head of government to the lowest bureaucrat)
- extractive policies:** government efforts to gather valuable resources for public use (think taxes)
- extractive sector:** that part of an economy which involves making use of natural resources for economic purposes (e.g. mining)
- faction:** a group organized on the grounds of self-perceived common interest **within** a political party, interest group, or government
- failed state:** a state within which the government has lost the ability to provide the most basic of public services or implement its policies
- federalism:** a regime in which political authority is shared between a central government and local governments
- feedback:** the reactions of people, organizations, and other factors that shape political environments for future policymaking

- first past the post:** see **plurality system**
- fiscal policy:** government decisions about total public spending and revenue that result in **budgetary deficits** or surpluses
- foreign exchange (ForEx):** the rates at which the currency from one nation trades with others; affected by **currency markets**, balances of trade, and domestic government policies
- function (public):** the actions taken by a government to decide upon, implement, and enforce policy decisions (private functions would, of course, be those things done by individuals and private organizations to further their goals)
- fusion of powers:** a system of governance in which the authority of government is concentrated in one body (see **separation of powers**)
- generalization:** a description of common features of a chosen group or category of examples
- global warming:** a well-supported theory that certain human-produced gases in the atmosphere are causing the earth's climate to warm
- globalization:** the increasing interconnectedness and interdependence of people, cultures, economies, and nation-states facilitated by technology, trade, and cultural diffusion
- governance:** the characteristics of a regime or a government
- government:** the part of the state with legitimate public authority; the group of people and organizations that hold political authority in a state at any one time (for Americans this would be a synonym for administration)
- grassroots politics:** locally-organized activism; as opposed to top-down, hierarchical organizing
- gross domestic product (GDP):** the total value of goods and services produced by an economy (very similar to gross national product or GNP)
- head of government:** the office and the person occupying the office charged with leading the operation of a government
- head of state:** the chief public representative of a state
- identity politics:** political activity and ideas based on the shared experiences of an ethnic, religious, or social group emphasizing gaining power and benefits for the group rather than pursuing ideological or universal or even state-wide goals
- imperialism:** the practice of one nation-state taking control of nations and territory of other countries
- import substitution:** a government policy that uses trade restrictions and subsidies to encourage domestic production of manufactured goods
- independent variable:** any one of the inputs, institutions, or processes that shape the results of government decision (policy) making
- industrial policy:** a government's decisions and actions, which define goals and methods for the manufacturing sectors of an economy (see **economic liberalization**)
- industrial sector:** that part of the economy which manufactures finished and secondary products
- inputs:** demands and support by individuals and groups upon the decision (policy) making process of government
- interdependence:** a situation, brought about by specialization and/or limited resources, in which nation-states rely on one another for economic resources, goods, and services and political assets such as security and stability
- interest aggregation:** ways in which demands of citizens and groups are amalgamated into proposed policy packages (e.g., leadership, political parties, etc.)
- interest articulation:** the methods by which citizens and groups can express their desires and make demands upon government (e.g., political participation, lobbying, protest, etc.)
- interest group:** any organization that seeks to influence government policymaking to better serve the self-perceived wants and needs of its members

**international:** describing organizations or events that involve more than one nation-state

**intervening variable:** a factor influenced by an **independent variable** that affects the changes in a **dependent variable**

**interventionist:** describing an activist government and/or state that is involved in a wide range of political, economic, and social arenas

**iron triangle:** mutually-beneficial relationships between private interests, bureaucrats, and legislators; sometimes called an "integrated elite" (see also **patron-client relationships**)

**judicial review:** the power of courts to modify or nullify the actions of legislatures, executives, and lower courts

**Keynesian economics:** the ideas of John Maynard Keynes that governments can manipulate macro-economic demand through taxation and spending policies in order to foster stable growth (see **economic liberalization** and **supply side economics**)

**legitimacy:** the belief that a regime is a proper one and that the government has a right to exercise authority

**monetary policy:** domestic government policies affecting interest rates and the supply of money available within an economy

**multiple causality:** the simultaneous effects of a number of independent and intervening variables that bring about changes in dependent variables

**nation:** a group of people who identify themselves as belonging together because of cultural, geographic, or linguistic ties

**nation-state:** a territorial unit controlled by a single state and governed by a single government

**national debt or surplus:** the historic total of yearly government budgetary deficits and surpluses for a nation-state

**nationalization:** the process of making the government the owner of productive resources

**neo-imperialism:** a pejorative label given to a

variety of attempts to achieve hegemony over other nations; some people tend to use the term to describe the use of corporate power and wealth to gain influence in Third World countries; others use it to describe attempts by international organizations to impose change upon rich and powerful nations (e.g., the Kyoto Treaty or the International Court of Justice)

**newly-industrializing countries:** nation-states that began developing economic industrial sectors relatively recently

**non-governmental organization (NGO):** private (often membership) group that pursues self-defined goals outside of government; common activities are publicizing issues, lobbying, making demands on government, and providing direct services

**normative analysis:** consideration based upon preferences and values about what things should be like

**oligarchy:** a system of governance dominated by a small powerful group in the state

**parastatal:** a government-owned corporation to compensate for the lack of private economic development or to ensure complete and equitable service to the whole country (can be anything from a national airline or railroad to a postal system or manufacturing and marketing operations)

**parliamentary government:** a system of governance in which the head of government is chosen by and serves at the pleasure of the legislature

**particularistic party:** a political party that does not attempt to appeal to voters beyond an identifiable group within a population

**patron-client relationships:** a usually informal alliance between a person holding power and less powerful or lower status people; the powerful patron provides power, status, jobs, land, goods, and/or protection in exchange for loyalty and political support (related terms: clientalism, patrimonialism, **prebendalism**)

**tics** (How does a culture get its people to be good political citizens or subjects?)

**politics**: the processes through which groups of people govern themselves or are governed; activities associated with the exercise of authority

**post-industrial**: describing an economy in which the service sector has become more important than the industrial sector

**post-materialist values**: beliefs in the importance of policy goals beyond one's immediate self interest (e.g., environmentalism and cultural diversity) as well as one's prosperity and security; sometimes labeled "post-modern" values

**power**: ability to direct the behavior of others through coercion, persuasion, or leadership (see **authority**)

**paternalism**: the form of patron-client politics that legitimizes the exploitation of government power for the benefit of office holders and their followers

**private**: interests, activities, and property of individuals and groups not part of government

**privatization**: the process of putting ownership of productive resources into the hands of non-governmental organizations and people (see **economic liberalization** and **nationalization**)

**proportional representation**: an electoral system in which voters select parties rather than individual candidates and parties are represented in legislatures in proportion to the shares of votes they win

**public**: actions, policies, institutions (and the people in them) supported by, or concern to, and open to the community at large

**qualitative research**: case studies of historical and cultural aspects of political systems

**quantitative research**: statistical studies which seek correlations and causalities between data

**peak association**: an interest group organization whose membership is other organizations with parallel interests and goals; frequently a nation-wide organization or specialized or localized smaller organizations (e.g. Trades Union Congress in the UK)

**plurality system**: an electoral system in which election winners are determined by which candidate receives the largest number of votes (regardless of whether or not a majority is received)

**police powers**: government powers to regulate public safety and enforce laws

**policy**: decisions made by an organization defining its goals and actions (public policies are decisions made by government)

**political communication**: the flow of information from and about government to its constituents and feedback from constituents to people in government

**political culture**: the collection of history, values, beliefs, assumptions, attitudes, traditions, and symbols that define and influence political behavior within a nation-state

**political economy**: the interaction of political and economic systems and policymaking of a state

**political participation**: the actions by citizens which involve them in the process of selecting leaders and making policies

**political party**: an organized group of people with the primary purpose of electing its members to government office (alternatively, some parties exist to represent and promote a point of view or ideology regardless of electoral successes)

**political recruitment**: the processes by which people are encouraged and chosen to become members of an elite within a political system or state

**political socialization**: the institutions and methods of developing and reinforcing significant public beliefs, attitudes, and practices

- realignment:** a significant change in the party or policy loyalties of substantial groups within a nation-state
- redistributive policies:** government policies that take valuable resources from one or more groups in society and allocate them to other groups
- reductivism:** the attempt to explain complex correlations and causations using a single independent variable; oversimplification
- regime:** a pattern of organization for a government (often described in a constitution or supreme law)
- regulatory policies:** government policies designed to control practices and behavior of citizens and organizations and prevent harmful results and/or ensure civic benefits of those behaviors
- rent seeking:** the practice of political leaders who, for the purposes of remaining in positions of power, "rent" public assets (resources or tax supported services) to patrons who profit from those public assets
- republic:** a political regime in which government citizens choose leaders directly or indirectly
- revolution:** a process by which a political regime is overthrown and replaced because of broad popular support and participation in the process
- rule of law:** constitutionalism; a governance system operating predictably under a known and transparent set of procedural rules (laws)
- run-off elections:** an electoral system that requires winners to earn a majority of votes cast; in cases where no candidate wins a majority in the election, least successful candidates are removed from the ballot and another election is held
- separation of powers:** the system of governance in which government power is divided into several bodies with the ability to check the power of the other bodies (see **fusion of powers** and **checks and balances**)
- service sector:** that part of the economy which organizes and provides services at an economic cost
- single-member district:** an electoral system in which voters choose an individual running for office in each legislative district (also called "first past the post" if the winner is chosen by a plurality)
- social change:** alterations in the characteristics of a group or in the relationships among and between group members
- social contract:** the basic agreement between group members and the group as a whole as to rights, privileges, duties, benefits, and costs; often partially explicit in a constitution; usually implicit, in part, in the history and politics of a group
- social democracy:** a political philosophy centered on electoral politics, egalitarian social policies, and the creation of social welfare systems
- social movement:** collective political action by a section of society outside the realm of established parties, interest groups, and power elites; social movements' goals are often adopted by parties and interest groups; social movements and their leaders can be **co-opted** by power elites
- social welfare:** the material condition of the members of a group; may also refer to the group-supplied material benefits in a society (e.g. health care)
- socialism:** a political/economic system in which the government plays a major role (usually ownership) in determining the use of productive resources and the allocation of valuable goods and services; may be democratic or authoritarian
- soft power:** a term credited to Harvard professor Joseph Nye, who defines it in international relations as "co-opting people rather than coercing them."

In domestic politics it's often used by political leaders as a justification for limiting the activities of dissidents and foreign and international NGOs who are seen as introducing non-traditional values. References are often made to the 2004-2005 Orange Revolution in the Ukraine, the Rose Revolution in Georgia, the ousting of Slobodan Milosevic in Serbia, the Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan, and the 1989 Velvet Revolution in Czechoslovakia. All of those regime changes involved mostly grassroots, non-violent movements funded and encouraged by NGOs, many funded by the United States.

**sovereignty:** independent legal authority over a population in a particular place; the degree to which a state controls its own territory and independently make and carry out policy

**state:** the assembly of all those people and groups within a nation-state that have power to effect change at some level of society through direct action or political participation

**strong state:** a state with extensive capacity to carry out policies adopted or a state in which there are few limitations on the actions of one or more parts of the state

**structural adjustment:** World Bank programs which offer financial and management aid to poor countries while demanding privatization, trade liberalization, and governmental fiscal restraint

**structure (public):** an organization or process by which a government carries out its public policies (private structures would, of course, be those organizations and processes by which individuals and private organizations further their interests)

**supply side economics:** the economic theory  
1. that markets are the most efficient and fair way to allocate productive resources and valuable products;

2. that government should interfere in the production of goods and services as little as possible;

and 3. that economic actors will negate any actions by government to manipulate demand by anticipating the actions and taking counter measures (see **economic liberalization** and **Keynesian economics**)

**supranational:** organizations or events in which nations are not totally sovereign actors (e.g. the European Union or global warming)

**system:** an organization of interdependent, interacting features bounded by limits, which interacts with its setting or environment

**technocrats:** highly-educated bureaucrats who make decisions based on their perceptions of technical issues rather than political ones (often contrasted with patron-client politics)

**unicameral:** describing a legislative body consisting of one house

**unitary state:** concentration of political power in a central government as opposed to federalism

**vote of confidence:** a vote in a parliament expressing support for a government; a government losing a vote of confidence is often expected to resign

**weak state:** a state with little capacity for carrying out policies adopted or a state in which the powers of the state are limited

**welfare state:** a state which provides a wide array of social services to its members

**win-win outcome:** a resolution to a situation in which all parties benefit

**zero-sum game:** a resolution to a situation in which one side wins and others lose