

GOV 20: Foundations of Comparative Politics

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Discussion Section

Complete slides, Fall 2024

What is Comparative Politics? Substance and method

- How is comparative politics different from journalism or history?
- What is “comparative” about CP?
- Method of agreement and method of difference
- Qualitative and quantitative methods
- Identifying causation

Reviewing lecture

- State, regime, and government
- Main approaches:
 - Economic
 - Cultural
 - Leadership-centered
 - Institutional

Weeks 2 and 3:

- Discuss Modernization Theory, its strengths and shortcomings, and the main critiques/alternative approaches
- Understand how and when states, markets, and institutions can promote development
- Discuss whether the state is a solution or a problem

What are this week's readings trying to explain?

- Outcome (dependent variable): development
- This will (mostly) be the structure of this course
- Look for the what causes this outcome and the how (independent variable and mechanism)
- Scope conditions are not always explicit (or, where else does this apply?)

Activity time

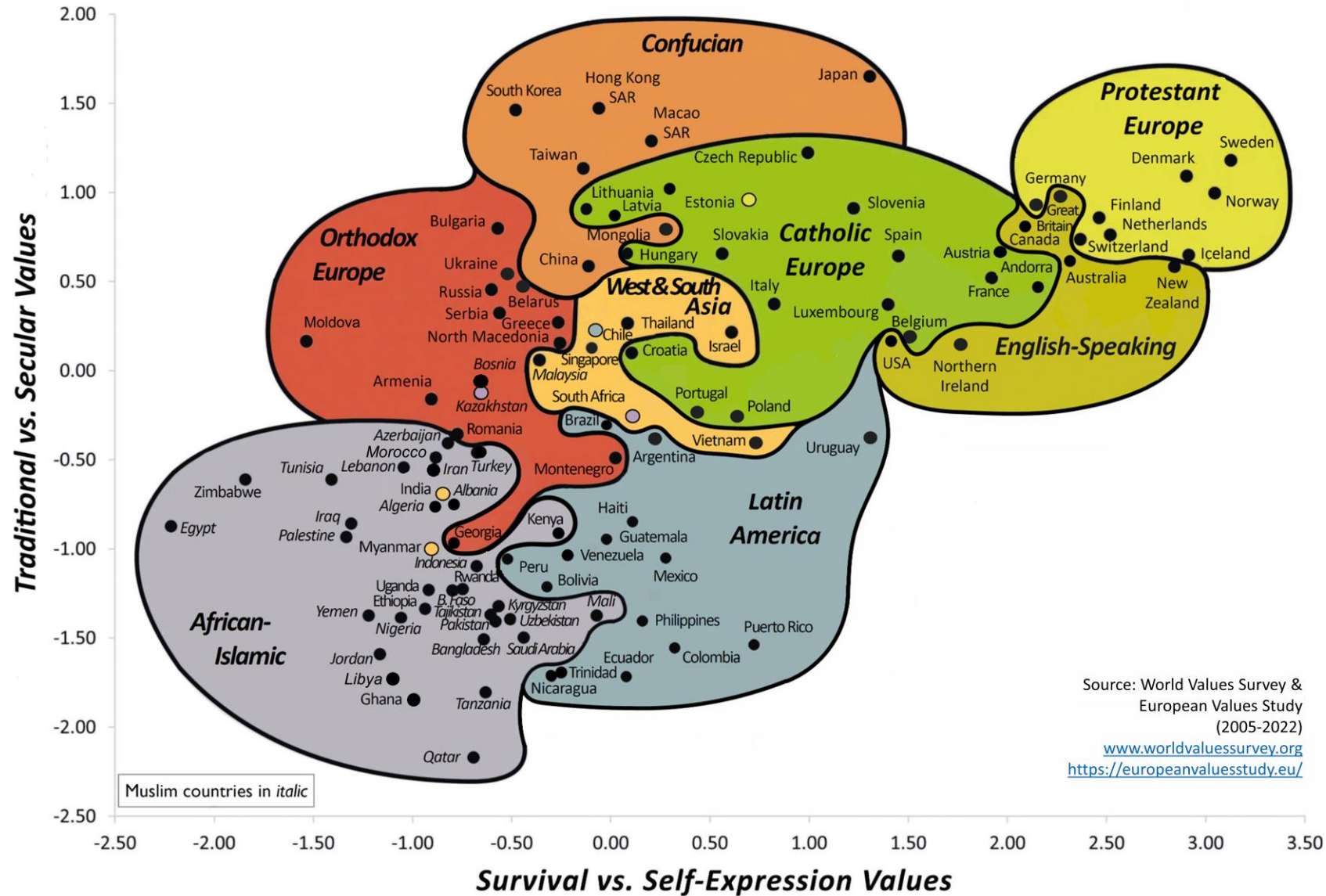
- Weberians
- Modernization Theorists
- Gerschenkronians
- Dependency theorists

Main question:

Why have some countries developed and others have not?

1. Summary of your approach
2. How does it define modernity
3. Answer main question
4. Discuss advantages and disadvantages of your approach
5. What would you tell a developing country today if your approach is correct? What are the country's prospects?

The Inglehart-Welzel World Cultural Map 2023



State-led development		Market-led development
	Where did it work? (according to the readings, lecture, or your personal knowledge)	
	What mechanisms made it work there?	
	Do you think the alternative strategy would also have worked in those contexts?	
	Where did it not work?	
	What went wrong?	
	Which is more conducive to this strategy's success: democracy or authoritarianism?	
	What's the role of ordinary individuals (voters, workers, etc) in each approach?	
	Does this strategy require a strong state?	

Week 4:

- Understand the theoretical role of the state and its dimensions
- Distinguish states from governments and regimes, state strength from scope of what a state does, some different dimensions of state strength
- Discuss how to actually strengthen states

Picking up where we left off

- Strong states are good for development
 - (whether state-led or market-led)
- What does a strong state look like?
 - Rule of law is enforced (evenly across the territory), bureaucracy is autonomous and effective in doing what it is required to do
- Conversely, a weak state...
 - Has weak rule of law, patrimonial or inept bureaucracy, not present throughout the territory



Some famous state-builders





Why did state-building not occur (or occur differently) elsewhere?

- Latin America – type of war, international context
- Africa – imposition of borders, population density
- China – exit options, centralization

How can we strengthen states now?

Week 5:

- Understand the definition(s) of democracy
- Discuss the factors that lead to the emergence of democracies, especially the role of structures and agency

Picking up where we left off

- In making states, war also helped develop power-sharing institutions
 - Key takeaway: people rarely give up power if they're not forced to
 - (In other words: institutions are sticky)
- On mass democracy, other arguments give weight to development, culture, class structure, and leaders



Normative v. Positive claims

- Normative claim: Women should be allowed to vote
- Positive claim: (Male) politicians will support women's suffrage when they think female voters will support their party
- Normative claim: governments should respond to demands of voters
- Positive claim: certain institutions make governments more or less responsive

Is the US a democracy?



Definitions of Democracy

- “a political system which supplies regular constitutional opportunities for changing the governing officials” (Lipset)
- “a key characteristic of a democracy is the continuing responsiveness of the government to the preferences of its citizens, considered as political equals” (Dahl)
- “a regime that uses elections as a decision rule for appointing rulers and where turnover of leaders is possible” + “freedom of the press, secret voting, direct-election of all legislative houses, and voting rights for all citizens” (Teele)
- “a regime in which governments are chosen in regular free and fair elections, all adult citizens can vote, and all citizens enjoy the civil liberties (e.g., free speech, press, association) necessary to inform themselves about, criticize, and oppose those governments” (Levitsky)

What causes democracy?

- Lipset: Modernization
 - How?
- Is this supported by the evidence?
 - Przeworski and Limongi
- If not modernization, then what?
 - Varshney: leaders

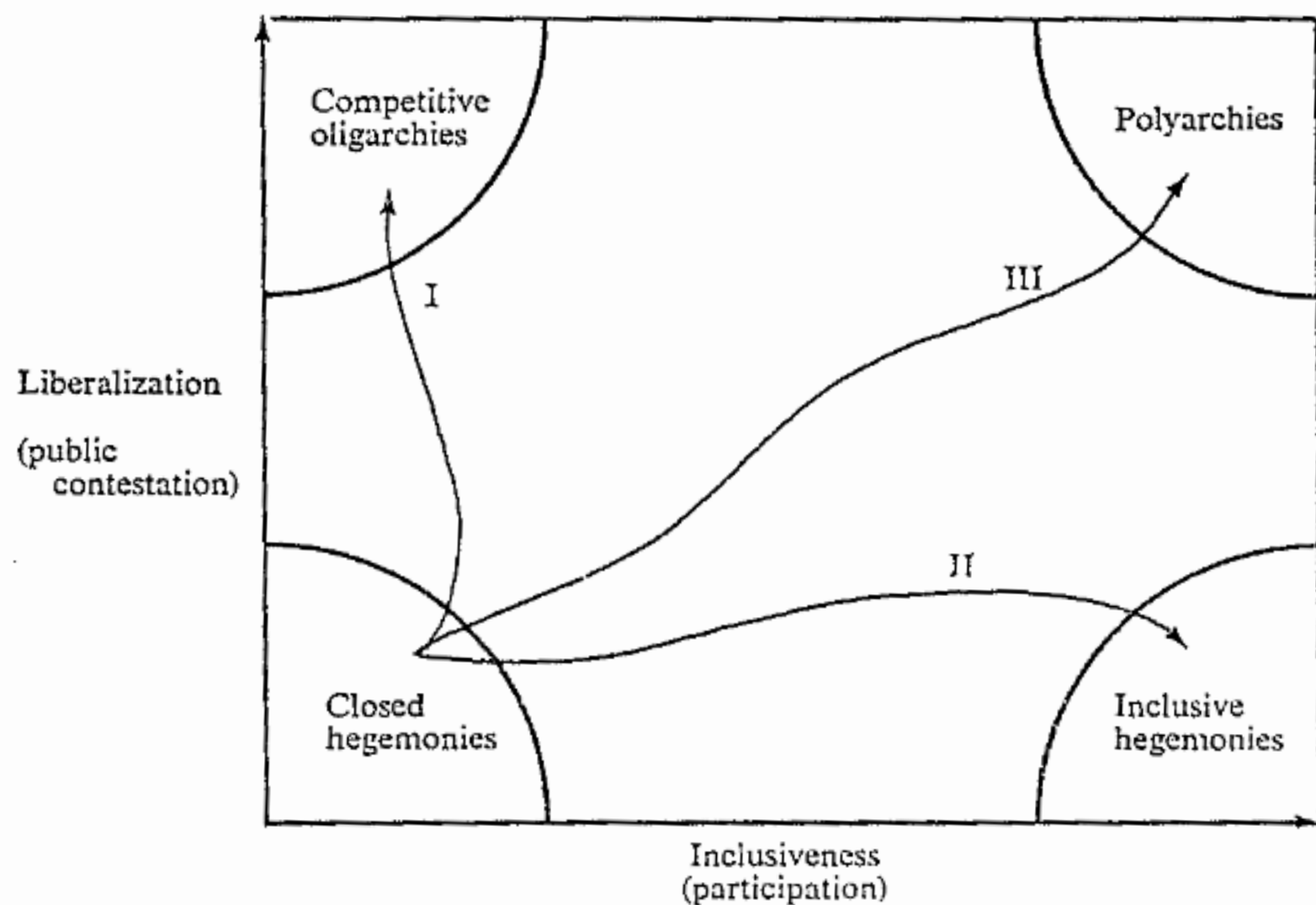


FIGURE 1.2 Liberalization, Inclusiveness, and Democratization

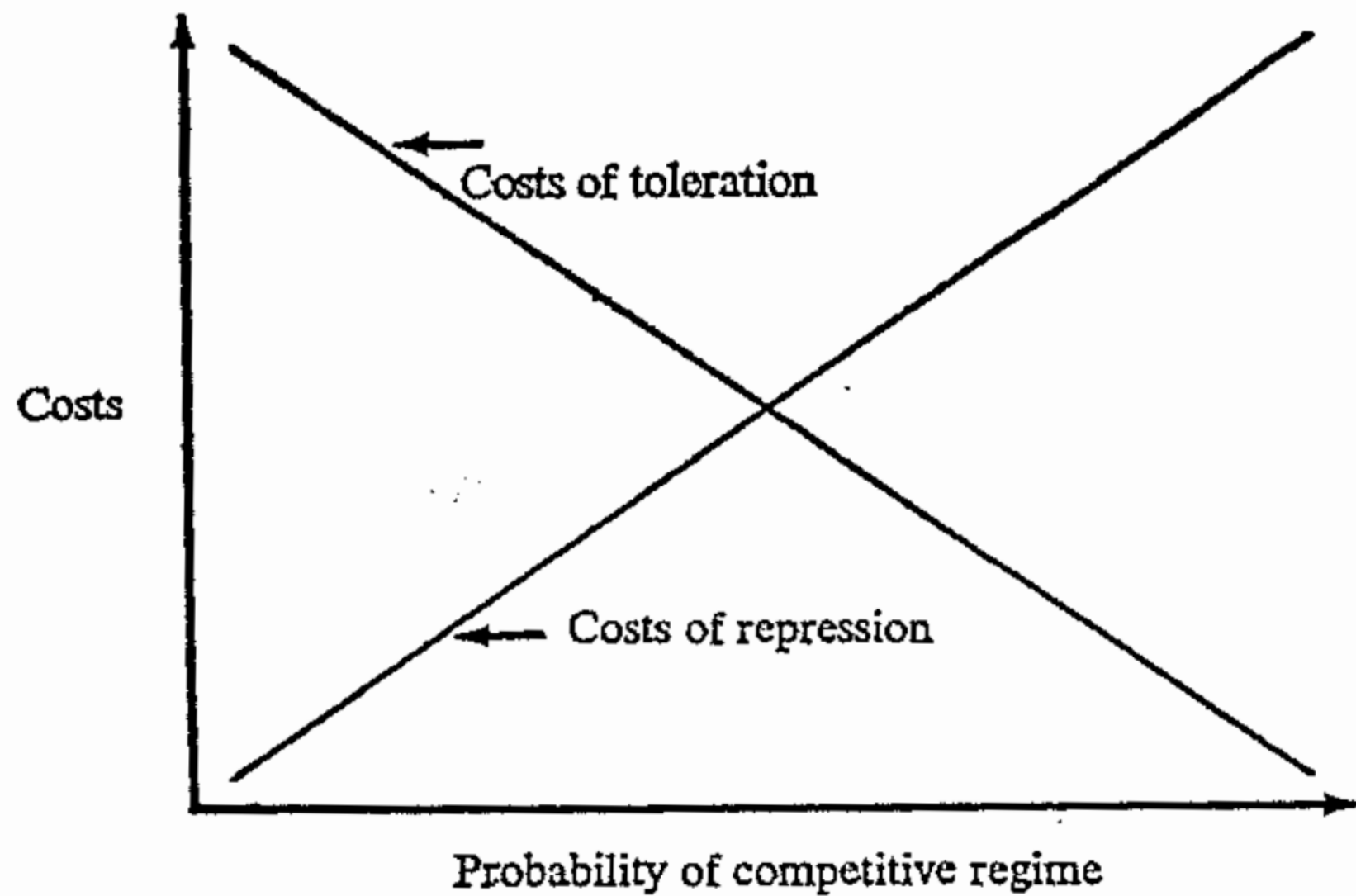


FIGURE 1.4

Week 6:

- Discuss democratization and democratic breakdown in the 21st century

EXPLAINING DEMOCRATIZATION WAVES

The dependent variable of this study is not democracy but democratization. The purpose is to explain why some countries that were authoritarian became democratic in a particular period of time. The focus is on regime change, not regime existence.

- Explain change and persistence, different or failed types

Democracy comes in waves

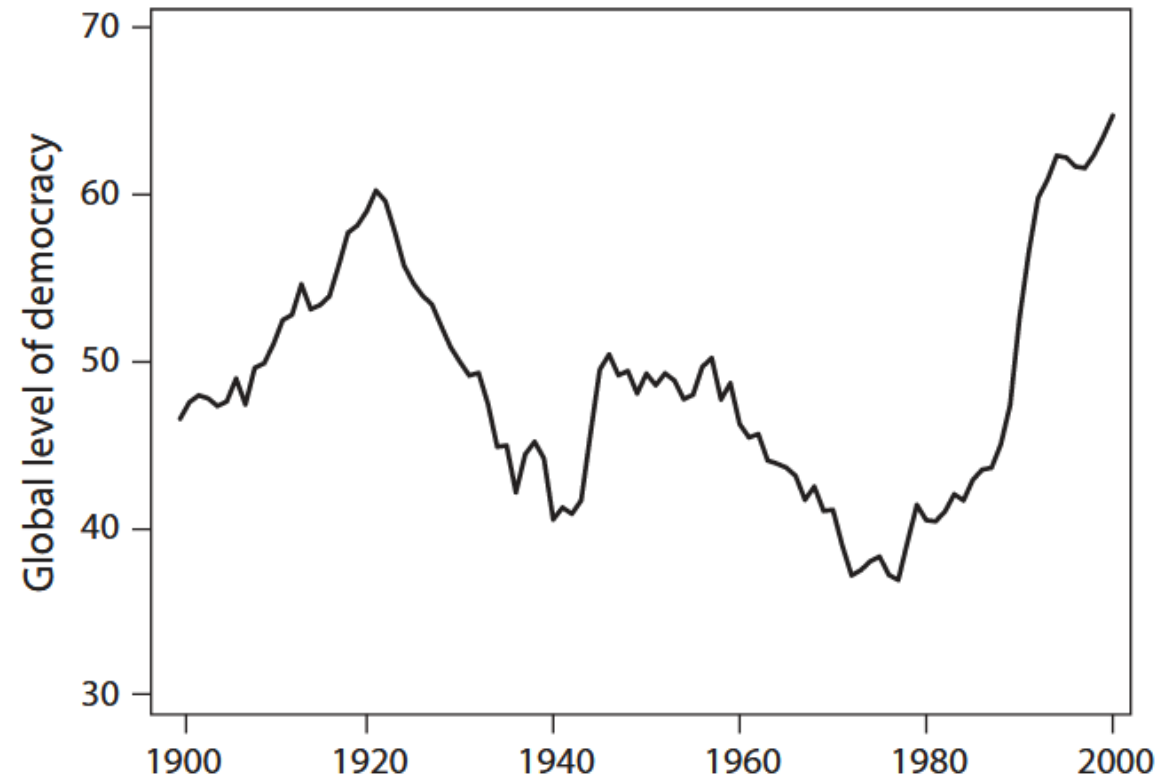


FIGURE 1.1. Global levels of democracy, 1900–2000.

Huntington 1991

- Earlier waves: development, war, crises
- Third wave: International actors and diffusion/“snowballing”
- Social, economic, and international conditions are necessary but not sufficient

Gunitsky 2017

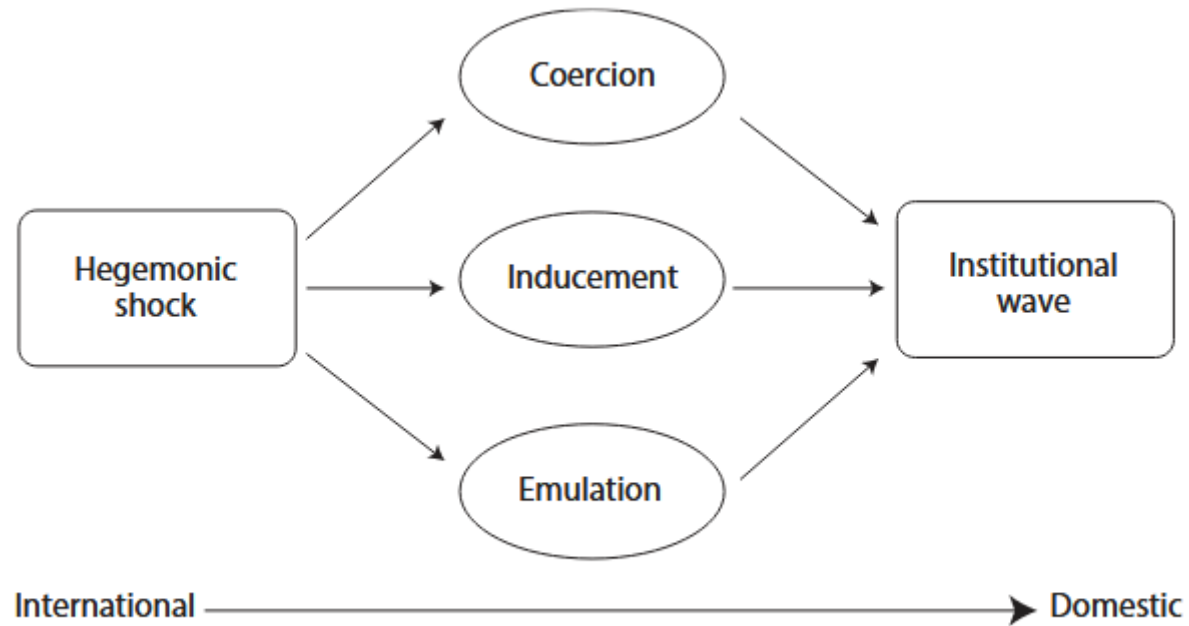


FIGURE 1.3. Causal mechanisms linking hegemonic shocks to regime waves.

Wood 2001

- Most famous cases of democratization in the third wave: leaders played a central role
- South Africa and El Salvador were different
 - Highly unequal “oligarchic societies” where elites had incentives to remain unified
- Pressure had to come from below, which eventually shifted economic interests and led some elites to want to concede

Svolik 2019

- Puzzle: vast majority of democratic breakdowns today are executive takeovers
- Why do authoritarian leaders get elected?

Levitsky & Way, Levitsky & Ziblatt

- Competitive authoritarianism
 - How is this different from a weak democracy?
 - Where does it fit Dahl's inclusiveness/liberalization graph?
- Contemporary backsliding
 - How is it different from how democracies used to die?
 - Should we be expecting forbearance from leaders?

Week 7:

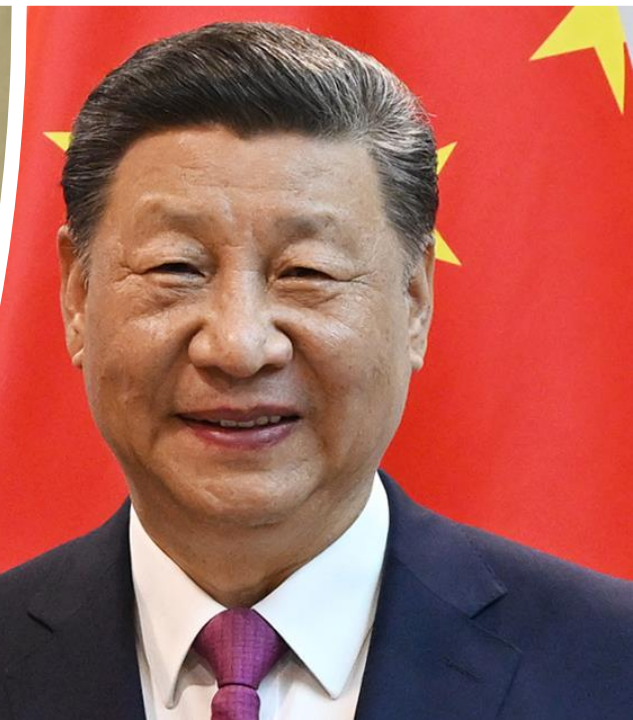
- Discuss authoritarianism and the prospects for democracy in some hard places
- Dive deeper into when economic development is not sufficient
- Debate democracy in China and in the Middle East

Some of the theories of democratization we discussed:

- Development and modernization (through urbanization, education, growing middle class, stronger civil society) increase the probability of democratization
- Splits within the authoritarian elite increase the probability of democratization
- Some cultures are more compatible with democracy than others

Typology of authoritarian regimes

- Monarchies
- Single-party regimes
- Military regimes
- Personalist regimes



Ross 2001

- Democracy is less prevalent in the Middle East and in oil-rich countries
- Mechanisms:
 - Rentier effect
 - Repression effect
 - Modernization effect

A hot take on taxation



Rosenfeld 2021

- The middle class does not always push for democracy – a large and educated middle class can still support the authoritarian regime
- Regime transitions are periods of uncertainty and threaten the status quo

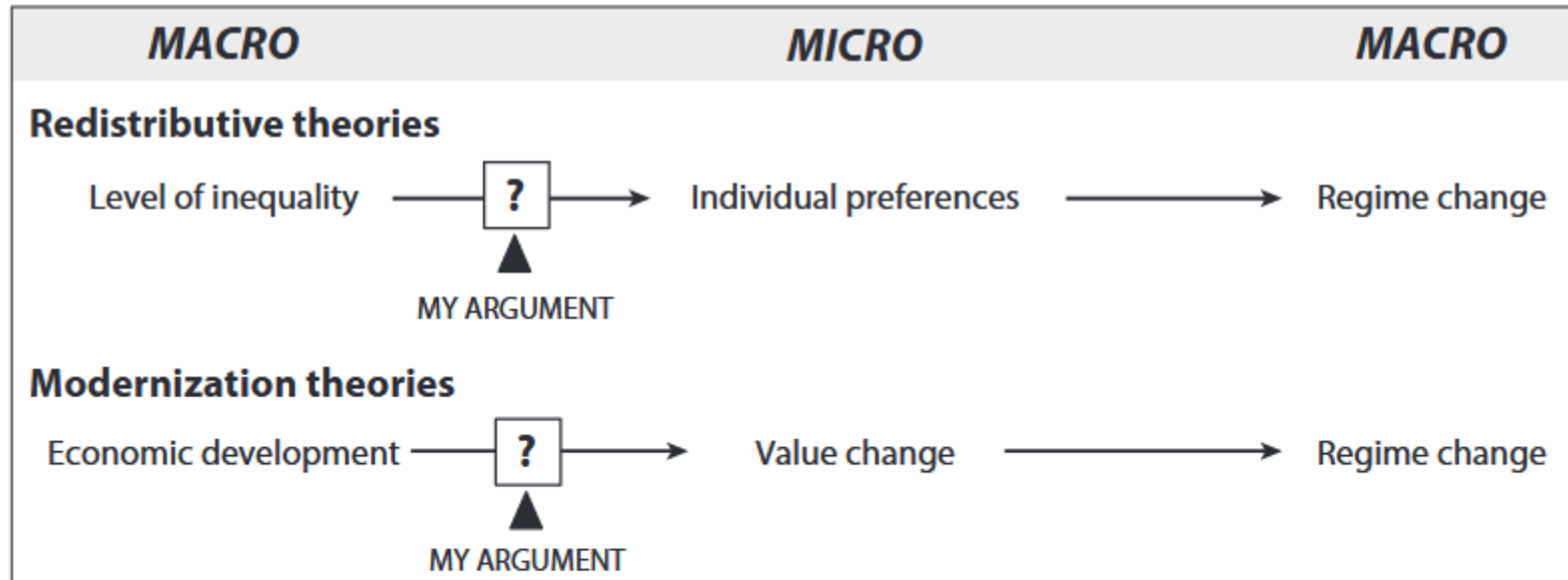


FIGURE 1.2. Causal logic of two theories of regime change. The figure shows where this book's argument lies in the causal chain described by redistributive and values-based modernization theories.

Week 8:

- Understand the collective action problem
- Discuss definitions and main theories of revolutions
- Eat some chocolate, if you're smart or lucky

Chocolate revolution

- Take a piece of paper, write down your name and one of either “SAFE” or “GAMBLE”
- If you choose SAFE, you get one chocolate; or you can GAMBLE for the chance of getting two chocolates
- For every person who chooses to GAMBLE, I will roll a die. If I get a 6 just once, **everyone** gets two chocolates. If none of the rolls is a 6, only students who chose SAFE get a chocolate (meaning gamblers get nothing).

Chocolate revolution

- What informed your calculus?
- How would it have changed if the odds were different?
- What about if being safe didn't guarantee you a chocolate, or if the possible reward from gambling was higher?
- How did your expectations of what others would do affect your decision?

The collective action problem

- Also known as the free rider problem
- Explains why it's hard to provide public goods: action is costly and outcome is dependent on others
 - If others are not helping, I can't do anything alone
 - If others are doing it, I'm better off not helping
- When does it happen?
 - Small, homogeneous groups
 - Selective incentives
 - Leader incurs costs

Marx and Engels (1848)

- Extremely influential pamphlet
- What is their definition of revolution?
- What is their theory of revolution?
- If the revolution of the proletariat is inevitable, why did they write this?

Davies (1962)

- Definition: “Revolutions are here defined as violent civil disturbances that cause the displacement of one ruling group by another that has a broader popular basis for support.” (p. 6, footnote 3)
- What is his theory of revolution? How is this different from Marx and Engels?
- How do both theories relate to modernization theory?

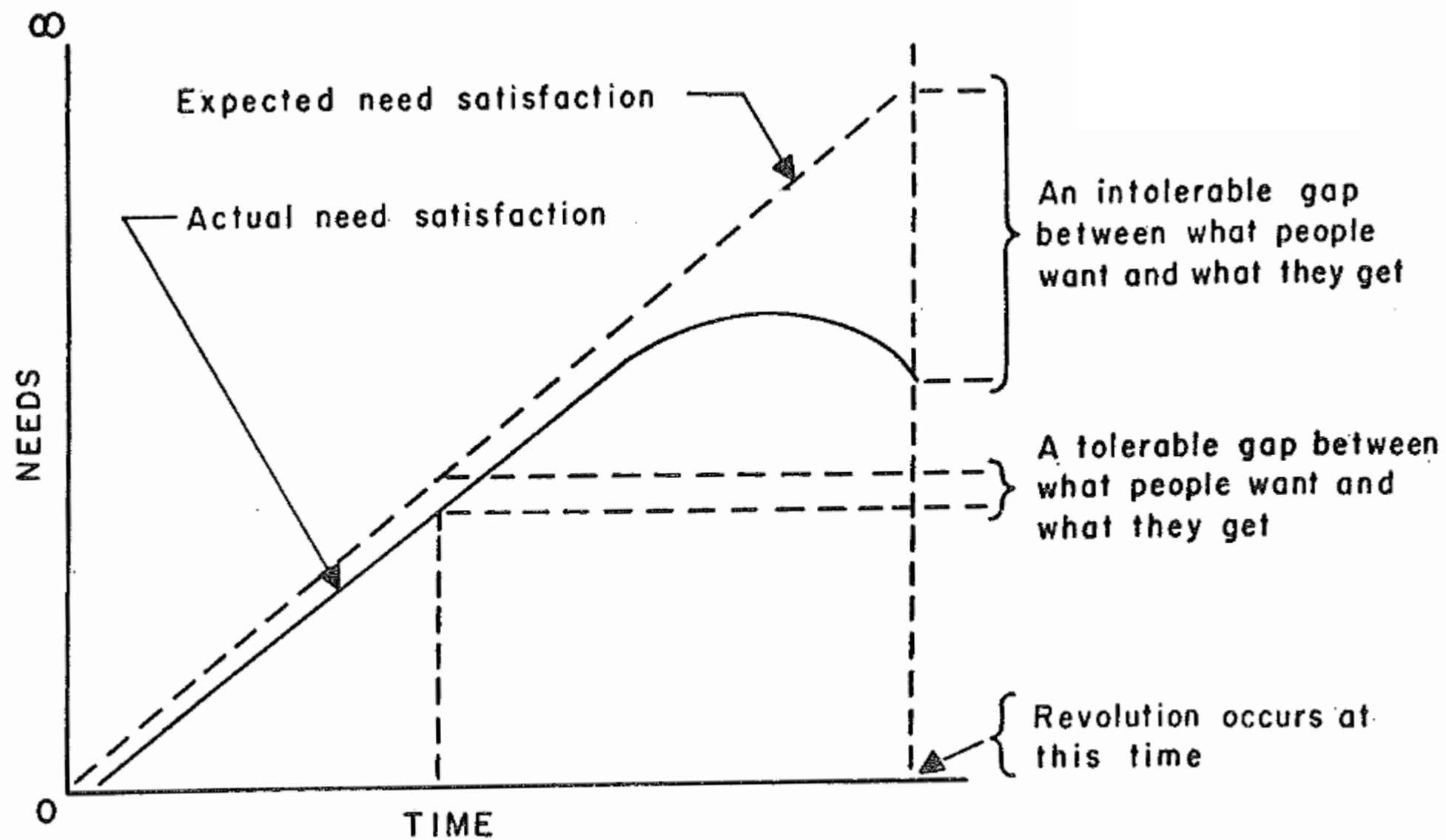


FIGURE 1. NEED SATISFACTION AND REVOLUTION

Skocpol (1994)

- Definition: “rapid, fundamental, and often violent transformation of a country’s state structure, class structure, and dominant ideology, which is accompanied by, and in part caused by, mass-based revolts from below”
- Conjunction of three factors:
 - Collapse of the state
 - Peasant insurrections
 - Marginal elite movements

How does all of this connect to the previous topics?

- Revolutions and development
- Revolutions and the state
- Revolutions and regime type

It's turkey season

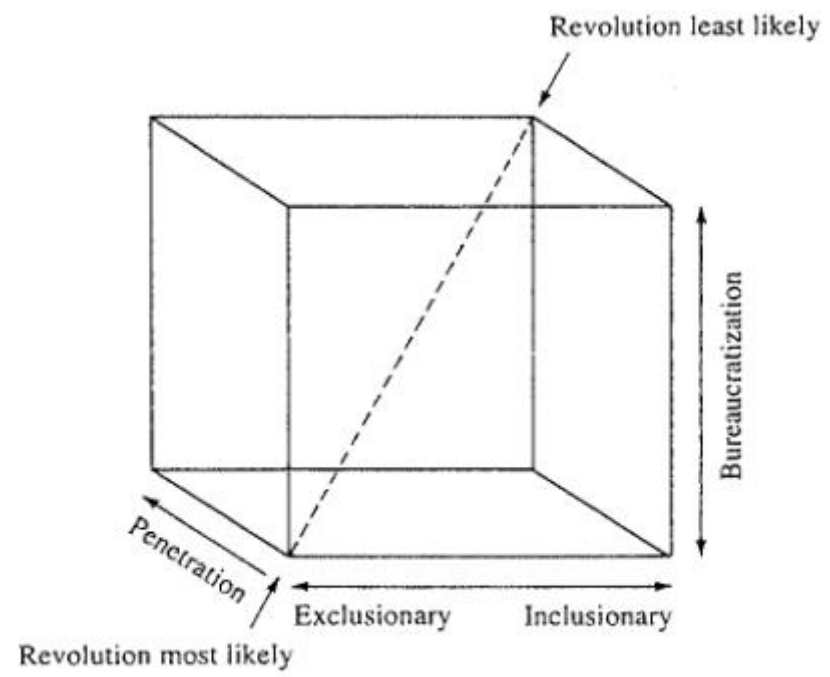
- <https://www.nbcboston.com/on-air/as-seen-on/cambridge-mail-carrier-speaks-out-after-turkey-attack/3013089/>

Week 9:

- Understand more causes of revolutions, especially in the “Third World”
- Discuss the cases of Russia and Iran and explain their revolutions
- Plan your own revolution to overthrow the ruling class and bring freedom to your people

Goodwin and Skocpol (1994)

- What makes countries vulnerable to revolutions?
- What does the revolutionary coalition look like?
- Does ideology play a role?



Selbin (1997)

- What is his critique of structuralist approaches?
- How parsimonious is this theory?
- Are you convinced? Do you like this better than structuralism?

Cases

- Russian revolution
- Iranian revolution
- Where else are revolutions likely in the world today?

Plan your own revolution

- Remember: it has to overthrow the regime through mass mobilization from below and implement a new ideology/class structure

- Group 1 you are going to organize a revolution in the country of Syldavia. This mid-size country, a young republic, has rapidly industrialized. Rural to urban migration has increased, as poor people from the countryside have come to work in the factories. Industry is controlled by urban elites with close ties to the ruling party. Because of its location, Syldavia is the subject of intense competition among global powers.
- Group 2 you are plotting a revolution in Khemed. This country has long been dominated by a single royal family. The discovery of oil increased interest among the global powers over what was previously a marginal player in regional politics. The interior of the country is remote and desperately poor. Khemed's cities are beginning to feel the benefits of oil wealth, as the public sector expands and the government increases its provision of welfare, education, etc.
- Group 3 you are organizing a revolution in the Republic of San Theodoros. This country, dominated by rural oligarchs, falls squarely under the influence of multinationals who have invested millions in agricultural concerns throughout the countryside. The peasantry are desperately poor, still recovering from the effects of a major drought that crippled agriculture.

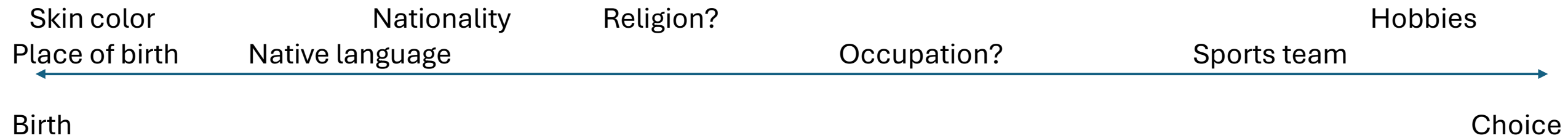
Week 10:

- Understand the definition(s) of ethnicity
- Understand where ethnicity comes from and when it becomes salient

What is ethnicity?

- Geertz: primordial attachments that stems from the “givens” and flows from a sense of natural affinity
- Bates: group with a shared conviction of common interests and common fate; and symbolism such as a collective myth of origin or ties of kinship
- Levitsky in lecture (following constructivists): group membership rooted in a shared subjective belief in common ancestry, based on ascriptive traits (e.g., race, language, religion, region)
- What is your identity? And what is your ethnicity?

The birth-choice continuum





Approaches to ethnicity

- Primordialism
 - AKA essentialism; ethnicity appeals and mobilizes at a fundamental level
- Instrumentalism
 - Leaders strategically manipulate ethnicity for power and resources
- Social constructivism
 - Identities are collective constructs that emerge from below

Posner (2004)

- Why Chewas and Tumbukas Are Allies in Zambia and Adversaries in Malawi
- How different are these groups objectively?

FIGURE 1. Research Sites

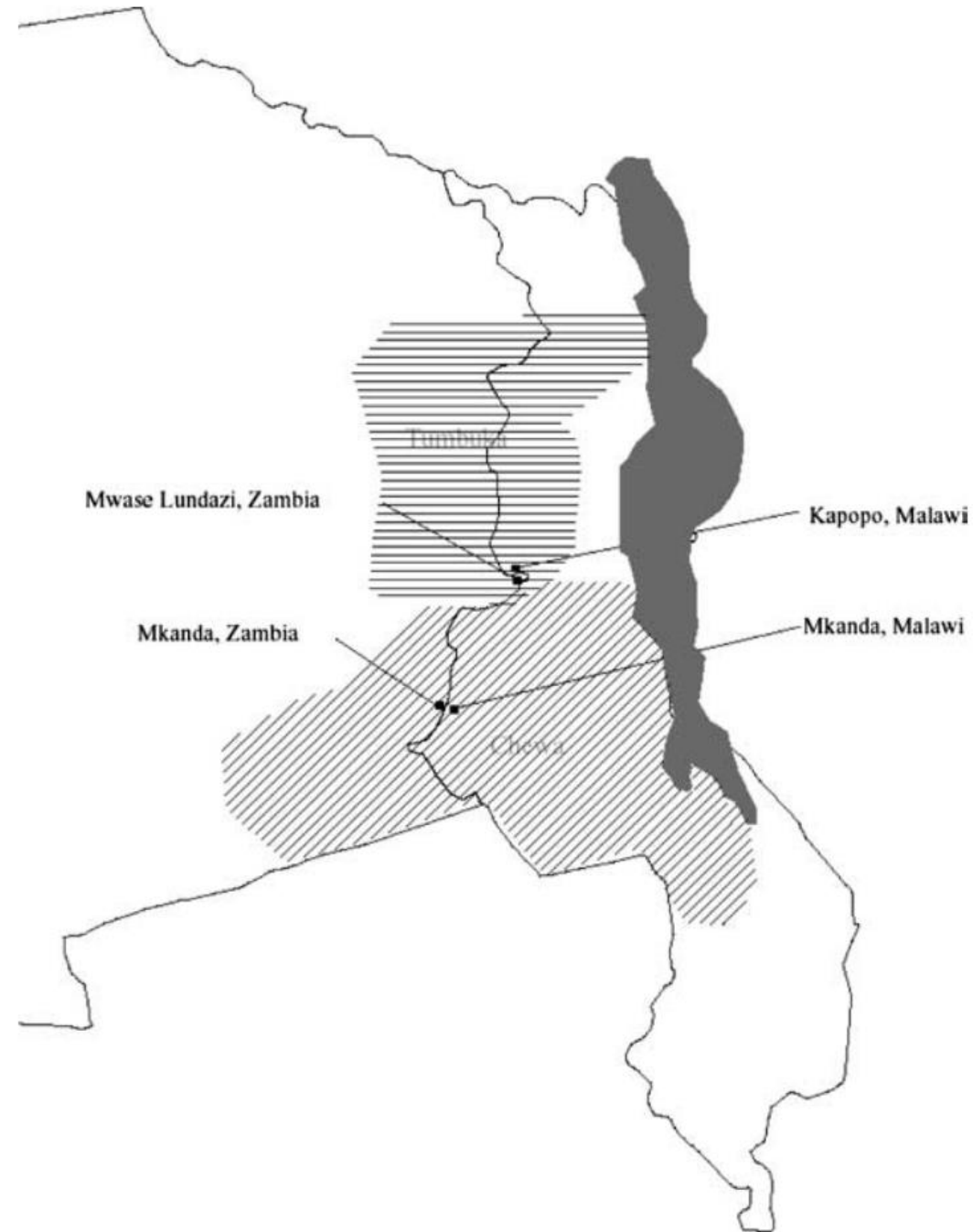
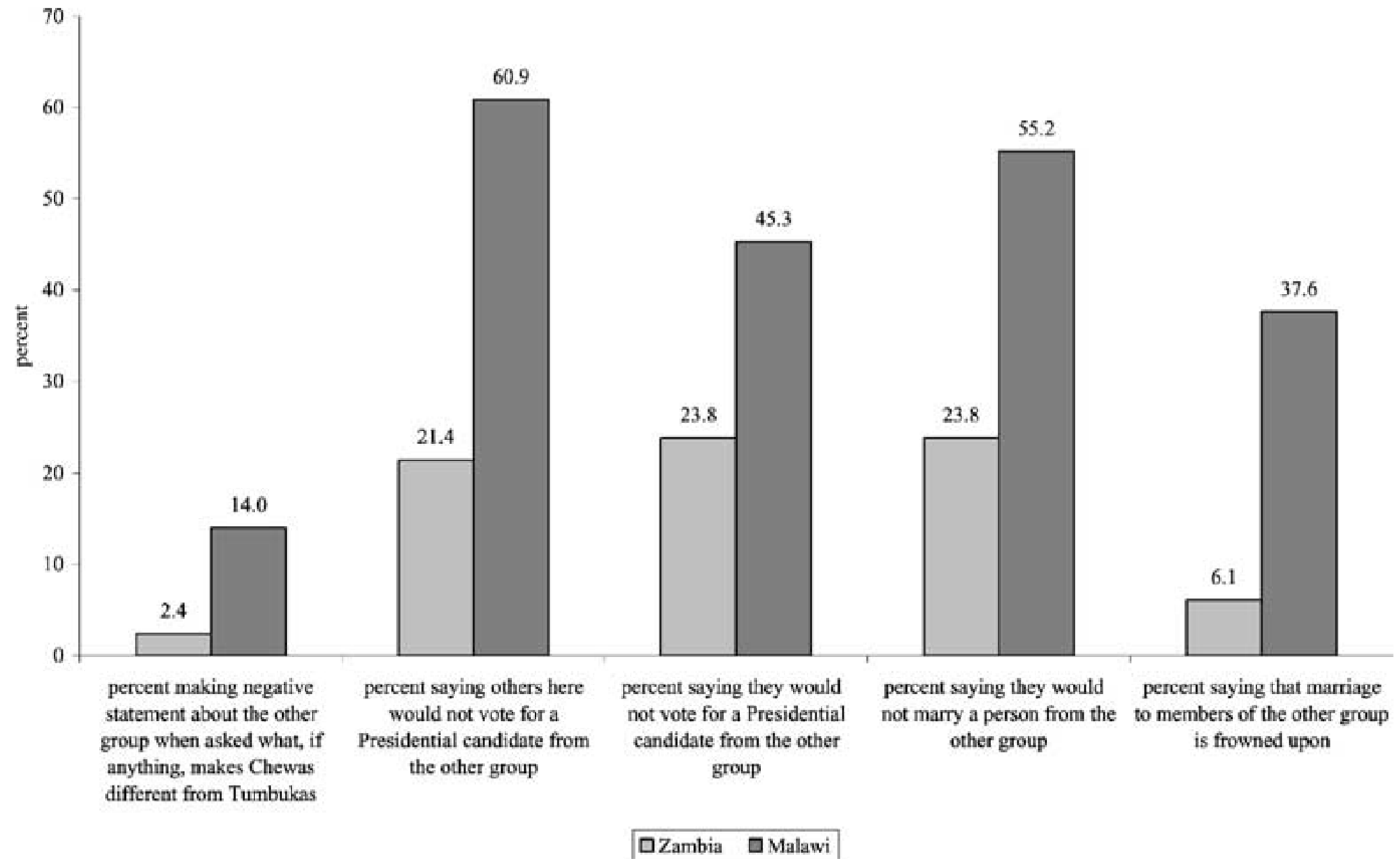
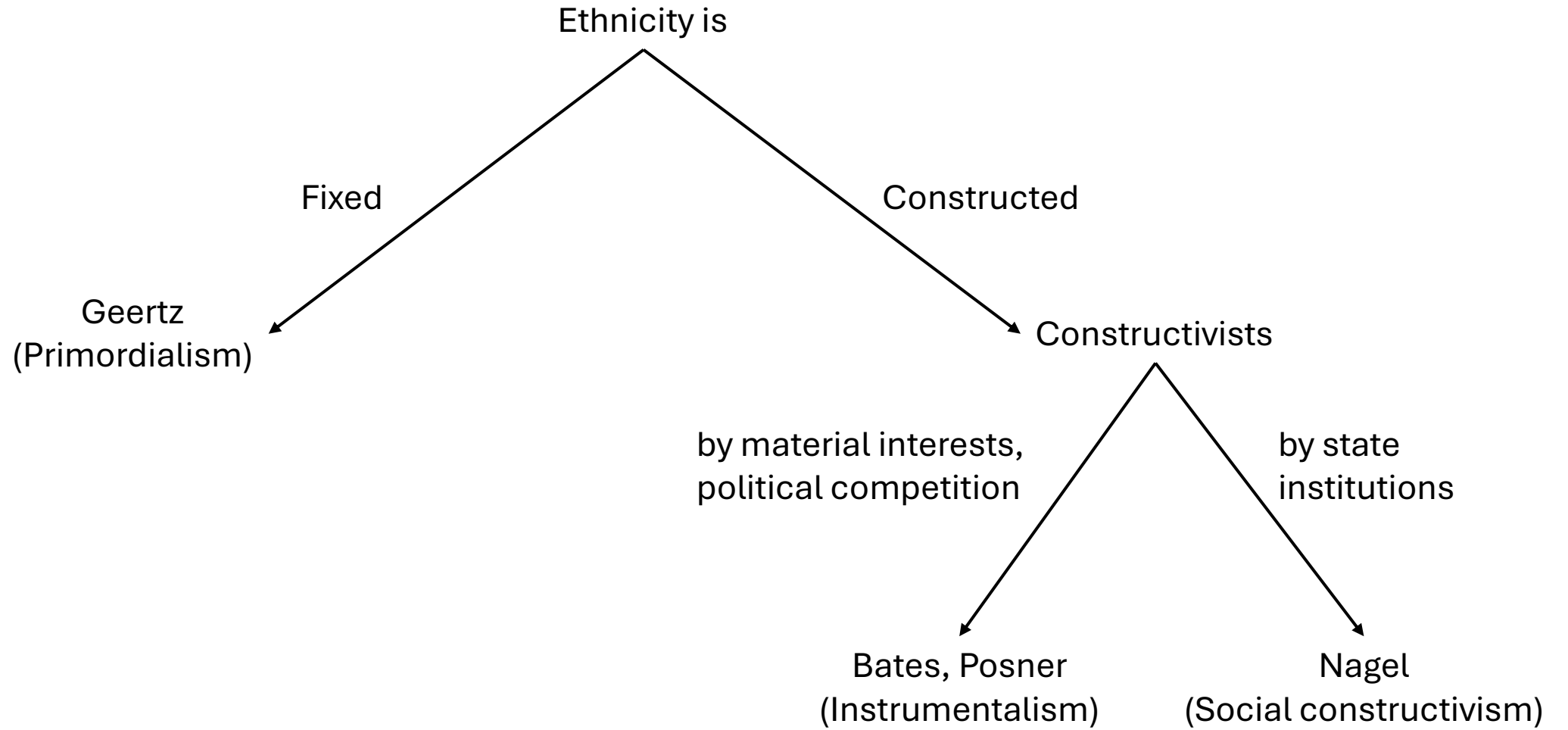


FIGURE 2. Chewa—Tumbuka Relations in Zambia and Malawi Compared





Jardina (2019)

- Ethnic identity is usually studied from the perspective of minority or non-dominant groups
- Relative status loss can lead to backlash and strengthening of ethnic identity

Weeks 11 and 12:

- Understand the different systems of government and electoral systems
- Define consociationalism and majoritarianism
- Discuss some consequences of political institutions
- Write your own constitution
- Discuss political parties and populism

What are institutions?

- Rules and procedures that structure social interaction by constraining and enabling actors' behavior

What institutions?

- System of government: how the executive power is formed
- Electoral system: how votes are translated into seats in the legislature

Systems of government

- Key distinction: whether there is separation between the executive and legislative powers in their origin and survival
- Presidentialism: popularly elected president holds executive power for a fixed term
- Parliamentarism: prime minister is chosen by legislature and can be removed at any point

The Perils of Presidentialism?

- What are the advantages and disadvantages of presidentialism?
- Cons:
 - Dual legitimacy
 - Temporal rigidity (fixed term)
 - Majoritarianism (winner-takes-all nature)
- Pros:
 - Checks and balances
 - Accountability/clarity of responsibility

Presidentialism referendum in Brazil



Electoral systems

- Key distinction: how many representatives are elected in a district and how are votes translated into seats
- Plurality rule: single-member districts, winner takes all
- Proportional representation: multi-member districts with seats proportional to votes
- Duverger's Law

Europe

The 2023 Dutch General Elections

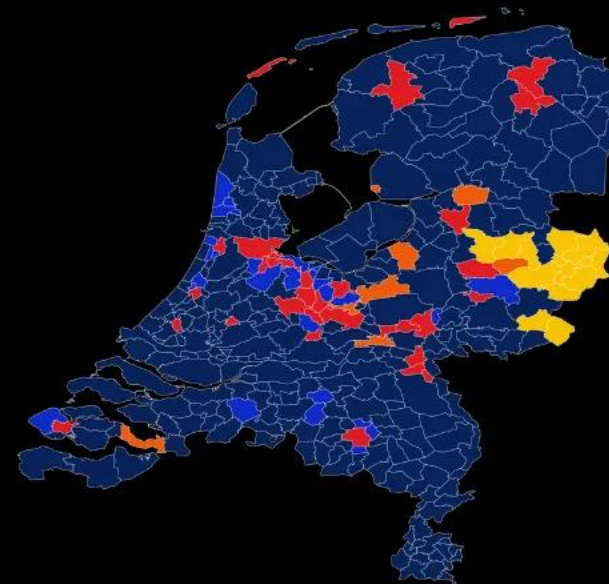
Seats in the House of Representatives

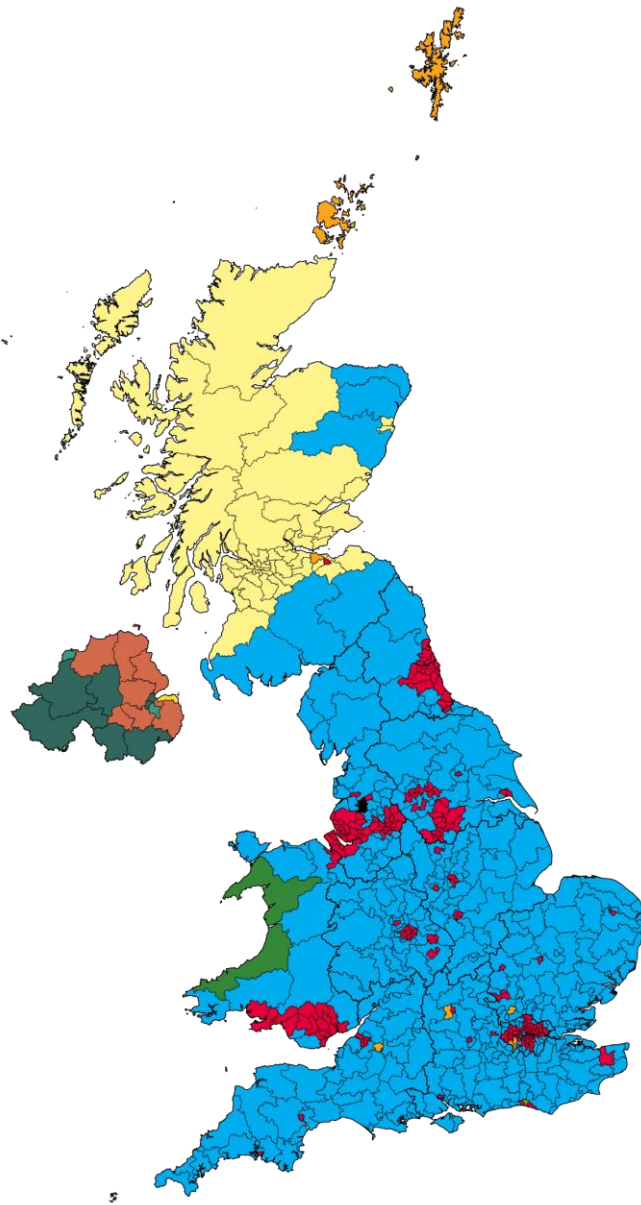
	Right Wing Populism	23.7%	37 (+20)
	Social Democracy Environmentalism	15.5%	25 (+8)
	Conservative Liberalism	15.2%	24 (-10)
	Christian Democracy	12.8%	20 (+20)
	Social Liberalism	6.2%	9 (-15)
	Agrarianism Farmers Rights	4.7%	7 (+6)
	Christian Democracy	3.3%	5 (-10)
	Democratic Socialism	3.1%	5 (-4)
	Minority Interests	2.3%	3 (0)
	National Conservatism	2.2%	3 (-5)
	Animal Rights	2.2%	3 (-3)
	Calvinist Christian Right	2.1%	3 (0)
	Christian Democracy	2.0%	3 (-2)
	European Federalism	1.7%	2 (-1)
	Conservatism	0.7%	1 (-2)

Voter Turnout (77.8%)

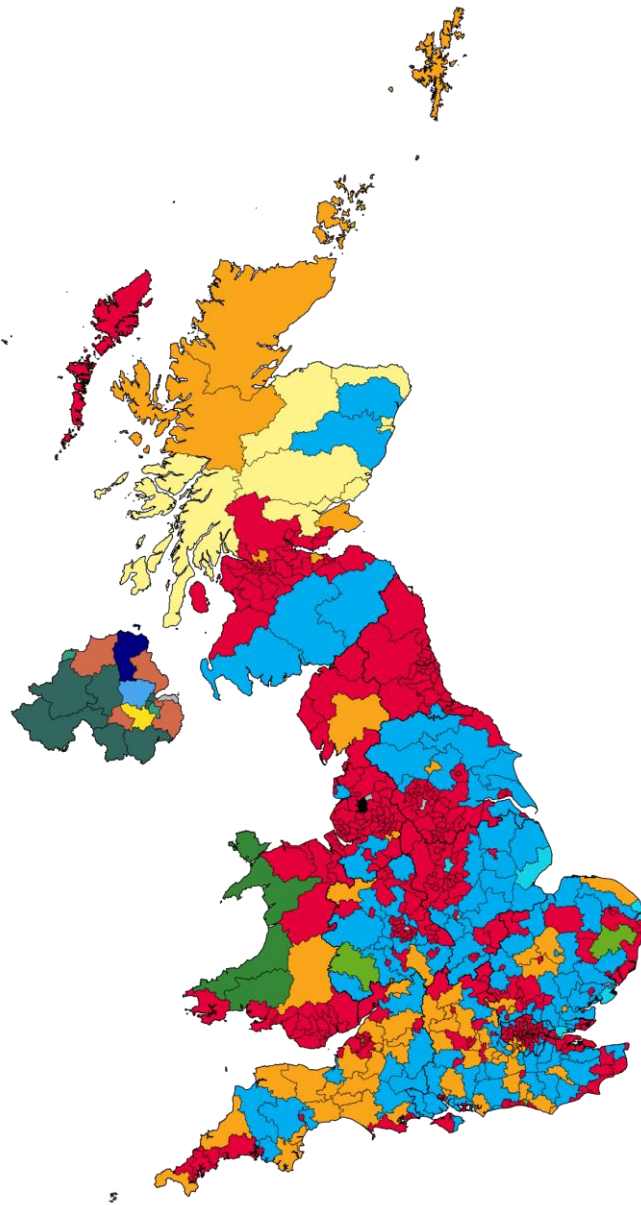


Most Popular Party by Municipality





Party	Leader	MPs			Votes		
			Of total			Of total	
Conservative Party	Boris Johnson	365	56.2%		13,966,454	43.6%	
Labour Party	Jeremy Corbyn	202	31.1%		10,269,051	32.1%	
Scottish National Party	Nicola Sturgeon	48 ^[n 4]	7.4%		1,242,380	3.9%	
Liberal Democrats	Jo Swinson	11	1.7%		3,696,419	11.6%	
Democratic Unionist Party	Arlene Foster	8	1.2%		244,128	0.8%	
Sinn Féin	Mary Lou McDonald	7	1.1%		181,853	0.6%	
Plaid Cymru	Adam Price	4	0.6%		153,265	0.5%	
Social Democratic and Labour Party	Colum Eastwood	2	0.3%		118,737	0.4%	
Green Party of England and Wales	Jonathan Bartley Siân Berry	1	0.2%		835,597	2.61%	
Alliance Party of Northern Ireland	Naomi Long	1	0.2%		134,115	0.4%	
Speaker	Lindsay Hoyle	1	0.2%		26,831	0.1%	



Affiliate	Leader	MPs			Aggregate votes		
			Of total			Of total	
Labour Party	Keir Starmer	411 ^[ab]	63.2%		9,708,716	33.7%	
Conservative Party	Rishi Sunak	121	18.6%		6,828,925	23.7%	
Liberal Democrats	Ed Davey	72	11.1%		3,519,143	12.2%	
Scottish National Party	John Swinney	9	1.4%		724,758	2.5%	
Sinn Féin	Mary Lou McDonald	7	1.1%		210,891	0.7%	
Independent	—	6	0.9%		564,243	2.0%	
Reform UK	Nigel Farage	5	0.8%		4,117,610	14.3%	
Democratic Unionist Party	Gavin Robinson	5	0.8%		172,058	0.6%	
Green Party of England and Wales	Carla Denyer Adrian Ramsay	4	0.6%		1,944,501	6.7%	
Plaid Cymru	Rhun ap Iorwerth	4	0.6%		194,811	0.7%	
Social Democratic and Labour Party	Colum Eastwood	2	0.3%		86,861	0.3%	
Alliance Party of Northern Ireland	Naomi Long	1	0.2%		117,191	0.4%	
Ulster Unionist Party	Doug Beattie	1	0.2%		94,779	0.3%	
Traditional Unionist Voice	Jim Allister	1	0.2%		48,685	0.2%	
Speaker	Lindsay Hoyle	1	0.2%		25,238	0.1%	

Majoritarianism and Consociationalism

- What do consociational models look like?
 - Grand coalitions
 - Mutual vetoes
 - Proportionality
 - Segmental autonomy (federalism)
- Majoritarianism?
 - Very powerful majorities

Effects of institutions

- Representation-efficiency trade-off
- Which model is best for an ethnically divided society?
- What would have happened if the US had been divided into racially based parties after the Civil war?

Write your constitution

After the Levitskystan Federation split in 2030, the newly independent country of Meiravia hired a committee of experts (Gov 20 graduates) to write their constitution and design political institutions to maximize accountability, government effectiveness, representativeness, checks and balances, peace among ethnic groups, and regime stability. You say that even though you went to Harvard, you can't do the impossible, and the Meiravians accept that some trade-offs might be necessary. Choose your favorite "blanket" institutions using whatever criteria you deem appropriate and be ready to justify your choices.

Parties and party systems

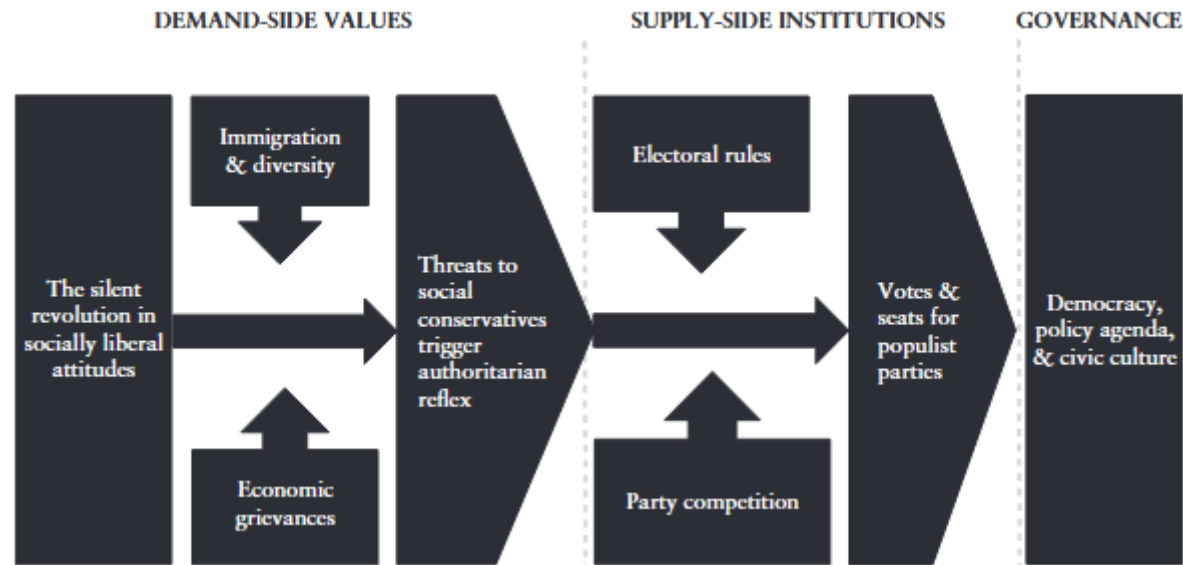
- What do parties help with?
- How do parties connect to voters?
 - Program
 - Clientelism
 - Personalism
- How do strong parties emerge? What are party substitutes?

Why are political institutions hard to change?

- Actors with the power to change the status quo were chosen by that status quo

Populism

- What are populists?
- Under what conditions are they successful?
- Are they always bad for democracy?



Week 13:

- Understand the effects of civil society and civic participation
- Define the types of welfare states and what explains variation
- Discuss what is different about democracy in the US

Civil society

- Citizen organizations independent of the state
 - Everything from birdwatching clubs, churches and labor unions to the KKK
- Putnam: participation is good
- Berman: participation can be bad (especially when political institutions cannot channel it)
- Varshney: social capital can be bridging or bonding

The Welfare State in the US and Europe

- Different types of welfare states
 - Social-democratic, conservative, liberal
- What explains variation?
 - Culture
 - Power of the left
 - Institutions
 - Ethnic diversity

Democracy in the US

- What is different about it?
- Are we in a tyranny of the minority?
- Is US democracy in danger?

- Short answers:
 - Define the term
 - Say why we care about it (usually: how it relates to a big topic)
 - (Relative backwardness: matters because creates incentives for rapid development under different development strategies)
 - Then, either give example
 - (Competitive authoritarianism: Russia in the 2000s)
 - or say what it's an example of
 - (Nehru: leader who exerted forbearance)
- Essays:
 - Remember to have a clear thesis and respond to the prompt
 - Try to connect readings (in a cohesive way)