

Chapter 2

Political Theory and Political Beliefs



Learning Objectives

- 2.1** Compare conservatism, classical liberalism, and socialism.
- 2.2** Distinguish cognitive, affective, and evaluative beliefs.
- 2.3** Compare belief systems of the mass and the elite.
- 2.4** Determine the extent to which political culture explains political behavior.

On your way to campus one day, you stop by Burger King for lunch. As you get your food, you notice a group of your classmates engaged in a very heated debate over the recent war in Afghanistan, a topic that hasn't interested you much. You decide to sit with them.

As you eat, Julie says, "The U.S. invasion of Afghanistan was totally immoral. The United States has no right to cause all that suffering, and it has cost America \$80 billion a year that should be spent dealing with issues at home, like poverty and education! This is even worse than what we did in Iraq! Don't you agree?"

She looks directly at you, searching for support. As you stare at your cheeseburger, you realize you are in the hot seat. You think: Do I support the U.S. action? Did the United States "invade"? Is it costing \$80 billion?

When you do not respond, Glen interjects, telling Julie, "You have no right to say that. Those in power are our most politically knowledgeable decision makers and have information we don't know about. As citizens, we shouldn't question their authority on complex issues such as deciding when to use our military!"

Julie replies, "It is not fair that I work so hard every day of the week so that the government can funnel my tax dollars into buying more tanks, guns, and airplanes to fight a war I do not support. Our government should focus on our own poor people and should do more to create jobs for us. I have every right to protest government action." You see Julie's point when you think about problems at home while your family's tax money is being used for a costly, distant war.



What march would *you* join? These college students express their strong political beliefs on an important issue.

“I sort of agree,” says Byron. “The United States is in a huge budget crisis. Our government is way too big. We should be cutting way back on spending on everything. Cut taxes. Give the money back to people who earned it!”

Frustrated with Julie’s challenges to the government, Glen says, “By not supporting our leaders and criticizing their actions, you are threatening our country’s political stability with your lack of patriotism. For your information, that money has not been wasted. By expanding our military power, we make our country more secure from people who threaten our way of life, and we are able to promote positive values such as democracy and freedom.” Supporting democracy and U.S. military strength do seem worthwhile to you.

Then Elene joins in: “You both miss the point. The real reason the United States went to war is because of the men who led the countries in the conflict. Obama decided to risk many lives in Afghanistan, just like Bush did in Iraq, because he wanted to demonstrate his manliness and power. If women had more authority in these countries, they might have figured out a solution without so much violence and death. I’m not saying it’s all about gender, but a lot of women do see things differently than many men do, and if women had more political authority, they might come up with less violent approaches.”

Amir, whose family is from the Middle East, cannot resist speaking. He says, “I agree with Julie. American leadership has caused great pain and suffering for many innocent Muslim families. In Iraq the reports of weapons of mass destruction were just a sham to allow the United States to force its values upon the Iraqis. George Bush even called the war a crusade! Then Obama caused more mass destruction in Afghanistan!

What's next? Syria? Iraq again? We are marching tonight on campus to protest any more U.S. military involvement in the region. Join us!"

You decide that everyone has made some good points. You wonder if you should spend more time gathering knowledge about political issues like the conflicts in the Middle East. This discussion has made you reflect on your own values: When are war and violence acceptable? What should the government spend money on? Should your country push other countries to adopt American values? Should you attend the protest rally?

How would you (the real you!) react to this conversation? What are your views on these questions?

This conversation is richly political—full of many knowledge claims. Some of the comments seem factual, while others mix fact, feeling, and evaluation. Some include strong prescriptive statements about what should be. There is a call for action. Your responses to this incident and to the questions it raises offer interesting evidence about your reactions to the political world. Some of your responses might involve what you think (your political beliefs and your political ideology), and others might involve what you do (your political actions). This combination of *an individual's beliefs and actions* is the essence of the domain of political science called **political behavior**. It is also sometimes called **micropolitics** because *the key object of study is the smallest political unit*—the individual as a thinker and actor in the political world. Micropolitics can also include the study of the political beliefs and actions of small groups such as families, committees, and juries.

Part Two of this book develops your understanding of the political world by examining major themes in the study of political behavior. This chapter explores individuals' political views, ranging from *core values to specific beliefs*. Initially, it examines normative political theory—the assumptions and broad beliefs that guide political ideologies. The primary focus is on three political ideologies prevalent in Western political thought: conservatism, classical liberalism, and socialism. The chapter then details what empirical analyses reveal about the basic elements of an individual's *political beliefs*. Third, the chapter considers the configuration of beliefs held by an individual—a cluster of beliefs called a *political belief system*. The final section attempts to characterize the dominant patterns of political behavior for an entire society—its *political culture*. The two other chapters in Part Two will extend our exploration of political behavior. Chapter 3 examines the political actions taken by individuals and groups. Chapter 4 assesses alternative explanations for the sources of people's political beliefs and actions.

Normative Political Theory

2.1 Compare conservatism, classical liberalism, and socialism.

Should an individual resist a government policy on drug use with which she disagrees? Why? By what means? With what goals? Should government provide for the poor? Why? By what means? With what goals? As each of us attempts to answer such questions, we must grapple not only with the facts and realities of the situation, as

we understand them, but also with our underlying beliefs about topics such as the appropriate role of government and the rights and duties of the individual in society. Political questions are often very difficult to resolve because they can be embedded in underlying values and core beliefs that are subject to deep disagreement.

Notice that the preceding questions are essentially *should* questions. The subfield of political science called *normative political theory* offers explicit arguments and proposes answers to the significant “should” questions in the political world, based on fundamental claims about the individual, the society, and the state. Normative political theorists develop their ideas about the “should” questions by blending their observations about the world with the detailed articulation and defense of one or more basic values, principles, or norms that shape their viewpoint. So, for example, a normative theorist’s response to whether the government should provide for the poor would require an elaboration on several key issues, such as whether society has a political or moral obligation to assist individuals, how this applies to the particular case of poverty, and how government is implicated in any such obligation. Such theorizing usually invokes fundamental themes like justice, fairness, equality, and freedom.

Although there are overlaps between the two general approaches, normative political theory can be broadly contrasted with *empirical political theory*, which *relies upon observation and analysis of real-world data as it attempts to apply the methods of science in order to develop descriptive and explanatory knowledge claims about the political world*. Later sections of this chapter offer information and generalizations about people’s cognitive, affective, and evaluative beliefs based explicitly in an empirical approach. But the formulation of an evaluative belief or a prescriptive knowledge claim will also draw upon normative thinking. Thus this chapter about political beliefs initially explores some key themes in normative political theory and describes several major political ideologies.

Some of the core issues of normative political theory are associated with the basic question: Why do we need a government? Theorizing about this can provoke further questions about human nature, about why and how people associate with one another, about how government should function, and about how people and government should interact. Plato, Aristotle, Confucius, Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, Karl Marx, and John Stuart Mill are among the many important thinkers who have offered profound, provocative, and influential ideas about these basic normative questions regarding the relationships among individuals, the state, and society. Such political questions remain important and fascinating. This section describes some of these questions and a few of the many answers that are proposed.

You will notice that many of the knowledge claims made by normative political theorists are based on more than their values. Most political theorists include descriptive statements (claims of how things actually are) as part of their arguments regarding what should be and why it should be. As they articulate their normative claims about the political world, they are influenced by the same factors that surround those engaged in empirical political analysis—their personal experiences and education, the nature of the time and place in which they live, and other key forces in their lives. Focus in 2 briefly considers how the socioeconomic context contributed to the hugely influential writings of three major political theorists.

Focus in 2

Great Britain as a Context for Some Great Political Theorists

What influences the thinking of the great political theorists? Of course, the answer is complex and variable. Chapter 4 will suggest that most people's political beliefs are influenced by an array of factors, including their personal experiences and upbringing, their teachers and other individuals whose ideas engage them, and the sociopolitical contexts that provide evidence guiding their assumptions and inferences about human nature, the role of the state, and other key topics. It is probably not surprising that most of the great political theorists of the last four centuries selected for major English-language anthologies were substantially influenced by their lives in the sociopolitical context of Great Britain (see, for example, Goodin and Pettit 2006; Love 2010; Ryan 2012). Even many modern thinkers who did not live in the British Isles were substantially influenced by Britain's unique institutional innovations and political culture in the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries. Here are very brief examples of three major theorists directly affected by their lives in Britain.

Thomas Hobbes. Englishman Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679) studied classics in school and at Oxford. After traveling in Europe, Hobbes became embroiled in the social turmoil, civil war, and serious succession problems in England after the death of Queen Elizabeth, as several different hereditary lines claimed the throne. One king (Charles I) attempted to reign absolutely over a resistant parliament through two civil wars and then was executed for high treason in 1649 as Cromwell's Puritans took over government. The chaos in England certainly influenced Hobbes's ideas about the brutal behavior of humans in the "state of nature." In 1640, Hobbes had written a tract to lawmakers urging that the sovereign (king) must exercise absolute power to reduce such disorder. He then fled England, fearing that he would be executed for his support of the monarchy. While abroad, Hobbes wrote his masterpiece, *Leviathan* (1651), in which he elaborated on his ideas, arguing that a powerful monarch should be established and obeyed. Recognizing the growing political influence of business in England, he also suggested that the

"voice of the people" should be heard through representatives of the business class. However, no one has any right to challenge the complete power of the monarch to make and enforce laws, as long as the monarch preserves social order.

Adam Smith. Adam Smith (1723–1790) left his small village in Scotland to study in Edinburgh and then Oxford, where he focused on philosophy and European literature. Smith served as chair in logic and moral philosophy in Glasgow and then traveled in Europe as tutor to a wealthy English duke. Smith had developed a strong opposition to the British government's interventions in its economy—a view reinforced when he saw similar problems in France. He retired to Scotland to write his classic *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776). Shaped by his training as a philosopher, his work explored how humans could best interact to produce the most efficient economic system. He emphasized the benefits of a division of labor, in which economic actors—generally unhindered by government—pursue their own rational self-interest while the "invisible hand" of the market guides the economy (see Chapter 8 of this book). However, Smith's life in Britain and his work as a customs agent persuaded him that there were some limitations to the free market, and he began to advocate certain important roles for government in the economy, such as enforcing contracts, protecting intellectual property rights, and acting in areas where the decisions of private economic actors would not produce necessary goods (e.g., roads and bridges). He also entered a contemporary policy debate, arguing that Britain should abandon its American colonies due to the high costs of sustaining imperialism.

Karl Marx. Although Karl Marx (1818–1883) was born in Germany, he lived the second half of his life (34 years) in England, where he researched and wrote his major work, died, and was buried. The moral and philosophical bases of his theories (especially French socialism and German philosophy) were established during his time as a student, journalist, and political agitator in Germany, France,

and Belgium. His activism led to his expulsion from all three countries, and thus in 1849 he moved to England and found refuge in London. His earlier ideas were blended with his experiences in England: a detailed study of English corporate records and other research in the British Museum; his projections of the future of capitalism based on his analysis of English capitalism, the world's most sophisticated economic system; and his observations of the hardships of the English working class. Indeed, Marx's own life was substantially shaped by the severe hardships suffered in London by his own family, which lived in poverty and disease and included the painful deaths of three of his children. His writing in England culminated in his monumental work, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy* (1867). As

stated by his disciple, Wilhelm Liebknecht, "[I]n England Marx found what he was looking for, what he needed: the bricks and mortar for his work. *Capital* could only have been written in London. Marx could only become what he did become in England" (McLellan 1983).

Further Focus

1. Based on these brief discussions, which of the three theorists seems to have been most influenced by the context of life in Britain?
2. Could you make a case that most major political theorists would probably have developed their ideas regardless of the country in which they lived?

Political Ideology

The political theories of Thomas Hobbes, Adam Smith, and Karl Marx are among the several dozen most famous and widely studied in the Western world. Some would describe the work of each of them as a political ideology. We can define a **political ideology** as *a comprehensive set of beliefs about the political world—about desirable political goals and the best ways to achieve those goals*. Thus, a political ideology characterizes what is and what should be in the political world, and it might also offer strategic ideas about how to make changes in the direction of that preferred situation. Many relatively coherent belief systems in the contemporary world might be classified as political ideologies.

This section characterizes three of the fundamental concerns that are addressed by most political ideologies and help us distinguish analytically among them. These three fundamental concerns are their assumptions and value judgments about: (1) individual human nature; (2) the proper relationship among the individual, state, and society; and (3) the desirability of establishing equality among individuals. Then it details three broad ideologies that are widely discussed in contemporary Western societies: conservatism, classical liberalism, and socialism. There are short explanations of the ideologies of fascism and political Islam as well as brief characterizations of some other "isms."

THE INDIVIDUAL The "nature versus nurture" debate centers on disagreements about whether a person's fundamental beliefs and behaviors are determined primarily by innate needs and values with which she is born or are mainly a product of her environment and experiences. Chapter 4 provides an empirical assessment of the implications of nature and nurture for political beliefs and actions. Here, our focus is on key assumptions that a political ideology makes about an individual's innate

nature (e.g., the extent to which individuals are selfish or sharing, violent or nonviolent, emotional or rational) and about the adaptability of individuals (the extent to which they can be taught or induced to act and think in a way that is against their innate nature). For example, Thomas Hobbes grounds his theories in the assumption that people are essentially motivated to serve their own interests and that they will use whatever means necessary, including violence, to protect themselves.

INDIVIDUAL, STATE, AND SOCIETY What is the proper relationship among the individual, the state, and society? One view is that the highest value in social arrangements is to maximize individual liberty and freedom of action. A different view is that the collective good of society is most important and individual freedom must be constrained by the state (the government, broadly understood—see Chapter 5) to achieve the results that most benefit the overall society. For example, Adam Smith emphasizes the benefits both to individuals and to the “wealth of the nation” from allowing economic actors to operate with a very high level of freedom from government controls, because their pursuit of enlightened self-interest will result in a good society with an efficient and effective economy.

EQUALITY To what extent should there be equality in terms of what individuals do and the benefits they acquire? One position is that there should be legal equality—that every person should be equal before the law, have equal political rights, and enjoy equality of opportunity. An alternative position is that there should be material equality—that every person should enjoy a comparable level of benefits and goods. This second position places a high value on equality of conditions, adding social and economic equality to legal equality. A third position posits that people and situations are intrinsically unequal and that it is neither possible nor desirable to legislate any kind of equality. Karl Marx is among those who argue most fervently that a good society is achieved only when there is substantial equality in the material conditions of all individuals.

Three major Western ideologies are described below—conservatism, classical liberalism, and socialism. Although there is broad agreement about the core beliefs within an ideology, it is subject to varying interpretations across individuals and across cultures. And an ideology can have distinct versions, such as the differences within socialism between its Marxist–Leninist form and its democratic socialist form.

Conservatism

Conservatism *attempts to prevent or slow the transition away from a society based on traditional values and the existing social hierarchy.* As the word suggests, the essence of conservative ideology is to conserve the many valued elements of the system that already exists. What the conservative wishes to preserve depends on the time and place, but certain underlying elements are highly valued. Particular importance is placed on stability, tradition, and loyalty to God and country. The relationship of the individual to society and an antipathy to egalitarianism (i.e., equality of conditions) are at the core of conservatism.

THE INDIVIDUAL Conservatism makes two key assumptions about human nature. First, individuals are not consistently rational. In many situations, people are emotional and are unable to reason clearly. Thus, tradition and religion, rather than reason, are viewed as the most reliable sources for guiding society because they support stability and moderate change. In the words of one British conservative, “The accumulated wisdom and experience of countless generations gone is more likely to be right than the passing fashion of the moment” (Hearnshaw 1933: 22). Second, individuals are inherently unequal in intelligence, skills, and status. Some individuals and groups are superior to others, and those who are superior should be in positions of power in society and in government.

INDIVIDUAL, STATE, AND SOCIETY Individuals have a basic need for order and stability in society. They belong to different groups that are unequal in power, status, and material possessions. Social harmony is maintained when these various groups cooperate. Traditional values and ethics provide the guidelines for group cooperation as well as individual behavior. And it is the role of societal institutions such as the family and the church, as well as government (the state), to communicate and enforce these values.

Individual liberty is valued and individual rights should be protected, but only within a framework of mutual responsibility. No individual or group has absolute freedom to do whatever it wants; rather, each should behave in a manner consistent with society’s traditional values. The superior groups should be allowed to enjoy the benefits and exercise the responsibilities associated with their position, but they should also protect the weak from severe hardships, a responsibility that the French call *noblesse oblige*—“the obligations of the nobility.” And government should use its power to maintain social order; to preserve traditional values, especially regarding family life, religion, and culture; and to protect private property rights. State military and economic power should also promote the country’s interests abroad and defend against intervention by other states.

EQUALITY Because inequality is a natural aspect of society, it is foolish and even dangerous to seek egalitarianism. Forced equality is unwise because it disrupts the natural, cooperative hierarchy among groups, causes social conflict, and endangers the fundamental goal of order and stability. Attempts to force equality are also unacceptable because they directly undermine individual liberty, which is of greater importance than equality.

Thomas Hobbes, Plato (427–347 B.C.E., who proposed rule by philosopher kings), and Confucius (551–479 B.C.E., who celebrated rigid social hierarchy; see Focus in 4), all reflect core values of conservatism. Other important advocates of conservatism include Edmund Burke, a British member of Parliament; British prime ministers Benjamin Disraeli and Winston Churchill; and, to a lesser extent, American Founding Fathers James Madison and Alexander Hamilton. In the conversation at Burger King at the beginning of this chapter, Glen’s views were generally consistent with conservatism.

Most contemporary conservatives are pragmatic. They are less concerned about the form of government than about the use of government to promote order and

stability. The conservative perspective is sympathetic to government intervention when the objective of the policy is to maintain or return to traditional values such as patriotism, family, morality, piety, and individual responsibility. In every era, conservatives resist current threats to the traditions they value. Today, those threats often include multiculturalism; expansion of the welfare state; and forced equality across class, race, and gender. A conservative government might actively support a state religion, expand its military power to influence other countries, suppress disorderly protest, provide minimal relief to those in poverty, or make abortion illegal. Some new policies are supported, but the rationale is always “to change in order to preserve,” as the British Conservative Party has put it. Many of the contemporary political leaders who come closest to the spirit of conservatism are in certain countries in Asia and the Middle East (e.g., Brunei, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia) where social hierarchy, order, and traditional values are celebrated.

Classical Liberalism

The ideology of **classical liberalism** *places the highest value on individual freedom and posits that the role of government should be quite limited*. In part, this ideology emerged in the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries as a response to rigid, hierarchical societies, such as those in feudal Europe. Intellectuals and those in commerce, among others, desired to be free from the constraints imposed by the dominant political, economic, and religious institutions in their society. They posited that each person should live responsibly but also should be allowed to live in the manner dictated by her beliefs and to enjoy fully the benefits of her efforts with minimal limitations from these stifling, conservative institutions.

THE INDIVIDUAL John Locke (1632–1704), a primary theorist of classical liberalism, describes individuals in a “state of nature” prior to the existence of government (see his *Second Treatise of Government*, 1690). Each person enjoys natural rights to life, liberty, and property. Each person is rational and has the ability to use reason to determine the sensible rules (the “laws of nature”) that shape how she should live in pursuit of her own needs and without harming others. Classical liberalism contrasts with conservatism in several important ways: (1) the freedom of each individual to pursue her natural rights is the highest value; and (2) each individual is rational and responsible and is the best judge of what is in her self-interest. (Notice also that the classical liberal’s view of the state of nature is far more benign than the one described by conservative Hobbes as “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.”)

INDIVIDUAL, STATE, AND SOCIETY A person’s full capabilities can be realized only if she is not limited by a conservative social order in which tradition and hierarchy are dominant. The social order celebrated in conservatism not only restricts individual freedom but also stifles progressive change and growth. In the classical liberal view, no one is forced to accept the authority of the state (government). Individuals can consent to be governed—choosing to “contract” with a minimal government, the main roles of which are limited to clarifying the laws of nature and enforcing the occasional

violations of those laws. The state should mainly be a night watchman, a low-profile police officer who ensures the basic safety and freedom of every individual. Thomas Paine's (1737–1809) slogan captures this perspective: "That government is best which governs least."

For similar reasons, classical liberals celebrate a *laissez-faire* economy, a view particularly associated with the writings of Adam Smith noted briefly in Focus in 2. Each person should be free to pursue her economic goals by any legal activity and to amass as much property and wealth as possible. Individual actors are guided by enlightened self-interest, and the overall economy is structured by the "invisible hand" of the market and free trade. There are only a few circumstances in which the state should act to constrain this freedom of economic action. This vision of a market political economy will be further explored in Chapter 8.

EQUALITY Equality before the law (equality of opportunity) is important, but government should not attempt to create material equality (equality of outcomes). People pursue their interests in different ways and with different levels of success. Even in situations of hardship, government action is undesirable because it undermines individual initiative and independence. Thus, government should have no significant role in addressing inequalities.

Among the many political thinkers associated with classical liberalism, in addition to John Locke and Adam Smith, are Jeremy Bentham (1748–1831) and John Stuart Mill (1806–1873). More contemporary advocates of classical liberalism (some of whom are labeled neoconservatives) include economists F. A. Hayek (1899–1992) and Milton Friedman (1912–2006) and political commentator William F. Buckley (1925–2008). At Burger King, Byron was most aligned with this perspective. Part Five of this book will reveal that many contemporary political regimes are powerfully influenced by classical liberalism. Its emphases on limited government, individual liberty, and *laissez-faire* economics are among the central themes in many ongoing debates about public policy and government action.

A brief aside: If you are an American, you might be confused by these characteristics of liberalism because, in the United States, a *liberal* is someone who supports substantial government intervention and public policies that increase equality of outcomes. This confusion of terminology emerged during Franklin Delano Roosevelt's tenure as U.S. president (1933–1945). Faced with a devastating economic depression, Roosevelt argued for a "New Deal" in which the national government had a clear duty and responsibility to assist actively in economic recovery and in social action. This expanded government would regulate business, create jobs, and distribute extensive welfare services to the citizens, including cash payments and increased public provision of education, housing, health care, and so on. Roosevelt's political opponents labeled his policies "socialism." He knew this was a very negative label in the United States, so he called himself and his policies "liberal," contrasting them with the "conservative" policies of others (mainly Republicans, such as the previous president Herbert Hoover) who emphasized limited government, *laissez-faire* economics, and individual freedom. Notice that, in the general language of political ideologies, what

Roosevelt was calling conservatism was mostly classical liberalism, and what he was proposing as liberalism was a very modest version of democratic socialism (described below). Roosevelt's meanings of liberals versus conservatives were adopted in the United States, but not in most other countries. In this book, the traditional ideology of liberalism will be called classical liberalism to distinguish it from the American understanding of liberalism as an ideology of extensive government and reduced inequality.

Socialism

For **socialism**, *the most important goal is to provide high-quality, relatively equal conditions of life for everyone, with an active state assisting in the achievement of this goal.* Many people were still impoverished and exploited in the nineteenth-century world, despite the emergence of industrialization and democracy. Socialism evolved as a distinctive ideology among theorists concerned about the plight of people who had relatively little economic, social, or political power. They were dissatisfied that neither conservatism nor classical liberalism revealed much concern for improving the conditions of these groups. Socialism articulated a vision through which economic and political power could be directed to benefit all groups in society.

THE INDIVIDUAL In the socialist perspective, people are social and caring by nature. They are not innately selfish and aggressive, although negative social conditions can produce such behavior. Every individual's attitudes and behaviors are largely determined by the environment of family, community, and work. Thus, it is crucial to create an environment that encourages individuals to place the highest value on cooperation and sharing and to act in ways that increase the collective good.

INDIVIDUAL, STATE, AND SOCIETY Because the good of the society as a whole is the most important goal, some of an individual's interests must be subordinated to, or at least coordinated with, the overall interests and needs of everyone in the society. All groups, from national organizations (e.g., trade unions) to local organizations (e.g., workplaces, social clubs) to the family, must encourage everyone to act in ways that result in cooperation and service to the common good. The state has a crucial role, both through policies that provide every citizen with good material living conditions and through education and civic training. Thus, government must take an expansive role in society, ensuring that every citizen has access to high-quality education, shelter, health care, and jobs, as well as financial security against economic uncertainty. The state is also much more active in controlling powerful actors and self-interested groups whose behavior will harm the collective good of the society, and thus it engages in extensive regulation of both the economic sphere and the social sphere. When everyone enjoys comfortable material conditions, there is much greater willingness to work for the common good and to subordinate one's acquisitiveness and greed.

EQUALITY Both the organic, hierarchical world of conservatism and the individualistic, self-serving world of classical liberalism result in societies with huge disparities of material conditions, wealth, status, and power. From the socialist perspective, these disparities and inequalities cause misery, deep alienation, and pervasive conflict in the

society. Thus, the ideology of socialism centers in a deep commitment to use the power and policies of the state to increase the material, social, and political equality of all its members. It is assumed that such equality transforms people into fulfilled, happy citizens and creates a society in which alienation and conflict are greatly reduced.

There are significant variations within the ideology of socialism. Among these, two major variations should be distinguished: Marxist–Leninist socialism and democratic socialism.

MARXIST–LENINIST SOCIALISM **Marxist–Leninist socialism** is a variant of socialist ideology that begins with three assumptions regarding the *forceful actions necessary to produce equality and social justice*. First, the entrenched socioeconomic elite, supported by the state that it controls, will resist change by every means available, and thus change will require violent overthrow of the existing order. Second, the transformation to socialism will be complex and face many obstacles in the existing system. Thus, a powerful government must be established and allowed total control of the process of change. Among the government’s most important tasks is the restructuring of the economic system, with public ownership of all the major resources in the society and the production and distribution of goods and services for human need. Third, a small, dictatorial leadership group must be empowered to manage the government and to effect the complex changes in the economy and society. Once relative equality is achieved, both this leadership group and the powerful government supporting it can be eliminated. They will, in the words of Marx, “wither away” and be replaced by decentralized, citizen-run politics and an efficient administration. (See Chapter 9 on the class approach and Chapter 8 on the command political economy for a more complete discussion of these points.)

The core elements of this version of socialism are the theories of Karl Marx and its modified practical applications by V. I. Lenin in the Soviet Union and by Mao Zedong in China. These variations of socialism are often called communism, Marxism, or revolutionary socialism as well as Marxist–Leninist socialism. In the last 70 years, this version of socialism has been attempted in more than 60 countries, ranging from A (Albania, Angola, Algeria) to Z (Zimbabwe). Most of the major regimes that implemented Marxist–Leninist socialism have since abandoned it (see especially Chapter 15 on postcommunist developed countries). Some conclude that the Marxist ideology of communism has been totally discredited. Debate in 8 will consider whether communism is, in fact, dead.

DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM The other major variation within socialist ideology is **democratic socialism**. This variant also has egalitarianism as its primary goal, and it assumes that the changes can be effected by a government that comes to power and rules by democratic means. It rejects the idea that a society based on justice and equality can be created only through violence and repression. This government’s authority is democratic, derived from consent of the governed in fair elections. In democratic socialism, the state’s policies emphasize the substantial reduction of inequalities in material conditions, power, and status, but the state does not attempt to achieve complete equality of material conditions. The approach to change is gradual, placing

continued importance on the protection of individual rights and freedoms even as it transforms the socioeconomic order. The government might own some of the major economic resources in the society and it strongly regulates much of the economy, but it does not attempt to plan and control all aspects of the economic system (Przeworski 1985, 1993).

The ideology of democratic socialism is rooted in utopian socialists such as Thomas More (1478–1535), Robert Owen (1771–1856), and Claude-Henri St. Simon (1760–1825), who envisioned voluntaristic communities based on cooperation. Twentieth-century variations include the Fabian socialists such as George Bernard Shaw, Sydney Webb, and Beatrice Webb, who were convinced that the people would elect democratic governments that gradually created socialist societies, and the revisionist Marxists such as Karl Kautsky, who argued that violence and repression by the state was not a legitimate means for achieving lasting change. At Burger King, Julie was probably the person closest to this ideology.

One vision of democratic socialism was articulated by the British economist Sir William Beveridge in a major policy statement commissioned by the British government in 1941. This statement was prompted by the dismay among British leaders regarding the very poor education and health of many young British working-class men who were drafted for World War II (this is another British example of political ideas shaped by socioeconomic conditions). In response to these circumstances, Beveridge argued that in a society operating according to the tenets of classical liberalism, there are five tragic effects on some people. Thus, the government should act as a “**welfare state**” (Castles et al., 2010), implementing policies to overcome each of these five effects:

1. **Disease:** to be combated by public provision of subsidized or free health care services, including doctors, treatment, hospitals, and medicines.
2. **Want:** to be eliminated by public provision of sufficient money and other services to raise people above poverty.
3. **Squalor:** to be reduced by state provision of publicly owned and subsidized housing affordable to all.
4. **Ignorance:** to be eliminated by universal, free public education.
5. **Idleness:** to be overcome by government policies that ensure meaningful work for every person.

The principles of democratic socialism have substantially shaped the current governance, social life, and material conditions in some contemporary social market systems present in countries such as Denmark, Germany, and Sweden (see Compare in 13). This socialist ideology is also advocated by some of the political elites in the postcommunist countries of Central and Eastern Europe (see Chapter 15).

Some Further Points About “ISMS”

To advance your knowledge regarding particular belief systems, you might take a course in political theory, political ideology, or world cultures, or you might pursue the “ism” of interest at the library or via the Internet. The preceding section identified three

major political ideologies that influence the political belief systems of many citizens in Western countries. There are many other significant political ideologies in the contemporary political world, at least some of which are “isms.” Table 2.1 briefly characterizes the essence of some of the political “isms” that you might encounter. Broader systems of religious-social beliefs also have great political importance, including Christian fundamentalism, Islamic fundamentalism, Confucianism, and Hinduism. Chapter 4 will indicate that it is almost impossible to understand politics in the contemporary world without considering the influence of these religious “isms” on beliefs and actions.

Some “true believers” adhere almost totally to a particular ideology, and these people are the genuine ideologues. But only a few individuals have a complete grasp of the details and subtleties of any ideology, and even fewer are prepared to accept without reservation every element of an ideology. A larger set of people is substantially influenced by one or more ideologies. They have developed their own system of political beliefs, in which they combine basic principles from particular ideologies with ideas from other sources. It will be suggested later in this chapter that many people have only rudimentary and inconsistent political beliefs.

Yet a particular “ism” can be a powerful force influencing people and shaping history. In the twentieth century, for example, both communism and fascism had particularly strong impacts. The role of communism will be explored later, especially in Chapters 8 and 15. Table 2.1 provides a basic definition of fascism. **Fascism** is antisocialist—it emphasizes an organic social order and thus opposes the idea of class struggle among groups. And it is antidemocratic—it views competitive, multi-party politics as divisive and destabilizing. While several twentieth-century regimes included strong elements of fascism, it is most closely associated with Italy under Benito Mussolini (1922–1943) and Germany under Adolf Hitler (1932–1945). In Germany, Hitler’s particular version of fascism was driven by several key ideological elements. First, it held that the top leader is the embodiment of the national will and must be obeyed. Second, it inspired nationalistic fervor with powerful loyalty to the homeland. The German leadership combined these ideas with a celebration of the superiority of the German race. This produced a virulent racism that became a justification for the brutal treatment of Jews, gypsies, gays, and other “undesirable” groups, including the extermination of more than 6 million in the concentration camps of Europe. All of these ideological elements, under Hitler’s charismatic leadership, resulted in Germany’s expansion beyond its borders, provoking a war (World War II) that spread across three continents and caused more than 51 million deaths. Groups or political parties that embrace core ideas of fascism, especially nationalism and ethnic purity, continue to be active in many contemporary societies.

In the early twenty-first century, considerable attention has focused on the rising political importance of *Islamism*, also known as “political Islam” (and less accurately characterized as Islamic fundamentalism). Islam is one of the world’s great religions, with more than 1.3 billion adherents across its many variations. Chapter 1 noted that there are deep disagreements within *dar al Islam* (the world of Islam) about how to interpret its crucial authority sources, especially the Koran, the teachings of Mohammed, and the analyses of Islam by venerated scholars of an earlier era. Islamic

Table 2.1 A Brief Primer on Political “Isms”

In politics and political theory, there are many “isms”—systems of beliefs that address how societies should function, how people should live and what they should value, and how political systems should operate. Entire books are devoted to each of the “isms” below, but here they are characterized in 40 words or less to give you an orienting (dangerously simplified?) idea about the core vision regarding any “ism” with which you are unfamiliar. The references in parentheses indicate the chapters in this book where some of these “isms” receive greater attention.

Anarchism—a moral–political ideal of a society that is untouched by relationships of power and domination among human beings; there is an absence of organized government.

Authoritarianism—a system in which the political rights and interests of individuals are subordinated, usually by coercion, to the interests of the state (see Chapter 7).

Capitalism—linking politics to the political economy, it is a system dominated by a (*laissez-faire*) market economy in which economic actors are generally free from state interference (see Chapter 8).

Collectivism—a doctrine holding that the individual’s actions should benefit some kind of collective organization such as the state, a tribe, or the like, rather than the individual.

Communism—based on the theories of Karl Marx, the essential goal of this system is the socialization of societal resources with the state owning land, labor, and capital and using them to promote the equal welfare of all citizens (see Chapters 8 and 15).

Conservatism—a belief in the virtue of preserving traditional values and social institutions and of promoting loyalty to country, reliance on family, and adherence to religion.

Corporatism—a political economy in which there is extensive economic cooperation between an activist state and a few groups that represent major economic actors such as large industry, organized labor, and farmers (see Chapter 8).

Environmentalism—advocacy of the planned management of a natural resource or of the total environment of a particular ecosystem to prevent exploitation, pollution, destruction, or depletion of valuable natural resources.

Fascism—a system in which the unity and harmony of government and society are of central importance and forces that might weaken that unity are repressed; a top leader is usually viewed as the embodiment of the natural will, and all individuals are expected to obey the leader’s will.

Feminism—a diverse social movement promoting equal rights and opportunities for women and men in their personal lives, economic activities, and politics; it is also an influential analytic perspective on political science topics from the perspective of feminist theory.

Islamism—guided by a rigid and conservative interpretation of Islam, this “political Islam” encourages active, even violent, opposition against any who undermine its beliefs about the appropriate way of living, both public and private.

(Classical) Liberalism—an emphasis on the primacy of the freedom and rights of the individual, relative to any constraints imposed by the state.

Libertarianism—an extreme version of classical liberalism, advocating the right of individuals to act freely and unconstrained by the state as long as they do not harm other people.

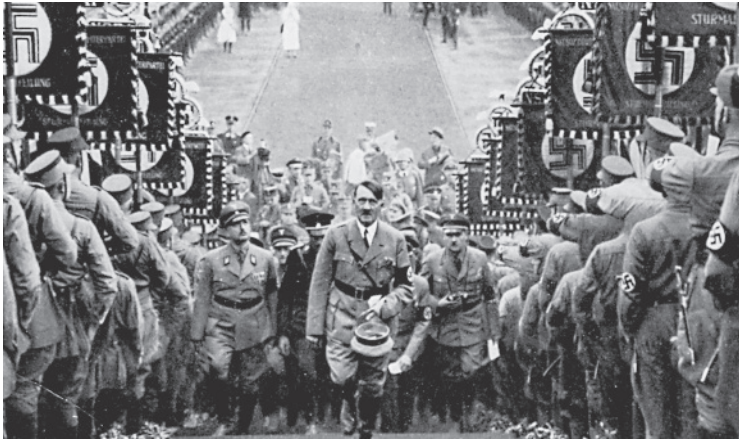
Marxism—a set of ideas based on the writings of Karl Marx, who argued that society is composed of competing classes based on economic power, that class struggle and change are inevitable, and that the desired goal is the equal distribution of welfare in the society (see Chapter 8).

Nationalism—a deep commitment to the advancement of the interests and welfare of the core group (based on location, ethnicity, or some other crucial factor) with which an individual identifies powerfully (see Chapter 5).

Pacifism—a belief that the highest political and social value is peace and the absence of violence.

Socialism—a system committed to utilizing the state, the economy, and public policy to provide a high-quality, relatively equal standard of living for all and, usually, to support democratic political processes (see Chapters 8 and 13).

Totalitarianism—a system in which the state possesses total control over all aspects of people’s lives, including their economic, social, political, and personal spheres (see Chapter 7).



Sieg heil! Fascism under Adolf Hitler, with its extreme nationalism, antisocialism, and leader veneration, became one of the most effective and destructive mass mobilization ideologies in modern history. Here, Hitler prepares to speak to 700,000 followers in 1934.

fundamentalists tend to embrace the most rigid and assertive beliefs regarding the interpretation of their holy authorities and the guidelines for their way of life, both personal and public. The political implications of this perspective can include an intolerance for what is viewed as deviant behavior by other Muslims, antagonism among different sects of Islam (e.g., Shi'a and Sunni), and hostility toward those non-Muslims who appear to challenge Islamic rule or to practice other religions within Muslim countries. Most

Islamic fundamentalists participate in personal, social, and political activities to further their beliefs. However, a minority of this population (the Islamists) believes it is necessary to engage in violent struggle against those other groups to protect the *Umma*, the community of all Muslims. Some of these Islamists have gained considerable notoriety for their violent actions and terrorism (see Chapter 12), including such groups as al-Qaeda, Hamas, Hezbollah, Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), and the Taliban. The death and suffering associated with communism, fascism, Islamism, and other extreme ideologies during the last 100 years are compelling evidence that political ideologies can be much more than bundles of ideas debated by intellectuals.

Individual Political Beliefs

2.2 Distinguish cognitive, affective, and evaluative beliefs.

Types of Political Orientations

Can you describe your thought process when you were asked how you would respond to the issues raised at Burger King? Your reaction might have been determined by fundamental and consistent principles you have about society and government—what has been characterized above as a political ideology. But if you are like most people, your thought processes in reaction to such political phenomena are probably best described in terms of a less structured combination of your factual knowledge, your feelings, and your assessments. These components of your political beliefs are termed cognitive, affective, and evaluative orientations.

Cognitive orientations are an individual's knowledge about the political world—what the person believes are political "facts." Cognitive orientations include descriptive knowledge such as: the names of political leaders; the policies supported by particular