CHAPTER 12

Governments, Systems and Regimes

'That government is best which governs not at all.'

HENRY DAVID THOREAU, *Civil Disobedience* (1849)

PREVIEW

Classifying the various forms of government has been one of the principal concerns of political analysis through the ages. This process can be traced back to the fourth century BCE, when Aristotle made the first recorded attempt to describe the political regimes then in existence, using terms such as 'democracy', 'oligarchy' and 'tyranny' that are still commonly employed today. From the eighteenth century onwards, governments were increasingly classified as monarchies or republics, or as autocratic or constitutional regimes. During the twentieth century, these distinctions were further sharpened. The 'three worlds' classification of political systems, which was particularly fashionable during the Cold War period, created an image of world politics dominated by a struggle between democracy and totalitarianism. However, in the light of modern developments, such as the collapse of communism, the rise of East Asia, and the emergence of political Islam, all such classifications appear outdated. Nevertheless, it is not entirely clear what these shifts mean. Some interpret them as an indication that democratization, modelled around the principle and structures of western liberal democracy, is a natural and inevitable process. In this view, liberal democracy constitutes the final form of human government. Others, nevertheless, argue that the modern world is becoming politically more diffuse and fragmented. From this perspective, not only is liberal democracy culturally-bound rather than universally applicable, but alternative regimes including authoritarian systems and forms of illiberal democracy, may prove to be more successful and enduring than expected.

KEY ISSUES

- What is the difference between governments, political systems and regimes?
- What is the purpose of classifying systems of government?
- On what basis have, and should, regimes be classified?
- What are the major regimes of the modern world?
- Has western liberal democracy triumphed worldwide?

CONCEPT

Government

Government in its broadest sense, refers to any mechanism through which ordered rule is maintained, its central features being the ability to make collective decisions and the capacity to enforce them. However, the term is more commonly understood to describe the formal and institutional processes that operate at the national level to maintain public order and facilitate collective action. The core functions of government are, thus, to make law (legislation), implement law (execution) and interpret law (adjudication). In some cases, the political executive (see p. 285) alone is referred to as 'the government'.

TRADITIONAL SYSTEMS OF CLASSIFICATION

Before we examine how different systems of rule have been classified, it is necessary for us to reflect on both what is being classified, and why such classifications have been undertaken. First, what is 'government', and how do governments differ from 'political systems' or 'regimes'? 'Government' refers to the institutional processes through which collective and usually binding decisions are made; its various institutions constitute the subject matter of Chapters 12–16 of this book. A **political system** or regime, on the other hand, is a broader term that encompasses not only the mechanisms of government and the institutions of the state, but also the structures and processes through which these interact with the larger society.

A political system is, in effect, a subsystem of the larger social system. It is a 'system', in that there are interrelationships within a complex whole; and 'political', in that these interrelationships relate to the distribution of power, wealth and resources in society. Political regimes can thus be characterized as effectively by the organization of economic life as they are by the governmental processes through which they operate. A regime is therefore a 'system of rule' that endures despite the fact that governments come and go. Whereas governments can be changed by elections, through dynastic succession, as a result of ***coups d'état***, and so on, regimes can be changed only by military intervention from without, or by some kind of revolutionary upheaval from within.

Why classify political systems?

The interest in classifying political systems stems from two sources. First, classification is an essential aid to the *understanding* of politics and government. As in most social sciences, understanding in politics is acquired largely through a process of comparison, particularly as experimental methods are generally inapplicable. It is not possible, for instance, to devise experiments to test whether, say, US government would be less susceptible to institutional **government gridlock** if it abandoned the separation of powers (see p. 313), or whether communism (see p. 275) could have survived in the USSR had reforms been instigated a generation earlier. In consequence, we look to comparison to throw into relief what we are studying. Through the highlighting of similarities and differences between what might otherwise be bewildering collections of facts, comparison helps us to distinguish between what is significant and meaningful, and what is not. In this process, we are able both to develop theories, hypotheses and concepts, and, to some extent, to test them. As Alexis de Tocqueville (see p. 245) put it, 'without comparisons to make, the mind does not know how to proceed'. The attempt to classify systems of rule is, therefore, merely a device for making the process of comparison more methodical and systematic.

The second purpose of classification is to facilitate *evaluation*, rather than analysis. Since Aristotle (see p. 6), those who have sought to understand political regimes have often been as keen to 'improve' government as to understand it. In other words, descriptive understanding is closely tied up with normative judgements: questions about what *is* are linked to questions about what *should* be. In

● **Political system**: A network of relationships through which government generates 'outputs' (policies) in response to 'inputs' (demands or support) from the general public.

● ***Coup d'état***: (French) A sudden and forcible seizure of government power through illegal and unconstitutional action.

● **Government gridlock**: Paralysis resulting from institutional rivalry within government, or the attempt to respond to conflicting public demands.

CONCEPT

Utopia, utopianism

A utopia (from the Greek *outopia*, meaning 'nowhere', or *eutopia*, meaning 'good place') is literally an ideal or perfect society. Although utopias of various kinds can be envisaged, most are characterized by the abolition of want, the absence of conflict, and the avoidance of violence and oppression. Utopianism is a style of political theorizing that develops a critique of the existing order by constructing a model of an ideal or perfect alternative. However, the term is often used in a pejorative sense to imply deluded or fanciful thinking, a belief in an impossible goal.

its extreme form, this process may involve a search for an 'ideal' system of rule, or even a utopia, and this can be seen in works such as Plato's (see p. 13) *Republic*, Thomas More's *Utopia* ([1516] 1965), and Peter Kropotkin's *Fields, Factories and Workshops* (1912). In a more modest form, this type of classification allows for qualitative judgements to be made in relation to political structures and governmental forms. Only a comparative approach, for instance, enables us to consider questions such as 'Should the transition to liberal democracy in Russia and other former communist states be welcomed and encouraged?', 'Should India abandon federalism in favour of either a unitary system or regional independence?' and 'Should the UK adopt a "written" constitution?'

All systems of classification have their drawbacks, however. In the first place, as with all analytical devices, there is a danger of simplification. The classification of regimes under the same heading draws attention to the similarities that they share, but there is a risk that the differences that divide them will be ignored or disguised. A related problem is a possible failure to see that a phenomenon may have different meanings in different contexts. For instance, in Japan and throughout East Asia, 'the state' may be different in kind and significance from 'the state' as generally understood in the context of the West (see p. 274). Comparative analysis is therefore hampered by the constant danger of **ethnocentrism**. Second, value biases tend to intrude into the classification process. This can be seen in the tendency to classify communist and fascist regimes as 'totalitarian', implying that western liberal democracies were fighting the *same* enemy in the Cold War as they had done in World War II. Finally, all systems of classification have the drawback that they are necessarily state-bound: they treat individual countries as coherent or independent entities in their own right. Although this approach is by no means invalid, it is now widely viewed as incomplete in the light of the phenomenon of globalization (see p. 142).

Classical typologies

Without doubt, the most influential system of classification was that devised by Aristotle in the fourth century BCE, which was based on his analysis of the 158 Greek city-states then in existence. This system dominated thinking on the subject for roughly the next 2,500 years. Aristotle held that governments could be categorized on the basis of two questions: 'Who rules?', and 'Who benefits from rule?' Government, he believed, could be placed in the hands of a single individual, a small group, or the many. In each case, however, government could be conducted either in the selfish interests of the rulers, or for the benefit of the entire community. He thus identified the six forms of government shown in Figure 12.1.

Aristotle's purpose was to evaluate forms of government on normative grounds in the hope of identifying the 'ideal' constitution. In his view, tyranny, oligarchy and democracy were all debased or perverted forms of rule in which a single person, a small group and the masses, respectively, governed in their own interests and, therefore, at the expense of others. In contrast, monarchy, aristocracy and polity were to be preferred, because in these forms of government the individual, small group and the masses, respectively, governed in the interests of all. Aristotle declared tyranny to be the worst of all possible constitutions, as it reduced citizens to the status of slaves. Monarchy and aristocracy were, on the

● **Ethnocentrism**: The application of values and theories drawn from one's own culture to other groups and peoples; ethnocentrism implies bias or distortion (see p. 355).

CONCEPT

Absolutism

Absolutism is the theory or practice of absolute government, most commonly associated with an absolute monarchy (see p. 292). Government is 'absolute', in the sense that it possesses unfettered power: government cannot be constrained by a body external to itself. The absolutist principle, nevertheless, resides in the claim to an unlimited right to rule (as in divine right), rather than the exercise of unchallengeable power. As it is based on a principled claim, whether religious or rational, absolutism does not invest government with arbitrary power, unlikely dictatorship (see p. 281).

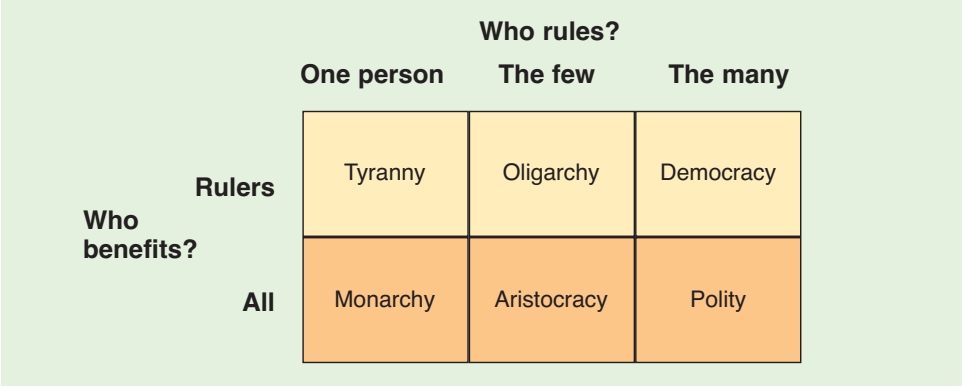

Figure 12.1 Aristotle's six forms of government

other hand, impractical, because they were based on a God-like willingness to place the good of the community before the rulers' own interests. Polity (rule by the many in the interests of all) was accepted as the most practicable of constitutions. Nevertheless, in a tradition that endured through to the twentieth century, Aristotle criticized popular rule on the grounds that the masses would resent the wealth of the few, and too easily fall under the sway of a **demagogue**. He therefore advocated a 'mixed' constitution that combined elements of both democracy and aristocracy, and left the government in the hands of the 'middle classes', those who were neither rich nor poor.

The Aristotelian system was later developed by thinkers such as Thomas Hobbes (see p. 61) and Jean Bodin (1530–96). Their particular concern was with the principle of sovereignty (see p. 58), viewed as the basis for all stable political regimes. Sovereignty was taken to mean the 'most high and perpetual' power, a power that alone could guarantee orderly rule. Bodin's *The Six Bookes of a Commonweale* ([1576] 1962) offered a wider-ranging account of the locus of sovereignty in political regimes, both contemporary and classical. He concluded that absolutism was the most defensible of regimes, as it established a sovereign who makes law but is not bound by those laws. The overriding merit of vesting sovereignty in a single individual was that it would then be indivisible: sovereignty would be expressed in a single voice that could claim final authority. Bodin nevertheless argued that absolute monarchs were constrained by the existence of higher law in the form of the will of God or natural law. On the other hand, in *Leviathan* ([1651] 1968), Hobbes portrayed sovereignty as a monopoly of coercive power, implying that the sovereign was entirely unconstrained.

These ideas were later revised by early liberals such as John Locke (see p. 31) and Montesquieu (see p. 312), who championed the cause of constitutional government. Locke, in *Two Treatises of Government* ([1690] 1965), argued that sovereignty resided with the people, not the monarch, and he advocated a system of limited government to provide protection for natural rights; notably, the rights to life, liberty and property. In his epic *The Spirit of the Laws* ([1748] 1949), Montesquieu attempted to develop a 'scientific' study of human society, designed to uncover the constitutional circumstances that would best protect individual liberty. A severe critic of absolutism and an admirer of the English parliamentary tradition, he proposed a system of checks and balances in the form of a 'separation of powers' between the executive, legislative and judicial

● **Demagogue**: A political leader whose control over the masses is based on the ability to whip up hysterical enthusiasm.

CONCEPT

Totalitarianism

Totalitarianism is an all-encompassing system of political rule, typically established by pervasive ideological manipulation and open terror. Totalitarianism differs from autocracy and authoritarianism (see p. 277), in that it seeks to politicize every aspect of social and personal existence, rather than just suppress political opposition. Totalitarian regimes are sometimes identified through a 'six-point syndrome' (Friedrich and Brzezinski, 1963): (1) an official ideology; (2) a one-party state, usually led by an all-powerful leader; (3) a system of terroristic policing; (4) a monopoly of the means of mass communication; (5) a monopoly of the means of armed combat; and (6) state control of all aspects of economic life.

institutions. This principle was incorporated into the US constitution (1787), and it later came to be seen as one of the defining features of liberal democratic government.

The 'classical' classification of regimes, stemming from the writings of Aristotle, was rendered increasingly redundant by the development of modern constitutional systems from the late eighteenth century onwards. In their different ways, the constitutional **republicanism** established in the USA following the American War of Independence of 1775–83, the democratic radicalism unleashed in France by the 1789 French Revolution, and the form of parliamentary government that gradually emerged in the UK created political realities that were substantially more complex than early thinkers had envisaged. Traditional systems of classification were therefore displaced by a growing emphasis on the constitutional and institutional features of political rule. In many ways, this built on Montesquieu's work, in that particular attention was paid to the relationships between the various branches of government. Thus, monarchies were distinguished from republics, parliamentary government (see p. 310) was distinguished from presidential government (see p. 289), and unitary systems were distinguished from federal systems.

The 'three worlds' typology

During the twentieth century, historical developments once again altered the basis of political classification. The appearance in the interwar period of new forms of authoritarianism (see p. 277), particularly in Stalinist Russia, Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, encouraged the view that the world was divided into two kinds of regime: democratic states and totalitarian states. The stark contrast between democracy and totalitarianism dominated attempts at regime classification through much of the 1950s and 1960s, despite the fact that the fascist and Nazi regimes had collapsed at the end of World War II. Nevertheless, there was a growing awareness that this approach was shaped by the antagonisms of the Cold War, and that it could perhaps be seen as a species of Cold War ideology, and this stimulated the search for a more value-neutral and ideologically impartial system of classification. This led to the growing popularity of the so-called 'three worlds' approach – the belief that the political world could be divided into three distinct blocs:

- a capitalist 'first world'
- a communist 'second world'
- a developing 'third world'.

The three-worlds classification had economic, ideological, political and strategic dimensions. Industrialized western regimes were 'first' in economic terms, in that their populations enjoyed the highest levels of mass affluence. In 1983, these countries generated 63 per cent of the world's **gross domestic product** (GDP) while having only 15 per cent of the world's population (World Bank, 1985). Communist regimes were 'second', insofar as they were largely industrialized and capable of satisfying the population's basic material needs. These countries produced 19 per cent of the world's GDP with 33 per cent of the world's population. The less-developed countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America were

● **Republicanism**: The principle that political authority stems ultimately from the consent of the people; the rejection of monarchical and dynastic principles.

● **Gross domestic product**: The total financial value of final goods and services produced in an economy over one year.

CONCEPT

Liberal democracy

A liberal democracy is a political regime in which a 'liberal' commitment to limited government is blended with a 'democratic' belief in popular rule. Its key features are: (1) the right to rule is gained through success in regular and competitive elections, based on universal adult suffrage; (2) constraints on government imposed by a constitution, institutional checks and balances, and protections for individual and minority rights; and (3) a vigorous civil society including a private enterprise economy, independent trade unions and a free press. The terms liberal democracy and and pluralist democracy (see p. 101) are often used interchangeably.

'third', in the sense that they were economically dependent and often suffered from widespread poverty. They produced 18 per cent of the world's GDP with 52 per cent of the world's population.

The first and second worlds were further divided by fierce ideological rivalry. The first world was wedded to 'capitalist' principles, such as the desirability of private enterprise, material incentives and the free market; the second world was committed to 'communist' values such as social equality, collective endeavour, and the need for centralized planning. Such ideological differences had clear political manifestations. First-world regimes practised liberal-democratic politics based on a competitive struggle for power at election time. Second-world regimes were one-party states, dominated by 'ruling' communist parties. Third-world regimes were typically authoritarian, and governed by traditional monarchs, dictators or, simply, the army. The three-worlds classification was underpinned by a bipolar world order, in which a USA-dominated West confronted a USSR-dominated East. This order was sustained by the emergence of two rival military camps in the form of NATO and the Warsaw Pact. Not infrequently, the 'non-aligned' third world was the battleground on which this geopolitical struggle was conducted, a fact that did much to ensure its continued political and economic subordination.

Since the 1970s, however, this system of classification has been increasingly difficult to sustain. New patterns of economic development have brought material affluence to parts of the third world; notably, the oil-rich states of the Middle East and the newly industrialized states of East Asia, Southeast Asia, and, to some extent, Latin America. In contrast, poverty became, if anything, more deeply entrenched in parts of sub-Saharan Africa which, in the 1990s, in particular, constituted a kind of 'fourth world'. Moreover, the advance of democratization (see p. 272) in Asia, Latin America and Africa, especially during the 1980s and 1990s, has meant that third-world regimes are no longer uniformly authoritarian. Indeed, the phrase 'third world' is widely resented as being demeaning, because it implies entrenched disadvantage. The term 'developing world' is usually seen as preferable.

Without doubt, however, the most catastrophic single blow to the three-worlds model resulted from the eastern European revolutions of 1989–91. These led to the collapse of orthodox communist regimes in the USSR and elsewhere, and unleashed a process of political liberalization and market reform. Indeed, Francis Fukuyama (see p. 271) went so far as to proclaim that this development amounted to the 'end of history' (see p. 44). He meant by this that ideological debate had effectively ended with the worldwide triumph of western liberal democracy. Quite simply, second-world and third-world regimes were collapsing as a result of the recognition that only the capitalist first world offered the prospect of economic prosperity and political stability.

REGIMES OF THE MODERN WORLD

Since the late 1980s, the regime-classification industry has been in a limbo. Older categories, particularly the 'three worlds' division, were certainly redundant, but the political contours of the new world were far from clear. Moreover, the 'end of history' scenario was only fleetingly attractive, having been sustained by the wave

Francis Fukuyama (born 1952)

US social analyst and political commentator. Fukuyama was born in Chicago, USA, the son of a Protestant preacher. He was a member of the Policy Planning Staff of the US State Department before becoming an academic; he is currently at Johns Hopkins University. A staunch Republican, he came to international prominence as a result of his article 'The End of History?' (1989), which he later developed into *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992). These works claimed that the history of ideas had ended with the recognition of liberal democracy as 'the final form of human government'. In *Trust* (1996) and *The Great Disruption* (1999), Fukuyama discussed the relationship between economic development and social cohesion. In *The Origins of Political Order* (2011), he laid down the basis for a theory of political development.

of democratization in the late 1980s and early 2000s, and drawing impetus in particular from the collapse of communism. In some senses, this liberal-democratic triumphalism reflected the persistence of a western-centric viewpoint, and it may, anyway, have been a hangover from the days of the Cold War. The image of a 'world of liberal democracies' suggested the superiority of a specifically western model of development, based perhaps especially on the USA, and it implied that values such as individualism (see p. 158), rights and choice are universally applicable. One result of this was a failure to recognize the significance, for instance, of Islamic and Confucian political forms, which tended to be dismissed as mere aberrations, or simply as evidence of resistance to the otherwise unchallenged advance of liberal democracy.

However, one of the difficulties of establishing a new system of classification is that there is no consensus about the criteria on which such a system should be based. No system of classification relies on a single all-important factor. Nevertheless, particular systems have tended to prioritize different sets of criteria. Among the parameters most commonly used are the following:

- Who rules? Is political participation confined to an elite body or privileged group, or does it encompass the entire population?
- How is compliance achieved? Is government obeyed as a result of the exercise or threat of force, or through bargaining and compromise?
- Is government power centralized or fragmented? What kinds of check and balance operate in the political system?
- How is government power acquired and transferred? Is a regime open and competitive, or is it monolithic?
- What is the balance between the state and the individual? What is the distribution of rights and responsibilities between government and citizens?
- What is the level of material development? How materially affluent is the society, and how equally is wealth distributed?
- How is economic life organized? Is the economy geared to the market or to planning, and what economic role does government play?
- How stable is a regime? Has the regime survived over time, and does it have the capacity to respond to new demands and challenges?

CONCEPT

Democratization

Democratization refers to the process of transition from authoritarianism to liberal democracy. Democratization encompasses three, sometimes overlapping, processes. (1) The breakdown of the old regime; this usually involves a loss of legitimacy (see p. 81) and the faltering loyalty of the police and military. (2) 'Democratic transition' witnesses the construction of new liberal-democratic structures and processes. (3) 'Democratic consolidation' sees these new structures and processes becoming so embedded in the minds of elites and the masses that democracy becomes 'the only game in town' (Przeworski, 1991).

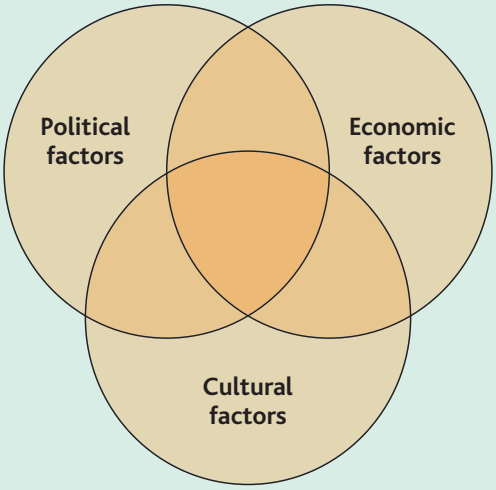

Figure 12.2 Key regime features

A *constitutional–institutional* approach to classification that was influenced by 'classical' typologies was adopted in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This approach highlighted, for instance, differences between codified and uncodified constitutions, parliamentary and presidential systems, and federal and unitary systems. A *structural–functional* approach, however, was developed out of systems theory, which became increasingly prominent in the 1950s and 1960s. This approach was concerned less with institutional arrangements than with how political systems work in practice, and especially with how they translate 'inputs' into 'outputs'. The 'three worlds' approach was *economic–ideological* in orientation, as it paid special attention to a systems level of material development and its broader ideological orientation. The approach adopted here, however, is in some ways different from each of these three. It attempts to take account of three key features of a regime: its political, economic and cultural aspects. The assumption in this approach is that regimes are characterized not so much by particular political, economic or cultural factors as by the way in which these interlock in practice (see Figure 12.2).

The significance of this approach is that it emphasizes the degree to which formal political and economic arrangements may operate differently depending on their cultural context. For instance, multiparty elections and a market economy may have very different implications in western liberal societies than they do in non-western ones. Nevertheless, in view of the profound political upheavals since the late twentieth century, it would be foolish to suggest that any system of classification can be anything but provisional. Indeed, regimes are themselves fluid, and the regime-classification industry is constantly struggling to keep up to date with an ever-changing political reality. Nevertheless, five regime types can be identified in the modern world:

- western polyarchies
- new democracies
- East Asian regimes

CONCEPT

Polyarchy

Polyarchy (literally, 'rule by many') refers, generally, to the institutions and political processes of modern representative democracy. Polyarchy can be understood as a rough or crude approximation of democracy, in that it operates through institutions that force rulers to take account of the public's wishes. Its central features are (Dahl, 1989): (1) government is based on election; (2) elections are free and fair; (3) practically all adults have the right to vote; (4) the right to run for office is unrestricted; (5) there is free expression and a right to criticize and protest; (6) citizens have access to alternative sources of information; and (7) groups and associations enjoy at least relative independence from government.

- Islamic regimes
- military regimes.

Western polyarchies

Western polyarchies are broadly equivalent to regimes categorized as 'liberal democracies', or even simply 'democracies'. Their heartlands are therefore North America, western Europe and Australasia. Huntington (see p. 425) argued that such regimes are a product of the first two 'waves' of democratization: the first occurred between 1828 and 1926, and involved countries such as the USA, France and the UK; the second occurred between 1943 and 1962, and involved countries such as West Germany, Italy, Japan and India. Although polyarchies have, in large part, evolved through moves towards democratization and **liberalization**, the term 'polyarchy' is preferable to 'liberal democracy' for two reasons. First, liberal democracy is sometimes treated as a political ideal, and is thus invested with broader normative implications. Second, the use of 'polyarchy' acknowledges that these regimes fall short, in important ways, of the goal of democracy.

The term 'polyarchy' was first used to describe a system of rule by Dahl (p. 250) and Lindblom in *Politics, Economics, and Welfare* (1953), and it was later elaborated in Dahl's *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition* (1971). In the view of these authors, polyarchical regimes are distinguished by the combination of two general features. In the first place, there is a relatively high tolerance of opposition that is sufficient at least to check the arbitrary inclinations of government. This is guaranteed in practice by a competitive party system, by institutionally guaranteed and protected civil liberties, and by a vigorous and healthy civil society. The second feature of polyarchy is that the opportunities for participating in politics should be sufficiently widespread to guarantee a reliable level of popular responsiveness. The crucial factor here is the existence of regular and competitive elections operating as a device through which the people can control and, if necessary, displace their rulers. In this sense, there is a close resemblance between polyarchy and the form of democratic elitism described by Joseph Schumpeter (see p. 202) in *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* (1942). Nevertheless, Lindblom (1977) and Dahl (1985) both acknowledged the impact on polyarchies of the disproportional power of major corporations. For this reason, the notion of 'deformed polyarchy' has sometimes been preferred.

Thus defined, the term 'polyarchy' may be used to describe a large and growing number of regimes throughout the world. All states that hold multiparty elections have polyarchical features. Nevertheless, western polyarchies have a more distinctive and particular character. They are marked not only by representative democracy and a capitalist economic organization, but also by a cultural and ideological orientation that is largely derived from western liberalism. The most crucial aspect of this inheritance is the widespread acceptance of liberal individualism. Individualism, often seen as the most distinctive of western values, stresses the uniqueness of each human individual, and suggests that society should be organized so as to best meet the needs and interests of the individuals who compose it. The political culture of western polyarchies is influenced by liberal individualism in a variety of ways. It generates, for example, a heightened sensitivity to individual rights (perhaps placed above duties), the

● **Liberalization**: The introduction of internal and external checks on government power and/or shifts towards private enterprise and the market.

CONCEPT

The West

The term the West has two overlapping meanings. In a general sense, it refers to the cultural and philosophical inheritance of Europe, as exported through migration or colonialism. The roots of this inheritance lie in Judeo-Christian religion and the learning of 'classical' Greece and Rome, shaped in the modern period by the ideas and values of liberalism. In a narrower sense, fashionable during the Cold War, the West meant the USA-dominated capitalist bloc, as opposed to the USSR-dominated East. Although Eastern Europe no longer belongs to the East in this sense, it has always been unclear whether Russia belongs to the West in the broader sense.

general perception that choice and competition (in both political and economic life) are healthy, and a tendency to fear government and regard the state as, at least, a potential threat to liberty.

Western polyarchies are not all alike, however. Some of them are biased in favour of centralization and majority rule, and others tend towards fragmentation and pluralism. Lijphart (1990, 1999) highlighted this fact in distinguishing between 'majority' democracies and 'consensus' democracies. Majority democracies are organized along parliamentary lines according to the so-called '**Westminster model**'. The clearest example of this is the UK system, but the model has also, in certain respects, been adopted by New Zealand, Australia, Canada, Israel and India. Majoritarian tendencies are associated with any, or all, of the following features:

- single-party government
- a fusion of powers between the executive and the assembly
- an assembly that is either unicameral or weakly bicameral
- a two-party system
- a single-member plurality, or first-past-the-post, electoral system (see p. 208)
- unitary and centralized government
- an uncodified constitution and a sovereign assembly.

In contrast, other western polyarchies are characterized by a diffusion of power throughout the governmental and party systems. The US model of pluralist democracy (see p. 101) is based very largely on institutional fragmentation enshrined in the provisions of the constitution itself. Elsewhere, particularly in continental Europe, consensus is underpinned by the party system, and a tendency towards bargaining and power sharing. In states such as Belgium, Austria and Switzerland, a system of **consociational democracy** has developed that is particularly appropriate to societies that are divided by deep religious, ideological, regional, cultural or other differences. Consensual or pluralistic tendencies are often associated with the following features:

- coalition government (see p. 239)
- a separation of powers between the executive and the assembly
- an effective bicameral system
- a multiparty system
- proportional representation (see p. 207)
- federalism (see p. 382) or devolution
- a codified constitution and a bill of rights.

On another level, of course, each polyarchical regime – and, indeed, every regime – is unique, and therefore exceptional. US **exceptionalism**, for instance, is often linked to the absence of a feudal past, and the experience of settlement and frontier expansion. This may explain the USA's deeply individualist political culture, which, uniquely amongst western polyarchies, does not accommodate a socialist party or movement of any note. The USA is also the most overtly religious of western regimes, and it is the only one, for instance, in which Christian fundamentalism has developed into a major political force.

● **Westminster model**: A system of government in which the executive is drawn from, and (in theory) accountable to, the assembly or parliament.

● **Consociational democracy**: A form of democracy that operates through power-sharing and a close association amongst a number of parties or political formations.

● **Exceptionalism**: The features of a political system that are unique or particular to it, and thus restrict the application of broader categories.

CONCEPT

Communism

Communism, in its simplest sense, is the communal organization of social existence on the basis of the collective ownership of property. For Marxists, communism is a theoretical ideal, characterized by classlessness, rational economic organization and statelessness. 'Orthodox' communism refers to the societies founded in the twentieth century, supposedly on the basis of Marxist principles. In such societies: (1) Marxism-Leninism was used as an 'official' ideology; (2) the communist party had a monopoly of power, based on its 'leading and guiding' role in society; and (3) economic life was collectivized and organized through a system of central planning.

India is a still more difficult case. It is certainly not part of the West in cultural, philosophical or religious terms. In contrast to the 'developed' polyarchies of Europe and North America, it also has a largely rural population and a literacy rate of barely 50 per cent. Nevertheless, India has functioned as an effective polyarchy since it became independent in 1947, even surviving Indira Gandhi's 'state of emergency' during 1975–7. Political stability in India was undoubtedly promoted by the cross-caste appeal of the Congress Party and the mystique of the Nehru–Gandhi dynasty. However, the decline of the former and the end of the latter has perhaps transformed modern India into something approaching a consociational democracy. Turkey is another example of a political system that, in some respects, hovers between the East and the West (see p. 280).

New democracies

A third wave of democratization began, according to Huntington (1991), in 1974. It witnessed the overthrow of right-wing dictatorships (see p. 281) in Greece, Portugal and Spain; the retreat of the generals in Latin America; and, most significantly, the fall of communism. Of the 151 countries comprising the world at that time, in 1973 only 45 were electoral democracies. However, by 2003, 63 per cent of states, accounting for about 70 per cent of the world's population, exhibited some of the key features of liberal-democratic governance. Most prominently, this process has been characterized by the adoption of multi-party elections and market-based economic reforms. Nevertheless, many of these states are '**transition countries**', often classified as **new democracies**. The process of democratic transition has been both complex and difficult, highlighting the fact that liberal democracy may not be the 'default position' for human societies (see p. 276). New democracies not only lack developed democratic political cultures, they also have to handle the strains produced by the external forces of globalization, as well as rapid internal change. The most dramatic evidence of their vulnerability is the re-emergence of the armed forces into politics, as occurred, for example, in military *coups* in Pakistan in 1979 and in Thailand in 2006. However, particular problems are faced by postcommunist states in bringing about democratization.

One feature of postcommunist regimes is the need to deal with the politico-cultural consequences of communist rule, especially the ramifications of Stalinist totalitarianism. The ruthless censorship and suppression of opposition that underpinned the communist parties' monopoly of power guaranteed that a civic culture emphasizing participation, bargaining and consensus failed to develop. In Russia, this has produced a weak and fragmented party system that is apparently incapable of articulating or aggregating the major interests of Russian society. As a result, communist parties, or former communist parties, have often continued to provide a point of stability. In Romania and Bulgaria, for example, the institutions of the communist past have survived into the postcommunist era while, in states such as Hungary, Poland and Russia, communist parties – now embracing, if with differing degrees of conviction, the principles of social democracy – have retained a measure of electoral credibility.

A second set of problems stems from the process of economic transition. The 'shock therapy' transition from central planning to *laissez-faire* capitalism, initially advocated by the International Monetary Fund, unleashed deep insecu-

● **Transition countries**: Former Soviet Bloc countries that are in the process of transition from central planning to market capitalism.

● **New democracies**: Regimes in which the process of democratic consolidation is incomplete; democracy is not yet the 'only game in town' (Przeworski, 1991).

Debating . . .

Is liberal democracy the 'default position' for human societies?

The seemingly relentless advance of democratization since the early nineteenth century has encouraged some to believe that it is a natural and inevitable process. From this perspective, all systems of rule are destined, sooner or later, to collapse and be remodelled on liberal-democratic lines. Is liberal democracy the only 'normal' political regime?

YES

Mandate of history. Modernization clearly wears a liberal-democratic face. Although the liberal-democratic mix of limited government and popular rule has only been around for about 200 years, it has become the dominant form of government worldwide. Although initially confined to Western Europe and North America, its western 'homeland', liberal democracy demonstrated its universal appeal through its spread to India and Japan after World War II, into Latin America and across Eastern Europe from the 1980s onwards and, more recently, into the Muslim world through the Arab Spring. This, and further waves of democratization, seems set to culminate in the establishment of a world of liberal democracies.

The 'transition paradigm'. Democratization is driven forward through a strong internal dynamic, helping to explain why dictatorship eventually crumbles in the face of advancing liberal democracy. Following an opening phase in which cracks appear in a dictatorial regime that has lost legitimacy, the regime itself collapses and a new, democratic system emerges in its place. Over time, democratic structures gain greater substance, as the new democratic 'rules of the game' come to be accepted by both political elites and the mass of the population. In this view, once competitive elections have been held, even if democratic imperfections persist for some time, a return to dictatorship is unlikely, and may be impossible.

Unrivalled performance. Liberal democracy brings a unique collection of humanitarian, economic and political benefits in its wake. Liberal democracy's humanitarian benefits derive from its capacity to uphold human rights and afford citizens the widest possible sphere of freedom unchecked by the state. Its economic benefits stem from its intrinsic relationship with capitalist economic structures, helping to explain why liberal-democratic regimes are also prosperous and developed. Its political benefits are evident in its tendency towards stability and consensus, open and pluralist politic, ensuring that no significant section of the population is permanently left ignored.

NO

Global context. In the aftermath of World War II, the advance of liberal democracy was underpinned in significant ways by the global hegemony of the USA. This both gave US-style liberal democracy a powerful appeal worldwide and was reflected in the adoption by the USA of a strategy of 'democracy promotion', using diplomatic, economic and, sometimes, military means. However, the shift in global power, from the US-led West to Asia in particular, has not only diminished the USA's willingness and ability to promote democracy elsewhere, but also tarnished the US political and economic model. It is also notable that rising powers such as China and Russia represent very different political models.

Rise of illiberal democracy. Since the late 1990s, the democratization process has slowed down, leading to a 'democratic recession' in the first decade of the twenty-first century (Fukuyama, 2011). Instead of the overthrow of dictatorship and holding of elections leading irresistibly to democratic consolidation, many transition countries have been left, perhaps permanently, in a 'grey area'. These states have become 'managed' or 'illiberal' democracies, in which a form of electoral democracy operates alongside weak checks and balances, and the routine intimidation of oppositional forces. Such arrangements reflect the capacity of political elites to bend democratic politics to their own ends.

Discontents of liberal democracy. It is by no means clear that liberal democracy has performance advantages over other systems of rule. Liberal democracy's difficulties and discontents include: a tendency towards plutocracy, reflecting the fact that capitalism is ultimately incompatible with popular rule; a trend towards atomism and declining civic engagement; and trade-offs between personal freedom and majority opinion that flow from the inherent tension between liberalism and democracy. The rise of state capitalism also challenges the idea that liberal-democratic regimes will always be more prosperous than other regimes, and liberal democracy may be culturally unsuitable for the non-western world.

CONCEPT

Authoritarianism

Authoritarianism is a belief in, or practice of, government 'from above', in which authority is exercised regardless of popular consent. Authoritarianism thus differs from authority, as the latter rests on legitimacy, and so arises 'from below'. Authoritarian regimes emphasize the claims of authority over those of individual liberty. However, authoritarianism is usually distinguished from totalitarianism. Authoritarianism, associated with monarchical absolutism, traditional dictatorships, and most forms of military rule, seeks to exclude the masses from politics rather than abolish civil society.

rity because of the growth of unemployment and inflation, and it significantly increased social inequality. Since the heady days of the early 1990s, the pace of economic liberalization has sometimes been greatly reduced as a consequence of a backlash against market reforms, often expressed in growing support for communist or nationalist parties. A final set of problems result from the weakness of state power, particularly when the state is confronted by centrifugal forces effectively suppressed during the communist era. This has been most clearly demonstrated by the re-emergence of ethnic and nationalist tensions. The collapse of communism in the USSR was accompanied by the break-up of the old Soviet empire and the construction of 15 new independent states, several of which (including Russia) continue to be afflicted by ethnic conflict. Czechoslovakia ceased to exist in 1992 with the creation of the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Ethnic conflict was most dramatic in Yugoslavia, where it precipitated full-scale war between Serbia and Croatia in 1991, and led to civil war in Bosnia in 1992–96.

Important differences between postcommunist states can also be identified. The most crucial of these is that between the more industrially advanced and westernized countries of 'central' Europe, such as the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland, and the more backward, 'eastern' states such as Romania, Bulgaria and, in certain respects, Russia. In the former group, market reform has proceeded swiftly and relatively smoothly; in the latter, it has either been grudging and incomplete, or it has given rise to deeper political tensions. This was reflected in early membership of the EU for the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia and the Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania), achieved in 2004. However, Bulgaria and Romania joined the EU in 2007, with other Balkan postcommunist states, including Croatia, Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia, still waiting to join. Another distinction is between the states on which communism was 'imposed' by the Soviet Red Army at the end of World War II and those that were once part of the USSR. Since the late 1990s, the process of democratization in many successor states to the USSR has slowed down and, in some cases, been reversed, leaving them in what Carothers (2004) called a 'grey zone' between dictatorship and liberal democracy. In countries such as Moldova, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Belarus, sometimes dubbed 'Europe's last dictatorship', an official acceptance of democratic legitimacy has been accompanied, albeit in different ways, by the systematic removal of checks on executive power and the erosion of the rule of law. In the case of Russia, the emergence of Putin as the government's leading force has led to a strengthening of executive control over television, the judiciary and the provinces, as well as a more ruthless approach to dealing with potential opponents. However, cracks in what has been portrayed variously as Russia's 'managed democracy' or 'electoral authoritarianism' became apparent after the parliamentary elections of December 2011, both because Putin's United Russia party saw its share of the vote drop to 49 per cent from 64 per cent four years earlier, and because of popular protests against vote rigging that were unprecedented for the Putin era.

East Asian regimes

The rise of East Asia from the final decades of the twentieth century onwards may ultimately prove to be a more important world-historical event than the

CONCEPT

Confucianism

Confucianism is a system of ethics formulated by Confucius (551–479 BCE) and his disciples that was primarily outlined in *The Analects*. Confucian thought has concerned itself with the twin themes of human relations and the cultivation of the self. The emphasis on *ren* (humanity or love) has usually been interpreted as implying support for traditional ideas and values; notably, filial piety, respect, loyalty and benevolence. The stress on *junzi* (the virtuous person) suggests a capacity for human development and potential for perfection realized, in particular, through education.

collapse of communism. Certainly, the balance of the world's economy shifted markedly from the West to the East in this period. Since the 1980s, economic growth rates on the western rim of the Pacific Basin have been between two and four times higher than those in the 'developed' economies of Europe and North America. However, the notion that there is a distinctively East Asian political form is a less familiar one. The widespread assumption has been that 'modernization' means 'westernization'. Translated into political terms, this implies that industrial capitalism is always accompanied by liberal democracy. Those who advance this position cite, for example, the success of Japan's 1946 constitution, bequeathed by the departing USA, and the introduction of multiparty elections in countries such as Thailand, South Korea and Taiwan in the 1980s and 1990s. However, this interpretation fails to take account of the degree to which polyarchical institutions operate differently in an Asian context from the way they do in a western one. Most importantly, it ignores the difference between cultures influenced by Confucian ideas and values, and those shaped by liberal individualism. This has led to the idea that there are a specific set of **Asian values** that are distinct from western ones, although this notion has attracted less attention since the Asian financial crisis of 1997/8.

East Asian regimes tend to have similar characteristics. First, they are orientated more around economic goals than around political ones. Their overriding priority is to boost growth and deliver prosperity, rather than to enlarge individual freedom in the western sense of civil liberty. This essentially practical concern is evident in the 'tiger' economies of East and South East Asia (those of South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia), but it has also been demonstrated in the construction of a thriving market economy in China since the late 1970s, despite the survival there of monopolistic communist rule. Second, there is broad support for 'strong' government. Powerful 'ruling' parties tend to be tolerated, and there is general respect for the state. Although, with low taxes and relatively low public spending (usually below 30 per cent of GDP), there is little room for the western model of the welfare state, there is nevertheless general acceptance that the state as a 'father figure' should guide the decisions of private as well as public bodies, and draw up strategies for national development. This characteristic is accompanied, third, by a general disposition to respect leaders because of the Confucian stress on loyalty, discipline and duty. From a western viewpoint, this invests East Asian regimes with an implicit, and sometimes explicit, authoritarianism. Finally, great emphasis is placed on community and social cohesion, embodied in the central role accorded to the family. The resulting emphasis on what the Japanese call 'group think' tends to restrict the scope for the assimilation of ideas such as individualism and human rights, at least as these are understood in the West.

There is also differentiation between East Asian regimes. The most significant difference is that, although China's acceptance of capitalism has blurred the distinction between it and other East Asian regimes, profound political contrasts survive. China, in political terms at least, and North Korea, in both political and economic terms, are unreconstituted communist regimes, in which a monopolistic communist party still dominates the state machine. China's 'market Stalinism' contrasts sharply with the entrenched and successful electoral democracy of, for instance, Japan. Moreover, East Asian regimes are becoming industrialized and increasingly urbanized, China, despite its dramatic economic growth,

● **Asian values**: Values that supposedly reflect the history, culture and religious backgrounds of Asian societies; examples include social harmony, respect for authority and a belief in the family.

CONCEPT

Theocracy

Theocracy (literally 'rule by God') is the principle that religious authority should prevail over political authority. A theocracy is therefore a regime in which government posts are filled on the basis of the person's position in the religious hierarchy. Theocratic rule is illiberal in two senses. First, it violates the public/private divide, in that it takes religious rules and precepts to be the guiding principles of both personal life and political conduct. Second, it invests political authority with potentially unlimited power, because, as temporal power is derived from spiritual wisdom, it cannot be based on popular consent, or be properly constrained within a constitutional framework.

sill has a significant agricultural sector. To some extent, this also explains different modes of economic development. In Japan and 'tiger' economies such as Taiwan and Singapore, growth is now based largely on technological innovation, and an emphasis on education and training, whereas China continues, in certain respects, to rely on her massive rural population to provide cheap and plentiful labour. A final range of differences stems from cultural contrasts between overwhelmingly Chinese states such as Taiwan and China, and Japan and ethnically mixed states such as Singapore and Malaysia. For example, plans to introduce Confucian principles in Singapore schools were dropped for fear of offending the Malay and Indian populations. Similarly, Malaysian development has been based on a deliberate attempt to reduce Chinese influence and emphasize the distinctively Islamic character of Malay culture.

Islamic regimes

The rise of Islam as a political force has had a profound effect on politics in North Africa, the Middle East, and parts of Asia. In some cases, militant Islamic groups have challenged existing regimes, often articulating the interests of an urban poor since the disillusionment in the 1970s with Marxism–Leninism. In other cases, however, regimes have been constructed or reconstructed on Islamic lines. Since its inception in 1932, Saudi Arabia has been an Islamic state. The Iranian revolution of 1979 led to the establishment of an Islamic republic under Ayatollah Khomeini (see p. 164), an example later followed in Pakistan, the Sudan and Afghanistan.

Islam is not, however, and never has been, simply a religion. Rather, it is a complete way of life, defining correct moral, political and economic behaviour for individuals and nations alike. The 'way of Islam' is based on the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (570–632) as revealed in the Koran, regarded by all Muslims as the revealed word of God, and the Sunna, or 'beaten path', the traditional customs observed by a devout Moslem that are said to be based on the Prophet's own life. Political Islam thus aims at the construction of a theocracy in which political and other affairs are structured according to 'higher' religious principles. Nevertheless, political Islam has assumed clearly contrasting forms, ranging from fundamentalist to pluralist extremes.

The fundamentalist version of Islam is most commonly associated with Iran. The Iranian system of government is a complex mix of theocracy and democracy. The Supreme Leader (currently Ali Khamenei) presides over a system of institutionalized clerical rule that operates through the Islamic Revolutionary Council, a body of 15 senior clerics. Although a popularly elected president and parliament have been established, all legislation is ratified by the Council for the Protection of the Constitution, which ensures conformity to Islamic principles. Shari'a law continues to be strictly enforced throughout Iran as both a legal and a moral code. The forces of revolutionary fundamentalism also asserted themselves through the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, 1997–2001, which was characterized by the imposition of strict theocratic rule and the exclusion of women from education, the economy and public life in general. Fundamentalism (see p. 53) is no less significant in Saudi Arabia, where it has similarly absolutist implications, although the temper of the essentially conservative Sunni regime in Saudi Arabia differs markedly from the revolutionary populism (see p. 307) of Shi'a Iran.

● **Shari'a**: Islamic law, believed to be based on divine revelation, and derived from the Koran, the Hadith (the teachings of Muhammad), and other sources.

POLITICS IN ACTION . . .

Turkey: between East and West?

Events: Although the republic of Turkey, founded in 1923 by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (1881–1938), was firmly rooted in secularism, Islamist political parties have been gaining strength since the 1990s. The Welfare Party briefly led a coalition government in 1996, before being broken up by the army and, in the 2002 parliamentary elections, the Justice and Development Party (AKP) won two-thirds of the seats on the basis of 34 per cent of the vote (thanks to the 10 per cent electoral threshold, which excluded all but two parties from representation). In the 2007 election, AKP increased its share of the vote to 47 per cent, which rose again in 2011, this time reaching 50 per cent. Since 2003, AKP's leader Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has been prime minister and, when Abdullah Gül was appointed president in 2007, he became the first openly devout Muslim president in the history of modern Turkey.

Significance: Turkey, a country of 79 million people, lies at the crossroads of Europe and Asia. Its geographical position is, nevertheless, also reflected in its political character, which has been shaped by a shifting combination of polyarchic, military and Islamic features. In line with 'Kemalism' (after Kemal Atatürk), modern Turkey is a constitutional republic committed to the rule of law, popular sovereignty, and a strict separation of politics and religion. In this context, the rise of political Islam during the 1990s and, especially, the rule of the AKP since 2002 have raised major questions about the country's future political direction. Its critics warn that the AKP plans to overturn the secular nature of the Turkish state, possibly establishing an Iranian-style Islamic republic. The ban on the wearing of the Islamic headscarf in Turkish universities (only enforced since the 1980s) was lifted in 2010, and restrictions on the sale of alcohol have been imposed in some parts of Turkey. Turkey has also increasingly looked to build ties with the Arab world and has become increasingly critical of Israel (particularly after Israeli soldiers raided a Turkish-led aid flotilla heading for Gaza in May 2010, causing the deaths of nine Turkish civilians). However, supporters of the AKP argue that it practises a constitutional form of Islamism very different from that found in Iran, in which moderate conservative politics based on Islamic values are balanced against an acceptance of Turkey's secular democratic framework. Rather than choosing between East and West, the AKP thus tries to establish a Turkish identity that is confident in being part of both. A key aspect of this compromise has been the quest, under the AKP, for membership of the EU, and, related to this, a willingness to introduce reforms in areas such as women's rights, and Kurdish language and cultural rights.

These developments have, nevertheless, had major implications for military-civilian relations in Turkey. The army played a crucial role in the establishment of the Turkish republic, coming to be the custodian of 'Kemalism' and establishing strong links to the bureaucracy, the judiciary and the media. Four times between 1960 and 1997, Turkey's generals have staged military *coups*, the last of which forced from office the country's first Islamist prime minister. While some see the 1 million strong army as the greatest obstacle to Turkey's onward march towards democracy and EU membership, others view it as the vital guarantee of secular and open politics, an obstacle preventing the AKP's moderate Islamism from becoming revolutionary Islamism. Although relations between the AKP government and Turkey's generals remain frayed, a gradual shift in power from the military to civilians, with, for instance, the military becoming more accountable to civilian courts, creates the possibility that the Turkish army may, in future, remain in barracks and out of politics.

CONCEPT

Dictatorship

A dictatorship is, strictly, a form of rule in which absolute power is vested in one individual; in this sense, dictatorship is synonymous with autocracy. Dictators are thus seen as being above the law and as acting beyond constitutional constraints. Early examples of dictators were Sulla, Julius Caesar and Augustus Caesar in Rome, more recent ones are Hitler, Mussolini and Saddam Hussein. More generally, dictatorship is characterized by the arbitrary and unchecked exercise of power, as in 'class dictatorship', 'party dictatorship', 'military dictatorship' and 'personal dictatorship'.

Muslims themselves, however, have often objected to the classification of any Islamic regime as 'fundamentalist', on the grounds that this perpetuates long-established western prejudices against an 'exotic' or 'repressive' East, serving as examples of 'orientalism' (Said, 1978). Evidence that Islam is compatible with a form of political pluralism can be found in Malaysia. Although Islam is the official state religion of Malaysia, with the Paramount Ruler serving as both religious leader and head of state, a form of 'guided' democracy operates as the dominance of the United Malays National Organization (UMNO), operating as a broad coalition, the Barisan Nasional, and within a multiparty framework. The UMNO has, since 1981, pursued a narrowly Islamic and pro-Malay strategy fused with an explicitly Japanese model of economic development. Authoritarian tendencies have, nevertheless, re-emerged since 1988, when the independence of the judiciary effectively collapsed following a wave of political arrests and the imposition of press censorship. Turkey also offers an interesting example of the relationship between Islam and democracy (see p. 280), as does the Arab Spring and developments in countries such as Egypt, Tunisia and Libya.

Military regimes

Whereas most regimes are shaped by a combination of political, economic, cultural and ideological factors, some survive through the exercise, above all, of military power and systematic repression. In this sense, military regimes belong to a broader category of dictatorship. Military dictatorship has been most common in Latin America, the Middle East, Africa and Southeast Asia, but it also emerged in the post-1945 period in Spain, Portugal and Greece. The key feature of a military regime is that the leading posts in the government are filled on the basis of the person's position within the military chain of command. Normal political and constitutional arrangements are usually suspended, and institutions through which opposition can be expressed, such as elected assemblies and a free press, are either weakened or abolished.

Although all forms of military rule are deeply repressive, this classification encompasses a number of regime types. In some military regimes, the armed forces assume direct control of government. The classical form of this is the military junta, most commonly found in Latin America. This operates as a form of collective military government centred on a command council of officers who usually represent the three armed services: the army, navy and air force. ***Junta*** regimes are often characterized by rivalry between the services and between leading figures, the consequence being that formal positions of power tend to change hands relatively frequently.

The second form of military regime is a military-backed personalized dictatorship. In these cases, a single individual gains pre-eminence within the *junta* or regime, often being bolstered by a cult of personality (see p. 302) designed to manufacture charismatic authority. Examples are Colonel Papadopoulos in Greece in 1974–80, General Pinochet in Chile after the 1973 military *coup*, and General Abacha in Nigeria, 1993–98. In the final form of military regime, the loyalty of the armed forces is the decisive factor that upholds the regime, but the military leaders content themselves with 'pulling the strings' behind the scenes. This, for example, occurred in post-1945 Brazil, as the armed forces generally recognized that the legitimacy of the regime would be strengthened by the

● ***Junta***: (Spanish) Literally, 'a council'; a (usually military) clique that seizes power through a revolution or *coup d'état*.

maintenance of a distinction between political and military offices and personnel. Such a distinction, however, may fuel an appetite for constitutional and representative politics, and reduce the scope for direct military intervention, thereby, over time, encouraging polyarchical tendencies. However, in what circumstances does the military seize power? Military *coups* appear to be associated with four key sets of circumstances. In the first place, there is a clear link between the incidence of military *coups* and economic underdevelopment. The vast majority of countries that have experienced military government are in the developing world. By the same token, growing prosperity appears to be an antidote to military intervention, as demonstrated by the tendency in Latin America, since the 1970s, for the military to return to the barracks. Second, the military is likely to intervene in politics only when it senses that the legitimacy of the existing institutions and the ruling elite is challenged, and when it calculates that its intervention is going to be successful. The armed forces thus rarely interfere directly in politics when a stable democratic culture has been successfully established. Third, military intervention is associated with the degree to which the values, goals and interests of the armed forces differ from those of the broader regime. In many newly-independent developing states, the military thus took over to 'save the nation', seeing itself as a 'westernizing' or 'modernizing' force confronting a traditionalist, rural, hierarchical and frequently divided political elite. This, for instance, occurred in Nigeria, Indonesia and Pakistan. Finally, the military's decision to seize power may also be affected by international considerations. In some cases, international pressures undoubtedly encourage military action. This was clearly the case with the Pinochet *coup* in Chile. Not only did Pinochet receive covert advice and encouragement from the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), but he was also guaranteed US diplomatic support once his new military regime was established.

SUMMARY

- Government is any mechanism through which ordered rule is maintained, its central feature being its ability to make collective decisions and enforce them. A political system, or regime, however, encompasses not only the mechanisms of government and institutions of the state, but also the structures and processes through which these interact with the larger society.
- The classification of political systems serves two purposes. First, it aids understanding by making comparison possible, and helping to highlight similarities and differences between otherwise shapeless collections of facts. Second, it helps us to evaluate the effectiveness or success of different political systems.
- Regimes have been classified on a variety of bases. 'Classical' typologies, stemming from Aristotle, concentrated on constitutional arrangements and institutional structures, while the 'three worlds' approach highlighted material and ideological differences between the systems found in 'first world' capitalist, 'second world' communist and 'third world' developing states.
- The collapse of communism and advance of democratization have made it much more difficult to identify the political contours of the modern world, making conventional systems of classification redundant. It is, nevertheless, still possible to distinguish between regimes on the basis of how their political, economic and cultural characteristics interlock in practice, even though all systems of classification are provisional.
- 'End of history' theorists have proclaimed that history has ended, or is destined to end, with the worldwide triumph of western liberal democracy. Indeed, the most common form of regime in the modern world is now some form of democracy. However, there is evidence that regime types have become both more complex and more diverse. Significant differences can be identified among western polyarchies, new democracies, East Asian regimes, Islamic regimes and military regimes.
- Those who view democratization as an irresistable process usually argue that, once instigated, democratic reform gains an internal momentum, deriving from the ways in which the holding of competitive elections alter public expectations about the political process. Others, however, point out that many transition countries have been left, perhaps permanently in a 'grey area' between democracy and authoritarianism.

Questions for discussion

- Does Aristotle's system of political classification have any relevance to the modern world?
- Is there any longer such a thing as the 'third world'?
- To what extent have postcommunist regimes discarded their communist past?
- Why have liberal-democratic structures proved to be so effective and successful?
- Have some new democracies got stuck in a 'grey zone' between dictatorship and liberal democracy?
- How democratic are western polyarchies?
- Do Confucianism and Islamism constitute viable alternatives to western liberalism as a basis for a modern regime?
- Are military regimes doomed to be short-lived?

Further reading

Brooker, P., *Non-Democratic Regimes; Theory, Government and Politics* (2009). A useful and wide-ranging survey of the different forms of non-democratic regime.

Carothers, T., *Critical Mission: Essays on Democracy Promotion* (2004). A stimulating collection of essays that reflect on strategies for aiding democracy and the nature of the democratic process.

Hague, R. and M. Harrop, *Comparative Government and Politics: An Introduction* (2013). A succinct and stimulating introduction to comparative politics that adopts a genuinely international approach.

Lijphart, A., *Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries* (1999). An updated version of a classic and highly influential attempt to distinguish between forms of democratic rule.