

Issues in Comparative Politics

AP Comparative
Government and Politics

What Is Comparative Politics?

It is a **subject of study**--comparing the nature of politics and the political process across different political systems.

It is a **method of study**--how and why we make such comparisons.

It evolved as a method of comparing **political systems** after World War II in the Cold War Bi-polar era of international affairs.

Political decisions are **social, public, and authoritative**. They take place within a **political system**.

The “**public sphere**” deals with collective decisions that extend beyond the individual and typically involve government action.

The “**private sphere**” deals with actions that do not bind anyone outside a group (e.g., family, friends).

Boundaries exist between the two and these boundaries can change.

Authority

Formal power rests with individuals or groups whose decisions are expected to be carried out and respected. **Politics** is **authoritative**.

Politics refers to activities associated with the **control** of public decisions among a given people and within a given territory. **Decisions** are **binding** on the political system.

Politics involves the **crafting** of these decisions, who makes the decisions and how they are made and who and what groups participate.

Governments and the State of Nature

Governments

Organizations of individuals and institutions who have the power to make binding decisions on behalf of a particular community.

They have authoritative and coercive powers.

State of nature:

Condition of humankind if no government existed.

Contrast of **Hobbes** (pessimist) and **Rousseau** (optimist). **Locke**: somewhere in the middle

No **leviathan**; rather limited government.

Why Governments?

- **Community** and **nation** building
 - Help create a national political culture
- **Security, law and order**
- **Protects property and other rights**
- **Promotes economic efficiency and growth**
 - Public goods
 - Externalities
- **Social justice**
- **Protects the weak**



When is Government the Problem?

Government: solution or problem?

This tension is part of the political discourse in many contemporary nations.

Government becomes a problem when:

- It causes destruction of community.
- Violates the basic rights
- Is economically inefficient
- It governs for private gain
- Has vested interests and inertia



Political Systems and States

Political system

- Physical and social systems have two properties:
 - They have a set of interdependent parts.
 - They have boundaries towards the environment with which they interacts.
- Examples: ecosystems, linguistic or religious regions, social systems such as a family, clans.
- **Political systems** are a particular type of social system - makes authoritative public decisions
 - Elements within it are institutions of government, political organizations

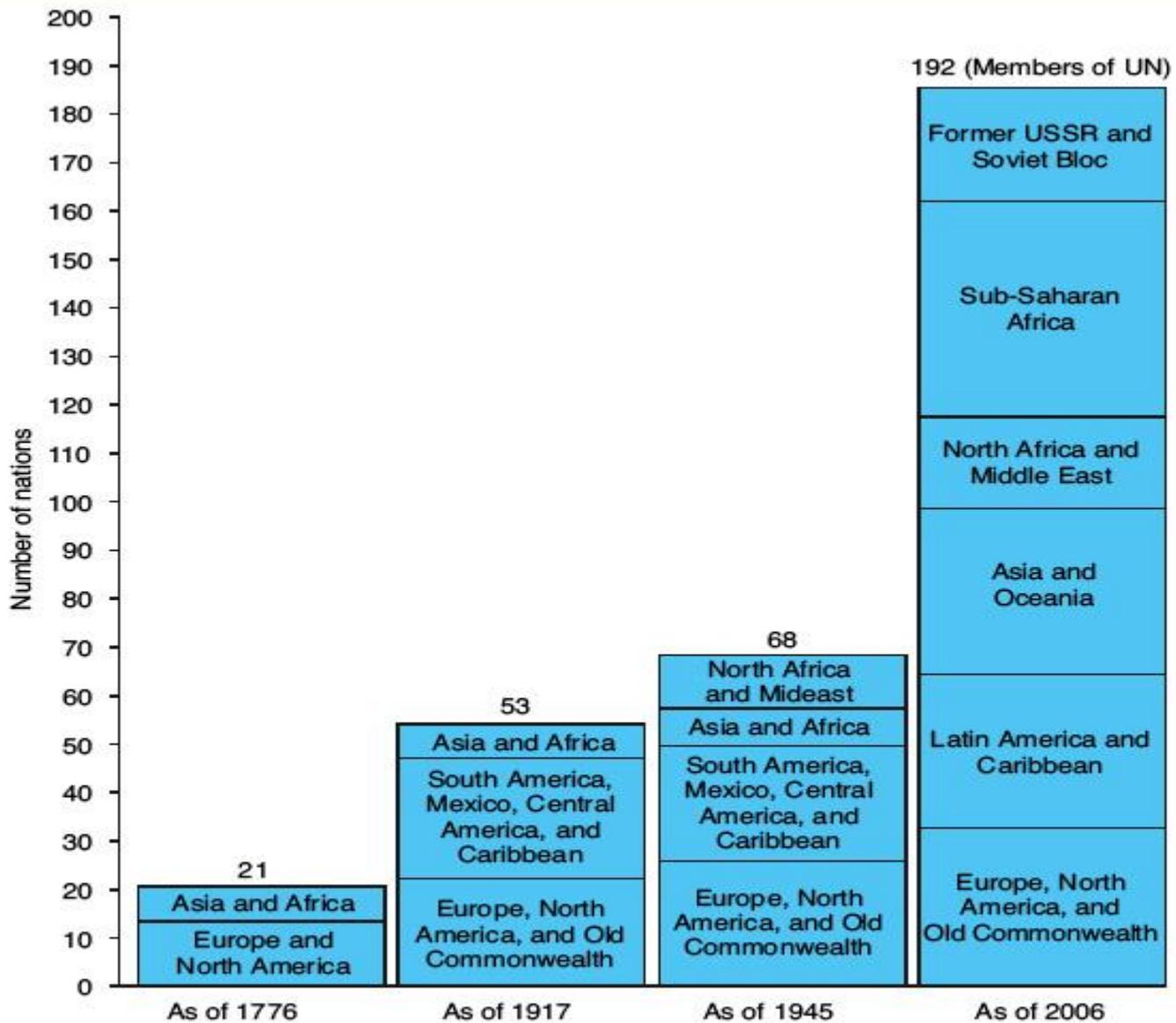
■ **States**

- A particular type of political system
- Has sovereignty: an independent legal authority over a population in particular territory, based on the recognized right to self-determination
- Molded by a domestic and international environment
- Constraints on external and internal sovereignty

■ **Nation-states**

- European Union
- United Nations





Formation of States Since 1776

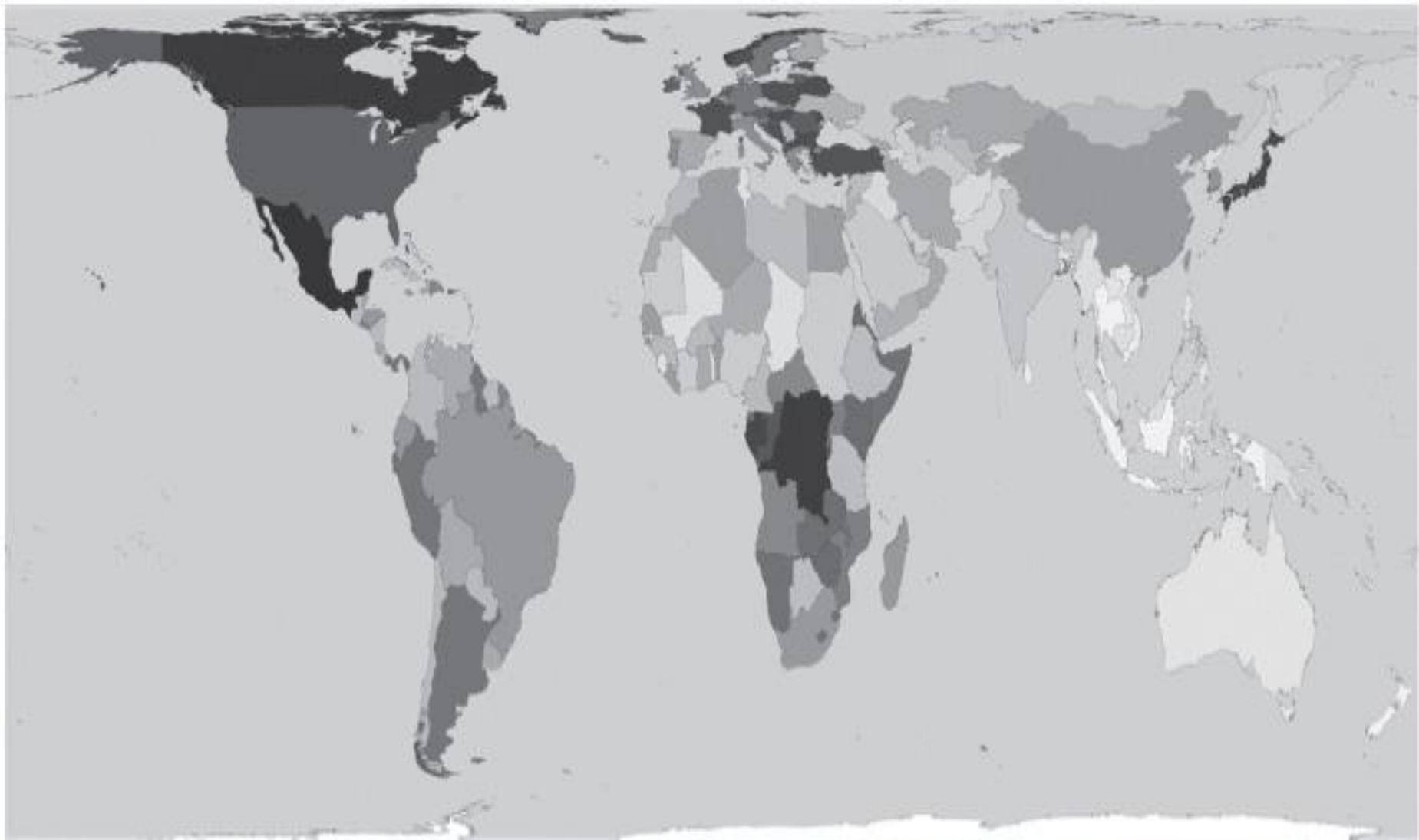
FIGURE 1.1

Source: For Contemporary Members, Information Office, United Nations. Data to 1945 From Charles Taylor and Michael Hudson, *World Handbook of Political and Social Indicators* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1972), 26 ff.

The Diversity of States

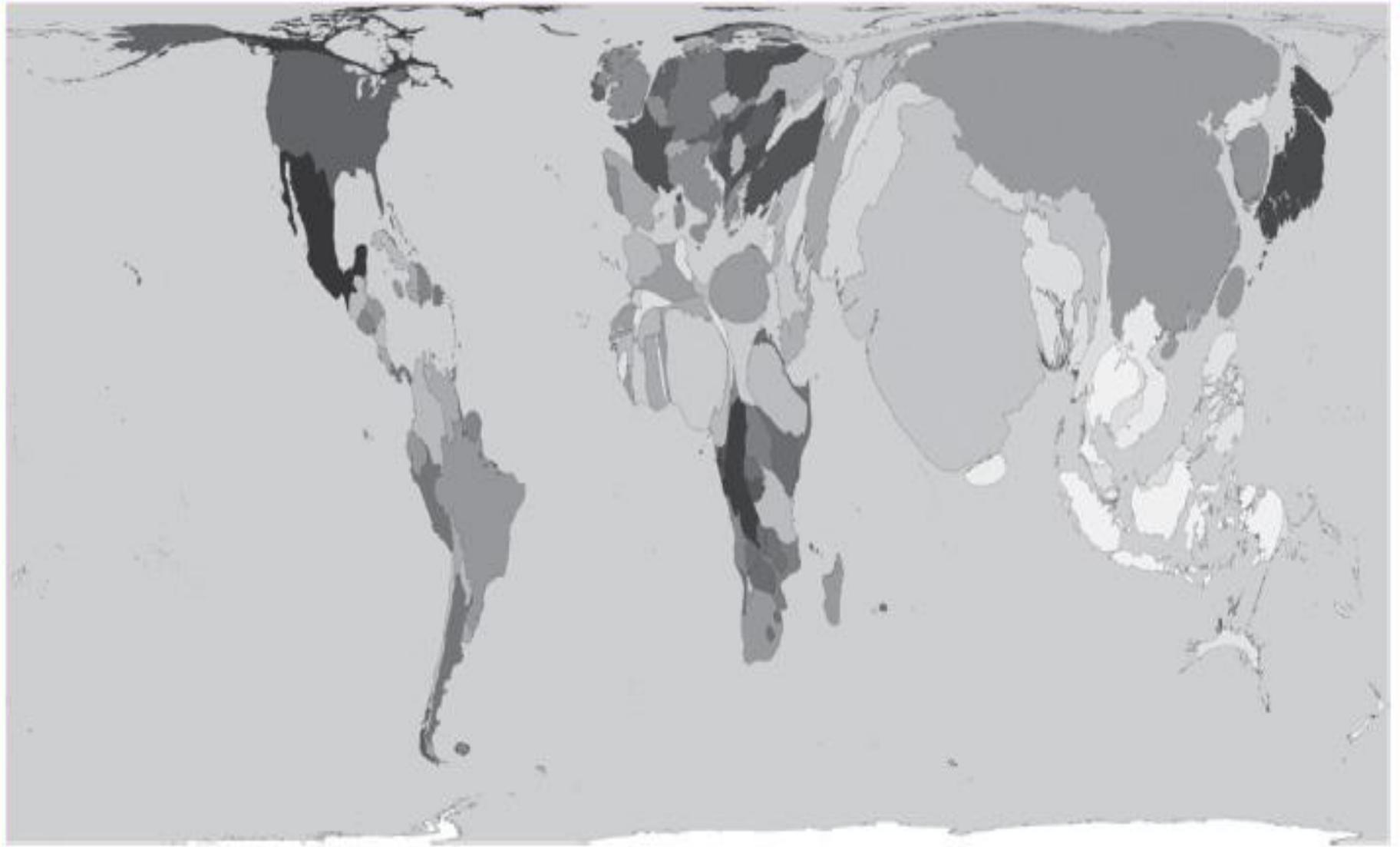
- Since WWII 125 new countries have joined the 68 states that existed in 1945.
 - Largest group of new states is in Sub-Saharan Africa
 - More than 20 new countries formed in the 1990's
 - Mostly the successor states of the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia
- These states share many characteristics, but they also vary in many ways that shape their politics.

- Big and small states
 - **Vatican City** - smallest legally independent entity in geographic size and population
 - Russia - largest landmass
 - China and India - largest populations
- Political implications of geographic and population size?
 - Big countries not always most important
 - Small ones can be: **Cuba, Israel, Vatican City**
- Area and population do not determine a country's political system.
- Geographic location can have strategic implications.



Map of the World Based on Geographic Size

MAP 1.1



Map of the World Based on Population Size

MAP 1.2

All face common challenges:

- Building community
- Fostering economic and social development
- Advancing democracy and civil liberties



Building Community

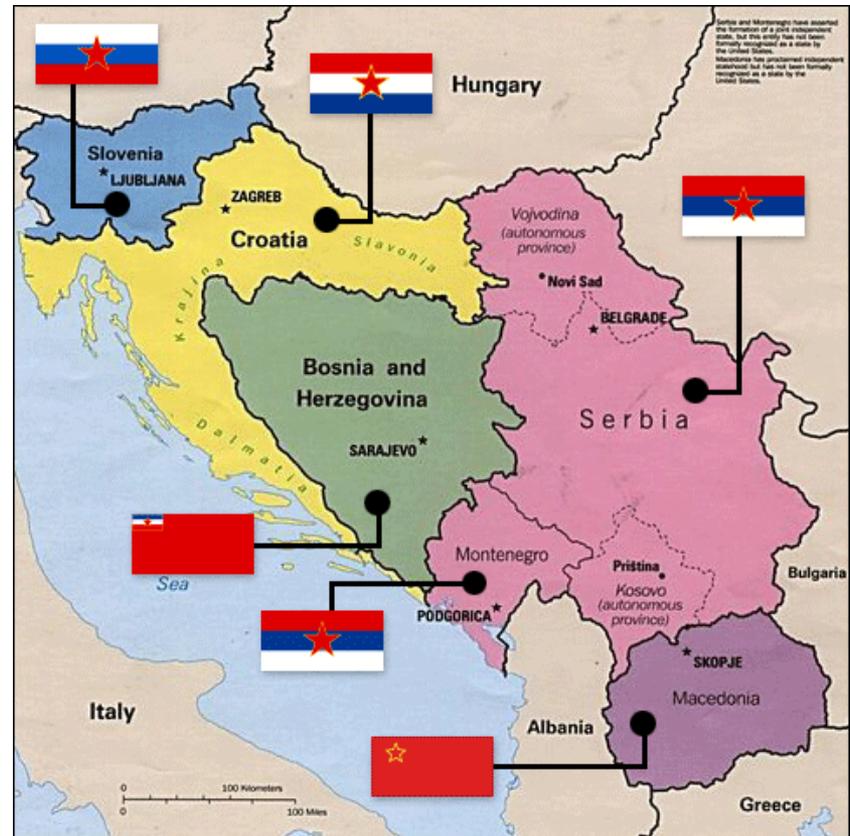
- Absence of **common identity** can have severe political consequences.
 - Conflict over national, ethnic, or religious identities can cause political turmoil.
- Easier for some nations; not for others
 - **Japan**: ethnically homogenous, common language and a long national political history.
 - **Nigeria**: accidental and artificial creation of British colonial rule and has no common pre-colonial history; sharply divided on religion; 250 different ethnic groups.

States and Nations

- Word “**nation**” is sometimes used to mean almost the same as state.
- Strictly speaking, **nation** refers to a **group of people with a common identity**.
- Cases in which national identification and the scope of legal authority largely coincide are called **nation-states**.

Often, the correspondence between a nation and a state is not so neat.

Multinational states: consist of a multitude of different nations;
Example: The Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia were multinational states that have now broken apart.



Nationality and Ethnicity

- There is a fine line between **nations** and **ethnic groups**.
- **Ethnicity** need not have any objective basis in genetics, culture, or history.
- Ethnic differences can be a source of political conflict.
 - Former Soviet Union
 - Former Yugoslavia

In many developing countries, boundaries cut across ethnic lines.

Former colonies:

Britain withdrew from India and divided the subcontinent into a northern Muslim area - Pakistan - and a southern Hindu area - India.

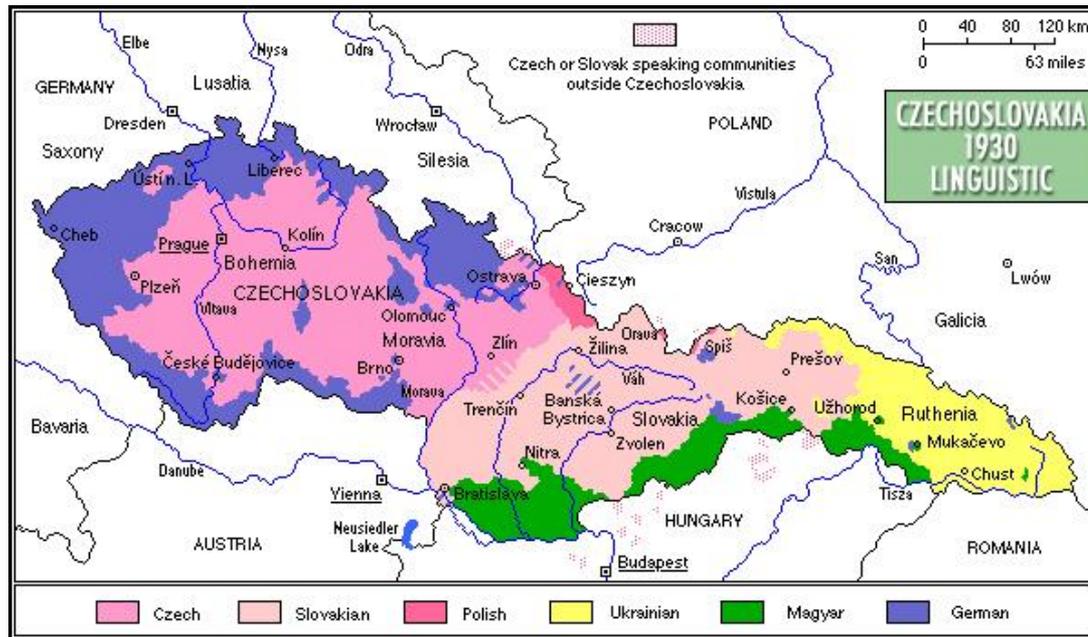
Nigeria, Rwanda became independent nations.

Consequences:

Continuous stress in the Pakistani-Indian border; terrible civil conflict and “ethno-religious” cleansing lie in Nigeria and Rwanda.

Traits related to political significant “ethnicity”:

- a. Physical differences:
language, norms against intermarriage, religion, and negative historical memories.



- b. Multiethnic countries

Examples of Ethnicity: Its Bases and Their Salience*

TABLE 1.1

	Physical Differences	Language	Norms Against Intermarriage	Religion	Negative Historical Memories
Brazil: Blacks	XX	O	XX	X	X
Britain: South Asians	X	O	X	XX	X
China: Tibetans	X	XX	XX	XX	XX
France: Algerians	X	X	XX	XX	XX
Germany: Turks	X	XX	XX	XX	O
India: Muslims	O	X	XX	XX	XX
Iran: Kurds	X	XX	XX	XX	XX
Japan: Buraku-min	O	O	XX	O	XX
Mexico: Mayan	X	X	XX	X	XX
Nigeria: Ibo	O	X	XX	XX	XX
Russia: Chechens	X	XX	XX	XX	XX
United States:					
African-Americans	XX	X	XX	O	XX
Hispanics:	X	X	X	O	X

*Salience is estimated at the following levels: O = none or almost none; X = some; XX = much importance in affecting differences.

Language

Language and social division

- 5,000 different languages in use in the world today
- Only 200 languages have a million or more speakers
- Only 8 classified as world languages
- **English** is the most truly international language.
 - 380 million people speak English at home
 - 1.8 billion live in countries where English is one of the official languages
- Other international languages: **Spanish; Arabic; Russian; Portuguese; French; and German**

Political systems cannot avoid committing themselves to one or several languages.

Conflicts over educational policies or language use in government:

Quebec



Religious Differences and Fundamentalism

States vary in their religious characteristics.

- Religion may be a basis of national identity for a majority of the population: Israel, the Irish Republic, and Pakistan
- Iran is a **theocratic** regime.
 - Religious authorities govern.
 - Religious law is part of the country's legal code.
- Religion can be a rallying point for political movements.
 - Poland

Christianity is the largest and most widely spread religion.

- Roman Catholics, Protestants, and Orthodox

Muslims are the second largest religion group and the most rapidly growing.

Can be a source of intense antagonism

- Religious fundamentalism

TABLE 1.2

Adherents of All Religions by Six Continents (Mid-2004, in Millions)

Religion	Africa	Asia	Europe	Latin America	North America	Oceania	Total	Percentage
Christians	401.7	341.3	553.6	510.1	273.9	26.1	2,106.2	33.0
Muslims	350.4	892.4	33.2	1.7	5.1	.4	1,283.4	20.1
Nonreligious and Atheists	6.4	724.2	130.6	18.6	33.1	4.2	917.7	14.4
Hindus	2.6	844.5	1.4	.8	1.4	.4	851.2	13.3
Buddhists	.1	369.3	1.6	.7	3.0	.4	375.4	5.9
Jews	.2	5.3	1.9	1.2	6.1	.1	14.9	.2
Other	107.7	693.5	3.2	17.6	6.3	1.0	828.8	13.1
Total	869.1	3,870.5	725.5	550.7	328.9	32.6	6,377.6	100%

Source: Adherents as defined in *Encyclopedia Britannica* 2006.

Fostering Economic Development

Two major forces transforming political systems and nations:

- Process of economic development
- Political democratization

A political system cannot satisfy its citizens if it does not foster these social and economic development.

Living standards

-Globalization, democratization, and marketization

-**HDI**- Human Development Index

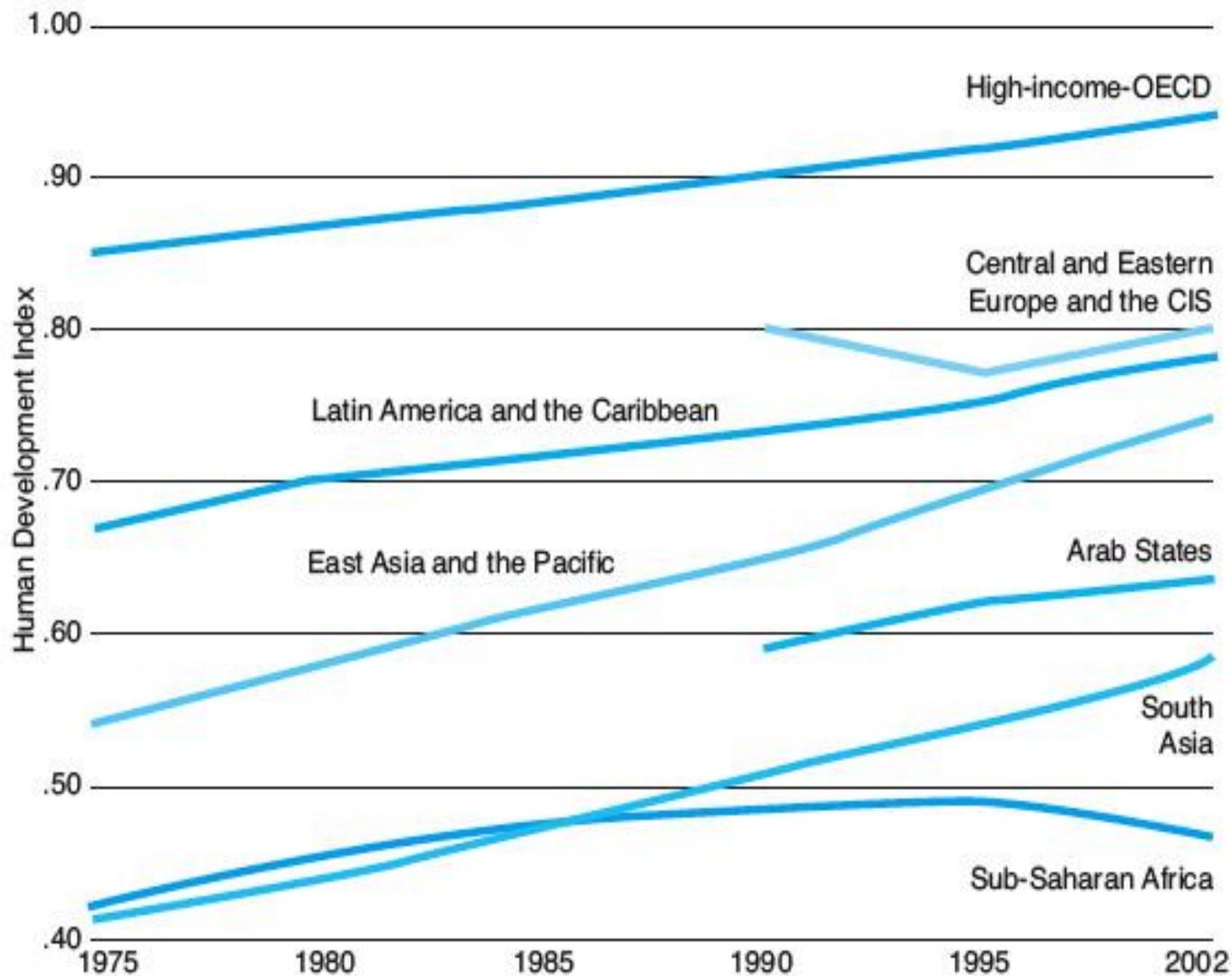
Structure of the labor force:

- Agriculture
- Urbanization

Wide gap in living standards still exists across nations of the world.

Productivity requires resources to develop a skilled and healthy labor force and an infrastructure that supports material welfare.





Changes in Human Development Index by Region

FIGURE 1.2

Problems of Economic Development

The unequal distribution of resources and opportunities are among the most serious causes of political conflict.

- Large **GNP** may conceal significant differences in distribution of these resources.
- Country's politics affected by internal divisions of income, wealth, etc.
 - Some countries work to limit these divisions:
India
 - Economic inequality in America is as great as several poor nations, such as **China** and **Egypt**.

First stages of industrialization may actually increase income inequality even though economic development may narrow the differences eventually, but that is not guaranteed.



Human Development Indicators

TABLE 1.3

Nation	Life Expectancy	Percent Enrolled in School	GNP/capita (ppp)	2003 HDI	1975 HDI	2003 World Rank
United States	77.4	93	37,562	.944	.867	10
Japan	82.0	84	27,967	.943	.857	11
United Kingdom	78.4	—	27,147	.939	.845	15
France	79.5	92	27,677	.938	.853	16
Germany	78.7	89	27,756	.930	—	20
Mexico	75.1	75	9,168	.814	.689	53
Russia	65.3	90	9,230	.795	—	62
Brazil	70.5	91	7,790	.792	.645	63
China	71.6	69	5,003	.755	.525	85
Iran	70.4	69	6,995	.736	.566	99
India	63.3	60	2,892	.602	.412	127
Nigeria	43.4	64	1,050	.453	.318	158

Source: United Nations Development Program, *World Development Report 2005* (New York: United Nations, 2005) (www.undp.org).

Another correlate of development is **population growth**.

- Population growth occurs when positive things, like health care improvement, increased living standards, occur.
- Rapid population growth, however, can pose policy challenges for many developing nations.
- Fertility rates
- Coercive policies: China

Economic growth can also create environmental costs.

- Despoiled forests, depleted soils and fisheries, polluted air and water, nuclear waste, endangered species, and ozone questions.
- Shortages of clean water, air, and adequate sanitation.

Income Distribution for Selected Nations

TABLE 1.4

Country	Year	Wealthiest 10%	Poorest 40%	Wealthy/Poor Gap
Germany	2000	22.1	22.2	-0.1
Russia	2002	23.8	20.9	2.9
Japan	1993	21.7	24.8	3.1
France	1995	25.1	19.8	5.3
India	1999	28.5	21.2	7.3
Britain	1999	28.5	17.5	11.0
United States	2000	29.9	16.2	13.7
Iran	1998	33.7	19.5	14.2
China	2001	33.1	13.7	19.4
Nigeria	1996	35.4	12.6	22.8
Mexico	2000	43.1	10.3	32.8
Brazil	2001	46.9	8.3	38.6

Source: World Bank, *World Development Indicators 2005*, table 2-7 (www.worldbank.org); distribution of income or consumption.

TABLE 1.5

Population by Economic Development Level in 1990 and Projected to 2015 (in Millions)

Economic Development Level	<i>In 1990</i>		<i>Projected to 2015</i>	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Low-income economies	1,777	33.9	2,794	39.4
Middle-income economies	2,588	49.3	3,299	46.5
High-income economies	887	16.8	1,007	14.1
Total	5,252	100	7,100	100

Source: World Bank, *World Development Report Indicators 2005*, table 2-1 (www.worldbank.org) population dynamics.

Fostering Democracy, Human Rights, and Civil Liberties

Democratization is the second major force transforming contemporary political systems.

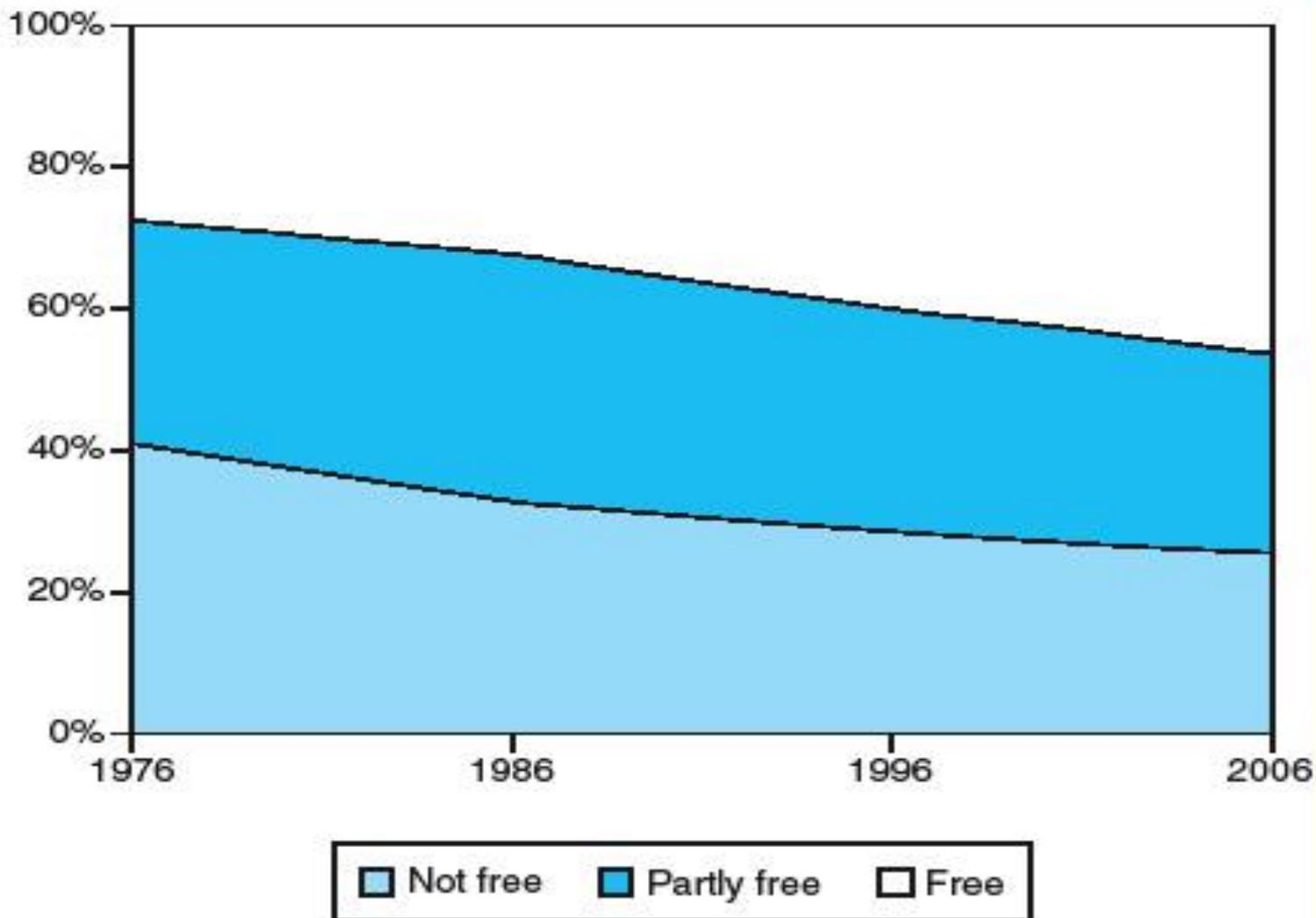
- Includes the enhancement of human rights and the expansion of freedom.

Democracy: a political system in which citizens enjoy a number of basic civil and political rights, and in which their most important political leaders are elected in free and fair elections and are accountable under the law.

It is the most important general distinction in classifying political systems:

- Democratic systems defies **Authoritarian systems:** lack one or several of the defining features of democracy.
 - Oligarchy
 - Totalitarian
- **Waves of democratization**
 - **First:** during the first half of the 20th century: Western states.
 - **Second:** 1943 to 1960s: newly independent states and defeated authoritarian powers.
 - **Third:** 1974 involving Southern Europe, East Asia, Latin America, and a number of African states.

Result: democracy more of a common goal of the global community.



Growth in Free Governments over Time

FIGURE 1.3

Source: Freedom House, *Freedom in the World 2006* (www.freedomhouse.org).

Looking Forward

In most of the world, the average child born today can look forward to a longer, better and freer life than his or her parents - particularly if that child is a girl.

Still, problems remain and some result from progress that is made.

- Environmental quality, changing lifestyles, challenges of globalization and multiculturalism
- How do we face those challenges?

