



# AP Comparative Government and Politics

*“Without comparisons to make, the mind does not know how to proceed.”*

– Alex de Tocqueville

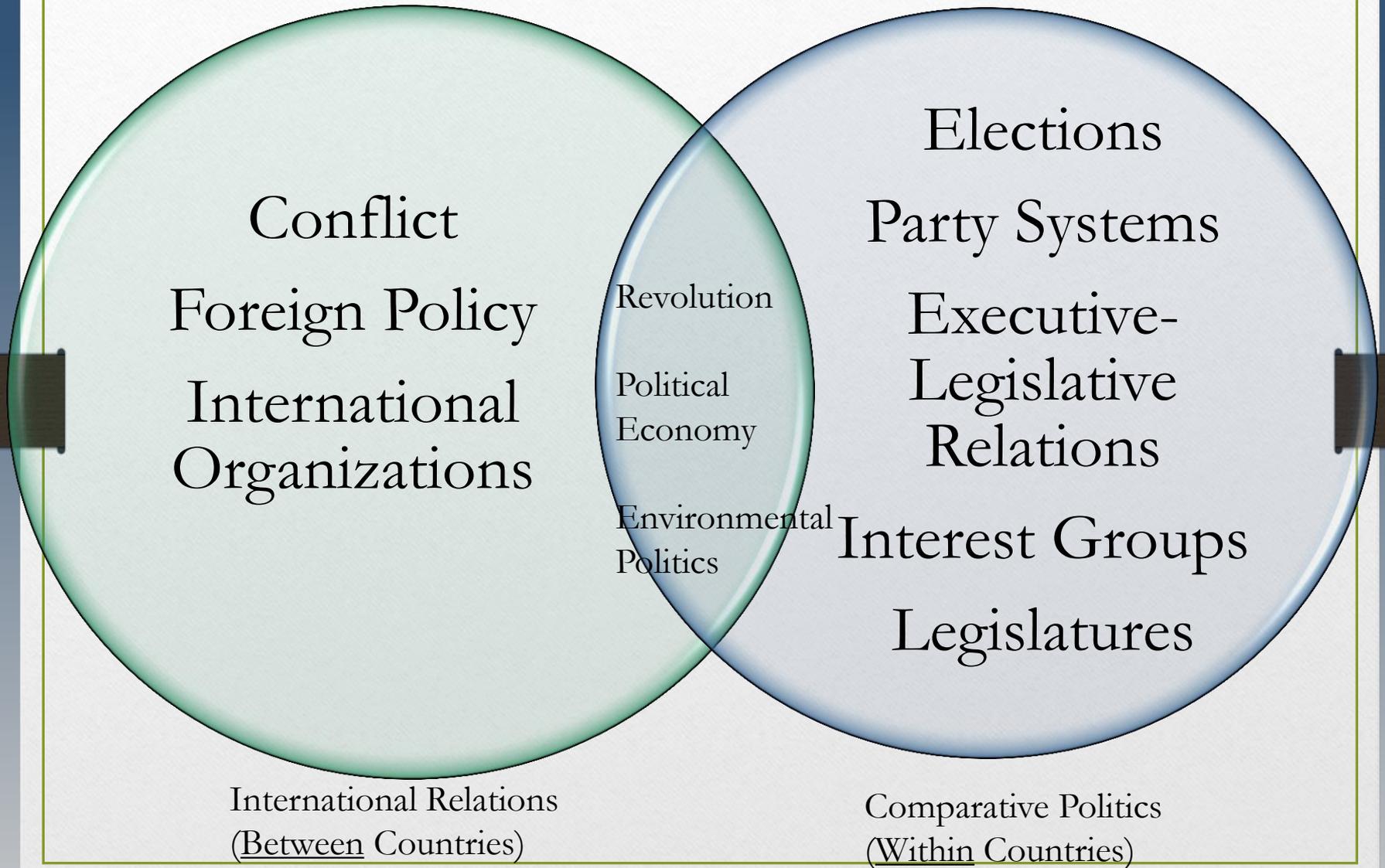
*“A man who has tasted only his mother’s soup has no basis to claim that hers is the best.”* –

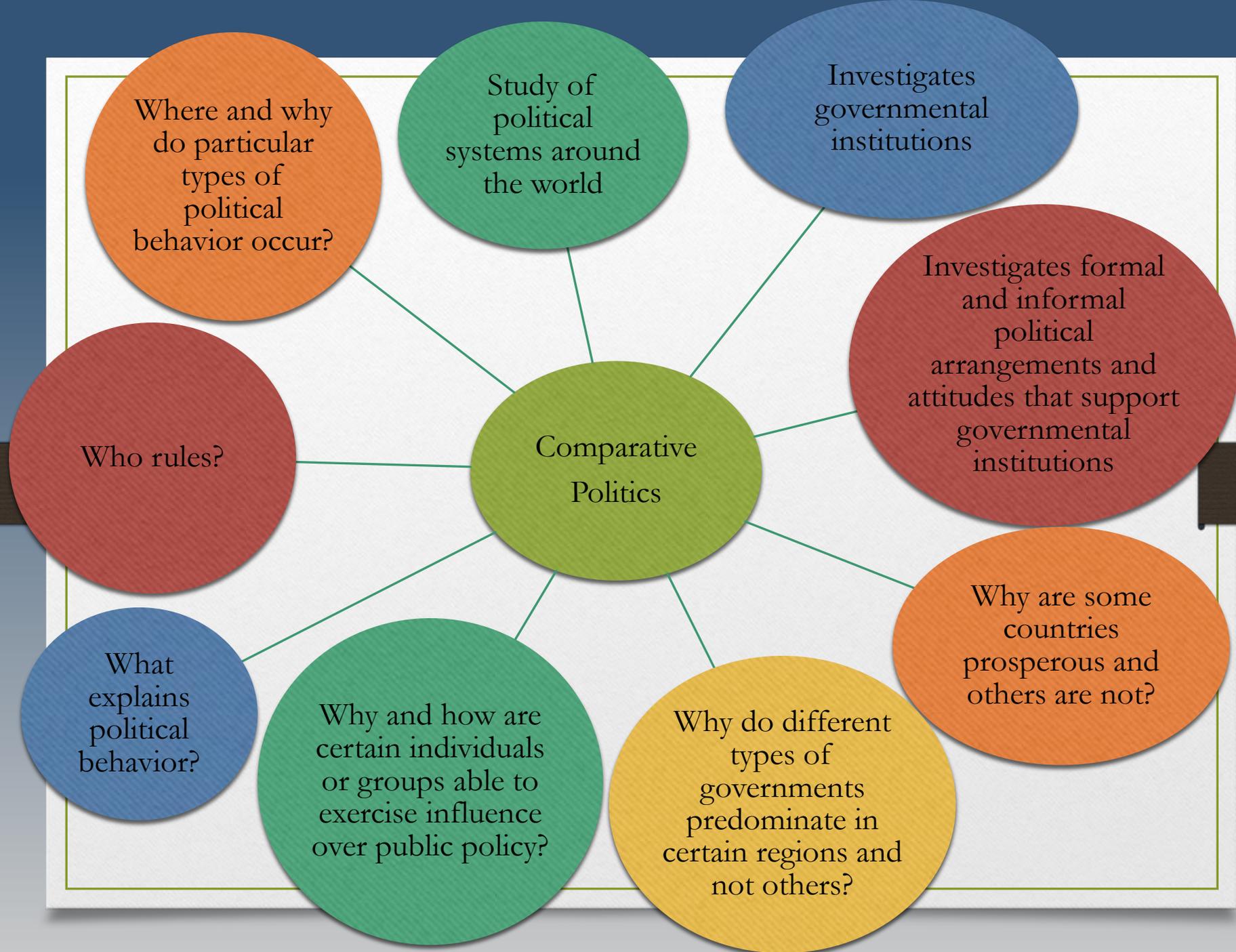
African Proverb

# What is Comparative Government & Politics?

- ▶ **Government** = leadership & institutions that make policy
- ▶ **Politics** = power to make decisions
  - Formal & informal
  - How is power gained & maintained?
- ▶ **Comparative Politics Definition:**
  - Field within political science that focuses on domestic politics (internal) and analyzes patterns of similarity and difference.

# International Relations vs Comparative Politics





# What Are We Comparing?

Concepts

Countries and their institutions, policies, and events

The AP Nine:

- ▶ UK (or Britain)
- ▶ European Union
- ▶ Germany
- ▶ Russia
- ▶ China
- ▶ Mexico
- ▶ Brazil
- ▶ Nigeria
- ▶ India

Plus the Asian Tigers!



# Why Compare?

- ▶ Similarities
- ▶ Differences
- ▶ Understand why nations react the same/differently to the same/similar events
- ▶ Put concepts, situations in context
- ▶ Evaluate
- ▶ Develop generalizations
- ▶ Test theories



# The Comparative Method

## Ways to Compare

- ▶ Empirical Data – facts, numbers, statistics
- ▶ Normative Issues – based on value judgments

## Empirical

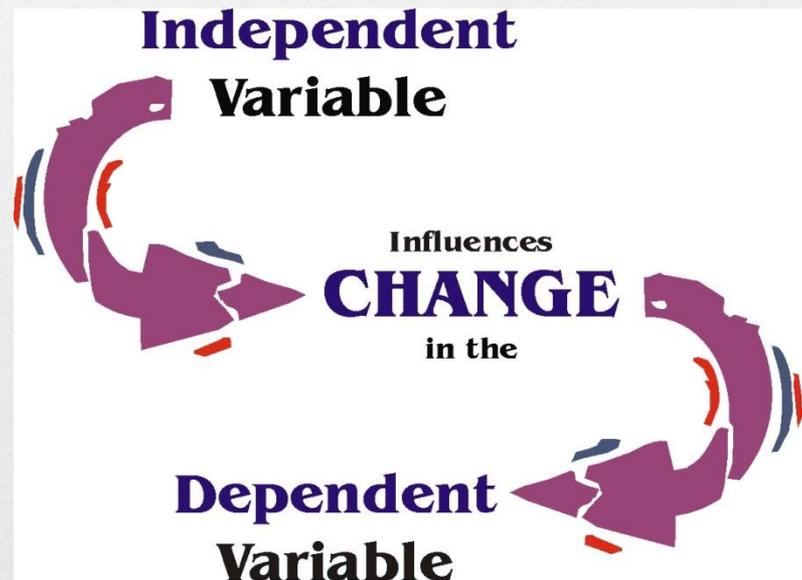
- ▶ Economic development of countries, including GNP, per capita income, imports/exports, etc

## Normative

- ▶ Whether or not statistics bode well for country

## ► Use of the Scientific Method

- Hypothesis
- Independent variable vs. Dependent Variable
- Correlation vs. Causation



- ▶ Example: **Why are poverty rates higher in one country than in others?**
- ▶ Hypothesis: **Poverty level might be caused by low levels of formal education.**
  - ▶ Independent variable?      Level of education
  - ▶ Dependent variable?      Poverty level
  - ▶ Positive or inverse correlation?

**As levels of education increase, poverty levels decline.**

# Sample Multiple Choice Question

- ▶ Which of the following is an example of an inverse (negative) correlation?
  - A. The amount of violence present in world politics is greatest when there are four states of relatively equal power.
  - B. The frequency with which people vote is unrelated to religion.
  - C. The higher the level of education in a state, the greater the likelihood of people voting.
  - D. The lower a state's gross domestic product, the less it spends on education.
  - E. The greater a state's socioeconomic development, the less likely it is that there will be internal political violence.

# Comparative Approaches

▶ Various terms are used to compare countries

▶ Old Approach: **Three Worlds**

1. **United States and its allies**

2. **Soviet Union and its allies**

(Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, Russia maintains many relationships)

3. **Third world nations**

Economically deprived and underdeveloped

▶ Newer Approaches

1. **Democracy vs. authoritarianism** (political)
2. **Communism vs. capitalism** (economic)

▶ New approaches must also take into account:

1. Role of informal politics
2. Importance of political change
3. Integration of political and economic systems

# Comparative Approaches

- ▶ Our Approach: Countries fall into one of 3 groups:
  - ▶ **“Advanced” democracies** (*also consolidated democracies/Industrialized democracies*)
    - ▶ UK and U.S.
  - ▶ **Current and post-communist countries** (*also authoritarian*)
    - ▶ China and Russia
  - ▶ **Newly Industrializing (NICs) & Less Developed (LDCs)** (*also transitional democracies*)
    - ▶ Newly industrializing – Mexico and Brazil
    - ▶ Less developed - Nigeria

# Possible FRQ's for your test

1. What is the study of comparative politics and how does it differ from the study of international relations?
2. Explain the difference between an independent and dependent variable.
3. Describe some ways political scientists typically classify countries.
4. Describe why institutions are important when studying comparative politics.