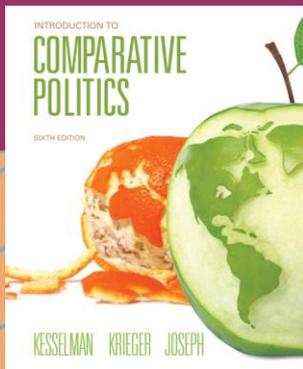


Introducing Comparative Government and Politics



Adapted and simplified from Kesselman, Krieger and Joseph,
Cengage Learning, 2014.

THE GLOBAL CHALLENGE OF COMPARATIVE POLITICS

Introduction

Over the last twenty years, we have experienced the following **critical junctures**:

1989: The Fall of the Berlin Wall

End of **Cold War** and beginning current era.

Cold war—hostile relations between the United States and the Soviet Union from late 1940s to 1991.



2001: The attack of the World Trade Center

New era of global insecurity



2008: The Great Recession of 2008

Global economic tailspin
Heightened political conflict
Anxiety over the future



2011: Three remarkable events:

1. Pro democratic protests in **Tunisia** and **Egypt** toppled decades-old dictatorships.
2. Protests in other countries in Middle East and North Africa, including **Algeria, Bahrain, Libya, Syria,** and **Yemen** had very different outcomes and massive violence. The United Nations military assets intervened in **Libya**, but refused to assert leadership.
3. **March, 2011:** Japan suffered first an earthquake and then a tsunami that culminated in the crippling of six nuclear reactors and the loss of thousands of human lives.

Comparative Politics studies how countries shape and are shaped by the world order created by watershed events, such as those that occurred in 1989, 2001, 2008, and 2011.

Each of the above dates, **1989, 2001, 2008,** and **2011** describe a **critical juncture:** *an important historical moment when political actors make choices that shape institutions and future outcomes.*

WHAT AND HOW COMPARATIVE POLITICS COMPARES

Making Sense of Turbulent Times

Comparative Politics is a Cross-national comparisons and explanations on four themes:

- 1. *The World of States:*** Historical formation, internal organization, and interaction of states within international order.
- 2. *Governing the Economy:*** Role of the state in economic management.
- 3. *The Democratic Idea:*** Spread and challenges of democracy.

4. The Politics of Collective Identities:

Sources and political impact of diverse **collective identities**: groups with which people identify, including gender, class, race, region, and religion, and which are the “building blocks” for social and political action.

Comparison dates back to Aristotle

Categorized Greek city-states according to their form of political rule ; Single individual, few, all citizens.

Distinguished good from corrupt; Whether those with power ruled in their own interest or for the common welfare.

Making Sense of Turbulent Times

Distinction between **comparative politics** and **international relations**

Comparative politics studies domestic political institutions, processes, policies, conflicts, attitudes in different countries.

International relations studies foreign policies of and interactions among countries, role of international organizations, influence of global actors.

Studies overlap; distinction important because political activity occurs within state borders.

Despite increased international economic competition and integration (key aspect of **globalization**), countries are fundamental building blocks in structuring political activity.

- Comparative approach focuses on selected institutions and processes when analyzing similarities and differences among countries.
 - As students of comparative politics (**comparativists**), we must look at more than one case to make reliable statement.
 - Look at two or more cases selected to isolate common and contrasting features
 - May analyze broad issues or institution, policy, process through time, e.g., shift in orientation of economic policy from **Keynesianism** to **neoliberalism**.

Globalization—intensification of worldwide interconnectivity associated with speed and magnitude of cross-border flows of trade, investment and finance, processes of migration, cultural diffusion, and communication.

Keynesianism—an approach that gives priority to government regulation of economy.

Neoliberalism—approach that emphasizes the importance of market-friendly policies.

WHAT AND HOW COMPARATIVE POLITICS COMPARES

Level of Analysis

- Comparisons are useful for political analysis at several different levels.
 - Specific institutions in different **countries**.

Countries—distinct, politically defined territories that encompass governments, composed of political institutions, cultures, economies and collective identities.

Countries are historically the most important source of collective political identity and a major arena for organized political action.

- **State**—key political **institutions** responsible for making, implementing, enforcing, and adjudicating policies .
- National **executive** (president or prime minister) and the **cabinet** are most important state institutions.
 - **Executive**—the agencies of government that implement or execute policy
 - **Cabinet**—the body of officials (e.g., ministers, secretaries) who direct executive departments presided over by the chief executive (e.g, prime minister, president).
- Other key institutions: military, police, and **bureaucracy**
 - **Bureaucracy** —an organization structured hierarchically, in which lower-level officials are charged with administering regulations codified in rules that specify impersonal objective guidelines for making decisions.

Alongside **executive** is the **legislature** and **judiciary**.

- **Legislature**—one of the primary political institutions in a country, in which elected members are charged with responsibility for making laws and usually providing for the financial resources for the state to carry out its functions.
- **Judiciary**—one of the primary political institutions in a country; responsible for the administration of justice and in some countries for determining the constitutionality of state decisions.

Political **legitimacy** required for long-term stability.

- **Legitimacy**—support of significant segment of the citizenry.
- Affected by economic performance and distribution of economic resources.
- May require some level of democracy.

Not all states are the same.

Variance in organization of institutions

- Differences impact political, economic, social institutions.
- Process of **state formation** influences political differences.
- **State formation**—historical evolution of the state.

- Variance in extent to which citizens share a common sense of nationhood.
 - **Nation-state**—when state boundaries and national identity coincide.
 - Source of political instability when they do not coincide.
 - Nationalist movements challenge existing boundaries.



WHAT AND HOW COMPARATIVE POLITICS COMPARES

Causal Theories

- Countries and states are the two critical units for comparative analysis. One approach is to develop **causal theories**.

Causal theories—Hypotheses expressed as:

“If X happens then Y will be the result.”

- Include factors (**independent variables**) that are believed to influence the outcome (**dependent variables**)
- Inverse correlation – X and Y vary in the opposite direction
 - Even without hypotheses, comparativists try to identify similarities and differences to discover patterns.

- Limits on “scientific” political science

Two differences between “hard” and social sciences:

- Social sciences study people who have free will.
 - Experimental techniques cannot isolate factors.
-
- Debate over whether or not social sciences should seek scientific explanations.
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- **Rational choice theory** borrowed from economics.

Rational choice theory - approach to analyzing political decision making and behavior that assumes that individual actors rationally pursue aims in effort to achieve most positive net result.

Most comparativists agree on **middle-level theory**.

Middle-level theory seeks to explain phenomena in a limited range of cases.

Study of **democratic transitions** identifies influence of variables on political stability.

Democratic transitions - the process of a state moving from an authoritarian to a democratic political system.

- Process in which authoritarian governments such as military **dictatorships** develop more democratic regimes.
- **Dictatorships** —a government in which one or a few rulers has absolute power.
- Identify common patterns that make sense of political events and link experiences.

THEMES FOR COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Theme 1: A World of States

- States have been primary actors for about five hundred years.
 - Individuals, international organizations, transnational corporations may play crucial role.
 - States still send armies to conquer other states.
 - Legal codes of states allow businesses to operate within borders and beyond.
 - States provide and enforce laws, and some social welfare.
 - States regulate movement of people across borders through immigration.
 - Protect citizens from aggressive actions by other states

- Country chapters emphasize the importance of understanding similarities and contrasts in state formation and **institutional design** across countries.

Institutional design— institutional arrangements that define relationships between executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government and between the central government and sub-central units.

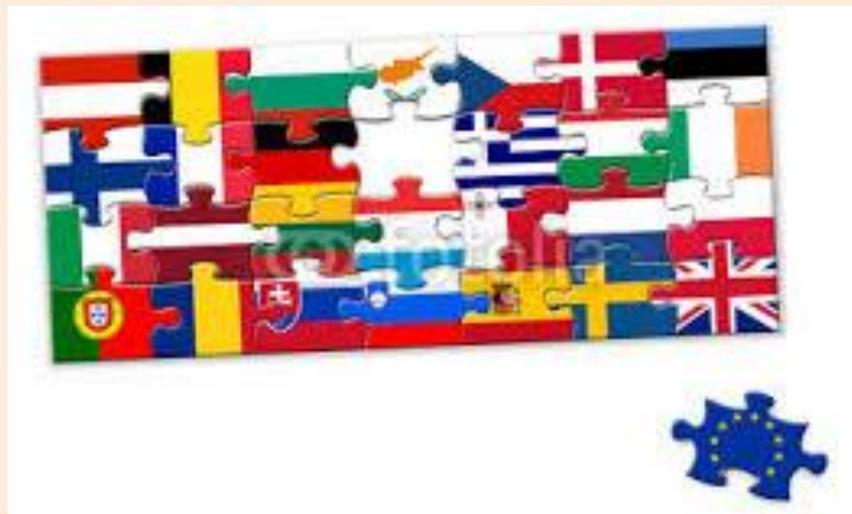
- States may collapse when rivals challenge rulers or when leaders violate the rule of law.
 - **Failed states** - states in which the government no longer functions
 - **Anarchy** - lawlessness due to absence of government

All states experiencing increased pressure from external influences

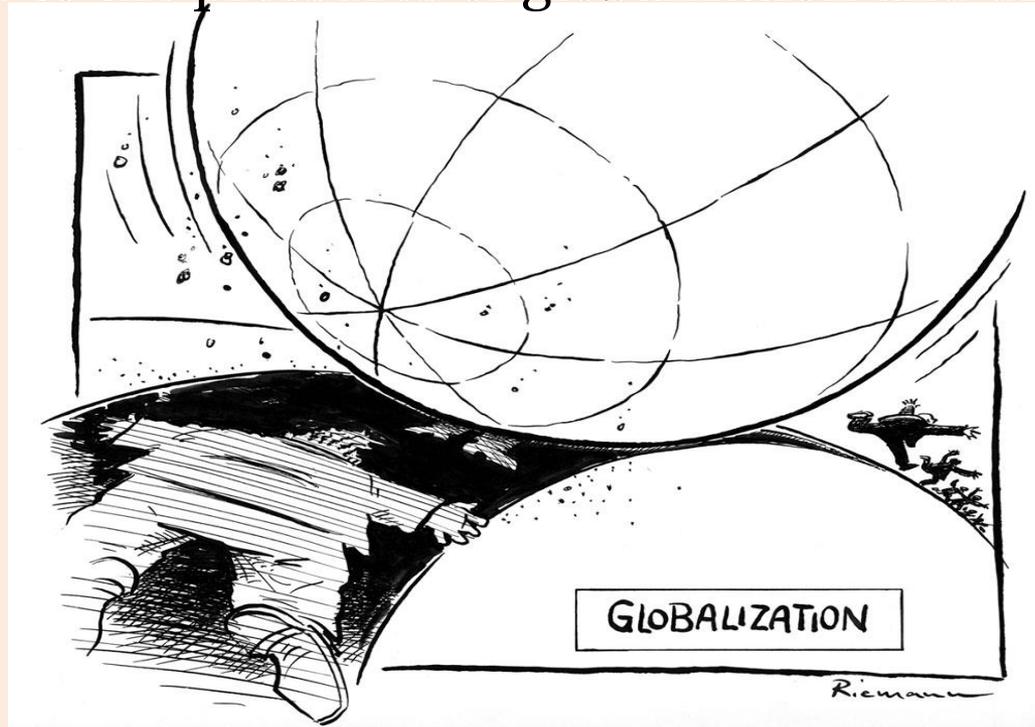
- Do not have same impact on all states
- Some states can shape structure and policy of international organizations.

- States with greater level of economy, military, and resources have a greater global influence and benefit more from globalization.
- Countries with fewer advantages are more dependent on states and international organizations and benefit less from globalization.
- International organizations and treaties challenge national sovereignty, including United Nations, the **European Union (EU)**, the **World Trade Organization (WTO)**, the World Bank, the **International Monetary Fund (IMF)**, and the **North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)**.
- Political borders do not protect people from global influences.

- Technology, immigration, and cultural diffusion impact domestic policies and challenge state supremacy.
 - Global media have increased knowledge about international developments.
- May increase demands on local governments to intervene to stop atrocities.
- May cause local governments to be held to international standards of human rights and democracy.



Puzzle: To what extent can even the most powerful states (especially the United States) preserve their autonomy and impose their will on others in a globalized world? And, in what ways are the poorer and less powerful countries particularly vulnerable to the pressures of globalization and disgruntled citizens?



Politics and policies of states increasingly influenced by international factors
Constituencies also challenge power and legitimacy of central governments .

THEMES FOR COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Theme 2: Governing the Economy

- Ability to ensure adequate volume of goods and services affects state's ability to maintain sovereign authority and control.
 - Inadequate economic performance important reason for rejection of communism.
 - Success in promoting economic development major factor in survival of Communist Party in China.

How state “**governs the economy**” is key element in overall pattern of governance.

- Difference in balance between agriculture and industrial production.
- Strategies to improve economic performance.
- Competition in international markets.
- Importance of private market forces versus government direction of the economy.

- **Political economy**—how governments affect economic performance and how economic performance affects politics.
 - Belief that domestic and international economy affects politics
- There is no one right way to manage the economy.
- No clear measure of economic success
 - More countries emphasizing **sustainable development** —an approach to promoting economic growth that seeks to minimize environmental degradation and depletion of natural resources.

Puzzle: What is the relationship between democracy and successful national economic performance?

- Both democratic and authoritarian regimes have been successful.
- For example: China, an authoritarian **communist party-state** has enjoyed highest growth rate among major economies since 1990.
- **Communist party-state**—type of nation state in which communist party attempts to exercise complete monopoly on political power and controls all important state institutions.

⇒ **Global Connection:** **How Is Development Measured?**

Two commonly used measures of size or power of country's economy:

- **Gross domestic product (GDP)**—value of total goods and services produced during a given year.
- **Gross national product (GNP)**—GDP plus income earned abroad by country's residents.



Textbook calculates GDP using the **purchasing power parity (PPP)** method.

- **PPP** takes into account the real cost of living in a particular country by calculating how much it would cost in the local currency to buy the “same basket of goods” in different countries. Since PPP does not take population size into account, it does not reveal prosperity.
- One of the important measures is **Human Development Index (HDI)**, a composite number used by the United Nations to measure and compare levels of achievement in health, knowledge, and standard of living. It is based on life expectancy, adult literacy rate and school enrollment statistics, and GDP per capita at PPP.

THEMES FOR COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Theme 3: The Democratic Idea

Democracy—from the Greek *demos* (the people) and *kratos* (rule). A regime in which citizens exercise substantial control over choice of political leaders and the decisions made by their governments.

- Strong appeal and rapidly spreading.

- Hard for authoritarian governments to survive persistent and widespread pressure for democratic participation.
 - Democracy's stability, affluence, freedom may appeal to citizens in authoritarian regimes.
 - Most consistent with human aspirations for freedom, prosperity, and security
 - Some observers claim that democracy is dangerous.
 - Democratic policymaking tends to be dominated by “short-term political and electoral considerations” whereas wise policy requires long-range perspective.

- Conditions that are necessary for democratic idea to take root:
 - Secure national borders, stable state, minimum level of economic development, acceptance of democratic values, agreement on rules, and institutional design.
- Gulf between transition to and consolidation of democracy
 - **Transition** occurs when authoritarian regime is toppled and democratic foundations are established.
 - **Consolidation** requires adherence to democratic procedures and making the government more sturdy and durable.
 - Reversal of democratic regimes to authoritarian rule have occurred in the past.

Theme 3, the Democratic Idea, must examine incompleteness of democracy even in countries with long experience of democratic government:

- Democratic idea invoked to make government more responsive and accountable.
- **Social movements** target actions, inaction.
- **Social movements**—large-scale grassroots action that demands reforms of existing social practices and government policies.

Once adopted, odds are democratic regime will endure.

Puzzle: Is there a relationship between democracy and political stability?

- Democracy permits opposition making political life turbulent and unpredictable.
- Legitimacy of political opposition deepens state support and promotes state stability.



THEMES FOR COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Theme 4: The Politics of Collective Identities

- At one time comparativists believed that **social class** was the most important source of collective identity.
 - **Social class**—group whose members share common economic status determined largely by occupation, income, and wealth.

- Formation of group attachments and interplay of collective identities more complex
 - In many long-established democracies identity based on class declining but still important politically and economically.
 - Economically-based sources of collective identity growing in significance.
- Politics of collective identities involves struggle to mobilize groups to be politically influential
 - Constant struggle among groups over relative power and influence.
 - Issues of inclusion, political recognition, representation, resource allocation, and ability to shape public policies.

Issues about collective identities never fully settled

Identity-based conflicts appear in every multiethnic society.

- Particularly intense in post-colonial countries.
 - Colonial powers forced ethnic groups together and drew borders with little regard to existing identities.

Political conflicts between and within religious groups.

- May cross national boundaries and involve globalization.
- Political orientation of religious community not predetermined.

Puzzle: How do collective identities affect country's **distributional politics**?

Distributional politics - use of power, particularly by the state, to allocate some kind of valued resource among competing groups.

- Most groups desire material benefits and political influence.
- Analytical difference between material and nonmaterial useful
- Compromise may be difficult in situation of extreme scarcity.
- Nonmaterial demands may be harder to satisfy through distributional politics.

CLASSIFYING POLITICAL SYSTEMS

Introduction

- Over two hundred states with distinctive political regimes today
 - Create **typology** to facilitate comparison within and between types of states

Typology - analytic construct that helps us engage in comparisons that yield useful knowledge.

- Most different case analysis to compare across types.

From World War II until 1980's consensus on "Three Worlds"

- **First World** was Western industrial democracies
Countries somewhat democratic, not industrialized
- **Second World** was communist states
Nearly disappeared today; remaining have developed market-based policies.
- **Third World** was economically less developed
Third World are countries with low or moderately low economic development as measured by GNI or GDP



-  **First World**
-  **Second World**
-  **Thlrd World**

- **Typology** classifies states into three groups:
 - **Consolidated democracies**—democratic political systems solidly and stably established for ample period of time with consistent adherence to core democratic principles.
 - **Transitional democracies**—countries that have moved from authoritarian government to a democratic one.
 - **Authoritarianism**—system of rule in which power depends not on popular legitimacy, but on the coercive force of political authorities.

CLASSIFYING POLITICAL SYSTEMS

The Meaning or Meanings of Democracy

- Contentious debate over **procedural definition** versus **provision of substantive equalities**
- Rough consensus over minimum features
 - Free and fair elections to select highest public offices
 - Political parties free to compete
 - Government policies developed according to rules that include transparency and accountability
 - Political rights and civil liberties for all citizens
 - Legal system based on “rule of law” and principle of legal equality; independent judiciary
 - Elected government exercises supreme power
 - Political, social, economic and identity-based conflicts to be resolved peacefully , without violence, according to prescribed procedures.

A Typology of Political Systems:

Criteria to distinguish between consolidated and transitional democracies:

- **Time** - Whether or not democratic institutions have been solidly and stably established for a period of time
Length of time open to interpretation
- **Extent** - extent of democratic practice
Consistent adherence to seven democratic principles
Violation of democratic norms sometimes occur

Authoritarian regimes:

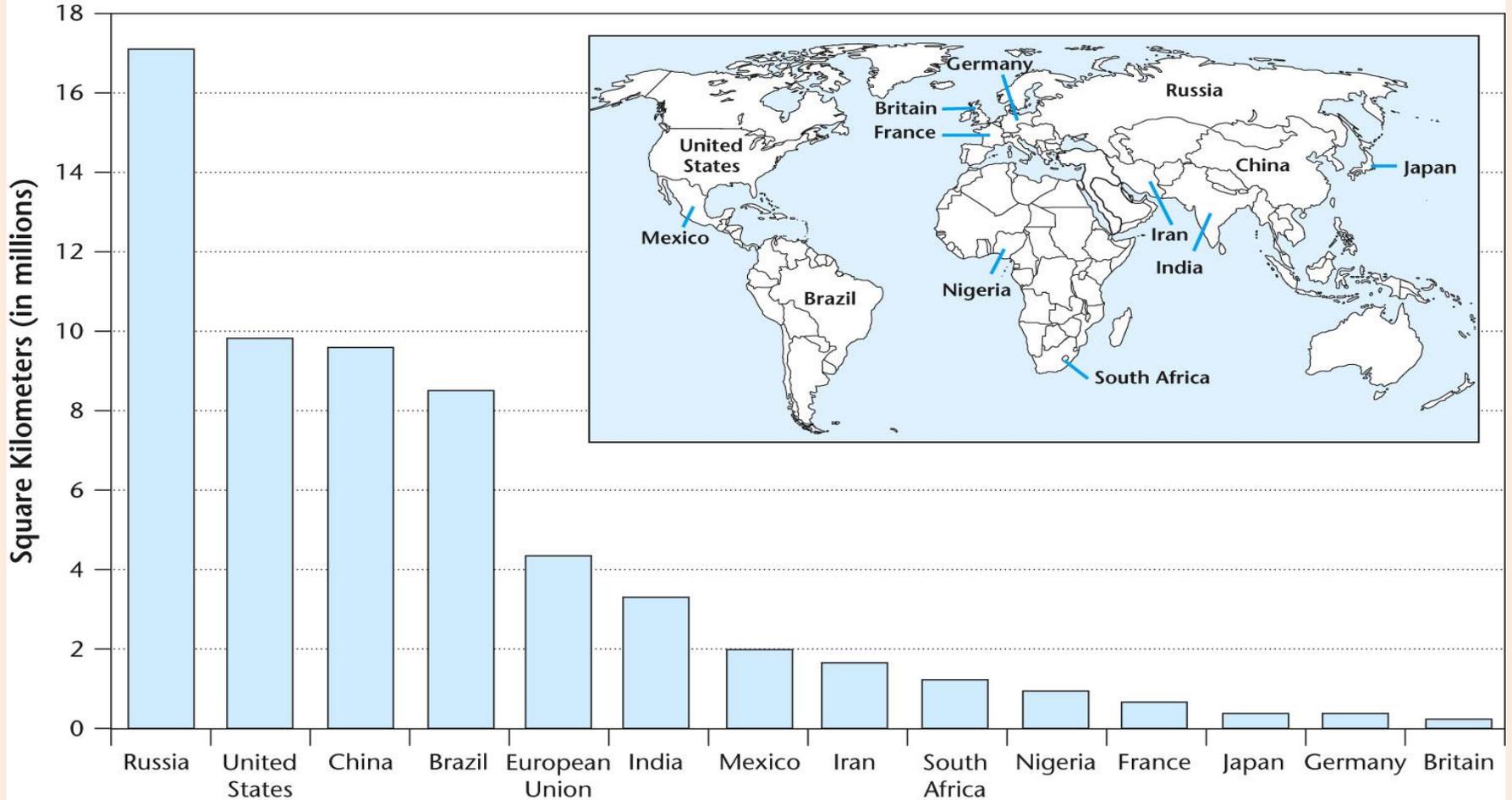
- Lack effective procedures for selecting political leaders through competitive elections
- Have few institutionalized procedures for holding those with political power accountable to its citizens
- Severely restrict oppositional politics and dissent
- Do not permit people of different genders, racial groups, religions, and ethnicities to enjoy equal rights
- Operate with a legal system that is highly politicized; moreover judiciary is not an independent branch of government
- Coercion and violence are part of the political process.

Variety of authoritarian regime types:

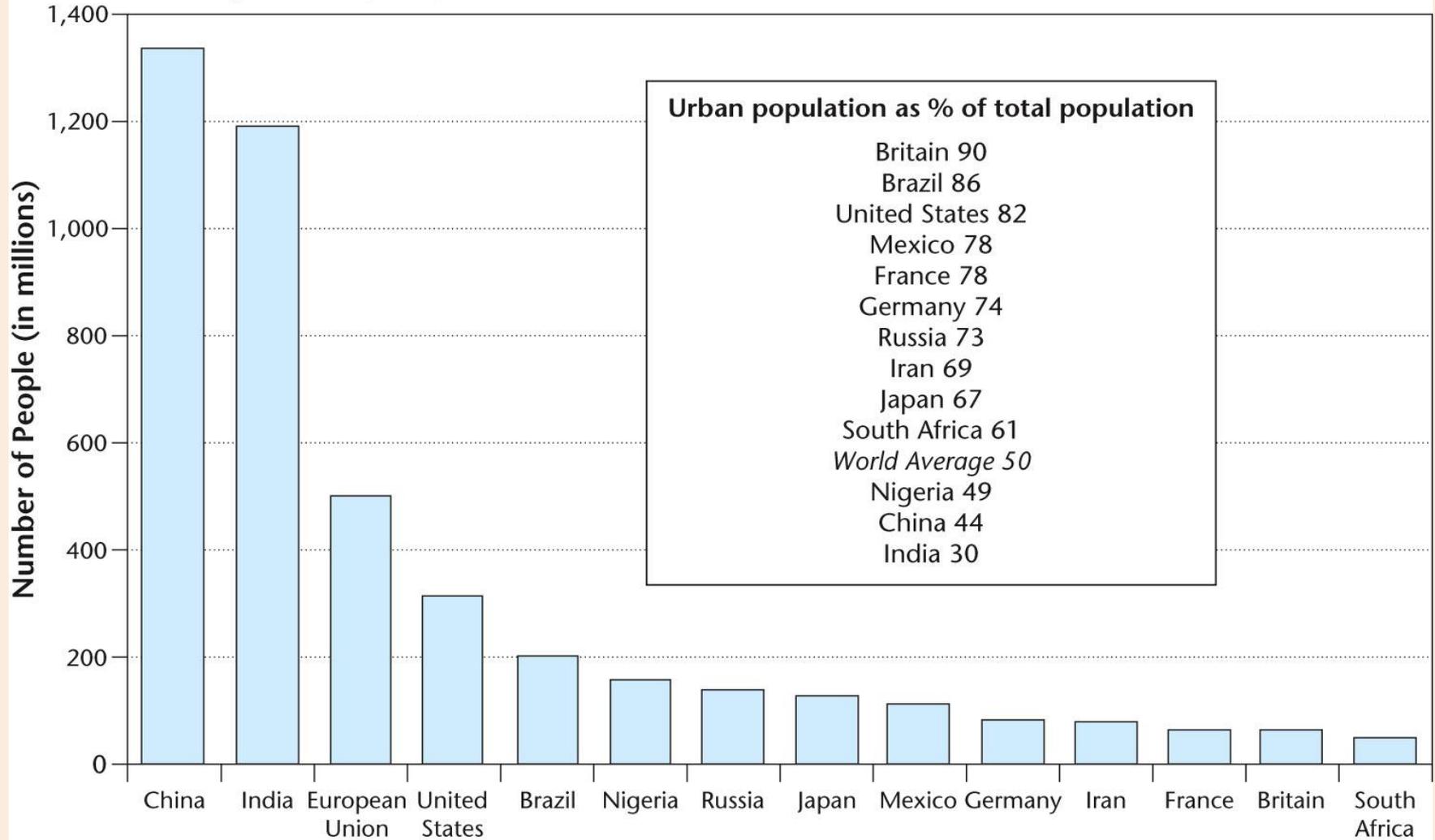
- Communist party-states (e.g., China and Cuba)
- Theocracies (e.g., Iran)
- Military governments (e.g., Myanmar, formerly Burma)
- Absolute monarchies (e.g., Saudi Arabia)
- Personalistic dictatorships (e.g., Venezuela)
- Categories are not air-tight and many straddle between two (e.g., Brazil and India).

Total Geographic Area

Land & People



Total Population (2010) World Total = 6.9 billion



Total Gross Domestic Product (GDP)

Economy

