Introduction to political science

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LSE THE LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND POLITICAL SCIENCE ∎

Contents

Introduction

What this course is about

On 17 December 2010, a young man in Tunisia called Mohamed Bouazizi set himself on fire. He was protesting at the government's confiscation of fruit and vegetables he was selling from his street stall, just one of many forms of harassment and frustration Bouazizi experienced at the hands of the Tunisian state. That evening riots and protests erupted throughout the capital city Tunis in outrage that a man should be driven to such an act. The protests quickly took on a deeper significance, transforming into anti-government protests and no longer specifically focused on the treatment of Bouazizi. On 13 January 2011, Mohsen Bouterfif, in a seemingly copycat act, set himself alight in a small town in Tebessa province in neighbouring Algeria. He was protesting against his inability to find a job and housing. The previous week four other people in Algeria had attempted to set themselves alight at a time when the country was already experiencing some localised rioting and civil unrest. Just four days later, an Egyptian man set himself alight outside the parliament, again in protest against the economic conditions he was experiencing and his frustration at the government's lack of responsiveness to his concerns. Within 10 days, large-scale anti-government protests were underway in Cairo. Before the end of the month, Muamar Gadaffi in Libya was publicly expressing his unease at the turn of events happening in his North African neighbours.

These early events served as the catalysts for what became known as the 'Arab Spring', a wave of mass protests and dissent against authoritarian governments that swept North Africa and parts of the Middle East. By the end of 2011, this had led to the overthrowing of regimes in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen and Libya, uprisings in Bahrain and Syria, and major protests in Algeria, Iraq, Jordan, Morocco and Oman. Of course, one man setting himself on fire cannot be identified as the sole cause of the possible wave of revolution, but it can be seen as a catalyst that fed a pre-existing desire for change in these states.

The aspiration of many Western policy makers and commentators is that, over time, these states will emerge as stable democratic regimes. In this respect, the mass protests are portrayed as demands by disenfranchised citizens for greater freedom and greater political freedom in particular. However, the process of 'democratisation', or the transformation from an authoritarian to a democratic regime, does not end with the removal of an autocrat and the decision to hold 'free and fair' elections. Liberal democracy is more than just elections. Elections are of central importance, but constitutional engineers and those other groups who will decide the shape of any new democratic state that might emerge in North Africa or the Middle East will face a dizzying array of choices in how they design the political features of the new state.

What is more, the design of these political institutions will directly impact upon the nature and the quality of the democracy that is experienced. Important questions will need to be considered, such as what type of electoral system should the new state have and how will this affect the way voters or parties behave? How many parties should be represented in government: one all-powerful party, or several competing parties in a coalition? Should the country have an independent supreme court or should elected representatives have more say than unaccountable judges?

Finally, and perhaps most importantly in a newly democratising state, what kind of political institutions will promote policies citizens actually want (such as economic growth, good public services and environmental protection), and work effectively to channel the aspirations of citizens?

How can political science help us answer these questions? What tools and evidence does the academic study of politics provide to help us understand the political and policy consequences of different forms of political behaviour and different ways of arranging democracies?

These questions, and others like them, form the backbone of this course and we hope to help you to understand the main explanations offered by political science, not just for why states become democracies, but also how to understand why democracies are so different. This course is an introduction to politics in a globalised world, with a particular focus on how political science tries to understand and explain cross-country differences and cross-time differences between countries. We do this by looking at three particular dimensions.

1. Political **behaviour** or why individuals and groups behave as they do.

2. Political **institutions**, the formal and informal rules that tell political actors what they can and cannot do.

3. Political **outcomes**, such as why some countries redistribute more wealth than others or why some states have better environmental policies than others.

Aims and objectives

The main aims of this course are to:

- introduce students to the main differences between democratic and non-democratic regimes, and between different models of democratic government

- introduce students to how political preferences are formed, how voters behave, how parties compete, how interest groups form, and how electoral systems shape behaviour

- explain how political institutions work, such as presidential and parliamentary systems, single-party and coalition governments, federalism, and courts and central banks

- explain how political behaviour and institutions shape policy outcomes, such as economic performance, public spending, and immigration and environmental policies

- prepare students for further courses in political science.

At the end of this course and having completed the Essential reading and activities, you should be able to:

- explain patterns of voting behaviour and party competition in different countries, and how electoral systems influence voters and parties

- explain how different institutional designs of democracy work

- describe how political science explains policy outcomes

- critically evaluate rational choice and institutional theories in political science

- explain the pros and cons of quantitative and qualitative methods in political science.

The structure of the subject guide

This subject guide is divided into four sections and you must complete all sections. The sections are:

- Section A: Thinking like a political scientist
- Section B: Analysing political behaviour
- Section C: Analysing political institutions
- Section D: Assessing political outcomes.

Reading advice

Essential reading

You will find a full and detailed reading list for each topic at the start of every chapter. There is not a single textbook for the course. However, several topics will use chapters from the following book:

> Clark, W.R., M. Golder and S. Nadenichek Golder *Principles of Comparative Politics*. (Washington DC: CQ Press, 2012) second edition [ISBN 9781608716791].

For each chapter, there will normally be up to three Essential readings in addition to this subject guide. One of the readings will be drawn from a textbook and the other readings will be drawn from journal articles or other online resources. Where the required readings are primary research articles, they will be explained in detail in the chapter in the subject guide.

Detailed reading references in this subject guide refer to the editions of the set textbooks listed above. New editions of one or more of these textbooks may have been published by the time you study this course. You can use a more recent edition of any of the books; use the detailed chapter and section headings and the index to identify relevant readings. Also check the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) regularly for updated guidance on readings.

Further reading

Please note that as long as you read the Essential reading you are then free to read around the subject area in any text, paper or online resource. You will need to support your learning by reading as widely as possible and by thinking about how these principles apply in the real world. To help you read extensively, you have free access to the VLE and University of London Online Library (see below).

For each chapter we recommend some Further reading – if you want to explore this topic in additional depth or if you plan to answer an examination question on this topic, then it is worth consulting these additional readings.

Unless otherwise stated, all websites in this subject guide were accessed in April 2012. We cannot guarantee, however, that they will stay current and you may need to perform an internet search to find the relevant pages.

How to use this subject guide

This course is very topical and it deals with many contemporary political issues that are in the news every day. Therefore it is useful to try to stay abreast of major political developments by reading a newspaper or news website on a regular basis and thinking about how the stories covered may be illuminated by some of the theories and ideas discussed in this course.

This course is cumulative – later chapters assume that you have a grasp of concepts introduced and explained earlier. Therefore, we suggest that you read the chapters in the order in which they appear. This will help you to navigate the course as a whole and see the big themes and ideas that are explored.

'Adopt a country'

Each chapter contains interactive elements for you to undertake in the form of tasks. At the outset we ask you to 'adopt a country' – that is, we ask you to **choose any country in the world that is democratic or partially democratic**, but it cannot be your home country. Then each 'week', we ask you to become an expert on one particular aspect of the political behaviour, the institutions or the outcomes in your adopted country.

The country you choose must be democratic or partially democratic (we provide you with a method of identifying how democratic a country is in Chapter 2). Also bear in mind that you should choose a country that has readily accessible information about its politics and political institutions and this should be in a language that you understand. It is also perhaps best to avoid very newly democratic countries, such as post-war Iraq, because when we discuss issues such as party systems or voting behaviour there may not be enough of a history of democratic politics in newly democratic countries to help you answer our interactive tasks satisfactorily. One of the best places to find out information about your chosen country is online, especially online news sites or on Wikipedia and other online encyclopaedias. You will also find that many of the readings we recommend discuss events in specific countries, so this will also be a good starting point.

If you complete all the tasks regularly, then by the end of the course you should have a very good knowledge of the political system of your adopted country. This can act as a rich source of evidence when it comes to thinking about the topics we discuss and also when it comes to answering essay questions in the examination.

Recommended study time

You should aim to study this course over eight months and you should spend at least seven hours on this course each week. Some of the ideas covered may be fairly challenging so be prepared to read widely and think deeply. Also try to start writing down your thoughts and answering the sample short questions and sample essay questions as soon as possible rather than waiting until the end of year examination.

The examination and examination advice

Important: the information and advice given here are based on the examination structure used at the time this guide was written. Please note that subject guides may be used for several years. Because of this we strongly advise you to always check both the current *Regulations* for relevant information about the examination, and the VLE where you should be advised of any forthcoming changes. You should also carefully check the rubric/instructions on the paper you actually sit and follow those instructions.

Remember, it is important to check the VLE for:

- up-to-date information on examination and assessment arrangements for this course

- where available, past examination papers and *Examiners' commentaries* for the course which give advice on how each question might best be answered.

The whole assessment for this unit is by a single examination of three hours' duration. The examination contains 12 essay questions and you must answer four of these questions. You should spend no more than 45 minutes on each essay. These questions may come from any of the topics covered during this course. When answering the essay questions, we are looking to see how well students can evaluate the debates that we have presented and apply these debates to the specific question we ask.

We provide sample examination questions at the end of each chapter and it will be useful for you to begin practising answering these as you work through this subject guide rather than leaving all this practice until near the time of the examination.

Online study resources

In addition to the subject guide and the Essential reading, it is crucial that you take advantage of the study resources that are available online for this course, including the VLE and the Online Library.

You can access the VLE, the Online Library and your University of London email account via the Student Portal at: http://my.londoninternational.ac.uk

You should have received your login details for the Student Portal with your official offer, which was emailed to the address that you gave on your application form. You have probably already logged in to the Student Portal in order to register! As soon as you registered, you will automatically have been granted access to the VLE, Online Library and your fully functional University of London email account.

If you forget your login details at any point, please email uolia.support@london.ac.uk quoting your student number.

The VLE

The VLE, which complements this subject guide, has been designed to enhance your learning experience, providing additional support and a sense of community. It forms an important part of your study experience with the University of London and you should access it regularly.

The VLE provides a range of resources for EMFSS courses:

- Self-testing activities: Doing these allows you to test your own understanding of subject material.

- Electronic study materials: The printed materials that you receive from the University of London are available to download, including updated reading lists and references. **Note that colour versions of some of the diagrams in the subject guide are available in the electronic version; you may find them easier to read in this format.**

- Past examination papers and *Examiners' commentaries*: These provide advice on how each examination question might best be answered.

- A student discussion forum: This is an open space for you to discuss interests and experiences, seek support from your peers, work collaboratively to solve problems and discuss subject material.

- Videos: There are recorded academic introductions to the subject, interviews and debates and, for some courses, audio-visual tutorials and conclusions.

- Recorded lectures: For some courses, where appropriate, the sessions from previous years' Study Weekends have been recorded and made available.

- Study skills: Expert advice on preparing for examinations and developing your digital literacy skills.

- Feedback forms.

Some of these resources are available for certain courses only, but we are expanding our provision all the time and you should check the VLE regularly for updates.

Making use of the Online Library

The Online Library contains a huge array of journal articles and other resources to help you read widely and extensively.

To access the majority of resources via the Online Library you will either need to use your University of London Student Portal login details, or you will be required to register and use an Athens login: http://tinyurl.com/ollathens

The easiest way to locate relevant content and journal articles in the Online Library is to use the **Summon** search engine.

If you are having trouble finding an article listed in a reading list, try removing any punctuation from the title, such as single quotation marks, question marks and colons.

For further advice, please see the online help pages: www.external.shl.lon.ac.uk/summon/about.php

Syllabus

This is a description of the material to be examined, as published in the *Regulations*. On registration, students will receive a detailed subject guide which provides a framework for covering the topics in the syllabus and directions to the Essential reading.

Basics: why are some countries democratic?

Procedural and substantive conceptions of democracy. Measuring democracy, and the number of democracies across time. Explanations of democratization: political culture, economic and social modernisation, and institutional 'contracts' between social groups.

Basics: political science explanations and methods

Historiography of modern political science. Difference between rational choice and institutional explanations. Difference between qualitative and quantitative methods. Basic understanding of regression.

Behaviour: political preferences and voting behaviour

The two main 'dimensions' of preferences: economic and social. Why the 'Left–Right' is a universal phenomenon. Difference between 'expressive' and 'strategic' voting. Class dealignment and post-materialism.

Behaviour: political parties and electoral systems

The Downsian model of electoral competition versus the 'cleavage model' of party systems. The number and location of parties in democracies. Two main types of electoral systems: majoritarian and proportional. Trade-offs in the design of electoral systems. How electoral systems shape party competition and voting behaviour.

Institutions: presidents and parliaments, coalitions and single-party governments

Difference between presidential, parliamentary, and semi-presidential systems and their performance, for example, regime survival, policy-making and accountability. Patterns of single-party and coalition government across the world. Theories of coalition formation. Policy implications of single-party, coalition and minority government.

Institutions: federalism and independent institutions

Difference between unitary, decentralised and federal systems. Causes and consequences of centralisation and decentralisation. Principal–agent theory and why politicians delegate to independent institutions. Design of courts and central banks, and policy consequences of granting power to independent institutions.

Outcomes: economic performance and public spending

Patterns of economic performance and public spending. How political institutions and party preferences shape economic policy outcomes. Models of welfare states. Whether citizens choose redistributive policies, or whether redistributive policies shape citizens' attitudes towards these policies.

Outcomes: environmental protection and migration

Patterns of environmental policy and migration policy in democracies. Theories of why some governments are better at protecting the environment than others. The 'tragedy of the commons' problem. 'Push' and 'pull' factors that influence migration flows. How institutions and political preferences influence migration policy outcomes.

Notes

Section A: Thinking like a political scientist

This section has two chapters. **Chapter 1** looks at what political science is. We answer this by discussing some of the main questions that political science tries to answer and by beginning to think about why politics is different in various countries and regions around the world. Next we introduce two different theoretical approaches to political science – those that emphasise the behaviour of individuals and those that emphasise the role of institutions. Finally, we look at different methods used by political scientists when trying to answer these questions. **Chapter 2** shows how political science uses theory and methods to study one of the core themes in political science, 'democracy'. Having looked at different ways of measuring democracy, we explain different reasons why states might become democratic, looking at both economic and cultural explanations.

By the end of this section you should have an understanding of what issues interest political scientists and how they think about these issues and what tools they use.

Notes

Chapter 1: What is political science?

Aims of the chapter

The aims of this chapter are to:

- introduce some of the topics political science addresses and how political scientists use theoretical ideas and empirical evidence to address these topics
- introduce two broad theoretical frameworks in political science: the rational choice approach, and the institutional approach
- explain the difference between qualitative and quantitative methods in political science.

Learning outcomes

By the end of this chapter, and having completed the Essential reading and activities, you should be able to:

- explain the difference between political behaviour and political institutions, and how political behaviour and institutions interact to explain political and policy outcomes
- discuss the difference between theoretical explanations which focus on the rational behaviour of political actors and explanations which focus on the role of institutions and society
- discuss the difference between qualitative and quantitative methods in political science and the pros and cons of these two approaches to empirical research.

Interactive tasks

1. Try to identify as many instances as you can of irrational mass political behaviour, such as being a member of Amnesty International. How can we explain this behaviour if it is 'irrational'?

2. Now try to identify as many instances as you can of irrational elite political behaviour. Generally speaking, is elite behaviour more rational than mass behaviour?

3. Identify an issue in politics that you would study using a quantitative approach and an issue you would study using a qualitative approach. Justify why you would use these methods for each issue.

Reading

Essential reading

Clark, W.R., M. Golder and S. Nadenichek Golder *Principles of Comparative Politics*. (Washington DC: CQ Press, 2012), Chapters 2 and 3.

'Case study', http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Case_study

'Regression analysis', http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Regression_analysis

Further reading

Gerring, J. 'What Is a Case Study and What Is It Good for?', *American Political Science Review* 98(2) 2004, pp.341–354.

Green, D.P. and I. Shapiro *Pathologies of Rational Choice Theory*. (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1994) [ISBN 9780300066364] Chapter 2.

Hall, P.A. and R.C.R. Taylor 'Political Science and the Three New Institutionalisms', *Political Studies* 44(5) 1996, pp.936–957.

Tsebelis, G. *Nested Games: Rational Choice in Comparative Politics*. (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1990) [ISBN 9780520076518] Chapter 2.

Works cited

Aldrich, J.H. 'Rational Choice and Turnout', *American Journal of Political Science* 37(1) 1993, pp.246–278.

Almond, G.A. 'Separate Tables: Schools and Sects in Political Science', *PS: Political Science and Politics* 21(4) 1988, pp.828–842.

Brady, H.E. 'Data-Set Observation Versus Causal-Process Observations: The 2000 U.S. Presidential Election' in Brady, H.E. and D. Collier (eds) *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards*. (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004).

Brady, H.E. and D. Collier (eds) *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards*. (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004).

Carey, J. and S. Hix 'The Electoral Sweet Spot: Low-Magnitude Proportional Electoral Systems', *American Journal of Political Science* 55(2) 2011, pp.383–397.

Henrich, J. et al. 'Economic Man in Cross-Cultural Perspective: Behavioral Experiments in 15 Small-Scale Societies', *Behaviour and Brain Sciences* 28(6) 2005, pp.795–815.

King, G., R.O. Keohane and S. Verba *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994) [ISBN 9780691034713].

Lipset, S.M. and S. Rokkan (eds) *Party Systems and Voter Alignments: Cross-National Perspectives*. (New York, NY: The Free Press, 1967) [ISBN 9780029191507].

March, J.G. and J.P. Olsen *Rediscovering Institutions*. (New York, NY: Free Press, 1989) [ISBN 9780029201152].

Marx, K. *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*. (1852) (Arc Manor, 2008) [ISBN 9781604505887] or www.questia.com/online_Library

Mill, J.S. *A System of Logic*. (1843) (Forgotten Books, 2011) [ISBN 9781440090820].

Von Neumann, J. and O. Morgenstern *Theory of Games and Economic Behavior*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1944) and (Princeton University Press, 2007) [ISBN 9780691130613].

North, D.C. *Institutions, Institutional Change, and Economic Performance*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) [ISBN 9780521397346].

Pierson, P. 'Path Dependence, Increasing Returns, and the Study of Politics', *American Political Science Review* 94(2) 2000, pp.251–267.

Shepsle, K.A. 'Studying Institutions: Some Lessons from the Rational Choice Approach', *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 1(2) 1989, pp.131–147.

Tsebelis, G. *Veto Players: How Political Institutions Work*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002) [ISBN 9780691099897].

1.1 What is political science?

In the third century BCE, the Greek philosopher Aristotle was perhaps the first scholar to think systematically about how different forms of government led to different political outcomes: such as stability or rebellion in the city states in Ancient Greece. In fact, if science is the systematic building and organisation of knowledge with the aim of understanding and explaining how the world works, then Aristotle was probably the first 'political scientist'.

Since Aristotle, many political philosophers have sought to understand and explain how politics works and think about how societies should be governed, and any course on the history of political thought will introduce students to many of these thinkers, such as Plato, Cicero, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke, Montesquieu and Madison.

The modern discipline of 'political science', however, as practised in teaching and research in universities, is little more than a century old. The first Chair in History and Political Science was at Columbia University in New York in 1857. The first institutions and departments with the name 'political science' in their titles were the Ecole Libre des Sciences Politiques in Paris in 1871, the School of Political Science at Columbia University in 1880, and the London School of Economics and Political Science in 1895. And the first professional association of political scientists was the American Political Science Association in 1903.

The first modern political scientists in the first few decades of the twentieth century included, among others, Max Weber in Germany, Robert Michels in Italy, Lord Bryce in Britain, and Woodrow Wilson in the USA. These scholars, and most of their contemporaries, thought of themselves primarily as sociologists, historians, lawyers, or scholars of public administration. But what they sought to understand and explain, among other things, was politics, and one aspect of politics in particular: **political institutions**. The foci of these early 'institutionalists', in the spirit of Aristotle, were the institutions of government and politics in different countries: such as executives, parliaments, constitutions, and political parties. And the questions these first political scientists tried to answer include things like: is the German system of government better than the British? Are political parties good or bad for government? What is the best electoral system for a democracy?

After this early focus on describing and explaining political institutions, in the mid-twentieth century political science shifted its focus to 'political behaviour'. There were several reasons for this change. Faith in the power of political institutions was challenged by the collapse of democracy in much of Europe in the 1920s and 1930s. The Weimar Republic, in Germany, was a supposedly ideal democratic constitution, so many contemporary scholars thought. To understand the collapse of Weimar, and the rise of Fascism and Communism, it was clear that the attitudes and behaviour of citizens and elites were perhaps more important than the institutions of government.

Political scientists also developed some new methods to study political behaviour. One such method was the 'representative opinion poll'. Until the 1930s, elections were usually predicted by newspapers or magazines who polled the opinions of their readers. For example, just before the 1936 Presidential election in the USA, the *Literary Digest* surveyed its 2.3 million readers, and confidently predicted that Alf Landon would defeat Franklin D. Roosevelt. The problem with this prediction was that the readers of the *Literary Digest* were mostly from higher income groups and hence were more likely to support the Republican candidate (Landon) than the average US citizen in the midst of the Great Depression.

At the same time, George Gallup conducted a smaller survey among a representative sample of US citizens, based on various demographic characteristics, such as income, age and gender. Using this method, Gallup correctly predicted a landslide for Roosevelt. Gallup became famous, as the pioneer of opinion polls. He later set up a subsidiary in London and correctly predicted a Labour victory in the 1945 election, while most other

commentators assumed that the Conservatives would win, led by Winston Churchill.

Between the 1940s and the 1960s, armed with new methods for studying politics, new data from opinion polls and other data collection exercises, and new ideas about how to explain political behaviour, political science went through what we now think of as a 'behavioural revolution'.

However, for most of the second half of the twentieth century the discipline of political science remained divided between a variety of different theoretical and methodological approaches, which operated largely in isolation from each other (Almond, 1988). For example, one group of scholars adapted some of the new theoretical ideas about actors' behaviour in economics to try to explain the behaviour of voters, parties, interest groups, legislators or bureaucrats. Since these scholars assumed that these political actors were driven by self-interest and strategic calculations, this approach became known as the 'rational choice approach' in political science. Some of the leading scholars in this approach were Kenneth Arrow, Anthony Downs, William Riker, Mancur Olson, William Niskanen and Kenneth Shepsle.

Another group of scholars adapted some of the new theoretical ideas in sociology about the social and cultural determinants of behaviour to try to explain the formation of states, the behaviour and organisation of political parties, how citizens voted, and why some countries became stable democracies while others did not. Some of the leading scholars in this more sociological approach to behaviour were Seymour Martin Lipset, Gabriel Almond, Philip Converse, Stein Rokkan, Samuel Huntington and Arend Lijphart. To find out more about the ideas and works of these great political scientists of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s simply enter their names into any internet search engine.

For much of this period these two approaches to political science largely ignored each other, even when they researched and wrote about similar topics! But, in the 1980s and early 1990s these two schools of thought started to communicate more with each other. From one side, rational choice theorists had realised that their formal models of political behaviour were not very effective at explaining real-world outcomes unless they included a more nuanced understanding of how institutional rules and procedures shape how actors interact. From the other side, scholars from the more sociological tradition realised that while culture and society shape political institutions, political institutions also shape culture and society. So, from different starting points, political scientists began to focus again on the role of political institutions, under the rubric of what became known as 'new institutionalism' (compare Hall and Taylor, 1996).

So, by the end of the 1990s, political science had come full circle. Having started with political institutions, we are now back to political institutions. The difference between modern political scientists and the scholars of politics a century ago, however, is that the development of the discipline in the intervening years has led to the accumulation of a solid body of theoretical ideas, research methods, and empirical observations, which together make up the toolkit of the contemporary scientist of politics.

As an introduction to this toolkit, we can start by introducing some of the topics political science focuses on: the 'empirical regularities' that political scientists try to understand and explain. One way to organise these topics is to distinguish between political **behaviour**, political **institutions** and political **outcomes**.

Here, **political behaviour** refers to the beliefs and actions of political actors, be they citizens, voters, party leaders, members of parliaments, government ministers, judges, civil servants, or members of interest groups. These actors have 'political preferences': their political interests, values and goals. For example, some citizens would like the government to spend more money on education and healthcare while others would like the government to reduce taxes. Then, how do these preferences translate into actions? For example, when voting in elections, do most citizens vote expressively, for the party whose policies most closely match their political preferences; or do they vote strategically, for a party which they prefer less but which has a higher chance of winning? And, how do parties respond to voters? Do they stick with their policies and try to persuade the voters to support them or do they adapt their policies to try to win as many votes as possible? And, if parties do the latter, does this lead to parties converging on the average (median) voter or moving to the extremes? Interest groups are another important set of political actors. Why are some interest groups more able to organise and influence politics than others? Clearly some interest groups have more financial resources, but money does not always guarantee influence. Why is that?

Political behaviour takes place within a set of **political institutions**. Some countries have presidential systems, where there is a separation of powers between the executive and the legislature (as in the USA and throughout Latin America), while others have parliamentary systems, where the government relies on the support of the parliament and the government can dissolve the parliament and call an election (as in most countries in Europe). Within both of these regime types, some governments are composed of a single political party (as is usually the case in the United Kingdom), while other governments are coalitions between several political parties (as is usually the case in the Netherlands). In addition, in some countries power is centralised at the national level (as in France); while in others power is divided between several levels of government (as in federal systems, such as Canada or India). And, in some countries, elected politicians are relatively free from external institutional constraints; whereas in other countries a supreme court and/or an independent central bank restrict the policy choices of elected politicians.

A common set of issues cuts across these political institutions topics, which relates to the political and policy consequences of concentrating power in the hands of a single political actor – such as a single political party in government in a parliamentary system – compared to dividing power between several 'veto players' – either several parties in a coalition government, or the executive and the legislature in a presidential system, or different levels of government in a federal system, or between the legislature and powerful courts.

Finally, **political outcomes** covers a broad range of issues, from specific policy outcomes such as economic growth or higher public spending or better protection of the environment, to broader political phenomena, such as political and economic equality, social and ethnic harmony, or satisfaction with democracy and government. For example, some countries have generous welfare states whereas others have less generous welfare regimes. Some countries are better at protecting the environment than others, and some countries are more welcoming to immigrants than others. And, in some countries citizens are generally satisfied with how their countries are governed, while in others citizens are far less satisfied.

Across all these topics, a common working assumption in modern political science is that political behaviour and political institutions interact to produce political outcomes. For example, on the issue of support for democracy, in the 1960s many political scientists assumed that a 'civic culture' was essential for a successful democracy. These days, in contrast, we recognise a mutually reinforcing relationship between attitudes towards democracy (political behaviour) and democratic government (political institutions): where support for democracy helps democratic stability, and stable and successful democratic government leads to stronger democratic values in society.

As in other fields of scientific enquiry, political scientists try to understand these phenomena by developing theoretical explanations and testing these explanations using a variety of empirical methods. We first discuss two main theoretical explanations in political science before turning to the use of qualitative and quantitative methods in political science.

1.2 Explanations in political science

A theoretical explanation in political science is a set of assumptions about how political actors behave and how political institutions influence and shape this behaviour, from which a set of propositions is derived, which can then be tested against empirical observations. There are many different theoretical approaches and ideas in modern political science. Two such explanations are the **rational choice approach** and the **institutional approach**. Whereas the rational choice approach emphasises the importance of political actors and how they behave, the institutional approach emphasises the importance of societal and political institutions in determining political behaviour and political outcomes.

1.2.1 Rational choice approach

The starting assumption of the rational choice in political science is that political actors – such as voters, politicians, parties, or interest groups – behave 'rationally'. Rationally in this context does not mean that actors always carefully calculate the costs and benefits of every decision they make. Instead it means that actors have an identifiable set of preferences over policy or political outcomes, and when faced with a political choice they will tend to choose the option which they prefer (which yields them the highest 'utility'). So, for example, if a voter prefers Party A to Party B and Party B to Party C, but there is no candidate from Party A standing in a particular election, the voter will rationally vote for Party B rather than Party C.

This sounds like a pretty simple idea. But, this simple idea has yielded some very powerful insights. One such insight is known as the 'prisoners' dilemma' (compare Von Neumann and Morgenstern, 1944). The story behind the prisoners' dilemma is as follows. Two people are arrested who are suspected of committing a crime and are interrogated separately. They are each told that they can either keep quiet or talk. If they both keep quiet, the police tell them that they have sufficient evidence to convict them both for a minor offence, which has a one year jail term. If one talks and the other stays quiet, the talker will be let off, and the other will be convicted of a major offence, for a three year term. If they both talk, then they will both be convicted of the major offence, but with a shorter jail term, of two years.

Suspect 2

	Quiet	Talk
Quiet	-1,-1	-3,0
Talk	0,-3	-2,-2

Suspect 1 (row label)

Figure 1.1: A prisoners' dilemma.

Figure 1.1 simplifies this narrative in a 'game'. Each cell in the grid indicates a possible outcome and the 'pay-offs' for the two players, where the first number in each cell represents the pay-off to Suspect 1 and the second number the pay-off to Suspect 2. We can assign pay-offs for the suspects.

- From an individual point of view, the most preferable outcome for Suspect 1 is that she talks while Suspect 2 does not. In this instance, Suspect 1 will be set free without any cost. We will assign this a value of 0.

- The next most preferable outcome for Suspect 1 is that she does not talk and nor does Suspect 2. This means both would be convicted of the minor offence and pay the cost of a small prison sentence. We will assign this a value of –1.

- A more negative outcome is that Suspect 1 talks and so does Suspect 2. In this instance, both suspects will be convicted of a major offence and get a longer jail term. We will assign this a value of –2.

- The most negative outcome for Suspect 1 is that she stays quiet while Suspect 2 talks. In this scenario, Suspect 1 goes to jail for a major offence and the longest possible jail term while Suspect 2 goes free. We assign this a value of –3.

Clearly, the best collective outcome would be if they both remain quiet, and so are both convicted of a minor offence (which yields a pay-off of one year in prison each). However, if they are both rational, in a strategic sense, they will both talk, as this is the 'best response' of any player to the possible actions of the other player. For example, if Suspect 1 talks and Suspect 2 remains quiet, then Suspect 1 will be let off, and if Suspect 1 talks and Suspect 2 talks, then at least Suspect 1 will not end up with a long jail term. Following this logic, both suspects should talk, which would mean both being sent to prison for two years.

A 'Nash equilibrium' is a 'set of strategies in a game such that no player has an incentive to unilaterally change her mind given what the other players are doing' (Clark et al., 2012, p.103). In other words, it refers to a situation when a player is making the best decision they can, taking into account the actions of the other player's decisions. The 'equilibrium' of the prisoners' dilemma game is hence a 'sub-optimal' outcome, or an outcome that is not the best possible collective outcome. One key insight of rational choice theory, then, is that individually rational behaviour can sometimes lead to political and policy outcomes which are not collectively desirable.

This is further illustrated in Figure 1.2, which is an application of the prisoners' dilemma game to global environment emissions. In this scenario, two similar states have signed an international treaty on the reduction of carbon emissions (such as the Kyoto Protocol). However, under the terms of the treaty each state is free to decide whether to cut carbon emissions

or not to cut carbon emissions. Now, assume that a state bears some costs of cutting emissions, for example as a result of introducing a carbon tax (-3, say). However, if one state cuts its emissions everyone benefits from a cleaner environment, including the citizens in the other state, regardless of whether that state also cuts its emissions (+2 for both states, say), and if both states cut their emissions then everyone would benefit twice as much (namely, +4 for both states).

This logic consequently yields a set of pay-offs as follows. In the top-left cell, if both states cut their emissions, they each bear a cost of -3 but a benefit of +4 from a much cleaner environment, which yields an individual pay-off of +1 to each state and a collective pay-off of +2. In the bottom-left and top-right cells, if only one state cuts emissions, it bears a cost of -3 and a benefit of only +2, which makes -1, while the other state can 'free ride' on the action of the first states, by gaining a cleaner environment (+2) without suffering any domestic adjustment costs. Finally, in the bottom-right cell, if neither state takes any action we are stuck with the status quo, of no change from the current situation.

	State A	
	Cut emissions	Don't cut emissions
State B Cut emissions	+1,+1	-1,+2
Don't cut emissions	+2, -1	0,0

Figure 1.2: Global environment emissions as a prisoners' dilemma game.

Clearly the collectively optimal outcome is for both states to cut their carbon emissions. However, as in the classic prisoners' dilemma game, if both states are rational (utility-maximisers), the equilibrium outcome is the status quo, since regardless of what the other state decides to do, individually a state is better off not cutting emissions (since +2 beats +1, if the other state cuts its emissions, and 0 beats -1, if the other state does not cut its emissions). Rational choice theory consequently helps explain why enforcing international environmental treaties is so difficult.

The theory also explains a number of other empirical regularities in politics, such as why parties in two-party systems tend to converge on the average (median) voter; why interest groups who represent narrow economic interests tend to be more able to mobilise than interest groups who represent broad societal interests; why policy change is more difficult in presidential systems than in parliamentary systems; why coalition governments between parties with similar policy preferences can be as decisive as single-party governments, and even why some forms of governments lead to greater wealth redistribution than others.

Nevertheless, rational choice theory is not without its critics. Many political scientists do not like the underlying pejorative assumption in rational choice theory that political actors **should** behave rationally (for example, Green and Shapiro, 1994). In defence, most contemporary rational choice theorists claim that rather than suggesting that actors should behave rationally, what they actually do is try to work out what could happen **if** actors did behave rationally (for example, Tsebelis, 1990). At a theoretical level, though, not all political actors are equally as

likely to be 'rational' in all political situations. In general, the higher the political stakes and the more often the behaviour is repeated, the more likely that a political actor will behave in a rational, and easily predictable, way. For example, when a party leader is working out what policies to put in a manifesto to win as many votes as possible, she will no doubt think carefully and strategically about all the potential options and likely outcomes. Contrast this with a citizen who takes lots of things into account when deciding how to vote, or even whether to vote, and ultimately may be influenced more by habit or social norms than a rational calculation. After all, from a strict rational choice perspective, it is probably irrational to vote since the costs of voting (the time and effort involved) far outweigh the expected benefits (the utility of one party winning as opposed to another, multiplied by the probability that the citizen will be pivotal in determining which party wins) (for example, Aldrich, 1993).

1.2.2 Institutional approach

A very different theoretical approach in political science derives from a variety of assumptions and propositions about the role of institutions. Here, 'institutions' means any formal or informal rule which constrains the behaviour of actors (compare North, 1990). **Formal institutions** include the various provisions in a constitution, the rules of procedure in a parliament, an electoral system, campaign finance regulations, rules governing how a party chooses its leader, and so on. **Informal institutions**, meanwhile, encompass social structures (such as class), social norms and cultural practices, metaphysical beliefs and ideological values, and so on. What formal and informal 'institutions' have in common is that they restrict actors' behaviour in political situations, and so shape political actions and political outcomes.

For example, one set of influential formal institutions is the rules in the policy-making process governing how many actors can block a proposal: the number of 'veto players' (compare Tsebelis, 2002). Where a political system has a single veto-player – for example, in a parliamentary system when there is only one party in government and that party also controls a majority of seats in the parliament (as is often the case in the United Kingdom) – this actor can dominate policy-making, and hence make radical policy changes. In contrast, where a political system has multiple veto-players – for example, in a presidential system where one party has the presidency and another party controls the majority in a congress, or in a parliamentary system when there are several parties in government – policy change tends to be more difficult as more actors need to agree on what policies need to be changed. As a result, in many policy-making situations, policy outcomes may be less determined by the political preferences of the actors (as standard rational choice theory assumes) and more a result of the formal institutions governing how decisions are made.

In contrast, examples of influential informal institutions are the cultural norms in a society governing what constitutes 'appropriate' behaviour. To illustrate the role of social norms on behaviour consider how you might agree to divide a Dollar (or Pound, or Euro, or Yen, or any currency) between you and a friend. This game, known as the 'ultimatum game' in experimental psychology, involves two players: Player 1 makes a proposal of how to divide the Dollar between the two players, and Player 2 then decides whether to accept or reject the proposal. If Player 2 accepts the proposal, the money is divided between the two players as proposed by Player 1. But, if Player 2 rejects the proposal, neither player receives any money.

Now, if both players are strictly 'rational', in a utility-maximising sense, Player 1 should propose a division of 99 cents for Player 1 and one cent for Player 2, and Player 2 should then accept this proposal because one cent is greater than 0, which is what they would receive if they reject the proposal.

However, a division of 99-1 is rarely the outcome when the ultimatum game is played in experiments with real people (is that how you would divide a Pound between you and a friend?). In fact, the average division in ultimatum games played by students in universities in North America and Europe is between 60-40 and 55-45 (with Player 1 receiving 60-55 cents/pence and Player 2 receiving 40-45 cents/pence). Offers of less than 40 cents by Player 1 tend to be rejected by Player 2 in these games because Player 2 considers anything less than an offer of 40 cents to be 'unfair'. Put another way, rather than focus on the short-term receipt of money in the game (which would lead Player 2 to accept any offer which is greater than 0), most people consider wider implications when making decisions, such as how their actions might set a precedent that people could get away with selfish behaviour.

Researchers have also found that the ultimatum game is played differently in different cultures. For example, a team of psychologists and economists conducted the ultimatum game in 15 small-scale societies in different regions in the world to see how the cultural fairness norms in the societies influenced how people behaved (Henrich et al., 2005). In the societies they studied, at one extreme the average division in an ultimatum game for the Lamelara in Indonesia was 42 for Player 1 and 58 for Player 2, whereas at the other extreme the average division for the Machiguenga in Peru was 74 for Player 1 and 26 for Player 2. In other words, cultural fairness norms are probably stronger among the Lamelara than they are among the Machiguenga.

More generally, from an institutional perspective, many political scientists theorise that rather than behaving in a rational self-interested utility-maximising way, in many decision-making situations political actors follow a 'logic of appropriateness' that fits their particular social, cultural or political context (March and Olsen, 1989).

Another set of ideas within the institutional approach is that once formal or informal institutions have influenced a particular policy or political outcomes, these outcomes tend to be 'locked-in' for a long term. This effect is known as 'path dependency' (Pierson, 2000). A prominent example of path dependency is the structure of party systems in western Europe today.

Universal suffrage was introduced in most countries in western Europe in the first few years after the First World War, between 1918 and 1925. At that time, the main social divisions (cleavages) were between landed interests, who were represented by conservative or Christian democratic parties, urban business interests, who were represented by liberal parties, and industrial workers, who were represented by socialist or labour parties. These parties dominated the early elections throughout western Europe. In the intervening century western Europe has suffered World Wars, authoritarian regimes and revolutions, witnessed the building of the welfare state in the 1950s and 1960s, experienced economic transformations in the 1970s and 1980s, undergone dramatic social and technological change in the past 30 years, and seen the rise of many new political parties and social movements. Yet, still today, conservative, Christian democratic, liberal and social democratic parties dominate politics, and together win most of the votes, in every western European country.

Seymour Martin Lipset and Stein Rokkan (1967) offered a powerful explanation of why this is the case. They argued that following universal suffrage the parties and party systems that formed in the 1920s were 'frozen' because of the organisational structures that were created within political parties and between political parties and the electorate. These party organisations were remarkably resilient, and so could adapt to the new economic, social and technological challenges.

Despite the different underlying assumptions of the rational choice and institutional approaches, most contemporary political scientists combine ideas from both approaches, and as a result assume a two-way interaction between actors and institutions (for example, Shepsle, 1989). This interaction is illustrated in Figure 1.3. On the one hand, at certain times actors are able to 'choose' institutions. For example, when a new democracy is formed, citizens and parties play a role in deciding what should be written in a constitution or how an electoral system should be designed. Also, repeated interactions between actors shape how cultural norms evolve and develop. When this happens, Kenneth Shepsle refers to these outcomes as 'equilibrium institutions': institutions which are the result of actors' individual and collective decisions.

On the other hand, once formal and informal institutions have been set up they constrain actors when they are making decisions. And, once formal and informal institutions have been in place for some time, they are often difficult to change (they are 'sticky'). Shepsle calls these outcomes 'institutional equilibria': policy and political outcomes which are the result of actors' decisions within a particular set of formal or informal institutional constraints.

Institutions are 'chosen' by actors

Actors   **Institutions**

Once created, institutions constrain behaviour, and
and often in ways that were not intended
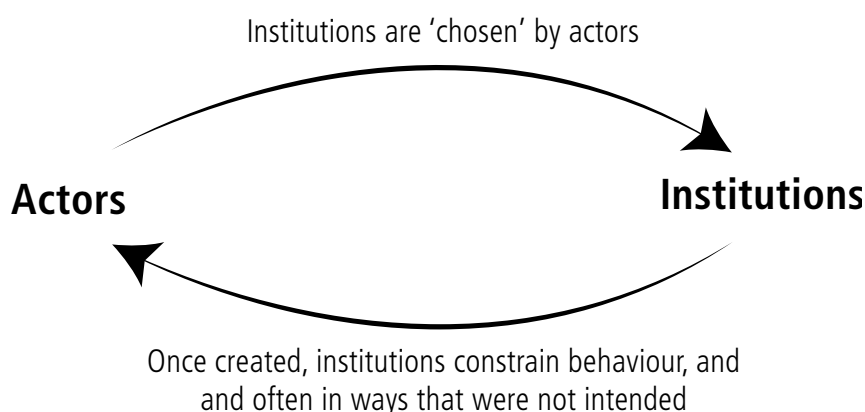
Figure 1.3: Interaction of actors and institutions.

This relationship between actors and institutions has actually been at the heart of social science theory for a long time. As Karl Marx (1852) once put it:

> Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they
> please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances,
> but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted
> from the past.

In other words, political actors make decisions, and are hence at the centre of most theories in modern political science. However, to understand how actors make decisions, and why certain outcomes result from individual and collective decisions, we need to know a lot about the institutional, social and political context within which actors behave, and how this context constrains and shapes actors' behaviour.

1.3 Methods in political science

A research method is a way of approaching the collection and analysis of information, of identifying relationships between factors, and ultimately of testing whether a theoretical proposition is true or false. As in other social sciences, political science uses both qualitative and quantitative methods. A qualitative method is the use of non-numerical techniques, such as archival research, text analysis, interviews, and so on, to uncover the key factors which explain a particular event or outcome. In contrast, a quantitative method is the application of statistical techniques to a large number of observations to identify correlations and causal relationships between 'variables'.

A variable is any observable empirical regularity which can be measured in some way: such as the income of a voter, the number of parties in a government, or the level of public spending on education. Political scientists often talk about 'dependent variables' and 'independent variables'. A **dependent variable** is the outcome factor which is trying to be explained (such as the level of democracy in a country). **Independent variables**, in contrast, are the factors which a researcher believes cause variation in the dependent variable (such as the level of economic development, the culture of a country, and so on). A **hypothesis** is a proposed explanation of the causal relationship between one or more independent variables and a dependent variable: for example, that economic development leads to democracy. Hypotheses are used in both qualitative and quantitative political science.

A vigorous debate exists in political science about which type of method is best, and for what purpose (for example, King et al., 1994; Brady and Collier, 2004). Suffice it to say that both methods have their advantages and disadvantages.

1.3.1 Qualitative methods

There are a number of different qualitative methods in the social sciences. Two such methods which are commonly used in political science are **case studies** and the **comparative method**.

A case study is the close observation of one particular case or phenomenon. There are several different types of case studies (Gerring, 2004). A theory-generating case study is where a researcher looks closely at a particular case or event to try to come up with an explanation of a particular phenomenon, which can then be tested by observing a number of other related cases or events (using either qualitative or quantitative methods). A theory-testing case study, in contrast, is where a researcher takes an existing theoretical idea in political science and tries to test the theory by closely studying one particular case. The case in question could be an important example of where the theory is meant to hold. In this method, the case study is known as a 'critical case' study, since if the theory does not hold in the particular case then the theory probably does not hold elsewhere either. Alternatively, a theory-testing case study could involve looking at a case where previous research suggests that a theory does not hold. Here, by studying an 'outlier case', the researcher tries to understand why the theory does not explain a particular phenomenon, with a view to understanding what factors might be missing in the original theory.

The comparative method is related to the case study method in that it involves the careful study of a small number of cases. This method was pioneered by John Stuart Mill in the mid-nineteenth century (Mill, 1843).

Mill proposed two related comparative methods, which he called the 'Method of Agreement' and the 'Method of Difference'. The Method of Agreement involves looking at two cases of the same phenomenon, and then trying to identify the variables on which the two cases are different. For example, if two countries are democracies and one society is rich and the other is poor, then the Method of Agreement suggests that economic wealth is not a **necessary condition** for a country to be a democracy, since one of the countries is poor but is still a democracy. (A necessary condition is 'a circumstance in whose absence the phenonemon in question cannot occur' (Clark et al., 2012, p.40)).

The Method of Difference, in contrast, involves looking at two cases that differ in a variable that the researcher aims to understand, and then trying to identify the variables for which the two cases have the same value. So, for example, if one country is a democracy and the other is not a democracy and both countries are ethnically homogeneous, then the Method of Difference suggests that the level of ethnic homogeneity is not a **sufficient condition** for a country to be a democracy, since one of the countries is ethnically homogeneous but is not a democracy. (A sufficient condition is 'a circumstance in whose presence the event in question must occur' (Clark et al., 2012, p.40)).

In both case studies and the comparative method, one of the key methods that qualitative researchers undertake is 'process-tracing'. Process-tracing involves carefully mapping the precise pathway from one variable to another variable, to try to uncover the causal mechanisms and sequences that explain how one variable has an effect on the other variable.

For example, Henry Brady (2004) used process-tracing to investigate what happened in the 2000 US Presidential election in Florida. The 2000 US Presidential election, between George Bush and Al Gore, came down to a very close race in the state of Florida. In the end, George Bush was declared the winner after the US Supreme Court stopped the recount of ballots in Florida. Many Democratic Party voters were unhappy with this outcome, claiming that had the recount been allowed to continue, Al Gore would have won. In response, some Republican Party supporters pointed out that the TV and radio networks had called the race in Florida for Al Gore while the polls were still open in the Western Panhandle counties (Florida crosses two time zones), which suppressed the Republican vote in these counties and hence suggests that Bush was the rightful winner of the election.

To investigate these claims, Brady traces the causal pathway between the calling of the election in Florida by the TV and radio stations and the votes in the Florida Panhandle counties. The media announced the election 10 minutes before the polling stations closed in the Panhandle counties. Evidence suggests that about one-twelfth of voters vote in the last hour, which is about 1/72nd of all voters in the last 10 minutes. There were 303,000 potential voters in the Panhandle in 2000 (who did not complete absentee ballots), which means that about 4,200 voters could have been affected by the early election call (303,000 divided by 72). However, research on media exposure suggests that only 20 per cent of these voters would have heard the election call, which is about 840 voters (20 per cent of 4,200). But, not all these voters were Republicans. In the Panhandle, the Bush vote was about 66 per cent, which means that 560 Bush voters perhaps heard the early call (66 per cent of 840). Of these 560, how many decided not to vote? Research suggests that only 10 per cent of voters who hear early election calls do not bother voting, as other elections are held at the same time, and 10 per cent of 560 is 56. Now, if 10 per cent of the 280

Gore voters also decided not to vote, then the total net effect of calling the election early in Florida was probably only about 28 votes for Bush, which is very unlikely to have had any effect on the overall outcome of the election!

Political scientists who use qualitative methods often claim that these methods allow them to measure variables and the effects of one variable on another in a very precise way, and particularly when the causal relationships between variables are highly complex. They also argue that these methods make it easier for researchers to discover 'new facts' which were previously unknown. Another claim is that qualitative methods enable researchers to gain a deep understanding of behaviour, decisions and processes, which is essential for furthering political science knowledge.

Nevertheless, critics of qualitative methods argue that these methods may be useful for generating new theoretical ideas, but they cannot be used for properly testing theories, as this requires a much larger set of observations, so that multiple causes of outcomes can be controlled for. Qualitative methods are also often hard to replicate, as it is difficult for other researchers to follow exactly the same procedures that a qualitative researcher has undertaken to come up with their observations and conclusions. Finally, and most harshly, some critics of qualitative methods argue that these methods are 'little more than good journalism', since the results can sometimes be a set of narrative descriptions which may or may not be theoretically or empirically robust.

1.3.2 Quantitative methods

The use of quantitative methods has exploded in political science in the last 30 years. This is partly because of changes in the training of students in doctoral programmes in political science. It is also a result of the collection and dissemination of new datasets, the development of new statistical methods, and the development of computer power, which has allowed researchers to apply these new techniques on large datasets on their laptops rather than large mainframe computers.

In one sense, where the aim of a researcher is to understand a causal relationship between one variable and another variable, the only difference between quantitative and qualitative methods is the number of observations being studied. In another sense, however, the methods are quite different, in that whereas quantitative methods are usually used to test a set of theoretical propositions, qualitative methods are often used to try to understand how, rather than whether, one variable is related to another.

One of the basic techniques of quantitative methods is **regression analysis**. Regression analysis aims to identify how far a dependent variable changes when any one of a number of independent variables is varied, while the other independent variables are held fixed. Regression analysis was invented and developed by Adrien-Marie Legendre, Carl Friedrich Gauss, and Francis Galton in the nineteenth century, and has since been extended and applied across all the natural and social sciences.

Regression, in its simplest form, works as follows. If x causes y, then we should expect the following relationship between these two variables:

$$Y = a + bX$$

Here, y is the dependent variable, x is the independent variable, a is the constant (the baseline value of Y which is uneffected by X), and b is the 'regression coefficient', which is the magnitude of the effect of X on Y.
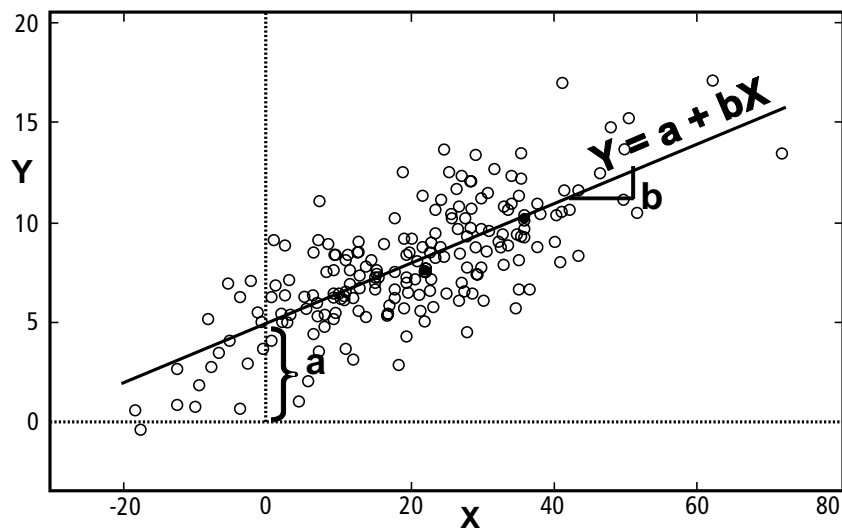
Figure 1.4: Illustration of a regression line.

How this works is illustrated in Figure 1.4. The figure shows a range of hypothetical observations with particular values of X and Y and the average relationship between X and Y, which is shown by the 'regression line'. This line crosses the Y axis at the value a, and the slope of the line is b. So, for a one unit increase in the value of X, Y increases on average by b.

As the figure shows, not all observations are on the regression line. The level of dispersion of the observations around the line indicates the level of 'statistical significance' of the relationship between X and Y. This is further illustrated in Figure 1.5. The closer the observations are clustered around a regression line, the more statistically significant the relationship is between X and Y.

Political scientists often present the results of quantitative research in a table rather than in a series of figures. An example of a table of regression results is shown in Table 1.1. Here we estimate two statistical models of the correlates of the 'effective number of parties' elected in a parliament in 615 elections in 82 democracies since 1945, using a dataset developed by John Carey and Simon Hix (Carey and Hix, 2011).
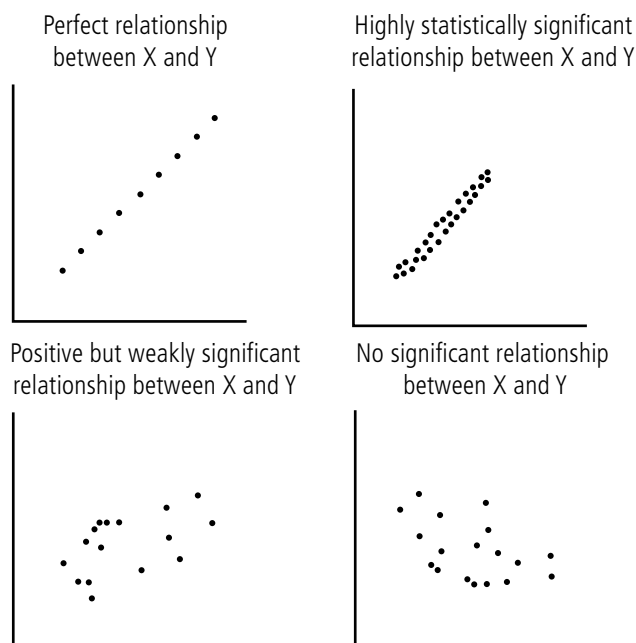
Figure 1.5: Statistical significance in a simple bivariate regression.

The table shows the results of two regression models. The first model looks at how the number of Members of Parliament (MPs) elected in a constituency (the 'district magnitude') affects the number of parties in a parliament; and the second model adds a number of other 'control' variables, to see if the relationship found in Model 1 still holds when a number of other factors are taken into account.

Dependent variable = effective number of parties elected in a parliament
Observations = 615 elections in 82 democracies, since 1945

Constant	3.215***	3.418***	
	(0.066)	(0.339)	
No. of MPs elected in a constituency	0.012***	0.010***	← Coefficient (magnitude of the effect)
	(0.002)	(0.002)	
Economic inequality		-0.019***	
		(0.007)	← Standard error
Ethnic fragmentation		1.373**	
		(.277)	
Federal system		-.518***	← Indication of statistical significance, *** ≥ 99% ** ≥ 95% * ≥ 90%
		(.158)	
GDP per capita		0.027*	
		(0.012)	
Population		-0.001	
		(0.001)	
No. of observations	615	615	
R-squared	0.06	0.11	← Overall explanatory power of the model

Key independent variable → No. of MPs elected in a constituency

Other independent (control) variables

Table 1.1: Regression models of the number of parties in a parliament.

Several things are worth noting in the table. First, the 'constant' is the average number of parties in all democracies in this period, which is just over three. Second, the 'coefficients' for each of the variables indicate the **magnitude** of the relationship between an independent variable and the dependent variable, and the value of each coefficient is the effect of a one unit change in an independent variable on the amount of change in the dependent variable. So, increasing the average number of MPs elected in a constituency by one (from one to two or eight to nine, say) increases the number of parties in a parliament by about 0.01. Put another way, a country with a district size of 100 is likely to have one more party in its parliament than a country with a district size of one, all other things being equal. However, having a federal system of government is associated with about 0.5 fewer parties.

Third, the numbers in parentheses are the 'standard errors' of the coefficients. These indicate how much variance there is in the relationship between the particular independent variable and the dependent variable. Fourth, the asterisks next to the coefficients indicate the statistical significance of the relationship between an independent variable and a dependent variable: with more stars indicating a statistically stronger relationship. The smaller the standard error, the larger the statistical significance. So, for example, the relationship between the level of ethnic fragmentation in a country and the number of parties in a parliament is statistically significant, whereas the relationship between population size and the number of parties in a parliament is not statistically significant.

Finally, the R-squared statistic at the bottom of the table indicates the overall explanatory power of the model. The first model explains 6 per cent of the total variance in the observations whereas the second model explains 11 per cent. So, adding more variables increases the explanatory power of the model. However, almost 90 per cent of the variance in the

number of parties in parliaments in democracies since 1945 is unexplained by these factors. Clearly many other things matter.

Overall, quantitative methods allow political scientists to test theoretical propositions about causal relationships across a large number of observations. These methods also enable researchers to control for multiple causes of variation in a dependent variable. Quantitative methods are also easy to replicate, which allows other researchers to check the results by estimating the same statistical models with the same datasets.

Nevertheless, quantitative methods also have their weaknesses. The methods require phenomena to be quantified, which raises concerns about how things have been measured or quantified across very different contexts. The methods also usually have to assume a 'constant causal effect' across all observations: where the average effect of X on Y should be the same for all cases. This can be a highly questionable assumption. Observing a statistical relationship between X and Y does not necessarily mean that X causes Y. It might mean that Y in fact causes X – for example, in Table 1.1, the number of parties in a parliament might affect gross domestic product (GDP) per capita. And, even if a causal relationship could be identified statistically, this is not the same as actually understanding **how** one variable has an effect on another.

In sum, qualitative and quantitative methods should be seen as complementary rather than in confrontation. Both methods can, of course, be done badly. But, any good political scientist understands the limits of the methods they use, and many political science research questions require both quantitative and qualitative methods for the question to be answered effectively.

1.4 Conclusion

Political science has evolved from the early description of institutions at the end of the nineteenth century, to a focus in the mid-twentieth century on political behaviour, to the modern study of the relationship between actors, institutions and political outcomes. Two prominent theoretical approaches in political science are rational choice theory, which emphasises the strategic utility-maximising behaviour of political actors; and institutional theory, which emphasises the power and path-dependency of formal and informal political institutions. Finally, political scientists apply a range of research methods to test their theories, and both qualitative and quantitative methods have their strengths and weaknesses.

1.5 A reminder of your learning outcomes

Having completed this chapter, and the Essential reading and activities, you should be able to:

- explain the difference between political behaviour and political institutions, and how political behaviour and institutions interact to explain political and policy outcomes

- discuss the difference between theoretical explanations which focus on the rational behaviour of political actors and explanations which focus on the role of institutions and society

- discuss the difference between qualitative and quantitative methods in political science and the pros and cons of these two approaches to empirical research.

1.6 Sample examination questions

1. Assess the strengths and weaknesses of rational choice theory.

2. 'Institutions are more important than behaviour in explaining political phenomena.' Discuss.

3. Assess the strengths and weaknesses of **either** quantitative **or** qualitative research methods.

Chapter 2: Democracy

Aims of the chapter

The aims of this chapter are to:

- provide an overview of ways of understanding and measuring democracy in political science
- explain how the number of democracies increased in several 'waves' in the twentieth century
- present some of the main theories of why countries become and remain democratic; covering social and economic modernisation, culture, and strategic bargains between social groups.

Learning outcomes

By the end of this chapter, and having completed the Essential reading and activities, you should be able to:

- discuss the differences between procedural and substantive definitions of democracy
- describe the historical growth in democracy throughout the twentieth century
- compare and contrast the main explanations for why some countries become and remain democratic
- explain why your adopted country either became a democracy, or remained only partially democratic, or has switched between democracy and authoritarian government.

Interactive tasks

1. Choose a country that you are interested in and that is democratic or partially democratic but is not your home country. This is going to become your 'adopted country' throughout this course. Look up your country's Polity IV score from 1946 to the present day on the website: http://systemicpeace.org/polity/polity4.htm. What does this tell you about the pattern of democracy in your adopted country?

2. Assess whether the economic, cultural or strategic bargaining theories apply to the democratisation of your adopted country and to what extent they do so.

Reading

Essential reading

Clark, W.R., M. Golder and S. Nadenichek Golder *Principles of Comparative Politics*. (Washington DC: CQ Press, 2012), Chapter 5.

Inglehart, R. and C. Welzel 'Changing Mass Priorities: The Link between Modernization and Democracy', *Perspectives on Politics* 8(2) 2010, pp. 551–567.

'Polity IV Project: Political Regime Characteristics and Transitions, 1800–2008'; www.systemicpeace.org/polity/polity4.htm

Further reading

Acemoglu, D. and J.A. Robinson *Economic Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) [ISBN 9780521855266] Chapters 1, 2 and 3.

Clark, W.R., M. Golder and S. Nadenichek Golder *Principles of Comparative Politics*. (Washington DC: CQ Press, 2012) Chapters 6 and 7.

North, D.R. and B.R. Weingast 'Constitutions and Commitment: The Evolution of Institutions Governing Public Choice in Seventeenth-Century England', *Journal of Economic History* 49(4) 1989, pp.803–832.

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Dahl, R.A. *Polyarchy: participation and opposition*. (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1971).

Huntington, S.P. 'The Clash of Civilizations?', *Foreign Affairs* 72(3) 1993, pp.22–49.

Lipset, S.M. 'Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy', *American Political Science Review* 53(1) 1959, pp.69–105.

Moore, B. *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World*. (London: Allen Lane, 1966) and ([London]: Penguin Books Ltd., 1969) [ISBN 9780140550863].

Przeworski, A., M.E. Alvarez, J.A. Chebiub and F. Limongi *Democracy and Development: Political Institutions and Wellbeing in the World, 1950–1990*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) [ISBN 9780521793797].

Popper, K.R. *The Open Society and its Enemies. Volume 1: The Spell of Plato*. (Routledge and Kegan Paul: London, [1945] 1966).

Schumpeter, J.A. *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*. (New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1942).

2.1 What is democracy?

Democracy has a strange and troubled history. In fact, the history of the twentieth century can be read as a history of just how difficult it is to create and sustain democracy. When we look at the history of democracy we can see a slow shift over the course of 2,000 years away from the negative view of democracy as a system that allowed the uneducated masses too much power to today's positive view of democracy which has led to most states claiming to be democracies, even when they patently are nothing of the sort, because it is now seen as the most desirable system of political organisation.

One of the first theorists of democracy was Aristotle who back in around 330 BCE stated that: 'In a democracy the poor will have more power than the rich, because there are more of them, the will of the majority is supreme'. Democracy's fundamental principle of placing power in the hands of the majority made Aristotle sceptical and wary. He saw it as rule by the masses who, in the time of Ancient Greece, were the low-educated and economically dependent common people. He feared that giving such a group of people power equal to that of the more educated and economically independent citizens would most likely lead to chaos and populism. When the first debates about democracy as a system of political rule were taking place in Ancient Greece, it was viewed with suspicion and criticised as being dangerous and unworkable. This negative perception remained right up until the Renaissance and Enlightenment eras when democracy became rehabilitated and thinkers started to link it with liberalism and an opposition to tyranny. Its subsequent revival continued

in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries until it reached the positive position that we associate with democracy today.

Of course, democracy as practised in large nation-states is very different from that imagined by Aristotle when he was writing, and over time multiple visions and understandings of democracy have evolved. These were well captured by Abraham Lincoln's famous statement in his address after the battle of Gettysburg in 1863, that 'Democracy is government of the people, by the people, for the people'. Democracy 'of the people' referred to the idea that democracy is fundamentally concerned with the people electing representatives to public office. The notion of 'by the people' emphasised that it must be these elected representatives that actually hold the power of decision-making in a democracy and not some other unelected body. Finally, Lincoln also notes the importance of the outcomes that democratic governments produce and democracy 'for the people' emphasises that democracy should promote the interests of the people and not some private interests. In this way, Lincoln teases out the different elements of modern representative democracy and how they fit together.

Aristotle feared the political equality among people that democracy entailed and he feared giving everyone an equal say over public affairs. Yet it was precisely this level of political equality and opportunity for the common people that led Mahatma Gandhi to advocate democracy for post-colonial India almost 2,300 years later and India today is the world's largest democracy. Gandhi said that: 'My notion of democracy is that under it the weakest shall have the same opportunities as the strongest'. Here the political equality of the masses is re-imagined as a positive and empowering attribute rather than as a potential route to chaos. For Gandhi, democracy is a system of rule that is more beneficial to the majority of citizens compared to alternative non-democratic systems that are more beneficial to a small group of elites.

From this brief overview we can see that democracy may be a long standing idea but it has not always been considered in a positive light. What is more, Lincoln shows us that democracy can take many forms, but we can say that overarching these different forms is the basic idea that it is concerned with giving citizens political equality and placing power in the hands of the people rather than in the hands of elites. This remains the case today even if we now mainly understand democracy to be representative democracy.

2.2 Democracy in political science

As we saw in the previous chapter, political scientists strive to use empirical evidence to measure and test ideas. So if we hope to do this for democracy, then we need a more specific definition than we have discussed so far. We need to know what is required to classify a country as being democratic or non-democratic. In political science, there are two main types of definitions of democracy: what we shall call 'procedural' and 'substantive' definitions.

Robert Dahl's (1971) starting point in his definition of democracy was that democracy was about political equality and giving everyone an equal voice in saying how a state should be governed. He then specified what procedures or institutions were required to deliver democratic political equality. According to Dahl's definition, if any one of these features is absent, then that society is a non-democracy:

- free and fair elections
- universal suffrage
- the policies a government passes depend on the election result
- citizens have the right to stand as candidates
- freedom of expression and information
- freedom of association.

A similar approach to defining democracy had come earlier from Karl Popper. He also placed the emphasis on the procedures required to underpin democracy and he gave a very minimal definition. For Popper, the only thing that is required for a state to be considered a democracy is that its citizens are able to remove a government from power.

Dahl and Popper were interested in refining a procedural definition of democracy, or a definition that classified systems of government according to whether or not certain procedures and institutions are in place. This appealed to them because they felt that it would help political scientists to find real world examples of democracy and to know very easily if a state is democratic or not.

In contrast, some scholars support more substantive definitions of democracy and they argue that specifying the procedural elements of democracy is not enough. Rather, definitions of democracy also need to take into account the substance of what democracy is about and what it aims to achieve. Under a procedural definition, it is possible to find states that have all of these features in place, but without actually being a democracy. For example, Singapore today, it could be argued, has all of these procedures in place but many people do not tend to think of Singapore as a democracy because it does not actually have **competitive** elections.

In an attempt to build the substance of democracy into his definition, Schumpeter drew attention to the importance of political elites competing among each other to win the votes of citizens. He defined democracy as a system in which 'individuals acquire the power to decide [political decisions] by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote' (1942, p.50). According to his definition, democracy is characterised by rival groups of elites competing to govern and the people choosing between these rival groups. A similar emphasis can be detected in one of the most prominent definitions of measuring democracy in political science by Przeworski et al. (2000). The authors' definition emphasises four different aspects that must be present in order for a state to be classified as democratic. These are as follows:

1. The chief executive is elected.

2. The legislature is elected.

3. There is more than one party competing in elections.

4. An alteration in power under identical electoral rules has taken place.

In this definition, Przeworski et al. acknowledge the importance of having elections, but they also realise that elections alone are not enough for a country to be described as democratic. They argue that there must also be at least two parties competing in the elections and, crucially, there must be a turnover of power. These features are crucial to ensure that the substance of democracy is present.

The distinction between procedural and substantive definitions of democracy can be seen by looking at two particular cases. Since gaining

independence from Britain in 1966 until the present day, Botswana has been ruled by representatives from the Botswana Democratic Party. During this time all the procedures identified by Dahl have been in place and under a procedural definition it would qualify as a strong democracy. However, without any test of the willingness of the governing party to step down from power upon losing an election, it could not be considered a democracy under Przeworski et al.'s substantive definition. Similarly, in Mexico the Institutional Revolutionary Party held power, including the presidency, from its formation in 1929 until 1997 when it lost its majority in the Congress and 2000 when it lost the presidency. Once again, during this time there were certainly free and fair elections held on a regular basis, but without any alternation in power Mexico was not considered to be a democracy by many scholars until 2000.

2.3 Measuring democracy

So where does all this leave us when we think about how to measure the level of democracy in the world? One of the most widely used and widely accepted measures of democracy is a substantive one called 'Polity IV'. This provides an annual measure of democracy and autocracy for 184 countries from 1800 to the present day, giving it the longest time-series and the most number of countries of any of the measures of democracy used in political science. It is comprised of five separate measures which, when combined, capture whether the substance of democracy is present or absent within a system. The five measures it uses are:

1. Competitiveness of executive recruitment.

2. Openness of executive recruitment.

3. Constraints on the executive.

4. Regulation of political participations.

5. Competitiveness of political participation.

(For those of you unfamiliar with the phrase 'the executive', this refers to the government in a political system. So in a presidential system, the executive is the president, while in a parliamentary system the executive is the prime minister and their cabinet). This measure gives a score somewhere between -10 and +10 for each country where -10 means a country is as autocratic as possible while +10 means a country is as democratic as possible. However, to make it a little easier when it comes to measuring whether a country is democratic or not, many scholars have used the cut-off point of +6. So, if a country has a polity score of +6 or higher, we can consider it to be a democracy.

Using this measure, we can observe the evolution of the number of democracies in the world between 1800 and the present day. Figure 2.1 shows the rise in the number of democratic countries over time. It shows not only the increase in the number of countries in the world as a result of the decline of empires and the rise of new nation-states, but crucially it also shows an uneven pattern. The growth of democracies really began in 1900 but then fell back again in 1939/1940 with the onset of the Second World War and the rise of Fascism. Yet this was followed by an explosion in the number of democracies in the 1960s which has carried on until the present day.

Based on this graph we can say that it is a mistake to assume democracy was the dominant form of political organisation prior to this very recent history. Rather, for most of modern political history the world was governed by other forms of political organisation, such as monarchies,

dictatorships or communist and single-party states. It is only in recent years that the majority of the world's countries are now democracies and that the majority of the people in the world live in a democracy. It is also significant to note that this trend emerges even when using Polity IV's very substantive definition of democracy.
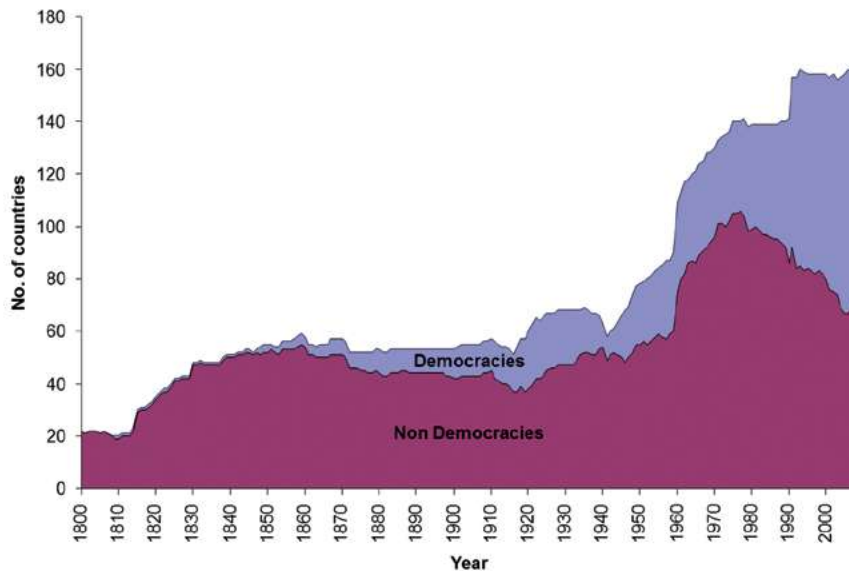
Figure 2.1: The rise of democracy.

Data source: Polity IV, Center for Systemic Peace;
www.systemicpeace.org/polity/polity4.htm

The other trend we can observe from this graph is that democracy has developed in several waves. Samuel Huntington (1993) spoke of three waves of democratisation. The first wave began in the nineteenth century and lasted until 1919, after the First World War. This was when many of the older west European and North American democracies emerged. However, the growth in democracies stalled and shrank during the interwar period, prior to the second wave of democracy which began after the Second World War in 1945. During the second wave, many states were rebuilt or emerged along democratic lines. However, it is also important to note that parts of central, eastern and southern Europe became authoritarian systems at that time. The third wave of democracy then began in the 1960s and runs up until the present day. This wave began with the decolonisation of countries in Africa and the Middle East and includes the rise of democracy in southern Europe and Latin America as well as the emergence of new democracies in central and eastern Europe after the collapse of the USSR. The nature of these waves can be seen more clearly when we look at the average polity scores for all countries in different regions of the world, as Figure 2.2 shows.
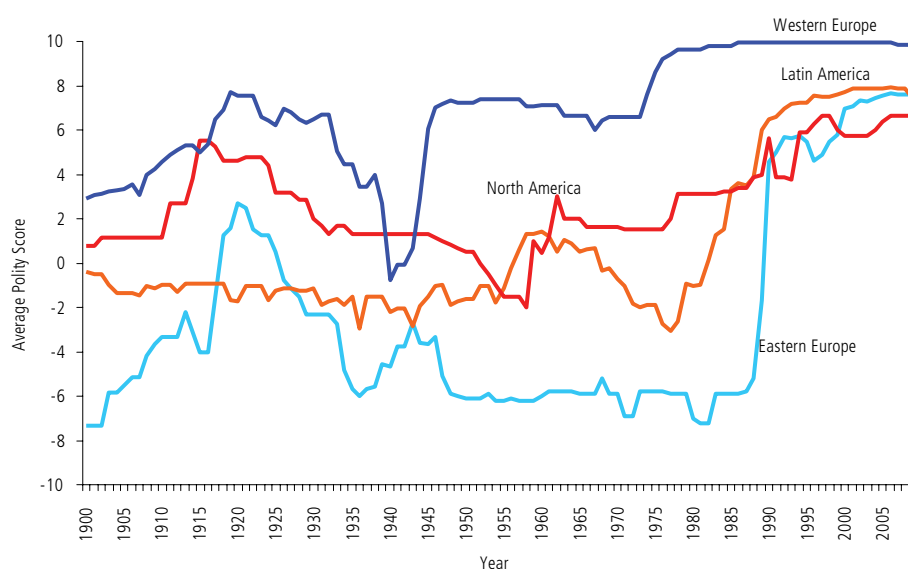
a. Europe and the Americas
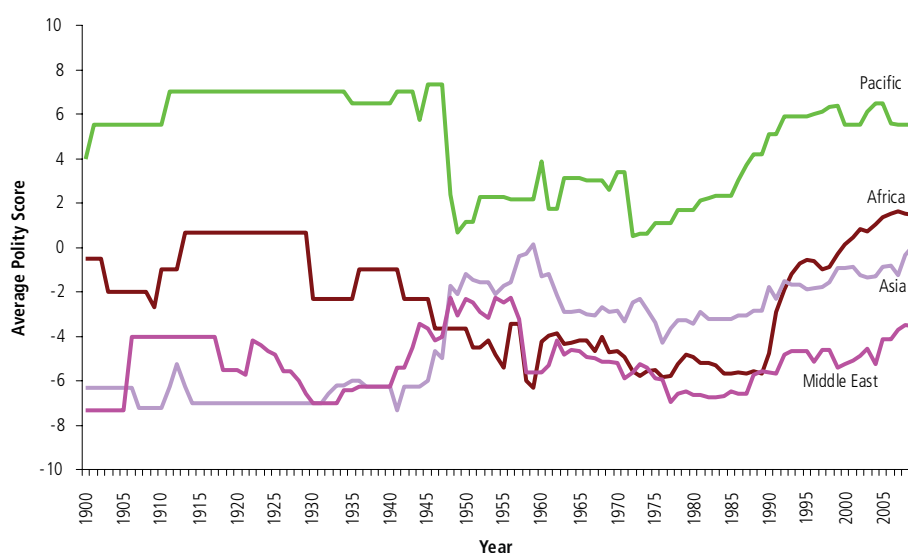
b. Asia, the Pacific, Africa and the Middle East

Figure 2.2: Patterns of democracy in different regions of the world.

Data source: Polity IV, Center for Systemic Peace; www.systemicpeace.org/polity/polity4.htm

These different patterns raise questions about how we can best explain the factors that create and sustain democracy.

2.4 Explaining democracy

In discussions of democratisation there are three prominent sets of explanations for why countries become democratic. The first emphasises the importance of economic and social modernisation; the second emphasises cultural factors; while the third highlights the centrality of strategic bargains between political elites and their citizens.

It is also important to note that when talking about democratisation we not only think about why a country becomes a democracy in the first place, but we must also consider what factors are important in helping a country to survive as a democracy without reverting back to some non-democratic form of rule. This is called democratic consolidation or democratic survival.

2.4.1 Social and economic modernisation and democracy

It is well established that there is a correlation between levels of wealth in a country and democracy. Acemoglu and Robinson (2006, p.53) and Clark et al. (2012, p.180) both present graphs showing that as a country's wealth increases (measured using average gross domestic product (GDP) per person), it is more likely to be a democracy. However, as with all correlations, we cannot be sure which way round is the causal relation: are countries more likely to be a democracy because they are wealthy, or are countries more likely to be wealthy because they are democracies?

A group of thinkers emerged in the 1950s and 1960s that observed this correlation and felt sure that rising wealth caused democracy. Most prominent among these was Seymour Martin Lipset (1959) who argued that democracy emerged as a society modernised. This was because modernisation created changes in the economic and social structure of a society which inevitably challenged authoritarian rule and led to demands for democracy. Lipset argued that traditional societies were characterised by large agricultural sectors and small industrial and service sectors. There were also lower levels of education and a smaller middle class. This social structure allowed authoritarian government to thrive because such a society did not possess large groups of people who had the education, money or incentives to mobilise and demand political equality. However, with modernisation, the social and economic structure transformed. As a society modernised, the agricultural sector shrank and the industrial sector grew. There was also a growth in urbanisation as well as other important social developments such as an increase in the level of mass education, an expansion of the middle class and the emergence of new liberal professionals, such as doctors, lawyers and journalists. The increasing complexity of society demanded new methods of government and the expanding middle class, alongside a generally more educated population, demanded greater equality through democracy. Once democracy was established, a wealthy society was considered more likely to remain democratic because suddenly the vast majority of the population had a vested interest in retaining their position of political equality and this was best guaranteed by ensuring a healthy democracy survived.

Lipset was a proponent of what is known as 'modernisation theory'. This theory argued that all societies are going through a process of modernisation and that ultimately there is a uni-directional development from a traditional society governed by authoritarianism to a modern society governed by democracy. In short, the developing world would ultimately evolve into societies like those in the USA and western Europe. This journey was seen as one-directional (societies could not go backwards) and the final destination was inevitable. Modernisation theory presents two distinct hypotheses about democracy (recall from 'Methods in political science' in Chapter 1 that a hypothesis is a prediction of what you should observe in the empirical world derived from a theoretical argument). These are as follows:

1. Democracy is more common in rich countries than in poor countries.

2. Transitions to dictatorship become less likely as wealth increases.

While there is certainly some evidence to support the hypotheses of economic modernisation theories of democracy, nonetheless, this view has been strongly criticised by other social scientists. This idea of an inevitable uni-directional journey towards democracy does not always fit the empirical evidence. Some societies certainly followed this pattern, such as Britain and the USA. However, some societies, notably those in the Middle

East, became wealthy without becoming democracies. Meanwhile, other countries, such as the Weimar Republic in Germany, became wealthy and transformed into democracies, only to revert back to non-democracies over time, thus challenging the uni-directional claims of modernisation theory. Finally, India's democracy seemed to challenge the idea that a high level of development was required for democracy to emerge. Some societies became democracies at lower levels of economic development while others became democracies at higher levels – there was no inevitable pattern. The other common criticism of modernisation theory was that it did not take into account the role of choices made by political actors. Instead, democracy was seen as being determined by the economic and social structure and the choices individuals made were not viewed as being important.

Barrington Moore (1966) tried to address some of these challenges by still using the ideas of modernisation but without always assuming that modernisation would lead to democracy. He said that there were three paths to modernity and while some societies would follow the democratic path, others followed Fascism or Communism. However, he still argued that whether democracy would emerge or not depended on the social and economic changes happening within a society and he famously stated that 'no bourgeoisie, no democracy' (1966, p.418). Similar to Lipset, he also argued that the change from an agrarian to an industrial society was the key factor in democratisation and if a society was going to follow the democratic path in its evolution, then a liberal bourgeoisie must be present. As such, Moore's work was still criticised for failing to take into account the role of cultural factors and the importance of actor's choices.

2.4.2 Culture and democracy

Discussions of the role of culture and democracy have a long history. Montesquieu in the eighteenth century and John Stuart Mill in the nineteenth century both argued that political institutions could only become embedded and accepted within a society if they were aligned with the culture of that society. While individuals may adjust to alien institutions over time, they argued that it is preferable to ensure that the type of politics promoted was one which aligned well with the internal culture.

Such ideas are not merely historical and we still see evidence of these ideas today. For example, Lipset (1959) argued that Catholicism was incompatible with democracy because Catholicism believed teachings from the Bible were the basis on which to organise society and given the Bible was God's word, this could not be debated or disputed. Additionally, the Catholic Church was a very hierarchical organisation that was viewed as incompatible with political equality. Evidence for this viewpoint tended to be the Catholic Church's support for Mussolini in Italy and Franco in Spain as well as support for dictators such as Pinochet in Chile. A more recent echo of these sentiments can be seen in Huntington's (1993) highly controversial 'Clash of Civilizations' thesis. He identifies many different civilizations in the world today, such as Western Christian, Confucian, Islamic, Latin-American, African and so on. Huntington argues that 'Western concepts differ fundamentally from those prevalent in other civilizations. Western ideas of individualism, liberalism, constitutionalism, human rights, equality, liberty, the rule of law, democracy, free markets, the separation of church and state, often have little resonance in Islamic, Confucian, Japanese, Hindu, Buddhist or Orthodox cultures' (1993, p.40). Again, this stance echoes the earlier debate about Catholicism. Islam is

seen as a religion where God instructs individuals how to live their lives and these instructions should not be compromised through political debate. Therefore, according to this viewpoint, Islam is fundamentally incompatible with democracy.

The understanding of culture and democracy that we have discussed so far tends to view culture as something that can potentially block democracy from emerging. However, there is also another set of theories that sees culture as having a much more active role in creating democracy. This viewpoint originated in the work of Almond and Verba who argued that certain societies had a civic culture that sustained democracy. They argued that 'Constitution makers have designed formal structures of politics that attempt to enforce trustworthy behaviour, but without these attitudes of trust, such institutions may mean little. Social trust facilitates cooperation among the citizens in these nations and without it democratic politics is impossible' (1963, p.357). From this perspective the fundamental bedrock of democracy is trust between and within citizens and political elites. The civic culture they identified as sustaining democracy had four elements and if these values were embedded within the citizenry then they claimed this civic culture was present. These elements were as follows:

1. A belief that individuals can influence political decisions.

2. High support for the existing political system.

3. High levels of interpersonal trust.

4. Preference for gradual societal change.

This idea was taken slightly further in the work of Ronald Inglehart who argued that modernisation led to a new form of culture emerging, a civic culture, which in turn created and sustained democracy. So Inglehart agrees with Lipset's starting point that economic development is important, but for Inglehart this is because economic development leads to a new culture and it is **culture** that creates and sustains democracy.

Looking at cultural explanations of democracy we can identify two hypotheses.

1. Democracy is more common in some cultures (for example, western cultures) – which support democratic values such as individual liberty, freedom of expression, equality – than in others (for example, Islam, Confucianism).

2. Economic development does not directly cause democracy, but rather economic development leads to cultural change and the emergence of a civic culture, which in turn leads to democracy.

Once again, having specified what the theories claim, it is now essential to turn to the empirical evidence to see how valid these theories really are.

Turning to the first hypothesis, the evidence indicates that there are good reasons to be sceptical of accepting this hypothesis. The first important evidence to note is that many countries with a Muslim majority are considered democracies, such as Albania, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Senegal and Turkey. These countries clearly show that it is possible to have a democratic Muslim society. What is more, claims that Islamic countries are not compatible with democracy overlook important lessons from history. We mentioned earlier that Lipset argued that Catholicism was not compatible with democracy. At the time Lipset was writing this seemed like a plausible enough theory. In 1976, of the 47 countries with a Catholic majority, 14 were coded as free and 16 were coded as not free. However, by 2004, of the 57 countries with a Catholic majority, 40 were coded as

free and only three were coded as not free (Clark et al., 2012, p.238). So we can see that it can be a little short-sighted to state that a religion is inherently incompatible with a particular form of political rule. Clark et al., have further evidence for why we should reject this first hypothesis. They found that once you take into account a country's GDP and its growth rate, then whether or not a country has a Muslim majority makes no difference to the likelihood of that country becoming or remaining democratic (2012, pp.243, 246).

But what of our second hypothesis? Inglehart directs a research project called the 'World Values Survey' (WVS) that regularly collects data about people's values and beliefs from over 100 countries since 1981. Using data from this project, Inglehart has been able to map the world's cultural values. Inglehart and Welzel (2010) found that there are two dimensions of cultural values. The first of these is whether a country's inhabitants are primarily interested in survival or self-expression. People interested in survival tend to place an emphasis on economic and physical security. Their primary concerns are about whether they have a home to live in, food to feed their family or a job. In contrast, people who are interested in self-expression tend to be economically and physically secure and many of their survival concerns have been allayed through relative prosperity. Instead, self-expression gives high priority to rising demands for participation in economic and political life through values such as a desire for freedom of expression. The shift from survival to self-expression is closely related to economic development. The second dimension is whether a country's inhabitants embody traditional values or secular-rational values. Traditional values emphasise the significance of religious beliefs and traditional family values and they defer to authority. In contrast, secular-religious values reflect a decline in religious and traditional family values and a rise in a belief in the rights of the individual and a questioning of authority.

Inglehart and Welzel (2010) found that the majority of the world's non-democracies tend to be in those countries characterised by a belief in traditional and survival values. However, as values changed to secular-rational and self-expression values, countries were more likely to be democratic. This pattern led them to claim that 'Modernisation favours democracy because it enhances ordinary people's abilities and motivation to demand democracy, exerting increasing effective pressure on elites… [Economic development's] impact on democracy is almost entirely transmitted through its tendency to bring increasing emphasis on self-expression values' (2010, p.561). In other words, modernisation leads to and sustains democracy but only because it changes cultural values and beliefs, not because of the rise in wealth *per se*.

So when we look at cultural explanations for democracy, there is certainly more evidence for the idea that a civic culture is central to creating and sustaining democracy than the idea that some cultures are inherently anti-democratic. What is more, cultural modernisation approaches are compatible with economic modernisation approaches. Maybe what Lipset actually observed was how economics changed culture and this is what led to democracy rather than the direct effect of an increase in wealth.

Given the compatibility between the two approaches, it is hardly surprising that both embrace many of the same limitations. Whether emphasising economics or culture, both theories are highly deterministic with strong assumptions that an increase in modernisation will inevitably lead to democracy. Yet neither theory specifies exactly how this will occur and they do not talk about the micro level or how exactly a society goes from

being authoritarian to being democratic and what actually happens. The main reason for the weakness of the causal explanations lies in the fact that neither approach refers to the role of actors' behaviour. The decisions of the citizenry and the political elites are not mentioned in these modernisation approaches. An effort to address this shortcoming and to specify a clear causal chain led to the development of theories of democratisation in terms of strategic bargaining.

2.4.3 Strategic bargains and democracy

Strategic bargain theories emphasise how, if the conditions are right, authoritarian leaders are forced to establish democratic institutions in order to appease a mass group of citizens who are demanding democratic representation and political and economic equality (see, for example, Acemoglu and Robinson, 2009; North and Weingast, 1989). Imagine a society governed in a non-democratic fashion by a small group of elites but which also contains a large mass of coordinated citizens demanding equality. The elites primarily want to protect their existing position of privilege and prevent revolution, while the mass of citizens want to redistribute wealth and power because they are generally poorer than the elites.

In this situation, there are two choices of government facing the elites: (1) a dictatorship, where the elites govern in their own interest but they have to pay a cost of repressing the mass of citizens; and (2) a democracy, where the majority governs in the interest of the mass of citizens. Under these circumstances, as a country moves from a dictatorship to a democracy there will be a redistribution of wealth through systems such as mass healthcare, mass education, public pensions and so on. So, how are the masses able to establish a democracy against the wishes of the elites?

According to strategic bargain theories, agreeing to establish democratic institutions, such as competitive elections, offers a credible method for elites to meet the masses' demands for increased political power while preventing all out revolution. Making a 'credible commitment' is a vital part of this process.

Clark et al. (2012, p.187) state that 'a credible commitment problem… occurs when: (a) an actor who makes a promise today may have an incentive to renege on that promise in the future; and (b) power is in the hands of the actor who makes the promise and not in the hands of those expected to benefit from the promise'. Citizens may have enough power today to make demands of the elites and the elites will give them greater equality, perhaps by agreeing to establish a welfare state or introducing fairer property rights or taxes. However, if the power balance shifts at a later stage and power returns to the elites, the elites may renege on their earlier concessions. At this point, the citizens are too powerless to resist and they return to a subordinate position in society. Therefore, when citizens are powerful enough to make demands from elites, they typically try to protect and embed the reforms they seek. They cannot just trust the word of the political elite, because it is in the elites' interest to return to the earlier unequal system. Therefore, the elites and the masses enter into an agreement to establish democratic institutions as a way of guaranteeing and protecting the equality they demand.

One of the most prominent examples of strategic bargain theory comes from Acemoglu and Robinson (2006, p.27) who argue that: 'The elites would like to prevent [revolution], and they can do so by making a credible commitment to pro-majority policies. However, promises of such policies within the existing political system are often non-credible. To

make them credible, they need to transfer political power to the majority, which is what democratisation achieves'.

According to Acemoglu and Robinson, there are three factors that will influence whether and when a democratic transition occurs. The first is the level of likely wealth redistribution if a state switches to a democracy. The bigger the initial inequalities in society, the more there will be a redistribution of wealth. If a highly unequal society where the average voter is poor turns into a democracy, then the average voter will redistribute large amounts of wealth to improve their relative economic position. Bigger inequalities may mean greater demands for equality from the masses, but it also means the elites will fight harder to retain their position of privilege as they have more to lose. The second factor is the probability of there being a revolution or a coup. Elites want to avoid revolutions as this would remove them completely from power, whereas if they reform the system they may lose some privileges, but at least they will not be fatally undermined through revolution. The final factor is the cost of repression that the political elites experience in order to maintain a non-democracy.

Based on this theory, they identify three hypotheses.

1. Elites in non-democracies cannot credibly commit to redistribute wealth without democratic institutions (for example, elections, majoritarian parliaments).

2. Higher wealth inequality raises the risk of democracy for non-democratic elites, which leads to more efforts to suppress democracy.

3. Economic shocks lead to transitions to democracy, but not transitions away from democracy. This is because in non-democracies, the middle classes blame the elites for economic failure, whereas in democracies the middle classes blame the government of the day.

2.5 Cases studies of democratisation

The way we will test these three hypotheses is by looking at four distinct case studies, each of which highlights a different path to democracy. Three of these case studies come from Acemoglu and Robinson (2006, pp.2–10) and we have also added the very topical case of Tunisia. These cases show different paths to democracy, highlighting how the presence of a strategic bargain allows democracy to develop in a stable fashion while the absence of a strategic bargain can lead to a more unstable democracy or no democracy at all.

2.5.1 Britain

The emergence of democracy in Britain can be seen as a series of slow and gradual changes that cumulatively led to increased levels of political equality. This began with the English Civil War of 1642–51 and the subsequent Glorious Revolution of 1688, both of which restricted the power of the monarchy and increased the power of parliament, albeit a limited parliament of merchants and landowners.

In 1832 the First Reform Act was passed after a period of sustained economic growth in Britain. This act removed 'rotten boroughs', where several members of parliament were elected by only a few voters, and instead established a much more equal right to vote based on property and income. Crucially, these reforms were introduced by the elites as an attempt to defuse rising revolutionary sentiment and popular discontent, in the wake of the French Revolution in the late eighteenth-century.

This act did not introduce mass democracy, but rather it was a strategic concession that increased the electoral franchise, but only within a limited context. Major reform did not come until the Second Reform Act of 1867 which was introduced after an economic shock and decline in the economic outlook in Britain, which in turn increased the threat of violence in response to growing inequality. This act increased the electorate to 2.5 million voters, and working class voters became the majority in all urban constituencies. The franchise was then steadily increased in a series of acts between 1884 and 1928, until there was universal adult suffrage.

Acemoglu and Robinson (2009) emphasise that democracy in Britain emerged as a result of strategic concessions made by wealthy elites in order to stave off social revolution. The effects of each concession were always limited to protect the position of the wealthy until further concessions were demanded. This process occurred against a backdrop of rising economic development, rapid industrialisation, urbanisation and rising economic inequality.

2.5.2 Argentina

In contrast to Britain, Argentina had a much more abrupt introduction of democracy which led to a protracted phase of political instability. In the second half of the nineteenth century, following its declaration of independence in 1810, Argentina set about creating a modern state. Initial claims of democratic reforms turned out to be a sham. This led to rising social discontent and labour unrest, which occurred against the backdrop of a booming agricultural sector. To protect political stability, in 1912 the Saenz Pena Law was passed which introduced universal male suffrage, a secret ballot and outlawed fraudulent electoral practices.

These democratic reforms led to the emergence and dominance of the Radical Party, which strongly challenged the position of traditional elites, especially given the elites' failure to mobilise an effective Conservative Party. In light of falling support for the Conservatives, a military coup was executed in 1930 to counter the rise of Hipolito Yrigoyen's Radicals. This was followed by a fraudulent election in 1931 that returned power to the traditional elites. In 1943, there was a second military coup which led to the rise of Juan Domingo Peron as president in 1946, and he embarked upon a widespread programme of redistribution. Peron in turn was removed by a coup in 1955 and another coup followed in 1966. Popular social mobilisation against the latest military regime led to the re-establishment of democracy in 1973 and the election of Peron in the first genuinely democratic election since 1946. Once again he commenced upon a programme of redistribution. Following Peron's death and his wife, Isabel Peron's, emergence as president, there was a further military coup in 1976. After undertaking a brutal and extensive programme of repression, this regime collapsed after defeat in the Falklands War, which had the lasting effect of restricting the power of the army as a political actor. Democratic elections were held in 1983 and Argentina has remained a democracy until the present day.

The key lessons from this process for Acemoglu and Robinson (2009) are that economic development, rising economic inequality and a changing social structure increased pressure on traditional elites to introduce democracy, but the elites subsequently felt too threatened by the increased political equality and level of redistribution, which then led to a series of military coups to protect the economic interests of the elites.

2.5.3 Singapore

Singapore is a case where competitive democracy never fully emerged. Historically, Singapore was a British colony established as a key trading port for the East India Company, but after the Second World War and Japanese occupation, there was a growing desire for independence.

The late 1940s and 1950s saw a large number of strikes and labour unrest, which eventually led to a series of constitutional negotiations and by 1959 Singapore had obtained almost complete self-rule. In elections in 1959 the People's Action Party (PAP) emerged as the strongest party and has remained the dominant party to the present day. Once in power, the party sought to reduce the influence of the trade union movement and harassed the opposition Barisan Sosialis (BS) Party. The PAP's position of power was confirmed in the first elections after independence in 1963. After a brief and ultimately unsuccessful merger with Malaysia between 1963 and 1965, the PAP continued to increase its dominance of Singaporean politics. In 1968 the BS resigned their seats in parliament and refused to participate in new elections citing PAP harassment. This allowed PAP to win every seat in parliament in 1972, 1976 and 1980, even after the BS agreed to participate again after 1972. Although a very small number of opposition members were elected in the 1980s, PAP's pre-eminent position has never been under threat. The party used control of the media, gerrymandering, harassment and threats to secure its position. Additionally, the social structure of Singapore was one without a strong aristocracy and with a weak industrial class, which limited demands for greater independence.

Acemoglu and Robinson (2006) argue that although Singapore's economy has boomed, there has been a low level of economic inequality and the PAP has 'maintained power through relatively benign means, fostering popularity through extensive social welfare programs as well as engaging in threats and coercion. Although there has been imprisonment and harassment, there have been no "disappearances" and there is apparently little opposition to PAP rule and little pressure for political change' (2006, p.10).

2.5.4 Tunisia

In the sixteenth century the Ottoman Empire focused on forcefully securing territories in North Africa and in 1574 it gained control of Tunisia. While officially ruled by an Ottoman Pasha it was in fact much more of an autonomous province than a closely governed country. It remained under Ottoman control for the next 300 years. However, by the mid-nineteenth century the strength of the Ottoman Empire was beginning to wane. The Tanzimat reforms of 1839 to 1876 attempted to modernise territories within the Empire and secure the Empire's territorial integrity against rising nationalist movements and other aggressive imperial powers, but in the case of Tunisia these measures failed. Against a backdrop of dramatically rising debt, which included a substantial loan from France, a group of French forces invaded Tunisia in 1881 and established it as a French protectorate.

The interwar period saw a rise in Tunisian nationalism which baulked against the French presence. In 1920 the Constitutional Liberal Party, known as Destour, was formed with the goal of liberating Tunisia from French colonial rule. To counter this rising threat, the French administration granted some cosmetic reforms, such as establishing

the Grand Council of Tunisia, but these were not satisfactory to abate the rising nationalism. In 1934 Habib Bourguiba established the Neo-Destour Party in response to internal disagreements within the Destour movement, and this new party was to prove central to securing Tunisian independence. In 1954 Bourguiba began negotiations for independence with the French authorities and, as was the case with many African colonies at this time, Tunisia was granted full sovereignty in 1956. Neo-Destour won the first independent elections and Bourguiba became the first Prime Minister of independent Tunisia.

Bourguiba was to dominate the Tunisian political landscape for the next 31 years and established the country as a one-party state. During his reign he proved to be a populist politician who suppressed the Islamists within the country and attempted to consolidate his own power, jailing dissidents, closing down critical media outlets and disbanding many trade unions. In 1975, Bourguiba appointed himself president for life and by this stage the new Tunisia was firmly established with a dictatorial constitution. In 1981, the government allowed officially sanctioned opposition parties to run for office, but the Neo-Destour Party, now called the Socialist Destourian Party, secured a rampant victory. This led to the opposition parties refusing to participate in the 1986 elections in protest at electoral fraud. In 1987 Bourguiba's reign came to an end when former army leader and the Minister for the Interior, Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, led a bloodless coup and had Bourguiba certified as medically incompetent to rule.

Ben Ali initially appeared to liberalise the country. He introduced reforms limiting individuals to holding the presidency for a maximum of three five-year periods and no more than two periods in a row; he released some Islamist dissidents from prison; and he changed the name of the ruling party to the Constitutional Democratic Rally (RCD). However, this liberalisation was not to be maintained and in the 1989 elections when opposition leaders were sure of having performed strongly, the RCD emerged with over 90 per cent of the vote through electoral fraud. Ben Ali subsequently banned many Islamist parties, he jailed thousands of political activists, he increased rates of official censorship, suppressed basic human rights, and he established a political system that allowed him to run unopposed in Tunisia's first presidential elections since 1972. He was to be re-elected with over 90 per cent of the vote in 1994, 1999, 2004 and 2009.

Then in December 2010, mass protests began following Mohamed Bouazizi's gesture of setting himself on fire in protest at the state bureaucracy's response to the harassment of his efforts to earn a living through selling vegetables. This led to widespread civil unrest fuelled by high unemployment, high inflation, high corruption and ongoing political suppression. In spite of efforts by Ben Ali to defuse the situation through gestures such as visiting Bouazizi in hospital prior to his death from the burns he sustained, the protests continued. Ben Ali's next response was to threaten the protestors with state repression but this also had little effect in dampening the protests. In fact, they gained even more momentum when groups of liberal professionals, such as lawyers and teachers, officially went on strike in early January 2011 and the protestors were even later joined by members of the police and army. In further efforts to appease protestors Ben Ali declared a state of emergency, he dissolved the ruling government, promised new elections within six months and promised increased job creation. However, this bargain was rejected by the protestors and Ben Ali fled to Saudi Arabia by the end of January 2011. Even after the flight of Ben Ali the protests continued until the protestors

were satisfied that the RCD influence was removed from any transitional government. In October 2011, free and fair elections were held for a newly established Constituent Assembly and the moderate Islamist party 'Ennahada' emerged with a plurality of the vote but not an overall majority, forcing them to negotiate with other allies to form a government. The core challenges facing the new government are the inclusion of as many political viewpoints as possible while still being able to tackle the economic and social crises facing the country.

Overall, Acemoglu and Robinson (2006) argue that a combination of the level of economic inequality and the cost of repression explain motivations for why people mobilise and whether traditional elites will seek to strike a bargain leading to democracy or whether they will resist because the cost of redistribution of wealth as a result of democracy in a highly unequal society is too high. These case studies show how this played out in four specific contexts – the gradual and steady democratisation of Britain through a strategic bargain; the uneven and unstable democracy of Argentina where there were constant tussles between the elites and the masses and no bargains were struck; and Singapore where the masses never demanded democracy due to low levels of economic inequality and the political domination of a single party. Finally, Tunisia provides a case where threats of repression failed and the subsequent bargain offered by the ruling elite was seen as coming too late by the protesting masses and therefore it did not stave off a revolution. This meant that the transition to democracy was more sudden and less stable than would be expected under a strategic bargain model and it remains to be seen whether this will impact upon the stability of the new democracy or whether Tunisia can survive the potentially tumultuous nature of its birth.

2.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, it is worth noting that the major challenge facing political science – in the debate about democracy and democratisation – is understanding how the three explanations relate to each other. Clark et al. (2012) note that the causal relationship could flow in many different directions. They ask: 'Does culture cause political institutions such as democracy to emerge and survive? Does it also cause economic development? Or do political institutions and economic development cause culture? In other words, which way does the causal arrow go?' (2012, p.217). This problem of discerning causality remains one of the foremost problems confronting debates about democratisation.

2.7 A reminder of your learning outcomes

Having completed this chapter, and the Essential reading and activities, you should be able to:

- discuss the differences between procedural and substantive definitions of democracy

- describe the historical growth in democracy throughout the twentieth century

- compare and contrast the main explanations for why some countries become and remain democratic

- explain why your adopted country either became a democracy, or remained only partially democratic, or has switched between democracy and authoritarian government.

2.8 Sample examination questions

1. 'Economic factors are more important than cultural factors in accounting for transitions to democracy.' Discuss.

2. 'Culture is the most important factor causing democratic stability.' Discuss.

3. Why do elites voluntarily introduce democracy in some countries but not in others?

Section B: Analysing political behaviour

This section is made up of four chapters, each of which considers a different aspect of political behaviour by individuals or groups. In **Chapter 3** we look at different explanations for why people vote the way they do, while in **Chapter 4** we examine how different electoral systems lead to different political outcomes. Next in **Chapter 5** we consider how political parties behave and why they might either try to appeal to as many voters as possible or why they might only appeal to a particular niche of voters. We conclude this section with **Chapter 6** which looks at why people form interest groups and social movements and what factors make them successful or unsuccessful when it comes to influencing policy-making.

Upon completing this section you should know some of the main aspects of political behaviour and the different factors that influence this. Using this knowledge you should then be able to explain why some individuals or political groups behave in different ways.

Notes

Chapter 3: Political preferences and voting behaviour

Aims of the chapter

The aims of this chapter are to:

- present different explanations for where political preferences come from
- introduce the idea of spatially mapping different dimensions of political preferences
- show how political preferences shape voting behaviour
- outline the difference between cleavage voting and expressive and strategic voting.

Learning outcomes

By the end of this chapter, and having completed the Essential reading and activities, you should be able to:

- explain what political preferences are and where they come from
- evaluate the usefulness of mapping preferences in one or two dimensions, especially the usefulness of the 'left–right' dimension
- critically explain the decline of cleavage voting and the rise of expressive and strategic voting
- outline patterns of voting behaviour in your adopted country.

Interactive tasks

1. Go to the website: www.politicalcompass.org/ and take the test to locate your own political preferences in a two-dimensional space. How does this compare to other well-known leaders and parties whose preferences are also listed on the website?

2. Identify the main cleavages that determined voting behaviour in your adopted country between the start of the twentieth century and the 1960s. How did these emerge and become frozen?

3. Looking at more recent voting behaviour in your adopted country, do voters typically vote expressively or strategically? How can you begin to explain this voting behaviour?

Reading

Essential reading

Benoit, K. and M. Laver *Party Policy in Modern Democracies*. (London: Routledge, 2006) [ISBN 9780415368322] Chapter 6. Available at the following website: www.tcd.ie/Political_Science/ppmd/

Downs, A. 'An Economic Theory of Political Action in a Democracy', *Journal of Political Economy*, 65(2) 1957, pp.135–50.

Kitschelt, H. 'Class Structure and Social Democratic Party Strategy', *British Journal of Political Science* 23(3) 1993, pp.299–337.

'Left-Right Politics', http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Left-right_politics

Further reading

Evans, G. and J. Tilley 'How Parties Shape Class Politics: Explaining the Decline of the Class Basis of Party Support', *British Journal of Political Science* 42(1) 2012, pp.137–61.

Evans, G. 'The Continued Significance of Class Voting', *Annual Review of Political Science* 3 2000, pp.401–17.

Schofield, N., G. Miller and A. Martin 'Critical Elections and Political Realignments in the USA: 1860–2000', *Political Studies* 51(2) 2003, pp.217–40.

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Dunleavy, P. and C.T. Husbands *British Democracy at the Crossroads: Voting and Party Competition in the 1980s*. ([London]: HarperCollins Publishers Ltd., 1985).

Hix, S., A. Noury and G. Roland 'Dimensions of Politics in the European Parliament', *American Journal of Political Science* 50(2) 2006, pp.494–520.

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Lipset. S.M. and S. Rokkan (eds) *Party Systems and Voter Alignments: Cross-National Perspectives*. (New York, NY: The Free Press, 1967).

The British Election Study website: www.essex.ac.uk/bes/

3.1 How are preferences formed?

It is widely accepted that all political actors – including voters, politicians, and political parties – have a set of political beliefs which influences their preferences towards certain salient issues. This framework of beliefs provides cues for understanding why citizens or politicians prefer certain outcomes to others, as well as providing a way of analysing how political competition between parties and groups is organised. If we understand these underlying beliefs, then we can understand the different behaviours they produce, such as why citizens vote the way they do or why two parties may interpret the same political issue in different ways. We call actors' views and beliefs 'political preferences'.

Traditionally, economic factors were seen as the dominant explanation for why an actor held the preferences they did. More specifically, a person's economic class was considered the key to understanding an individual's political beliefs. It was argued that people from different economic classes generally had different economic interests and these translated into different political viewpoints. Famously, the most prominent proponent of this viewpoint was Karl Marx. Marx, writing in the mid-nineteenth century, offered one such economic determinist perspective. According to Marx, an individual's understanding of the world was determined by their relationship to the 'means of production'. The means of production referred to the physical objects needed to produce goods, such as land, factories, mines and tools. For Marx there was a fundamental conflict between those who owned the means of production and the workers they

employed. In short, whether you were an owner of capital or whether you were a worker determined your political viewpoint, which was always in opposition to members of the other group.

While Marx's understanding of preference formation is perhaps the most well-known version, he was certainly not the only classical thinker to write on this topic. Max Weber, writing at the start of the twentieth century, also thought that economics was the primary determinant of political viewpoints, but he believed that Marx had over-emphasised the relationship between individuals and the means of production. Rather, Weber argued that a well-paid worker may have more in common with an owner of capital than with other lower paid workers. He suggested that it was not the bond between workers that created a shared set of preferences, but the bond between similar levels of wealth and consumption that created a shared set of preferences. According to Weber, wealth and consumption were the key determinants of preferences and while these may co-align with the division of labour, this is not inevitable and some wealthy workers will have similar consumption patterns to owners and therefore these will translate into shared preferences.

After the Second World War, many features of the classical description of industrial societies began to look a little dated. By the middle of the 1960s, increasing mass prosperity enabled new classes of individuals to emerge and there was an embourgeoisment of society. These developments complicated an overly simplified distinction between workers and owners of capital or between the wealthy and the non-wealthy. In light of these social changes new understandings of the origins of political preferences began to emerge. Such theories adopted a more sophisticated understanding of the interaction of economics and social structure, and they attempted to explore the increased complexity of post-industrial advanced democracies. One such notable thinker was Dahrendorf (1959) who argued that a new middle class emerged with the fragmentation of society and this group sometimes sided with the traditional elites and sometimes with the traditional mass of workers. In short, the established class divide was weakening. There was an expansion of the welfare state, most notably in education, and a new public sector began to emerge. This led to a corresponding rise in new liberal professions, such as doctors, lawyers, teachers and journalists, and these professions were now accessible to a much greater proportion of society. This new middle class could certainly not be considered workers in the traditional Marxist sense, but nor could they be considered owners of the means of production. Rather society had diversified and increased in complexity, and this challenged the classical understandings of preference formation.

Attempting to capture how preferences formed in a post-industrial society, Kitschelt (1994) made a distinction between individuals who had 'people processing jobs' and individuals who had 'data processing jobs'. He argued that people from the new liberal professions tended to develop more liberal preferences, such as a commitment to notions of gender equality and rights for minorities. In contrast, people who were data processors tended to be more socially conservative, preferring traditional values and the maintenance of the social status quo. Of course, it is difficult to state if liberal people are drawn to people processing occupations or if being a people processor causes the development of liberal values, and so we return to our previous theme of how caution is needed when discussing the causal direction of correlations. Another approach to explaining post-industrial preference formation came from Dunleavy and Husband

(1985), who argued that preferences differ according to whether you work in the private sector or in the public sector and that this divide cuts across the traditional owners/workers divide.

Theories that emphasised the primacy of economic factors as the main determinants of political preferences were subsequently challenged by Ronald Inglehart (1990). Inglehart argued that the changes to the social structure of advanced industrial economies that we mentioned earlier led to a decline in the influence of economic factors in the process of preference formation. The embourgeoisment of society and the expansion of education were found to have a profound effect on the cultural values of citizens, according to Inglehart's data. He argued that once societies crossed a certain wealth threshold, people became interested in expressing non-economic related preferences. Using extensive survey evidence, Inglehart demonstrated that economic wealth was important in shaping preferences beneath a certain wealth level, but that once this threshold was crossed, people became interested in post-material values – and more concerned with self-expression than economic survival – such as gender equality, civil liberties, lifestyle choices and the environment. He also noted a generational lag in the emergence of post-material values. The preferences of older generations tended to be more shaped by economic factors while the younger generation who had grown up with greater economic security held more post-material values.

Where does all this leave our understanding of political preferences? We can say that a whole range of factors shapes preference formation. Of course, economics still matters, but this has become more complicated than classical understandings presumed. What is more, in post-industrial societies other factors are also important. For example, a person's religion, their gender, their ethnicity or nationality, their family and education level may all impact upon an individual's preferences.

3.2 The left–right dimension

While there is a complex range of factors at play in preference formation, crucially many of them are overlapping. Therefore, political scientists have long been concerned with finding simplified methods of understanding and mapping individuals' preferences. The most common method of doing this is through the use of the 'left–right' dimension. The left–right dimension is both widely understood by political commentators and political and social scientists. It is both a dichotomy and a continuum. We can speak of a person or a political party being either 'on the left' or 'on the right', and we can also speak of someone being more or less left-wing or right-wing than another person. This makes the left–right dimension highly appealing when trying to understand preferences.

It is important to note, however, that in this conception, the 'left–right' does not possess an innate conception or represent a fundamental ideological divide. Rather, left–right here is simply a constructed dimension, purely for the purposes of simplifying the world of politics. The history of the term derives from the seating arrangement in the National Assembly of France in the immediate aftermath of the French Revolution in 1789, where supporters of the King sat to the right of the chamber while supporters of the revolution sat to the left. The dimension has somewhat retained these connotations with 'the left' predominantly being associated with progressives and social liberals while 'the right' is more associated with conservatives and capitalists.

Perhaps the greatest appeal of the left–right dimension to political scientists is that it seems near universal. This is important because if a left–right dimension is present in most countries, then it potentially allows political scientists to compare the range of preferences in one country to that in another country as well as potentially allowing the comparison of preferences over time within a specific country. Dalton (2006) uses data from Inglehart's most up-to-date survey to examine the relevance of the left–right dimension in different regions around the world. This survey asked the question: 'In political matters, people talk of "the Left" and "the Right". How would you place your views on this scale, generally speaking?' Dalton found that, with the exceptions of Algeria, Colombia, Jordan, Morocco and Pakistan, over 50 per cent of the public in a very diverse array of 76 countries were able to locate their political preferences on a left–right dimension. In fact, in most of these countries, over 70 per cent of the public could place themselves on this scale (2006, p.7). Similarly, Hix et al. (2006) found that the left–right was also the strongest dimension at the supranational level when they examined preferences in the European Union. Combined, these studies show that the left–right dimension is meaningful in a very wide array of contexts. In fact, it is almost universal. While it is certainly more strongly embraced by the public in some countries than others, nonetheless the left–right has a large degree of relevance in almost all settings.

Interestingly, Dalton also found that the left–right scale was comprised of different issues in different regions of the world. In other words, when a person in Africa described their preferences as being on the left, they could very well be thinking of an entirely different set of issues to those of a left-wing individual in eastern Europe, for example. Dalton (2006, pp.17–19) found that in advanced industrial societies the two strongest issues that people associated with a left–right scale were economics and religion and the environment was also important. Economics and religion were also the main components of the left–right scale in eastern Europe. Yet in Latin America, gender and religion were the main components, while gender and nationalism were the main factors making up the dimension in Asian democracies. Mainly religion, but also gender, was important to the Arab world, while the public in African countries mainly thought of the left–right in terms of the economic effects of the environment. From this it is evident that the left–right dimension is indeed near universal but it means very different things in each country.

It is by being a broad catch-all term that it becomes universal, but for Benoit and Laver (2006), one of our Essential readings, it is precisely this broad nature that limits the analytical use of the left–right dimension. They argue that each society has its own history and politics and, although there may be some commonalities, essentially the issues that people find salient and important will vary depending on the country and time period. In other words, the evolution of preferences is path-dependent and this is why the meaning of the left–right dimension changes in different contexts. This poses a distinct challenge when we try to look at how the left–right dimension varies across countries or over time because we are not comparing like with like. In fact, Benoit and Laver go so far as to argue that the left–right is potentially so different in every country that it has become almost meaningless for political comparison. While it may be a useful concept for providing a snapshot summary, political scientists need to be cautious about over extending the use of the left–right dimension.

Such debates regarding the usefulness of the left–right dimension for comparison have emerged as an important and pressing topic in political science in recent years. However, as we will now argue, this does not mean we cannot usefully map preferences using the left–right dimension.

3.3 Mapping political preferences

Each preference a person or a political party holds is often related to another preference in a clear fashion. For example, if you have a preference for increased gender equality you are likely to also have a preference for increased minority rights. Similarly, if you have a preference for a strong private sector, you are probably sceptical towards government regulation of markets. As we have just seen, it is precisely because of this close relationship between different preferences that people like Dalton argue we can group them together and summarise them in a single dimension, such as the left–right. Such a dimension is both highly durable and near universal. In contrast, Benoit and Laver were cautious of oversimplifying too much as people understand the left–right dimension to mean very different things in different contexts. In order to counter this tendency of oversimplification, but at the same time to allow us to summarise preferences in a manageable fashion, most modern political scientists think in terms of two distinct dimensions that are not necessarily related to each other.

The first dimension we can think of as an **economic** left–right dimension. This dimension is concerned with how far the state or the political majority should intervene in the economic freedoms of its citizens. It is comprised of issues such as attitudes towards the welfare state, taxation and market regulation, where the left believes the majority should intervene while the right believe that the majority should not be able to intervene. The second dimension is a **social** left–right dimension. This is concerned with how far the state or the political majority should intervene in the social freedoms of its citizens. It is comprised of issues such as minority rights, lifestyle choices and post-material issues. Here the left tends to advocate the belief that the majority should not intervene in the social freedoms of its citizens while the right is more in favour of social intervention. As such, the degree of intervention advocated by a person who places themselves on the left of a left–right dimension will depend on whether they are considering the economic or the social dimension. Therefore, these two dimensions cut across each other rather than lying on top of each other.

To appreciate the usefulness of locating political preferences in two dimensions it is apposite to look at how such an approach locates the classical political ideologies. For our purposes, we can think of an ideology as a coherent worldview about how the world or a society should be organised, which in turn shapes a person's specific preferences on individual issues. These ideologies and the range of preferences they represent can be mapped as in Figure 3.1.

Liberalism first emerged in the nineteenth century and was in favour of extending social freedoms to greater proportions of society and also extending economic freedoms. Conservatism, in many respects, evolved as a defence against the threat of liberalism to the social power of traditional authorities, such as the church and the aristocracy. As such, it was in favour of intervening in citizens' lives socially, but it had common ground on the economic dimension with liberalism. Given the hitherto agreement on the economic dimension between liberalism and conservatism, the emergence of socialism was the first time that the economic dimension
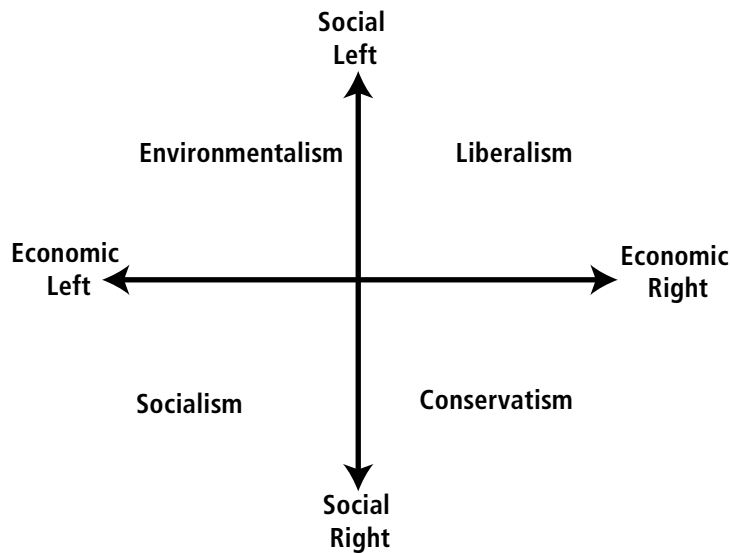
Figure 3.1: Mapping ideologies in a two-dimensional left–right space.

became activated as a source of political contestation. Socialism emerged in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century and it became a powerful political ideology with the extension of the voting franchise to working class men. They represented a large mass of the population and they demanded redistribution of wealth through the welfare state. However, this movement was, initially at least, socially conservative with many socialists reluctant to extend the voting franchise to women and hesitant with regard to issues such as immigration due to the threat these were perceived as posing to white, working class industrial men. As such, socialism was traditionally in favour of both economic and social intervention. The final ideology to consider is environmentalism, which evolved in the 1960s and 1970s and was non-interventionist on the social dimension, believing in the freedom of lifestyle choices, but much more comfortable with intervention on the economic dimension in order to protect the environment from abuse by private interests.

3.4 Cleavages and voting behaviour

Having established how preferences are formed and having explored some initial methods of mapping these preferences, it is now useful to turn to examining how political preferences influence voting behaviour. Initial explanations of voting behaviour did not make explicit reference to the role of preferences, instead emphasising how social group membership, such as a person's class, led to party identification and this rigidly influenced who they voted for. This is often called 'expressive voting'. However, the decline of expressive voting meant that political scientists began to turn to preferences to understand why people either vote for a party that is closest to their preferences, or why they may not vote for the party closest to their preferences but for some other alternative. This model of voting is also known as 'strategic voting'.

Expressive voting refers to voting on the basis of party attachment, political ideology or social group membership, and until the 1960s this was the dominant understanding of why people voted the way they did. Initial explanations of voting behaviour argued that a person's preferences did not really matter when trying to understand why they voted for a particular party or candidate. Rather, voting was more a reflection of a person's identification with a particular party and this bond was very difficult to break. This identification was typically formed on the basis of

an individual's membership of a particular social group. This is known as the 'cleavage model' of politics.

Lipset and Rokkan (1967) argued that during the democratisation of many advanced industrial democracies, a number of social cleavages emerged. A cleavage was a divide in society that provided the potential basis for political conflict. For example, the democratic revolution in the late nineteenth century was seen as leading to a conflict with traditional elites and authority structures on the one side and newly emerging liberal professionals on the other. This conflict often took the form of a church–state conflict where religious citizens identified with Christian democratic or conservative parties while more secular citizens identified with liberal and social democratic parties. However, by far the most prominent cleavage emerged in the industrial revolution and was the divide between the upper and middle classes on the one hand; and the working class on the other. This conflict took the form of traditional class conflict where the working class inevitably identified with socialist or social democratic parties; while the middle and upper classes identified with conservative or liberal parties. Lipset and Rokkan went further still and they argued that these cleavages became 'frozen' in place in the 1920s with the introduction of universal suffrage. As a result, they argued, the same divisions and patterns of voting and party competition were evident when they were writing in the late 1960s as was evident during the earlier part of the century. This pattern of voting is summed up in Figure 3.2.
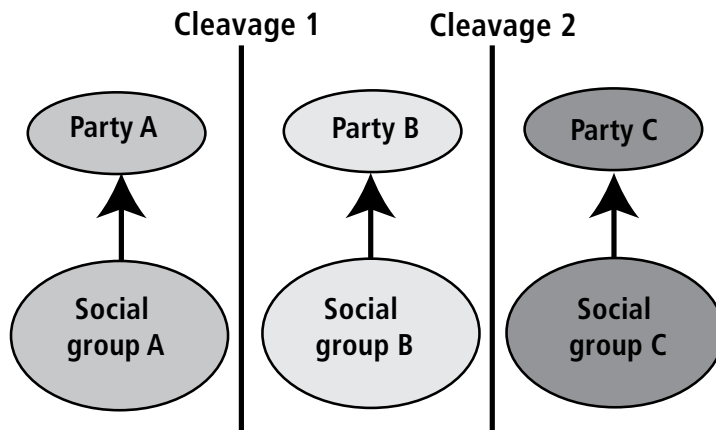

Figure 3.2: The cleavage model of voting and parties.

There are two important implications of a cleavage model that should be noted. First, citizens did not necessarily engage in rational decision-making prior to voting. Of course, individuals voted for the party that would most closely relate to their social position, but once they identified with this party they did not necessarily appraise the party's policies or exercise reflective judgments on performance prior to voting for them. Rather a voter's identification and sense of attachment to a particular party due to their social group ensured they would vote in the manner that they did. This brings us on to our second implication. According to a cleavage model, voting patterns should be very stable and slow to change. This is because social change is very slow. If a country is characterised by a strong class cleavage, it is unlikely that the number of working class or middle class citizens will vary in a dramatic fashion between elections (with the exception of introducing new voting franchises) and therefore voting should be stable and predictable. This was indeed typically the case between 1920 and 1960.

Yet suddenly at the start of the 1970s, the cleavage model and expressive voting explanations began to be challenged by emerging patterns of electoral volatility. This can be examined by looking at one specific form of cleavage voting, namely class voting. During the late 1960s and early 1970s, many advanced industrial societies went through a period of de-alignment of the cleavages that were 'frozen' in place in the 1920s. A range of reasons is presented for the de-alignment of class voting, some of which we have already mentioned (see Evans, 2000, pp.405–06). Most notably, a general increase in economic growth and prosperity led to an embourgeoisment of the working class and reduced the level of inter-class conflict. Additionally, new post-industrial divisions began to emerge that replaced the traditional class divide, such as a public sector/private sector divide or post-material divisions. At the same time, there was a general increase in the level of education, especially higher education, within working and middle class groups. This increased the 'cognitive mobilisation' of citizens and challenged rigid partisan identification by increasing voters' abilities to make calculative decisions when voting rather than having to rely on emotional or group attachments. Finally, the rise of values, especially post-material values, began to eclipse class as the basis of party preference. This was fuelled by the expansion of a mass media independent of political control.

Turning to the empirical evidence we find strong support for the notion of a de-alignment in class voting. The Alford Index is a measure of class voting. It is calculated by taking the percentage of the working class that voted for their expected class-based party minus the percentage of the upper class that voted for this party. As such, it will always produce a score between 0 and 100, where 100 indicates that all working class voters voted the way you would expect and no members of the upper class voted for a party that was seen to represent workers' interests. Using the Alford Index, Dalton (2002, p.193) shows that there has been a marked decline in class voting in the USA, Great Britain, Germany, France, Austria and Sweden since the middle of the 1960s.

The evidence indicates that there is no longer a rigid alignment between social groups and how people vote. Not only has class voting declined, but electoral volatility also increased in many countries. Therefore, from the late 1960s onwards the cleavage model of politics no longer explained voting behaviour adequately. In its place, political scientists began to utilise a spatial model of politics that placed preferences at the centre of explanations for actors' voting behaviour. We will now turn towards explaining how the spatial model of politics uses preferences to explain voting behaviour and we will highlight this with two cases: the United Kingdom and the Netherlands.

3.5 Strategic voting

Strategic voting refers to voting to produce an election outcome which is as close as possible to one's policy preferences. As we shall see, this may or may not mean voting for one's most-preferred party. As noted earlier, a spatial model of politics allows us to locate an individual's preferred position, or 'ideal point' as it is also known, in a one-dimensional or two-dimensional space. The model then assumes that voters can estimate distances from their ideal preference point to the different policy proposals offered by each party or to the existing policy currently supported by the government. The voter then votes accordingly to attempt to deliver an outcome that is as close as possible to their preferences.

At first glance this would seem to imply that voters will always vote for the party that comes closest to their ideal point, but in some instances voters may vote for an alternative party that may not be their first choice, but which they believe has a better chance of winning, in order to prevent a less preferred outcome. In many instances, a citizen votes sincerely; that is they vote for the party with the set of policy positions that is closest to their ideal point. They reflect on parties' policy proposals and then vote for the party that holds a set of political beliefs closest to their own. In reality, a voter may like some policies from one party, but prefer other policies from a different party. In such instances, the salience or importance of the different sets of policies will decide which party is chosen or there will be a calculation on the proximity of the overall package of policies. Yet at other times, a citizen votes for a party which is not the closest party to their ideal point. This is typically undertaken because a voter wants to influence the election in such a way so that the overall policy outcome, such as the person elected or the government formed, is closer to their ideal point than it would otherwise be if they voted sincerely. In short, we might vote for our second favourite party if we think that it has a better chance of defeating our least favourite party which might otherwise win the election.

To understand strategic voting it is necessary to think of voters as having 'single peaked and symmetrical' preferences. To demonstrate what this means we have visually mapped this in Figure 3.3. Along the x-axis we have a 'left–right' policy dimension while the y-axis shows the 'Intensity of the Preference'. We have identified two voters, Voter A and Voter B. Where these voters have the highest level of intensity is their ideal point, or where they would most like a policy to be. Voter A has a centre–left ideal point, while voter B has a centre–right ideal point. There is only one ideal point and our voters are not equally happy with two distinction points – in other words, the voters' preferences are single peaked. Additionally, we see that the area around their preferences is symmetrical. This means that if the voter is offered two alternatives both the same distance from their ideal point, then the voter will be completely indifferent between them regardless of whether they are to the left or the right. Of course, this is not necessarily a wholly realistic claim, but it does allow us to undertake some important analysis. We can now see that the further away a party is positioned from the voters' ideal points, the less likely they are to vote for them. For example, prior to casting their vote Voter A will reflect on the position of Party X and Party Y. After calculating that Party X is closer to their ideal point, this will be voter A's preferred party.
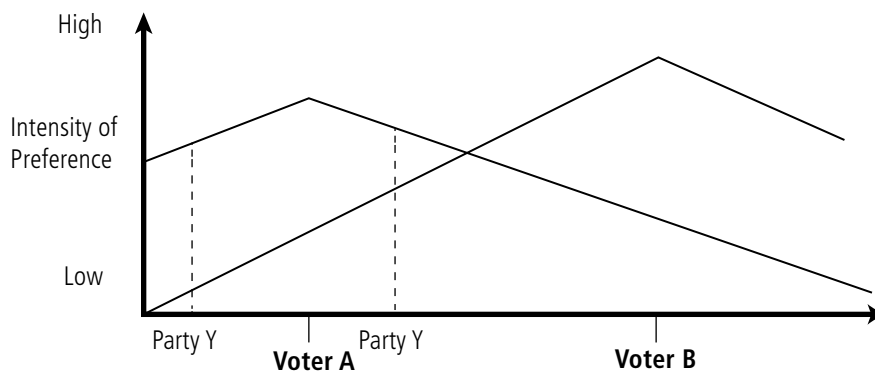

Figure 3.3: Spatial theory of voting.

This can also be mapped in a two-dimensional space as shown in Figure 3.4. On the x-axis we have an economic left–right dimension while on the y-axis we have a social left–right dimension. We have also plotted the ideal

points of three voters: A, B and C, and three parties: X, Y and Z. Based on how close these parties are to each voter, and assuming that each voter has symmetrical preferences – that is, they are indifferent about whether a party is nearer to them from the left or from the right – then we can make the following claims about which party each voter will support:

- Voter A prefers Party X over Party Y over Party Z

- Voter B is indifferent between Party Y and Party Z, but prefers both of these over Party X

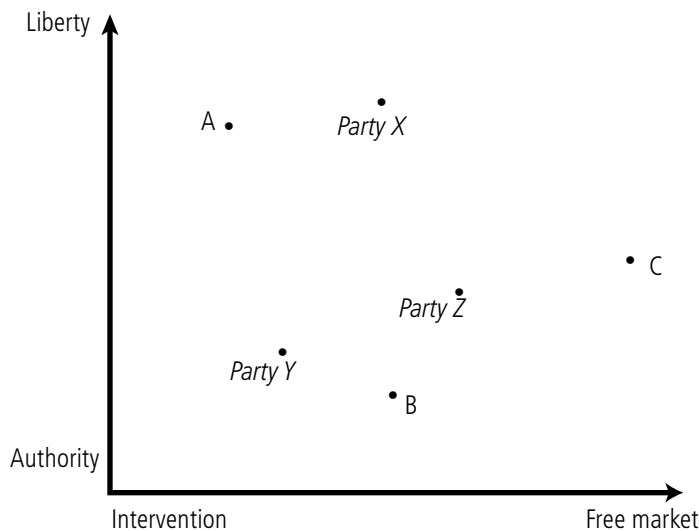- Voter C prefers Party Z over Party X over Party Y.

Figure 3.4: Spatial theory of voting in two dimensions.

In both of the above figures, we assumed that our voters would vote sincerely. In other words, we assumed that our voters would vote for the party closest to their ideal point. However, survey evidence (which we discuss in more detail below) shows that, in some instances, voters do not vote for the party closest to their ideal point. The spatial model explains this through strategic voting. There are two instances in which we can observe strategic voting, local and national.

1. **Local**: if a voter's preferred candidate has little or no chance of being elected, then they may vote for the 'closest' candidate from among those candidates who have a reasonable chance of being elected. Here the voter is trying to influence the election outcome in their local constituency.

2. **National**: if a voter's most-preferred party has no chance of influencing government formation or if it might form a coalition with a party much further away from a person's preferences, then they may vote for a party which is 'further' away from their ideal point, but which will lead to an overall national policy outcome closer to their ideal. Here the voter is trying to influence national government formation.

To illustrate these, let us return to the above two-dimensional Figure 3.4, starting firstly with local strategic voting. Previously we outlined the sincere electoral preferences for the three voters: A, B and C. However, let us now assume that the candidate from Party Z is viewed as having little or no chance of being elected. Once the candidate from Party Z is excluded, then we can make the following claims about which party each voter will support:

- Voter A prefers Party X over Party Y
- Voter B prefers Party Y over Party X
- Voter C prefers Party X over Party Y.

Based on this there is no real change in the voting pattern for Voter A, but Voter B now has a clear choice of Party Y over X, while Voter C will no longer vote for Party Z but will vote for Party X instead.

To examine strategic voting in the national context, let us assume that Party X announces that if it is elected it will form a coalition with Party Z. What is more, Party Z is a more powerful and larger party than Party X. This implies that any coalition will be closer to the ideal point of Party Z than Party X and that Party Z will hold more cabinet seats and implement more of its policies. Therefore, in reality the choice for our voters now becomes that between Party Y and the new position somewhere along the line between Parties X and Z, but closer to Z. This is illustrated in Figure 3.5. In this instance we can make the following claims about which party each voter will support:

- Voter A prefers Party Y and is indifferent between Party X and Party Z
- Voter B prefers Party Y and is indifferent between Party Z and Party X
- Voter C is indifferent between Party Z and Party X and prefers these to Party Y.

From this we can see that Voter A will now vote for Party Y instead of X while the voting behaviour of Voter B and Voter C will remain the same.
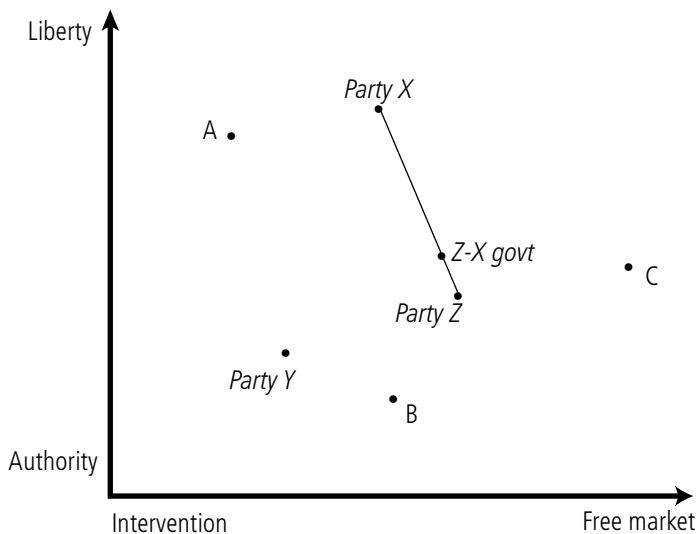

Figure 3.5: Strategic behaviour with coalition government formation.

3.6 Strategic voting in the UK and the Netherlands

All this may seem a little abstract, so it is useful to turn to two examples of strategic voting in recent elections. The first comes from the UK and provides an example of local strategic voting. The British Election Study asks voters: 'Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrat or what?' Respondents were then asked the follow up question: 'Which party did you vote for in the general election?' In 2010 there were much higher levels of sincere voting than there were in 2005. In 2005, over 90 per cent of Labour Party supporters voted for the Labour Party and over 95 per cent of Conservative Party supporters voted for the Conservative Party. However, only 78 per cent of Liberal Democrat supporters and only 21 per cent of supporters of Other

parties voted for their first preference party. Instead these supporters voted for one of the larger parties rather than voting for their first choice.

In the 2010 general election there was a much higher degree of sincere voting. Over 94 per cent of Conservative supporters voted for the Conservative Party and 87 per cent of Labour supporters voted for the Labour Party. However, in this election 89 per cent of Liberal Democrat supporters and, surprisingly for a country with a majoritarian electoral system, 60 per cent of supporters of Other parties, voted for their first preference. These were notable increases upon previous elections. Nonetheless, we can still say that approximately 20 per cent of voters voted for a party that was not their first preference in the last four UK general elections.

2005	**Party voted for**				
Party first preference	Lab (%)	Con (%)	LD (%)	Other (%)	Total
Labour	**92.7**	2.6	4.7	0.0	100
Conservative	2.3	**95.4**	1.6	0.8	100
Lib Dem	10.0	10.5	**78.4**	1.1	100
Other	32.6	18.4	27.7	**21.3**	100
2010	**Party voted for**				
Party first preference	Con (%)	Lab (%)	LD (%)	Other (%)	Total
Conservative	**94.6**	1.6	2.8	0.9	100
Labour	1.2	**87.6**	9.3	1.9	100
Lib Dem	6.8	3.5	**89.1**	0.6	100
Other	14.0	11.6	14.9	**59.5**	100

Table 3.1: Strategic voting in the 2005 and 2010 UK election.

The second example comes from the Netherlands in 2006 and provides an example of national strategic voting. As the election approached, opinion polls predicted that the two biggest parties in the new parliament would be the Christian Democratic Party, the CDA, and the Labour Party, the PvdA, who would gain 42 and 38 seats respectively out of the 150 seats available. However, in the week prior to the election, the leader of PvdA, Wouter Bos, when pressed in a media interview stated that he expected to form a coalition with the CDA after the election in order to form a new government. Following these comments, in the final election result PvdA only obtained 33 seats and CDA obtained 41 seats. Instead there was a corresponding rise in support for the PVV (Freedom Party) and for the SP (Socialist Party). Looking at the parties' placement along a left–right dimension (shown in Figure 3.6) helps to highlight how strategic voting due to anxieties over the proposed coalition altered the expected outcome.
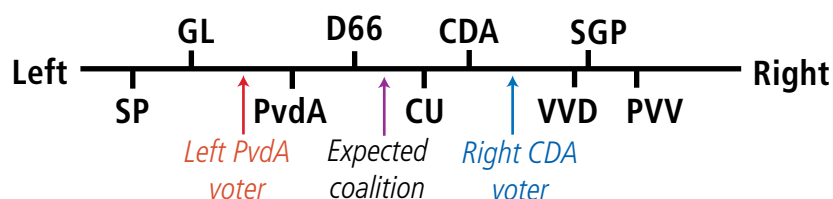

Figure 3.6: Location of parties and voters in the Dutch 2006 election.

Voters expected the proposed coalition to be positioned somewhere in the middle of the space between the PvdA and the CDA. Supporters of the PvdA who were somewhat left of the party position suddenly realised that a vote for the SP would produce a more desirable overall outcome and some voters to the right of the CDA switched support to the PVV for the same reasons. This changing pattern of support can be interpreted as national strategic voting to produce a more desirable outcome from the perspective of some voters.

3.7 Conclusion

Voting behaviour has changed markedly since the 1960s. Voters no longer vote on the basis of strong party attachments related to social cleavages, but rather voters now tend to vote on the basis of judgments made on certain issues of salience to them. Social change transformed political competition. Therefore, new ways of understanding voting behaviour emerged. Yet this does not mean that we will observe an end to the pattern of voters casting their votes for the party closest to their social class. Voters located on the left will still vote for left parties and voters located on the right will still vote for right parties. However, it does mean that we now understand the process of how voters reach their decisions in a different way than previously. We now see voters acting strategically in order to produce an outcome that is as close as possible to their political preferences. This involves a rational decision-making process rather than a process of partisan identification, even though the final outcome may be observationally equivalent.

3.8 A reminder of your learning outcomes

Having completed this chapter, and the Essential reading and activities, you should be able to:

- explain what political preferences are and where they come from
- evaluate the usefulness of mapping preferences in one or two dimensions, especially the usefulness of the 'left–right' dimension
- critically explain the decline of cleavage voting and the rise of expressive and strategic voting
- outline patterns of voting behaviour in your adopted country.

3.9 Sample examination questions

1. Is the 'left–right' a useful description of political preferences across countries and over time?
2. 'Ultimately, de-alignment has not substantially altered voting behaviour or outcomes.' Discuss.
3. What explains why voters choose to vote for the parties they do?