CHAPTER 4

States

Mexican police patrol Nuevo Laredo with automatic weapons. War with the drug cartels illustrates the penetration of crime into politics. (Eduardo Verdugo/AP Photo)

A **nation** is a population with a certain sense of itself, a cohesiveness, a shared history and culture, and often (but not always) a common language. A **state** is a government structure, usually sovereign and powerful enough to enforce its writ. (Notice that here we use state in its original sense; the 50 U.S. states are not states in this sense of the word.) At last count, there were about 193 states in the world.

Which came first, states or nations? Many suppose nations did, but in most cases states created their nations. The Zulus of South Africa, for example, are an artificially created nation put together from many clans and tribes two centuries ago by a powerful warrior, Shaka. Paris united many regions, mostly by the sword, to create France and inculcated Frenchness by education, language, and centralized administration. The French nation is an artificial creation of the French state. The United States was put together by a few men in Philadelphia from 13 colonies. While assimilating tens of millions of immigrants, the United States developed a sense of nationhood based largely on the ideals of its founding documents. Nations do not fall from heaven but are created by human craftsmanship of varying quality.

Questions to Consider

1. What is the difference between a nation and a state?
2. What are *weak states* and *failed states*?
3. What were Aristotle's six types of government?
4. What is the crux of a political institution?
5. What are the problems of unitary and federal systems?
6. What are the two main electoral systems and their advantages and disadvantages?
7. What is the difference between socialism and statism?
8. Is the U.S. preference for minimal government shared worldwide?
9. Can or should government attempt to modernize society?

INSTITUTIONALIZED POWER

Political institutions are the working structures of government, such as legislatures and executive departments. Institutions may or may not be housed in impressive buildings, although that helps bolster their authority. The U.S. Supreme Court, even if it met in a tent, would be an important institution as long as its decisions were obeyed. As we will consider later, it was not clear what the powers of the Supreme Court were to be when it began, but forceful personalities and important cases slowly gave it power. Likewise, the Federal Reserve

nation Population with a historic sense of self.

state Government structures of a nation.

political institution Established and durable pattern of authority.

weak state One unable to govern effectively, corrupt and penetrated by crime.

failed state One incapable of even minimal governance, with essentially no national government.

Board ("the Fed") evolved from calming bank panics, to fighting inflation, to arranging bailouts of financial giants. Congress could not do the job, so the Fed took on whatever new tasks were needed to stabilize the U.S. economy. Good institutions are flexible and evolve.

As we considered in Chapter 1, authority is a fluid thing and requires continual maintenance. A political institution is congealed or partly solidified authority. Over time, people have become used to looking to political institutions to solve problems, decide controversies, and set directions. Institutions, because they are composed of many persons and (if they are effective) last many generations, take on lives of their own apart from the people temporarily associated with them. This gives the political system stability; citizens know who is in charge.

Institutions are bigger than individual leaders. When President Nixon resigned under a cloud of scandal in 1974, the institution of the presidency was scarcely touched. If there had been a series of such presidents, and if they had refused to resign, the institution itself would have been damaged. Sometimes dictators try to

KEY CONCEPTS ■ EFFECTIVE, WEAK, AND FAILED STATES

Not all states really function as states; some hardly function at all. Just because a country has a flag and sits in the UN does not prove that it is a serious state. No world tribunal classifies states on the basis of their strength, but analysts see at least three categories:

Effective states control and tax their entire territory. Laws are mostly obeyed. Government looks after the general welfare and security. Corruption is fairly minor. Effective states tend to be better off and to collect considerable taxes (25 to 50 percent of GDP). Effective states include Japan, the United States, and Western Europe. Some put the best of these states into a "highly effective" category.

Weak states are characterized by the penetration of crime into politics. You cannot tell where politics leaves off and crime begins. The government does not have the strength to fight lawlessness, drug trafficking, corruption, poverty, and breakaway movements. Justice is bought. Democracy is preached more than practiced and elections often rigged. Little is collected in taxation. Revenues from natural resources, such as Mexico's and Nigeria's oil, disappear into private pockets. Much of Asia, Africa, and Latin America are weak states.

Failed states have essentially no national government, although some pretend they do. Warlords, militias, and opium growers do as they wish. There is no law besides the gun. Territorial breakup threatens. Education and health standards decline (as in the increase of HIV/AIDS). Many count Afghanistan and Somalia as failed states. Pirates make their home in Somalia because there is no state power to stop them (and no jobs for young men). Only outside assistance and pressure keep these two countries from disappearing altogether. Some fear Yemen, home to Islamist fighters, could become a failed state.

institutionalize To make a political relationship permanent.

make themselves into "institutions," but it fails; the institutions they tried to build unravel upon their deaths. Josip Tito ruled Yugoslavia for 35 years and attempted to ensure his system would survive him, but it was based too much on himself. Eleven years after his death, Yugoslavia split apart in bloody fighting. Dictators seldom build lasting institutions; they rarely **institutionalize** their personal power.

Powerful inhabitants of an office can sometimes put their personal stamp on the institution. George Washington retired after two terms, and until FDR no president tried to serve longer. Washington institutionalized term limits into the presidency that were not codified into law until the Twenty-Second Amendment in 1951. West Germany's first chancellor, Konrad Adenauer, offered such decisive leadership that the chancellorship has been powerful ever since.

One way to begin the study of institutions is to locate the most powerful offices of a political system: Who's got the power? Constitutions may help but do not tell the whole story. The U.S. Constitution indicates the executive and the legislative powers are equal and in balance, but over two centuries power has

CLASSIC WORKS ■ ARISTOTLE'S SIX TYPES OF GOVERNMENT

The earliest and most famous classification of governments was Aristotle's in the fourth century B.C. He distinguished among three legitimate kinds of government—where the ruling authority acts in the interests of all—and three corrupt counterparts—where government acts only in the interests of self.

A monarchy, according to Aristotle, is one person ruling in the interest of all. But monarchy can degenerate into tyranny, the corrupt form, under which the single ruler exercises power for the benefit of self. Aristocracy, Greek for rule of the best (*aristos*), is several persons ruling in the interest of all. But this legitimate rule by an elite can decay into oligarchy, the corrupt form, in which several persons rule in the interest of themselves.

Aristotle saw the *polity* (what we might call constitutional democracy) as the rule of many in the interests of all and the best form of government. All citizens have a voice in selecting leaders and framing laws, but formal constitutional procedures protect rights. Aristotle warned that polity can decay into the corrupt form, democracy, the rule of many in the interests of themselves, the worst form of government. Deluded into thinking that one person is as good as another, the masses in a democracy follow the lead of corrupt and selfish demagogues and plunder the property of the hardworking and the capable. Aristotle's classification, which reigned for nearly 25 centuries, is still useful and can be summarized like this:

Who Governs	Legitimate Forms *Rule in the Interest of All*	Corrupt Forms *Rule in the Interest of Selves*
One	Monarchy	Tyranny
A few	Aristocracy	Oligarchy
Many	Polity	Democracy

King Abdullah plays with a Saudi princeling at a festival. Saudi Arabia is one of the world's last working monarchies. (Saudi Press Agency/Reuters/Landov)

gravitated to the presidency. The French constitution, set up by Charles de Gaulle in 1958, seems to give the presidency near-dictatorial powers. But French legislative elections sometimes produce parliaments of one party facing a president of another—a "deadlock" in U.S. terms. The French president solved the problem by trimming his role and letting an opposed prime minister take a bigger role, what the French call "cohabitation." Constitutions (see next chapter) are themselves institutions, gradually evolving in practice if not in wording.

monarchy Hereditary rule by one person.

republic A political system without a monarch.

There are many ways to classify governments. One old question, now fading, is the "form of state," whether a country is a **monarchy** or **republic**. Most countries are now republics, but that does not necessarily mean "good" or "democratic." Figurehead constitutional monarchies still "reign" symbolically but do not actually rule in Britain, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Spain, and Holland, which are happy with that status. Traditional, working monarchies are still found in the Arab world—Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Kuwait—and may be doomed unless they can turn themselves into limited constitutional monarchies. Failure to do so has led to the overthrow of traditional monarchies and their replacement by revolutionary regimes in Egypt, Iraq, Libya, Ethiopia, and Iran.

UNITARY OR FEDERAL SYSTEMS

unitary system Centralization of power in a nation's capital with little autonomy for subdivisions.

first-order civil divisions Countries' main territorial components, such as U.S. states or Spanish provinces.

federalism Balancing of power between a nation's capital and autonomous subdivisions, such as U.S. states.

center–periphery tension Resentment of outlying areas at rule by nation's capital.

regionalism Feeling of regional differences and sometimes breakaway tendencies.

devolution Shifting some powers from central government to component units.

A really big and basic institutional choice is the territorial structure of the nation: unitary or federal. A **unitary system** accords its component areas little or no autonomy; most governance radiates from the capital city. The **first-order civil divisions**—departments in France, provinces in China, counties in Sweden, prefectures in Japan—are largely administered by national authorities with only small local inputs. The first-order civil divisions of **federalism**—U.S. and Brazilian states, German *Länder*, and Swiss cantons—have considerable political lives of their own and cannot be legally erased or easily altered by the central power.

Unitary Systems

Unitary governments control local authorities and citizens' lives more than federal systems do. France's education ministry in Paris draws up school curricula in order to reduce regional differences in language and culture, which at one time were very strong. Many decades ago, a French education minister looked at his watch and proudly told an interviewer which Latin verbs were being conjugated all over France. Unitary states have a national police force and one court system, whose judicial officers are appointed by the national government.

Center–periphery tensions or **regionalism** grew in several countries during the 1970s, and for several reasons. Economics was one. Local nationalists often claim that their region is poorer and shortchanged by the central government. The region may have a distinct language or culture that its people want to preserve. Many feel that important political decisions are not under local control, that they are made by distant bureaucrats. Often regions harbor historical resentments at having long ago been conquered and forcibly merged with the larger nation. Iraqi Kurds feel this way about rule by Baghdad. Several unitary systems grope for solutions to the regional problem.

Devolution in Britain The Celtic Scots and Welsh, pushed to the peripheries of Britain centuries ago by the invading Angles and Saxons, retain a lively sense of their differences from England. Many Scots and Welsh resent being ruled by London. During the 1970s, the Scottish and Welsh nationalist parties grew until they won several seats in Parliament. In 1997, the new Labour government of Tony Blair passed **devolution** bills that gave home-rule powers to Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. The Scottish parliament, first elected in 1999, now has a government of "Scot Nats" with the power to raise taxes and run Scotland's education, medical services, judicial system, and local government, somewhat

quasi- Nearly or almost.

prefect Administrator of a French department.

department French first-order civil division.

decentralization Shifting some administrative functions from central government to lower levels; less than *devolution.*

autonomías Spanish regions with devolved powers.

like a U.S. state. Some say this makes Britain **quasi-**federal, but officially Britain is still unitary.

Decentralization in France France was historically much more unitary than Britain. Everything is—or, until recently, was—run from Paris, a pattern that began with the absolutist (see page 234) moves of Louis XI in the fifteenth century. In the seventeenth century, Cardinal Richelieu centralized power in Paris by a system of provincial administrators, *intendants*, who reported back to him. The French Revolution, Napoleon, and republics that followed increased centralization. Now **prefects** report back from the **departments** to the interior ministry.

Most of France's 96 *départements* were named after rivers to try to erase the historical memories of the old provinces. But France, like Britain, has distinctive regional subcultures: the Celtic Bretons (who fled from Britain centuries ago to escape the Saxons); the southerners of the Midi, whose speech is still flavored with the ancient *langue d'oc*; and the Corsicans, who still speak an Italian dialect. Breton and Corsican separatists sometimes promote their cause with violence.

In 1960, to better coordinate economic development, President de Gaulle decreed 22 regions consisting of two to eight departments each. Starting in 1981, President Mitterrand instituted genuine **decentralization** that gave the regions certain economic planning powers. The Paris-appointed prefects lost some of their powers to newly important departmental legislatures. France thus reversed five centuries of centralization.

Autonomy in Spain Spain, too, decentralized. Here the problem was more urgent, for regional resentments, long buried under the dictatorial rule of Francisco Franco (1939–1975), came out with anger. Spain's regional problems were among the most difficult in Europe, second only to Yugoslavia's. Basques and Catalans, in the north of Spain, have non-Castilian languages and distinctive cultures. Basques, for example, speak a language related to no other and are intensely proud of it. In addition, many areas of Spain were granted *fueros* (local rights) in medieval times, which they treasured for centuries. On top of great regional diversity, Spanish centralizers attempted to plant a unitary system on the French model. The result was great resentment that appeared whenever Spain experimented with democracy. Breakaway movements appeared in 1874 and in the 1930s, only to be crushed by the Spanish army, which regards the unity of the country as sacred.

With this background, Spain held its breath in the late 1970s and 1980s as the post–Franco Spanish democracy instituted 17 regional governments called **autonomías**. The big problem is still the Basque country in the northwest, where the terrorist ETA strives for complete Basque independence with

murder and bombing. To appease regionalist feeling, which also appeared in more moderate forms in Catalonia, Galicia, Andalusia, and other areas, Madrid allowed regions to become autonomous, with regional parliaments, taxation power, language rights, and control over local matters. Most Spaniards approve of the *autonomías*, but *center-periphery tensions* (see page 63)—especially in Catalonia—continue over taxes and the sharing of revenues.

prefecture Japanese first-order civil division.

Pros and Cons of Unitary Systems Authority in unitary states can be absurdly overcentralized. Local government may not be able to install a traffic light or bus stop without permission from the capital. This leads citizens to ignore local affairs and produces political alienation. Centralization of power, however, can be an advantage in facing modern problems. Clear lines of authority without excess bickering among units of government can be useful. In unitary systems, the capital can marshal economic resources and coordinate planning and development. Taxation is the same nationwide, so firms and individuals cannot flee to low-tax states, as in the United States. Education standards can be high and uniform, as in Japan.

Japan gives a certain amount of autonomy to its subunits, but they, too, tug in a quasi-federal direction. An 1871 copy of the French system, Japan has 43 **prefectures** plus its three largest cities and the thinly populated northernmost island, each with its elected governor and unicameral assembly. Their activities are still overseen and limited by the home affairs ministry in Tokyo, and they collect only about 30 percent of the taxes they need, what Japanese call "30 percent autonomy." Colorful and outspoken prefectural governors have recently been demanding more autonomy.

Federal Systems

Federalism gives first-order civil divisions much autonomy while the central government runs areas that are inherently national. It is a difficult balancing act that varies among federal nations. Americans, with one of the first federal systems, sometimes urge federalism on other nations, including Iraq, where it may not work. The hostility among Iraq's Shia, Sunni, and Kurds could rip it apart. The ex–Soviet Union and Mexico became so centralized that some wondered if they were still federal. The crux of a federal system is that the component states have some powers that cannot be easily overridden by the central government.

The components of a federal system are typically represented in an upper house such as the U.S. Senate or German Bundesrat. (Unitary systems do not really need upper houses, but most have them.) In federal systems, the central government has exclusive control over foreign, defense, and monetary policy. The states typically control education, police, highways, and other close-to-home

confederation Political system in which components override *center*.

center Nation's capital and its powers.

affairs. Because the division of these powers is seldom clear or permanent, a federal government rests on a delicate balance between central power and local autonomy.

There are several reasons for starting a federal union. The first is national security; small and weak states cannot defend themselves against powerful aggressors. (This was one of the main arguments of *The Federalist*.) The pooling of diplomatic and military resources of the states made Bismarck's Germany a major power. Federal unions serve economic purposes. U.S. prosperity is based in large part on its continent-wide market without trade barriers, a feat the European Union has copied. Federalism is often the only way to protect national unity. As Britain freed India in 1947, New Delhi set up a federal system that allowed such states as Bengal and Punjab to maintain their own cultures while joining the Indian nation. Indian states would not have entered the federal union without a guarantee of local autonomy. Much of Latin America—especially the large countries of Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico—saw federalism as the only way to control their vast territories. Belgium in 1993 switched from a unitary to a federal system to give its two languages (French and Flemish) their own turf. The two still dislike each other, and Belgium could split apart.

Pros and Cons of Federal Systems Citizens are closest to their local governments, where they can influence officials and see how decisions are made. U.S. states have been called "laboratories of democracy" because they can experiment with new programs. If they work, they can be copied nationwide; if they fail, not much harm is done. On the other hand, local governments may lack the money to finance programs, and their officials are sometimes incompetent and corrupt. Local decision making can lead to duplication of services and poor coordination.

COMPARING ■ THE SHAKY LIVES OF CONFEDERATIONS

Theoretically, a third alternative to unitary and federal systems is the **confederation**. In a unitary system, power is concentrated in the national capital. In a federal system, power is balanced between the **center** and the components. In confederations, the component parts can override the center. Confederations tend to have short lives; they either fall apart or become federations. This was the fate of the early United States under the Articles of Confederation. Similarly, in the Confederate States of America, the states had such independence that they could not effectively wage the Civil War. Switzerland still calls itself a confederation (*Confederatio Helvetia*)—which the Swiss proudly date to 1291—but it is now a federal system. The European Union (EU) started as a confederation, but with the growth of the powers of Brussels (its headquarters), especially with economic and monetary union (the euro currency), it is trying to become a federal system.

Land German federal first-order civil division; plural *Länder.*

republic In Communist Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, federal first-order civil division.

glasnost Gorbachev's policy of media openness.

The relationship of the states or provinces to other levels of government varies among federal systems. In Germany, each of the 16 Länder has its own constitution and government for **Land** affairs. The Landtag (state legislature) can even affect the national policy because it elects members of the Bundesrat (the upper house of the national legislature). India is unique among federal states because New Delhi can proclaim "president's rule" during disorder in a state and take over its government.

Each of America's 50 states can legislate in any area not delegated to the federal government or to the people. Usually, education, welfare, civil law, property taxes, and licensing of professions are state functions. However, in the twentieth century, the federal government expanded in the areas of civil law, welfare, and economic regulation. Bush 43 moved education standards to the federal level with his No Child Left Behind Act—something that many states and traditional Republicans did not like. Dependent on federal grants and revenue sharing, the states must meet federal standards in many areas. Washington, for example, threatened to withhold federal highway funds if states did not make 21 the legal drinking age. Most quickly did.

From the beginning, the United States has debated the proper role of the federal government and worried that "sectionalism" could pull the Union apart, which it did. Southern insistence on "states' rights" led to a clash with President Lincoln over slavery and then to civil war. In the 1960s, controversial U.S. Supreme Court decisions prompted a campaign to curb the power of federal courts. Some insist that the concentration of power in Washington perverts American federalism and encroaches on individual freedoms. At the same time, local governments and citizens continue to rely on federal help in solving complex—and expensive—problems. Federalism is not an easy system to maintain and does not necessarily solve the problems of large and diverse countries. Consider the following.

Ex-Soviet Federalism On paper, the Soviet Union was a federation: Its 15 **republics** were supposed to have the right to secede. In practice, under the tight control of the Communist Party—although usually staffed by local talent (Georgians ran Georgia, Uzbeks ran Uzbekistan, and so on)—they followed Moscow's orders. Beneath a centralized veneer, however, lurked disunion. Gorbachev underestimated the strength of local nationalism, and when he allowed **glasnost** in the late 1980s, many Soviet republics went for independence, led by the Baltic states of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, which Stalin had brutally annexed in 1940. With the collapse of the Soviet Union at the end of 1991, all 15 republics proclaimed themselves independent, something Moscow always hated. Now Russia aims to regain what it calls the "near abroad" either by economic or by military means, as in Georgia.

The bulk of the old Soviet Union continued as the Russian Federation, which is composed of 89 autonomous republics, districts, regions, and even

centrifugal Pulling apart.

cities, most of which have signed a federation treaty with Moscow. Several areas, home to some of the hundred-plus ethnic groups within Russia, refused to sign and billed themselves as independent. The largely Muslim North Caucasus never liked being ruled by Moscow, and some areas now try to break away. Moscow, fearing that Chechen independence would encourage such demands elsewhere, brutally crushed Chechnya. Putin reinstituted central control over unruly governors by creating seven super-regions headed by former colleagues from the security police.

Could the three Communist federations—the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia—have devised a more genuine federalism that would not have fallen apart? Or were these federations of unlike components doomed from the start? The Communists, by pretending to have solved the "nationalities question," merely suppressed it until it came out later.

Ex-Yugoslav Federalism Yugoslavia, founded only in 1918, was a new and somewhat artificial country whose components were rarely content. It fell apart once before, in World War II, when its German conquerors set up an independent Croatia with expanded territories. Croatian fascists murdered a third of a million Serbs and others who had lived among them for centuries, thus sowing the hatred that erupted in the 1990s. The Communist Partisans who fought the Nazis thought federalism was the answer. Under the maverick Communist Tito (see page 49), Yugoslav federalism let Yugoslavia's six republics run local affairs and sent equal numbers of representatives to both houses of parliament. Yugoslavia's collective presidency had one member from each republic.

This hyperfederal setup, however, did not calm local nationalism; it inflamed it. Each republic wanted its own railroads, steel mills, and control of its economy. Under Tito, the Communist Party and security police could hold Yugoslavia together, but after he died in 1980 the republics went their separate ways. Tito deserves blame for this, as he designed an unworkable system that had to fall apart. Yugoslavia is an example of poor institutional choices.

Slovenia and Croatia declared their independence in 1991, followed by Bosnia in 1992. Serbian forces brutally practiced "ethnic cleansing" and murdered thousands. A 1995 U.S.-brokered and NATO-enforced peace calmed Bosnia, but ethnic Albanians in Kosovo, a Serb province, moved for independence. In 1999, a U.S.-led bombing campaign prevented Serbia from wholesale massacre of Kosovars. Bosnia and Kosovo are in effect NATO protectorates. Even tiny Montenegro chose independence from Serbia in 2006.

Canadian Federalism Canada is another federation with **centrifugal** tendencies. As we will consider in Chapter 7, the British allowed the French-speaking Québécois to keep their language, and francophones became second-class citizens, poorer than other Canadians and discriminated against because almost all private and government business was conducted in English. In the 1960s, the

Parti Québécois (PQ) sprang up, dedicated to Quebec's independence from Canada. To appease them, the federal government in Ottawa in 1969 made Canada bilingual, with French and English having equal rights. The PQ wanted more and made French the only official language of Quebec. Trying to hold the federation—which came to look a bit like a confederation as the provinces overruled the center—together, Ottawa and the provincial governments laboriously developed two new federal accords (Meech Lake in 1987 and Charlottetown in 1992), which were then rejected. The stumbling block was a separate status for Quebec as a "distinct society." Quebeckers said it did not go far enough; other Canadians said it went too far. Quebec's drive for sovereignty has receded, but Canadians still quarrel over federalism.

single-member district Electoral system that elects one person per district, as in the United States and Britain.

Federalism is difficult. These three cases remind us that federalism cannot cure everything. If the components are too different from one another—culturally, economically, linguistically, or historically—a federal system will not hold together. A shared political culture, as in the United States, Australia, Brazil, and Germany, is a big help. With that as a foundation, the right balance must be found between central and state governments. The United States is still searching for its correct balance.

ELECTORAL SYSTEMS

Electoral systems are also important institutional choices; they help determine the number of parties, the ease of forming a stable government, and the degree of citizen interest in politics. There are two general types of electoral systems with many variations.

Single-Member Districts

The simplest electoral system is the Anglo-American **single-member district**, wherein one member of Parliament or of Congress is chosen to represent the entire district by winning a plurality (not necessarily a majority) of the votes. Called "single-member districts with plurality win" or "first past the post" (FPTP), this system pushes interest groups and political factions to coalesce into two big parties. If there were, say, four parties who received 25, 25, 24, and 26 percent of the vote, respectively, the last would win. Losing parties that are not far apart ideologically quickly recognize that their advantage is to combine for the next election. Then this new party wins, forcing other small parties to combine. The message: Merge or lose. Woodrow Wilson won in 1912 only because Theodore Roosevelt split the Republican Party. FPTP countries tend to have two-party systems.

Third parties exist in such systems but without much hope of winning. They may have an impact as protest and pressure groups on the big parties. The British

majoritarian Electoral system that gives more than half of seats to one party.

proportional representation Elects representatives by party's percent of vote.

Liberal Democrats win nearly one vote in five, but because they are dispersed throughout the country, they win few seats. Single-member systems are unkind to third parties except in situations like Canada and India, where provincial and state concentration of parties permits many to win seats.

Advantages of Single-Member Districts Politics in FPTP systems tend to the center of the political spectrum, for this is usually where the most votes are. This inhibits the growth of extremism. If leaders out of touch with mainstream views control the party, it will lose, and the losing leaders will likely be replaced. This is what happened with the Republicans after the conservative Goldwater in 1964, the Democrats after the liberal McGovern in 1972, and the British Conservatives after two ineffective leaders, William Hague in 2001 and Michael Howard in 2005. As we will see in Chapter 8, public opinion in most democracies forms a bell-shaped curve. Parties that depart too far from the center penalize themselves.

Most FPTP systems also give a clear parliamentary majority to one party—thus, they are called **majoritarian** systems—so coalitions are rarely necessary. Gains are magnified in single-member systems. In 2010, for example, the British Conservatives won only 36 percent of the vote but took 47 percent of the seats in Parliament. Remember, seats in FPTP systems are not proportional to votes. A relatively small swing of votes from one party to another can translate into many parliamentary seats, perhaps enough to form a parliamentary majority and a new government. The United States, with its constitutionally mandated separation of powers, muddies the advantage of this system by frequently giving the White House to one party and the Congress to another.

Disadvantages of Single-Member Districts FPTP creates an artificial majority in parliament, which makes governing easier but does not fairly or accurately reflect public opinion or voting strength. In each district, the winner takes all. If there are two parties, the losing party, even if it received 49 percent of the vote, gets no representation. Thanks to computers, most U.S. states are now so perfectly gerrymandered—some of the districts have bizarre shapes—that close to 400 out of 435 House seats are "safe" for one party or the other with few close or unpredictable races.

Single-member districts teach parties a sort of golden rule about sticking to the political center, which makes politics safe but dull. The two big parties often sound alike, resulting in voter boredom and low turnout. The European multiparty systems have higher voter turnouts, partly because voters can choose from a more interesting menu of parties.

Proportional Representation

Proportional representation (PR) systems are based on multimember districts; that is, each district sends several representatives to parliament, not just one. In

the small countries of the Netherlands and Israel, the entire country is one big district. In Sweden, the district is a county; in Spain, a province. If the district is entitled to ten seats, each party offers voters a *party list* of ten candidates. Each voter picks one list, and the party gets seats in proportion to the votes it receives. If the party won 30 percent of the votes in a ten-member district, it would send the first three names on its party list to parliament. A party with 20 percent would send its first two names.

majority More than half.

plurality The most, even if less than half.

mixed-member Hybrid electoral system that uses both single-member districts and proportional representation.

Rarely does the vote divide so neatly; one party might win 42 percent of 11 seats. Would it get 4.62 seats? How do you send a fraction of a person to parliament? The most common way to handle this is the d'Hondt mathematical formula, which slightly overrepresents the larger parties at the expense of smaller ones. Sweden "tops off" numerical discrepancies by using nationwide seats. Sweden's 28 districts elect only 310 of the Riksdag's 349 seats; the remaining 39 seats are parceled out to rectify variances from the parties' national percentages.

To minimize the problem of splinter, nuisance, or extremist parties, PR systems require parties to win a certain percentage of the vote in order to obtain any seats at all. These are called "threshold clauses." In Germany and Poland, a party must win at least 5 percent of the vote nationwide; in Sweden and Italy, 4 percent.

COMPARING ■ FRENCH AND GERMAN VARIATIONS

France uses single-member districts but with runoffs. Few candidates win a **majority** (more than 50 percent, not the same as the simple plurality in the Anglo-American system) on the first round, so those with at least an eighth of the vote go to a runoff a week later. Then a simple **plurality** suffices to win. By previous agreement between parties, some candidates withdraw and urge their supporters to vote for the candidate closest to them ideologically, so in most second-round contests there are only two or three candidates. The first round in France is somewhat like a U.S. primary election.

The German system is basically half FPTP and half proportional representation (PR). On a split ballot, Germans vote in one column for an individual to represent their district; here plurality wins. In a second column, they vote for a party to represent their *Land* (state) in proportion to the votes received. Overall strength in the Bundestag is set by the second vote—the one for parties—so seats are always proportional to votes. Half of the seats, though, are reserved for the 328 winners of the district contests. Germany's split representation system produced a two-plus party system (discussed in Chapter 11) and governing stability. The German system is a modification of the PR system and was designed after World War II to prevent a return to the weak and unstable Weimar system, which had proportional representation that treated the country as one big district. In the 1990s, Italy, New Zealand, and Japan adopted German-style **mixed-member** systems that combine single-member districts with PR for their parliamentary elections.

laissez-faire French for "let it be"; economic system of minimal government interference and supervision; capitalism.

welfare state Economic system of major government redistribution of income to poorer citizens.

Advantages of Proportional Representation PR means that the country's legislature accurately reflects public opinion and party strength. Parties do not have to capture the big middle of the electoral spectrum as in Anglo-American systems and can thus articulate ideologies and principles more clearly because they do not try to please everybody. If a small part of the population—as low as 2 percent in Israel—really believes in something, they can run as a party and win seats. They are not forced to amalgamate into bigger parties and dilute their views, as in FPTP systems.

Disadvantages of Proportional Representation PR systems do little to fight party splintering, so they often lead to multiparty systems. This tendency, however, is waning, and two-plus party systems have emerged, even in PR systems. Sweden and Spain have one or two large parties, plus a few smaller ones. Their political systems are not terribly splintered. Israel, on the other hand, is plagued by splinter parties; as many as 15 parties are elected to the Knesset. If the largest party falls short of half the seats in PR systems—usually the case—it must form a coalition with other parties. These coalitions are often unstable and unable to decide important issues. Where one party is big enough to govern alone, however, the system is quite stable. The Anglo-American systems mostly confer a majority and thus stability. When no party won a majority of seats in Britain in 2010, it too had to form a coalition (of Conservatives and Liberal Democrats).

STATES AND THE ECONOMY

Yet another way to classify governments is how they handle the economy. States face two questions: (1) How much of the economy should the state own or supervise? (2) How much of the nation's wealth should be redistributed to help the poorer sectors of society? The answers produce four basic approaches to promoting the general welfare: laissez-faire, statism, socialism, and the welfare state. These array themselves into a fourfold table (see Figure 4.1).

In a **laissez-faire** system, the government owns little or no industry and redistributes little in the form of welfare programs. As we explored in Chapter 3 on ideologies, these countries follow Adam Smith, seconded by Thomas Jefferson, who argued that government interference in the economy decreases growth and prosperity. The theory here is that private enterprise and individual initiative make a nation both free and prosperous.

A **welfare state** owns little or no industry but does redistribute wealth to the less well-off. Sometimes known as "social democracies," the welfare states of northwest Europe offer "cradle-to-grave" benefits in health insurance, child care, job training, and retirement funds. To pay for this, they charge the world's highest taxes—in Sweden and Denmark, about 50 percent of GDP. Industry, though, is private and moneymaking.

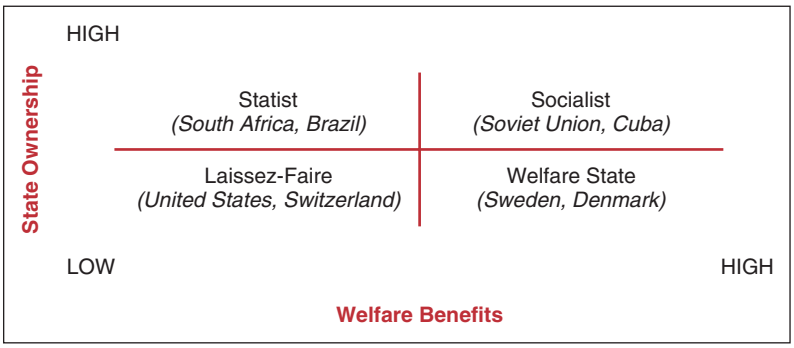

Figure 4.1
Statist, socialist, laissez-faire, and welfare-state approaches.

statism Economic system of state ownership of major industries to enhance power and prestige of state; a precapitalist system.

socialism Economic system of government ownership of industry, allegedly for good of whole society; opposite of capitalism.

Statism is an old system that predates laissez-faire. In a statist system, the state (meaning the national government) is the number-one capitalist, owning and running much major industry but providing few welfare benefits. Statism began when the French kings founded a powerful, centralized state that supervised industry for the sake of French wealth and power. Sometimes called by its French name *étatisme*, it typically includes state ownership of railroads, steel mills, banks, oil, and other big enterprises. Small and medium business is left in private hands. Statism caught on in much of Europe and Latin America. France, Brazil, Chile, and Mexico were statist systems but reformed in a free-market direction. Many developing countries have followed statist models with the argument that only the government has the money, ideas, and talent to start up new industries. The economic results suggest state-owned firms are inefficient because they are run by bureaucrats and face no competition; often they operate at a loss and have to be subsidized by the national treasury.

A **socialist** system practices both state ownership and extensive welfare benefits. Exemplified by the former Soviet Union, government owns nearly all the means of production, claiming it runs the economy in the interests of the society as a whole. However, the collapse of Communist regimes (which called themselves "socialist"; we called them "Communist") indicates they worked poorly. Today, only North Korea and Cuba remain as (negative) examples of socialism, and their systems seem ripe for change.

In actual practice, governments often combine elements of these four systems. Even the basically laissez-faire United States demands welfare measures and bailouts of financial giants deemed "too big to fail." Communist China and Vietnam, once strictly socialist, now have rapidly growing private, capitalistic economies. These questions are never settled, and countries often change their combinations. In our day, we have seen a massive shift away from state-owned industry in

strong state Modern form of government, able to administer and tax entire nation.

Eastern Europe, France, and Latin America. Welfare states like Sweden, feeling the pinch of too-generous benefits and too-high taxes, have elected conservative governments.

A basic American attitude is that government should be kept small. In much of the rest of the world, however, state power is accepted as natural and good. In France, for example, Louis XI started a strong state in the fifteenth century, and Louis XIII and Cardinal Richelieu expanded it in the seventeenth century. This strong state implanted itself into French consciousness and later spread through most of Europe. The French-type **strong state** supervised the economy and education, collected taxes, built highways and canals, and fielded standing armies. A bureaucratic elite, trained in special schools, ran the country.

These attitudes lasted well into the twentieth century and are still present. Defeated by Germany in 1870–1871, the French elite used the state as an *agent of modernization*. Paris tried to build a unified and cohesive population, to turn "peasants into Frenchmen." A centralized school system stamped out local dialects, broke stagnant rural traditions, and recruited the best talent for universities. State-owned industries turned France into an economic power. Beaten by Germany again in World War II, the French elite again used state power to modernize France.

Did it work? France did modernize greatly, but was this the fastest or most efficient way? Britain and the United States advanced further with minimal government supervision; the competitive spirit of the free-market economy did the job faster and cheaper. (The comparison is not quite fair; Britain and the United States faced no powerful, expansionist Germany on their borders. If they had, the role of government would have been much bigger.)

Japan is another example of state-led modernization. With the Meiji Restoration of 1868, Tokyo assigned various branches of industry to samurai clans, provided funds, and told them to copy the best of the West. In one generation, Japan went from handicrafts to heavy industry under the slogan "Rich nation, strong army!" After World War II, the Ministry of Finance and Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) supervised Japan's rapid economic leap by aiming bank loans to growth industries, keeping out foreign competition, and penetrating the world market with Japanese products. Before we say government supervision of the economy does not work, we must explain why it worked in Japan. The Japanese, of course, have an entirely different and more cooperative culture. An American MITI might not work in our economic and cultural context.

Should government attempt to supervise the economy by providing plans, suggestions, industry-wide cooperation, insurance, and loans? The traditional American answer is "No, it'll just mess things up." Europeans and Canadians are amazed that the United States had to go through bitter controversy to pass even a moderate healthcare reform, something they did decades ago. Even in America, however, the federal government has repeatedly pushed the U.S. economy forward by acquiring large territories, letting settlers homestead them, and giving

railroads rights of way. In the 1930s, the Tennessee Valley Authority brought electricity and flood control to a backward part of America. Conservatives disliked the 2008 bailout of major financial institutions, but most agreed it was necessary. America, too, has used the state as an agent of modernization and now debates federal programs to reform healthcare. One of the great questions of modern politics is how much state intervention do we want?

HOW TO . . . ■ USE SOURCES

Sources—where you get your facts, data, quotes, and ideas—are very important and are the first things an instructor checks. Good sources are from specialized books, scholarly articles, or respected periodicals. Bad sources are ones that appear commonplace or dubious, such as textbooks (never use your current textbook as a source), encyclopedias (yes, even Wikipedia), dictionaries, and popular newsweeklies. To cite something, in parentheses and just before the period, put the author's last name followed (without comma) by the year (Smith 2010).

Google and Wikipedia are easy to use but seldom give a complete picture. They do not tell you what questions to ask. Many Web sites are advertising or propaganda. Most are so current or narrow that they fail to mention what happened last year or in another country; they lack historical and comparative perspective. For that, you still need books and articles.

Scholars divide sources into two types: primary and secondary. A primary source is direct material unfiltered through the mind of another. It might be a 2008 quote from presidential candidate Barack Obama (Jones 2009). It might be a statistical tabulation in a report (World Bank 2007, 274–275). It might be your own survey of college students.

A secondary source is another's synthesis, ideas, or opinions. It might be an article on a Web site about the U.S. occupation of Iraq (Berry 2006). It might be a scholar's reading of the World Bank figures (Adams 2007). To use a football analogy, which is better—your personal observation of the game (primary source) or the sportscaster's description of it (secondary source)? Instructors usually like primary sources. A paper may include as a primary source numbers from official documents, such as EPA budget cuts under Bush (Williams 2005). Williams's comments on the cuts, on the other hand, would be a secondary source (Williams). Just noting the same source twice does not make it two sources. A source means a different book or article.

Instructors are impressed if you have many good sources, say, ten in a five-page paper. If you cite a specific fact or quote, include the page number (Thompson 2001, 247). In the library's reference section, there are ways to get started fast, most on computer.

New York Times Index
Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature
Social Sciences Index
Public Affairs Information Service
CIA World Factbook
Facts on File
LexisNexis
Academic Index
First Search

For anything to do with executive-legislative relations (Congress, the White House, new laws, budgets), there's something so good, it's almost cheating: *Congressional Quarterly*, which puts out a weekly, an annual, and a *Congress and the Nation* for each presidential term. For foreign countries, check the magazine *Current History* and the Country Study series of books published by the Library of Congress.

mypoliscikit EXERCISES

Apply what you learned in this chapter on MyPoliSciKit (www.mypoliscikit.com).

Assessment Review this chapter using learning objectives, chapter summaries, practice tests, and more.

Flashcards Learn the key terms in this chapter; you can test yourself by term or definition.

Video Analyze recent world affairs by watching streaming video from major news providers.

Comparative Exercises Compare political ideas, behaviors, institutions, and policies worldwide.

KEY TERMS

autonomías (p. 64)
center (p. 66)
center–periphery tension (p. 63)
centrifugal (p. 68)
confederation (p. 66)
decentralization (p. 64)
department (p. 64)
devolution (p. 63)
failed state (p. 60)
federalism (p. 63)
first-order civil divisions (p. 63)
glasnost (p. 67)
institutionalize (p. 61)
laissez-faire (p. 72)
Land (p. 67)
majoritarian (p. 70)
majority (p. 71)
mixed-member (p. 71)
monarchy (p. 62)
nation (p. 60)
plurality (p. 71)
political institution (p. 60)
prefect (p. 64)
prefecture (p. 65)
proportional representation (p. 70)
quasi- (p. 64)
regionalism (p. 63)
republic (p. 62, 67)
single-member district (p. 69)
socialism (p. 73)
state (p. 60)
statism (p. 73)
strong state (p. 74)
unitary system (p. 63)
weak state (p. 60)
welfare state (p. 72)

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