

Comparative Government

Dr Chao-Yo Cheng



Weel 2: Organising



Today's plan

- ▶ Logistics: Attendance, class duration and etc
- ▶ Recap: "Doing Comparative Politics" (30 mins)
- ▶ Refresher lecture and Q&A (1-1.5 hr)
 - Last week: Regimes, government and governance
 - Nations, states and nation-states
 - How states vary: State capacity and economic development
- ▶ Reading exercise: "Democracy and Varieties of Nationalism" (1 hr)



International

Wednesday, 30 April 2025

Winners in the fight for Africa's democracies are getting hard to find



<https://observer.co.uk/news/international/article/winners-in-the-fight-for-africas-democracies-are-getting-hard-to-find>



Recap: "Doing Comparative Politics"

- ▶ What is this about? Why is the issue/question this news article attempts to "discuss" or "explain?"
- ▶ What are the "factors" highlighted by the author? How "convincing" are they?
- ▶ What is the comparative method used here?



Question: The “strange” case of democracies in Africa

- ▶ Many democracies in Sub-Saharan Africa have "reverted" back to authoritarianism, as illustrated by a rising number of
 - coups
 - rigged elections
 - opposition leaders facing charges or even being "jailed"



NEWS

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Coups, elections and protests - a difficult year for democracy in Africa



AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

The deadly violence that followed Tanzania's election shocked many

Stewart Maclean

Nairobi

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c1lr70jg2zgo>

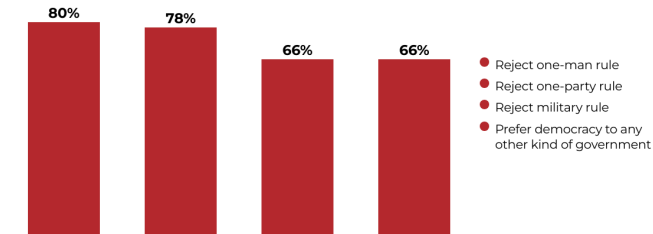
Report: “African insights 2024” (Afrobarometer 2025)

- ▶ Support for democracy remains strong but declining
 - 66% prefer democracy; large majorities reject authoritarian alternatives
 - Yet support dropped 7 percentage points over a decade (30 countries), with steep declines in South Africa (-29) and Mali (-23)
- ▶ Military rule gaining acceptance
 - Opposition to military rule weakened by 11 percentage points, especially in Mali (-40) and Burkina Faso (-36)
 - 53% would accept military takeover if leaders abuse power
- ▶ Mixed signals on support for democratic norms
 - In favor of: accountability, rule of law, term limits, multiparty competition and media freedom
 - Support for elections declined 8 points (though majority still favor)



Support for democracy and rejection of authoritarian rule | 39 African countries | 2021/2023

AFROBAROMETER



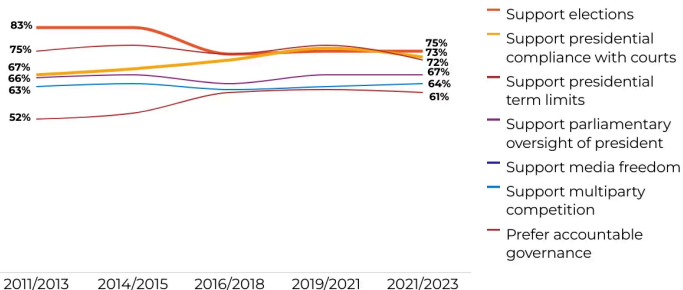
<https://www.afrobarometer.org/feature/flagship-report/>



Trends in support for democratic norms

| 30 African countries | 2011-2023

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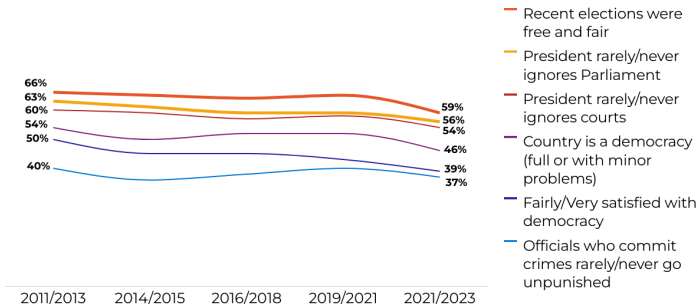


<https://www.afrobarometer.org/feature/flagship-report/>



Supply of democratic norms, institutions | 30 African countries | 2011-2023

AFROBAROMETER



<https://www.afrobarometer.org/feature/flagship-report/>



Why democracies in Africa are “fragile”

- ▶ Worldwide democratic backsliding and the difficult "state" of global economy (inflation and cost of living crisis)
- ▶ Weakening of the post-1945 international settlement (and the rise of alternatives)
- ▶ African democracies are "young;" democratic institutions are "flimsy"



“Refresher” lecture

- ▶ Last week: Regimes, government and governance
 - Regime: The principle to rule (institution)
 - Government: The organization to rule (organization)
 - Governance: The action to rule (behavior)
- ▶ Nations, states and nation-states
- ▶ How states vary: State capacity and economic development



States, nations, and nation-states

► State(s)

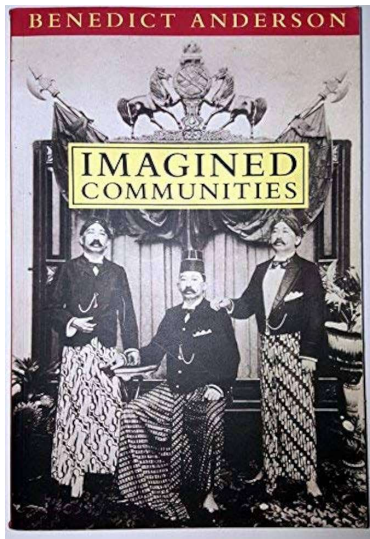
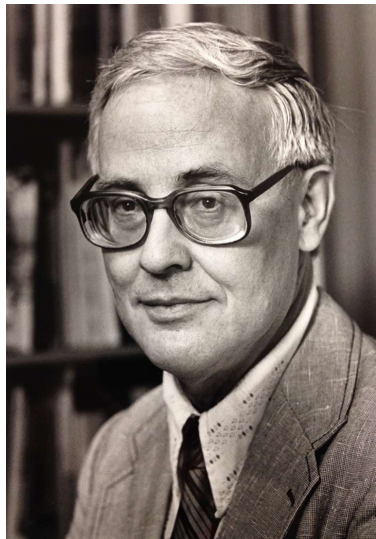
- Components: Sovereignty, territory and people (?)
- Building of a state: War, political centralization and resource extraction (armed forces and bureaucracy)
- Different forms of states (look back to history)

► Nation(s)

- Building of a nation: **Imagined Communities** by Benedict Anderson (1983)
- Nations versus race and ethnicity
- Varieties of nationalism: Multiculturalism and populism

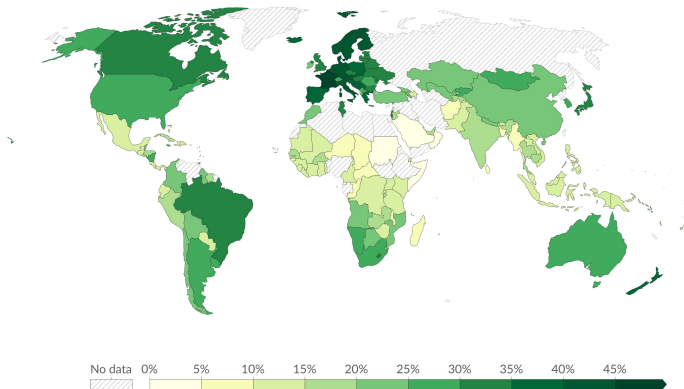
► Nation-state(s): Where nations and states meet each other (do they always align? what if they do not?)





Tax revenues as a share of GDP, 2022

Direct and indirect taxes as well as social contributions included.



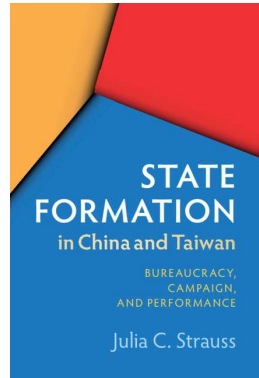
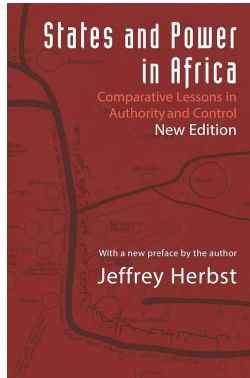
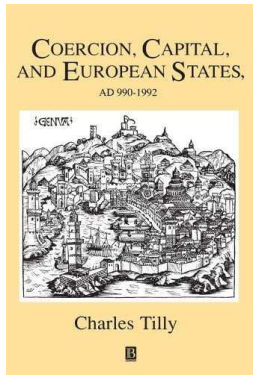
Data source: UNU-WIDER Government Revenue Dataset (2023)

OurWorldinData.org/taxation | CC BY

<http://ourworldindata.org/state-capacity>



Varieties of states and state-building: Alternative indicators and non-Western experiences



How states vary

- ▶ By political regime: Democracy, anocracy and autocracy (Week 4)
- ▶ By constitutional design
 - Judiciary (Week 3): Supreme (or constitutional) courts (or not – not every country has one)
 - Executive (Week 5): Presidential versus parliamentary; bureaucracy (Week 8)
 - Elections (Week 6): Plural/majoritarian versus proportional representation (and mixed-member); political parties (Week 7)
 - Legislature: Unicameral versus bicameral
 - Central-local relations: Federal versus unitary (and "decentralized")
- ▶ By level of economic development: Regime versus state?



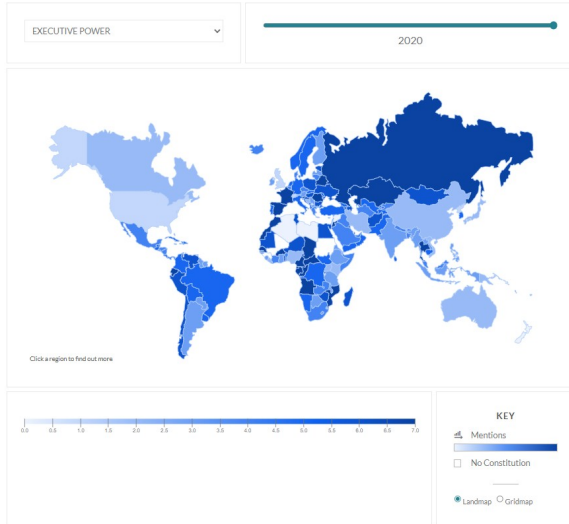
“Freedom in the World” (Freedom House 2025)



<https://freedomhouse.org/explore-the-map>



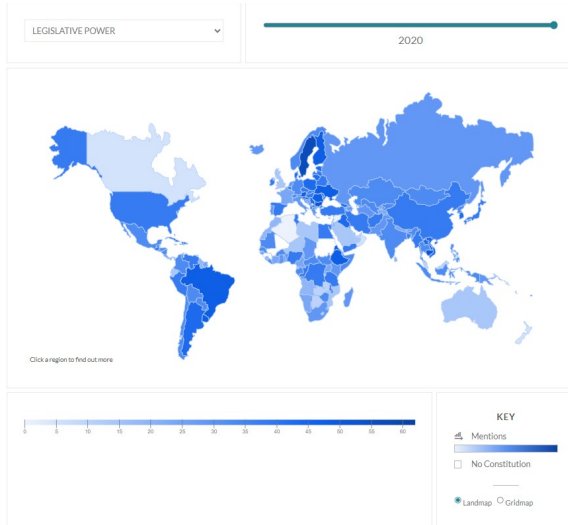
Constitute Project (executive power)



<https://www.constituteproject.org/countries>



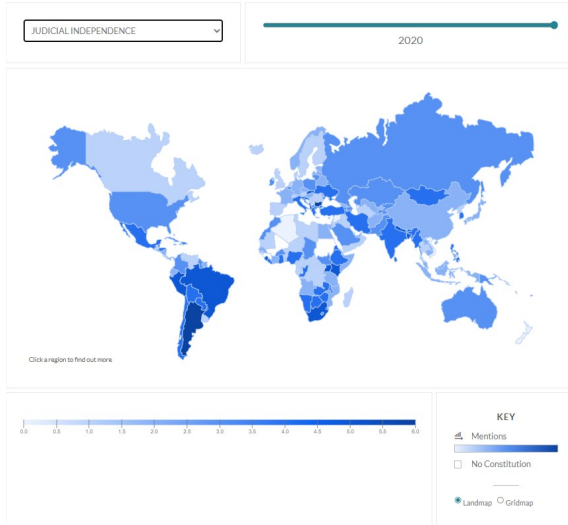
Constitute Project (legislative power)



<https://www.constituteproject.org/countries>



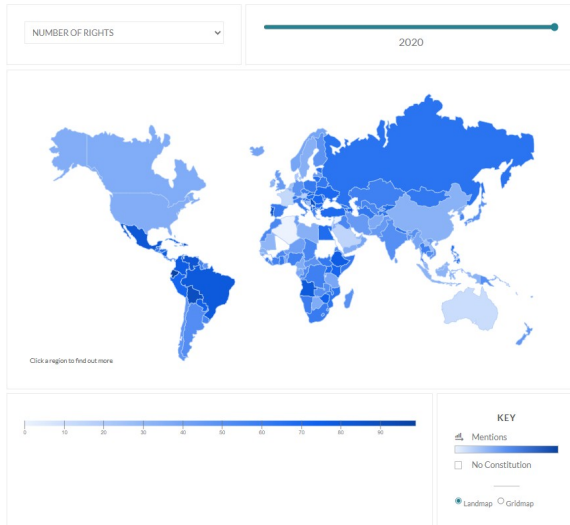
Constitute Project (judicial independence)



<https://www.constituteproject.org/countries>

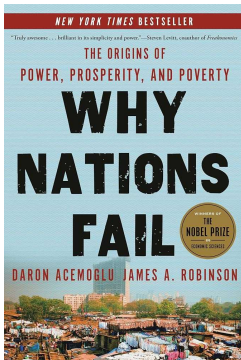


Constitute Project (political rights)

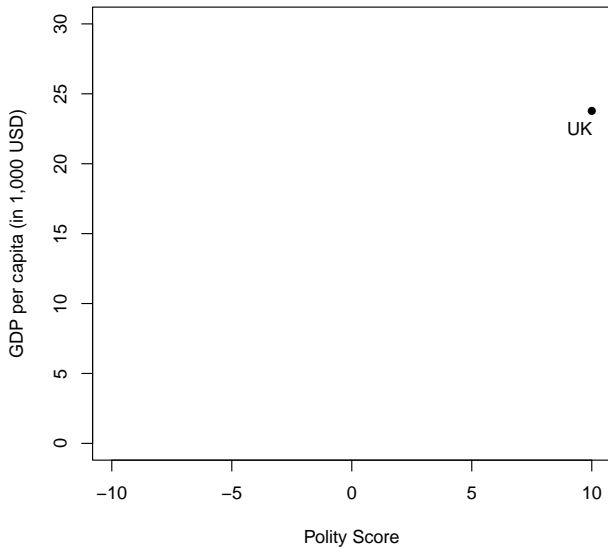


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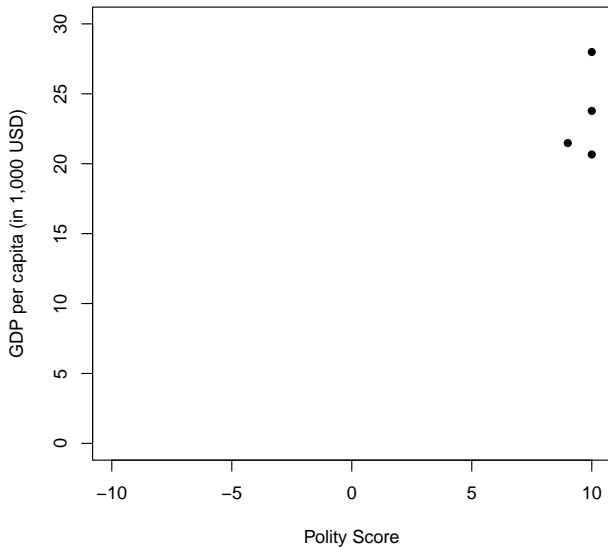




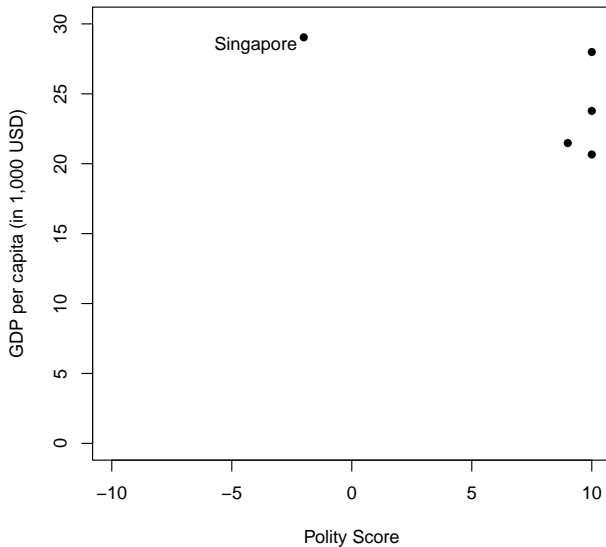
Democracy and development



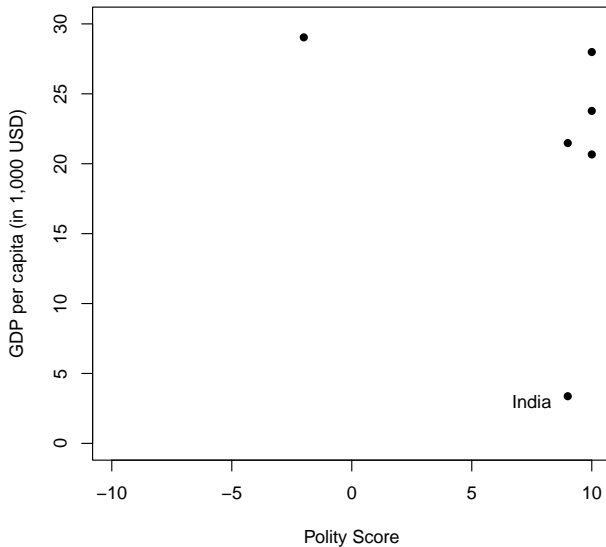
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