

ADVANCED DEMOCRACIES

During the era of the Cold War, most political science scholars categorized countries of the world according to the “Three Worlds” approach. The First World included the United States and its allies; the Second World included the U.S.S.R. and its allies; and the Third World included all countries that could not be assigned to either camp. Today, with the Cold War over and the world encompassed by forces of globalization and fragmentation, we will use these three categories to more effectively compare political systems: advanced democracies, communist and post communist countries, and developing/less developed countries. In this section of the book, we will consider advanced democracies.

What do we mean by the term, “advanced democracies”? By and large, we are referring to two dimensions: political type and level of economic development.

POLITICAL DIMENSIONS

Politically, advanced democracies exemplify many facets of democracy, not just the characteristic of holding regular and fair elections. Other qualities of advanced democracies are:

- **Civil liberties**, such as freedom of belief, speech, and assembly
- **Rule of law** that provides for equal treatment of citizens and due process
- **Neutrality of the judiciary** and other checks on the abuse of power
- **Open civil society** that allows citizens to lead private lives and mass media to operate independently from government
- **Civilian control of the military** that restricts the likelihood of the military seizing control of the government

Advanced democracies generally have a high degree of legitimacy, partly because their systems have been in place for a long time. Another source of legitimacy is a large amount of **social capital**, or reciprocity and trust that exists among citizens, and between citizens and the state. All advanced democracies guarantee participation, competition, and liberty, but they differ in the methods that they use. For example, some have proportional representation electoral systems; others use the plurality system; and still others combine the two systems. Participation rates vary considerably, too. The uses of referenda and initiatives differ greatly across these countries; most advanced democracies do use them, although the United States, Japan, Canada, and Germany allow for such votes only at the local level. In most of the countries, it is the responsibility of the state to ensure that all eligible voters are automatically registered to vote. However, in the United States and France, the responsibility to register is on the individual. In several Scandinavian countries, citizenship is not required for voting; anyone who is a permanent resident may vote. In Australia, Argentina, Uruguay, and Belgium, voting is mandatory.

ECONOMIC DIMENSIONS

In thinking about the values that form the political culture of advanced democracies, they may be described as reflecting **post-modernism**. **Modernism** is a set of values that comes along with industrialization. Values of modernism include secularism (an emphasis on non-religious aspects of life), an emphasis on reasoning (rationalism), materialism (valuing concrete objects and possessions), technology, bureaucracy, and an emphasis on freedom rather than collective equality. In other words, industrialization encouraged making money and gaining economic success. Advanced democracies, such as Britain and the United States, experienced this transformation

POLITICAL SYSTEMS IN ADVANCED DEMOCRACIES		
Parliamentary	Semi-Presidential	Presidential
Australia	Austria	The United States
Belgium	Finland	
Canada	France	
Denmark	Portugal	
Germany		
Israel		
Italy		
Japan		
Netherlands		
New Zealand		
Norway		
Spain		
Sweden		
Great Britain		

Parliamentary, Semi-Presidential and Presidential Systems. As the chart demonstrates, most advanced democracies have a parliamentary system. Although the United States is the only advanced democracy with a presidential system, other countries – such as Mexico and Nigeria – use it.

in the 19th century. Others were later, but all advanced democracies have also experienced post-modernism, a set of values that emphasizes quality of life over concern with material gain. Some examples of post-modern values are the preservation of the environment and the promotion of health care and education. These values accompany the economic changes of **post-industrialism**, in which the majority of people are employed in the **service sector**, including such industries as technology, health care, business and legal services, finance, and education. These contrast to the most common type of job created earlier by industrialization, the **industrial sector**, which employs people to create tangible goods, such as cars, clothing, or machinery. The **agricultural sector** of post modern societies is very small since mechanized farming (first developed during the industrial era) means that only a few farmers can produce enough food to feed all the workers in the industry and service sectors.

We may also refer to advanced democracies as liberal democracies, which value individual freedoms in both economic and political realms. Many advanced democracies, but not all, established democratic political systems many years ago, and now operate under stable governments that have long followed democratic traditions.

Many countries in Europe are among the most stable democracies in the modern world. Although their political systems operate in a variety of ways, they share common characteristics that help students begin to effectively compare across countries, and allow them to see both similarities and differences. The citizens of each country are diverse, and they actively participate in political affairs. In the AP Comparative Government and Politics course, Britain represents this group. Britain has a well-organized and competitive party system and interest groups, as well as a representative form of government.

The sector percentages for some advanced democracies look something like this:

ECONOMIC SECTORS IN ADVANCED DEMOCRACIES			
	Services	Industry	Agriculture
United States	79.2%	19.9%	1.2%
Canada	69.6%	28.4%	2%
Japan	72.1%	26.4%	1.4%
United Kingdom	76.2%	22.8%	.9%
France	77.4%	20.3%	2.2%
Germany	69%	30.1%	.9%

Source: *CIA Factbook*, 2008 estimate, as percentage of GNP

SUPRANATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS: THE EUROPEAN UNION AND NAFTA

One of the most important developments of the past few decades in Europe has been the slow but steady march toward integration of the continent's countries. After World War II the most obvious need was to rebuild the infrastructures of countries devastated by the conflict. As the Cold War set in, the "Iron Curtain" separated western and eastern Europe based on economic and political differences, with countries in the east dominated by communism. Still, the urge to integrate, first economically and eventually politically, continued throughout the century. By the early 21st century, the European Union had emerged as a strong supranational organization that encouraged cooperation among nations and promised to redefine the meaning of national sovereignty.

The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) is a supranational organization that binds the United States, Canada, and Mexico. Created in 1995 mainly as a free trade area, NAFTA has much narrower integration goals than the EU. Unlike the EU, no common currency has been adopted for North American countries, and no parliament or court systems have been set up.

In the pages that follow, the political system of Britain will be discussed, and students should note that the outline of concepts in Chapter One is followed throughout. The second part of this section is a brief review of the development and current status of supranational organizations, with a focus on the European Union, a major force that shapes policymaking in Britain and all other European countries.

IMPORTANT TERMS AND CONCEPTS

modernism

post-modernism

post-industrialism

sectors of the economy (agriculture, industrial, service)