



CHAPTER 7

Institutions and States

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

This is the first in a series of chapters that will focus on domestic institutions. As you will see, political scientists spend a lot of time analyzing the behaviour of institutions and theorizing about them. Following brief

introductions to the concept of the institution and the different factors that structure political behaviour, we will examine the state from a variety of perspectives. A brief historical account of the development

▲ European Union membership referendum demonstrators gather near the Brexit Battle Bus in Exeter, UK, on 11 May 2016 (© Anthony Collins/Alamy Stock Photo).

of the European state and the spread of that model to other parts of world is followed by an introduction to the European state system (an interdependent series of sovereign states) and its spread between the

seventeenth and twentieth centuries. We will then look at the basic functions of the modern states and draw some distinctions between types of state: strong, weak, and democratic.

Understanding Institutions: Informal and Formal

What is an **institution**? Perhaps we can best understand the concept if we think in terms of *regular patterns of behaviour that give stability and predictability to social life*. Some institutions are informal, with no clear written rules. Examples include the family, social classes, or ethnic groups. In each of these cases individuals internalize “codes of behaviour” as a result of being socialized as members of the group. What makes someone feel like an Acadian or Brazilian or a member of the working class will have a lot to do with his or her personal upbringing and the emotional and other forms of belonging that identity confers. Other institutions are more formalized, with codified rules and organization. Examples include governments, political parties, bureaucracies, legislatures, constitutions, and law courts. To the extent that institutions structure behaviour, we might see them as constraints, limiting what people can do; on the other hand, those who understand how they work can use them as tools or resources to achieve specific political or other goals.

Students of politics tend to concentrate on formal institutions, which are the basis of political systems. Many theorists try to identify regularities that can be elevated to the level of “laws.” A good example is Duverger’s Law, which (as we will see in Chapter 11), states that first-past-the-post electoral systems produce two-party systems.

At the same time, political scientists examine the environment in which political systems are located. Environmental pressures, whether they come from within the state or from the international arena, can rock any political system, leading to domestic political disruption or even breakdown. The Libyan revolution and civil war is a recent example (see Box 7.1). In most cases, however, states adapt in one way or another and carry on. Political scientists attempt to identify regular patterns of adaptation as a way of generalizing more widely about the behaviour of political institutions.

As Sven Steinmo (2001, p. 7555) puts it: “Institutions define the rules of the political game and as such they define who can play and how they play. Consequently, they ultimately can shape who wins and who loses.” Still, it is also important to grasp the relationships between political institutions and the environmental forces—political, social, economic—that surround them. In this chapter we will use a simplified version of the British sociologist Anthony Giddens’s structuration theory to clarify these relationships. Giddens distinguished between *system*, *structure*, and *structuration* (1979, p. 66). We use the term *system* to mean *political system*—the large arena within which institutions such as parties or bureaucracies compete or co-operate for influence. We use the term *structure* to mean *political institution*. And by **structuration**, we mean the factors that both hold back and also provide resources for changes in how institutions and the system as a whole function. These can range from levels of economic development, regional or class group activity, to the behaviour of individual political actors. In studies of politics, major changes are virtually never caused by just one factor: There are multiple, overlapping causes, and it is often an enormous challenge to sort out which ones are the most important.

See Chapter 11, page 231,
for a discussion of
Duverger’s Law.



KEY CONCEPT BOX 7.1**The Libyan Revolution of 2011 and the Civil War of 2014**

In 2011, after more than four decades under the rule of Colonel Muammar Gaddafi, the North African nation of Libya was rocked by protests and violent counterattacks by government forces. A month after the protests began in mid-February, the United Nations authorized a coalition of nations, including the United States, United Kingdom, France, and Canada, to enforce a “no-fly” zone across the country to protect civilians. Gaddafi’s forces cracked down hard, but in August 2011 the capital, Tripoli, fell to anti-government militias and in October Gaddafi was found and killed by enraged protesters.

Some efforts at promoting stability ensued, but Libya’s woes were not yet over. By 2014, the country was plunged into civil war, as four military factions fought for control of the country. *The Economist* (2015) described the situation this way: “Today Libya is at war with itself again. It is split between a government in Beida, in the east of the country, which is aligned with the military; and another in Tripoli, in the west, which is dominated by Islamists and militias from western coastal cities. Benghazi is again a battlefield.”



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PHOTO 7.1 | Libyan leader Colonel Muammar Gaddafi at a meeting of G8 development ministers in Rome in 2009.

For example, George W. Bush did not lead the United States into war with Iraq in 2003 only to destroy (alleged) weapons of mass destruction, to oust Saddam Hussein, or to gain control of Iraqi oil reserves. The reasons were far more complex and included Bush's own perceptions of reality, the counsel he received from his advisors, his personal belief that the United States could spread democracy to the Middle East, and a wide variety of domestic and foreign pressures (MacDonald, 2009). As well, Prime Minister Jean Chrétien's decision *not* to take Canada into the same war was motivated by a host of considerations, not the least of which was a groundswell of popular feeling against the Bush administration. We can also contrast Australia's decision to join the US effort in Iraq with New Zealand's decision to condemn the US invasion as illegitimate. Some theorists felt that the differences boiled down to political culture: New Zealanders and Canadians were far more interested in international law and the United Nations than it seemed were the Australian and US governments. Others pointed to differences in the security environments that the various countries faced. Australia felt threatened by Indonesia, and the United States by the Middle East, whereas Canada and New Zealand perceived their security environments to be relatively benign. Different levels of animosity toward the United States (or "anti-Americanism") also seemed important and stemmed from political cultures (MacDonald, O'Connor, & Katzenstein, 2008). Most political decisions result from the interplay of many factors, and it is the relative weight of those factors that determines the outcome. When we, as observers, try to explain what those factors are, it is often a matter of our own interpretation of the information we have, which may not be complete.

A basic distinction that political scientists often find useful is the difference between *structure* and *agency*. *Structure* refers to the impact of a particular group of institutions. To what extent did a certain structure determine the outcome, or at least help make a particular outcome more likely? Sometimes outcomes are explained in terms of "path-determined" outcomes; once a particular decision was taken, other decisions along the same path became easier to follow, while turning away became harder. Thus, once Bush had publicly announced that war was a serious option and got approval from the US Congress (a powerful institution), it became much harder to back down. The same is true of Prime Minister Helen Clark in New Zealand. Once she had announced that her country would not go to war without a UN Security Council resolution, it would have been hard for her to join the "Coalition of the Willing" without looking like she was caving in to the Americans.

By contrast, *agency* refers to the impact of actions taken by one or more agents, either individuals or groups of them. Since politics is a social activity, it is rare that a particular political outcome is determined by structure alone. Nor do agents have complete freedom, since their options are always constrained by structures of one kind or another. We might liken this situation to a game of hockey. Although individual players like Duncan Keith of the Chicago Blackhawks (who won the Conn Smythe Trophy in 2015) have tremendous agency to score goals, they (like their teammates) are constrained by the National Hockey League, which makes the rules that govern the games between the 30 franchised teams of the NHL.



See Chapter 20 for an exploration of the relationship between the state and economic institutions.

KEY POINTS

- Institutions play a vital role in structuring political behaviour.
- Political, economic, and social factors all provide structuration in political life and determine particular outcomes.
- Structure and agency perform complementary and contrasting functions in determining outcomes.

States

In Chapter 1 we explored some of the defining elements of the state. Among those elements were sovereignty, legitimacy, and a monopoly on the use of force in a particular territorial area. In addition, states claim a monopoly on law making. At its most basic level, then, the **state** is the structure of rule and authority within a particular geographical area. In that sense the state is abstract; as the Canadian political theorist Barry Buzan (1991, p. 63) notes, “In some important senses, the state is more an idea held in common by a group of people, than it is a physical organism.” Thus we refer to the nation-state, the welfare state, and so on.

In the rest of this chapter we will look at the rise of the European state and its spread across the world through **colonialism**, the European state system, the modern state, strong and weak states, and finally the democratic state.

In contradistinction to the Western-style nation-state, tribes and small communities around the world have promoted their own forms of rule. We can trace the roots of European ideas of government to classical Greece and Rome, whose models of governance were rediscovered during the Renaissance after centuries of near oblivion. The modern European state model developed gradually between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, after which it was carried (often by force) to other parts of the world. This is not to say that the European model is not contested. People who were subject to European colonialism do not necessarily consider the European model of government better than what they had before. Indeed, many Indigenous peoples are resurrecting their own forms of traditional governance and questioning the European-style state. Bolivia currently has a vice-minister of decolonization, Félix Cárdenas Aguilar, whose job it is to undo centuries of colonization, not just of the physical territory of the country, but also the colonization of the values and practices of the country’s Indigenous inhabitants. In a recent interview, Aguilar described Bolivia as a “failed country” since it was based on European ideals and sought to deny the reality of its history and peoples. State-building was “based on the destruction of the indigenous people, based on the destruction of their languages, their culture, their identity.” Aguilar thus rejects the former official narrative that “Bolivia is one nation, one language, one religion.” Instead, he argues, “We are 36 [Indigenous] nations, 36 cultures, 36 ways of seeing the world, and therefore, 36 ways of providing solutions for the world. We call this diversity of cultures ‘plurinational,’ and we want to build a plurinational state” (quoted in Dangl, 2015).

This is an important point for us to stress throughout the book: There is nothing natural or inevitable about the current state system we have now. There was no natural evolution from individual to family to community to the Western industrialized state. Various historical processes, some progressive and positive, others destructive and negative, have led us to the system we have today. This is a system that has put some states at the top of the economic and military pecking order while marginalizing many others.

KEY POINT

- The term *state* is used in a variety of ways, some concrete and some abstract. This can make detailed analysis difficult and contentious.

The Rise of the European State

State capacity may be defined as “the ability of a government to administer its territory effectively” (Wang, 1995, p. 90). It takes four basic forms:

the capacity to mobilize financial resources from the society to pursue what the central policymakers perceive as the “national interest” (extractive capacity); the capacity to guide national socioeconomic development (steering capacity); the capacity to dominate by using symbols and creating consensus (legitimation capacity); and the capacity to dominate by the use or threat of force (coercive capacity). These four capacities are conceptually distinct but interrelated in practice. For instance, the legitimation of a regime is dependent on its performance. If the state is able to produce and deliver economic and social goods at the level its subjects expect, or at least as its rulers promise, it should have no legitimacy problem. On the other hand, if the state apparatus cannot adequately steer the economic system, this is likely to result in a decline in its legitimacy. With legitimation capacity, the state can effectively steer activities without the necessity of constantly deploying coercion. Without legitimacy, however, the state would find it much more difficult to extract resources from the society, and would have to bear much higher costs for maintaining law and order. (Wang, 1995, p. 90)

The development of state capacity is a fascinating story. As the well-known theorist Charles Tilly (1990, p. 96) put it, over the last thousand years the European state has evolved from a wasp to a locomotive: What was once a small inconvenience to the people it ruled over has become a powerful driver of social and economic development. And while locomotives can pull heavy loads, they can also crush anything that gets in their way.

In the European context, until the seventeenth century it was impossible to separate the state from the ruler. The officials who ran the affairs of state were personally appointed by the ruler, who was also responsible for paying them; even in states that did impose taxes, a great deal of the cost of maintaining officials came from the ruler’s own income. Eventually, when a salaried bureaucracy began to develop beginning in the seventeenth century, one of its most important functions was to collect and administer taxes. Gradually what emerged was a system for extracting taxes from more and more property owners, especially to pay for war. As Tilly put it: “War made the state and the state made war” (Tilly, 1975, p. 42). Time and again, the need to raise funds for fighting drove governments to devise new ways of raising money. The United States, for instance, introduced income tax in 1861 to pay for the American Civil War then raging between the North and the South. Canada introduced income tax in 1917 to help pay for its contributions to World War I. Gradually this capacity to extract taxes, coupled with access to a modernizing and industrializing commercial economy and a large rural population, enabled some states to dominate others (Tilly, 1990, p. 15). They in turn became the models that others had to deal with and, if possible, surpass.

The French Revolution transformed the capacity of the European state, leading to a level form of taxation for all its citizens as well as the principle of the modern citizen army, which helped France dominate continental Europe until 1814. Britain was forced to emulate France to raise enough money and create a large enough armed force to resist

See Chapter 1, p. 23, for an exploration of different theoretical conceptions of the state.

See Chapter 20, p. 418, for an exploration of states in a globalizing world

it. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, bureaucracies had become central to the state's operation (van Crevelde, 1999, p. 143). This was a key development, for it laid the foundations of the modern state. First, state officials were expected to advance the state and the public good rather than any individual ruler. Second, officials developed rules and patterns of administration that separated them from the rest of society. In the late nineteenth century, the German sociologist Max Weber laid out the key characteristics of the new bureaucracies: impersonal, rule-based, goal-oriented activity, with promotion of officials based exclusively on merit and performance. Weber saw bureaucracy as an ideal type of social organization, which he identified with the ongoing rationalization of social life. He emphasized the technical superiority of bureaucratic organization over any other form, although he was often critical of bureaucracies' power and the way they operated (Weber, 1968).

As the European states grew stronger, new institutions and legal principles had to be established to constrain their rulers, particularly through constitutions. Samuel Finer emphasizes two events that were crucial in this respect: the American and French revolutions:

[T]he transcendent importance of the American Revolution is that it demonstrated forever that quality of the Western European government we have called “law-boundedness.” Here is a government which draws its powers from and can only act within a framework of fundamental law—the Constitution—which is itself interpreted by judges in the ordinary courts of the country. Could law-boundedness . . . receive a more striking affirmation? (Finer, 1997, p. 1485)

From this “law-boundedness” followed six innovations, listed in Box 7.2.

Although it was the American Constitution that introduced the “separation of powers” as a formal principle, its framers were influenced by the British practice of constitutional monarchy, under which absolute power rested not with the monarch but with Parliament, which could even force the king or queen to abdicate (step down) if required. In Britain (and various states in continental Europe), the Parliament was divided between two houses based explicitly on social class: the House of Commons and the House of Lords. This division was to some extent reproduced in the United States. For example, the



See Chapter 14, p. 295, for a more detailed discussion of the rise of the modern state system.



See Chapter 10, p. 209, for a discussion of theories of bureaucratic policymaking.

KEY CONCEPT BOX 7.2

The Governmental Innovations of the American Revolution

Finer (1997, p. 1485) identifies six innovations associated with the American Revolution:

1. The deliberate formulation of a new frame of government by way of a popular convention
2. A written constitution
3. A bill of rights enshrined within it
4. Guaranteed protection for these rights through judicial review
5. The separation of powers along functional lines
6. The division of powers between national and state governments

House of Representatives was directly elected every two years, while the Senate was based on longer six-year indirect elections made by state legislatures. In both cases, the upper houses were largely insulated from mass politics. In Canada, our system is a mixture of the British and American models, with an elected lower house and an appointed (and largely unaccountable) upper house. Currently, all three major political parties in Canada want to either reform or abolish the Senate.

At the time, the combination of new institutions and principles was an experiment: No one knew whether they would all work together. Nevertheless, the American Constitution provided a model and a starting point for most subsequent writers of constitutions. Just over a decade after the American Revolution, the revolution in France further transformed the theory and practice of government.

The French Revolution celebrated the “rights of man,” making all men equal (but not women nor nonwhite men), and inaugurated an era of populist dictatorship, which effectively violated its own principles. Although the revolution was at first widely praised, Napoleon’s military expansionism provoked a backlash among others, especially in the Germanic states, that led to the creation of nation-states throughout Europe in the nineteenth century. And although it preached universal harmony, the revolution also led to a new form of military organization—the mass citizen army—that became the model for military organization throughout Europe. Yet in their different ways these diverse elements influenced various forms of modern government in Europe and throughout the world. Elements of modern democracies and modern dictatorships—which we could define respectively as rule by law and rule by force—can be seen in the French Revolution. Although it began as an attempt to establish checks on the absolutist monarchy, it led to greater government intrusion into the lives of ordinary people than ever before.

KEY POINTS

- A milestone in the development of the European state was the separation of state officials from the ruler.
- Another key development was the separation of the state from the rest of society through institutionalization and bureaucratization.
- Warfare was a catalyst for raising funds from society and increasing the state’s reach.
- The American and French revolutions helped develop some of the better-known modern principles of government.
- New institutions, such as national constitutions and legislatures, helped to check the power of rulers.

The Spread of the European State Model

Colonialism

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the economic and military might of the dominant European powers, supported by superior military and industrial technology, helped them develop **empires** overseas. The primary purpose of colonialism was exploitation—to

take the riches of Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and the Americas to Europe. A secondary goal was the spread of Christianity as well as aspects of European identity deemed to be civilized and superior to what colonial explorers and administrators encountered.

One of colonialism's indirect legacies was the spread of the European-style state to other continents, albeit in simplified versions. Administrative arrangements in the colonies were never as sophisticated as in Europe, because the colonizing powers had no interest in doing anything more than maintaining order. They also invested the minimum in infrastructure, apart from the roads, canals, and railway lines needed to transport goods from the interior of colonies to the coasts for shipping to Europe. The goal was to have basic administration in place to facilitate exploitation. Contrary to some rosy historically revisionist views, colonization was not done with kindly intentions toward the colonized. Indeed, colonialism could be extremely brutal and exploitative, as several recent historical explorations of the colonial past reveal.

For example, Adam Hochschild's *King Leopold's Ghost* (1999) explores the horrific legacies of Belgian colonialism in the Congo, from the foundation of the colony in the 1880s to the death of the Belgian king in 1910. Hochschild delivers a damning critique of colonialism, positing that Belgium's rule in the Congo brought about the deaths of some 10 million Congolese Africans (50 per cent of the population) through massacre, disease, forced relocation, and slave labour. While the apogee of the killing occurred from 1890 to 1910, the Congo genocide was nevertheless a pure product of nineteenth-century colonialism (Hochschild, 1999, pp. 225–33). Implicit here was the belief that European countries had the right to exploit Africa to the fullest, particularly if great profits could be gained, in this case from the forced cultivation of rubber. However, Leopold was not alone in his ruthless methods. Hochschild notes that other colonial empires followed relatively the same course of action. Rubber production in French West Africa, Portuguese Angola, and the German Camaroons followed a similar trajectory, with the percentages of dead in these regions also approaching 50 per cent (Hochschild, 1999, p. 280).

The tragic impact of two centuries of British rule in India likewise produced high casualties. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, British colonial officials used famine as an instrument of colonial policy. The Bengal famine in 1769–70 killed an estimated 10 million people (Chomsky, 1993). The bleeding of India in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries gave Britain the raw materials and later the markets to fuel its Industrial Revolution, something for which, as India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru ironically remarked, "Bengal can take pride." Describing British rule as little more than a "gold lust," Nehru saw the "liquidation of the artisan class" as directly attributable to the suppression of Indian domestic manufacturing in favour of British imports. This led to the deaths of tens of millions of people (Nehru, 1990, pp. 209–11). An 1835 British commission of inquiry supported this claim, noting that "the misery hardly finds parallel in the history of commerce. The bones of cotton-weavers are bleaching the plains of India" (Chomsky, 1993, p. 13). The famines continued later. As Mike Davis argues, between 12.2 and 20.3 million people died as a result of British corruption, arrogance, and misrule during periods of intense drought from 1876 to 1902. His work is based on statistics from the British medical journal *The Lancet* (Davis, 2001, pp. 6–16).

The former British, French, German, and Italian colonies gained their independence in the twentieth century, although they often retained close economic ties to their former colonizing powers. At that point, most of the newly independent states simply took over the structures and institutions put in place by European colonizers. This is hardly sur-

prising, since those were the structures and institutions that the post-independence elites, trained in the colonial centres of power, were familiar with. To change everything overnight would have been extremely difficult; thus most leaders were forced to start working with what was in place and make what changes they could over time. They also had to deal with forms of internalized racism as a product of colonialism. After decades of being taught that their own cultures, languages, spiritualities, and skin colours were inferior, many people had a difficult time decolonizing themselves as well as their countries. Colonialism has proved to be a pernicious and extremely difficult system to erase (Pyke & Dang, 2003); see Box 7.3.

Among the institutions that the former colonies adopted was the bureaucratic machine that extracted resources from the people to pay for government. India is a prime example: It inherited its large bureaucracy from the British, along with the small elite cadre of specialized administrators who form the prestigious Indian Civil Service. In some cases the separation between ruler and officials that had marked the rise of the modern state was now reversed. In what have been called **patrimonial states**, some rulers came to use the state to extract resources from the rest of society for their own benefit; this practice has been associated with African states in particular, although it is not exclusive to them.

Another legacy that has been a major problem for former colonies is the European insistence on undivided sovereignty. Precolonial borders tended to be fluid and changeable, reflecting the nomadic lifestyles of the Indigenous peoples, but Western states imposed formal boundaries. Designed in colonial capitals such as Paris, London, and Berlin, the new borders took little account of local social and cultural relations. The main goal had been to divide up territory according to the interests of the colonial powers. Thus members of the same ethnic or religious group were often split between two or more colonies, while traditionally hostile groups were sometimes forced together within the same boundaries. The consequences for state legitimacy and viability in South America, North America, and sub-Saharan Africa are still with us today. When the colonies became independent, the arbitrary boundaries created by the colonial powers made it extremely difficult to create cohesive nation-states based on the European model. Had all the African colonies gained

KEY QUOTE BOX 7.3

Colonial “Sea Pirates”

American novelist Kurt Vonnegut explains colonialism, describing colonizers as “sea pirates”:

Here is how the pirates were able to take whatever they wanted from everybody else: they had the best boats in the world, and they were meaner than anybody else, and they had gunpowder, which was a mixture of potassium nitrate, charcoal, and sulphur. They touched this seemingly listless powder with fire, and it turned violently into gas. This gas blew projectiles out of metal tubes at terrific velocities. The projectiles cut through meat and bone very easily, so the pirates could wreck the wiring or the bellows or the plumbing of a stubborn human being, even when he was far far away. The chief weapon of the sea pirates, however, was their capacity to astonish. Nobody else could believe, until it was much too late, how heartless and greedy they were. (Vonnegut, 1973, p. 12)

their independence at the same time, for example, the colonial borders could theoretically have been reconsidered in light of precolonial linguistic, tribal, religious, and other distinctions. But the fact that decolonization took place over several decades, starting in the late 1940s, made a wholesale reconfiguration of borders nearly impossible. Thus in many parts of the world the state has had to create the nation, whereas in Europe the nation had generally created the state.

Spreading the Western Model

The spread of the European state model was not limited to former colonies, however. Other countries, though not colonized, felt obliged to adopt aspects of the European model to compete with the West. Among them was Japan. In 1854, when Commodore Matthew Perry of the US Navy led a number of warships into Tokyo Bay and demanded that Japan open itself up to international trade, the Japanese had been isolated from the outside world for nearly three centuries. They had no ships that could challenge the Americans, so they were forced to comply. What followed was a series of transformations of Japanese society and the Japanese state. Impressed by American power, Japan sought to modernize so that it could compete with the West and become “rich and strong” (Terry, 2002, p. 38).

In 1867 the shogunate (a system of hereditary military dictators) that had kept Japan in isolation fell and the imperial family was restored to power. The new government adopted a more centralized and coercive system of rule, based largely on the Prussian model, and set out to establish a civilian bureaucracy capable of developing resources for the state. The samurai—traditionally a class of independent warriors—were forced to serve the state as part of either the bureaucracy or the new national army.



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PHOTO 7.2 | Traffic congestion on the Yasukuni Dori in the Shinjuku district of Tokyo during rush hour. One of the busiest and most important shopping and sightseeing streets in Tokyo, the Yasukuni Dori is famous for its neon signs.

In addition, the new government sent representatives abroad to study the political, legal, and technological strengths of the West. In 1890, the first Japanese constitution came into force, setting limits (albeit ambiguous ones) on the powers of the emperor and establishing a parliament (the Diet) as well as an independent judiciary. Together these reforms had a tremendous impact. From an inward-looking society that was very much anchored in its own traditions, Japan transformed itself into a modern industrial state. By 1895 it was able to defeat its greatest regional rival, China, in war, and a decade later it became the first non-European state to win a war against a European imperial power—Russia. Then it set out to establish its own empire, beginning with the annexation of Korea in 1910 and continuing with the occupation of parts of China during the 1930s. Within a few decades the new Japanese state had accomplished what had taken European nations centuries.

Turkey is another example of a country that was never colonized but adopted Western forms of rule to compete with the West and stop Western meddling in its domestic politics. Turkey had been the core of the Ottoman Empire since its creation in 1299, but by the nineteenth century the empire was in decline and many of its components, such as Greece and Bulgaria, were seeking independence. Significantly, the military took the lead in looking to the West for ideas and models that would enable Turkey to compete. Military considerations drove increasingly radical reforms of the state in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. When the empire finally collapsed following World War I, the long history of Western-style reform culminated in the creation of a secular republic in 1923. The new president, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (the name means “father of the Turks”), pushed through a series of reforms based mainly on principles borrowed from France that included complete separation of state and religion (Starr, 1992, pp. 8–15). The new Turkey then became a model for promoters of democracy in other countries; see the Case Study in Box 7.4.

CASE STUDY 7.4

A Turkish Model for Iraq?

In 2002 many US presidential advisors were already interested in invading Iraq and deposing its dictator, Saddam Hussein. The Bush administration discussed what form of government should be put in place in a post-occupation Iraq, something some officials were discussing well before the invasion in 2003. Among the more significant influences promoting regime change was the historian Bernard Lewis, a friend of Vice-President Dick Cheney, who was strongly influenced by Atatürk’s transformation of Turkey into a modern secular republic. The process had been dictatorial, but the democratic system it established had proved more stable than any of its counterparts in the Middle East (MacDonald, 2009).

The idea of a Turkish-style redemption for the Arab world was a powerful one that Lewis had been promoting since the 1960s. According to journalist Michael Hirsh (2004), the “Lewis Doctrine” called for “a Westernized polity, reconstituted and imposed from above like Kemal’s Turkey . . . a bulwark of security for America and a model for the region.” The Turkish model helped many US policymakers conceptualize what a democratic Iraq could ideally look like. Unfortunately, it did not take into account Iraq’s complex, multiethnic identity and history. While Iraq is now a more or less functional democracy, the process of transformation has been longer and more painful than US officials expected, and the democratic future of the country remains uncertain.

The European State System

The modern European state system is widely considered to have originated in the Peace of Westphalia, which ended the Thirty Years' War in 1648. That treaty established the paradigm of the European-style state as

a sovereign, territorially delimited political unit, facing other similar units, each striving for supremacy but never achieving it owing to their rapidly adopted skill of forming combinations that would defeat such a purpose, that is, the techniques of the “**balance of power**” first developed by the Italian city-states in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries (Finer, 1997, p. 1306).

The Treaty of Westphalia established three principles:

1. The sovereignty of states and their fundamental right to self-determination
2. Legal equality between states
3. Nonintervention of one state in the affairs of another

Although the criteria that states use for mutual recognition today were agreed upon under the Montevideo Convention of 1933, they are based on principles that were first established in the Treaty of Westphalia.

Today the European-style state is the universal form of political organization around the world. In 2011 South Sudan joined the United Nations as its 193rd member state. Ranging in size from China, with a population of over 1.37 billion, to Tuvalu, with a population estimated at 12,000, the UN's members range in area from more than 17 million square kilometres (Russia) to 2 square kilometres (Monaco). The perennial aspirant for recognition as a state is Palestine, which has been seeking such recognition for many decades.



See Chapter 14, p. 285, for details on the Montevideo Convention.



See Chapter 14, p. 299, for a detailed discussion of the globalization of the modern state system.

KEY POINTS

- The European state model spread to other continents largely through colonialism.
- Colonialism was often extremely exploitative, and its legacies remain today. Fuelled by greed and by a low level of respect for the lives of their fellow human beings, European colonial officials established policies that resulted in the deaths of tens of millions of people.
- War and colonial expansion were the key elements in much of this spread, but some countries, such as Japan and Turkey, adopted elements of the European state to reduce Western meddling in their affairs while also laying the basis for competition with European states.
- In former colonies, borders and sovereignty have been problematic, since the peoples of these states did not get to choose their own borders or what territory and peoples lay within or outside the state.
- The principles that govern relations between states today were established in 1648 in the Peace of Westphalia.
- The European state model was imposed or indirectly spread to other continents and became the basis of the international system of states.

The Modern State

Basically, states today have two sets of roles or functions: internal and external. The former are the functions they perform with respect to their own populations; the latter are the functions they perform with respect to other states.

Internal Functions

The internal role of the state, according to Gill (2003), has been understood through three quite distinct lenses. First, some theorists have cast the state in the role of partisan: Every state, strong or weak, “is seen as pursuing its own institutional interests or those of the officials who work within it” (Gill, 2003, p. 8). The state is supported in this role by a Weberian state bureaucracy with its own structure and procedures that help it resist pressures from the rest of society.

The second role is that of guardian. Here the state is presented as working in the interests of society as a whole, stabilizing and maintaining a healthy balance between the various, sometimes conflicting, interests in society. Examples would include federal or consociational political systems designed to counter fundamental cleavages, such as those posed by the Catalan and Basque separatist movements in Spain. Another example would be the kind of developmental state seen in East Asian countries like Singapore and Malaysia, where the state directs the development of society and the economy along the path that it believes to be most favourable to the national interest; for example, industrialization and economic modernization.

The third view sees the state as a tool—“a pliable instrument” (Gill, 2003, p. 9) lacking autonomy—in the hands of one or more groups in the society. This could describe a genuine liberal democracy, where the people control the state’s actions. But it could also describe a state controlled by one section of society, such as “big business,” or one particular ethnic group; it could even describe a patrimonial state in which power flows directly from the leader and political elites take advantage of their connections to enrich themselves and their clients. Marxists certainly believed that the state was controlled by the bourgeois class and thus was hardly autonomous. Elite theorists as well argue that the state is controlled by powerful interests who may use it to further their own power (Gill, 2003, p. 10).

In practice, modern states often perform all three roles at the same time. Most state bureaucracies operate to some extent on the basis of their own institutions and codified procedures that help to protect them from outside interference. Most states develop some perspective on the desirable path of development for their societies and attempt to mobilize the resources necessary to achieve it, and most states are to some extent responsive to groups outside themselves. Dictators, such as former President Suharto of Indonesia, favoured “loyal” businessmen who did his bidding and in return enjoyed special favours. What is important is which of the three roles is predominant in a particular state.

External Functions

States have two external functions: to manage relations with other states and to protect their people and territory against attacks from outside. By recognizing one another as sovereign, states reinforce each other’s authority as the legitimate rulers of defined territories. In this way they reduce the threat of anarchy posed by the lack of a global government.

See Chapter 10, p. 209,
for a discussion
of bureaucratic
policymaking.

See Chapter 1, p. 21,
for a description of the
developmental state.

Diplomatic recognition gives governments some reassurance against incursions by other states, although it is not an iron-clad guarantee: Other states could still choose to attack, and sometimes do. On the other hand, it also means that states expect their counterparts to interact with them in familiar and predictable ways, mainly through diplomatic means. Bureaucratic agencies such as foreign ministries in one state expect to find equivalent agencies in other states. This strengthening international society contributes to the proliferation of government agencies in individual states.

Strong States and Weak States

The state today is more powerful than ever before. The twentieth century witnessed the most extreme manifestations of state power that the world had ever seen. Totalitarian states such as Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Russia murdered tens of millions of people and intruded into the private lives of their citizens to an unprecedented degree, both through pervasive state propaganda and through enormous networks of secret police and informers that closed off virtually all avenues for self-expression. Now that the archives of some of these states are open we can get a clearer perspective on the reach of such state bureaucracies. For example, at the time of its collapse in 1989, the German Democratic Republic had what has been described as a "honeycomb" state, in which one-sixth of the adult population were involved in one way or another in the state's "micro-systems of power." That translated into a large amount of spying. One out of every 180 citizens was a full-time employee of the secret police—the highest ratio in any of the communist states (Fulbrook, 2005, pp. 236, 241).

We can view these regimes as extreme versions of the modern state. As its powers have increased, so too have people's expectations of what it can do. Rotberg (2004) provides a long list of the political goods or functions that a modern state might be expected to provide its citizens. Typically, the most important include the following:

1. Human security
2. Predictable and recognizable methods of adjudicating disputes and regulating both the norms and the prevailing values of a particular society or polity
3. Freedom to participate in politics and compete for office; respect and support for national and regional political institutions, such as legislatures and courts; tolerance of dissent and difference; and fundamental civil and human rights

Among the many other services expected by citizens are healthcare; schools and educational institutions; infrastructure such as roads, railways, and harbours; communication networks; a banking system with a national currency; space for the flowering of civil society; and policies regulating the way the money made within the state is shared out (Rotberg, 2004, pp. 2–3). States in the developed world usually perform these functions to the satisfaction of their citizens, even if not perfectly. They are "strong" or "robust" states.

However, many states clearly don't function as well as they could. Most of these weak states are in the developing world. Chabal and Daloz (1999, p. 1) have argued that the state in Africa is "not just weak, but essentially vacuous, with virtually none meeting the Weberian criteria." As we discussed earlier, this has something to do with the way these former colonies were divided up between European powers. Little heed was paid to the ethnic and political realities on the group during the nineteenth century



PHOTO 7.3 | Poverty in the midst of prosperity: shacks in Soweto, South Africa.

“scramble for Africa.” The French historian Jean-Francois Bayart (1993) described the situation in much of sub-Saharan Africa as follows:

The frontiers of the state are transgressed, the informal sector is a canker on the official economy, taxes are not collected, poaching and undisciplined exploitation of mineral resources becomes endemic, weapons circulate, resettled villages split up, the people appropriate the legitimate use of force to themselves and deliver summary justice, delinquency spreads, businesses suffer from languor induced by underproductivity, delays and absences. (p. 258)

Table 7.1 presents a list of the world’s “weakest” states, according to *Brookings* magazine. The country in first place, Somalia, has effectively been without a central state since 1991; the consequences are discussed in the Case Study in Box 7.5.

Even though the structures of modern states are fairly similar, then, they vary considerably in capacity. This raises the question of what makes a state strong or weak. It is possible to identify a series of factors. One is size. Although Monaco has the same international legal status in the UN General Assembly as India, in practice there is an enormous difference in each country’s capacity to pursue their goals in the world. Another factor is economic strength. As the largest economy in the world, the United States has the power to finance a high level of domestic public services and respond to the preferences of its people. A poor state like Burma is much less capable of providing adequate services for its people. A third factor is military might. Again, the United States, as the only military superpower, is better able than most to protect its people and territory as well as pursue foreign policy goals, although its failures in Iraq suggest that American power is hardly unlimited.

TABLE 7.1 | Index of State Weakness in the Developing World

Rank	Country	Overall Score	Economic	Political	Security	Social Welfare	GNI per Capital
1	Somalia	0.52	0.00	0.00	1.37	0.70	226
2	Afghanistan	1.65	4.51	2.08	0.00	0.00	271
3	Dem. Rep. Congo	1.67	4.60	1.80	0.28	0.52	130
4	Iraq	3.11	2.87	1.67	1.63	6.27	1134
5	Burundi	3.21	5.01	3.46	2.95	1.43	100
6	Sudan	3.29	5.05	2.06	1.46	4.59	810
7	Central -African Rep.	3.33	4.11	2.90	5.06	1.25	360
8	Zimbabwe	3.44	1.56	1.56	6.81	3.84	350
9	Liberia	3.64	3.39	3.91	6.01	1.25	140
10	Côte d'Ivoire	3.66	5.23	2.12	3.71	3.56	870
11	Angola	3.72	5.42	2.67	5.32	1.45	1980
12	Haiti	3.76	3.90	2.62	5.21	3.31	480
13	Sierra Leone	3.77	5.01	3.87	5.43	0.76	240
14	Eritrea	3.84	3.09	2.78	7.01	2.48	200
15	North Korea	3.87	0.52	0.95	7.28	6.73	n/a
16	Chad	3.90	5.80	2.42	6.18	1.21	480
17	Burma	4.16	4.72	0.89	3.96	7.07	n/a
18	Guinea-Bissau	4.16	5.22	3.83	5.96	1.69	190
19	Ethiopia	4.46	6.14	4.03	5.91	1.75	180
20	Rep. Congo	4.56	5.08	2.77	6.45	3.95	1100

Source: Rice, S. E., & Patrick, S. (2008). *Index of state weakness in the developing world*. Washington, DC: The Brookings Institute. Retrieved from http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Research/Files/Reports/2008/2/weak-states-index/02_weak_states_index.PDF

So far we have looked primarily at external factors related to the strength of states, but domestic factors are equally important. First there is the issue of legitimacy. If a state lacks its people's consent to rule, it may need to rely on force to achieve acquiescence, and this can be a source of weakness. In some cases, lack of legitimacy is the result of disagreement over its borders. Many postcolonial states have international boundaries that were imposed more or less arbitrarily, with the consequence that some ethnic or tribal communities do not think of themselves as citizens of the states whose borders they straddle; often they wish to establish their own homelands. States are always more successful when they do not have "stateness" problems of contested borders, conflicted identities, internal sovereignty claims, or other things that, as Robert Dahl argues, would put into question "the rightfulness of the unit itself" (Dahl, 1989, p. 207).

In other cases lack of legitimacy reflects lack of support for the dominant ideology of the state. Ultimately, what brought down the regimes in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union was the lack of popular support for the official ideology of communism. People also questioned the validity of the rulers to rule. Without popular legitimacy states are brittle, however strong they may look on the surface. They are vulnerable to new challenges because they lack flexibility and are slow to adapt.

A second crucial factor in the strength of states is the robustness of state institutions. To what extent can they withstand turbulence in the rest of society? Bayart (1993) and Chabal

CASE STUDY 7.5

Somalia as a Failed State

With a landmass as large as France, Somalia has a relatively small population, estimated at just under 10 million in 2011—roughly 15 per cent of its French counterpart. Unlike many postcolonial states, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, Somalia is not particularly ethnically heterogeneous, and the main divisions between Somalis are based on clans and subclans rather than ethnic differences. Nor are its boundaries much disputed, though Somalis have also traditionally lived in what are now Ethiopia, Kenya, and Djibouti. The colonial and postcolonial states have all hung above the rest of society and only partially integrated into it.

In 1960 the post-independence state was formed from former British and Italian colonies. Nine years later the civilian president was assassinated and General Siad Barre seized power. Barre tried to create a modern state by suppressing traditional clan ties, but gradually the army broke up along clan lines. Barre's regime became notoriously corrupt and its domestic support shrank to his own clan.

In 1991 Barre was overthrown by Mohamed Farrah Aidid. This incident led to a bloody civil war between rival militias. Hundreds of thousands of people died, either from the ferocious fighting or from starvation, and in 1993 the UN, led by the United States under President Bill Clinton, set out to impose peace. The members of Operation Restore Hope, as it was called, were initially welcomed into the capital, Mogadishu, but after a few months their unsuccessful efforts to arrest Aidid and his supporters led to widespread civilian casualties. These events united Somalis against outsiders; even the Red Cross had to be protected. Mogadishu was devastated by withering American firepower and retaliation (Peterson, 2000). The brutal deaths of 18 US servicemen turned American popular opinion against the intervention, and the UN later withdrew.

Even now there is no central authority in Somalia. In 2003 Kenya took the lead in organizing a conference that established a Transitional Federal Government, but little progress has been made toward national legitimacy. In late 2006 forces from Ethiopia intervened to frustrate a movement for national unity based on several Islamic parties.

Menkhaus (2007, pp. 86–7) writes of “a loose constellation of commercial city-states and villages separated by long stretches of pastoral statelessness.” One part of the country (Puntland) has declared autonomy, while another (Somaliland) in the north is effectively independent. The only effective administrations are at the local level, and public services (education, healthcare, welfare) have collapsed. In the absence of a functioning nationwide judicial system, clans and subclans rely on the traditional practice of recompense for injuries or damage suffered by their members, but heavily armed militias can still demand resources from civilians with impunity.

The people, however, have proven very resilient. The traditional economy based on trade in herds of cattle is flourishing as compared with the pre-1991 period, since the state

and Daloz (1999) repeatedly suggest that the weakness of many African states is the result of the interpenetration of state, society, and the economy. Individual African politicians expect to use the state to become rich as a way of impressing others and redistributing resources to their “clients.” They note that “Rich men are powerful and powerful men are rich” (Chabal & Daloz, 1999, p. 52). Ethnic and tribal communities expect “their” representatives, whether democratically elected officials or lowly members of the government bureaucracy, to channel resources to them, because if they don't do so no one will. Thus state institutions in many



Ariadne Van Zandbergen/Alamy Stock Photo

PHOTO 7.4 | A boy looks over the escarpment in Ga'an Libah Forest Reserve, Somaliland.

cannot extract usurious taxes (Little, 2003). Private enterprise has found ways of providing services such as the transfer of money within and outside the country despite the lack of banks. Businessmen also buy off militiamen to provide security for their trade, so there is no state monopoly on the means of violence. Mobile phone companies prosper, while the landline service decays. The private sector provides public services that allow for quick profits (for example, running ports and airports, electricity supply), but not public sanitation. Transnational corporations such as Total and GM have found ways of doing business in the country despite the lack of a stable institutional and legal system. Somalis abroad send back anywhere between US\$500 million and \$1 billion per year, which helps support the domestic economy, especially in the cities.

As of 2015 Somalia remains a failed state. In late July of that year, the militant Islamist group Al-Shabaab detonated an enormous bomb at the Jazeera Palace Hotel in Mogadishu. Linked with Al-Qaeda, Al-Shabaab is a dangerous terrorist force in Somalia and was responsible in this instance for the deaths of 13 people and injuring of another 40 (*BBC News*, 2015).

Thus state institutions in many parts of Africa do not stand above or apart from society. In such cases a strong, autonomous, rule-based bureaucracy is almost impossible to achieve. State institutions are not really institutionalized, and the state is more easily penetrated by outside forces as a result.

On the other hand, the African states are still relatively young, and they may well become more robust in time. Van Creveld (1999, p. 306) reminds us that in the nineteenth century newly independent states in South America were similarly fragile. Colombia had

30 civil wars, Venezuela had 50 revolutions, and Bolivia experienced 60. Coronil (1997) describes Venezuela at the beginning of the twentieth century:

[T]he state was so weak and precarious as a national institution that its stability and legitimacy were constantly at risk. Without a national army or an effective bureaucracy, in an indebted country that lacked a national road network or an effective system of communication, the state appeared as an unfulfilled project whose institutional form remained limited to localized sites of power with but partial dominion over the nation's territory and sway over its citizens. (p. 76)

As we shall see in Chapter 11, Venezuela looks quite different today.

In general, European and North American states are strong while those in the developing world are comparatively weak. Western theorizing about the state has tended to focus on issues associated with the strong. Recently, though, the problems of weakening states in the developed world have begun to attract more attention, largely because of increasing globalization. States in the developed world now increasingly see their sovereignty eroding as multinational corporations and other transnational actors and forces leach power from their governments (Marsh, Smith, & Hothi, 2006, p. 176). The level of erosion is certainly far less than what we see in the developing world. Nevertheless, state autonomy appears to be declining throughout the world.

See Chapter 11, p. 234,
for a Case Study on
Venezuela.

See Chapter 20, p. 418,
for an exploration of the
impact of globalization on
the study of politics.

KEY POINTS

- Modern states can be characterized according to whether they function primarily in their own interest (the “partisan” role); in the interest of the society as a whole (the “guardian” role); or in the interest of some particular segment of the society (the “instrument” role).
- There is an enormous range in the capacity of states in different regions of the world.
- Some states are at best “quasi” states.
- States need legitimacy and robust institutions to be considered strong.
- Globalization is limiting state capacity around the world.

The Democratic State

What is a democratic state? Initially, the answer might seem obvious: A democratic state is one that holds elections for some or all of the leading positions in the state or government. The problem is that the same can be said of authoritarian states, which hold elections in which the outcome is determined in advance. We could instead say that a democracy has genuinely free and fair elections. But is that enough? We could say that a democratic state must have political parties; but there are exceptions (Uganda is one, as we will see in Chapter 11).

The question of elections aside, perhaps we could define a democratic government as one that is genuinely accountable to elected representatives. Accountability is presumed to be an essential element of a democratic state. Parties are elected to parliament in some authoritarian states, but they cannot exercise any effective check on the government.

See Chapter 11, p. 227,
for a Case Study on
Uganda.

See Chapter 3, p. 56, for a
discussion of the meaning
of democracy.

Perhaps we should specify extra conditions that would ensure such accountability, such as a provision requiring that governments (or ministers) lose office if they fail to do what “the people” want. But is that all democracy is about? What about the representation of major social groups in elected bodies? Should there be roughly equal representation of men and women? Do ordinary citizens have a role to play beyond voting in elections? Is civil society an essential requirement for a functioning democracy? Is a democratic political culture also needed to make democracy work?

These questions explore dimensions of democratic political systems. Yet, as we argued at the beginning of this chapter, a democratic system is not the same as a democratic *state*. To understand what a democratic state entails, we need to ask wider, more abstract questions about conceptions of authority. Do views about authentic democracy vary from one country to another, or from one region of the world to another (Paley, 2002)? Bell, Brown, Jayasuriya, and Martin Jones (1995) have identified a different sort of democracy in East and Southeast Asia, one they call *illiberal democracy*. Illiberal democracies, like liberal ones, have elections and political parties, but they operate on the basis of more definite views about appropriate forms of social harmony. The main priority of the legal system is to control society rather than to protect rights and liberties. The Chinese government produced a White Paper that promotes a different understanding of democracy (*White Paper on Political Democracy*, 2005). In what ways does it differ from the standard understanding in liberal democracies? Are the citizens of a given state the only ones who can fairly judge whether their state is democratic, or can foreigners have a legitimate view? (See Box 7.6.)

These are just some of many dimensions that might contribute to the assessment of a democratic state. We encourage you to try to carry out a democratic audit of a state with which you are familiar, whether your own or another. International IDEA, a democracy



See Chapter 12, p. 239, for a detailed exploration of the concept of civil society.



See Chapter 1, p. 21, for a brief discussion of illiberal democracy.

KEY QUOTE BOX 7.6

Hillary Clinton Compares Electoral Corruption in Nigeria and the United States

During a state visit to Nigeria in 2009, then US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton recalled how George W. Bush won the presidency because of a disputed electoral outcome in Florida:

In a democracy there have to be winners and losers. And part of creating a strong democratic system is that the losers, despite how badly we might feel, accept the outcome. Because it is for the good of the country we love. Our democracy is still evolving. You know, we had all kinds of problems in some of our past elections, as you might remember. In 2000, our presidential elections came down to one state where the brother of the man running for president was the governor of the state. So we have our problems, too. (quoted in *Sky News*, 2009)

These remarks were controversial, because as secretary of state, Clinton was supposed to be an impartial voice for US foreign policy. However, she could not resist suggesting a similarity between her own country and one of the world’s most corrupt states. Interestingly, by 2016 Clinton was the Democratic Party’s nominee for US President.

CASE STUDY 7.7

Brexit: Great Britain Votes to Leave the European Union

In mid-2016 a majority of voters in the United Kingdom chose to end their country's membership in the European Union. The process came to be known as Brexit (a contraction of "British Exit"). Originally formed after World War II, the EU has 28 member states. Britain joined the then European Economic Community in 1973, gaining entry to one of the world's largest and most lucrative free-trade zones. The EEC was transformed into the more cohesive European Union in 1992.

In May 2015, during the national election campaign, then Prime Minister David Cameron promised a referendum on Britain's status in the EU. His goal was to placate members of his own Conservative Party, who were divided over whether the EU had been beneficial to British interests. There had always been a strain of Euroscepticism in Cameron's party, and about half of his MPs, including five cabinet ministers, favoured leaving. Many complained of the EU's restrictive laws on business and trade, the billions of pounds in annual fees, and the lack of control over British borders.

Cameron strategized that a referendum on a simple question—"Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union or leave the European Union?"—would preserve the status quo while quelling anti-EU grumblings within his party. Polling indicated that most Britons did not want to leave. Cameron campaigned on the position that it was better to reform the EU and gain a "special status" for Britain. He was supported by half of his MPs and 16 cabinet ministers.

Two cross-party movements formed in the lead-up to the June vote. On the Leave side were members of varied political stripes, including influential Conservative MPs and some opposition Labour MPs. "Leave Britain" was backed by many vocal and colourful figures, including Boris Johnson, the two-term mayor of London. He argued that the EU had become too powerful and was impinging on the sovereignty of member states. In a May speech he declared: "the EU has changed out of all recognition; and to keep insisting that the EU is about economics is like saying the Italian Mafia is interested in olive oil and real estate."

A separate Leave campaign was waged by Nigel Farage, leader of the UK Independence Party (UKIP). In the 2015 elections, UKIP had gained 13 per cent of the popular vote on a promise to get Britain out of the EU. Farage's party controlled most of Britain's seats in the European Parliament, with 22 MEPs.

The Remain side was represented by "Britain Stronger in Europe," while individual political parties ran their own campaigns. Half of the Conservative Party backed the Remain side, together with the opposition Labour Party, the Liberal Democratic Party, the Scottish National Party, and the Welsh party Plaid Cymru. Most British businesses also favoured staying. Remain proponents argued that the economic benefits far outweighed the EU's drawbacks. Unfortunately for Remain, the Labour Party was divided, and its leader, Jeremy Corbyn, a longstanding Eurosceptic, ran a half-hearted campaign. Nevertheless, on the eve of the referendum, most polls indicated that Remain would win handily.

The Vote and Its Aftermath

Almost 72 per cent of Britons voted in what turned out to be a narrow victory for the Leave side, which claimed 52 per cent of the vote. There were major divisions by age, region, and ethnicity.

Over 70 per cent of those aged 18–24 voted Remain, in contrast to the large majority of those over 60 who voted Leave. England and Wales both endorsed Leave by 53 per cent. Scotland (62 per cent) and Northern Ireland (56 per cent) voted Remain.

The result threw the very status of the United Kingdom into question. Nicola Sturgeon, First Minister of Scotland and leader of the SNP, pronounced the decision “democratically unacceptable” and argued for a second referendum on Scottish independence. Some suggested Northern Ireland might hold its own referendum on whether to leave Britain and unify with the Irish Republic.

A shamefaced Cameron resigned after losing the referendum. Soon after, Boris Johnson, once favoured to replace Cameron as prime minister, announced that he would not run for the leadership. By July, Nigel Farage had also resigned as party leader, claiming that, his life’s ambition achieved, he was no longer needed within UKIP. Theresa May became Britain’s prime minister in mid-July.

Meanwhile, Corbyn’s lacklustre performance angered most of his Labour MPs, who tried to eject him as leader. Two-thirds of his cabinet stepped down, and over three-quarters of Labour’s elected MPs supported a non-confidence vote on his leadership. Corbyn vowed to fight on, arguing that 60 per cent of Labour Party members supported him, and that it was they and not the MPs who should decide his future.

Leaving the EU?

Nineteen of the EU’s 28 member states use a shared currency, the Euro. The Euro and the Pound suffered devastating drops in value after the Brexit result. Both the currency and the union face serious challenges ahead.

Article 50 of the EU’s Lisbon Treaty, which came into effect in 2007, allows any member state to leave the EU. Article 50 states: “Any Member State may decide to withdraw from the Union in accordance with its own constitutional requirements.”

Is an exit inevitable? Wheeler and Hunt (2016) are among those who believe that Britain can change course:

The referendum result is not legally binding—Parliament still has to pass the laws that will get Britain out of the 28-nation bloc, starting with the repeal of the 1972 European Communities Act. The withdrawal agreement also has to be ratified by Parliament—the House of Lords and/or the Commons could vote against ratification. . . . One scenario that could see the referendum result overturned is if MPs forced a general election and a party campaigned on a promise to keep Britain in the EU, got elected, and then claimed that the election mandate topped the referendum one. Two-thirds of MPs would have to vote for a general election to be held before the next scheduled one in 2020.

With most of the campaign’s key actors gone from the stage, the future of Britain within the EU remains uncertain.

promotion institute, offers a checklist of questions designed to help citizens assess their own countries (International IDEA, 2002a). Use this as a starting point for your audit. You can also get an idea of how such an audit might work in practice from the examples presented in an accompanying publication (International IDEA, 2002b).

KEY POINTS

- There are multiple dimensions to a democratic state.
- A democratic political system and a democratic state are different concepts.

Conclusion

This chapter has established the framework for the next six chapters. These will explore various dimensions of the state both as organization and as authority structure. We have also illustrated the great disparities in capacity that exist among the world's states today. The next three chapters will focus on the most important institutions of states, while the following three will deal with broader forces that give structure to the context of political life.

Key Questions

1. When looking at the strength or weakness of a state, does it matter whether the nation or the state came first?
2. Can democracy be successfully imposed on another country by military force?
3. Is state capacity simply a reflection of the country's level of economic development?
4. Why are stateness problems so important to the strength or weakness of a state?
5. How applicable are theories of the modern Western state to states in the developing world?
6. How democratic is your country? You may find some of the websites at the end of this chapter useful, such as Democracy Watch and Freedom House.
7. Did internal dissension or external destabilization play a bigger role in destroying the Somalian state?
8. What are the connections between domestic corruption and state capacity? Can a state truly be democratic if it is highly corrupt?
9. In what ways can weak states in the developing world be strengthened?
10. Are some states simply too weak or too arbitrarily constructed to justify continued international recognition? Should the international community simply let them disintegrate? What would be the consequences?
11. Is democracy the most accountable system to its citizens? What other systems could also provide accountability?

Further Reading

Bayart, J.-F. (2009). *The state in Africa*. Cambridge: Polity Press. A vivid account of the distinctive features of states in Africa.

Boix, C., & Stokes, S.S. (Eds.). (2009). *The Oxford handbook of comparative politics*. New York: Oxford University Press. A detailed discussion of theories of the state and the current state of the field of comparative politics. Section 3, "States and State Formation: Political