When are legislators inclined to cast votes in cooperation with their parties, and when do they go their own way? When and why do nations contend with each other, and when are they more likely to cooperate? Thematically arranged around the interplay of contention and cooperation, A Comparative Introduction to Political Science encourages students to explore causal factors and consequences related to political phenomena to become knowledgeable and resourceful citizens of their nations and the world.

Alan Smith covers how patterns of contention and cooperation—and the resulting government policies—may be affected by such factors as the surrounding political framework, the distribution of influence, and political motivation, including values as well as material interests. To expose students to the politics of specific nations, each chapter concludes with two country case studies exploring contention and cooperation in those countries in the context of the chapter topic.

Pedagogically, the book employs careful sequencing of topics and concepts for clarity and to introduce politics in a natural, logical, synthesised way. At times Smith goes beyond sharp, night-and-day terminological distinctions to add accessible, ordinary language-based terminology that better captures the real-world spectrum between the extremes.

A Comparative Introduction to Political Science: Contention and Cooperation provides a comprehensive teaching and learning package including these ancillaries:

- **TEST BANK AVAILABLE** for adopters to download, the Test Bank provides multiple-choice, true/false, and essay questions for each chapter.
- **TESTING SOFTWARE** This customizable test bank is available as a Word file or in Respondus 4.0—a powerful tool for creating and managing exams that can be printed out or published directly to the most popular learning management systems. Exams can be created offline or moved from one LMS to another. Respondus LE is available for free and can be used to automate the process of creating printed tests. Respondus 3.5, available for purchase or via a school site license, prepares tests to be uploaded to an LMS.
- **COMPANION WEBSITE** The open-access Companion Website is designed to engage students with the material and reinforce what they’ve learned in the classroom. For each chapter, flash cards and self-quizzes help students master the content and apply that knowledge to real-life situations. Students can access the Companion Website from their computers, tablets, or mobile devices.
- **EBOOK** The full-color eBook allows students to access this textbook anytime, anywhere. The eBook includes the entire print edition rendered in vibrant color and features direct links to the Companion Website.
- **POWERPOINT SLIDES** For every chapter, art slides of all figures and tables are provided.

For more information on how to access the accompanying instructor and student resources, visit the text’s catalog page at rowman.com/084/4432525292.

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Brief Contents

PART I       THE BASICS OF POLITICS
1 Politics, Government, and Policy
2 Power and the Distribution of Influence
3 Political Science
4 The Development of Modern Politics: Challenges and Responses

PART II      NORMATIVE POLITICAL THOUGHT
5 Political Philosophies and Theories
6 Today’s Ideologies

PART III    SOCIETY AND POLITICS
7 Political Economy
8 Political Attitudes: Political Culture, Socialization, Public Opinion and the Media
9 Interest Groups
10 Political Parties
11 Voting and Elections

PART IV      POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS
12 Legislative Assemblies
13 The Democratic Political Executive
14 Applying the Law: Public Administration and the Courts
15 Authoritarian Regimes and Revolution
16 Democratization

PART V       INTERNATIONAL POLITICS
17 Models of International Relations and What They Explain
18 Social Identity and Today’s Foreign Policy Challenges
Preface

Today nations confront complex challenges, such as economic crisis and change, global warming, wars and their refugees, and the political role of religion. At this historical juncture, it is especially important for people to understand the fundamentals of politics. This book aims to enable students to traverse the terrain between their first impressions of politics and the realities of the subject. It focuses on clear, logical, and compelling explanation of what they need to know about today’s politics, to be good citizens of their nations and the world. The book’s strategy has several features that work in tandem: (a) an overall theme: politics as the interplay of contention and cooperation in and around government, (b) the book’s conception of political science as the exploration of causal factors and consequences related to political phenomena, (c) exploration of the subject in a diversity of real-world contexts, including two country cases per chapter, (d) an effective, intuitive pedagogical approach to topic sequencing, and (e) an accessible, practical approach to concepts and their application to the real world.

A Theme: Politics as the Interplay of Contention and Cooperation

I have found that students focus better on a subject when they have an overall theme to help integrate the whole. I think of politics as the interplay of contention and cooperation by individuals and groups, to affect authoritative decision making (in this case, decision making by government). Here the word “group” is meant expansively, including not only interest groups but also a wide range of other entities such as political parties, factions within them, sociopolitical movements, institutions, schools of thought about policy, and other types of groups. My meaning for the term “contention” is also expansive, based on how the word is used in ordinary language: any sort of striving in the face of difficulty, rivalry, competition, or opposition. (Thus I use the
word much more broadly than what a few political scientists call “contentious politics”—protest, usually involving sociopolitical movements, outside established political channels.)

Thinking about the interplay of contention and cooperation stimulates interesting and important questions. The United States, for example, displays an increasingly polarized society, politically, economically, and socially, and we see vigorous contention within other nations, too, as well as among nations in international politics. What brings individuals to cooperate in maintaining such groups as political parties, interest groups, and social movements? What factors can contribute to division within such groups into different contending factions? In legislative assemblies, when do legislators tend to cast votes in cooperation with their party and its leadership, and when do they go their own way? When and why do different parties ally with one another, and when do such coalitions break down? When and why do different governmental institutions seem to be contending or cooperating with each other, and which has the most influence over the other as they do so? In international politics, when and why do nations contend with each other, and when are they more likely to cooperate (sometimes in contending alliances)?

Regarding the intensity of intergroup contention, more questions arise. When and why do groups contend sharply, sticking to their most important priorities? When and why do they engage in more gentle rivalry, at times engaging in cooperation and compromise? What are the consequences of differences in the intensity of contention or cooperation? And what about the consequences of patterns of contention and cooperation? I believe that the theme of political contention and cooperation can motivate student interest as well as help tie the course together.
Political Science, Causal Factors, and Consequences

This book defines political science as the systematic examination of causal factors and consequences of political phenomena. For students to be good citizens of their nations and the world, they need to be able to think in terms of causal factors and consequences regarding important developments around them. At various points in this book, I highlight one or more of three types of causal factors that affect patterns of contention and cooperation in politics: (a) the main types of political framework that surround and structure politics, (b) influence, the most common form of power in politics, and (c) values, among the goals of policies and at times among the motivations of contending groups, alongside (or even occasionally instead of) material interests.

For example, multiparty parliamentary democracy displays very different patterns of contention and cooperation from those that we see under two-party presidential democracy or military authoritarian rule. In another example, the influence of a political party’s top leadership over its legislators and mid-level leaders is a key factor in the degree of cooperation within the party, as it contends with other parties. And in the financial crisis of 2008–2009, shared concern about a value—public well-being in the particular form of minimal financial stability—contributed to cooperation among parties and interest groups that normally contend with each other, often sharply. An especially important cluster of values, human rights, is a recurring topic over the course of the book as either causal factor or consequence.

Cases

Moreover, good citizenship requires being able to view events and patterns in a comparative context. Some awareness of what goes on elsewhere enriches one’s perspective on how things
are done domestically, so that what is happening at home does not seem to be “the only game in
town.” In addition to many brief examples from various countries within the narrative, each
chapter ends with two in-depth country cases, drawn from many different parts of the world, to
illustrate political contention and cooperation with an eye to the chapter’s topic. In understanding
politics, it is important for students to situate concepts in the stories of particular nations. Over
the course of this book, a wide range of nations are represented.

Topic Sequencing
A further challenge for a text introducing political science revolves around topic sequencing. The
field of politics is a sprawling tapestry with many interrelationships among topics. How can the
student understand one topic without the others? Yet a text must start somewhere, and proceed in
some order. If the student’s understanding of politics is not built systematically, from the ground
up, the result may be a complex jumble of information that can even discourage students from
good, thoughtful citizenship.

This book emerged from my thirty years of teaching the course to undergraduates, in
which I used my syllabus to rearrange the sections and chapters of the available textbooks to
achieve what I considered to be a more natural and logical sequence of coverage. For example,
the distinction between parliamentary and presidential democracy is commonly first presented in
the chapter on the legislative process, which tends to come toward the middle of texts or later.
But a preliminary and simplified version of the distinction is also useful for understanding topics
that should come earlier in the book, such as power and interest groups. I concluded that for the
subject of politics to unfold in a natural, logical, synchronized way, concepts and topics need to
be sequenced carefully to reduce confusion and build understanding systematically, step by step.
Eventually it occurred to me that the market needed a book that did a better job of topic sequencing.

A second major aspect of topic sequencing is the overall order of the chapters in the book. For introductory students, chapters need to flow in a logical order to build a feel for politics and government. I believe that this book’s table of contents presents such a sequence. However, a qualification is in order here. Often instructors using the same text vary in how they want to use it in the course, and may prefer a different sequence. And they may not want to assign every chapter, every section of a chapter, every box feature, or every country study, as required reading for students. For this reason, I have tried to craft each chapter and section to be sufficiently comprehensive and self-contained to be able to stand alone, so that each may do its job as part of a different sequence or strategy. Such modular construction can provide a book that is a flexible and powerful multi-use tool, capable of being employed effectively in various roles in a wide range of higher education settings, from community colleges to regional and primary state universities, liberal arts colleges, and other universities.

Terms, Concepts, and Their Real-World Application

Another feature of this book’s pedagogical approach addresses challenges that students sometimes face when they are confronted by new terms and try to apply them to often messy realities. Clarity and accuracy in applying terms to the real world is important in preparing students for good citizenship as well as for further study of politics. Contending politicians sometimes use vague, emotionally charged, and extreme language to characterize events or their opponents. Media coverage does little to reduce the resulting confusion, and many voters are tempted to throw up their hands in frustration or disgust. Being a responsible citizen requires
some awareness of the shades of gray between polar extremes, and having a feel for when exaggeration or outright falsehood may be afoot. This text attempts to make a start on this problem, in the nonpartisan context of introducing political science.

In addition to using clear terms and definitions, most chapters contain a “Concept in Context” section, explaining further the meaning of a key term or phrase in the realistic context of its actual use. And where appropriate, this text includes examples that illustrate and invite critical thinking about the application of terms. To be sure, this book relies on terminology widely used in political science, defined as simply and directly as possible. But occasionally a term that is widely used by political scientists to label a phenomenon may unintentionally create a misleading or confusing impression of what it refers to. At the few points where such confusion is possible, this book adds more intuitive terminology that is direct, revealing, and clear, in relation to both ordinary language and political reality.

The most important occasions for this seem to arise as political scientists use typologies to classify phenomena. Sometimes contrasting labels suggest extremes, whereas most of the empirical reality actually occupies the spectrum between the extreme poles. For example, in the chapter on political parties, I take note of the terms “catchall” and “programmatic,” used by many political scientists to classify political parties. The first word implies vacuous pandering, while the other seems to go to the opposite extreme: a party that always displays and pursues a specific and detailed program of policy prescriptions. These terms are fine for the extremes, but in reality, most parties lie somewhere in between. In this case, it may be better to enrich our terminology for introductory students by adding a pair of words from ordinary language—“broad” and “focus”—to classify parties by their segment of the continuum.
In another example, political scientists who study voting tend to draw a contrast between (a) voting by policy preference, with the voter choosing a party because its policy on a key issue is closest to the voter’s own policy preference (called “proximity” voting), and (b) voting without regard for policy, either on a gut feeling or on whether things seem to be going well or poorly for oneself or one’s country. But many votes seem to be on a continuum between these poles. To help here, at points in the chapters on parties (10) and elections (11), I employ the notion of general policy direction preference. This involves preferences that government policy move in one or more of four types of general direction: (a) toward a value (e.g., national security or social justice), (b) in the direction of a particular ideology, (c) toward support for an interest group, or (d) in the direction of a general policy prescription to address an important issue (e.g., toward restricting or expanding access to abortions). Often voter motivations and party appeals seem to center on preferences for such general policy directions, rather than on specific policy positions, retrospective assessment of events, or affective attraction, or involve mixtures of these factors.

Special Features
To enrich student learning, this book also includes revolving selections of boxed sections under the following titles:

**Concept in Context** (noted above) expands on some of the most important key terms and concepts by showing how they may be viewed in the context of their use in politics and political science.
Contention and Cooperation in Focus zeroes in on a particular issue, event, or process in a country that illustrates the interplay of political contention and cooperation.

The Philosophical Connection takes note of the views of one or two important political philosophers on topics discussed in the chapter.

The Human Rights Connection examines how the human rights outlook bears on aspects of the chapter’s topic.

Applying the Models uses the models of the distribution of influence (majority preference, elite, pluralist, and personal leadership, introduced in chapter 2) to some part of the chapter topic.

Country Case Studies at the end of each chapter help illustrate each chapter’s themes, give a feel for the politics of particular nations, and provide helpful background for examples that are found in subsequent chapters.

Critical-Thinking Questions at the end of each chapter expand on the chapter’s concepts for students to consider the implications and relate to other situations.

Key Terms are found in bold and defined in the text, listed at the end of each chapter for easy review, and defined again in the glossary at the end of the book.
The book also contains tables, figures, maps, and photos that are designed to underscore the major concepts and take-home points in each of the chapters, and enhance student comprehension of the topics.

**Supplements**

**Test Bank.** For each chapter in the text, there is a test bank section that includes multiple choice, true/false questions, and essay questions. The Test Bank is available to adopters for download on the text’s catalog page at https://rowman.com/ISBN/9781442252592.

**Testing Software.** This customizable test bank is available as either a Word file or in Respondus 4.0©. Respondus 4.0© is a powerful tool for creating and managing exams that can be printed to paper or published directly to the most popular learning management systems. Exams can be created offline or moved from one LMS to another. **Respondus LE** is available for free and can be used to automate the process of creating print tests. **Respondus 3.5**, available for purchase or via a school site license, prepares tests to be uploaded to an LMS. Click here: http://www.respondus.com/products/testbank/search.php to submit your request.

**Companion Website.** Accompanying the text is an open-access Companion Website designed to engage students with the material and reinforce what they’ve learned in the classroom. For each chapter, flash cards and self-quizzes help students master the content and apply that knowledge to real-life situations. Students can access the Companion Website from their computer or mobile device; it can be found at http://textbooks.rowman.com/smith1e.
eBook. The full-color eBook allows students to access this textbook anytime and anywhere they want. The eBook for *A Comparative Introduction to Political Science* includes everything that is in the print edition in vibrant color, and features direct links to the Companion Website where students can access flash cards and self-quizzes to help test their understanding of the major concepts and terminology in each chapter. The eBook can be purchased at https://rowman.com/ISBN/9781442252608 or at any other eBook retailer.

**PowerPoint® Slides.** A set of line art PowerPoint® slides provides all the tables and figures from the text. The slides are available to adopters for download on the text’s catalog page at https://rowman.com/ISBN/9781442252592.

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FOCUS QUESTIONS

- **HOW** do voters think about contending alternatives when they are voting?
- **HOW** does the number of alternatives affect voting?
- **WHAT** considerations contend for attention in the minds of voters? How might they cooperate to support a particular choice?
- **HOW** does voters’ identification with a political party affect voting?
- **HOW** do parties and candidates maneuver to gain votes?
- **WHAT** does it mean for voter choice to be meaningful?

**IMAGINE THAT YOU WERE A FRENCH VOTER** during the presidential and national assembly elections of April–June 2012. What issues would you have considered as you cast your vote? The presidential race was developing into a contest mainly between François Hollande, the leader of the moderate left-of-center Socialist Party (PS), and the incumbent, President Nicholas Sarkozy, leader of the conservative Union for a Popular Movement (UMP). But the leaders of the smaller ethnic-ultranationalist National Front, the left social democratic Left Front, and the centrist Centre for France were also getting some attention. The personalities of leading candidates can be a factor, but neither Sarkozy nor Hollande stood out here.

The country’s economic performance surely would play a role. Conditions in France were not favorable, with high unemployment and problems with the budget and economic growth. Especially during the last weeks of the campaign amid the widening European financial crisis, an important consideration was the directions that the candidates and their parties wanted the government to take regarding deficits, debt, and growth. Hollande supported stronger growth-stimulating policies, whereas Sarkozy and the UMP seemed to favor the Germany-backed path of austerity (see chapter 7).

In the election results, the candidates of all the above-noted parties won significant portions of the votes for the presidency and the assembly (except for a poor assembly showing for the Centre). But Hollande and his PS won by about 3 percent, and together with its smaller coalition allies won a clear majority in the National Assembly.
France is one of the two most important countries in the Eurozone (with Germany), and this election result seems undeniably significant. Why did the voters vote the way they did? That is a question that political scientists try to answer, and the one we shall consider here.

In elections in representative democracies, average citizens participate in the political process and influence government. They do so by choosing office-holders and holding them accountable for their past performance. Voters make their selections mainly from a range of contending individuals and political parties.

We begin this chapter with a brief look at the contending options facing the voter on election day. We then turn to the various motivations that can be at work as the ballot is cast. These, too, contend or cooperate with one another in voters’ minds. Later in this chapter, we will take an overall look at how parties contend in elections, building on what we learned about parties in chapter 10. We will conclude with a discussion of how and when election outcomes allow for voter choice to be more or less meaningful.

**ALTERNATIVES FOR VOTER CHOICE**

Voters select from an array of contending alternative candidates and parties. What sorts of choices must the voters make on election day, and how many alternatives are before them as they choose? How does the array of options affect how voters perceive their choices in the voting booth?

**The Number of Alternatives: The Electoral System Factor**

One major feature of the democratic voting situation is the number of significant alternatives before voters. There may be very few important options for choice, or many. Since political parties usually nominate the candidates, the number of significant contending parties is an important factor determining the range of significant alternatives before the voters on election day. What makes a party important enough for its candidates to be significant alternatives for voter choice? An important factor here is whether or not a party may realistically have a hand in government policymaking. As we saw in Chapter 10, a policy-significant party may be defined as any political party whose legislators’ votes might be needed to regularly pass policy proposals into law, either now or in the not-too-distant future.

Recall from earlier chapters that concerning the number of significant parties in a democracy, the main categories are two-party and multiparty. In a two-party system, only two large, policy-significant parties prevail and contend with one another. In a given legislative assembly, one or the other will hold the majority. Coalitions are unnecessary, and the other parties are too small to make a difference in policy outcomes. (Since such small parties may hold a few seats each, perhaps a more specific title for this pattern would be the “two prevailing party” system.)
Two-party systems tend to be present where the electoral system is SMDP (single-member district plurality), under which each district is small and sends only one representative to parliament: the candidate that got the most votes (see chapters 3 and 10). Again, here only large parties can be victorious in very many districts, so (a) voters tend to vote for one of them rather than “wasting their votes” on small parties, and (b) small groups—with virtually no chance of having their candidates come in first—tend to join with other groups, often the largest parties, to get bigger and have a chance of holding office. As was noted in chapter 10, only where there are regional interest–based focus parties (or others with regionally concentrated support) that are big enough in their home bases of strength to win seats there, might we fail to see one or the other of the two biggest broad parties win a legislative majority in its own hands (see British country case study, chapter 1).

Alternatively, in a multiparty situation a voter can choose from among several parties (say four, five, or more) that each have the potential, either now or in a plausible future, to be a necessary part of a majority coalition. As we saw in chapters 3, 4, and 10, multiparty systems normally occur with PR voting. Legislative seats are allocated to parties according to the share of the vote that each has won in large multimember districts (each usually filling five seats or more), allowing small parties to win seats. Too many parties end up with seats for any one of them to have the majority by itself. So a coalition of two or more parties must form to make up a majority and be assured of passing legislation. Thus even small parties may be necessary parts of majority coalitions, giving voters several policy-significant alternatives on the ballot.

Votes must be cast for a favored party or candidate, but the main impetus may be against another party or candidate. SMDP voting, with its two significant contending alternatives, may contribute to a substantial amount of oppositional voting. Under SMDP, if you strongly oppose a candidate or party, you have only one other significant choice. This situation encourages parties and candidates to engage in negative campaigning against their opponents, because they know that if their oppositional approach is persuasive, the voter has only one alternative, theirs. In contrast to SMDP, PR's multiparty elections tend to produce less oppositional voting. You may oppose a party strongly, but you still have a decision to make among several remaining significant alternatives. This reduces the incentives somewhat for parties to rely on negative campaigning, because it may not produce votes for them.

Voting for Candidate or Party: The Governmental Structure Factor

Another question to consider is: What types of alternatives do the voters see before them? They may view their choice in two contending ways, as either (a) picking individual candidates, or (b) selecting political parties, guided more by the candidates' party labels than by the individual names on the ballot. In the case of party-focused voting, I assume that the voter's preference can change from election to election according to the motivation and criteria at work at the time. Only in the special case of “party identification”—considering oneself a “member” of a party (see below)—does party voting remain fairly constant over successive elections.
Of course, emphasis on party or individual candidate depends partly on personal inclination. But other factors can also encourage one approach or the other. A major one is the type of governmental structure. We have already seen that under parliamentary government, the party or coalition holding the majority must vote cohesively (in a unified way) in favor of the policy proposals of its leaders in the cabinet to retain control of the executive branch. By the same token, opposition parties tend to vote cohesively against cabinet bills. Voters and officeholders alike expect each party’s legislators to display party discipline. Consequently, it is the relative success of the contending parties in an election—reflected in their seat strengths in parliament—that indicates whose policy preferences will become law. Understanding this, voters tend to consider their vote as the choice of a party more than the choice of particular candidates for parliamentary seats. In fact, many pay little attention to the individual names on the ballot.

In contrast, recall that under presidential government, the chief executive stays in office for a set term, regardless of whether her or his policy proposals pass in the legislature (see chapters 1 and 10). Thus, the legislators of the president’s party or coalition do not necessarily have to vote in a unified way in favor of the president’s policy proposals. And opposition-party legislators don’t have to vote cohesively against them. As a consequence, the voting records of individual candidates matter, and fewer voters who know much about the candidates will be guided solely by party.

Another variable, the electoral system, can also have some effect on whether voters focus on party or on individual candidates. SMDP, by definition, formally involves picking an individual candidate’s name (though as we have seen, voters in parliamentary systems tend to pay more attention to the party label). In contrast, PR asks the voters to choose between party lists—slates of candidates organized on the ballot by party. That formal feature of PR voting, which can occur in presidential governmental systems as well as parliamentary ones, encourages voters to focus on the party as they cast their votes.

**Voter Turnout and the Option of Not Voting**

In addition to the alternatives in casting votes, a further option is not to vote at all. Some voters may not have enough positive or oppositional interest in the options to draw them to the polls.

Countries and elections can vary in their rates of voter turnout—the percentage of eligible voters who actually come out to vote on election day. For example, American voter turnout tends to be between 50 percent and 65 percent of registered voters in presidential election years, and less in the alternating Congress-only
elections. In contrast, European turnouts typically range from 65 percent to 90 percent. The type of governmental structure may be a factor affecting such a difference. In parliamentary systems, more voters may believe that their votes will make a difference in government policy decisions. Another factor may be that continental Europe's multiparty frameworks offer more parties to choose from, improving the chance of matches between voter preferences and the alternatives.

Other practical differences in voting may also contribute. In Europe, elections usually occur on convenient weekend days, and there are few or no voter registration requirements to discourage voters. Some European nations even legally require citizens to vote (sometimes with nonvoters charged a small fine). In contrast, in the United States, elections occur on a work day during the week (Tuesday), and require cumbersome registration procedures for would-be voters.

In a single nation, turnout may rise and fall from election to election. Different election years may present sharper or fuzzier contrasts between the parties and candidates, making voter choice seem more or less meaningful (see below). Surrounding events can arouse controversy and draw larger numbers to the polls. In the United States in November 2008, for example, the combination of a historic candidacy of an African American Democratic candidate and an erupting financial crisis boosted turnout to 62 percent, a comparatively high level for the United States (see Country Case Studies below).

Notably, in a wide swath of established democracies, average voter turnout dropped by between 5 percent and 15 percent over the last half of the twentieth century. However, in the twenty-first century, turnout seems to have turned the corner and is rising in many nations.

In some countries, procedures allow a referendum item to be on the ballot that stimulates special interest and a higher voter turnout in a given election. A referendum is an example of direct rather than representative democracy; citizens vote directly on whether a policy proposal will become law. A referendum measure may be put on the ballot by a party's activists or officeholders to turn out more of its voters on election day, as in the case of a socioculturally conservative party getting an abortion-related or gay marriage referendum question included in an election. In a few countries allowing referenda, a measure can get on the ballot with no more than a certain number of signatures on a petition. (The required number of signatures may be easily gained with enough money to pay enough canvassers to go door to door getting signatures.) In some countries, this approach may be used to call a special election on whether to recall—remove from office—an officeholder.

Other factors affecting turnout have to do with portions of the electorate rather than with the surrounding framework or the events of the day. For example, suburban dwellers typically vote at higher rates than rural dwellers. (Perhaps the greater distance that rural people have to travel to get to a polling place makes a difference.) And research shows that more education, higher income, and age are each associated with a higher probability of voting. Less educated, lower-income, and younger people may follow political events less regularly and intensively.

**CRITERIA FOR VOTER CHOICE**

Whether a citizen voted for individual candidates or their parties, or their motivation was positive or oppositional, a key question remains: why did the voter...
choose to vote the way (s)he did? Voters make their choices for a variety of reasons, but we can classify voter motivations under three general headings:

1. Affective voting: personal (gut-level) feelings about the alternatives.
2. Retrospective voting: a desire to hold leaders accountable for the impact of past policymaking on society.
3. Policy direction voting: preferences regarding what general directions government policies should take, such as toward (or away from) a value, an ideology, help for an interest group, or a particular policy on an issue (see below).

Very commonly, more than one of these six categories of voter motivation are at work in a given voter’s choice at the polls. We should think of them more as components of voter choice, such that often two (or even three) of them work together to affect how a voter casts her or his ballot. But just as in chemistry we need to understand atoms before studying molecules, we shall look first at each in isolation before examining how they combine.

**Affective Voting**

Whether a voter focuses on an individual candidate or a party, the choice may follow largely from personal feelings about the alternatives. Political scientists don’t agree on a general term to describe such voting as it applies to both individual candidate and party. Here, I borrow the term “affect” from social psychology in referring to gut-level motivation. **Affective voting** can be oppositional as well as positive; that is, one’s vote can follow from gut-level feelings of disapproval toward a rival candidate or party, as well as a positive attraction to the chosen alternative.

**Affective Voting for an Individual Candidate** Political scientists do have a phrase for affective voting by individual candidate: **candidate orientation voting**. One form of such motivation lies in a shared social identity between voter and candidate. In South Africa, for example, a Zulu voter may choose the Zulu candidate based on ethnic identification that creates a comfort level with the candidate. Alternatively, voters may be attracted to something admirable that they perceive in the personal character or qualities of a candidate, apart from the candidate’s favored policy directions. An American example is a 1950s’ voter who agreed with the ad slogan, “I like Ike” (President Dwight Eisenhower, the former supreme commander of the allied forces in World War II). Another example is a 1960s’ French voter who voted for Charles de Gaulle because the voter considered him to be “a great man.” The voter may feel that a candidate is honest, displays strong leadership, or has shown integrity in sticking to campaign promises.

Alternatively, the voter may be drawn to a candidate as simply having an attractive personality—or charisma. For example, many Americans were drawn to the personal appeal of John F. Kennedy and his brother Robert in the 1960s, and of Ronald Reagan in the 1980s. Affective attachment to candidates can play a role in nominations by parties. In France in the 1970s, as the right-of-center coalition looked for a presidential candidate, it passed over the leaders of its largest party, the conservative Gaullists. Instead, the right-of-center coalition
parties chose Guiscard d’Estaing, the head of the small Union for French Democracy (a vaguely classical liberal group of small parties), primarily because of his personal popularity in the nation. Indeed, he won the election on behalf of the conservative coalition.

Affective voting by individual candidate can also be primarily oppositional. Voters may perceive a candidate as dull, weak, indecisive, slick, untrustworthy, or arrogant. Voters with such perceptions tend to avoid voting for that candidate.

Affective support for a leader can be influenced by events and circumstances. For example, a crisis or emergency can produce a jump in the approval ratings of the chief executive. He or she may give a rousing speech showing determination to battle the challenge, causing people to rally around their chief’s “leadership” in the crisis. Such support benefited British prime minister Margaret Thatcher following the invasion of the Falkland Islands by Argentine forces in 1982, and American president George W. Bush after the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States in 2001.

Affective Voting for a Party A voter may also choose to vote for a political party out of affective motivation. Childhood socialization at home can create a sense of personal connection with a particular party that lasts into adulthood. The result can be a comfort level with the party without thinking much about its record or policy direction preferences. Or the party may appear to represent a group with which a voter identifies. An example is identifying a party with one’s religion or social class (common in early twentieth-century Europe), or with one’s ethnicity or region, or both, as in India (see Country Case Studies below). Another factor in purely affective attachment can be associating a party with an instrumental value, such as competent economic management or forceful foreign policy, without reference to the particular policies and goals pursued by such management. (Such instrumental values can be closely linked to “retrospective voting” based on judgments of past success or failure while the party was in power; see below.)

An affective linkage to a party is a major contributing factor to what political scientists call “party identification.” But most often, pure affect is not the only factor behind a person’s party identification (see below). Note also that affective voting by party can be primarily oppositional. For example, a major corruption scandal may disillusion many voters with a party, as occurred in the early 1990s in Italy regarding the center-right Christian Democratic Party and the center-left Socialist Party, which ended in both parties’ dissolution.

Retrospective Voting: How Have Things Been Going?
In another style of voting, the voter holds officeholders responsible for positive or negative outcomes in the country. If things seem to be going well, especially for the economy, some voters will vote positively for the incumbents; if things are going poorly, such voters will cast oppositional votes for the challengers. Political scientists tend to refer to this sort of voting as “retrospective,” in the sense of “looking back.” Retrospective voting assumes that the currently governing party is responsible for the present situation, usually without thinking much about how politicians’ past policies may have caused a prosperous or weak economy, or a successful or unsuccessful war.3
For example, support levels for American president George W. Bush in the 2000s illustrate retrospective concerns. In the months and years after 9/11, further terrorist attacks on American soil failed to materialize. Many Americans credited the Bush administration with protecting them, probably contributing to Bush’s reelection in 2004. After 2004, however, things didn’t go well in other policy areas. By 2006, the American public perceived the intervention in Iraq to have gone poorly and to have been costly in both money and lives. American approval of the Republican administration’s handling of the war went from the 50–60 percent range to 25–35 percent, and President Bush’s overall job approval rating showed a similar drop. The Congressional elections of November 2006 reflected a degree of oppositional retrospective voting against the president’s party, as many Republicans lost their seats to Democrats. And in 2008, the Republicans lost the presidency (and the Senate) to the Democrats, partially due to an economic crisis that was frightening many voters at the time.

Retrospective voting is often related to economic conditions at the time of the election, regarding what is happening to such indicators as the rates of unemployment, inflation, or economic growth (growth in “gross domestic product,” or GDP). Where we see such “economic voting,” it tends to affect the electoral support for the party of the chief executive, especially where external factors do not seem evident and one party seems responsible for economic policy; attributing responsibility to individual parties in cases of coalition government is harder.

To be sure, cross-national studies of economic voting have shown little dependence of electoral success on actual economic conditions at the time of voting. One complication regarding retrospective voting is that it is affected by voters’ beliefs about whether things are going well or poorly. But at times, objective and accurate answers to this question may be hard to come by among ordinary voters, and different perceptions may contend with one another. For example, during the American election campaign in the fall of 2012, were things going well because a depression had been avoided and the economy was gradually recovering, or were things going badly because the unemployment rate, the government budget deficit, and the American national debt all still seemed high? And even where the outcome and reasons for it are identifiable, often retrospective voters make errors regarding these things, blame or praise incumbents for outcomes beyond their control, and are affected by their own partisan sympathies.

Among the factors influencing this perception, the news media’s presentation of events looms large. Does television news coverage present the situation hopefully and optimistically, or the opposite? And during election campaigns, the contending messages of the parties about the economy, for example, may fight for center stage. The amount of money spent on television advertising can be a major factor in what messages the voters see. If a party can dominate the “ad wars” and swing poll results in its direction, the news media reports of such poll results tend to further boost the bandwagon.

Policy Direction Voting

Finally, voter attitudes toward candidates and parties may result in policy direction voting: support for, or opposition to, directions that the candidates and parties would like government policy to take on important issues. As was noted in chapter 8, there is much reason to question whether many people cast votes based on the specific policy preferences that they hold, and how such preferences
match up with parties’ official policy positions (what political scientists call “proximity voting”). More often, however, average voters have at least vague notions about what general directions they want government policy to take, regarding issue areas that seem important to them. This notion extends the idea of directional voter and party preferences that was first introduced by political scientists George Rabinowitz, Stuart Elaine MacDonald, and Ola Listhaug, more than two decades ago. They focused on preferences in the direction of (or away from) particular policies to address issues; here I expand the scope of the directional concept to include other sorts of policy direction, as well. At least four major types of policy direction contend for the voter’s attention and support:

- toward a value, such as some particular form of well-being or freedom (see chapters 1 and 3),
- toward an ideological orientation,
- toward helping an interest group that the voter supports, or
- toward a particular policy to deal with an issue.

As we shall see below, I am not suggesting that the majority of policy direction voters fall into only one or another of these categories. We tend to see combinations of two or more of them in voting decisions. But like someone beginning the study of chemistry, we need an acquaintance with the elements before we get to the compounds and how they interact and combine with one another.

**Value-related Voting** In voting for a candidate or party due to policy direction preference, one possible focus is the candidate’s or party’s perceived commitment to pursue one or more values. (For an ancient Greek view of this factor, see “The Philosophical Connection.”) Some voters may know little of the policy approaches that are contending in a campaign, but are attracted to candidates or parties based on the values that they espouse. For example, a voter may want government policy to move in the direction of some form of national well-being, such as relieving economic insecurity, strengthening national security against foreign threats, or bolstering the traditional family. Candidate and party appeals to such values are often related to their ideological orientations (e.g., moderate left-of-center parties tend to support social justice), but value appeals can sometimes stand on their own in ways that may resonate with voters.

**Ideological Direction Voting** Voters may also cast their ballots along ideological lines. A voter may want government policy to move more in the direction of a particular ideology, such as classical liberal or moderate left of center, or a broader ideological direction, such as right of center or left of center. Multiparty systems with PR voting tend to present more ideological options, whereas two-party SMDP settings tend to present just a broad moderate left-of-center party contending with a broad right-of-center party.

In multiparty frameworks, the choice between two broad ideological directions comes into play in how parties contend and cooperate in coalitions. For example, commonly a left-of-center coalition contends with a right-of-center one. Because many voters know of the probable coalition alignments, their support for a party may also express indirect support for its coalition and its broad ideological direction.
PART III • Society and Politics

In the fourth century BCE, the Greek philosopher Aristotle wrote about values and voting. For him, a state might pursue one of three key values: individual freedom, wealth/property, and personal moral goodness. For Aristotle, the democratic form of government held freedom as its key value. The logic of democracy was that since all citizens were equal in being free (not slaves), everyone should have an equal chance to serve in government. Ancient Greece practiced direct democracy. Policymaking was done by the whole citizenry—in practice, whoever came to the public square on the day for making a decision. The few government officials were not elected; instead, their names were drawn “by lot.” In practice, Aristotle argued, direct democracy was one of the bad forms of government in that it usually pursued the self-interest of the ruling group—in this case, the poor majority—rather than the common good.

For Aristotle, a government with property or wealth as its key underlying value was an oligarchy. Oligarchy, too, was a bad form of government because its ruling group—here, the wealthy—governed in its own self-interest. Oligarchy set a minimum property requirement for holding political rights. The oligarchic way of filling government offices was by voting in elections. In practice, election winners tended to be those with enough property and wealth to have time for public service, and financially secure “gentlemen” were assumed to be less tempted to engage in financial wrongdoing than the poor.

To Aristotle, the third main value was another interpretation of well-being: personal moral goodness. This was the focus of the aristocracy, or rule by the few for the common good. Full-scale political participation by the perfect aristocracy included only those who fully possessed moral goodness (including wisdom) and had the material means to provide the leisure for the “good life.” Perfect aristocracy’s main governmental job was educating the citizenry to goodness. The problem with this form for Aristotle was that it was a perfectionist extreme. That all citizens would be fully moral and wise was too much to expect of the real world (much as it is implausible, in Aristotle’s view, for the mind of a king never to be overcome by passion).

For Aristotle, the most practical acceptable regime was something else: a mixture of oligarchy and democracy. He called this mixture polity, the rule of the many in the common interest. In its choice of officeholders, polity employed oligarchy’s method of election. From democracy came the practice of allowing all citizens to vote. Aristotle suggested that the different contributions of “the many” to decision making could add up to a richer sum of good judgment than could any one or a few alone. Thus, the many—including the best alongside everyone else—was qualified to appoint government officials and judge them at the end of their term of office. Here we have an idealized articulation of our own idea of representative democracy.

Aristotle also mentioned certain types of personal goodness in connection with polity. He stressed that stable polities had a large middle class with attitudes that involved certain forms of justice: fairness, impartiality, and law-abidingness. Most important for polity, however, was a point that he made about less-than-perfect forms of aristocracy: those that fall short of full-scale, ideal aristocracy but are achievable in the real world. If a regime respects all three values—freedom, property, and personal goodness—and employs personal goodness among its criteria for electing officeholders, it could be equally described as both a lesser aristocracy and a polity. Thus, for common real-world circumstances, Aristotle favored a polity with a strong middle class that votes for candidates with personal goodness in mind.

How many voters are ideologically consistent across a range of issue areas and look for candidates and parties to match their views? Certainly the parties’ candidates tend to represent their party’s ideological identity on the left-right scale, as has been stressed by political scientists Herbert Kitschelt, Michael Laver, and others. Only exceptionally do we see party leaderships depart from ideological
consistency, as in the case of moderate left-of-center party leaders accepting harsh austerity in southern Europe—and losing many of their traditional voters in the process. (This case seemed to be an example of parties’ earlier commitments to pro-Europe rules that had unforeseen consequences later, when applied under the very different circumstances of the five-year European economic slump and debt crisis of 2009–2014.)

Regarding voters, in a study of Europe in the 1990s, political scientists Herman Schmitt and Jacques Thomassen found a strong degree of fit between party candidates’ ideologically connected positions and those of their voters on a range of perennially important issues. But this is not true for all issues. For example, many voters were less enthusiastic on closer European integration (e.g., easy migration and the Euro) than were the candidates of the parties they voted for.

As was noted in chapter 6, the reality appears to be a continuum, from voters who are fairly consistent ideologically across issue areas and party choice, through a larger number who lean in some ideological direction in most issue areas but not all, to others who are fairly nonideological.

**Voting to Support an Interest Group** Another sort of policy direction is toward promoting the interests of one or more groups in society. Many people are most interested in (and knowledgeable about) policy issues that affect groups that they are part of. As we saw at the beginning of chapter 9, an important role for interest groups in politics stems from the tendency of many voters to look for a match between the preferences of a party or candidate and the concerns of one or more important groups with which that the voter identifies. And chapter 10 noted that one of the main representative roles of political parties is representation of groups. Consequently, “voter groups” that comprise substantial categories of people are especially important in elections.

One important category of such groups is broad economic strata (upper, middle, and lower income levels). Recall from chapter 10, for example, that middle and lower economic strata tend to support moderate left-of-center parties, while more people associated with business and wealth tend to lean toward conservative or classical liberal parties. To be sure, the last third of the twentieth century saw a gradual decline in voting according to economic stratum. Many people were becoming interested in new, less economic “post-materialist” concerns, such as women’s rights, the environment, peace, lifestyle, minority rights, and local democracy (see chapter 8). However, under the impact of today’s globalization, economic stress, and increased budgetary pressures, the concerns of economic strata may again be rising on the public agenda and affecting voting more.

Ethnic or racial groups can also be prominent. In France, for example, people of West African ancestry are a distinct group, as are those of North African Arab ancestry, alert to the representation of their interests as they vote in French elections. In the United States, African Americans and Hispanics are important voter categories who lean toward the moderate left-of-center Democratic Party.

Gender can play a role, too. Recent American elections have displayed a “gender gap,” a pattern of more women voting Democratic and men tending to vote Republican. Similarly, the urban and rural sectors, regional differences, and religion can affect voting. And smaller interest groups such as particular occupational categories can also be important. We need to remember, though, that these sorts of differences emerge more as mild statistical tendencies rather than solid
blocs voting for one party or another. Interest group support is, after all, only one of the types of policy direction voting.

Interest group-oriented voting is roughly in line with the pluralist model of influence distribution. Recall from chapter 2 that this model places interest groups and their contention and bargaining at the center of policymaking (see “Applying the Models”). Those who vote based on their group interests may find more opportunities to do so under presidential than parliamentary frameworks. With less pressure on lawmakers for party cohesion, each officeholder may be more open to the appeals of interest groups in making decisions.

**Voting to Support Particular Policies** Some voters may want the government to move in the direction of a particular policy to solve a problem or achieve a goal. For example, an American voter concerned about the abortion issue may support a candidate or party who favors restricting abortion. Similarly, a European voter concerned about climate change will favor a party pushing for more restrictions on carbon burning.

The purest form of this sort of policy direction voting is the rational and public-spirited citizen who identifies the policy issues that are most important to him or her and asks what specific policy will best secure the common good on that issue. The voter would examine each issue on a case-by-case basis, without attachment to any one value, ideology, or interest group. But such citizens usually represent only a small minority. More commonly, in any given election campaign, some voters focus especially on one or a few prominent issues, and the candidates’ or parties’ favored directions that policy should take on those issues.

For votes that are cast with a policy focus, a common style is oppositional. Here the policy direction that the voter favors is away from a policy. A voter who lacks a clear solution for an issue may still oppose a certain policy that seems to the voter to be failing. As we have discussed, many Americans who had supported the invasion of Iraq in 2003 concluded by 2006 that its aims could not be achieved and its costs were too high. Many Democrats won office pledging to move government policy toward departure from Iraq.

**Combining the Factors**

Typically, multiple factors contribute to a given political decision (see chapter 2). Voting is no exception. Two or three factors can cooperate to produce a preference for one alternative over another.

**Common Patterns of Factor Cooperation** For example, two commonly interwoven motivations are retrospective voting and value-oriented policy direction voting. When voters seek to oust a party that presides over a weak economy, their retrospective vote also rests implicitly on a value—overall prosperity (an economic interpretation of well-being)—as well as an empirical judgment that the economy is doing poorly. Another common link is between support for a particular policy and support for the value it pursues. An opponent of a war policy may also generally support international peace. In addition, values often link with ideological preference. For example, conservative ideology includes support for well-being in the form of national security against military attack. Yet another common association is that between support for an interest group and support for a policy favoring that group. For example, organized labor in the
Voting can reflect the various models of the distribution of influence: majority preference, elite, pluralist, and personal leadership. In the majority preference model, the political process translates the policy preferences of the citizen majority into government policy. In this picture, the voters’ issue preferences are primary in how they vote, as they match them with those of candidates and parties. The candidates who most effectively express the majority’s policy views and receive broad press coverage will win. This model seems relevant if we refer to the voters’ preferred policy directions (because most voters do not seem to have clear and strong views on specific policies), and if we see the voters as picking a legislative majority of some sort—either between parties in a two-party system or between coalitions in a multiparty system.

The elite model seems to fit less well with voting and elections. Those supporting the elite model might stress the limited range of alternative candidates on the ballot, and suggest that this selection of nominees leaves room for limit-setting influence:

- by officials of the political parties over their own nominations,
- by the willingness of campaign donors to give enough money for a campaign to be viable, and/or
- by the willingness of media to give accurate and fair attention to candidates.

Elite model supporters may also suggest that in the final electoral competition, voter perceptions may be constrained if one side has much more money available to buy campaign advertising. At worst, a financial elite group favoring one side can flood the media and drown out the other side’s message (perhaps by driving up the advertising rates to the point of unaffordability for the less advantaged candidate).

The milder elite-model view by Joseph Schumpeter (see chapter 2) presents contending party organizations themselves as would-be elites pursuing majority support. It integrates the elite perspective with a mild form of the majority preference model. Schumpeter saw many voters as voting retrospectively, primarily based on how things have been going for the country or their district. If things are going well, voters tend to support the current leadership; if not, they vote in the opposing party-elite. In Schumpeter’s perspective, voters leave policymaking to an elite, but it is an elite they choose in competitive elections.

In the personal leadership model, the voter supports a candidate or party because the voter likes the candidate or party leader. In a way, the voter adopts the candidate or party leader(s) as his or her leader(s).

The pluralist model does not see voting as reflecting either a majority preference or the sway of an elite (or elites). Here voters pay attention to whether parties and candidates are generally favorable or unfavorable toward particular interest groups that they identify with or otherwise support. Does the candidate or party have my interests at heart as, for example, a working person, a member of a racial or ethnic minority, or a southerner? In particular, significant voter groups in a district or nation may have limit-setting influence; alienating one or more of them may doom a candidate’s chances.

It is possible to suggest a combination of two models—for example, the personal leadership model and the majority preference. We may consider democracy as needing attractive leaders to present policy alternatives to voters in search of majority support. However, this combination can yield an unpleasant result. Consider the charismatic demagogue who whips up and manipulates popular passions by oversimplifying emotional issues. Alternatively, the combination of personal leadership with majority preference factors can have positive results. A candidate may have her own view of the public interest on a tough issue and try to persuade voters to reject a short-sighted or irrational view. In a more pessimistic picture, one may combine the elite with the pluralist models. Multiple interest groups contend, but those with the strongest financial backing are able to give their favored candidates and parties the advantage in campaigning.

Think about a recent national election. Which model (or models) of influence distribution seems to best explain the outcome? What do you think about this situation?
United States supported government aid to the ailing American auto industry during the post-2008 downturn.

Another example combines affective support for a candidate with support for one or more policy directions. Consider the example of a candidate-oriented American voter who favored Robert Kennedy for president in 1968. Kennedy declared himself a candidate late in the nominating process but immediately became a leading contender for the Democratic Party nomination. His perceived charisma helped him. However, so did his most prominent policy direction preferences. These included concern for social justice (a value) aimed especially at ethnic-racial minorities (interest groups), and his newly declared opposition to a specific policy, the war in Vietnam.

**Party Identification** An important example of cooperation of multiple factors is party identification—considering oneself a member of a party, and thus voting regularly for that party over time.

As we noted above, one factor that is fairly consistently in the mix for party identification is affective attachment to a party. But the affective factor often appears alongside other reinforcing factors. A common combination is affective attachment cooperating with interest group identification. Broad interests and the political cleavages that define some of them (see chapter 4) can affect a voter’s party choice. We have already noted that in the first half of the twentieth century in Europe, for example, political cleavages along religious, class, and sometimes regional lines heavily structured party identification. Even today, a German worker may vote habitually for candidates of the Social Democratic Party as “the party of the workingman,” not only because of gut-level identification but in association with appreciation for worker-supporting policies in the past and future. Or a French businessman may vote consistently for the Republican Party (until recently called the “Union for a Popular Movement”), the main French conservative party, out of both affective attachment and a belief that the party will promote his business interests.

Other policy direction factors can also play roles in party identification. One is ideology. A voter may start out with an ethnic-ultranationalist ideological viewpoint, and come to identify over time with a particular party as the best long-term representative of that ideological policy direction. Retrospective voting can play a role, too, as pointed out by political scientist Morris Fiorina. For example, a mid-twentieth-century Mexican farmer may have felt grateful to the Institutional Revolutionary Party because of a policy that it had pursued in the past: the 1930s’ land reform program that provided his family’s forbears with land (see Country Case Studies, chapter 9). Such an example can be multifaceted: an (a) affective tie entwined with (b) positive retrospective voting related to (c) an outcome for an interest group.
Survey research over the last quarter century shows a decline in party identification related to social class and religion in the established democracies. As Figure 11.1 shows for nine European nations, however, the really significant declines between 1976 and 1992 seem to have occurred among the weaker party supporters (“sympathizers,” but not members), dropping from over 40 percent in 1976 to just under 30 percent in 1992. The numbers without any party identification correspondingly increased from 30 percent to 40 percent. The data for those who were “fairly” or “very” involved in politics, however, showed only slight declines.

What might explain this? In many countries during the 1970s and 1980s, successive governmental leaderships of contending parties failed to solve difficult and persistent economic problems (see chapter 7). Perhaps many of those weaker party identifiers whose attachments were linked to policy direction preferences lost their party leanings due to these negative retrospective factors. In any case, party identification remained remarkably stable among those who were most involved in politics. During such trying times for policymakers, voters do not seem to have become generally disconnected from parties, as suggested by political scientists Mark Blyth and Richard Katz. Rather, as Herbert Kitschelt argues, for some voters party identification seems at times subject to shift in response to new issues and consequent party strategy adjustments, usually within the overall left-of-center and right-of-center coalitions.

Sometimes expected patterns of party identification do not occur, given cross-cutting lines of intergroup division. In developing nations, many of the poor live in rural areas, have little education, find themselves in patron-client dependencies on landowners, and are heavily influenced by a traditional religion. Thus, rather than favoring left-of-center parties, they might back a conservative party with traditionalist sociocultural views. And new democracies emerging in developing nations can experience volatility among voters and parties as they try to connect with one another, as political scientists Scott Mainwaring and Timothy Scully have pointed out regarding Latin America.

A category that is relevant to party identification is the independent voter. This is a voter who not only fails to identify as a member of a party, but also does not regularly lean toward support for one party or another as a voter. Another voter category is the independent leaner, who inclines to support a party but does not identify with it as a member. Most political scientists who study election-related attitudes see independent voting, party leaning, and party identification as subject to change over time, rather than frozen. Even over the final weeks of a single election campaign, polling can show momentum in a party’s direction increasing the numbers of its identifiers and leaners, and reducing the number of “Independents.” Accordingly, the independent or “swing” voter gets a lot of attention from both contending parties and political analysts.
Especially in studies of two-party systems, the availability of the independent voter has been presented as driving contending parties toward convergence in the moderate middle in policy proposing. However, true independents often have little interest or knowledge regarding politics and policy, and many other independents, when pressed by pollsters, turn out to be party leaners rather than true independents. The importance of the independent voter remains open to debate.

CAMPAIGNS AND ELECTIONS

Now we turn from the voters to a focus on how candidates and parties contend for votes. As they campaign, parties and candidates take advantage of opportunities, offered by the circumstances, to influence voter motivations.

Party Self-Definition

At times, a major factor in elections is parties’ redefining themselves and their images to face new electoral circumstances. For example, in the early 1990s in Italy, a scandal that caused the collapse of major center-leaning parties led to the creation of two new broad parties: (a) the conservative Party of Liberty, led by media magnate Silvio Berlusconi, and (b) the Democratic Party, with the merging of several left-leaning groups. In the late 1990s and 2000s, the Workers’ Party of Brazil shed its former left social democratic ideology and in effect became a moderate left-of-center party with wide electoral appeal, though it included substantial ideological diversity (see Country Case Studies, chapter 4).

In multiparty countries with PR, some parties may have to adjust their appeals to voters because the parties must cooperate with other parties in coalitions. Numerous European countries have enduring left-of-center coalitions among the moderate left-of-center, left social democratic, and green parties. Right-of-center coalitions form among conservative and classical liberal parties, perhaps joined by a moderate ethnic-ultranationalist party. More extreme parties may have to moderate their policy positions, and moderate and center-leaning parties must sometimes sharpen their policy differences with the opposing coalition.

A third aspect of party self-definition concerns the timing of the electoral cycle, especially for broad parties. At party nominating conferences early in campaigns, large parties tend to emphasize their ideological identities to their “base” of strong identifiers. But as election day approaches, their positions often move toward the center to attract “swing voters” and relatively pragmatic interest groups. In addition, events during the campaign may raise issues that force parties to refine their policy stances. In Latin America in the 2000s, voters increasingly perceived free-market (“neoliberal”) policies and globalization as having failed to produce benefits for the middle and lower classes. As a result, moderate left-of-center parties won elections by sharpening their differences with free-market opponents. They advocated more government spending to help the poor and resist globalization, while continuing to favor keeping budget deficits under control.

Parties may respond to unusual circumstances with departures from one or two facets of their normal ideological orientations. Recall from chapter 10 that
in the mid-2000s Germany faced unemployment and deficit problems; the Social Democratic Party agreed with the Christian Democrats in support of reductions in long-term unemployment benefits and in some labor market regulations. And when the financial crisis hit Europe in 2008–2009, some conservative parties in power shifted to favoring government intervention to bolster the banks and stimulate consumer spending. They were then rewarded with success at the polls by voters grateful for their flexibility.

Parties’ capacity to redefine their policy directions in response to events is enhanced by today’s mass media-oriented campaigning. In the early twentieth century when campaigning relied primarily on local activists mobilizing traditional support groups on the ground with face-to-face appeals, quick party responses to new issues were hard to manage. Today, however, advertising and news coverage in the broadcast and electronic media allow candidates and party leaders to quickly shift gears to emphasize a new issue or take a new stand on an older one. They can thus not only reach voters fast with something new, but also quickly communicate the adjustment to their local supporters. To be sure, responses using the mass media can be glib, opportunistic, and even manipulative. But they can also be serious responses to voters’ desires for action on pressing new issues.

Electoral Realignment

Certain elections and policy-related developments, or a series of them alongside a changing electorate, can yield longer-term change in patterns of party support. Political scientists call such a change a realignment. A traditional twentieth-century view of European party-group relationships was the “freezing hypothesis”: European party systems appeared locked into patterns based on ethnic, religious, and regional cleavages that lasted from the 1920s through mid-century. However, changes in group-party alignment do sometimes occur, based on parties’ campaigning choices as well as changes among groups in society. When the Great Depression hit the United States in the early 1930s, the Democratic Party became a moderate left-of-center one by proposing a range of government actions on the economy that were unprecedented in American history. Groups suffering from the depression such as farmers, labor, and minorities lined up substantially with the Democrats.

Sometimes more gradual developments provide opportunities for contending parties to lead realignments. In the 1960s, America’s Democratic Party, in line with its ideology and its history of representing the interests of disadvantaged minorities, pursued civil rights for African Americans. This weakened the party’s traditional support among Southern whites. The election campaigns of 1968–1994 saw the Republican Party strike hard to win white Southerners away from their traditional Democratic allegiance. During the same period, new activism arose among Protestant religious fundamentalists in the West and Midwest, allowing the Republicans to draw many farmers and small-town voters into the conservative Republican fold.

The Role of Personal Leadership in Election Campaigns

Personal leadership has often been a major factor in party breakthroughs and realignments. Democratic president Franklin Roosevelt’s charisma in his radio
“fireside chats” contributed to the above-mentioned party realignment that the 1936 landslide election confirmed. In recent decades, parties seem to have placed even more emphasis on the name and face of their leader during election campaigns. Wherever possible they turn to leaders with widespread name recognition and personal appeal. For example, in the early 2000s the Peruvian APRA Party turned to its widely known past leader Alan Garcia to spearhead its comeback efforts as a centrist party (see country case study on Peru in chapter 10), despite Garcia’s past association with the now unpopular left social democratic policies of the 1980s.

Presidential systems of government forefront the names of the would-be chief executives of contending parties in elections and provide an individual to hold responsible for a government’s policies and performance. Today, however, even parties in parliamentary systems highlight their party leader in campaigning. As long as it stops short of catchall personalism, this approach can provide an advantage in political contention. If a party’s policy directions fail, it may be able to limit the negative fallout by switching leaders. This option is a strength of semi-presidential governmental systems, as we shall see in chapter 13.

**Party Identification and District Design**

In some systems, legislative district boundaries are periodically redrawn in a process called **reapportionment**, which adjusts representation to changing population. Party reapportionment strategies can affect elections and thus become a factor in electoral contention. For example, in the case of districts in the American House of Representatives, reapportionment occurs at the regional (state) level every ten years, following the U.S. census. The stronger party in the state government can then redraw the state’s Congressional district boundaries in ways that maximize the number of seats that it can win. In an area where opposition-supporting voter groups are strong, they may be redistributed to multiple districts, just thinly enough that the opponent will lose many seats by moderate margins (say, by 53–47 percent). Where the opposing party’s support is too concentrated to be divided this way, it can be concentrated in just one or two districts that the opponent will win by huge margins (say 90–10), yielding very few seat victories. The result is that the opposing party can have the majority of voting support overall but win very few seats despite large numbers of voting supporters. In the state of Pennsylvania in 2012, where the Republicans controlled the state legislature and drew the boundaries for the state’s districts for national House of Representatives elections, Democrats won a majority of the overall Congressional vote but only a third of the state’s seats in the House of Representatives.

In some nations where districts are not periodically adjusted, migrations of people over time have led to imbalances in district populations. Districts with declining populations may end up overrepresented, with the same representation as those with far greater populations. An example is the overrepresentation of conservative rural voters that exists in some Latin American and African countries, as district boundaries have remained largely unchanged despite decades of migration from rural areas to big cities. Supporters of city-based parties may find themselves underrepresented by being confined to a few urban districts with large populations.
Thus party and candidate self-definition and electoral system features also contribute to voter choice and election outcomes, alongside the types of voter motivation discussed earlier in this chapter (see Figure 11.2).

**CHALLENGES TO MEANINGFUL VOTER CHOICE**

Elections allow voters to try to influence politics and policymaking. In that effort, however, voters sometimes contend (or cooperate) with other causal factors such as elites, new issues that come along after the election, and money.

Some commentators favor what can be called “deepening” democracy, in search of a closer link between (a) citizens’ concerns and (b) governmental policymaking and its outcomes. As we have seen, however, voters have diverse motivations. And most voters lack clear knowledge or preferences on very many policy issues. At most, we can say that many voters, in one or a few policy areas that are important to them, would like policy to move in general directions that they favor. The most realistic goal that we can hope for may be meaningful voter choice: voting whose results make a difference to subsequent policymaking in directions favored by voters who supported the most successful candidates and parties. But how much of a difference, and how? As with many other concepts related to politics, meaningful voter choice involves a continuum between extremes, rather than a clear-cut classification.

Difficulties arise in connecting voter intentions to election outcomes and desired policy directions. As we have seen in this chapter, voter choice can be motivated by affective attachment, retrospective concerns, policy direction concerns of various sorts, or some combination of these types of motivation. The voter hopes that if her or his favored candidate(s) or party wins, more effective policymaking will result. What factors affect the degree to which voter choice will be meaningful in this way?

**Procedures**

We should immediately note a factor that is often taken for granted: the need for the largest number of votes to in fact determine the winner. Rigging of the vote count, or intervention by an institution such as the military or a court to declare a winner at the expense of the vote count, is generally a mark of semi-democratic or authoritarian systems rather than established
In the American two-party presidential system, the election of the president is filtered through the Electoral College system. Voters in each state cast their votes for a slate of “electors” pledged to support their favored presidential candidate. (Normally, the plurality-winning slate will later attend a purely ceremonial meeting to cast all of the state’s electoral votes for the candidate who won the state.) The Electoral College (EC) votes are allocated to states based largely on population—the state’s number of House seats, plus two for each Senate seat. The elected president must have won the majority of these EC votes overall. This system, which evolved from EC provisions in the American constitution, is one in which the contending parties and voters cooperate in observing.

The EC winner usually has also won the majority of the national popular vote. But the electoral vote victor—the new president—may fail to gain a majority of the national popular vote. In 1992, Democrat Bill Clinton won a clear majority of the Electoral College votes, and hence the presidency. However, his popular vote plurality fell short of a majority. It is even possible for the EC victor to fail to gain the national plurality of the popular vote (more votes than any other candidate). This occurred in the 2000 election. Democrat Al Gore won the national plurality by a few hundred thousand votes but lost to George W. Bush in the electoral vote total.

This occurred under unusual circumstances. One populous state, Florida, tipped the electoral vote balance in Bush’s favor. In the official Florida vote tally, Bush had a tiny plurality of a few hundred votes out of millions. One key factor in this outcome was that to the left of center ideologically, some left social democrats chose to contend rather than cooperate with the moderate left-of-center Democrats by supporting a third-party presidential campaign by the well-known consumer advocate Ralph Nader. Nader ran and took tens of thousands of votes in Florida that would no doubt have otherwise gone to Gore.

In addition, irregularities appear to have prevented many members of core Democratic-supporting groups from voting or having their votes counted as they intended. Such irregularities included the false voter instructions published in the heavily African American city of Jacksonville, the misleading “butterfly ballot” in heavily Jewish Palm Beach County, false disqualifications of many African American voters who came to the polls, and technical problems with the physical voting process that left some votes unrecorded. In the weeks after the election, lawyers for the Democrats contended sharply in state courts for pursuing potential remedies for these problems, while Republican lawyers argued for sticking to the original official vote tally with its Republican victory.

Eventually a hand recount of the votes was mandated by the Florida Supreme Court to try to deal with some of these problems and get at voters’ intent. But the U.S. Supreme Court intervened to stop the recount, and declared the earlier official tally to be final, resulting in a Bush victory. If the Florida irregularities could have magically been addressed and corrected, the Florida popular vote result may have basically replicated the national one—a narrow victory by Gore. Thus, the electoral vote outcome would have coincided with, rather than contended with, the national popular vote result. Gore, not Bush, would have become president. Notably, under the American Electoral College system for presidential elections, special difficulties or irregularities in just one important state such as Florida or Ohio can determine the overall outcome. This may contribute to subsequent political distrust and contention.

democracies. And among democratic systems, complicated ways of getting from vote counts to winners, such as the American **Electoral College** system, can reduce voters’ sense of meaningful choice (see “Contestation and Cooperation in Focus”).

A given procedural approach may have both advantages and disadvantages. For example, two-stage SMDM elections such as those for the presidency in
France and Latin American nations can enhance the sense that the final winner has majority voter support. In the first phase in these multiparty systems, voters choose among several presidential candidates. But the ultimate winner is determined by a second **runoff election** between the top two vote-getters from the first round, inevitably giving the victor a majority of the votes. Nevertheless, voters whose first-round favorites did not qualify for the second round must ultimately pick between alternatives that they did not support. This lesser-evil choice can affect government’s policy directions, but perhaps less meaningfully than a purely positive choice.

**Governmental Structure**

A nation’s particular type of democratic governmental structure affects voting and elections. Might either presidential or parliamentary government have advantages with regard to meaningful voter choice?

**Presidential Government**  Ultimately it is individual people who directly make policy decisions in government. Since more voters in presidential systems tend to pay attention to the individual candidates, presidential government may have an advantage for meaningful voter choice. Officeholders in presidential systems can act more independently of their party, so the personal records of individual candidates may matter to voters.

However, this candidate focus is subject to two limitations, one coming before election day and the other coming after. The pre-election question is: How can voters tell what candidates will do in office? The media and voters often do not do much to critically examine what candidates say about what they and their opponents have done and will do. Campaign advertising and rhetoric fill this vacuum to some extent, but they may misrepresent or conceal the actual records of candidates. Critics argue that often the candidate supported by the most money, and thus the most media coverage, may determine much of what voters think.

Moreover, even if the voters have accurate information about what the candidates will do in office, the reality of decision making after election day can be another factor limiting meaningfulness of voter choice. We have seen that presidential government encourages the independence of individual officeholders from their party. And there are multiple decision points at which policy proposals may be blocked. Consequently, the victory of a voter’s favored candidate(s) or party may not guarantee what policy decisions will be made by the government after an election. Contention and bargaining among individual officeholders must occur to pass legislation, and the voters cannot foresee the future course of such interactions.

**Parliamentary Government**  In contrast, a parliamentary government is essentially party government. As we have seen, voters don’t pay much attention to individual candidates because what counts are the resulting strengths of the contending parties in parliament. Normally, the parliamentary majority can pass the bills of its leadership in the cabinet at will. This adds to the meaningfulness of retrospective voting, because such voters can observe the results and hold the majority party or parties responsible in the next election. Policy direction voters
can review the past record of each significant party, and can observe whether a parliamentary majority’s postelection policies match its campaign promises. The main risk from campaigning is parties’ exaggeration of the predicted future success of their own (or coalition’s) victory and future risks of victory by the opponent.\(^{19}\)

However, recall that at times in two-party systems, political scientists have seen parties appeal to centrist “swing voters.” They are up for grabs between the two broad parties and can determine the winner in a close election.\(^{20}\) Appeals to the swing voter, more evident in campaigning as election day approaches, could reduce the meaningfulness of voter choice if differences between the parties’ policy directions diminish. Voters may decide that the election results will not make much difference for subsequent government policy.

On this count, multiparty parliamentary systems present a wider range of options, perhaps increasing the voters’ sense of finding a match that will make a difference in subsequent policies and outcomes. But what ultimately matters is which coalition has won the most seats. And retrospective voters can judge only the coalition’s performance in office. Most voters know of the coalition alignments, and thus recognize that votes for a party are in effect votes for its coalition. They are also likely to know who would be prime minister for each coalition if it were victorious (normally the leader of its largest party), and whether a given coalition is broadly left of center ideologically, right of center, or center-right or center-left.

However, in these multiparty parliamentary settings, voters typically cannot predict the particular policy directions that will follow in government after an election. Contention, cooperation, and compromise must take place among the parties in the majority coalition and their leaders in the cabinet. It has been argued that such “inside information” must not be open to the public if parties in a coalition are to be free to cooperate and compromise with each other.\(^{21}\) Others argue that keeping such information private is not good for democracy.\(^{22}\)

In addition, the makeup of the majority coalition may change between elections, and at times even coalition accountability can be a challenge.\(^{23}\) If voters cannot tell what coalitions will form after an election, policy decision making passes largely into the hands of interparty negotiation, and voter choice becomes less meaningful. Notably, however, today such changes usually replace one small (often center) party with another, without a major shift in the coalition’s key policy directions.

**ELECTIONS UNDER NONDEMONCRATIC CONDITIONS**

Do elections play any significant role in nondemocratic political frameworks? If so, what is it? Under authoritarian government, either elections are not held or they are not meaningful. For one reason or another, the regime and its favored policy directions will prevail, regardless of voting outcomes. Nonetheless, many authoritarian rulers like the ceremonial appearance of elections. They provide an excuse to mobilize the regime’s supporters and try to generate a sense of legitimacy among them (see “The Human Rights Connection”).

In the 1960s–1980s’ heyday of authoritarian regimes (see chapter 15), the ways in which different sorts of authoritarian governments used elections were variations on the theme of controlled voting alternatives to choose a powerless
legislature. Communist Party-run regimes traditionally offered one Communist candidate to the voters, and the “winners” occupied seats in merely ceremonial legislatures. Non-Communist single-party regimes might often allow multiple candidates to contend and represent local interests under the one-party umbrella (e.g., 1970s’ Zambia), but overall policymaking remained under the control of the party/government leadership. Military regimes often created their own military-supporting party vehicle and manipulated elections to assure its victory and its compliance with the generals’ wishes.

We know that the U.N.’s civil-political Covenant of human rights requires that elections be “free and fair.” The freedom of elections primarily means freedom of association and assembly for political parties, freedom of expression for them and their candidates, freedom of information access for the voters, free and equal access to voting without discrimination, and the secret ballot. One of these rights can be curbed only to protect another of them, or to protect public safety or order, such as when one party threatens or conducts violence against another.

In addition, elections must be fair. Examples of fairness requirements are roughly equal representation of voters per elected representative (“one person/one vote”), unbiased administration of the process, guarantees against corruption and fraud in voting and vote counting, and fair access to the media by competing parties and candidates.

A useful example to examine regarding the relationship of freedom to fairness in elections is the recent one in Belarus (see Country Case Studies, chapter 1). In the presidential election campaign of February and March 2006, the government of incumbent president Alexander Lukashenko allowed opposition organizations to field candidates, including two significant rivals: Aleksandr Milinkevich, supported by a cluster of opposition groups, and Aleksandr Kozulin, party leader of the Belarusian Social Democratic Party and former chief of the Belarusian State University. (This contrasts with, for example, the late 1990s Nigerian military ruler Sani Abacha’s registration of only parties willing to declare him to be their presidential candidate.) Opposition candidates were each allowed an hour of television time. There was no overt violence or intimidation at polling places on election day.

These minimal concessions toward a free election, however, coincided with Lukashenko’s unwillingness to allow the elections to be fair. There is a past record of unsolved disappearances—assumed to be murders—of opposition leaders, suspected to be at the hands of government security forces or supportive death squads. According to a report by the Long-term Observation Mission of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, the campaign saw harassment and detention of campaign workers, and detention and beatings of leading opposition figures. The government also used criminal prosecutions, reportedly arbitrarily, to hinder opposition activity, assured that national broadcast media covered only Lukashenko and his campaign, suppressed independent media outlets including seizure of newspapers, and had security services claim that opposition groups were really terrorists and intended to seize power by force.

In addition, vote counting was under the control of the government and closed to outside monitors. Finally, the hour of television campaign footage granted to each party was aired at rush hour when the minimum number of people would be able to watch. Clearly, a fair and level playing field was missing for this election. Despite the formalities of free election, the surrounding climate of fear and intimidation robbed the electorate of the substance of freedom. If you lived in such a country, would you be inclined to vote? If not, what minimal changes would you require to become involved?

Can Elections Be Partly Free but Not Fair?

THE HUMAN RIGHTS CONNECTION
Under the single-party-dominant political framework, multiparty elections are held, but only one party regularly wins large victories and controls the government (e.g., pre-2011 Egypt). The government and its dominant party control the electoral system, and election officials often falsify the vote count. Party control over the media and harassment of opposition parties suppress their campaigns. The latter can take the form of arrest, detention, and prosecution of opposition leaders and activists, or informal bullying or intimidation, or both. The ruling party typically controls the flow of government benefits through some form of patron-client system. If governments with single-party dominance avoid repressive tactics, we can consider them semi-democratic rather than electoral authoritarian.

**SUMMARY: CONTENTION AND COOPERATION IN VOTING AND ELECTIONS**

Voters cast their ballots with one or more orientations in mind. They can have more or fewer alternatives to choose from, and may vote positively for one option or oppositionally against another. Voters may think of themselves as choosing either among parties or among individual candidates. Various motivations may contend in voters' minds. They may decide based on affective motives, or in pursuit of retrospective accountability. Or voters may look for candidates or parties who seem likely to move government policy in the directions that they favor: whether toward one or more values, toward an ideology, toward help for an interest group that the voter identifies with or is concerned about, or toward a specific policy (or oppositionally, in a direction contrary to one of these policy directions). Multiple motivations may cooperate or contend with one another to reinforce a voter's choice. Party identification commonly involves multiple voter motivations working together to produce a vote.

Parties and candidates respond to the opportunities presented by these voter motivations. Most often they contend with one another, sometimes partially redefining themselves in response to new policy challenges, changes in the pattern of interparty contention, or changes among the voters. Sometimes parties cooperate in multiparty coalitions, such that coalitions become contenders as well as individual parties and their candidates. Many voters want their votes to make a difference for government policy in some way. However, challenges to this aspiration exist, some of them related to differences among political frameworks. Elections in authoritarian regimes are formal rituals that have no chance of affecting government policy.

**COUNTRY CASE STUDIES**

The following country cases serve different purposes. The first details a particular election, the presidential election of 2008 in the United States, with its two-party presidential framework. The second case surveys electoral contention in India, with its multiparty parliamentary political framework.
The United States: Voting in Recent Presidential Elections

The United States has a two-party presidential political framework with SMDP elections. This means much voting by individual candidate as well as by party, and some oppositional voting. Third parties cannot make much impact, and two broad parties contend: the moderate left-of-center Democratic Party and the conservative Republican Party. Ideologically, classical liberals tend to support the Republicans, given their shared free-market economic policy direction, and green-inclined voters tend to support the Democrats.

Nearly all of the types of voter motivation discussed in this chapter can be found in American elections. This country case study will focus on the presidential elections of 2004, 2008, and 2012, with the most emphasis on 2008 in comparison with 2004. Surveys of voters can indicate which characteristics of the candidate and party appeal to which voters. There were four likely key factors in the 2008 election result:

- **oppositional retrospective voting due to an economic crisis under a Republican president,**
- **policy direction voting related to economic values and ideology,**
- **policy direction preference for helping certain group interests,** and
- **affective voting regarding the presidential candidates’ personal qualities.**

**Oppositional retrospective voting by party.** Exit polling showed that by election day in 2008, the economy had replaced the Iraq war by a wide margin as voters’ main concern (62 percent to 10 percent). The previous eight years had seen little improvement for the middle and lower strata. Most importantly, late 2008 saw a precipitous financial and economic decline, including a sharp fall in home prices, a threat of international financial breakdown, a dive in the stock market and hence in many voters’ retirement accounts, and a possible depression. Most voters didn’t have an answer to the economic crisis, but they did know that the Republican Party had been in power for eight years, and John McCain was its candidate (in the Senate he had voted for Bush’s proposals 90 percent of the time).

**Policy direction voting based on values and ideology.** Retrospective accountability was accompanied by policy direction support for pursuing a value: economic security, a form of well-being. People wanted the government to act to stem the crisis. (McCain’s own identification with a value, national security and its 9/11-related concerns, had become much less relevant for the voters than it was for George W. Bush in 2004.) Economic value-related concern was entwined with policy direction along ideological lines. When the financial crisis hit only weeks before election day, many experts agreed that it had resulted in part from inadequate government regulation of Wall Street and the mortgage industry. But this view went against a core stance of Republican free-market ideology: its belief that government regulation stifled economic growth and should be avoided. Until the crisis, McCain had consistently campaigned against economic regulation, and he continued to oppose government spending to boost jobs. McCain had been fully associated with conservatism’s opposition to government intervention in the economy.

**Policy direction voting related to group interests.** Barack Obama seemed to have benefited from voting by policy direction toward help for certain categoric interests. How much of the 10 percent swing toward the Democratic candidate (from Democratic candidate John Kerry’s 3 percent loss in 2004 to Obama’s 7 percent victory in 2008), might be explained by Obama’s gains among particular voter groups? The following categoric interests among the voters stand out as supporting Obama more than they had supported Kerry in 2004:

- **White voters**—75 percent of the total—where Obama’s gains (especially among the young) amounted to nearly a third of his overall improvement over Kerry (perhaps 3 of the 10 percentage points of overall improvement).
- **Latinos**—10 percent of voters—where Obama’s gains (especially young Latinos) over Kerry amounted to nearly another third of his overall improvement (perhaps 3 of the 10 points of improvement).
- **African Americans**—13 percent—voted heavily for Obama (1–2 of the 10-point gain).
Younger voters—18 percent under 30—whose higher turnout and heavier support for Obama (66 percent) amounted to almost half of Obama’s improvement over Kerry (perhaps 4 of the 10 points of overall improvement), distributed across white, Latino, and African American populations.

Why did Obama’s results improve over those of Kerry among these groups? White voters included not only workers who feared for their jobs amid the economic crisis, but also people with retirement savings invested in financial markets. These categories included many in the upper income and education brackets who turn out to vote. Many favored assertive government action to stabilize the country’s financial situation.

Many Latinos, two-thirds of whom voted for Obama, tended to favor government action on the economy and noted McCain’s backing away from a path to legal status for immigrants. African Americans, already traditionally Democratic voters, may have assumed that the African American in the race, Obama, would be better for them. And across these groups, many pro-choice women feared that Republican appointments to the Supreme Court might restrict or reverse a woman’s right to abortion. Finally, many young people favored a new, more idealistic style of politics as well as an exit from Iraq and greater government help for education.

Related to all this is party identification, which involves more than just an affective link to a party; other factors can also contribute, such as voting by party related to retrospective accountability, values, ideology, and group-interest support. Probably several of the above-discussed factors in the 2008 election contributed to the fact that the party identification percentages for the parties went from even (at 37 percent each) in 2004 to a 7 percent spread in favor of the Democrats by election day in 2008 (39 percent Democrat to 32 percent Republican).

Affective voting by candidate. At the outset, Obama had potential affective negatives. He was relatively new to national politics, and being an African American seemed to pose risks for him among some whites. But affective help for Obama came from young people. Many found him charismatic and liked his desire for a new style of politics and his frankness in describing the country’s problems. Not only did young people vote in increased numbers, but they also provided an army of ground-level campaign workers to identify and turn out voters from other groups. And African Americans felt a strong identity link to their fellow African American and his historic candidacy, voting extremely heavily (95 percent) for Obama.

Affective factors among white voters may also have played a part. Despite his short political résumé, many white voters found Obama to be intelligent and steady through the financial crisis. McCain’s attacks on Obama’s past associations with a former anti-Vietnam radical and a controversial African American pastor did not seem to affect many swing voters. Obama received significantly greater support among white men than had Kerry in the 2004 election (though still not a majority of them). Exit polling revealed little oppositional affective voting against Obama on racial grounds.

Perhaps more important, however, were oppositional affective reactions against the McCain-Palin ticket. In McCain’s favor, he was respected for his years as a prisoner of war (POW) in North Vietnam, his long experience in Congress, and his past willingness to vote against the party line on certain issues. However, McCain’s reversals of some past policy positions (as he turned right to get the Republican nomination) and some vacillation on the financial crisis may have hurt perceptions of his judgment. In addition, concerns about McCain’s age (seventy-two) and health (having experienced several past bouts with cancer) had elevated the importance of the Republicans’ vice presidential candidate in this election, Alaska governor Sarah Palin, who would succeed him if he were to die in office. To many she seemed unprepared and ideologically extreme.

The results of the 2012 presidential election will take time to digest, but it is instructive to compare its exit polls with those of 2008. Obama defeated Romney by 4 percent in the popular vote (51–47), but this represented a 3 percent Republican improvement over McCain’s 7 percent loss in 2008. How might we explain this narrowing of Obama’s margin? We saw virtually no change in the party identification gap (6 percent in favor of the Democrats), or in the huge group-interest advantage for Obama among Blacks and Latinos, who again turned out fairly strongly as they had in 2008. But a significant improvement for Romney over McCain did occur among white voters (72 percent of those voting). Among them, Romney won by 8 points more than had McCain in 2008 (a 20 percent margin versus 12 percent in 2008). Some of this difference may
overlap with Romney’s significant improvement over McCain among voters with incomes above $50,000. Romney’s white upper-income gains may have driven his smaller improvements by age and gender over McCain’s 2008 performance.

Probably a significant difference in voter motivation in 2012, at least among nonminority voters, was in oppositional retrospective accountability. 2008 had greatly favored Obama, with McCain inheriting the Bush economy in full-blown crisis. In contrast, the economy in 2012 was mixed, with still high unemployment, slow recovery, and notably larger deficits and national debt. To be sure, most voters still considered the economic downturn overall to be Bush’s fault. But others held Obama responsible for the slow rate of job growth, which Romney’s campaign rhetoric hit hard. (No doubt many voters were unaware that Obama had not been able to advance his jobs proposals since 2010, when Republican victories in Congressional elections had enabled them to block his jobs initiatives.) Regarding ideological policy directions, by 2012 there was little sense of economic crisis and no pervasive call for government action. Also Romney was helped by some better-off white voters responding negatively to Obama’s stated preference for raising taxes on higher incomes.

Regarding affective voting, probably the main difference between 2008 and 2012 was that Obama’s persona had gone from being a dynamic face of “change” to humdrum (though still sympathetic to ordinary people) in 2012. Notably, Obama’s margin among young white voters flipped from positive to negative between the two elections. Romney, for his part, presented a mixed persona. He sounded confident and assertive (but not detailed) in debates, though in ways that for some people seemed aggressive and arrogant. And even more than McCain, Romney had a reputation for reversing past issue positions. Finally, Romney presented contrasting portraits as a businessman: decisive fixer versus takeover artist offloading jobs and workers’ benefits.

As this discussion makes clear, many different types of voter motivation led to Barack Obama’s victories in 2008 and 2012. For numerous individual voters, undoubtedly two or more sorts of voter motivation probably contributed to their decision.

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India: Electoral Democracy in a Huge Nation

India is the world’s largest well-established representative democracy. After India gained independence from British colonial rule in 1947, the victory was marred by religious division and secession of a large Muslim minority to form the nation of Pakistan (part of which later became Bangladesh). Today India has 1.1 billion people, twice the combined population of the United States and all of Western and central Europe. Only in India does representative democracy operate on such a large scale. This fact alone makes the nation and its political experience very important on the world scene.

The 1950-Indian constitution adopted the British-style parliamentary government with SMDP elections. But India is much larger and more diverse than Great Britain, with patterns of political cleavage along ethnic, religious, economic, and social caste lines that vary by region. Not surprisingly, the nation adopted federalism, with an elected parliamentary government in each state as well as at the national level. Thus a regional interest–based focus party can be large in its home state and win numerous seats there, while lacking a presence elsewhere and remaining small nationally.

At independence, the dominant political force was the Indian National Congress. Led originally by Mohandas Gandhi, this party had spearheaded the struggle for independence by organizing people for Gandhi’s “civil disobedience”—peaceful protest and resistance contrary to the official rules, while accepting the legal penalties that may follow. This effort required extensive political organization by Congress across the country. But after independence, coinciding cleavages at the regional level gave rise to significant regional parties pressing local interests. To hold the country together, above all Congress had to maintain its widespread organization and win elections. India’s electoral history has evolved in three main stages:
From independence into the 1970s, Congress won big victories and remained the dominant party.

From the early 1970s to 1991, the Congress Party faced serious challenges in both national and regional elections. It occasionally lost to some alliances of smaller parties united by opposition to Congress leaders’ authoritarian style and left-leaning policies.

From about 1991 to the present, three coalitions emerged, one to the left, one in the center led by Congress, and a third to the right.

As it led the struggle for independence, Congress’s leadership had adopted an inclusive approach toward all significant groups. This approach fit well with the cultural diversity of India as a whole. Economically, the party pursued left social democratic and nationalist policies—for example, favoring strong economic regulation to protect domestic industry, government ownership of parts of the economy, and heavy spending on schools and health clinics.

Congress’s organizational machine existed in nearly all states. Under SMDP electoral arrangements, a large party can win many seats by small margins, giving it a much larger percentage of the legislative seats than of the popular vote. Congress’s initial 40–50 percent of the national vote translated into clear majorities in the lower house, the Lok Sabha. Early on, opposing parties were too small, diverse, and disorganized to seriously challenge Congress.

National decision making within the Congress Party was especially responsive to top leaders—“the syndicate”—backed by regional and caste power bases and patron-client networks. In 1964, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru was succeeded by his daughter, Indira Gandhi (unrelated to Mahatma Gandhi). As late as 1971, Congress maintained its national dominance. No other party or coalition could win national parliamentary majorities.

From 1971 to the early 1990s, however, India’s electoral pattern followed a second mode, which included more open contention within the Congress Party. After winning a dispute with the syndicate leaders in 1969, Indira Gandhi’s faction responded to pressure from the left by moving government policy leftward (including nationalizing banks). Also facing stronger contention from regional parties, Gandhi centralized party and government control around her and her son Sanjay, filling party positions with family loyalists. This personal leadership pattern of influence distribution in the Congress Party continued under Rajiv Gandhi, after the death of his brother Sanjay in 1980 and his mother’s assassination in 1984.

During this period, opposition to Congress increased at the state level. Protests were partly directed at Indira Gandhi’s authoritarian style, which occasionally involved emergency rule, suspended civil liberties, and arrests of opponents. At times, resentment over these tactics gave rise to opposing coalitions, which rose and dissolved with the issue of the day. Electoral swings occurred between affective attraction to Gandhi family leaders and sympathy over their assassinations on one hand, and oppositional responses to the family’s authoritarian tendencies on the other. Voter ambivalence and electoral volatility featured heavily in the second phase of Indian electoral politics.

The third era in India’s elections began in 1991 and continues today. The multiparty parliamentary framework now displays more stable contending coalitions, with each roughly occupying a segment of the ideological spectrum. Electoral volatility and personal leadership dominance have been reduced.

Benefiting from sympathy over Rajiv Gandhi’s assassination in 1991, Congress won the most seats that year, but it failed to gain a majority. An elderly Congress veteran, Narasimha Rao, became prime minister in a Congress-led coalition. Rao rejected centralized control of the party, and revived elections within it. Ideologically, Rao moved Congress policies toward the center, and its coalition began introducing some free market-oriented reforms. But after Hindu-Muslim rioting in 1992, later accusations of corruption, and a poor showing in the 1996 elections, Congress became an outside support party propping up a centrist government that lacked a formal majority. After further pro-market reforms, Congress withdrew its support and forced new elections in 1998.

The 1998 election confirmed the rise of a new right-of-center coalition. It was led by a broad party based on Hindu nationalism: the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). In many ways, it first emerged as the political arm of a Hindu revivalist social organization, the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh (RSS), stressing traditional Hindu religious values and expressing hostility to minorities of other faiths. The BJP had gained support by opposing a mosque that had been built on a sacred Hindu site, spawning bloody anti-Muslim riots. The party also embraced free market-oriented measures of deregulation, privatization, and opposition to affirmative action for lower-caste people. It has been
able to govern only as the leading party in a coalition with several small regional parties. When this coalition gained a parliamentary majority in 1999, the BJP's conservative preferences were constrained by its more moderate coalition partners.

Thus we may say that ideological policy direction voters in India have three coalition alternatives to choose from: left, center, and conservative. The center and conservative coalitions are each led by a broad party, while the left coalition is led by the Communist Party (Marxist), or CP(M), an ideological focus party.

The 2004 elections followed a period of overall economic growth, and the BJP-led coalition government expected another victory on a surge of positive retrospective voting. Its slogan was “India shining.” But India did not “shine” for many middle-class and lower-strata voters. By stressing their plight, the centrist Congress-led coalition defeated its rivals but fell short of a parliamentary majority. Its cabinet relied on outside support from the left-of-center coalition, dominated by the CP(M), the third largest party in the lower house. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's preference for more free market reforms was blocked by the left front.

In the elections of May 2009, however, the centrist electoral coalition of Congress and its allies—called the United Progressive Alliance—unexpectedly won a much larger victory than in 2004, giving it a near majority in the Lok Sabha. Favorable retrospective voting played a key role. India’s regulated economy had helped to insulate the nation from the world economic downturn of 2008–2009. In addition, the government’s program of debt relief and jobs for hard-pressed farmers had fostered support from the nation’s huge agricultural sector. And Congress's top leaders, such as (now former) PM Dr Manmohan Singh, party chairman Sonia Gandhi, and her son Rahul, tend to be well regarded personally—a favorable affective factor that the BJP-dominated coalition and the left front largely lacked at the time. Enough small parties and independents then joined the coalition to give it a clear majority. (Congress had also won some state elections.) Without having to rely on support from either the left front coalition or significant regional parties, Congress and its coalition allies could pursue their mixed agenda of help for the rural poor alongside some privatizations and reductions in subsidies, and the banning of an insurgent Maoist party.

Each of the two national broad parties is to some extent a collection of regional leaders with their followings. Meanwhile, regional interest–oriented voters have alternatives in the regional parties. Such parties in the main coalitions can often influence the party leading the coalition, while other regional parties are fully independent. Some of the most important states in India have each been controlled by a regional party whose leader serves as the state's chief minister. When Congress or the BJP is in control in a state, it tends to be in coalition with the state's most important regional-interest party.

After 2009, however, Congress's star began to wane. Corruption scandals sullied the party's affective support, deficits rose, and Prime Minister Singh had difficulty getting measures through parliament. He seemed at times to be a weak leader, with key decisions taken by the party leader, Sonia Gandhi. In 2012, Congress was soundly defeated by a regional party in the state assembly election in an especially important state, Uttar Pradesh. Meanwhile, attention from television and social media (the Internet, Facebook, and Twitter) was increasing the importance of retrospective accountability for governmental performance, not only in economic growth, jobs, and corruption, but also in such policy areas as roads, education, health care, electric power, law and order, provision of rations for the food-insecure poor, and checking the Maoist insurgency.

For the parliamentary election of May 2014, the BJP found a popular leader, Narendra Modi, and a powerful retrospective line of attack on weak Congress performance in virtually all of the above-mentioned issue areas. Modi stressed his past record of economic growth and development in Gujarat state, where he had served as chief minister for more than a decade. A lifelong member of the Hindu-nationalist association RSS, Modi seemed to be backing away publicly from his earlier close association with the Hindu nationalists. (Over a decade had passed since, in 2002 in Gujarat, the police seemed to have passively stood by as Hindu zealots killed up to a thousand Muslims.) Tactically, Modi ran an efficient, modern campaign with broad influence over the media. And given the seat advantage accruing to big parties under India's SMDP voting system, the BJP's large 31 percent vote share was spread in such a way as to swamp not only Congress but many regional parties. The BJP won 282 seats for an unheard-of majority in parliament in its own hands, so that it need not depend on smaller coalition allies. Later in 2014, the Indian economy was helped by rapidly falling oil prices, and the BJP won big victories in some important state elections.
We need to remember, however, that even such massive electoral success may not last. Whatever the inspiring talk about development, over time India’s huge numbers of retrospective voters will look for improvement in outcomes that they can see around them, such as job availability, corruption, the prices of food, power, and water, and the condition of infrastructure such as roads, electricity, clean water, sanitation, and flood control. Changing these outcomes in a country of over a billion people can at best be a slow process. And in India, attempts at free market-oriented changes such as deregulation run into opposition from groups that still have strength in the upper house, the Rajya Sabha, with its limit-setting capacity to veto or amend initiatives.

India’s upper house represents the state governments, and thus reflects state-level power relationships determined by state elections that are staggered over the years between national parliamentary elections. It would take years of winning control of state governments one at a time for the BJP to gain a majority in the upper house. BJP did well in a few states that elected their governments in the last half of 2014, but lost big in Delhi in early 2015, when opponents seem to have cooperated around the anti-corruption “common man” party (AAP), which won a big victory. This can occur elsewhere, especially since at times, Modi’s RSS base continues to show its Hindu zeal (not disavowed by Modi) against other religious minorities, in ways that can alarm opposing parties to the point of cooperation to contend more effectively against the BJP. This occurred in late 2015 in the elections in Bihar, in which an anti-BJP coalition won a landslide victory.

**Critical Thinking Questions**

1. Which is a more effective way of voting, by individual candidate or by party, and why? How might the answer depend on circumstances? Give examples.

2. Give an example of two or three types of motivation affecting peoples’ votes in a recent past election. Which motivations seem most valid?

3. Do you tend to vote for a specific party? Why or why not? Has your allegiance changed over your lifetime, and if so, why? What types of experiences can alter voters’ party identification?

4. Which country has more meaningful voter choice: India or the United States? Explain your answer.

**Further Reading**


**Key Terms**

oppositional voting, 315
voter turnout, 316
referendum, 317
recall, 317
affective voting, 318
candidate orientation voting, 318

retrospective voting, 319
policy direction voting, 320
party identification, 326
independent voter, 327
independent leaner, 327
realignment, 329
reapportionment, 330
meaningful voter choice, 331
Electoral College, 332
runoff election, 333


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1 The main exception to this is where we find regional-interest parties, which are small nationally but very big in their home regions, such as the Scottish National Party. Where there are many such parties, as in India, we may even see a multiparty system despite SMDP voting.

2 Again, this “Duverger’s law” application is only meant to refer to the basic difference between two-party and multiparty outcomes (e.g., four policy-significant parties or more). Within the multiparty segment of the continuum, political scientists have not found the number of parties to be quantitatively proportional to the number of seats in a multimember district (called the “district magnitude”). See Gary W. Cox, *Making Votes Count: Strategic Coordination in the World’s Electoral Systems* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997). Within the multiparty category, just how many parties will be policy-significant is affected by factors other than the electoral system, especially the number and nature of political cleavages in society (see chapter 4).


8 For a somewhat technical discussion of this, see Raymond M. Duch, Jeff May, and David A. Armstrong II, “Coalition-directed Voting in Multiparty Democracies,” *American Political Science Review* 104, no. 3 (November 2010): 698–719. Indeed, the authors go on to suggest that many voters employ a form of what political scientists call “strategic voting,” supporting a party more extreme than their own overall preference in hopes that a bigger vote for that party will help pull the coalition in a voter-favored policy direction.


11 See note 7 above.


13 See chapter 10, note 4.
15 Bartolini and Mair (1990); see chapter 10 above, note 7.
19 For a broad review of this literature as of the mid-2000s, see G. Bingham Powell, “Political Representation in Comparative Politics,” Annual Review of Political Science 7 (2004): 273–96.
22 See Shugart and Carey 1992, 44.