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Government and Public Policy

Most European governments are liberal democracies in practice, claim, or aspiration. Democratic leaders are supposed to do what their citizens want and be accountable to them through competitive elections. In a *liberal democracy*, citizens must be free to organize and express their desires, and public policy must be shaped by these citizen preferences, and not by what some leader or expert claims is the people's true interest. Moreover, the civil and political rights and liberties of individual citizens and the rights of minorities, must be protected. Liberal democracy also depends on the *rule of law*. This means that government can take no action that has not been authorized by law, and that citizens can be punished only if they violate an existing law. The opposite of democratic government is *authoritarianism* or *autocracy*.

In Western Europe liberal democracy is well established. By the early 1980s, the last authoritarian governments (in Greece, Portugal, and Spain) had made successful transitions to democracy. Yet, some Western European nations have faced serious conflict, and some have constrained democratic freedoms in limited ways or in local areas. In the early 1990s, Italian citizens expressed severe dissatisfaction with their country's political performance and attempted to replace most of its politicians and restructure its politics. But despite occasional problems of violence, terrorism, and intolerance, all Western European countries now have competitive elections, representative assemblies, and civil rights.

The nations of Central and Eastern Europe present a more varied picture. Most of the successor countries of Yugoslavia have experienced civil war or sharp ethnic tension. The Soviet Union until 1989 dominated most of the rest of Eastern Europe, where the citizens endured authoritarian rule and in large part foreign domination. While most citizens now support their new democratic freedoms and market economies (see Chapter 2), it has not always been easy to sustain these reforms. Consolidation is hampered not only by the lack of democratic experience, but also by unfavorable social and economic conditions. Some new democracies, such as Poland and Hungary, have consolidated. Democracy remains provisional or fragile in others, including Russia and Ukraine, while authoritarianism prevails in a few, such as Belarus. History shows that there are many

different ways to run a democracy, with distinct advantages and disadvantages. Despite their occasional shortcomings, the nations of Eastern Europe offer additional experiences in democratic governance and new lessons about why some emerging democracies survive while others fail.

CONSTITUTIONAL ORGANIZATION: RULES FOR MAKING RULES

Working out a *constitution*, which is a general agreement on how laws are made and decision makers chosen, is a critical task for any new democracy. A constitution may be a single written document, a set of statutes and practices, or some combination of these. The choice of constitutional arrangements may shape political decisions for generations. Because constitutional rules are so fundamental, radical changes in them are rare except after massive upheavals.

The most important question in constitutional design is who has authority to make political decisions. Democracies typically mix elements of *direct* governance, in which citizens make political decisions themselves through referendums, initiatives, town hall meetings and the like, and *representative* rule, in which citizens elect politicians that make decisions on their behalf. European democracies are primarily representative. Except for Switzerland, direct democracy is much less common than in many American states. Yet, many European constitutions require or permit referendums on major constitutional changes, such as whether or not to join the European Union or adopt a new Euro constitution.

SEPARATION OF GOVERNMENT POWERS

Since most political decisions in Europe are made by the people's representatives, rather than by the people themselves, it is important to understand what powers different branches of government possess. Whereas authoritarian political systems often lack any effective limitation on the power of the ruler(s), democracies have devised various constraints on politicians. The theory of *separation of powers* has a long and venerable history going back at least to the work of Locke in Britain and

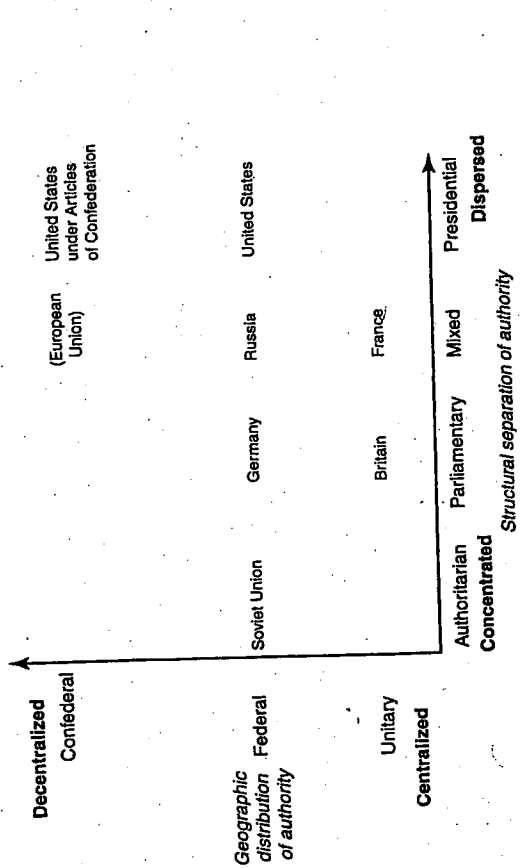
Montesquieu in France.¹ Separation of powers, they argued, can prevent injustices that might result from an unchecked executive or legislature. James Madison and Alexander Hamilton elaborated this theory in *The Federalist*, which described and defended the institutional arrangements proposed by the U.S. Constitutional Convention of 1787. In modern democracies, there are two basic ways to separate power: (1) a *geographic* distribution of authority between the central (national) government and lower levels, such as states, provinces, or municipalities; and (2) a *structural* separation of powers among different branches of government, such as the legislature, the executive, and the judiciary. We shall discuss these dimensions in order.

Geographic Distribution of Government Power

The United States has a long history of geographic separation of power. The Articles of Confederation set up a *confederal* system: ultimate power rested with the states. Under the Constitution of 1787, the American government became *federal*: both central and state governments have since then had separate spheres of authority and the means to implement their power. Most European states are more geographically centralized. Britain, France, Hungary, Poland, and many other European countries are *unitary*: with power concentrated in the central government. Regional and local units have only those powers specifically delegated to them by the central government, which may change or withdraw these powers at will. Thus, confederal systems represent the greatest degree of power dispersion, unitary systems the least, and federal systems are in the middle (see the vertical dimension of Figure 4.1).

There are several federal states in Europe, and especially in the German-speaking region of Central Europe. In Germany and Switzerland, for example, the national government shares power in many policy areas with regional governments (called *Länder* in Germany). Austria and Russia are also federal states, and Belgium became federal in 1993. Moreover, even such unitary countries as France, Italy, and Spain have recently shifted some power from

FIGURE 4.1 Division of Governmental Authority



their national governments "downward" to regional ones. The European Union is also becoming increasingly federal, as power is shifted "upward" from the member-states to this supranational body (see Chapter 12).

Federalism can have a number of advantages. In culturally divided societies, it may help protect ethnic, linguistic, or religious minorities, particularly if they are geographically concentrated. In Belgium, federalism was introduced to satisfy the country's two main language communities: the French-speaking Walloons and the Dutch-speaking Flemings. Yet national governments often fear that decentralization of power will put the country on a slippery slope toward a total breakup, as happened in the former Yugoslavia. But even if decentralization leads to a breakup, this is not always undesirable. Czechoslovakia is a more positive example of a federal system that peacefully transformed itself into the separate states of the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

Federalism may also serve as a check on overly ambitious rulers and thus protect the rights and freedoms of the citizens. Moreover, federalism may

allow subunits (such as states) to experiment with different policy programs. One government may thus learn from the experiences of others. Besides, citizens can "vote with their feet" and choose the policy environment they like best. However, while federalism promotes choice and diversity, it does so at the expense of equality. Since federalism allows different subnational governments to pursue distinct policies, citizens may get systematically different treatments and benefits. Unitary governments may also be better able than federal ones to redistribute resources from richer to poorer regions.

Parliamentary or Presidential Democracies

The second form of separation of power is *functional*: it runs between the different branches of government. The major distinction is between presidential and parliamentary systems. These alternatives specify the relationship between the *assembly* (or legislature or parliament),² which represents the people and has primary authority to make laws, and the *executive*, which carries out these laws. In both

parliamentary and presidential democracies the assembly is directly elected by the citizens and has significant authority to make laws, tax, and spend.

In a *presidential democracy*, such as in the United States, the people also elect the president separately. The president is both head of state and chief executive (head of government). He or she appoints a government (cabinet), which helps the president administer all the executive agencies. Both president and assembly have fixed terms; neither can dismiss the other before the next election. (It may be possible to impeach the president or members of the cabinet, but only for serious offenses and after an extraordinary vote that often requires a large majority.) While the primary authority to make laws or raise and spend money usually remains with the assembly, the president often has a veto power. In the United States, for example, Congress can pass legislation over the president's veto only if each House adopts it by a two-thirds majority.

In Western Europe, in contrast, the typical government is some form of *parliamentary democracy*, in which the people do *not* directly elect the chief executive, the *prime minister*. Instead the people elect the assembly (parliament), which then

chooses and can dismiss the prime minister. The office of prime minister goes by different names in different countries (prime minister in Britain, premier in France, and chancellor in Germany, for example) but functions in a similar fashion. The prime minister heads the *cabinet*, which consists of the top executive policymakers, primarily the heads of the various executive agencies (known as departments or ministries). The prime minister, his or her cabinet members, and their party-affiliated staff and political advisers are collectively referred to as the "government." The prime minister is the head of government but not the ceremonial head of state. All authority to make and execute laws derives from the elected assembly; but in reality the cabinet dominates policymaking more than it does in presidential systems. Some of the typical features of presidential and parliamentary systems are shown in Table 4.1.

Most parliamentary systems have two critical constitutional provisions that differ from presidential systems. One is the *confidence vote*, and its mirror image, the "vote of no confidence" or "vote of censure." If a parliamentary majority expresses its lack of confidence in the government (the prime

TABLE 4.1 Distinguishing Features of Parliamentary and Presidential Democracies

Distinguishing Features ^a	Parliamentary Democracies	Presidential Democracies
Title of chief executive	Prime minister (head of government)	President (head of state and government)
How is the assembly selected?	By citizens in competitive election	By citizens in competitive election
How is the chief executive selected?	By assembly after election or removal	By citizens in competitive election
Can the chief executive be removed before the end of his/her term?	Yes, by assembly through no-confidence vote	No
Can the assembly be dismissed before the end of its term?	Yes, the prime minister may call for early election ^b	No
Authority to legislate	Assembly only	Assembly plus president (e.g., veto)
Party control of assembly and executive	Same parties control both	Different party control possible
Party cohesion in assembly voting	Strong	Less strong

^aThese define the pure parliamentary and presidential types; as discussed in the text, many constitutional systems, especially in Eastern Europe, "mix" the features of the two types.
^bSome constitutional systems that are parliamentary in all other ways do not allow for early legislative elections. All parliamentary democracies provide for legislative elections after some maximum time (from three to five years) since the last election.

Most of the time the major parties enjoy nearly perfect internal cohesion.⁵

A second lesson of European parliamentarism is that the fragmentation of parties in parliament affects the cabinet's stability and strength. When a single party controls a parliamentary majority, it can also control the executive and carry out its election promises in predictable ways. Of course, by the same token it may ignore the interests of minority parties. When elections instead produce a parliament divided between many parties, at least some of them must negotiate with each other to form a government. For better or worse, the resulting government is likely to pursue compromise policies that may not resemble anybody's election platform. If legislative negotiations are difficult, governments may also be unstable (as in Italy, where the average cabinet since World War II has lasted only about a year). For these reasons, election rules that determine how many parties gain representation are especially important in parliamentary systems.

Contrary to presidentialism, parliamentary democracies have a dual (or "split") executive. One person (the prime minister) is the effective leader of the executive branch and someone else the ceremonial representative of the country (the head of state). The head of state may be a president or monarch. A hundred years ago, the overwhelming majority of European heads of state were monarchs, but now there are only eight left (disregarding such micro-states as Monaco and Liechtenstein). The last new European democracy that chose a monarchy was Spain in the 1970s. All the other European monarchies (those in Britain, Scandinavia, and the Low Countries) are at least a century old. And there are no monarchs in Eastern Europe.

Figure 4.2 displays the constitutional structures of Western and Eastern Europe. There are no pure presidential systems. All Western European systems except Switzerland are parliamentary. Typically, the head of state is a president rather than a monarch. But presidents may be selected in many different ways. The most important distinction is between those that are elected by the citizens and those that are selected by parliament.⁶

The power of European heads of state varies a great deal across countries.⁷ Nowadays, monarchs

have only symbolic or ceremonial functions, though Spain's King Juan Carlos actually played a positive role in consolidating Spain's new democracy in the 1970s and early 1980s. "Parliament-selected" presidents, such as in Germany, Hungary, and Italy, never have much policymaking authority and consistently rank well behind their respective prime ministers in real power. To find powerful heads of state we therefore have to look to countries with popularly elected presidents.

Not all popularly elected presidents are strong, however. Some have largely ceremonial powers, as in Austria, Iceland, and Ireland. But a handful of Western European countries, most notably France, have "mixed" or *semi-presidential systems* that combine parliamentary and presidential features. In such systems, the directly elected president appoints the prime minister. Moreover, the president can usually dissolve parliament and call new elections; he or she may also have some direct policymaking powers. Prime ministers in these countries are "jointly accountable": they depend on majority support in the assembly as well as on the backing of the president. If they fail to retain parliamentary support, they can be removed through a vote of no confidence. If they fail to please the president, they can often be fired.

Table 4.2 compares various powers of the five presidents covered in our text. The Russian president is the strongest of these five executives. He is the only one who names cabinet members directly. Thus, the Russian president, rather than the prime minister, controls the membership of the cabinet. It is also very difficult for the Russian assembly to override presidential vetoes. The German president, on the other hand, is the weakest of the five. He has no veto or decree powers, and he can only dismiss the Assembly (the *Bundestag*) in narrowly defined emergency situations.

As shown in Table 4.2 and Figure 4.2, many Eastern European constitution makers favored a semi-presidential regime. Several countries partly imitated the French constitution. Yet about a third of the Eastern European constitutions (including Hungary) are purely parliamentary and have weak, parliament-selected presidents. A similar number have directly elected, but fairly weak and ceremonial,

Box 4.1 The Confidence Vote in Parliamentary Democracies

prime minister forces the members of parliament either to adopt the bill or to find another prime minister. This can be a particularly painful choice for dissenting members of the prime minister's own party. If they don't vote for the bill, they may bring down their own government, and may perhaps also immediately have to face the voters. Prime ministers can therefore use the confidence motion in order to bring rebellious party members into line. Usually, the threat alone is enough to ensure party discipline and pass important legislation. Thus, the confidence vote helps explain why party discipline tends to be stronger in parliamentary than in presidential systems.

liament provides an arena for debate, consent, and final authorization. The assembly thus plays a more limited policymaking role than in presidential systems. In Western Europe the most powerful politician is usually the prime minister.

In the European parliamentary systems most governments depend on disciplined party support to survive. Especially the elected representatives of the governing party tend to vote extremely cohesively. Partisan voting is further encouraged by the fact that members of parliament who want to be appointed to cabinet positions or other prestigious offices depend on the goodwill of their respective party leaders. The tendency of Western Europeans to vote for parties, not individual representatives, both reflects and encourages party cohesion in the assembly. The strong *party cohesion* (often called "discipline") in Western European parliaments is frequently contrasted with the U.S. Congress where party affiliation is only one of several features shaping voting decisions, along with constituency interests, interest group pressure, and personal opinions. On the average substantive "party vote" in the U.S. Congress in the 1990s, a little more than 80 percent of the party members voted together.⁴ In the Western European parliamentary systems, on average over 95 percent of the party members vote together on issues that the parties contest.

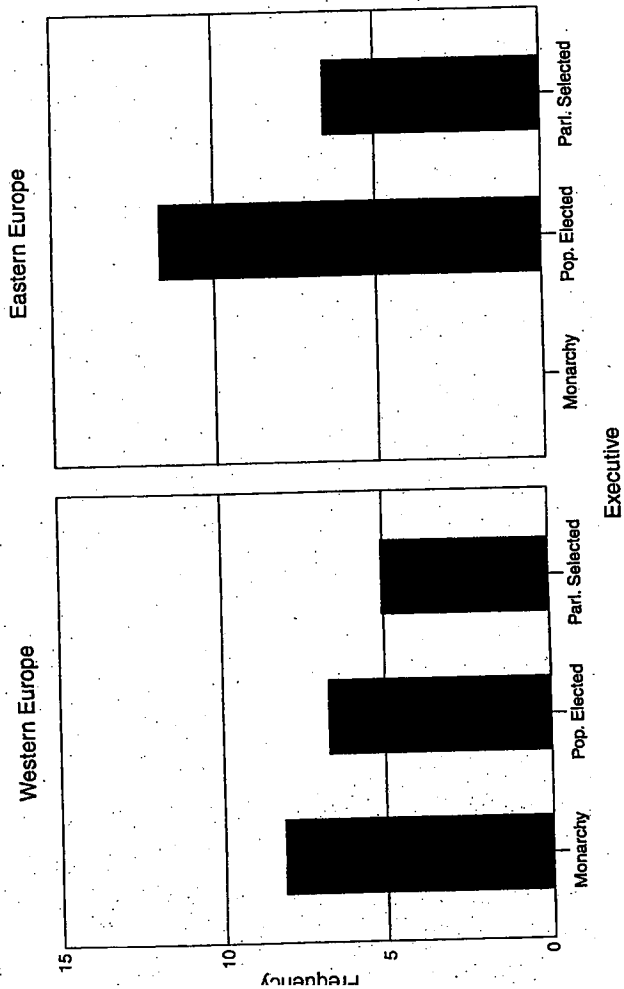
Confidence votes can be critical and dramatic events in parliamentary democracies, since if they lose the vote, the prime minister and all members of the cabinet have to resign. A confidence vote can be called either by the opposition (a no-confidence motion) or by the prime minister (a confidence motion). Whether it is a motion of confidence or no confidence, the government must win the vote or resign from office. But why would the prime minister ever voluntarily call for a confidence vote and risk being thrown out of office? The answer is that the confidence motion is typically attached to a bill (a policy proposal) that is favored by the prime minister, but not by the parliamentary majority. By attaching a confidence motion to the bill, the

minister and his or her cabinet), then the government must resign.³ (See Box 4.1.) The second distinctive feature is the possibility of *parliamentary dissolution*. Dissolution allows the government to end the assembly session and hold new elections before they would otherwise be due. In some parliamentary countries, such as Britain, the prime minister can effectively decide to hold new elections whenever he or she wants to. In other countries, the president has to agree, or there are various constitutional restrictions. Votes of no confidence are often followed by parliamentary dissolution. If the government resigns, a new election may be called at the same time. Alternatively, some of the parties in the assembly may try to form a new government without having an election. This depends on the constitutional rules, customs, and the political situation.

The purpose of the confidence vote and the dissolution power is to ensure that the executive branch and the legislature share a common political view, so that they do not work at cross-purposes or get bogged down in gridlock. Rather than a rivalry between government branches, as we often see in the U.S. system, there is strong coordination. This promotes decisive government, but it also means less constraint on those in power.

In almost all parliamentary systems, the executive branch is the major policymaker, while the par-

FIGURE 4.2 Heads of State in Western and Eastern Europe, as of 2004



Note: "Popularly Elected" executives include executives that are directly elected by the citizens and those that are indirectly elected by them. "Parliament Selected" executives may be elected solely by the parliament, or by some combination of the parliament and other government officials.

Source: Central Intelligence Agency, 2004. CIA World Factbook, as updated November 30, 2004, from <http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/facebook/fields/2077.html>

presidents. However, the popularly elected presidents in Lithuania, Poland, and Romania have powers at least equal to those of the French president. They appoint prime ministers and cabinets that are accountable to the assembly. The presidents of Croatia, Russia, and Ukraine have even stronger policymaking powers. These are the only European countries in which the president is more powerful than the prime minister. To the extent that these countries are democratic, they come close to being presidential, even though the prime minister is accountable to the national assembly.

A semi-presidential system with a powerful president as well as a prime minister may experience *divided government* (known in France as "cohabitation"). This is where one party (or coalition of parties) holds the presidency, while another party controls the legislature, and typically also the prime ministership. France experienced such "cohabitation" in 1986-1988, 1993-1995, and 1997-2002, and Poland in 1993-1996 and 1997-2001. Divided government can lead to conflict or complex political bargaining. While we are still learning about semi-presidentialism in Eastern

TABLE 4.2 Presidential Powers

Can the President Veto Laws?	If So, How Does Parliament Override?	Can the President Issue Decrees (Regulations Not Passed by the Assembly)?	Can the President Propose a Referendum?	What Is the Role of the President When a Cabinet Is Formed?	Can the President Dissolve the Assembly and Call New Elections?
Yes; override by simple majority	Yes; override by simple majority	The president has limited authority to issue decrees.	Only upon the request of the prime minister or both houses of the Assembly	The president names a prime minister, who must be approved by the Assembly and then names other ministers.	Yes, but not during the first year of the Assembly's term.
Veto power not clearly established by Constitution	No	No	No	The president names a prime minister, who must be approved by the Assembly and then names other ministers.	Yes, but only after there has been a vote of no confidence in the prime minister.
Yes; override by simple majority	The president has limited authority to issue decrees.	The president has restricted powers to do so, but other institutions may also propose.	Only with the consent of the Senate	The president names a prime minister, who must be approved by the Assembly and then names other ministers.	Yes, but only after there has been a vote of no confidence in the prime minister.
Yes; override by absolute majority of all representatives	No	No	Only with the consent of the Senate	The president names a prime minister, who must be approved by the Assembly and then names other ministers.	Yes, but only after there has been a vote of no confidence in the prime minister.
Yes; override by extraordinary majority	The president has extensive power to issue decrees, as long as they do not conflict with existing laws.	The president has restricted powers to do so, but other institutions may also propose.	Only upon the request of the prime minister or both houses of the Assembly	The president names a prime minister, who must be approved by the Assembly and then names other ministers.	Yes, but only after there has been a vote of no confidence in the prime minister.

Sources: Albert P. Blaustein, and Gisbert H. Flanz, ed., *Constitutions of the Countries of the World*, Dobbs Ferry, NY: Oceana, *The Europa World Year Book 2004*, 45th ed., Europa Publications; Taylor and Francis Group; New York, NY: International Institute for Democracy, ed. 1996. *The Rebirth of Democracy: 12 Constitutions of Central and East Europe*, 2nd ed., Council of European Publishers; Germany: Lee Kendall Metcalf, 2000. "Measuring Presidential Power," *Comparative Political Studies* v. 33 (660-85), Matthew S. Shugart and John M. Carey, 1992. *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics*, Cambridge University Press: New York, NY.

Europe, the basic lessons from France are that (1) if the president's party controls the assembly, he or she can be the lead policymaker; (2) even without such control a clever president with substantial support can dominate policymaking if the opposition is divided; but (3) if the legislature is controlled by a united opposition, power will tend to shift to the prime minister and the parties controlling the assembly.⁹ In Eastern Europe, this third condition has been rare, as fragmented party systems and internally divided parties have facilitated presidential dominance.

There is a heated debate over the advantages of parliamentary versus presidential constitutions. Based on the favorable Western European experience with parliamentarism (and the often unfavorable Latin American experience with presidentialism), scholarly opinion has tended to favor the parliamentary option.⁹ Parliamentary systems, their proponents argue, can represent a wide range of public opinion in the assembly and see that these views bear directly on the executive. And if the elected representatives of the people dislike the cabinet's policies, they can change governments.

A presidential system always holds the potential for a confrontation between a strong president who usually initiates a lot of legislation and also implements it—and the assembly that must approve all laws and fund all government programs. Such confrontation is particularly likely when these branches of government are controlled by different political parties. In the United States, divided government has often been associated with deadlock and policy “immobilism,” such as the conflict between a Democratic president and a Republican Congress that briefly shut down many government programs in the winter of 1995–1996. When the conflict is very severe, as in Chile in the early 1970s, the strife between these two agents of the people can tear the political system apart. Another problem is that a strong president can also use executive powers to repress democratic competition.

On the other hand, advocates of presidential systems, and many constitution makers in new democracies, point out that direct presidential election and fixed terms improve efficiency and accountability.¹⁰ Election dates are predictable, and citizens

Box 4.2 Democratic Failure: An Unfree Press

One of the surest threats to democracy is failure to sustain free broadcast and print media. Freedom House's annual *Press Freedom Survey* evaluates constraints on these freedoms in many countries. Europe scores comparatively high on press freedom, but the region is far from trouble-free. The good news in the most recent report (covering 2003) is that all but one country (Italy) in Western Europe and eight of the countries in Eastern Europe, including Poland and Hungary, were generally classified as having a “free” press.

Yet, Italy and eight Eastern European countries experienced sufficient problems that they were classified as having an only “partly free” press in 2003. Italy's problems lie in “an inadequate legal and institutional framework” and “an unprecedented concentration of media ownership and a resulting increase in and misuse of political pressure on media outlets. Silvio Berlusconi has used his position as prime minister to exert undue influence over the public broadcaster RAI, in addition to manipulating coverage at his family's own sizable media empire, which includes Italy's three largest-private television stations.”

Finally, the Freedom House analysis classified the media in Belarus, Moldova, Russia, and Ukraine as

“not free.” These four countries had far to go on the journey toward effective democracy. Concerning Russia, the report notes that “while the constitution provides for freedom of speech and of the press, the Putin administration has increasingly restricted these rights in practice, especially regarding sensitive issues such as criticism of the president, the ongoing conflict in Chechnya, and government corruption.” Several independent broadcasting stations and journalists were forced off the air in the run-up to the legislative elections in December 2003. “Independent journalists continue to be harassed, assaulted, kidnapped, and killed.”

The most disturbing finding in the Freedom House report may be that for the second successive year press freedom worldwide suffered a substantial decline in 2003. Three European countries were downgraded: Bulgaria and Italy from free to partly free, and Moldova from partly free to not free. Italy's downgrade represents the first time a member-state of the European Union has been classified as anything other than free.

Sources: Freedom House, *Press Freedom Survey 2004*, as downloaded November 26, 2004, from www.freedomhouse.org/pfs2004/.

strong president has ignored constitutional limits on his power, and in Bosnia-Herzegovina, which was plunged into a civil war before democratic institutions could be consolidated. But even in Russia, Ukraine, and Serbia and Montenegro (the remainder of the former Yugoslavia), democracy seems fragile at best. With so many different risks, the constitutional questions remain open.

LIMITING AND DISPERSING POLICYMAKING POWER

European democracies are embedded in complex constitutional arrangements, many of which require the policymakers to secure the consent of more than a simple parliamentary majority. The British political system is one of the simplest, because a government that controls the House of Commons need not share power with other institutions or political opponents. Most other European countries,

however, feature various constraints on the parliamentary majority.

Besides direct democracy and federalism, many European democracies limit executive power through three different kinds of institutional arrangements: strong legislative committees, bicameralism, and judicial review. The first approach, *strong legislative committees*, requires *power-sharing* with opposition parties within the parliament itself. Such countries as Austria, Germany, and Hungary delegate a large part of the process of drafting laws to parliamentary committees in which the chairmanships are shared proportionally between government and opposition parties. In such committees it is usually necessary for government majorities to take greater account of the parliamentary opposition parties.

Another approach is *bicameralism*—a separation of power between two parliamentary chambers. Germany, Russia, and Switzerland, for example, have

(as does the United States) a second legislative chamber with significant power and a different method of election. In some countries, such as Germany, the upper house directly represents regional governments. If different parties control the two chambers, then policymaking may require more extensive bargaining and compromise.

Judicial review by special constitutional courts or councils is another way to constrain the government. Although most European courts are not as active as the U.S. Supreme Court, many have become more assertive in recent years.¹¹ The constitutions of newly free Eastern European nations generally provide for constitutional courts, many of which have played influential roles in constraining government policies and even defining new constitutional powers. However, in some countries, such as Russia, Belarus, and Albania, the constitutional courts are controversial. For countries that are members of the European Union, the European Court of Justice has become an important check on national legislation.

CONSTITUTIONAL ORGANIZATION: ELECTORAL RULES

European polities operate primarily as representative democracies. Therefore the rules for electing the people's representatives are a critical part of their constitutional arrangements. Although these rules are often established only as ordinary legislation, they play a fundamental part in shaping the policy process and once established are only rarely modified in a substantial way.¹² Most Western European democracies feature *proportional representation* (PR) in parliamentary elections. PR provides for multi-member legislative districts with parties represented in rough proportion to their vote. There are many forms of PR, and none is perfectly proportional. But the larger the number of representatives elected in each district, the easier it is to reach proportionality. For example, it may take up to 33 percent of the vote to gain a seat in a three-member Irish district. In the Netherlands, in contrast, the entire 150-seat legislature is elected from the nation at large, permitting even very small parties to gain representation. Some constitutions also feature so-called *supplementary seats*, which are elected from the na-

tion as a whole and given to parties that would otherwise be underrepresented.

Proportional representation rules with large districts very accurately convert votes into legislative seats, but they can fragment the assembly into a multitude of little parties. Consequently, it may become difficult to build legislative majorities and pass coherent legislation. In order to limit the number of legislative parties, many countries have some minimum "threshold" of votes (for example, 5 percent) that parties must win in order to enter parliament. Such thresholds are often used in combination with supplementary seats. The Swedish Parliament, for example, has 349 seats, out of which 310 are given out in separate districts that have anywhere from 2 to 34 representatives each. The remaining 39 supplementary seats are given to parties that surpass the national threshold of 4 percent but are underrepresented when all the district seats are added up. In this way, Sweden gets highly proportional results for all parties that get at least 4 percent of the vote, whereas parties that fall below this threshold get nothing.

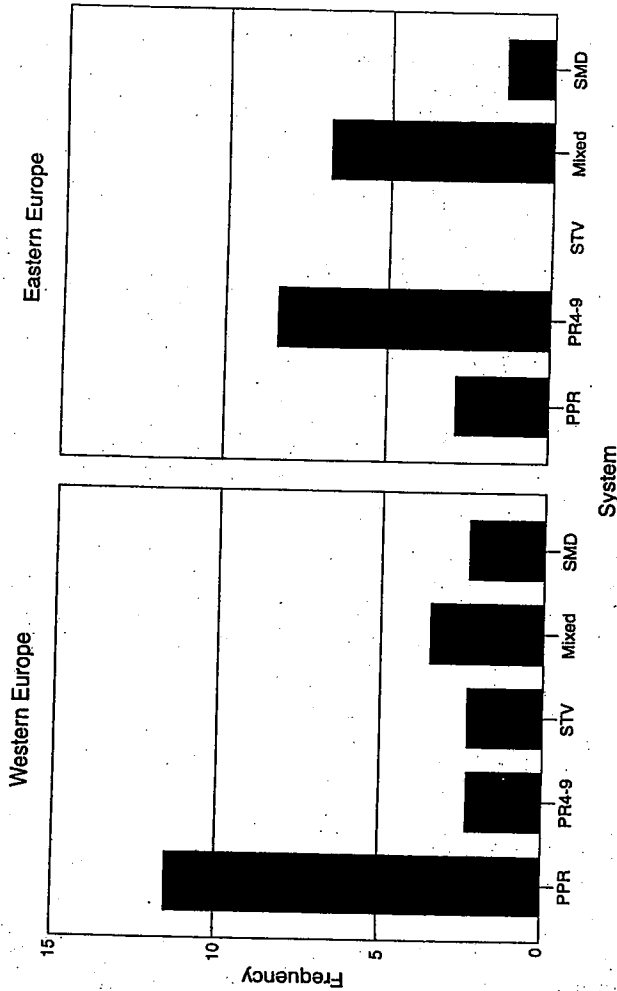
Figure 4.3 shows some features of the election laws in Western and Eastern Europe. The first two bars in each region show countries with PR but different thresholds for representation. Most Western European countries, but only three in Eastern Europe, now have thresholds lower than 4 percent (or no thresholds at all). Most commonly, as shown in the second column, the Eastern European PR systems require parties to win 4 to 9 percent of the vote to enter the national parliament. Although such thresholds seem low, even 4- or 5-percent thresholds can eliminate the representation of many voters (but also help constrain legislative fragmentation) if the party system is extremely splintered. Nonetheless, under PR it is hard for individual parties to win legislative majorities. A few PR countries have small districts or other special rules that raise the effective threshold even higher, making it harder for small parties to enter the legislature and easier for large parties to win majorities.¹³

Single-Member District Plurality Systems

The best-known alternative to proportional representation is the "first-past-the-post" system, in which

FIGURE 4.3 Legislative Election Rules in Western and Eastern Europe, as of 2004

Lower House Electoral Rules in Western and Eastern Europe



Notes:

PPR = Pure proportional representation

PR4-9 = Proportional representation with a 4–9% electoral threshold

STV = Single transferable vote

Mixed = Mixed proportional and plurality electoral system

SMD = Single-member district system

Sources: Electionworld, 2004, *Elections Around the World*, as updated November 15, 2004, from <http://www.electionworld.org/>; David Farrell, 2004, *Choosing Electoral Systems*. Presented at the British Columbia Citizens' Assembly in 2004; Harvard University, John F. Kennedy School of Government, 2004, *Kokkalis Program on Socialism and East-Central Europe*, as updated July 12, 2004, from <http://www.ksg.harvard.edu/kokkalis/region>; Library of Congress, 2003, *Country Studies U.S.*, as updated in 2003, from <http://countrystudies.us>

a country is divided into *single-member districts* and in each district the candidate with the most votes (the plurality) wins. This system is used in legislative elections in the United States and Canada. In Europe, only Britain and Belarus use simple first-past-the-post voting in national parliamentary elections. France uses a similar single-member district system, but with a majority requirement. If no can-

didate garners an outright majority, the leading candidates go to a second-round runoff. Several other countries, such as Germany and Russia, use single-member district elections for some, but not all, of their legislative seats.

Plurality systems have some attractive features. Districts can be small, and voters can get to know their representative. Voting is simple and easy to

In countries with directly elected and powerful presidents, the rules for electing the president are just as important as those for the assembly. In Europe the most common method begins with an open contest between candidates from many different parties. If no candidate wins a majority of votes in the first round (as has happened frequently in France, as well as in Poland in 1995 and in Russia in 1996), there is a second-round runoff. Usually only the two leading candidates go on to the second round, which is held a week or two after the first. The relative timing of legislative and presidential elections is important. If the two elections are held at the same time, it is much more likely that the same party or coalition will control both presidency and legislature.¹⁵

The Effects of Electoral Systems

Election laws and party competition interact to determine the number of parliamentary parties. Since most Western European countries use proportional representation, the number of parties in the legislature is usually only slightly smaller than the number competing in the election. However, in the single-member district systems of Britain and France these discrepancies are quite striking: the number of parties in parliament is much lower than it would be under proportional representation, and single parties often win legislative majorities with far fewer than half of the votes. Some relatively recent electoral systems in Western Europe, such as those of Greece, Italy, and Spain, have some of the basic features of proportional representation, but contain special provisions that reward large parties and often help them secure parliamentary majorities even when they have not won a popular majority.

Eastern Europe is different in two notable ways. First, in about two-thirds of the countries electoral thresholds significantly reduce the number of legislative parties. Often, many parties run unsuccessfully and fall below the electoral threshold. This is because political party leaders (and followers) in many new party systems are only gradually learning enough about the electorate and the electoral rules

to coalesce into viable parties. Eventually the party leaders and organizers in these new democracies may come to build larger and more coherent parties, at least large enough to surmount a barrier of 4 or 5 percent. But there are still quite a few countries in which 10 to 20 percent of the voters support parties that are too small to get any representation.

The second difference is the weakness of national parties in the single-member district elections, which, for example, choose half of the legislators in Ukraine and Russia. To a degree unknown in contemporary Western Europe (except Ireland), many candidates in these elections campaign as independents, representing local rather than national interests. The feeble national parties in these countries have weakened their assemblies and contributed to presidential dominance. However, in smaller countries with mixed electoral systems, such as Hungary, Lithuania, and Macedonia, the single-member district elections predictably reduce the number of legislative parties.

In most of Western Europe the electoral rules, constitutional provisions, and policymaking procedures work together to represent many different groups of citizens through multiple political parties. Only Britain, France, and Greece have rules that typically give unshared political power to directly elected majority governments. The other Western European nations disperse political influence within and/or beyond the national government. The makers of the Eastern European constitutions were torn between their fear of strong government and their need for it. They were also torn between the desire to involve as many citizens as possible and the concern that dispersed representation would create deadlock. As a result, the emergent constitutions frequently combine diverse elements, such as semi-presidential systems and mixed election rules. Experience with these rules suggests that specific conditions and party strategies can make quite a difference. It can take a number of elections before these effects are fully understood. This is reflected in Eastern Europe in the struggles between legislatures and executives and in the confusions of party competition in the first few elections.

tem. However, the Italians opted for a larger share (75 percent) of single-member district seats and a less proportional system. In the new democracies of Eastern Europe, constitution writers have opted for a variety of electoral systems, as we see on the right side of Figure 4.3. *Mixed electoral rules*, often inspired by the German system, have found wide favor. However, many of these systems lack the compensatory features found in Germany and instead look more like the Italian system.¹⁵ Without such compensation, and where half or more of the seats are single-member districts, as in Hungary and Russia, the results can over- or underrepresent parties very substantially. In all electoral designs one faces the question of whether representation should be based strictly on the principle of "one person, one vote." Should electoral districts be designed in such a way that each member of the legislature represents an equal number of citizens? Deviations from this principle are known as malapportionment. It may seem obvious that malapportionment should be avoided, and indeed it is generally viewed as undesirable. Yet, in some cases there is malapportionment by design. This is most common in federal systems, where all states (or more generally, subnational units) may be represented equally, regardless of population. Thus, in the U.S. Senate each state, whatever its population, has two seats. The same is true of the upper house of the Russian assembly. In the German upper house, the *Bundesrat*, the biggest states (Länder) have more seats than smaller ones, but not nearly as many as their populations would indicate. Deliberate malapportionment is less common in unitary states or in the lower legislative houses (such as the U.S. House of Representatives, which has very strong rules against it). Yet the Chamber of Deputies in unitary Spain substantially underrepresents some regions and overrepresents others. And Scotland has more seats in the British House of Commons than its population would justify. Overall, though, malapportionment in most European assemblies is modest, though in some countries it systematically benefits particular parties. Serious malapportionment makes it difficult to achieve a high degree of proportionality in party representation.

Mixed Electoral Systems

After World War II, the designers of the new German constitution pioneered a novel electoral system that combines proportional representation and single-member districts (see Figure 4.3). For elections to the German *Bundesrat* (the lower house), the country is divided into single-member districts. Half the members are elected from these districts; the other half are elected by proportional representation from party-lists (with a 5-percent threshold). Each voter casts two votes: one for an individual district candidate and one for a party list of candidates from a larger area. In this way each voter has a representative from his or her geographic district to turn to on local issues, whereas the party-list (PR) seats are allocated so as to achieve partisan proportionality. Parties that are underrepresented in the single-member districts receive a compensatory overrepresentation from the list seats. The result is a very high degree of proportionality. When Italy reformed its electoral system in the 1990s, the country adopted many of the features of the German sys-

GOVERNMENT FORMATION AND POLICYMAKING

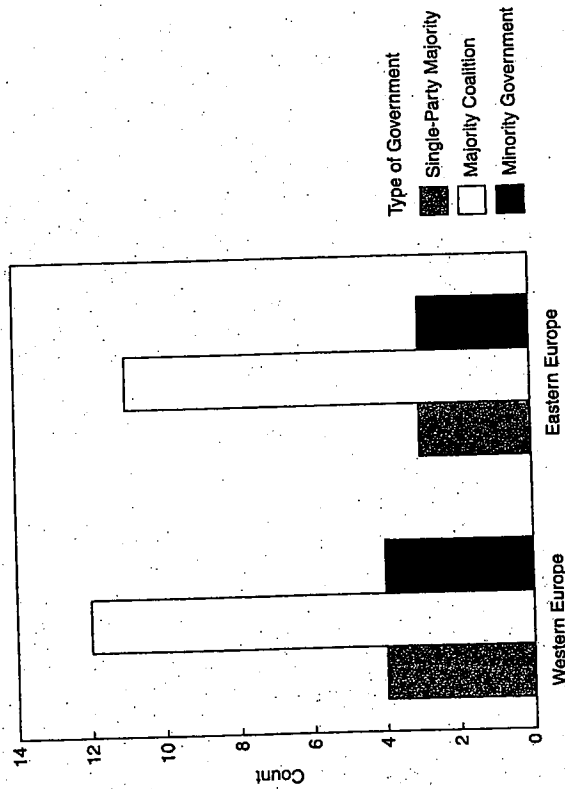
Forming Governments

Since in parliamentary and semi-presidential systems the head of government is not directly elected, parliamentary elections are followed by a period of bargaining over *government formation*. This process is sometimes straightforward, rapid, and simple. When a single political party wins a majority of the parliamentary seats, it almost always forms a government with the party leader as prime minister. The majority party seldom shares cabinet posts with other parties. But as Figure 4.4 shows, after the most recent elections only four Western European countries (Britain, France, Greece, and Malta) have had single-party majority governments. In recent elec-

tions in Eastern Europe, single parties or electoral alliances have won majorities in Albania, Moldova, and Russia.¹⁷

In most European elections, no single party comes away with a majority. In these cases, a government may form that is a coalition of parties that jointly controls a parliamentary majority. In fact, the tall middle bar in Figure 4.4 shows that such a multiparty majority coalition is the most common type of government in Eastern as well as Western Europe. The task of forming such a coalition can be easy or difficult. It is relatively simple when several parties agree before the election that they would like to govern together and then in fact win a legislative majority. Parties that are already involved in a *coalition government* may simply announce that they will continue to govern together if they collectively win the election. Or parties that are all in op-

FIGURE 4.4 Types of Government Formed After Elections in Western and Eastern Europe, as of 2004



Source: Kesting's *Contemporary Politics: Electoral Studies*. Note that "single-party majority" refers to governments containing one party whose representatives constitute a majority in the legislature, even if additional parties also share cabinet seats.

position may agree to present an alternative to the incumbent government. Such pre-election agreements have been common in Germany, France, and smaller countries such as Ireland, Denmark, Sweden, and Norway. They may be encouraged by election rules that favor electoral cooperation between parties. All told, about 20 percent of recent Western European governments have been such majority coalitions that were announced before the elections (not shown separately in Figure 4.4).

When there is no parliamentary majority for parties that have already agreed to govern together, the process of forming a government is less straightforward. What happens then depends on constitutional rules as well as circumstances. Typically, the head of state will ask the leader of the largest political party to attempt to negotiate a government. If he or she fails, another party leader will be asked. If it is difficult to anticipate which coalitions may be feasible, the head of state may ask an "informateur" to sound out possible options. Bargaining over government formation is frequent throughout Europe, either immediately after an election or after the breakup of a previous coalition government. Virtually all governments in Belgium, Finland, and the Netherlands (as well as pre-1994 Italy) have been formed in this way.

Sometimes the outcome of coalition bargaining is not what people expect. As shown in Figure 4.4, about a fifth of all European governments are *minority governments*, which consist of parties that do not control a parliamentary majority. Such governments depend on support from a party or shifting sets of parties, that have no representatives in the cabinet. By the rules of parliamentary democracy, minority governments live dangerously, and in fact they do tend to be shorter-lived than majority governments. But in some countries, minority governments can become a common occurrence. Norway, for example, has had nothing but minority governments since 1985. A minority government can be a stopgap until the next election provides a parliamentary majority (as in Britain in 1974). It can also be an alternative to majority government where the rules permit even the opposition parties to have policy influence (as in Norway), so that they are less keen to defeat the incumbent government. Or mi-

nority government may be a sign of parliamentary deadlock in which it is simply not possible to build any majority coalition (as has frequently happened in Italy).¹⁸ As of 2004, seven European countries, including Spain, had minority governments.

After a coalition government has been formed, the cabinet positions are shared among the participating parties, which usually receive such "portfolios" in proportion to their relative strength in parliament. They also tend to demand and receive ministries reflecting their particular interests. Thus, the Ministry of Agriculture tends to go to parties with strong rural support. In semi-presidential systems the president may be able to exert some influence over the composition of the cabinet, even if his or her party does not control the legislature.

Single-party majority governments usually endure until they lose an election, at least in mature party systems such as Britain. Coalition governments that are "minimal winning," which have a parliamentary majority but cannot afford to shed any party without losing their majority, are also usually quite durable. Minority governments, on the other hand, last only about a year and a half on average and less in some countries.¹⁹ When governments fall between elections—either because they lose a confidence vote or because they resign in anticipation of this—the bargaining process must begin anew. In semi-presidential systems, a strong president may be able to use the threat of dissolving the assembly or other policymaking powers to sustain a minority government, as in France (1988–1993) and in Russia before the 1999 election.

Policymaking by Cabinet Governments

Between elections, the policymaking process in parliamentary systems is heavily, but not exclusively, shaped by the composition of the government. In systems with concentrated political power, such as Britain and France, the winning party or coalition expects and is expected to carry out its campaign promises. If the competing parties or coalitions offer contrasting choices, a change of governments usually makes a notable policy difference. When in 1981 a coalition government of Socialists and Communists came to power in France after many years

of center-right rule, it made many dramatic policy changes, such as nationalizing private banks and the five largest industrial corporations, as well as raising the minimum wage and social security benefits. In countries that offer more influence to parties outside of government, or where governments are broad coalitions of very different parties, a change of government usually makes less of a dramatic policy difference. Frequent changes in government can also limit the impact of elections and parties on policy, as it takes time for new executives to affect policy.²⁰

In semi-presidential systems the president can sometimes play an important role in policymaking. The president may be able to shape the government through his powers of appointment and the influence of his party in the legislature. The president may also have executive powers, for example in foreign and defense policy, directly conferred by the constitution (as in France). Some, like the Russian (but not the French) president, have a legislative veto, which may be difficult for the parliament to override. Some presidents can issue decrees that have the force of law for limited periods or even (as in the Russian case) until replaced by appropriate legislative action. Where the president's powers depend largely on his or her ability to name the government, as in France, policy influence will largely reflect the balance in the legislature. Where the president has powers of veto and decree, as in Russia, the president can have policy influence that depends less on his or her support in the legislature.

All governments are constrained by international conditions and by the economies and societies in which they operate. A government may come to power committed to economic expansion yet be forced to change policies because of the international monetary situation, as was true of the French Socialists in the early 1980s. Governments in most Western European countries since the early 1990s have been frustrated in their ambitions by high levels of unemployment.

DEMOCRATIC POLICIES AND WELFARE IN EUROPE

Economic conditions and public policies jointly affect the welfare of citizens and, in turn, their satisfactions or frustrations with democratic politics. In

general, the public policies that have emerged in the wealthy democratic societies of Western Europe have responded to public demand for extensive social "safety nets," substantial public services (that include, for example, government-run public transit systems), and relative economic equality. Governments have also contended with the economic problems of unemployment, inflation, and growth, which tend to worry voters in all modern societies. In recent years governments have also been responding to pressures from citizens and some parties to pay more attention to the environment.

Various social welfare benefits, such as unemployment benefits, social security, and public-sector health care, tend to be more extensive in Western Europe than in the United States. They also tend to be more thoroughly financed by the government. Historically, the Western European societies developed these policies earlier. In many countries the benefits were markedly expanded during reconstruction after the two world wars. Massive public involvement in housing was also stimulated by postwar reconstruction and remains a prominent, though generally declining, feature in many European nations. Public education, and especially university education, on the other hand, was a priority in the United States before it became one in Europe. Only in recent decades have many Western European countries begun to offer higher education to more than a small elite.

Extensive social services are largely responsible for the comparatively greater size of government relative to the private sector in most of Western Europe. Whereas in the United States, about 15 percent of all workers are in the public sector, this percentage ranges in Western Europe from about the same in Britain to more than 30 in some Scandinavian countries. The median government expenditure in Western Europe is around 45 percent of the gross national product, compared with around 35 percent in the United States or Japan. However, there is again substantial variation across Europe, with Switzerland similar to the United States, but Denmark and Sweden approaching 60 percent of GNP. The welfare state tends to be larger where social democratic parties have frequently been in government, where labor unions are strong, and where there is a tradition of strong bureaucracy. In the 1990s budgetary pressures

resulted in cutbacks in the public sector in some high-spending countries such as Sweden.

Some countries also have large public sectors because the government is directly involved in many large economic enterprises (for example, banks, oil companies, airlines, railroads, or defense industries). Such government ownership is often a hotly contested political issue. For example, in the early 1980s conservative governments in Britain and Germany sold off substantial government enterprises (privatization), while the socialist government in France was acquiring them. Since about the 1980s, market-dominated and competitive economies have yielded superior economic performance, which has led governments in many countries to privatize previously state-owned industries.

The Eastern European countries began their democratic experience in the early 1990s with controlled economies that guaranteed some kind of employment for able-bodied citizens of working age, fixed prices for goods and services, ensured relative income equality, and promised some modest welfare security for the young, the old, and those unable to work. Most of these countries also had great shortages of consumer goods, poor economic productivity, and a standard of living far below their Western European counterparts. Most citizens were disillusioned with the Communist governments.

The newly democratic Eastern European governments began by freeing prices, privatizing industry, and encouraging free competition and investment. Unfortunately, it proved difficult to move swiftly from a controlled economy to a competitive one. In some countries, as in Russia, it has been hard even to dismantle the old system, let alone to build a new one. Even where this was achieved most rapidly and successfully, as in Poland, it came at the cost of short-term drops in living standards and a great deal of confusion as citizens learned to live with economic uncertainties. Debates over the speed of transition and the protection needed for the less fortunate have been bitter and divisive. In several countries the desire to soften the costs of transition brought formerly Communist parties back into power. This policy issue continues to dominate much of Eastern Europe. The region also faces a huge task of cleaning up vast environmental damage created by the Communist

governments' ruthless industrialization, but this is for most citizens a lower priority.

THE RULE OF LAW, CORRUPTION, AND DEMOCRACY

Democracy is a complicated system of government. As noted at the beginning of this chapter, it depends on competitive elections to link government policies to citizen preferences. To ensure that those policies are implemented fairly, democracy also requires the rule of law. The rule of law can fail in many ways, as when the president decides to continue past the end of his term of office or ignore the rulings of a constitutional court (as in Belarus), when ruling parties demand kickbacks from construction firms seeking public works contracts or bribes from interest groups asking for special legislation (which unfortunately happens far too often in too many countries), when tax officials and border authorities take cash payments to overlook tax deficiencies and customs violations, or when corruption opens the way to organized and violent criminal penetration of government.

No democracy is immune to such threats to the rule of law. But some countries suffer much more grievously than others from corrupt government officials. When citizens who must interact with the government find themselves forced to participate in corrupt practices to gain even basic benefits, it surely weakens their confidence in government. In Western Europe the most blatant examples of public corruption emerged in Italy in the early 1990s, when the judicial investigation called "Operation Clean Hands" revealed that the governing political parties had demanded and received huge bribes from business organizations and used them to finance both party organizational activity and lavish lifestyles for their leaders. Other investigations uncovered that organized crime, through bribery as well as violence, had deeply penetrated Italian politics, particularly in the south. These revelations destroyed most of the political parties and leaders that had dominated Italian politics, sparking constitutional change and a new party system.

In Eastern Europe establishing the rule of law has been one of the most difficult parts of the transition to democracy.²¹ Communist dictatorships

had in many countries coexisted with widespread corruption. Sometimes the governments even encouraged corruption to overcome the inefficiencies of the vast bureaucracies. Abuse of power to gain personal benefits was common at all levels, especially where communism had been imposed upon economically poor societies. Such habits were not easily overcome after democratization, especially in local government. They were sustained by poverty and exacerbated in the short run by the slumping economies and lagging salary payments that made life desperate for many government employees. Privatization of large enterprises that had long been run by the government also created unusual opportunities for insiders to abuse their positions and acquire some of this new wealth, as most dramatically witnessed in Russia.

While it is difficult to study corruption and criminal activity systematically, interesting comparisons are offered by Transparency International, which surveys businesses to estimate corruption levels in different countries. Their "Corruption Perceptions Index" annually rates most countries on a scale from 0 (most corrupt) to 10 (most clean). In 2004 a majority of Western European countries, including Britain and Germany, rated 8 or higher. Finland had the best score of all countries (9.7), followed by New Zealand (9.6) and Denmark (9.5). The Western European average was very similar to that of the United States (7.5). France and Spain (both 7.1) were rated somewhat less "clean" than the United States, but only Italy and Greece were ranked below 5 (the midpoint score).²² All the Eastern European nations fell well below the Western European average. Slovenia and Estonia were rated highest for the region and above Italy, while Hungary was about level with Italy. Russia scored a discouraging 2.8, whereas at 2.2, Ukraine had the worst perceived corruption problem in Europe.

In Europe and across the world economic development is a very powerful predictor of cleaner politics. Yet, presumably because of the problems of overcoming its communist heritage and managing an economic transition, the Eastern European region scores somewhat more poorly than its economic development would lead us to expect. Corruption is recognized as a serious issue within most

of these countries, but it is easier to raise it as an election issue than to solve the problem.

INTRODUCING AND SUSTAINING DEMOCRACY

Historically, most of the world's democracies have been European. Europe has thus been the source of much of our knowledge of democratic governance. It has also been the site of some of the most famous failures of democracy, most notably the collapse of Germany's Weimar Republic into Nazi dictatorship, with terrible consequences for the entire world. While there are now more democracies outside of Europe, there is little doubt that the experiences of Eastern Europe will add greatly to our understanding of democratization.

In managing democratic conflict, Western European societies have tended to engage in power-sharing through a variety of constitutional and electoral devices, which has encouraged multiple political parties and multiple paths to policy influence. In some European countries the efforts to overcome deep conflicts gave rise to a distinctive form of guaranteed power- and policy-sharing called *consociationalism* (see Chapter 1).²³ The once deeply divided societies of the Netherlands, Austria, Belgium, and Switzerland offer prominent examples of elite-negotiated agreements to share political power. These agreements guaranteed both influence and benefits to all social segments (whether defined by religious, linguistic, or occupational criteria) and were buttressed by formal organizational arrangements. Consociational democracy has proven to be a valuable approach to conflict management in seriously divided societies, although it may work better in the short term than over the longer haul. This is because consociationalism also contributes to the mutual isolation of different social groups. Such isolation can be beneficial in situations of severe conflict, but as social segments become less distinctive and conflicts less intense, the different groups may find consociational arrangements confining and a barrier to fuller integration.

Studies of conflict based largely, but not entirely, on the Western European experience suggest that power-sharing processes can have some success

in diminishing riots and protests.²⁴ Such turmoil is likely to be more intense where there are fewer roads to influence, as in majoritarian democracies. On the other hand, proportional representation and power-sharing strategies may bring turmoil "inside" the institutions, putting extremist parties in the legislature and making stable cabinet government more difficult. Moreover, once violent conflict is underway, elite agreements may be insufficient. Northern Ireland has demonstrated repeatedly that democratic power-sharing agreements cannot be sustained without the assent of the majority of citizens, who will simply replace leaders they view as betraying their interests.

Western Europe has experienced many threats to democracy by violence and military intervention. A common thread in these crises has been the need for organized political parties to rally behind democracy. In the 1930s the bitterly suspicious socialist and middle-class parties failed to unite against the Nazis in Germany, whereas in Austria similar parties careened into civil war. In Greece conservative fears of a new socialist government encouraged the military to overthrow democracy in 1967. In contrast, the fact that all Italian political parties backed government antiterrorist measures in the 1970s helped sustain democracy against intensive bombing and assassination campaigns. In France in 1961 and Spain in 1981, a united front of all major parties helped democratic heads of state defeat attempted coups by rallying citizens and loyal members of the military.

A number of Western European countries must continue to battle against terrorism and violence (especially violence against immigrant groups). In so doing, democratic governments must maintain the critical balance between upholding the security of their residents and protecting their freedoms. This is, of course, easier to do under positive economic conditions and when citizens share common democratic values. In Eastern Europe these conditions were often missing after the collapse of communism, and in many countries the preconditions for democracy are still weak.

Yet, in most of Eastern Europe the revolution that has occurred since 1989 has brought remarkable change with little violence. Democracy is shaky in some nations because of strong ethnic tension,

gross corruption in government, and violations of the freedom of speech and other civil liberties (see Box 4.2). In particular, the current decade is a critical time for the region formerly dominated by the Soviet Union; there is great potential, but also great risk. The devastating wars in Chechnya and in the former Yugoslavia show the potential cost of failure.

Democracy seems to be building a firm foundation elsewhere in the former East, perhaps more successfully than we originally expected. Parties are learning to develop internal cohesion and accommodate differences with political opponents. Governments are learning to deal with dissent without suppressing dissenters or the press, to manage economies without taking them over, to provide safety nets for citizens without destroying their incentives. Citizens are demanding a rule of law, and so are many international agencies and non-governmental organizations. The prospects for democracy are particularly favorable in the eight Eastern European countries that were admitted to the European Union in 2004. This is both because they were selected for membership on the basis of the democratic credentials they had gained, and because the EU itself will insist on and monitor democracy within its member-states.

No one has yet found the perfect political institutions. European democratic institutions are no exception. It is easy to find flaws in constitutional arrangements, party systems, and policymaking processes. It is even easier to criticize the policies of a current government, since democracy does not guarantee good leadership or wise policies. Yet bitter experience in Europe and elsewhere shows that democracy is more likely than any other form of government to sustain personal freedoms, encourage equal treatment under the law, and protect the rights of minorities. Moreover, democracies seldom go to war against each other. Democratic government is the best security for the hard-won personal freedoms of the citizens of Eastern Europe, and the new-found peace that has replaced Europe's destructive wars. Building democracy has thus had profound consequences for all Europeans. And the European experiences will continue to hold valuable lessons for the world about the limits and potentials of democratic government.

Key Terms

assembly
bicameralism
cabinet
coalition government
confidence vote
executive

federalism
freedom of the press
government formation
judicial review
liberal democracy
minority government

mixed electoral rules
parliamentary democracy
power-sharing
proportional representation (PR)
semi-presidential systems
single-member districts
strong legislative committees

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Endnotes

- John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, ed. Peter Laslett (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1960); Charles de Secondat, Baron de Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws* (London: Hafner, 1960).
- We occasionally use the term "assembly" rather than the more common "legislature" to emphasize that legislation-making laws—may not be the most important function of this branch of government. The assembly may not have the sole authority to make laws, and it is seldom the most important source of legislation.
- The German, Hungarian, and Spanish constitutions feature a "constructive" vote of no confidence, under which the government is forced to resign only if a parliamentary majority explicitly designates and supports an alternative government.
- Congressional Quarterly*, December 21, 1996, p. 3461. This analysis considers only votes in which the two major parties oppose each other and does not include voting for official House leadership positions (on which voting tends to be strictly along party lines).

- In the 1987-1992 British House of Commons, both parties were perfectly cohesive on 80 percent of the votes on which these parties took official stands (Philip Norton, "Parliamentary Behavior Since 1945," *Talking Politics*, VIII, 1995-96, p. 112). For evidence of similar cohesion in Germany in the 1970s and 1980s, see Thomas Saalfeld, "The West German Bundestag After Forty Years," *West European Politics* 13, No. 3 (July 1990): 74. On the French Fifth Republic, see Philip E. Converse and Roy Pierce, *Political Representation in France* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986), pp. 552-61. On party cohesion generally, see Shaun Bowler, David M. Farrell, and Richard W. Katz, *Party Cohesion, Party Discipline and the Organization of Parliaments* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1999).
- In some countries the president is elected by a special "electoral college" that includes both members of parliament and other public officials, such as representatives of local governments.
- To avoid confusion, we refer to heads of state as presidents or monarchs and to heads of government in parliamentary systems as prime ministers. The formal titles are sometimes different. Thus, the official title of the head of government is "President of the Council of Ministers" in Spain and "Federal Chancellor" in Germany. See the country chapters for details.
- See Chapter 6; Roy Pierce, "The Executive Divided Against Itself: Cohabitation in France 1986-1988" *Governance* 4, No. 3 (July 1991): 270-94; and John D. Huber, *Rationalizing Parliament: Legislative Institutions and Party Politics in France* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996).
- See Arend Lijphart, ed., *Parliamentary Versus Presidential Government* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992); Juan Linz and Arturo Valenzuela, eds., *The Failure of Presidential Government* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994); G. Bingham Powell, Jr., *Contemporary Democracies: Participation, Stability and Violence* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), Chs. 6, 10; Alfred Stepan and Cindy Skach, "Constitutional Frameworks and Democratic Consolidation: Parliamentarism Versus Presidentialism," *World Politics* 46 (October 1993): 1-22.
- See Shugart and Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies*.
- See the essays in Mary L. Volcansek, ed., "Judicial Politics and Policymaking in Western Europe," a special issue of *West European Politics* 15, No. 3 (July 1992); and in Martin Shapiro and Alec Stone, *The New Constitutional Politics of Europe*, a special issue of *Comparative Political Studies* 26, No. 4 (January 1994).
- However, in the French Fourth Republic (1947-1958) governments frequently flunked with the election laws to seek electoral advantage. In France in 1986 and in Greece in 1989 governments introduced proportional representation with low thresholds to try to limit expected losses; these party successful changes were eventually reversed by their successors. Several of the new Eastern European democracies, including Bulgaria, Macedonia, and Ukraine, have also modified their election rules.
- These countries are Greece, Ireland, and Spain. For a general discussion of the "effective-threshold" for party representation, see Lijphart, *Electoral Systems and Party Systems*, Ch. 2; later in the book Lijphart estimates the effective threshold in each electoral system.
- Maurice Duverger, *Political Parties: Their Organization and Activity in the Modern State* [1954], trans. Barbara and Robert North (New York: Wiley, 1963).
- As explained in Chapter 7, the German "mixed" electoral system distributes the party-list seats among the parties so as to make the overall legislative representation (combining single-member district representatives and party-list representatives) correspond as closely as possible to the party vote shares. A party like the Free Democrats, which rarely carries any single-member districts, gets an extra helping of party-list seats to bring its overall proportion into balance with its vote. As discussed in Chapter 9, the Russian version (also used in Japan and elsewhere) gives no such party-list compensation for underrepresentation in the single-member districts. Other European systems use various degrees of compensation. The complicated Hungarian system is discussed in Chapter 11.
- See Matthew Soberg Shugart, "The Electoral Cycle and Institutional Sources of Divided Presidential Government," *American Political Science Review* 89 (June 1995): 327-43.
- Belarus and Bosnia have been excluded from Figure 4.4 because government formation in these countries has been constrained by factors other than democratic electoral results.
- See the discussion of minority governments in Poland in Chapter 10.
- Governments built on an "excessive" number of parties are also frequently unstable, prone to additional bargaining and to being reduced to the minimum number needed for parliamentary control.
- See classic analyses of France in the Fourth Republic by Philip Williams, *Crisis and Compromise: Politics in the Fourth Republic* (Hamden, CT: Arcton Press, 1964), esp. p. 405. But the issue is controversial; see the discussion and one of the few empirical comparative studies in John D. Huber, "How Does Cabinet Instability Affect Political Performance? Portfolio Volatility and Health Care Cost Containment in Parliamentary Democracies," *American Political Science Review* 92 (1996): 577-91.
- See, for example, the essays by Stephen Holmes, et al., "Crime and Corruption After Communism," in *East European Constitutional Review* 6 (Fall 1997): 69-98.
- All scores downloaded from www.transparency.org/cpi/2004/en.html on November 30, 2004.
- The critical contributor to analysis of this approach has been Arend Lijphart; see especially *Democracy in Plural Societies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977).
- Powell, *Contemporary Democracies*, Chs. 4, 5, 10.