

## The Global Political Economy, its Evolution through the Decades, Systems around the World

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### ***Executive Summary***

*There are many different types of political systems around the world. Whereas the political system in the United States follows a mixture of direct and indirect election, the UK with its Westminster style of democracy is another type of political system. Most of the former colonial countries follow the UK model including India and many countries in Asia whereas the African countries follow the European model which is a mixture of the American and the British model. The American style of democracy is characterized by the devolution of powers between the Federal Government and the State Governments. The President of the United States is elected directly by the Electoral College though the division of electoral votes follows a pattern that is unique in the world. For instance, the American President takes all the electoral votes in a particular state if he or she wins the majority of the votes cast. To take an example, California has 52 Electoral Votes and whoever is the winner in the state (who secures the most votes) has 52 votes in his or her kitty. There is no division of seats as is done in the UK and India where each state or district has constituencies and hence, the election is determined constituency wise.*

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### **I. LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### ***A. The American Political System And The British Model***

The American political system is also notable because each state has Two Senators irrespective of its size and population whereas each state has congressional representatives based on its size and population. This distinction is crucial because a smaller state like Wyoming sends two senators whereas it has less than 10 congressional seats. The states follow their own patterns of democracy with each state having a legislature and a governor who is directly elected. As mentioned earlier, the American political system is unique in the world because of these characteristics. On the other hand, the Westminster model of democracy is based on proportional representation as well as the first past the post principle. For instance, in the UK and in India, the constituency winner is the person who secures more votes than the nearest opponent does and hence, there is no concept of absolute majority in each constituency. Further, these seats are for the lower house, which is the House of Commons in the UK and the Lok Sabha in India. The members of the upper house are elected indirectly and the Rajya Sabha (in India) and the House of Lords in the UK are the upper houses of parliament.

#### ***B. The European Model***

In contrast, the European system of democracy is different with many countries in Europe having a president who is elected directly or nominated and the members of parliament who are elected according to the Westminster model. The point here is that in the UK, the Queen (or the King) is the ceremonial head of government and in India; the President is the ceremonial head of government. The president in some

European countries and in India is elected indirectly whereas in other European countries, both the president and the members of parliament are elected directly.

### ***C. The Birth of the Modern Nation State***

In earlier centuries, it was the norm for kings to rule and kingdoms to reign supreme. The modern day concept of the nation state is a relatively new phenomenon when one considers the arc of history. For instance, it was only during the time of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment in the late 17th and 18th centuries in Europe for the concept of the nation state to be born. The leading thinkers of that era speculated on the social contract between man and the state and posited the idea that a form of a nation state that takes care of its citizens by giving them rights and at the same time by placing certain responsibilities on them. This was the guiding principle behind the Treaty of Westphalia that gave birth to the rise of the modern nation state. Hence, the modern conception of the nation state is said to be the Westphalian norms of governance.

### ***D. The Enlightenment and the Nation State***

Of course, the 17th and 18th centuries witnessed the birth of the nation state only in Europe and the United States where the American Revolution brought forth the concept of a state. It was after the Civil War between the North and the South that the overriding theme of unification and the birth of the American state known as the United States of America came into existence. As for the other parts of the world, they either were ruled by Kings and Princes or were colonized by the Western powers. Countries like India were under the dominion of the British who ceded independence only in the aftermath of World War Two. Talking of World War Two, it can be said that it was the decisive turning point in the history of humanity as the end of the war brought forth into existence many nation states.

### ***E. Democracy Blooms and Retreats***

*The growth of the modern nation state picked up pace after the war and during the 1960s when many African states became independent from their colonial rulers.* Further, with the spread of modern communication technologies, it was easier for the indigenous people to rise up as a unit and overthrow their colonial masters thus accelerating the birth of the modern nation state. However, it has to be noted that despite these changes, the concept of the nation state has been under attack from both globalization and internal fissures. This is a rather sad aspect of the modern day nationality as globalization has meant that nation states cede power to the giant conglomerates and corporations and at the same time the resistance to globalization in the form of revolts leads to corrosion in the authority of the state.

### ***F. The Evolution of the Global Political Economy***

*The global political and economic system has undergone many changes over the last few decades.* If the aftermath of World War 2 was to bring about the existence of two opposing camps consisting of the United States and the Soviet Union leading to the cold war, the post 1990 global political economy has been characterized by the emergence of the United States as the sole superpower with unbridled power. However, the unipolar moment in the world for the United States was short lived as the 9/11 attacks comprehensively demonstrated that the United States could not take its preeminence for granted. Further, the financial crisis of 2008 marked the end of the hegemony of the West and ushered in an era of competing states vying for dominance in the global political economy with no clear hegemon.

### ***G. From the Cold War to the 2008 Economic Crisis***

The evolution of the global political economy from that of détente between the US and the USSR to the birth of the unipolar world and to the ushering of the power of the East makes for fascinating analysis. If there is a clear lesson in all this, it is that no country can take its position for granted and that the fluid and ever changing global system means that the emergence of hegemonic powers also sows the seeds for their eventual decline. The reason for such fluidity and flux is that the arrival of technology and globalization has queered the pitch for the hegemonic powers and with increasing awareness and cognizance of the happenings across the world to the citizens of the countries, it is no longer possible to contain the yearning for freedom and security.

### ***H. Globalization and Global Political Economy***

On the other hand, the world has become less safe as a result of the changes brought about due to globalization and the rise in the number of failed states is an indicator that whole countries are withering away wherein they cannot guarantee the security and prosperity of their citizens. Further, the fact that globalization has increased the threats to humankind has only exacerbated the situation to a point where an isolated incident in one corner of the globe has the potential to bring the global political economy to its knees. These are some of the challenges that confront the policymakers in the west and the east as they grapple with the emergence of the new world order.

## **II. CONCLUSION**

### ***Reasons for Variety of Political Systems***

The reason for the variety and the different kinds of political systems around the world is mainly that the evolution of democracy around the world has been a process that has been influenced by the political systems of the US and the UK. Since they were among the first countries to have established procedures for elections and democracy, once the other countries became independent after the Second World War and became democratic following the Westphalian model of sovereign states in the 19th century, they chose to have political systems that had elements drawn from these two countries. Therefore, one finds variants of these models across the world in the kind of political systems that individual countries selected for themselves

Again, the recent Arab Spring has again raised hopes about the spread of freedom and the desire of the peoples of the world to be governed by representative democracies instead of by authoritarian rulers. It is with the hope that the retreat of democracy would be temporary and the age old yearning of the human spirit to be free would be actualized that this article ends

Finally, it is the case that the study of the global political economy yields the conclusion that the only constant in the world is change and that unless countries around the world seize the moment for themselves and not let go of opportunities, they are likely to be left behind in the race for dominance and even survival. In conclusion, the world is not what it used to be a few decades or a few centuries ago and hence it is in the interest of all aspiring professionals in all fields to pay attention to the changing contours of the global political economy.

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