

Political systems. I challenge my students by beginning my class with what seems an absurd statement. They look at me as if I were crazy. “What is the old man up to now?”, their eyes seem to say. One of these statements is that all political systems are the same. There is no distinction between democracy, socialism, or dictatorship.

I ask them to tell me the difference between all these systems. The more they explain the more it is clear the various systems have the same institutions, rules of law more or less developed and enforced, political bodies, a bureaucracy, an army, etc.

But what makes them really different? Or, are they different? I believe the only difference between political structures lies in the number of power groups in control of the national system. Otherwise there is little difference between them.

When a nation has few power groups, they tend to control the country to satisfy their needs, the needs of a few people. In this case the country does not grow rapidly and does not generate much wealth. The reason is that the power groups in control do not need much wealth because the wealth has to be shared by few.

On the other hand, countries with a large number of power groups (democracies) need a fast growing country to create the wealth to be shared by all the various power groups.

The bottom line is that all political systems are the same. The same can be said about religions. But this will be the subject of another commentary. Power is the unifying parameter of political systems. However, the evidence shows that countries with a large number of power groups (Europe and US) experience faster and more stable growth than those countries with a smaller number of power groups in control of the system (Africa, Japan, Russia). How you label these systems is irrelevant.

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