**Thinking Like a Political Scientist:
Analyzing Data from the 2022 Congressional Elections**

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The Human Development Index

- The idea of development used to focus almost exclusively on economics
  - Wealthier = more developed

- In the 21st century there has been greater emphasis on "human capabilities" when examining development.

- This idea became the basis for the **Human Development Index (HDI)**
  - life expectancy, education, per capita GDP

Benefits and Drawbacks of Using HDI to Measure Development

Benefits

- HDI is an aggregate measure.
- It does not just focus on economic development.
- It focuses on overall quality of life.

Drawbacks

- HDI reflects changes over the long term and may not reflect recent changes.
- National wealth does not equal citizen welfare.
- Does not reflect income inequality

Economic Measures of Development: Gross Domestic Product, GDP per Capita, and GDP Growth Rate

There are several basic economic indicators used by political scientists.

- **Gross Domestic Product**
  - total value of goods and services produced in a country in a year
- **GDP per capita**
  - GDP divided by population; rough measure of standard of living
- **GDP growth rate**
  - The percentage a GDP has grown over a period of time, usually a year

GDP and GDP per Capita

Country	GDP
China	17.73tr
UK	3.13tr
Russia	1.78tr
Mexico	1.27tr
Nigeria	440.8
Iran	359.7b

World Bank, 2023

Country	GDP per Capita
UK	46,510
China	12,556
Russia	12,195
Mexico	10,016
Iran	4091
Nigeria	2,066

Source: World Bank, 2022

Figure 1.1

FIGURE 1.1

Twenty Years of GDP Growth Rates (Percent)
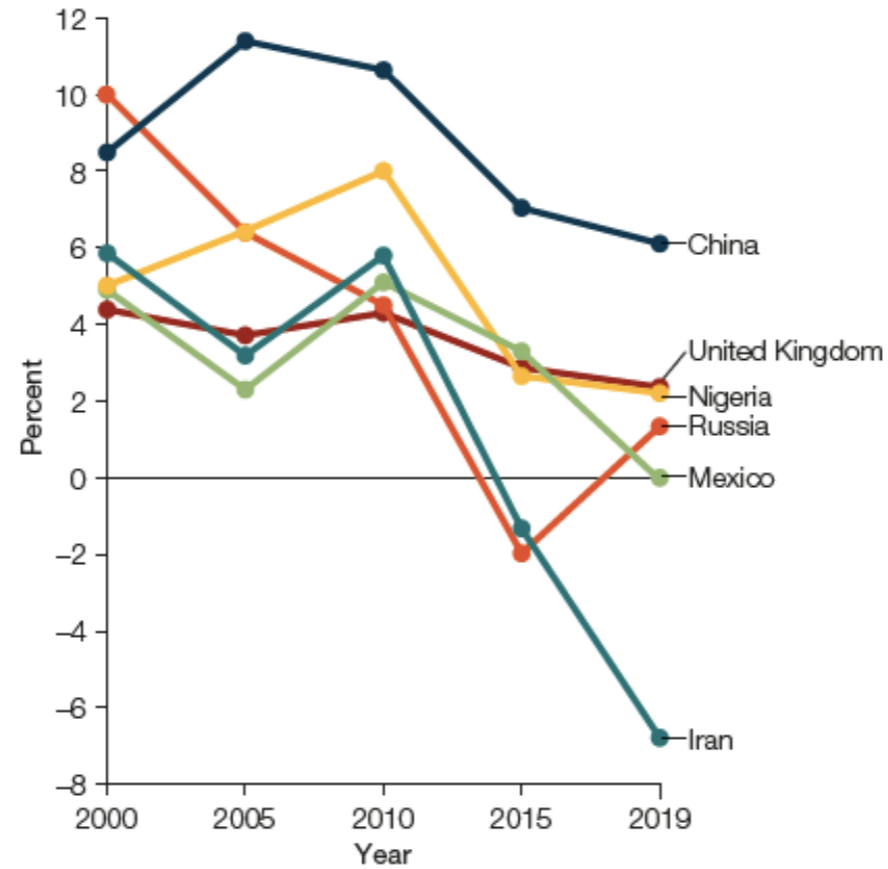
Data from World Bank.

Benefits and Drawbacks of GDP-based Measures

- Why is GDP per capital a better comparative measure than GDP?

- Why is GDP still a useful comparative measure?

- Why do developing states have higher GDP growth rates than developed states?

Economic Measures of Development:
The Gini Index/Coefficient

- Gini Index/coefficient

- A measure of income inequality

- The higher the number the greater the inequality

Country	Gini Coefficient
Mexico	45.4
Iran	40.9
China	38.5
Russia	37.5
Nigeria	35.1
UK	35.1

Benefits and Drawbacks of the Gini Index

Benefits
- Income inequality may eventually result in unrest, so it's important to measure.
- The Gini Index measures the wealth gap, which is not taken into account by GDP per capita.

Drawbacks
- The Gini Index does not measure trends over time.
- Countries with similar Gini Index scores may have very different standards of living, which means it is not a good comparative

Political Measures of Development: Freedom House

- **Freedom House** is a non-governmental organization that measures the level of democracy in countries from year-to-year.
  - Scores are based on two main categories – civil rights and political rights
    - These two categories are broken into several smaller categories.
    - Countries are ranked as Free (F), Partially Free (PF), Not Free (NF).
  - Countries rated as Free have undergone **democratic consolidation**.

Freedom House

Country	Status	PR (40)	CL (60)
China	NF	-2	11
Iran	NF	4	8
Mexico	PF	27	22
Nigeria	PF	20	23
Russia	NF	5	11
UK	F	39	54

Source: Freedom House, 2022
PR=Personal Rights, CL=Civil Liberties

Benefits and Drawbacks of Freedom House

Benefits
- It is a composite measure
- It measures political science conceptions of civil right and liberties

Drawbacks
- It reflects a Western perspective of rights and liberties

Political Measures of Development: Transparency International and the Corruption Perceptions Index

- Transparency International measures the level of perceived corruption in a country in the **Corruption Perception Index**

  - **Corruption** - the use of official power for personal gain.
    - Grand corruption – Corruption among the political elite.
    - Petty corruption – abuse by everyday government employees

Corruption Perceptions Index

Country	Score	Rank (180)
UK	73	18
China	45	65
Mexico	31	126
Russia	28	137
Nigeria	24	150
Iran	25	147

Source: Transparency International, 2022

Benefits and Drawbacks of Corruption Perceptions Index

Benefits

- It measures both grand and petty corruption.
- It relies on information from citizens.

Drawbacks

- It measures perceived corruption, not actual corruption.
- Citizens may be hesitant to report corruption.

Political Measures of Development: The Fragile States Index

The Fragile States Index attempts to measure the existential danger each state faces.

- **Strong states** are able to provide necessary and desired services to their citizens.

- **Failed states** cannot provide necessary services to their citizens.
    - Some causes include war, famine, natural disaster, economic mismanagement
    - Often results in a reinforcing cycle

Measuring State Strength

The Fragile States Index considers 12 criteria in four categories

Social, Economic, Political, Cohesion

All criteria are weighed evenly; higher scores mean more instability

States can take action to improve stability.

Some of these actions include economic growth, improve education, and democratization.

Fragile States Index

Country	Rating (179)	Classification
UK	148	Sustainable
China	101	Warning
Mexico	85	Warning
Russia	53	Warning
Iran	40	Alert
Nigeria	15	Alert

Source: Fragile States Index, 2022

Benefits and Drawbacks of Fragile States Index

Benefits

- It is an aggregate measure, taking 12 indicators into account.
- It can be used to measure stability over time.

Drawbacks

- It may imply that state building is necessary, but state building can cause instability.
- Fragility is difficult to quantify.

Just for Fun: The Happiness Index

Life evaluations from the Gallup World Poll provide the basis for the annual happiness rankings. They are based on answers to the main life evaluation question. The Cantril ladder asks respondents to think of a ladder, with the best possible life for them being a 10 and the worst possible life being a 0. They are then asked to rate their own current lives on that 0 to 10 scale. The rankings are from nationally representative samples over three years.

Happiness Index Scores

| Country	Rank/137
US	15
UK	19
Mexico	36
China	64
Russia	70
Nigeria	95
Iran	101

Source: World Happiness Report 2022

Critical Thinking Questions

- Are political factors, such as freedom, or economic factors, such as GDP per capita, more important in measuring the level of development within a state?

- Why are failed states a problem for their neighbors? For the larger world community?

Sample Free Response
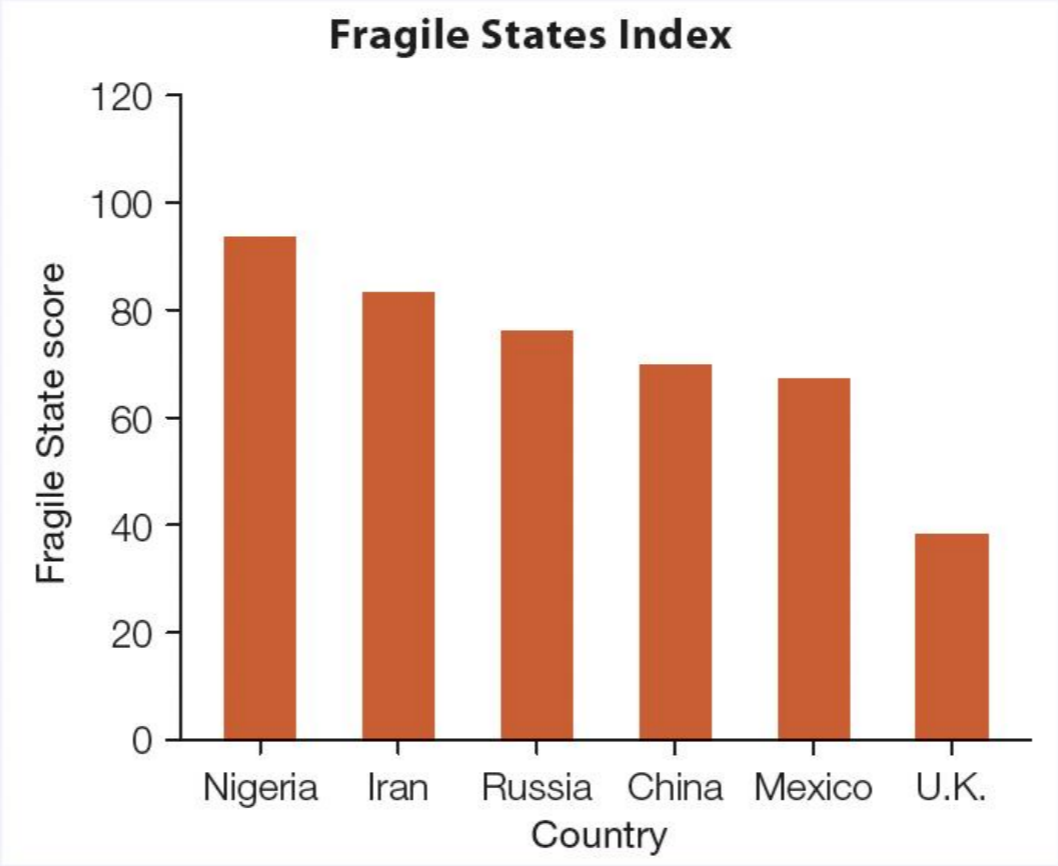
Sample Free Response

Answer A, B, C, D, and E. Keep the following in mind: Maximum score is 120. Higher numbers mean less stability.

A. Using the data in the bar chart, identify the state with the highest level of fragility.

B. Using the data in the chart, explain why the country you identified in part A has a high level of fragility.

C. Draw a conclusion about democratic government and the level of fragility in a country.

D. Using your knowledge of fragility, describe a policy a state could enact to increase stability.

E. Explain a limitation of the Fragile States Index in measuring the strength of states.

Thank You

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