America as a Baseline

I. The American System
   A. Critical Historical Junctures
   B. Culture and Identity
   C. Governance and Policy-Making
   D. Representation and Participation
   E. Political Economy

II. American ‘Exceptionalism’
   A. How America is Different
   B. Why America is Different
A. Critical Historical Junctures

- The American Revolution
  - Life and Politics in Colonial America
  - Seven Years [French and Indian] War (1756-63)
  - British Debt and American Taxes
  - “No taxation without representation”
- Articles of Confederation and Turmoil
- Constitutional Convention, Philadelphia 1787
America’s ‘Balanced Constitution’

- **Separation of Powers**
  - Separate branches with separate personnel chosen by different methods of election and constituencies

- **Checks and Balances**
  - Division of authority and control across executive, legislative and judicial branches

- **Federalism**
  - Division of authority between national and state governments
A. Critical Historical Junctures

- The Civil War and Reconstruction
  - Dominance of federal over state government
  - National citizenship
- The New Deal
  - Increased economic regulation and vastly expanded government activity
- The Cold War
  - America as an active player on the world stage
- (Temporary) Retreat of Big Government
  - Regan Revolution through Clinton’s Welfare Reform, but...
  - Back with a vengeance under Bush and Obama
B. Culture and Identity

- The ‘American Creed’ – A belief in:
  - Democracy
  - Political and legal equality
  - Limited government
  - Individual values over collective values
  - Free market capitalism
  - Upward mobility (The ‘American Dream’)
  - America as an example
C. Governance and Policy-Making

- President
  - Formal v. Informal Powers (Persuasion)
- Congress
  - Constitutional Basis
  - Legislative Process
- Independent Judiciary
- Federalism and State Powers (EX: Education)
- Combined = Comparatively WEAK national government
D. Representation and Participation

- Political Parties
  - Two Party system from electoral system (single member plurality districts) and incorporation of third party ideas
  - Party Weakness (Primaries and Campaign Finance)

- Interest Groups
  - Money and Influence
E. Political Economy

- Low Social Welfare Spending (Health, Education, Unemployment)
- Indirect Economic Control (Fiscal and Monetary)
- Pro-Market Regulation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Total Government Expenditure % of GDP (2006)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>33.6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>44.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>45.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>53.4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>55.5%</td>
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Source: OECD
II. American Exceptionalism

A. How America is Different:

- **Culture**
  - Dominance of ‘American Creed’
  - Low Political Involvement

- **Institutions**
  - Separation of Powers and Divided Government
  - Weak Political Parties (Primaries)

- **Public Policy**
  - Government Expected to Do Much Less
II. American Exceptionalism

B. Why America is Different:

- Wealth
  - Upward Mobility/Low Salience of Social Class
  - Immigration

- Culture

- Institutions
  - Weak and inefficient state reduces desire for government activity