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Answer Key: Leviathan vs. The Social Contract: College Comparative Politics Quiz

Evaluate the structural tensions between consolidated executive power and decentralized governance through the lens of institutional design and political stability.

1. In the context of the 'Resource Curse' (Paradox of Plenty), how do rentier states like Oman or Qatar typically bypass the traditional social contract found in liberal democracies?

Answer: B) By replacing taxation-based representation with state-provided welfare and subsidies

Rentier states rely on external rents (like oil) rather than domestic taxation; since citizens aren't taxed, there is often lower demand for political accountability or representation.

2. The institutional arrangement in which a country like Japan maintains a highly centralized authority with local governments exercising only powers delegated by the national diet is known as a _____ system.

Answer: C) Unitary

In a unitary system, the central government is supreme, and any subnational units exercise only powers that the central government chooses to delegate.

3. Arend Lijphart's 'Consociationalism' model suggests that deeply divided societies are best served by majoritarian, 'winner-take-all' executive branches.

Answer: B) False

Consociationalism advocates for power-sharing, proportional representation, and minority vetoes to manage conflict in pluralistic societies, rather than majoritarianism.

4. Which mechanism of executive-legislative relations is most characteristic of Mexico's current presidential system compared to a traditional Westminster model?

Answer: C) The executive and legislature are elected independently, creating the potential for 'divided government'

Presidential systems feature a separation of powers where the executive is not responsible to the legislature, often leading to gridlock or divided government if parties differ.

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5. When analyzing the 'Double Democratic Deficit,' scholars often point to the _____, where a popularly elected president and a prime minister from a different party share executive power.

Answer: B) Cohabitation

Cohabitation occurs in semi-presidential systems, such as in France, when the President and the Prime Minister belong to opposing political blocs.

6. In a 'First-Past-The-Post' (FPTP) electoral system, a political party can theoretically win a majority of seats in the legislature while receiving a minority of the total popular vote.

Answer: A) True

FPTP focuses on winning individual districts; if votes are inefficiently distributed for opponents, a party can secure a seat majority without a national popular majority.

7. What distinguishes 'Competitive Authoritarianism' (Levitsky & Way) from traditional 'Hard' Authoritarianism?

Answer: B) The formal existence of democratic institutions that are subverted by an uneven playing field

Competitive authoritarian regimes use democratic formalisms (elections, media, courts) but the incumbent systematically abuses state resources to disadvantage the opposition.

8. The concept of _____ federalism, seen in nations like Russia or Spain, occurs when certain subnational regions are granted more autonomy or different powers than others.

Answer: C) Asymmetric

Asymmetric federalism is often used to appease ethno-linguistic minorities by giving specific regions (like Catalonia or Quebec) unique legislative or fiscal privileges.

9. How does 'Democratic Backsliding' typically manifest in modern illiberal democracies like Hungary?

Answer: C) Through incremental executive aggrandizement and the weakening of judicial independence

Modern backsliding is often legalistic and gradual, using legislative majorities to change rules, capture courts, and marginalize independent media.

10. In a Pure Parliamentary system, the Head of State and the Head of Government are always the same individual.

Answer: B) False

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Parliamentary systems typically bifurcate these roles, with a ceremonial Head of State (Monarch or President) and a political Head of Government (Prime Minister/Chancellor).