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Answer Key: House of Cards: Comparative Executive Power Quiz for Seniors

How do variations in semi-presidentialism and consociationalism impact state stability? Evaluate institutional design and elite power-sharing mechanisms.

1. In the context of Arend Lijphart's typology, which mechanism is a defining feature of a consociational democracy, such as that practiced in Switzerland?

Answer: B) The use of a grand coalition involving all major linguistic or religious groups

Consociationalism relies on elite cooperation through grand coalitions to ensure that all significant social segments have a stake in governance, preventing majoritarian dominance in deeply divided societies.

2. In a semi-presidential system like Poland's under the 'Little Constitution' era, the president and prime minister must always belong to the same political party to function legally.

Answer: B) False

Semi-presidential systems often experience 'cohabitation,' where a president and a prime minister from opposing parties must navigate shared executive authority.

3. The concept of ___ refers to a political system where the state is effectively controlled by a single party that merges its interests with the collective interest, as seen in Mexico's 'Perfect Dictatorship' era under the PRI.

Answer: A) Hegemonic party system

A hegemonic party system allows peripheral parties to exist for appearance, but the dominant party faces no real threat of losing power through the electoral process.

4. Which of the following describes a 'Constructive Vote of No Confidence,' a mechanism used in the Spanish and German legislative systems?

Answer: C) The opposition must agree on a replacement head of government before removing the incumbent

This mechanism ensures executive stability by preventing the removal of a leader unless a viable alternative majority has already coalesced around a successor.

5. Symmetric federalism exists when all subnational units (such as provinces or states) possess the same formal powers and relationship to the central government.

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Answer: A) True

Unlike asymmetric federalism (where some regions like Quebec or Scotland have special powers), symmetric federalism treats all constituent units as constitutionally equal.

6. In the 1990s, Japan shifted from a Multi-Member District system to a ___ system to encourage party consolidation and reduce intra-party competition.

Answer: C) Parallel (Mixed-Member) Electoral

The Mixed-Member system combines single-member seats with proportional representation to balance local accountability with national party strength.

7. How does 'Corporatism' in a political sense (e.g., Scandinavia or post-war Austria) differ from 'Pluralism' regarding interest group influence?

Answer: C) Corporatism involves formal tripartite negotiations between the state, labor, and capital

Social corporatism integrates large interest groups (like labor unions and employer federations) directly into the legislative process to minimize industrial conflict.

8. The transition from an authoritarian regime to a democratic one, often involving secret negotiations between 'soft-liners' and 'moderates,' is termed a ___ transition in transitology literature.

Answer: B) Pacted

Pacted transitions involve elite agreements that provide guarantees to the outgoing regime's members to ensure a peaceful handover of power.

9. Bureaucratic Authoritarianism is a theory primarily used to explain the rise of technocratic military regimes in South America during the 1960s and 70s.

Answer: A) True

Proposed by Guillermo O'Donnell, this theory explains how modernization led to military takeovers aimed at stabilizing the economy through repression and technocratic management.

10. Which institutional arrangement is typically associated with the 'Westminster Model' of democracy?

Answer: B) Executive dominance over the legislature

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The Westminster model usually features a fused executive and legislature where the cabinet exerts sheep-like control over the parliamentary majority, often called 'elective dictatorship.'