

**Some potential topics for research papers
(Not always posed as researchable questions)**

General topics in political science

Pick a book, scholarly paper, or even an article that makes a controversial claim. Then figure out how such a claim might be tested and do so.

Testing *Guns, Germs, and Steel*: What is the relationship between the availability of cultivable plants, domesticable animals, and the rise of complex societies?

The survival of democracy in former British territories (cross-nationally or case study)

The extension of full "citizenship" to women (globally, across U.S. states, etc.), as measured by suffrage, property rights, and equality before the law

Explaining the sexual revolution in the United States, 1950-present

What caused the contraction, expansion, and subsequent contraction of the Roman Empire

The effects of new communication technologies on political mobilization

Testing *What's the matter with Kansas?*

The development of the "rule of law" in pre-modern China and Korea

The development of constitutionalism in classical Greece, from Ionia to Sikyon

The effects of political institutions on comparative science policy (e.g., spending on research, politicization of science, etc.)

How the type of autocratic regime (e.g., sultanistic, military, one-party civilian, etc.) affect foreign policy

What causes "rally-around-the-flag" effects in the United States?

Changing styles of candidate discourse in Mexican political campaigns

How do Americans think about social justice? (e.g., focus groups and experiments)

The management of ethnic tension in Belgium

Who Governs, in Cambridge

Political barriers to the diffusion of the moveable type (a.k.a., the printing press)

Predicting the size of militaries (from topography, external borders, country size, etc.)

The distributional consequences of bank bailout packages in Mexico (1996-2003), Japan, the U.S. (Saving & Loan), Korea (since 1999), Chile (1980s), Czech Republic, Russia, and elsewhere.

A comparison of the Tiananmen Square massacre in China (1989), the Kwangju Massacre in Korea (1980), the Tlatelolco Massacre in Mexico (1968), the Boston Massacre in the Massachusetts Bay Colony (1770), etc.

The impact of natural disasters on political legitimacy. Examples might include: Nicaragua (1970s), El Salvador (early 1980s), Mexico (1985), Pakistan (2005), Hurricane Katrina in the U.S. (2005) etc.

The effects of shorter "sound bites" in U.S. presidential campaigns on audience recall

Does newspaper ownership affect political coverage in _____?

The causes of media opening (or lack thereof) in _____

The role of the Holy Inquisition in Spanish state-building

Why there is no (very little) ethnic politics in Latin America

The impact of decentralization on clientelism

The emergence of pork-barrel-based party systems

What explains levels of media concentration (cross-nationally or within one large country)

The correlates of political engagement among college students in the U.S.

Experiments in the shaping and malleability of political identity

The impact of U.S. military occupation on prospects for democracy in _____.

The political attitudes of U.S. military officers

The success of oligarchical rule in the Republic of Venice

Leadership quality and mechanisms of leadership selection

Institutional improvements in democratic governance since *The Federalist*.

Reformulating and testing Samuel Huntington's argument about political instability

Corruption and cronyism in the U.S. military procurement cycle

Topics related to Regime Change

Nasser's coup in Egypt, 1952

The consolidation of dynastic imperial rule in the Eastern Roman Empire after Constantine

The English Civil War of 1642 (Charles I vs. Parliament)

The fall of Slobodan Milosevic in Yugoslavia, October 2000

The survival of democracy in interwar Czechoslovakia

A comparison of the failure of the Kornilov coup in Russia (1917) to the success of the de la Huerta coup in Mexico (1911)

The failure of the Newburgh conspiracy in the United States in 1783

The consolidation of revolutionary theocratic rule in Iran, 1979-81

The 1974 fall of Haile Selassie (King of Kings, Elect of God, Lion of Judah, His Most Puissant Majesty and Distinguished Highness the Emperor of Ethiopia, etc.)

The fall of Habib Bourguiba in Tunisia, 1987

The repudiation of partial parliamentary rule and consolidation of monarchical absolutism in Morocco, 1963-1965

The Libyan "revolution" (read: coup), September 1969

The establishment of the Libyan Jamahiriya under Muammar al Qadhafi, 1973-79

Ethnic conflict and democratic breakdown in Fiji, 2000

The breakdown of democracy and the eruption of civil war in Lebanon, 1975

Democratic breakdown and re-democratization in Nepal since 2000.

The consolidation of personalistic dictatorship under Syngman Rhee in South Korea, 1948-60

The consolidation of personalistic authoritarian rule under the Yushin Constitution in South Korea, 1972

The collapse of the Fourth Republic and the establishment of the Fifth Republic in France, 1958

The eruption of Algeria's (most recent) civil war

The uprising/coup against Ecuadorian president Jamil Mahuad, January 21, 2000.

Some Past Paper topics

The timing of African-American disenfranchisement in the former Confederate states after Reconstruction.

Testing the "clash of civilizations": Do cultural differences affect the likelihood or intensity of inter-state conflict?

The effects of succession mechanisms on leadership quality and political stability in the Roman Empire and Merovingian Gaul

The effects of economic conditions (as measured by changes in average annual rainfall) on political freedom in sub-Saharan Africa

The effect of parliamentarism/presidentialism and unitarism/federalism and on planning for epidemics.

Sources of opposition to Turkey's membership in the European Union.

The role of national identity in Estonian re-democratization (with extensions to other post-Communist countries)

The consequences for partisan fragmentation of the direct election of the prime minister in Israel

The impact of political freedom on official responses to AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa

Modernization, political mobilization, and State of Emergency in India

The role of leadership in regime transition: Namibia, South Africa, and Zimbabwe

Ethnic fragmentation and political instability in Afghanistan

The effect of electoral rules on public satisfaction with democracy in the developed world

Political legitimacy and the survival of leaders in the Roman Empire

The causes of the Glorious Revolution in England, 1688-89 (deposition of James II and installment of William III and Mary II)