

PLS 140  
Introduction to  
Comparative Politics

Week 12, Lecture 1:  
Collective identities

# Recap

- Representation of societal interests within the framework of the state by political parties and interest groups
- Contentious politics in conditions of inadequate representation

# Plan for this week

- The politics of:
  - Collective identities
  - Ideas and ideologies

# Plan for today

- Collective identities and their political salience
- Focus on Nigeria as well as the other seven country cases

# Collective identities

- National
- Ethnic
- Linguistic
- Racial
- Gender
- Class
- Caste
- Religious

# Identity categories

- Nation:

- *Grouping of people who share a political identity based on cultural traits or historical association*

- Nationalism:

- *The view that upholds the primacy of national identity and the correspondence between the nation and the state (—> nation-state)*
- Civic vs. ethnic nationalism

# Identity categories

- Ethnic group:
  - *Grouping of people who share “a subjective belief in [...] common descent”*
- Race:
  - *Grouping based on social ideas about phenotypical traits*
- Gender:
  - *Identity based on social ascription of male, female, third gender, and transgender status*

# Identity categories

- Class:
  - *Grouping of people with similar socioeconomic status*
- Caste:
  - *Form of social stratification characterized by endogamy and hereditary transmission of occupation*



# Politics of collective identities

- Political salience
- Political cleavages:
  - *Deep and lasting sources of political competition and conflict within a given society*

# Explanations of identity salience

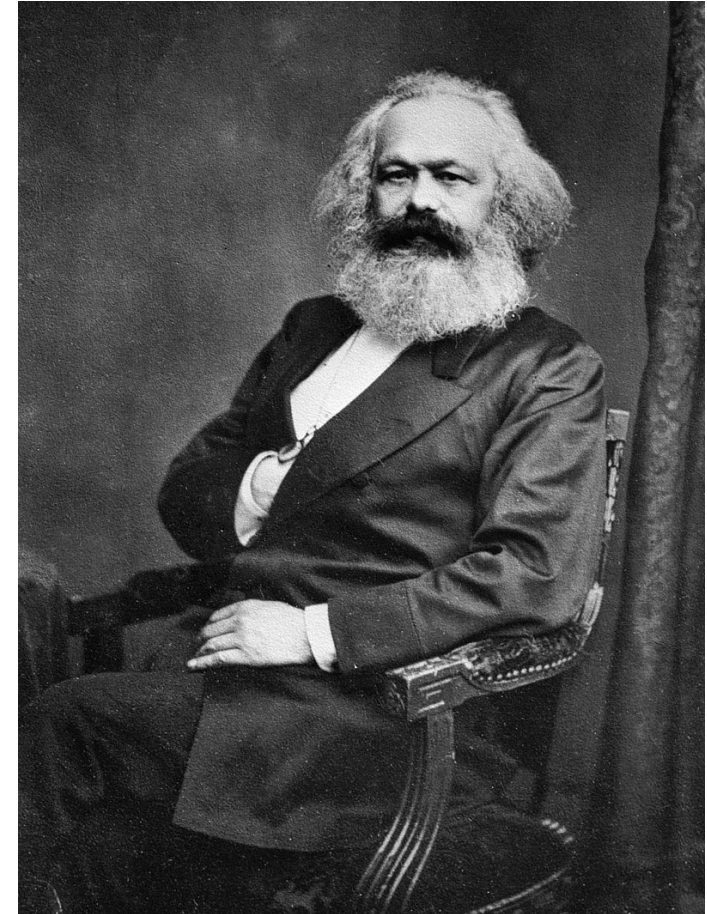
- Noneconomic identities:
  - Primordialism:
    - *Collective identities are fixed, natural, and ancient*
  - Constructivism:
    - *Collective identities are constructed*
  - Structuralism:
    - *Collective identities as the product of socioeconomic structure*

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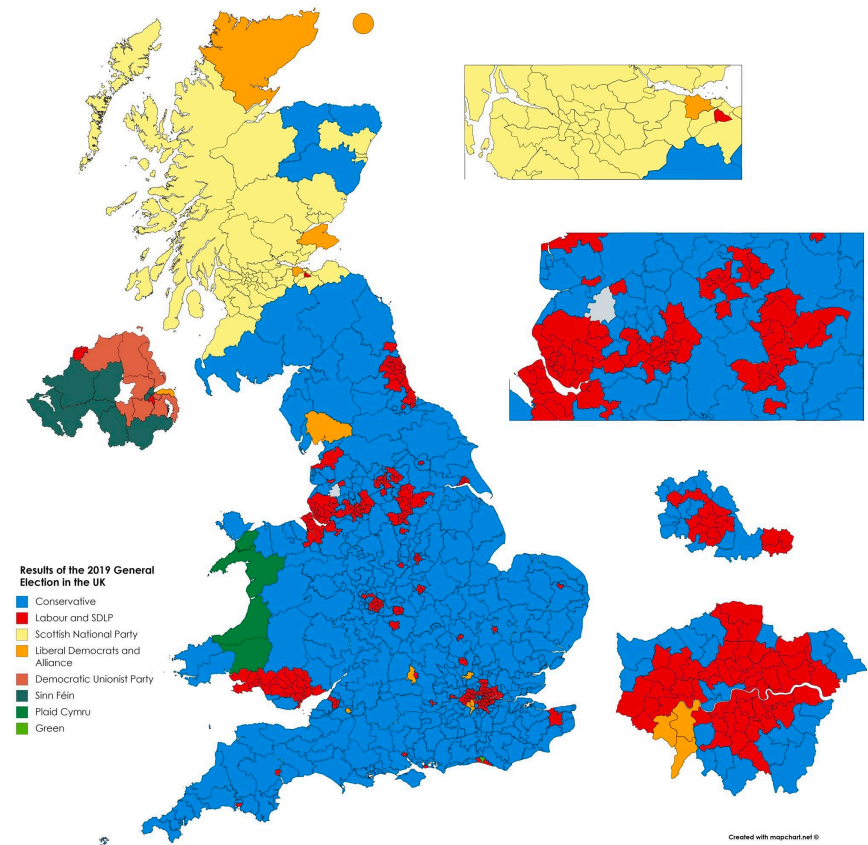
# Explanations of identity salience

- Economic identities (according to Marx):
  - Economic structure —> class antagonisms —> class-consciousness



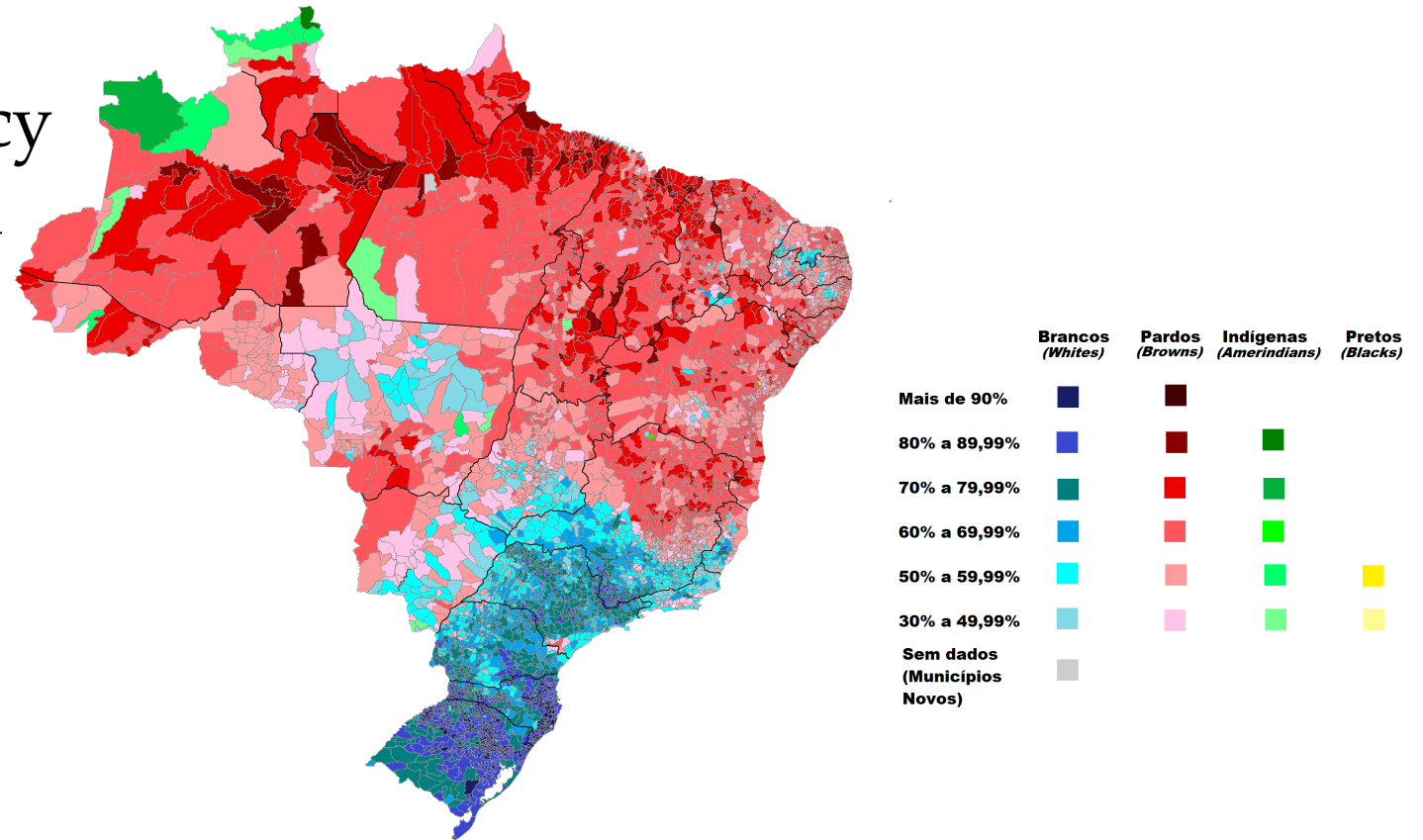
# Politics of class and nationality in the UK

- Historically rigid class system and its congruence with the party system
- Increase in the political salience of English, Scottish, and Welsh national identities and voters' shift towards the Scottish National Party, Plaid Cymru, the Conservative Party, and fringe English nationalist parties



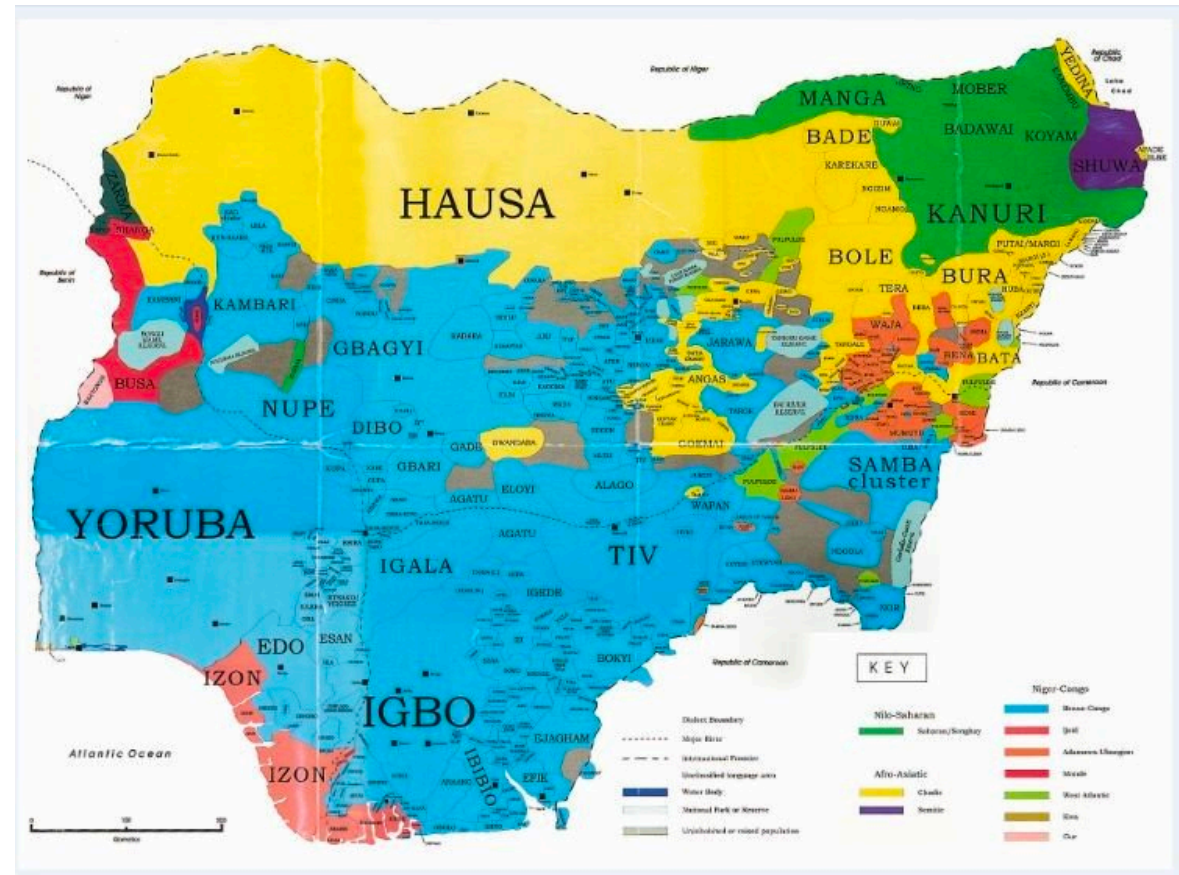
# Politics of nationality and race in Brazil

- Construction of the myth of racial democracy and the limited political salience of racial identities—in contrast to the United States
- Gradual increase in the political prominence of racial disparities



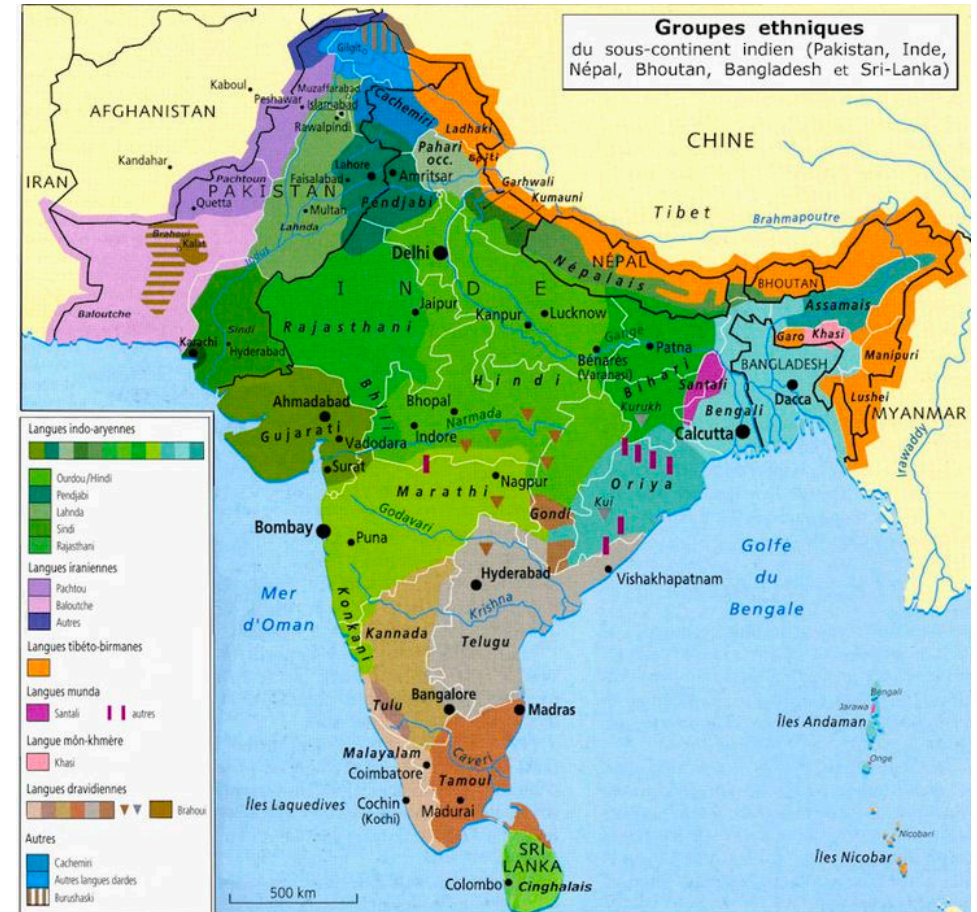
# Politics of ethnicity and gender in Nigeria

- Political prominence of ethnicity:
  - British colonizers' belief in Africans' 'tribalism'
  - Biafran war, 1967-1970
  - Attractiveness of political mobilization of ethnicity
- Limited political salience of gender



# Politics of ethnicity and caste in India

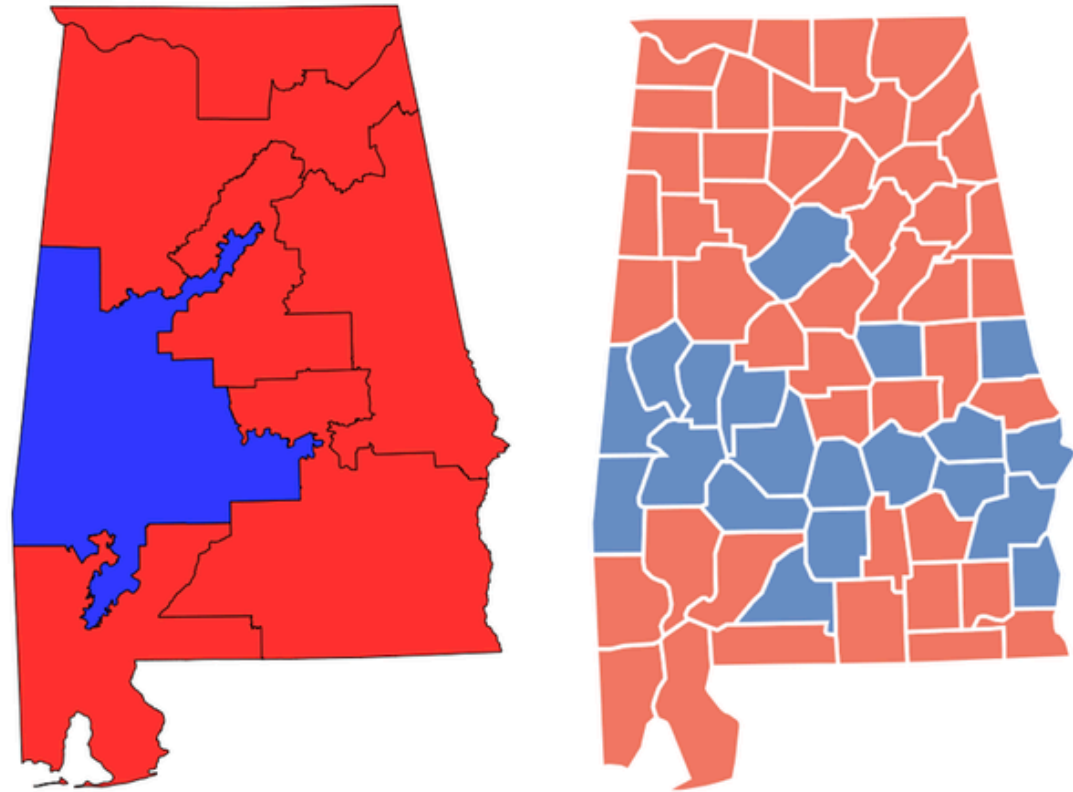
- Successful mobilization of political support on the basis of:
  - Ethnicity, e.g.:
    - Naga People's Front
    - People's Party of Arunachal
  - Caste, e.g.:
    - Mayawati's Bahujan Samaj Party





# Politics of race in the United States

- Political prominence of (quasi-)racial categories in American politics
- Gerrymandering as a tool of racial exclusion



# Politics of ethnicity / nationality in China

- Demographic and political dominance of the Han Chinese
- Official autonomy of some minorities



# Politics of ethnicity / nationality in Russia

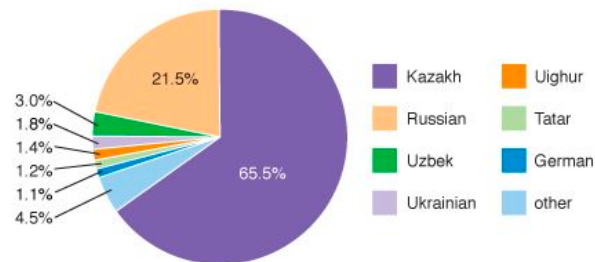
- Demographic dominance and political preeminence of ethnic Russians
- Autonomy of some areas inhabited by minorities and suppression of independence aspirations



# Politics of ethnicity / nationality in Kazakhstan

- Recency of Kazakh majority and tensions between ethnonationalist and civic nation-building agendas

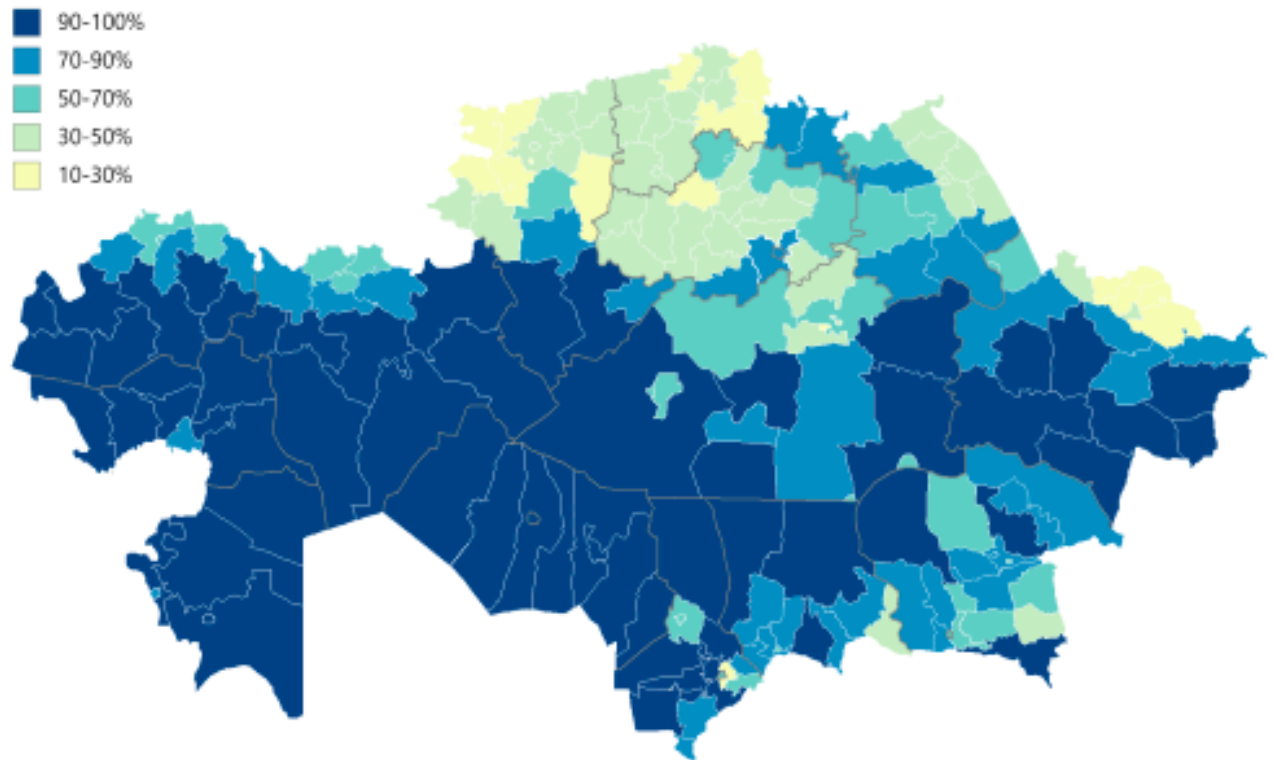
Ethnic composition (2014\*)



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\*January 1.

Ethnic Kazakh population in Kazakhstan



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# Takeaways

- The political salience of some collective identities as a product of:
  - Political agents' choices
  - Political conditions in which those individuals operate