

CHAPTER 1

Challenge and Change in Comparative Politics

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 1.1** Briefly describe the public and authoritative aspects of political decisions.
- 1.2** Discuss the challenges of building a national identity for a nonhomogeneous population.
- 1.3** Explain the processes and challenges of economic development, giving specific examples from various countries.
- 1.4** Describe the characteristics of representative democracy and the connections between economic development and democratization.
- 1.5** Discuss the positive and negative effects of globalization.
- 1.6** List five ways in which a government can help its citizens.
- 1.7** List five ways in which a government can harm or hinder its citizens.

In the past few decades, the world has undergone a fundamental transformation that will affect the rest of our lives, especially for the young. One of the most dramatic changes was the Third Wave of democracy.¹ After forty years of Cold War conflict between East and West, and the dominance of autocratic governments in the Third World, the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989 expanded the new era of **democratization**, which had begun a decade earlier. The communist nations of Eastern Europe shed their autocratic regimes almost overnight, and developed into new and often vibrant democracies. Other nations in East Asia, Africa, and Latin America participated in this democratic transition, allowing hundreds of millions to enjoy democratic freedoms. Today, democracy has become the dominant method of organizing government, even if democratic development is still incomplete.

Behind this democratic transition has been a slow but relatively steady process of **socioeconomic modernization** in most regions of the globe. In the 1980s, a quarter of the world's population lived in

absolute poverty, unable to meet everyday food and shelter needs and struggling with disease and the consequences of poverty. The number of people living in absolute poverty has dropped by nearly 1 percent a year since then, as the world's population has continued to grow.² In China alone, economic growth has taken 600 million people out of absolute poverty since 1981. In 2008, for the first time in history, less than half of the people in sub-Saharan Africa lived below the poverty line. Even in the advanced industrial democracies of Western Europe and North America, income levels and social conditions continued to improve compared to the 1950s and 1960s. The global recession of 2008 produced a partial retrenchment in socioeconomic conditions, but the world today is much richer and more socially secure than a generation or two ago.

This process of socioeconomic modernization has many consequences. Modernization has expanded the educational levels of the world's population, providing the skills and resources that lead to better occupations and hopefully to better citizens. In advanced industrial

democracies, this has meant the expansion of university and graduate degrees; in the developing world, this has meant increasing rates of literacy and basic education. About 90 percent of the world's population is now literate.³ The impact of modernization has especially transformed the conditions of women. In many developing nations, women were formerly second-class citizens, excluded from economic and political life. Literacy rates have increased the most for women, birth rates have fallen, and women's participation in the labor market in developing nations has expanded dramatically. In advanced industrial democracies, more women are being elected to governmental offices and taking high-ranking business jobs. Economic growth has also increased access to health care across the world, and contributed to dramatic progress in medical science. Among your own family, there are probably relatives who would have died in the 1950s and 1960s because necessary care was unavailable. And modernization has increased our access to information about the world and our lives. From the Nigerian taxi driver who watches the news on his cell phone to the Japanese college student who is connected 24-7, we live in a new information age. Often, social modernization is unsettling and evokes conflict, but the long-term benefits have improved the quality of life for most of the world's population. Moreover, these societal changes contribute to the expansion of democracy and citizen rights in both developed and developing societies.

The third force transforming contemporary societies is the rapid process of **globalization**, in which nations have become more open to and dependent on one another. Globalization has many faces. One is increasing trade in goods and services, which means that many of the products we buy are made in China and many of the telephone calls we make are answered in India. Outsourcing and loss of local jobs have been among the negative consequences of this aspect of globalization. Globalization has lowered the prices of many products and increased the richness of life. Globalization may also mean that citizens of all (or most) countries increasingly share common norms of an international system. But these effects have also created serious challenges for many states. Some, such as North Korea, Myanmar, and Iran, have sought to isolate themselves from its effects. Others have responded in a more accepting manner. Most of the industrialized countries of Europe have created a common market economy and a set of supranational political institutions embodied in the European Union.

What Is Comparative Politics?

1.1 Briefly describe the public and authoritative aspects of political decisions.

A key factor in these changes in the world today is the government system—which is the focus of this book. Governments, on their own or as representatives of their citizens, take policy actions that can foster or retard economic development. They are the primary guarantor of the rights and liberties of the citizens; sometimes they are the greatest threats to these liberties. They take actions that expand or retard the living conditions of their citizens. When nations must work together in the international system, governments attend international conferences and sign treaties. When states go to war, it is typically through the actions of a government or semigovernmental organization.

This book describes the variations in the governments and political systems that take these actions and make decisions affecting the nation. The actions of government constantly touch our lives. Our jobs are structured by government regulations, our homes are built to conform to government housing codes, public schools are funded and managed by the government, and we travel on roads maintained by the government and monitored by the police. Politics thus affects us in many important ways. Therefore, it is important to study how political decisions are made and what their consequences are.

Politics deals with human decisions, and political science is the study of such decisions. Yet not all decisions are political, and many of the social sciences study economic and social decisions that are of little interest to political science. Political scientists study decisions that are *public* and *authoritative*. The public sphere of politics deals with collective decisions that extend beyond the individual and private life, typically involving government action. Most of what happens within families, among friends, or in social groups belongs to the private sphere and is not controlled by the government. In totalitarian states, like East Germany before 1989 or North Korea today, the public sphere is very large and the private sphere is very limited. The state tries to dominate the life of its people, even intruding into family life. On the other hand, in some less developed nations, the private domain may almost crowd out the public one. Many people may be uninvolved

in politics and are untouched by the decisions made in the nation's capital. Western democracies have a more balanced mix of private and public spheres. However, the boundaries between the two spheres are redrawn all the time and may be a matter of contention.

Political decisions are also authoritative. Authority means that formal power rests in individuals or groups whose decisions are expected to be carried out and respected. Governments and other authorities may use persuasion, inducements, or brute force to ensure compliance. For instance, a religious authority such as the pope has few coercive powers. He can persuade, but rarely compel, the Catholic Church's followers. In contrast, tax authorities, such as the U.S. Internal Revenue Service, can both exhort and compel people to follow their rules.

Thus, *politics* refers to activities associated with the control of public decisions among a given people and in a given territory, where this control may be backed up by authoritative means. Politics involves the crafting of these authoritative decisions—who gets to make them and for what purposes.

Our approach to studying the political process is based on two principles. The first was articulated by the late Seymour Martin Lipset, who frequently said that he who knows one country knows no country. Lipset's argument was that in order to understand any one nation and its government, we need to compare it to others to see what is truly distinctive or similar relative to other nations. For instance, all governments face the challenge of raising taxes; by comparing different tax systems across nations, we see the benefits and limits of various tax policies. We might think that the conditions in one nation are dependent on specific institutional arrangements or the nation's political history, but we can only determine this by comparing nations with different institutions or histories. The nature of good science, including political science, is comparison—and this book follows this premise by comparing a dozen nations of varying social and political conditions.

Our second principle is that to compare political systems and their governments, we need a conceptual framework that facilitates comparison of what are seemingly quite different elements. How does one compare, for example, the theocratic government of Iran with the centuries-old democracy in Britain, or the governing experience in Nigeria? Comparing apples and oranges is difficult, but it can be done. This book builds on a theoretical model that compares the governing process in its basic elements, connecting

these elements together to describe the overall political process (see Chapter 2).⁴

We live in one of the most exciting times to study politics. The end of the Cold War created a new international order, although its shape is still uncertain. Democratic transitions in Latin America, Eastern Europe, East Asia, and Africa have transformed the world, although it is unclear how many of these new democracies will endure and what forms they might take. Throughout the world, globalization brings the citizens of different countries closer together and makes them more dependent on one another, for better or worse. Some of the issues that people in many societies confront—such as climate change and achieving international peace—are transnational and indeed global. Part of their solutions, we hope, lies in the political choices that people in different communities make about their collective future. In this book, we try to give you a sense of how governments and politics address these challenges.

Challenges: Building Community

1.2 Discuss the challenges of building a national identity for a nonhomogeneous population.

One of the first, perhaps the first, challenge that a new state faces is to build a national community. Most states do not have a homogeneous population, and instilling a sense of shared identity can be difficult to accomplish. Building a common identity and a sense of community is important because conflicts over national, ethnic, or religious identities can be explosive causes of political turmoil, as we have witnessed in Iraq, the former Yugoslavia, and the Sudan. It is difficult to advance socially, economically, or politically if the citizens of a region do not share some common bond and a commonly accepted set of goals.

While building community is a common challenge, some countries are in a much better situation than others. Japan, for example, has an ethnically homogeneous population, a common language, and a long national political history. Most Japanese share in the religions of Buddhism and Shintoism, and the country is separated by miles of ocean from its most important neighbors. Nigeria, in contrast, is an artificial creation of British colonial rule and has no

common precolonial history. The population is sharply divided between Muslims and Christians; the Christians are divided equally into Catholics and Protestants. There are some 250 different ethnic groups in Nigeria, speaking various local languages in addition to English. Obviously, the challenges of building community are much greater in Nigeria than they are in Japan. The challenge of community building is most prominent in the developing world, where current political structures are relatively young, although even Europe faces challenges, as in Basque and Scottish autonomy movements.

Building a common sense of community is often described as part of a process of nation building. The word *nation* is frequently used interchangeably with the word *state*, as in the *United Nations*. Strictly speaking, however, we use the term **nation** to refer to a group of people with a common identity. That common identity may be built upon a common language, history, race, or culture, or simply upon the fact that these people have occupied the same territory. Nations may or may not have their own state or independent government. In some cases—such as Japan, France, or Sweden—there is a close correspondence between the memberships of the state and the nation. Most people who identify themselves as Japanese do in fact live in the state of Japan, and most people who live in Japan identify themselves as Japanese.

In other cases, states are *multinational*—consisting of a multitude of different nations. The Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, and the Sudan were multinational states that broke apart. Some nations are much larger than the corresponding states, such as Germany for most of its history or China. Other nations have split into two or more states for political reasons, such as Korea today and Germany between 1949 and 1990. Some groups with claims to be nations have no state at all, such as the Kurds, the Basques, and the Tamils.

Ethnicity

Ethnic groups are typically defined by common physical traits, languages, cultures, or history. Like nationality, **ethnicity** need not have any objective basis in genetics, culture, or history. German sociologist Max Weber defined ethnic groups as “those human groups that entertain a subjective belief in their common descent because of similarities of physical type or of customs or both, or because of memories of

colonization and migration. . . . [I]t does not matter whether or not an objective blood relationship exists.”⁵ For example, the Serbs, Croats, and Muslim Bosnians may believe they are descended from different ancestors and hence are physically different as well. Over centuries, originally homogeneous populations may intermix with other populations, even though the culture may continue.

In many developing countries, the former colonial powers established boundaries that cut across ethnic lines. In 1947, the British withdrew from India and divided the subcontinent into a northern Muslim area—Pakistan—and a southern Hindu area—India. The most immediate consequence was a terrible civil conflict and “ethnoreligious” cleansing. There still are almost 100 million Muslims in India and serious religious tensions. Similarly, forty years ago, the Ibo ethnic group in Nigeria fought an unsuccessful separatist war against the rest of the country, resulting in the deaths of roughly a million people. The Tutsi and Hutu peoples of the small African state of Rwanda engaged in a civil war of extermination in the 1990s, with hundreds of thousands of people slaughtered and millions fleeing the country in fear of their lives.

The migration across state boundaries is another source of ethnic differentiation. The American descendants of formerly enslaved Africans are witnesses to the largest coercive labor migration in world history. In contrast, today, there are Indians, Bangladeshis, Egyptians, and Palestinians seeking better lives in the oil sheikhdoms around the Persian Gulf, Mexican and Caribbean migrant workers moving to the United States, and Turkish and North African migrants relocating to Europe. Two scholars refer to the contemporary world as living through an “Age of Migration” comparable in scale to that of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁶

The later chapters of this book will focus on twelve states to illustrate the detailed working of the political process and how governments are structured to address the challenges they face. All twelve of these nations still include a significant ethnic or racial minority. For example, recent migration has made such previously homogeneous states as Britain, France, Japan, and Germany more multiethnic. Other countries, such as the United States, have long been multiethnic and have become even more so. India and Nigeria were multicultural regions that took on national form with colonization and decolonization. Russia reflects the diversity of



Globalization Takes Many Forms

German universities now have a diverse student body drawn from around the world.

historical empire building. Moreover, globalization and migration seem destined to increase the diversity of many societies worldwide.

Language

Another challenge in building community may be language differences. Language can be a source of identity that may overlap with ethnicity. There are approximately 5,000 different languages in use in the world today, and a much smaller number of language families. Most of these languages are spoken by relatively small tribal groups in the developing world. Only 200 languages have a million or more speakers, and only 8 may be classified as world languages.

English is the most truly international language. Close to one-third of the world's population lives in countries in which English is one of the official languages. Other international languages include Spanish, Arabic, Russian, Portuguese, French, and German. The language with the largest number of speakers, though in several varieties, is Chinese (with well over a billion speakers). The major languages with the greatest international spread are those of the former colonial powers—Great Britain, France, Spain, and Portugal.

Linguistic divisions can create particularly thorny political problems. Political systems can choose to ignore racial, ethnic, or religious differences among their citizens, but it is more difficult to function using several languages. Linguistic conflicts typically show up in controversies over educational policies, or over language use in the government. Occasionally, language regulation is more intrusive, as in Quebec, where English-only street signs are prohibited and large corporations are required to conduct their business in French.

Religious Differences and Fundamentalism

States also vary in their religious characteristics. In some—such as Israel, the Irish Republic, and Pakistan—religion is a basis of national identity for most of the population. Iran is a theocratic regime, in which religious authorities govern and religious law is part of the country's legal code. In other societies, such as Poland under communism, religion can be a rallying point for political movements. In many Latin American countries, the clergy have embraced a liberation theology that fosters advocacy of the poor and criticism of government brutality.

Christianity in its various forms is the largest and most widely spread religion in the world today. Roughly one-third of the world's population belongs to the Christian Church, which is divided into three major groups—Roman Catholics, Protestants (of many denominations), and Orthodox (e.g., Greek and Russian). Catholics are dominant in Europe and Latin America; there is a more equal distribution of Catholics and Protestants elsewhere. While the traditional Protestant denominations have declined in North America in the last decades, three forms of Protestantism—fundamentalist, Pentecostal, and evangelical—have increased there, and also, especially, in Latin America and Asia. The Muslims are the second largest religious group and the most rapidly growing religion. Between one-fourth and one-fifth of the world's population is Muslim, and it is concentrated in Asia and Africa. Islam has become revitalized in Central Asia, and Muslims have been particularly successful in missionary activities in sub-Saharan Africa.

Religion typically guides the social and political behavior of its supporters. This may lead one to be concerned about others, or become a source of intense disagreement with those who hold different beliefs. For instance, religious groups often battle over such issues as the rules of marriage and divorce, child rearing, sexual morality, abortion, the emancipation of women, and the regulation of religious observances. Religious communities often take a special interest in educational policies in order to transmit their ideas and ethics. On such issues, religious groups may clash with one another as well as with more secular groups.

Religious fundamentalism has emerged in some form in all major faiths, often in reaction to social modernization. While each religion disagrees over the interpretation of its sacred texts and values, fundamentalists believe in the absolute truth of their religion in relation to others. Some want political life to be organized according to their sacred texts and doctrines. The rise of fundamentalism has affected the entire world. For example, India has frequent confrontations between Hindus and Muslims; Nigeria sees conflict between Muslims and Christians.

Too often, religious fundamentalists employ violence to assert their positions. These acts of terrorism are intended to stagger the imagination, frighten, and weaken the will. The September 11, 2001, jihadist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon involved not only suicide pilot-hijackers but also aircraft

filled with volatile fuel and innocent passengers converted into immense projectiles. These attacks were followed by jihadist assaults in Bali, Madrid, London, Riyadh, and other cities. Many nations worldwide now face the challenge of dealing with international terrorism by religious and other extremists.

Fostering Economic Development

1.3 Explain the processes and challenges of economic development, giving specific examples from various countries.

The nation of Bhutan has a national goal to develop its level of Gross National Happiness (GNH). The Bhutanese idea is to measure social progress in terms of the quality of life in more holistic and psychological terms than the standard measures of economic well-being. Its Buddhist religious heritage has led to government programs and research to increase the happiness of the society, even though it is a low-income nation.

Bhutan is very unusual; people in most political systems want their government to foster social and economic development. Thus, economic and social development are important state goals. Economic development implies that people can enjoy new resources and opportunities, and that parents can expect their children to do at least as well as themselves. Many people expect government to improve their living conditions through economic growth, providing jobs, and raising income standards. The success of governments—both democratic and autocratic—is often measured in economic terms.

In affluent, advanced industrial societies, contemporary living standards provide for basic social needs (and much more) for most of the public. Indeed, the current political challenges in these nations often focus on problems resulting from the economic successes of the past, such as protecting environmental quality or managing the consequences of growth. New challenges to social welfare policies are emerging from the medical and social security costs of aging populations. For most of the world, however, substantial basic economic needs still exist, and governments focus on improving the socioeconomic conditions of the nation.

Over the past two to three decades, economic growth has transformed living conditions in many nations more than in any similar period in the past.



Construction in China

With the Chinese government encouraging economic growth and foreign investment, the Shanghai skyline is now a mix of high-rises and construction cranes.

The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) combines measures of economic well-being, life expectancy, and educational achievement into its Human Development Index (HDI).⁷ The HDI shows dramatic improvements in life conditions in many regions of the world over the past three decades (see Figure 1.1). East Asia and South Asia have made substantial improvements since 1980. For instance, in 1975, South Korea and Taiwan had a standard of living close to many poor African nations, and they are now affluent societies. Even more striking is the change in the two largest nations in the world. China improved from a low HDI in 1975 (the same as Botswana or Swaziland) to a level that is close to Russia or Brazil by 2012; India followed a similar upward trajectory. These statistics represent improved living conditions for billions of people. Living conditions in sub-Saharan Africa have also recently begun to improve. Although severe economic problems remain, this development

trend is improving the living conditions of hundreds of millions of people, freeing them from absolute hunger and poverty, and providing the resources so their lives can improve in other ways.

The process of economic development typically follows a common course. One element is a transformation of the structure of the labor force from an agrarian to an industrial and then an advanced industrial economy. The five advanced industrial countries in this book all have agricultural employment of less than 10 percent of the labor force. Poor countries, in contrast, often have more than two-thirds of their labor forces employed in agriculture. In addition, economic development is typically linked to urbanization as peasants leave their farms and move to the cities. In nations undergoing rapid economic development, such as China, urban migration creates new opportunities for the workers but also new economic and social policy challenges for the governments.

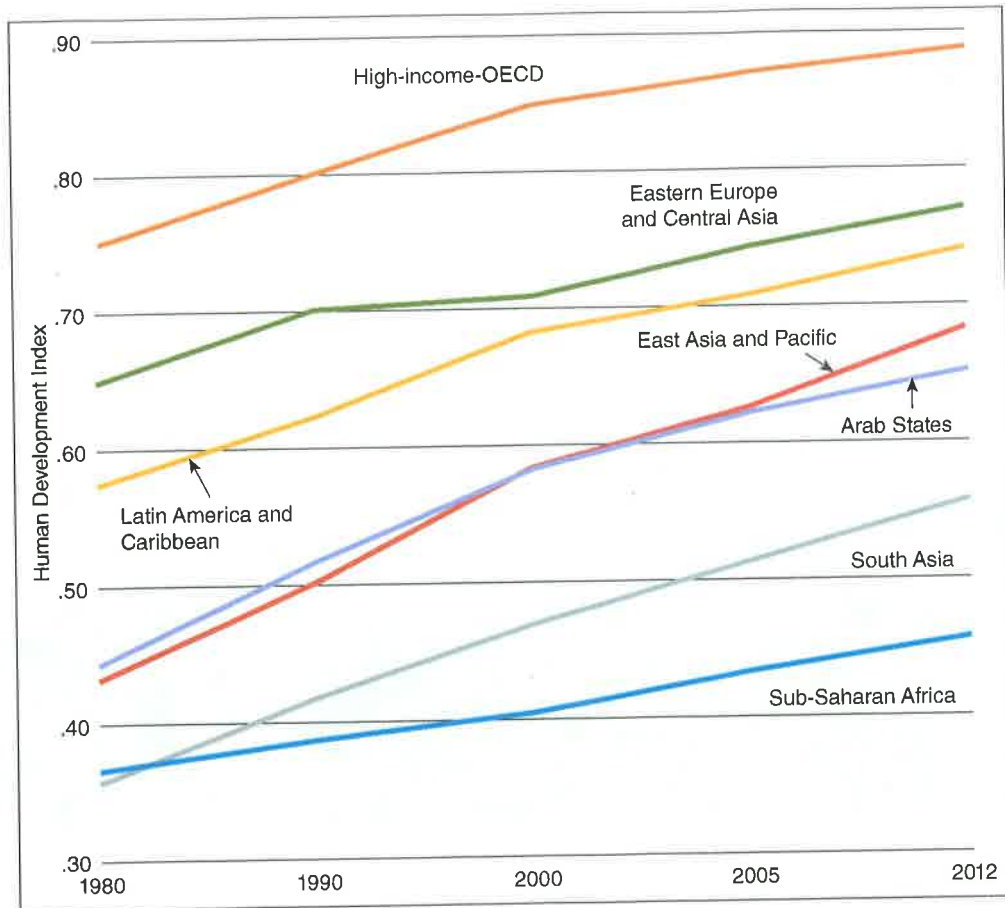


FIGURE 1.1

Changes in Human Development Index by Region

Source: United Nations Development Program, *Human Development Report 2013* (New York: United Nations, 2013).

Figure 1.2 presents the wide gap in living standards that still exists across the hundred largest nations in the world, and shows how levels of affluence affect basic social conditions. The horizontal axis in the figure aligns nations in terms of the **gross national income (GNI)** per capita, which is a measure of national affluence. The vertical axis displays average number of years of education for the population that is over fifteen years of age. The twelve core nations discussed in this book are highlighted in red.

Two things are obvious. Perhaps the most striking feature of this figure is the wide gap in living standards that still exists across nations worldwide, including eleven of the nations in this book. The level of affluence per capita is about twenty times higher in the Western advanced industrial democracies than in Nigeria.⁸ Second, affluence is strongly related to the educational levels of a nation's people. The fit between

education and income is so strong that the United Nations combines these two items (and other statistics) to define the HDI.

Income levels and education are also related to other measures of social development. The countries with the fewest literate citizens also have the fewest radios and television sets—even though these devices do not require literacy. Economic development is also associated with better nutrition and medical care. In the economically advanced countries, fewer children die in infancy, the impact of disease is limited, and the resources exist to improve the quality of life in many ways. Improvements in living conditions have substantially increased life expectancy in many low-income nations, such as Mexico and China. However, the average life expectancy of a Nigerian is less than fifty years, it is sixty-three years for an Indian, and over eighty years for a Japanese. Material productivity,

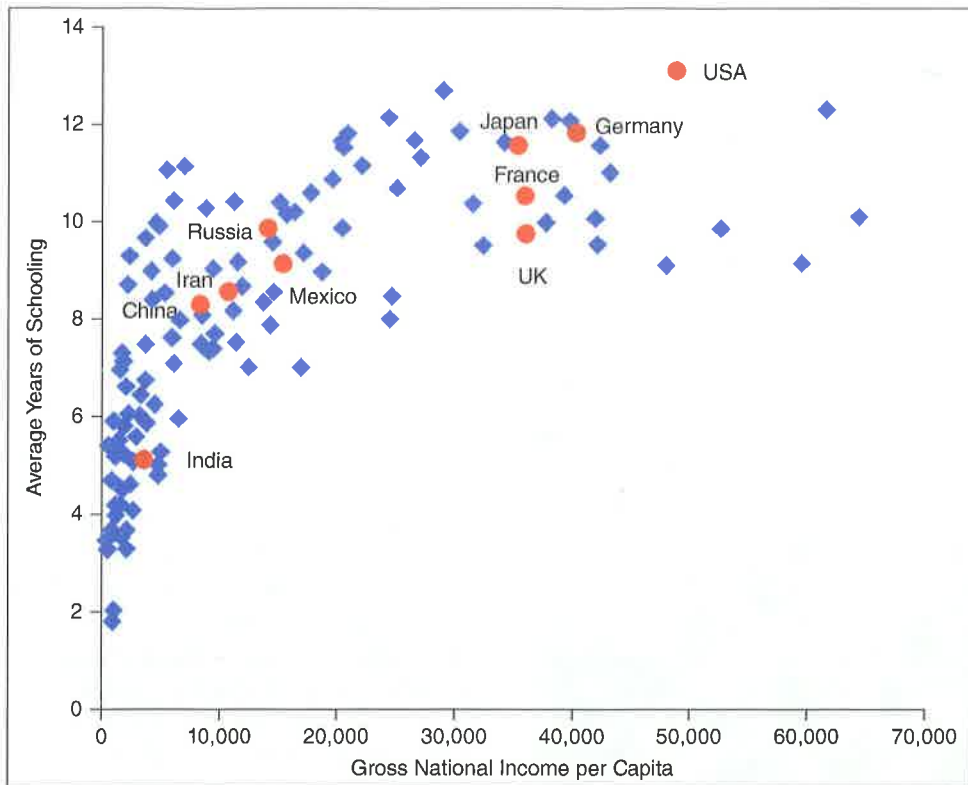


FIGURE 1.2

National Affluence and Schooling

Economic development improves the resources and opportunities of the public as seen in rising education levels.

Source: World Bank Indicators for 2011. Gross National Income is per capita based on purchasing power parity; years of schooling is for the population over age fifteen. Figure is based on 150 largest nations by population for which data are available.

education, exposure to communications media, and longer and healthier lives are closely interconnected.

Thus, low-income nations face the urgent issues of economic development: how to improve the immediate welfare of their citizens yet also invest for the future. Political leaders and celebrities, such as Bono and Angelina Jolie, have mobilized public awareness that these differences in living conditions are a global concern—for those living in the developing world, for the affluent nations and their citizens, and for international organizations such as the United Nations and the World Bank.

Problems of Economic Development

While economic development can be a partial solution to many of a country's needs, it can also create new challenges. Health, income, and opportunity are rarely evenly distributed within nations, and the unequal

distribution of resources and opportunities can stimulate political conflict. A high national income may conceal significant poverty and lack of opportunities in some sectors of society. A high rate of national growth may benefit only particular regions or social groups, ignoring other parts of the population. Parts of the “inner cities” of the United States, the older parts of Delhi and Kolkata in India, remote and landlocked parts of many African states, many rural areas in China, and the arid northeast of Brazil all suffer from poverty and hopelessness, while other parts of these countries experience growth and improved welfare. Moreover, rapid economic development may increase such inequalities.

Generally speaking, economic development improves the equality of income, at least past a certain stage of economic growth. Wealthy nations like Japan, Germany, and France have relatively more egalitarian income distributions than middle- or low-income countries. Still, the wealthiest 10 percent in



Poverty in Third World Countries

Poverty in Third World countries is illustrated by this scene of a back street in Kolkata, India, where the poor make their beds in the streets. Similar scenes, though on a lesser scale, are to be encountered in modern American cities, where homeless people sleep on the sidewalks and in doorways.

Japan receive about the same total income as the poorest 40 percent receive. This is a large gap in life conditions between the rich and poor, but the gap is even wider in less affluent nations. In Mexico, a middle-income country, the ratio is closer to three to one; in Brazil it is more than five to one. The United States has higher inequality than Japan and the countries of Western Europe, but lower than most other countries. In Russia and other postcommunist societies, the development of new capitalist markets generated new income inequalities. Research suggests that a nation's political characteristics make a difference. India has consciously worked to narrow inequality, while inequality in China has steadily increased.

Various policies can mitigate the hardships economic inequality causes in developing societies. If

there is equality of opportunity and high social mobility, inequality may decline over time and may not seem so oppressive to younger generations. Investments in education can also lessen inequality. Taiwan and South Korea show how land reforms equalized opportunity early in the developmental process. Investment in primary and secondary education, in agricultural inputs and rural infrastructure (principally roads and water), and in labor-intensive industries produced remarkable results for several decades. Thus, some growth policies mitigate inequalities, but it can be very difficult to put them into practice, especially where substantial inequalities already exist.

Another correlate of development is population growth. As health care improves, living standards increase, life expectancies lengthen, and populations grow. This is a positive development because it represents improved living conditions for these people, but rapid population growth also can pose new policy challenges. Some projections estimate that the world's population will increase to 7 billion by 2015, and poorer countries will see a more rapid rate of growth. In 2005, Hania Zlotnik of the United Nations (UN) population division estimated that "out of every 100 persons added to the [world's] population in the coming decade, 97 will live in developing countries."⁹ Rapid economic growth in the developing world can create significant burdens for these nations.

These prospects have produced a development literature that mixes both light and heat. Economist Amartya Sen warns of a "danger that in the confrontation between apocalyptic pessimism on one hand, and a dismissive smugness, on the other, a genuine understanding of the nature of the population problem may be lost."¹⁰ He points out that one of the first effects of "modernization" is to increase the population rapidly as new sanitation measures and modern pharmaceuticals reduce the death rate. As an economy develops, however, changing conditions tend to reduce fertility. With improved education (particularly of women), health, and welfare, the advantages of lower fertility become clear, and population growth rates decline.

Today, the native populations are decreasing in many affluent European nations because fertility rates are below levels necessary to sustain a constant population size. This pattern also seems to be occurring in parts of the developing world. Thus, annual population growth in the world has declined over the last two decades. The rate of population growth in India, for



Environmental Challenges

The world's increasing energy use is causing serious environmental challenges. The burning of fossil fuels—such as coal, oil, and gas—pollutes our air, water, and atmosphere, whereas nuclear power plants, such as this one in Northern Bohemia, pose the risk of nuclear radiation.

example, was 2.2 percent in the 1970s and has since declined. Latin America peaked at a higher rate and then came down sharply. Sub-Saharan Africa continues to experience relatively high birth rates.¹¹

Economic growth can have other social costs. For instance, advanced industrial societies are dealing with the environmental costs of industrial development and a consumer society. Despoiled forests, depleted soils and fisheries, polluted air and water, nuclear waste, and endangered species now burden their legislative dockets. With increasing industrialization and urbanization in the developing world, many of these environmental problems could worsen. At the same time, some environmental problems are even more acute in less developed countries, where population growth and urbanization create shortages of clean air, clean water, and adequate sanitation.¹² And economic growth in a world based on a carbon economy has raised the new issue of global

climate change that will impact the planet as a whole. Thus, economic development generally improves the living conditions of the public, but in the process, it produces new policy problems that governments must address.

Fostering Democracy, Human Rights, and Civil Liberties

1.4 Describe the characteristics of representative democracy and the connections between economic development and democratization.

Another major force transforming contemporary political systems is the democratization process, which includes the enhancement of **human rights**

and the expansion of freedom. Democracy is the form of government to which most contemporary countries, more or less sincerely and successfully, aspire. A **democracy**, briefly defined, is a political system in which citizens enjoy a number of basic civil and political rights, and in which their most important political leaders are elected in free and fair elections and are accountable under a rule of law. Democracy literally means “government by the people.”

In large political systems, such as contemporary states, democracy is achieved primarily through a process of citizen representation. Elections, competitive political parties, and representative assemblies make some degree of democracy—some degree of “government by the people”—possible. Representative democracy is not complete or ideal. But the more citizens are involved and the more influential their choices, the more democratic the system.

In contrast, **authoritarian** political systems lack one or several of democracy’s defining features. Authoritarian states can take several forms (see Chapter 6). In **oligarchies**, literally “rule by the few,” a small political elite withholds political rights from the majority of the population. South Africa until the abolition of apartheid in the early 1990s is a good example. Other authoritarian states, such as China or Zimbabwe, are party, military, or personal dictatorships. **Totalitarian systems**—such as Nazi Germany, the Soviet Union under Joseph Stalin, or North Korea today—are systems in which the government constricts the rights and privacy of its citizens in a particularly severe and intrusive manner.

As societies become more complex, richer, and more technologically advanced, the probability of public involvement and democratization increases. In the first half of the twentieth century, most Western states became democracies. After World War II, a second democratic wave—which lasted from 1943 until the early 1960s—saw both newly independent states (such as India and Nigeria) and defeated authoritarian powers (such as Germany and Japan) set up the formal institutions of democracy.¹³

Another round of democratic transitions began in 1974, involving Southern Europe, East Asia, Latin America, and a number of African states—the so-called “Third Wave” of democratization.¹⁴ The most dramatic changes came in Central and Eastern Europe, where, in a few short years, the Soviet empire collapsed, and these countries rapidly converted to democracy; many joined the European Union. Similarly, much of Latin America has shifted from dictatorships (often military) to democracy. The end of the apartheid regime in South Africa was equally dramatic. Most recently, the Arab Spring has produced regime change in several North African nations, but the ultimate outcomes of these popular revolutions is still uncertain.

As a result of these three democratization waves, democracy has become a common goal of the global community (see Figure 1.3). In the 1970s, only a third of the world’s independent countries had competitive party and electoral systems. Communist governments, other single-party governments, and other authoritarian regimes dominated the landscape. By 2013, almost two-thirds of states had a system of electoral democracy, and human rights and liberties were similarly spreading to more of the world’s population.¹⁵ The number of

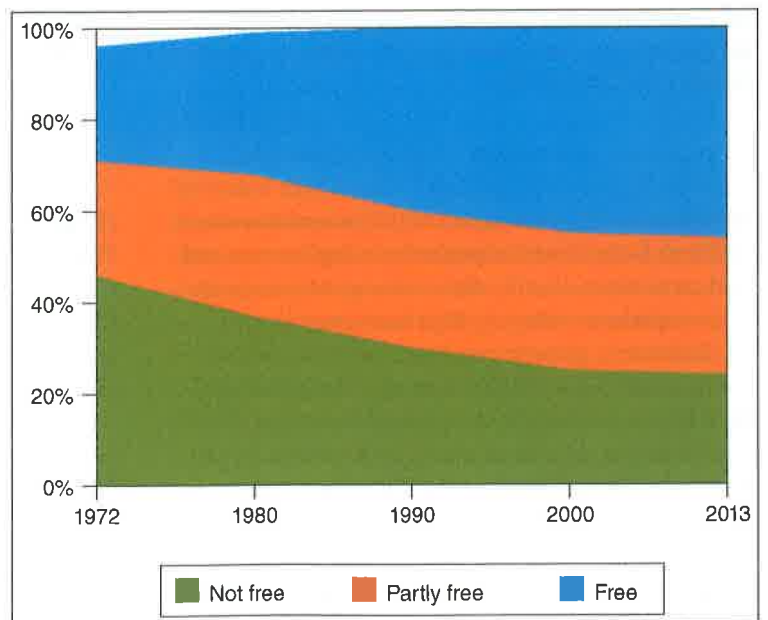


FIGURE 1.3
Growth in Free Governments over Time
The Free World has been growing.

Source: Freedom House, *Freedom in the World 2013* (www.freedomhouse.org). The figure displays the percentages for all states.

democracies has been stable over the past decade, with advances balanced by some backward movements.

This democratization process is broadly linked to the social modernization of nations.¹⁶ Economic development transforms societies in ways that typically encourage democratization by creating autonomous political groups that demand political influence, expanding the political skills of the citizenry, and creating economic complexity that encourages systems of self-governance. Social modernization also transforms the political values and political culture of the public, which increases demands for a more participatory system (see Chapter 3). New democracies are much more likely to endure when founded in economically developed societies. Yet democracy typically does not come about overnight or as an immediate reaction to changing social conditions. It often takes time to establish

the conditions fostering democracy, create democratic institutions, and educate the public to comply with the rules of the democratic process.

Figure 1.4 illustrates the relationship between a nation's level of social modernization (the gross national income per capita on the horizontal axis) and the development of democracy (the World Bank's voice and accountability index on the vertical axis).¹⁷ These two traits are strongly related. The figure shows that it can be especially difficult to consolidate democracy in less economically developed societies. In some developing nations, democratic processes fail to produce stable institutions and effective public policies and eventually give way to some form of authoritarianism. In Nigeria, for example, military coups overthrew democratically elected (but badly flawed) governments in 1966 and again in 1983, and redemocratization did not happen

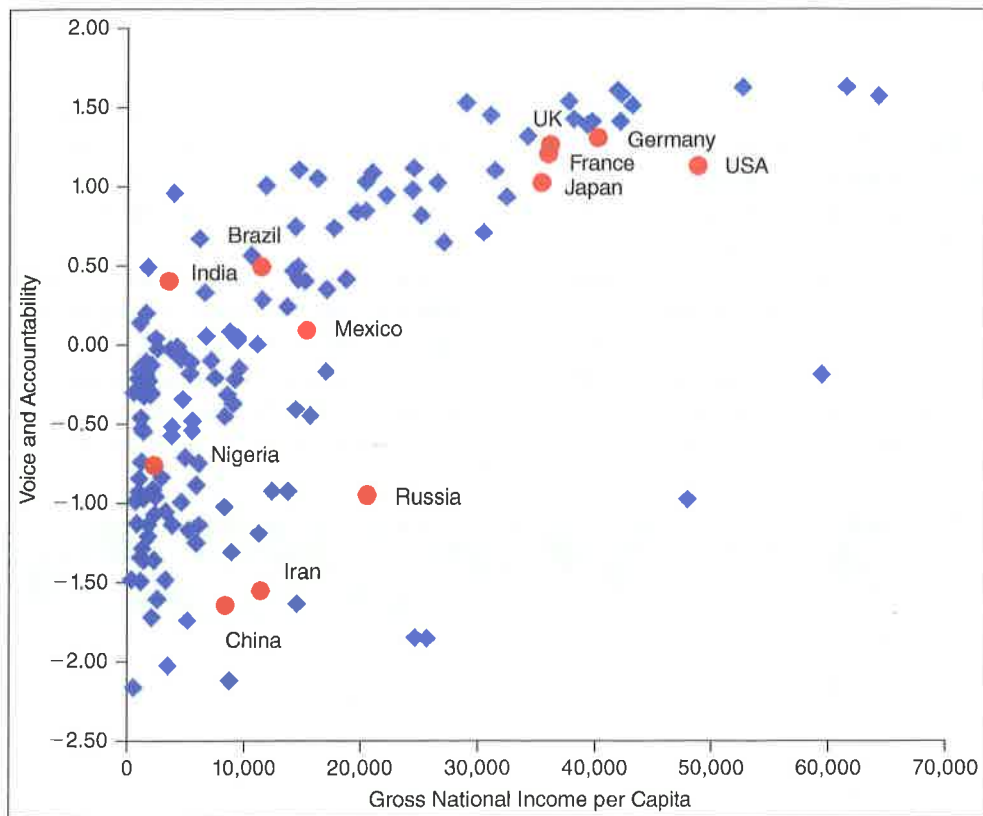


FIGURE 1.4
National Affluence and Democratic Development

Affluence increases the likelihood that a nation will have a more democratic political system, but this is not a perfect relationship.

Source: World Bank Indicators for 2011. Gross national income is per capita based on purchasing power parity; based on 150 largest nations by population for which data are available.

until 1999. Even today, democracy in Nigeria is limited. Nigeria is by no means unique. Transition can move in either direction, toward or away from democracy. Often the entrenched political class uses coercion or the threat of force to maintain their political control. For example, China has made major economic advances in recent years, but the regime limits those factors that might press for democratization and the expansion of citizen rights. And Russia has regressed democratically under Vladimir Putin's leadership. At the same time, India has been the counterexample by embracing democracy since gaining independence. So the relationship between social modernization and democracy is strong, but not total.

Democratization is also an ongoing process. Even when states adopt democratic institutions, there is no guarantee that they will grant human rights and civil liberties to all their people. In addition, the definition of appropriate rights and liberties evolves. Democracies have to balance between respecting the will of the majority and protecting the rights of the minority. Even when political rulers sincerely try to promote human rights and civil liberties (which is by no means always the case), they do not always agree on the nature of those rights.

A good example of the spread of rights and liberties—and cultural differences in the definition of rights—involves gender issues. Governments in Western industrial societies favor gender policies that guarantee equal access for women in society, the workplace, and politics. The UN and other international organizations are advocates of women's rights. But gender norms often vary across cultural zones. The

UN's statistics indicate that many developing nations hesitate to grant equal rights to women, restricting their education and their involvement in the economy and politics.¹⁸ Restrictions on women's rights are often stark in many Arab states, where they clash with social norms and religious beliefs. Ironically, improving the status of women is one of the most productive ways to develop a nation politically and economically (see Box 1.1), for example, by improving educational and health standards and stabilizing birth rates. In short, expanding human rights is an ongoing process in the world today, and there is much room for further progress.

The Contribution of Globalization

1.5 Discuss the positive and negative effects of globalization.

Most social scientists agree that the globalization process is affecting both socioeconomic and political development—but they disagree on whether the consequences are positive or negative.¹⁹ Discussions of globalization typically focus on the economic side. International trade of goods and services has increased, which has created massive investments in the economic infrastructure of developing nations. Product production shifts to where costs are lowest or production is most efficient. For example, Levi's jeans sold in the United States have been made in over a dozen different

BOX

1.1

Women and Political Development

If a poor nation could do one thing to stimulate its development, what should it do? Opening the fiftieth session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women in 2006, UN Deputy Secretary-General Louise Fréchette said the international community finally comprehends that empowering women and girls around the globe is the most effective tool for a country's development. She stated that studies have repeatedly shown that by giving women equal education and work opportunities, and access to a society's decision-making processes, a country can

boost its economic productivity, reduce infant and maternal mortality rates, and improve the general population's nutrition and health. These results are achieved because women's education and participation in the labor force increase family output, increase the likelihood that children will be better educated and benefit from health care, improve nutrition in the family, and better the quality of life for women and their families.

Source: UN News Centre, February 27, 2006.

nations in recent years, with only a single factory left in the United States. Products made in China may have been designed in California and use raw materials from Australia, memory chips from South Korea, and design elements patented in Europe. Then these products are shipped to a global customer base.

Some experts stress the positive economic effects of globalization. Globalization lowers the prices of many products, which benefits consumers in the nations that buy products from this international network. Access to new goods also expands choices. The production nations benefit from foreign direct investment and increased employment for their citizens. Indeed, the appeal of working in a factory for better wages is a magnet that draws millions to urban areas in developing nations. Consequently, a country's participation in the global economy is positively related to its levels of economic and democratic development.

At the same time, other experts point to the negative effects of globalization. Outsourcing and the loss of jobs hurt individuals, who often face unemployment as a result. A global economy exerts downward pressures on salaries in those parts of the economy that are part of the international system. There are repeated examples of companies exploiting workers in developing nations with sweatshop-like conditions.

Most discussions of globalization focus on its economic aspects, but it has important social and political effects as well.²⁰ Globalization promotes the diffusion of international norms as societies interact more and become more interdependent. For instance, greater

participation in international trade and investment generates pressures to lessen economic corruption in developing nations. Globalization also appears to benefit the social and economic status of women, who gain rights and responsibilities that come from a developing nation's participation in international commerce and the social norms and equal rights values of the international system. Globalization has mixed effects, but in overall terms, it has positive benefits on the global economy and the spread of human rights, and those countries that shield themselves from fair trade generally suffer.

What Governments Do

1.6 List five ways in which a government can help its citizens.

A recent libertarian science fiction book begins with the scenario of a group of travelers landing at an airport after a long overseas flight. As they disembark from the plane, they notice that there are no police checking passports, no customs officers scanning baggage, and no officials applying immigration rules.²¹ They have landed in a society without government, and the puzzle is what having no government would mean for the citizenry. The answer is: a great deal (see Box 1.2). As philosophers have pointed out, there are many reasons why people create governments and prefer to live under such a social order—in part because governments are important vehicles for addressing the challenges that face these societies.

BOX 1.2

U.S. Government's Top Ten List

Paul Light surveyed 450 historians and political scientists to assess the U.S. government's greatest achievements in the second half of the twentieth century. Their top ten list is as follows:

- Help rebuild Europe after World War II
- Expand the right to vote for minorities
- Promote equal access to public accommodations
- Reduce disease
- Reduce workplace discrimination
- Ensure safe food and drinking water
- Strengthen the nation's highway system
- Increase older Americans' access to health care

- Reduce the federal deficit
- Promote financial security in retirement

Several of these policy areas will be discussed in Chapter 7, but note that the first of these accomplishments had to do with the country's external environment: rebuilding Europe after World War II. Other achievements include important public goods (safe water, highways), as well as promoting fairness and building a social safety net.

Source: Paul Light, *Government's Greatest Achievements of the Past Half-Century* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2000) (www.brookings.edu/comm/reformwatch/rw02.pdf).

Community and Nation Building

As noted earlier, one of the first purposes of governments is to create and maintain a community in which people can feel safe and comfortable. Governments can help generate such communities in many different ways—for example, by teaching a common language, instilling common norms and values, creating common national myths and symbols, and supporting a national identity. However, sometimes such actions create controversy because there is disagreement about these norms and values.

Nation-building activities help instill common worldviews, values, and expectations. Using a concept discussed more in Chapter 3, governments can help create a shared **political culture**. The political culture defines the public's expectations about the political process and its role within the process. The more the political culture is shared, the easier it is to live in peaceful coexistence and engage in activities for mutual gain.

Security and Order

Many experts claim that only strong governments can make society safe for their inhabitants; providing security and law and order is one of the most essential tasks of government. Externally, security means protecting from attacks against the country. Armies, navies, and air forces typically perform this function. Internally, security means protecting against theft and violence by members of one's own society. In most societies, providing this protection is the police's function.

Providing security and order is a critical function of modern governments. While governments worldwide have privatized many of the services they once performed—for example, those involving post offices, railroads, and telecommunications—few, if any, have privatized their defense forces or police. This shows that security is one of the most essential roles of government. The jihadist terrorist attacks in New York City and Washington, D.C., on September 11, 2001, and subsequent attacks in London, Madrid, and elsewhere underscore the importance of security.

Protecting Rights

Thomas Jefferson reflected a larger reality when he wrote about the importance of “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness” in the Declaration of Independence.

A prime goal of government is to protect social and political rights, such as freedom of speech and association, and protection against various forms of discrimination and harassment. Governments also play a key role in protecting the rights of religious, racial, and other social groups. Human development stresses the expansion of these rights and liberties, and governments play a key role in this process.

John Locke, an early political theorist, considered property rights to be another critical factor in developing a prosperous and lawful community. Without effective protection of property rights, people will not invest their goods or energies in productive processes. If you were an entrepreneur, would you invest your time in growing a business or expanding a farm if you didn't believe you were safe from someone (or the government) claiming the fruits of your labors? Unless property rights exist and contracts can be enforced, people will be hesitant to trade and invest. Anything beyond a subsistence economy requires effective property rights and contracts.

Many analysts argue that one of the most restrictive limitations on economic development in the Third World is the government's inability (or unwillingness) to guarantee such rights. Peasant families in many societies have lived for generations on a plot of land but cannot claim ownership, which erodes their incentive and opportunity to invest in the future.

Promoting Economic Efficiency and Growth

Economists have long debated the government's potential role in promoting economic development. Neoclassical economics shows that markets are efficient when property rights are protected, when competition is rigorous, and when information is freely available. When these conditions do not hold, however, markets may fail and the economy may suffer.²²

Governments are especially important in providing **public goods**, such as clean air, a national defense, or disease prevention. Public goods mean that if one person enjoys them, they cannot be withheld from other members of the public. Consider clean air. In general terms, it is impossible to provide one person with clean air without also giving it to his or her neighbors. Moreover, my enjoyment of clean air does not mean that my neighbors have any less of it. Analysts often claim that because public goods are shared, and thus cannot be

produced by individual action, only government can provide the right quantity of them.

Governments can also address the problems that arise when an economic activity has consequences that are not borne by the producer or the user. For instance, a company may produce environmental pollution if it ignores the environmental impact of its production methods. Polluting factories, waste dumps, prisons, and major highways can impose large costs on those who live near them. Governments can help protect people from such consequences or ensure that burdens are fairly shared.

Governments can also promote fair competition in economic markets. For example, governments can ensure that businesses follow minimum standards of worker protection and product liability. In other cases, the government may control potentially monopolistic companies to ensure that they do not abuse their market power. This happened in the nineteenth century with railroad monopolies, and more currently with technology monopolies such as Microsoft and Google. In these cases, the government acts as the policeman to prevent the economically powerful from unfairly exploiting their power.

Social Justice

Many people argue that governments should promote social justice by redistributing wealth and other resources among citizens, and that a just distribution of resources is necessary for effective citizenship and a prosperous economy.²³ In many countries, the distribution of income and property is highly uneven, and this is particularly troubling when there is little upward mobility or when inequalities tend to grow over time.

Government can redistribute resources from the better-off to the poor to lessen inequality and maximize a society's potential. Many private individuals, religious and charitable organizations, and foundations also do much to help the poor, but they generally do not have the capacity to tax the wealthy or expand social and educational programs to help the disadvantaged. Governments do, at least under some circumstances. Many tax and welfare policies redistribute income, although the degree of redistribution is often hotly disputed (see Chapter 7).

Some experts argue that governments should attempt to equalize the conditions of all citizens. Others prefer governments to redistribute enough

to equalize opportunities, and then let individuals be responsible for their own fortunes. Yet people in most nations agree that governments should provide a social safety net and give their citizens opportunities to reach certain minimum standards of living.

Protecting the Weak

Governments should protect individuals and groups that are not able to speak for themselves. Groups such as the disabled, the very young, or future generations cannot effectively protect their own interests. Governments can protect future generations by, for example, preventing them from being saddled with economic debts or environmental degradation. In recent decades, governments have become much more involved in protecting groups that are politically weak or disenfranchised, such as children, the old, and the infirm or disabled, as well as nonhumans—from whales and birds to trees and other parts of our natural environment.

When Does Government Become the Problem?

1.7 List five ways in which a government can harm or hinder its citizens.

Governments serve many political functions, yet their intervention is not always welcomed or beneficial. When and how government intervention is necessary and desirable are disputed issues in modern politics. During the twentieth century, the role of governments expanded enormously in most nations. At the same time, criticisms of many government policies have persisted and sometimes intensified. Such debate is directed at virtually all government activities, especially the economic role of government. Anarchism and libertarianism are two political and philosophical traditions that are critical of the role of modern governments. But they differ in their main concerns. Libertarians see the greatest problem of government as its encroachment on individual freedoms, whereas anarchists are concerned primarily with the threats that governments pose to social communities.

Destruction of Community

Some critics of government argue that it destroys natural communities. Government, they hold, implies power and inequality among human beings. Those

who have power are corrupted, and those without it are degraded and alienated. For example, the philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau claimed that only people unfettered by government can form bonds that allow them to develop their full human potential. By imposing an order based on coercion, hierarchy, and the threat of force, governments destroy natural communities. The stronger government becomes, the greater the inequalities of power. Such arguments stimulated criticism of communism as limiting the potential and freedom of its citizens. Others argue that strong governments create a "client society," in which people learn to be subservient to authorities and to rely on governments to meet their needs.

Violations of Basic Rights

Just as governments can help establish many essential rights, they can also use their powers to violate these rights in the most serious manner. The potential abuses of government power illustrate a dilemma that troubled James Madison and other founders of the American Revolution: the challenge of creating a government strong enough to govern effectively but not so strong that it could destroy the rights of its citizens. They understood the irony that to protect individuals from each other, societies can create a government that has even more power to coerce the individual. Libertarians are especially concerned about the abuses and violations of basic freedoms that large governments may thus enable.

During the twentieth century, some governments violated basic human rights on a massive scale. Millions lost their lives to political persecution. Such horrors happened not only in Nazi extermination camps and during Stalin's Great Terror in the Soviet Union but also on a huge scale in China, Cambodia, and Rwanda. In other instances, governments stripped minority groups of their basic civil and human rights. Some governments did learn that with great power comes great responsibility.

Economic Inefficiency

Governments can help economies flourish, but they also can distort and restrict a state's economic potential. President Robert Mugabe, for instance, has destroyed the economy of Zimbabwe, which was once Africa's most prosperous state. Similar examples exist in many struggling economies. Economic problems may arise

even if government officials do not actively abuse their power. Government regulation of the economy may distort the terms of trade and lower people's incentives to produce. Further inefficiencies may arise when governments actually own or manage important economic enterprises. This is particularly likely if the government holds a monopoly on an important good, since monopolies generally cause goods to be undersupplied and overpriced. Moreover, government industries may be especially prone to inefficiency and complacency compared to private firms. Such experiences have caused citizens in both developing and advanced industrial economies to worry about the potential negative economic effects of government policy.

Government for Private Gain

Society also may suffer if government officials make decisions to benefit themselves personally, or select policies to get themselves reelected regardless of whether those policies are best for the society. For instance, a local mayor plans an economic development project that will benefit his friends or supporters who own suitable land or who will supply contracts for the project. In another example, a government might enact a particularistic policy to advance its reelection, even though it recognizes the negative effects on the country as a whole. Such actions can impose large costs on society because policies are chosen for the private benefits they produce rather than for their social efficiency and because groups may expend great resources to control these spoils of government. These policies may turn into outright corruption when influence is traded for money or other advantage (see Box 1.3).

This kind of political exploitation is a particularly serious problem in poor societies. Holding political office is often an effective way to enrich oneself when political watchdogs such as courts and mass media are too weak to constrain government officials. Besides, many developing societies do not have strong social norms against using government for private gain. On the contrary, people often expect those in government to use their power to benefit themselves, their families, and their neighbors. Even in many advanced democratic societies, public officeholders are expected to appoint their supporters to ambassadorships and other public posts, although civil service rules may constrain such appointments. The temptations of office holding are

**BOX
1.3**
The Struggle Halting Corruption

What happens if politicians use their power in their own self-interest or to benefit individuals or groups that support them? One small example is the governor of an oil-producing region in Nigeria. Governor Diepreye Alamieyeseigha embezzled tens of millions of U.S. dollars in public funds and acquired real estate all over the world. Unfortunately for him, the London police found more than \$1 million in cash at his home there. Dressed in drag, he escaped back to Nigeria. To his surprise, his state legislature impeached him, and in 2007,

Alamieyeseigha pleaded guilty to failing to declare his assets. He was sentenced to two years in prison but released the next day for time served. Then in March of 2013, his friend, the president, pardoned him. By some estimates, Africa loses up to a tenth of its national income to corruption that runs from the highest to the lowest levels of government and the economy.

Source: Adam Nossiter, "U.S. Embassy Criticizes Pardons in Nigerian Corruption Cases," *New York Times*, March 15, 2013.

great. Despite legal rules, press scrutiny, and citizen concerns, few governments anywhere finish their terms of office untainted by some corruption scandal. In Lord Acton's famous words, "Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely."

Vested Interests and Inertia

Government-created private gains are difficult to change or abolish once they have been established, because some people enjoy government jobs, contracts, or other favors. The larger the government and the more attractive the benefits it provides, the more likely it is that such vested interests will resist change (unless change means even larger benefits). Therefore, any government will foster officeholders and beneficiaries with an interest in maintaining or enlarging the government itself. Such groups may become a powerful force in favor of the status quo.

This situation makes it difficult to change government policies or make them more efficient. Once established, agencies and policies often live on far beyond their usefulness. For example, when the Spanish Armada threatened to invade England in 1588, the government established a military observation post at Land's End in southwest England. This observation post remained in place for four centuries! In the United States, the Rural Electrification Administration was created in 1935 to bring electricity to rural America. Although the country had long been electrified by then, the agency persisted for almost sixty years until it was finally merged into the Rural Utilities Service in 1994.

Such interests are particularly likely in political systems that are constructed to limit rapid political change. While the checks and balances in political systems such as in the United States are designed to safeguard individual rights, they may also protect the privileges of vested interests. Yet even political systems that contain far fewer such checks may exhibit an excess of political inertia. Britain is an excellent example. Until recently, the House of Lords represented the social groups that dominated British society before the Industrial Revolution more than 200 years ago (noblemen, bishops, and judges). Only in the last few years has Britain begun reforming the House of Lords to eliminate features that reflect Britain's feudal and preindustrial past.

Looking Forward

The last several decades have been a period of tremendous social, economic, and political change in the world. Economic development, improved living standards, the spread of human rights, and democratization have improved the life chances and life conditions of billions of individuals. In most of the world, the average child born today can look forward to a longer, better, and freer life than his or her parents—especially if that child is a girl.

At the same time, continuing social, economic, and political problems remain. Progress in one area can create new opportunities, but also new problems in another area. Economic development, for example, can sometimes stimulate ethnic strife and destabilize political institutions. Economic development can also

disrupt social life. And the process of development has been uneven across and within nations. Many basic human needs still remain in too short supply.²⁴

Even in the affluent democracies, as one set of policy issues is addressed, new issues come to the fore. Western democracies struggle to address issues of environmental quality, changing lifestyles, and the challenges of globalization. A more affluent and better-informed citizenry may also be less inclined to trust political parties, interest groups, parliaments, and political executives. Success in meeting these old and new

challenges can improve the living conditions for the world's populations, decrease international conflict, and come closer to meeting the ideals of humankind.

Governments and politics have played a large role in human societies of the past. Some of their policies have greatly improved the quality of life of their citizens, while others have been disasters. Yet one way or another, governments and their activities are central to our political futures. Our goal in this book is to examine the ways in which citizens, policymakers, and governments address the policy challenges that face them today.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

- What are the main challenges that countries face in building a political community?
- What are the causes and consequences of economic development?
- What are the causes and consequences of democratization?
- How does globalization contribute to economic development and democratization?
- What are the potential positive and negative outcomes of government activity?

KEY TERMS

authoritarian
democracy
democratization
ethnicity

globalization
gross national income
(GNI)
human rights

nation
oligarchy
political culture
public goods

religious fundamentalism
socioeconomic
modernization
totalitarian systems

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