

PEARSON

国外经典政治学教材·影印版

主编 王浦劬



**Comparative
Politics Today:
A Theoretical Framework**
(Sixth Edition)

当代比较政治学

(第六版)

G. Bingham Powell, Jr. (小G·宾厄姆·鲍威尔)
[美] Russell J. Dalton (拉塞尔·J·道尔顿) 著
Kaare Strøm (卡雷·斯特罗姆)

著

PEARSON

中国人民大学出版社



国外经典政治学教材·影印版

主编 王浦劬

Comparative Politics Today:

A Theoretical Framework

(Sixth Edition)

当代比较政治学

(第六版)

G. Bingham Powell, Jr. (小G·宾厄姆·鲍威尔)

[美] Russell J. Dalton (拉塞尔·J·道尔顿)

著

Kaare Strøm (卡雷·斯特罗姆)

中国人民大学出版社

· 北京 ·

图书在版编目 (CIP) 数据

当代比较政治学: 第6版: 英文/(美) 鲍威尔, (美) 道尔顿, (美) 斯特罗姆著. —北京: 中国人民大学出版社, 2012. 8

国外经典政治学教材·影印版/王浦劬主编

ISBN 978-7-300-16246-1

I. ①当… II. ①鲍…②道…③斯… III. ①比较政治学-教材-英文 IV. ①D0

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字 (2012) 第 188353 号

国外经典政治学教材·影印版

主编 王浦劬

Comparative Politics Today: A Theoretical Framework (Sixth Edition)

当代比较政治学 (第六版)

G. Bingham Powell, Jr. (小 G·宾厄姆·鲍威尔)

[美] Russell J. Dalton (拉塞尔·J·道尔顿) 著

Kaare Strøm (卡雷·斯特罗姆)

出版发行	中国人民大学出版社		
社 址	北京中关村大街 31 号	邮政编码	100080
电 话	010-62511242 (总编室)		010-62511398 (质管部)
	010-82501766 (邮购部)		010-62514148 (门市部)
	010-62515195 (发行公司)		010-62515275 (盗版举报)
网 址	http://www.crup.com.cn		
	http://www.ttrnet.com (人大教研网)		
经 销	新华书店		
印 刷	涿州市星河印刷有限公司		
规 格	185 mm×260 mm 16 开本	版 次	2012 年 9 月第 1 版
印 张	13.75 插页 1	印 次	2012 年 9 月第 1 次印刷
字 数	344 000	定 价	32.00 元

版权所有 侵权必究

印装差错 负责调换

PREFACE

Comparative Politics Today: A Theoretical Framework, Sixth Edition, presents in the form of a separate book Parts One and Two of *Comparative Politics Today: A World View*, Tenth Edition (2011). As a text, *Comparative Politics Today: A Theoretical Framework* is ideally suited for courses that seek to provide a broad and comprehensive thematic overview of comparative politics, which instructors may then combine with their own selection of reading materials from the literature of country and analytic studies.

For the past three decades, *Comparative Politics Today: A Theoretical Framework* and its “cousins” have been among the most influential textbooks in comparative politics. Our book traces back to the original Almond and Powell, *Comparative Politics: A Developmental Approach* (Little, Brown 1966), as revised and expanded in *Comparative Politics: System, Process and Policy* (Little, Brown 1978), by the same authors. The framework these books developed was incorporated into the *Comparative Politics Today* texts and supplemented with analyses of specific countries by leading specialists. Earlier editions of this book in the 1970s pioneered the teaching of systematic comparison of the political cultures, structures, processes, and policy performances of the world’s political systems. Later editions have explored the impact of enormous changes—such as democratization, the breakup of the Soviet empire, globalization, and intensified threats from ethnic and religious conflict—that have shaped politics in many nations. Throughout, these editions reflect Gabriel Almond’s creativity and the applicability of his framework to the changing concerns of students of political science.

NEW TO THIS EDITION

This Sixth Edition of *Comparative Politics Today: A Theoretical Framework* contains a substantially revised set of chapters that include review questions as well as a guide to the key themes in each chapter. The chapters have been revised for greater readability, and we have expanded the number of illustrative example boxes. The new edition also incorporates more thorough discussion of globalization and its components and consequences. In its analysis of public policy, Chapter 7 introduces its concept of “political goods” with reference to the United Nations Millennium Goals and more systematically treats policy goals and consequences, including welfare, fairness, liberty, and security outcomes.

FEATURES

This Sixth Edition, like the previous one, begins by explaining why governments exist, what functions they serve, and how they create political problems as well as solutions. Chapter 1 also introduces the three great challenges facing

most states in the world today: building a common identity and sense of community; fostering economic and social development; and securing democracy, human rights, and civil liberties. Chapter 2 sketches the concepts needed to compare politics in very different societies: political systems and their environments, structures and functions, policy performance and its consequences. Jointly, these two chapters constitute Part One, which spells out the unique framework that our book employs.

Part Two elaborates on important components of the system, process, and policy framework, discussing the causes and consequences of political cultures, interest groups, parties and other aggregation structures, constitutions, key structures of policymaking. The continuing and unprecedented spread of democracy in recent decades is not only a development to be celebrated, but also a reason that the issues of democratic representation, as discussed in Chapters 4 through 6, are becoming increasingly relevant to an ever larger share of the world's population. Growing prosperity in many parts of the world means that the challenges of development and public policy (Chapters 1 and 7) are changing. While the global incidence and human costs of war have declined in recent years, conflicts still devastate or threaten communities in areas such as Afghanistan, the Middle East, South Asia, Sudan, and other parts of Africa. Moreover, the world faces enormous challenges, new as well as old, in such areas as climate change, migration, globalization, epidemic disease, international terrorism, and nuclear proliferation. All of these developments make it more important than ever to understand how political decisions are made, and what their consequences might be, in the very different political systems that make up our political world.

The tables, figures, and boxes in *Comparative Politics Today: A Theoretical Framework* provide examples, compare systems, and discuss important trends, such as globalization, democratization and backsliding, the rise of fundamentalism, the challenges to the rule of law, and the recruitment of women into leadership roles in politics. These comparative tables, figures, and examples draw systematically from the same set of countries: Britain, France, Germany, Japan, Russia, China, Mexico, Brazil, Iran, India, Nigeria, and the United States. Our book can therefore be conveniently supplemented with case studies on any or all of these twelve countries. The tenth edition of *Comparative Politics Today: A World View* contains a separate chapter on each of these countries.

SUPPLEMENTS

Longman is pleased to offer several resources to qualified adopters of *Comparative Politics Today* and their students that will make teaching and learning from this book even more effective and enjoyable.

PASSPORT FOR COMPARATIVE POLITICS With Passport, choose the resources you want from MyPoliSciKit and put links to them into your course management system. If there is assessment associated with those resources, it also can be

uploaded, allowing the results to feed directly into your course management system's gradebook. With over 150 MyPoliSciKit assets like video case studies, mapping exercises, comparative exercises, simulations, podcasts, *Financial Times* newsfeeds, current events quizzes, politics blog, and much more, Passport is available for any Pearson introductory or upper-level political science book. Use ISBN 0-205-09515-1 to order Passport with this book. To learn more, please contact your Pearson representative.

MYSEARCHLAB Need help with a paper? MySearchLab saves time and improves results by offering start-to-finish guidance on the research/writing process and full-text access to academic journals and periodicals. Use ISBN 0-205-11217-X to order MySearchLab with this book. To learn more, please visit www.mysearchlab.com or contact your Pearson representative.

THE ECONOMIST Every week, *The Economist* analyzes the important happenings around the globe. From business to politics, to the arts and science, its coverage connects seemingly unrelated events in unexpected ways. Use ISBN 0-205-11004-5 to order a 15-week subscription with this book for a small additional charge. To learn more, please contact your Pearson representative.

THE FINANCIAL TIMES Featuring international news and analysis from journalists in more than 50 countries, *The Financial Times* provides insights and perspectives on political and economic developments around the world. Use ISBN 0-205-11042-8 to order a 15-week subscription with this book for a small additional charge. To learn more, please contact your Pearson representative.

LONGMAN ATLAS OF WORLD ISSUES (0-205-78020-2) From population and political systems to energy use and women's rights, the *Longman Atlas of World Issues* features full-color thematic maps that examine the forces shaping the world. Featuring maps from the latest edition of *The Penguin State of the World Atlas*, this excerpt includes critical thinking exercises to promote a deeper understanding of how geography affects many global issues. Available at no additional charge when packaged with this book.

GOODE'S WORLD ATLAS (0-321-65200-2) First published by Rand McNally in 1923, *Goode's World Atlas* has set the standard for college reference atlases. It features hundreds of physical, political, and thematic maps as well as graphs, tables, and a pronouncing index. Available at a discount when packaged with this book.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Acknowledgments in the tenth edition of *Comparative Politics Today: A World View* express our debts and appreciation to those who helped us prepare that edition, which is the basis of this volume also. We reiterate our gratitude to the authors of the twelve country studies in that volume—Richard Rose (Britain); Martin A. Schain (France); Russell J. Dalton (Germany);

Frances Rosenbluth and Michael F. Thies (Japan); Thomas F. Remington (Russia); Melanie Manion (China); Wayne A. Cornelius and Jeffery A. Weldon (Mexico); Frances Hagopian and Timothy J. Power (Brazil); Subrata K. Mitra (India); A. Carl Levan, Robert J. Mundt, and Oladimeji Aborisade (Nigeria); Houchang E. Chehabi and Arang Keshavarzian (Iran); and Thad Kousser and Austin Ranney (United States)—who added once more, as they and their predecessors have many times over the years, essential contents and interpretative insights to our basic theoretical framework. We are also grateful to Frances A. Rubio for research assistance and to Michael McKeen for assistance in developing the index for this edition. Finally, we wish to thank the reviewers of both volumes—Jennifer Horan, University of North Carolina-Wilmington; David Myers, Penn State University; Sanghamitra Padhy, Davidson College; Ani Sarkissian, Michigan State University—and the team at Longman and PreMediaGlobal.

Gabriel Almond, from whose innovative work this book derives, had enormous influence on the study and teaching of comparative politics. He wrote at length about many important political topics, including political culture, interest groups, fundamentalism, and the history of political science. One of his greatest achievements was his continuing commitment to finding ways to understand, compare, and explain the most diverse aspects of political life. This text is deeply shaped by that commitment, both through Gabriel Almond's own involvement in writing it and through his influence upon each of us. And one of his greatest legacies is the generations of students who have learned about comparative politics and our world through the insights he provided.

G. BINGHAM POWELL, JR.

RUSSELL J. DALTON

KAARE STRØM

目 录

序	Ⅲ
第一章 比较政治学的议题	1
第二章 比较政治体系	38
第三章 政治文化与政治社会化	56
第四章 利益表达	79
第五章 利益综合与政党	104
第六章 政府与政策制定	131
第七章 公共政策	165
索 引	199

CONTENTS

Preface III

CHAPTER 1 Issues in Comparative Politics 1

CHAPTER 2 Comparing Political Systems 38

CHAPTER 3 Political Culture and Political Socialization 56

CHAPTER 4 Interest Articulation 79

CHAPTER 5 Interest Aggregation and Political Parties 104

CHAPTER 6 Government and Policymaking 131

CHAPTER 7 Public Policy 165

Index 199

Issues in Comparative Politics

WHAT IS POLITICS?

Some people love politics. They relish the excitement of political events, such as a presidential election, as they would an exciting athletic contest (the World Series of baseball or the World Cup of soccer, perhaps). Others are fascinated with politics because they care about the issues and their consequences for people in their own communities and around the world. Still others hate politics, either because it sets groups and individuals against each other, or because it involves abuse of power, deceit, manipulation, and violence. Finally, some people are indifferent to politics because it has little to do with the things that matter most to them, such as family, friends, faith, hobbies, or favorite activities. All of these reactions involve kernels of truth about politics. Indeed, most of us react to politics with a mixture of these sentiments. Politics has many faces and can be a force for good as well as evil. The core of politics, however, is about human beings making important decisions for their communities and for others.

This book is about the comparative study of politics. In order to make political comparisons, we need to understand what politics is and what it means to study politics comparatively. Comparative politics thus is both a subject of study—comparing the nature of politics and the political process across different political systems, and a method of study—involving how and why we make such comparisons. We address the first point in this chapter; Chapter 2 discusses the second.

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 decisions that are of little interest to political scientists. For example, consider when you go with a friend to an event, such as a concert or a soccer match. You can spend your money on the tickets (to get the best seats possible) or on food and drink, or you can save your money for the future. Economists study

the spending decisions people make and perhaps how they reach them. Psychologists, on the other hand, might study why you went to the event with this friend and not another, or who suggested going in the first place.

Political scientists seldom examine such private and personal decisions, unless they have political consequences. Instead, political decisions are those that are *public* and *authoritative*. Political decisions take place within some society or community that we call a *political system*, which we describe below. Yet not all social decisions are public. Most of what happens within families, among friends, or in social groups belongs to the *private sphere*. Actions within this sphere do not bind anyone outside that group and are not controlled by the government. In most societies, your choices of concert partners and food are private decisions.

The *public sphere* of politics deals with collective decisions that extend beyond the individual and private life, typically involving government action. Yet political decisions 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.

In totalitarian societies, like Hitler's Third Reich, 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 in various African nations, for instance, may be unaware of what happens in the capital city and untouched by the decisions made there. Western democracies have a more balanced mix of private and public spheres. However, the boundaries between the two spheres are redrawn all the time. A few decades ago, the sex lives of U.S. presidents or members of the British royal family were considered private matters, not to be discussed in public. These norms have changed in Britain and the United States, but the traditional standards remain in other countries. Similarly, in Britain, certain religious beliefs were considered treasonous in the 1500s and 1600s. Today, religious beliefs are considered private matters in most modern democracies, though not in many other parts of the world. Even though politics may be influenced by what happens in the private domain, it deals directly with only those decisions that are public.

Politics is also *authoritative*. Authority means that formal power rests in individuals or groups whose decisions are expected to be carried out and respected. Thus, political decisions are binding for members of that political system. 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.

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 parts of 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 has brought the citizens of different countries closer together and made them more dependent on one another, for better or worse. Some of the issues people in many societies confront—such as confronting 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. Our goal in this book is to give you a sense of how governments and politics can either address or exacerbate these challenges.

GOVERNMENTS AND THE STATE OF NATURE

Governments are organizations of individuals who have the power to make binding decisions on behalf of a particular community. Governments thus have authoritative and coercive powers and do many things. They can wage war or encourage peace; encourage or restrict international trade; open or close their borders to the exchange of ideas; tax their populations heavily or lightly and through different means; and allocate resources for education, health, and welfare or leave such matters to others. People who are affected by such decisions may welcome them or disapprove, and there is often heated disagreement about the proper role of government.

Debates over the nature and appropriate role of government are far from new. They reflect a classic polemic in political philosophy. For centuries, philosophers have debated whether governments are a force for good or evil. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries—the time of the English, French, and American revolutions—much of this debate was couched in arguments concerning the *state of nature*.

Political philosophers thought about the state of nature as the condition of humankind if no government existed. In some cases, they thought that such a situation had existed before the first governments were formed. These philosophers used their ideas about the state of nature to identify an ideal social contract (agreement) on which to build a political system. Even today, many philosophers and political thinkers find it useful to make such a mental experiment to consider the consequences of having governments.

These debates have shaped our images of government, even to the present. The contrast between Thomas Hobbes's and Jean-Jacques Rousseau's ideas about the state of nature is most striking. Hobbes was the ultimate

pessimist. He thought of the state of nature as mercilessly inhospitable, a situation of eternal conflict of all against all, and a source of barbarism and continuous fear. He pessimistically argued that “[i]n such condition, there is no place for Industry; because the fruit thereof is uncertain: and consequently no Culture of the Earth; no Navigation, nor use of the commodities that may be imported by Sea; no commodious Building, . . . no Arts; no Letters; no Society; and which is worst of all, continuall feare, and danger of violent death; And the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.”¹

Rousseau, in contrast, was more optimistic about the state of nature. For him, it represented humanity before its fall from grace, without all the corruptions that governments have introduced. “Man is born free,” Rousseau observed in *The Social Contract*, “and yet everywhere he is in chains.” Rousseau saw governments as the source of power and inequality, and these conditions in turn as the causes of human alienation and corruption. “The extreme inequality in our way of life,” he argued, “excess of idleness in some, excess of labor in others; . . . late nights, excesses of all kinds, immoderate ecstasies of all the passions; fatigues and exhaustion of mind, numberless sorrows and afflictions . . . that most of our ills are our own work; that we would have avoided almost all of them by preserving the simple, uniform, and solitary way of life prescribed to us by nature.”²

John Locke’s ideas have been particularly important for the development of Western democracies. He took a position between those of Hobbes and Rousseau. Compared with Hobbes, Locke thought of human beings as more businesslike and less war-prone. Yet like Hobbes he proposed a social contract to replace the state of nature with a system of government. While Hobbes thought the main task for government is to quell disorder and protect against violence and war, Locke saw the state’s main role as protecting property and commerce and promoting economic growth. He believed government would do this by establishing and enforcing property rights and rules of economic exchange. Whereas Hobbes thought government needed to be a Leviathan—a benevolent dictator to whom the citizens would yield all their power—Locke favored a limited government.

Although these debates began centuries ago, they still underlie current discussions on the appropriate role of government. To some, government is the solution to many human needs and problems—a theme that former U.S. president Bill Clinton often advocated. To others, the government is often part of the problem—a theme that former U.S. president Ronald Reagan articulately argued. To some, government exists to create the social order that protects its citizens; to others, government limits our freedoms. This tension is part of the political discourse in many contemporary nations, including the United States. We explore these contrasting views and different examples of government structures in this book.

WHY GOVERNMENTS?

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

BOX 1.1 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 past half 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, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 2000) (www.brookings.edu/comm/reformwatch/rw02.pdf).

customs officers scanning baggage, and no officials applying immigration rules.³ They had landed in a society without government, and the puzzle was what having no government would mean for the citizenry. The answer is a great deal (see Box 1.1). As philosophers have pointed out, there are many reasons why people create governments and prefer to live under such a social order. We shall discuss some of these, beginning with activities that help generate a stable community in the first place and then those that help this community prosper.

Community- and Nation-Building

One of the first purposes of governments is to create and maintain a community in which people can feel safe and comfortable. While humans may be social beings, it is not always easy to build a community in which large numbers of people can communicate, feel at home, and interact constructively. Governments can help generate such communities in many different ways—for example, by teaching a common language, instilling common norms and values, creating common 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 world views, values, and expectations. Using a concept discussed more in Chapter 3, governments can help create a national **political culture**. The political culture defines the public's expectations toward 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, such as commerce.

Security and Order

Hobbes believed that only strong governments can make society safe for their inhabitants, and providing security and law and order is among the most essential tasks that governments perform. Externally, security means protecting against attacks from other political systems. Armies, navies, and air forces typically perform this function. Internally, security means protecting against theft, aggression, and violence from members of one's own society. In most societies, providing this is the function of the police.

Providing security and order is a critical role 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 governments have privatized their police or defense forces. This shows that security is one of the most essential roles of government. The international terrorist attacks in New York City and Washington, D.C., on September 11, 2001, and subsequent attacks and attempted violence in London, Madrid, and elsewhere underscore the importance of security.

Protecting Rights

John Locke considered property rights to be particularly critical to the development of prosperous communities. Without effective protection of property rights, people will not invest their goods or energies in productive processes. Also, unless property rights exist and contracts can be negotiated and enforced, people will not trust their neighbors enough to trade and invest. Anything beyond a subsistence economy requires effective property rights and contracts. Therefore, Locke believed that the primary role of government is to establish and protect such rights. Similarly, contemporary authors argue that social order is a prerequisite for development and democratization.⁴

Effective property rights establish ownership and provide security against trespass and violations. Such rights must also make the buying and selling of property relatively inexpensive and painless. Finally, people must have faith that their property rights can be defended. Thus, many analysts argue that one of the most restrictive limitations on 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.

Although Locke was most concerned with economic property rights, governments also protect many other social and political rights. Among them are

freedoms of speech and association, and protection against various forms of discrimination and harassment. Indeed, the protection of these rights and liberties is one of the prime goals of government—with other factors such as nation-building, security, and property rights providing a means toward this goal. 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.

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 defined and 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.⁵ At least in some circumstances, governments can ameliorate the results of market failure.

Governments may be especially important in providing **public goods**, such as clean air, a national defense, or disease prevention. Public goods have two things in common. One is that if one person enjoys them, they cannot be withheld from anyone else in that community. The second is that one person's enjoyment or consumption of the goods does not detract from anyone else's. Consider clean air. For most practical purposes, 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. Economists argue that people in a market economy therefore will not pay enough for public goods because they can "free-ride" on the goods that others provide. At the very least, people will not pay for public goods until they know that others will also contribute. Analysts therefore often claim that only government can provide the right quantity of such public goods.

Governments can also benefit society by controlling the **externalities** that occur when an activity incurs costs that are not borne by the producer or the user. For instance, many forms of environmental degradation occur when those who produce or consume goods do not pay all of the environmental costs. Polluting factories, waste dumps, prisons, and major highways can impose large costs on those who live near them. NIMBY ("not in my backyard") groups arise when citizens complain about these costs. Governments can help protect people from unfair externalities or ensure that burdens are fairly shared.

Governments can also promote fair competition in economic markets. For example, governments can ensure that all businesses follow minimum standards of worker protection and product liability. In other cases, the government may control potentially monopolistic enterprises 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, or telecommunications companies. In these cases, the government acts as the policeman to prevent the economically powerful from exploiting their power. Sometimes, the government itself may become the monopolist. In some markets, very large start-up or coordination costs mean that there should

be only one producer. If that producer may also easily abuse its power, the government may set itself up as that monopolist, or impose tight controls. Telecommunications have commonly been a government monopoly in many societies, as have mail services and strategic defense industries.

Social Justice

Governments can also play a role in dividing the fruits of economic growth in equitable ways. Many people argue that governments are needed to promote social justice by redistributing wealth and other resources among citizens. 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. Brazil, for example, has one of the most severe income inequalities in the world, an inequality that grew in every decade from the 1930s to the 1990s but has recently receded a little.

Under such circumstances, social justice may require a “new deal,” especially if inequalities deprive many individuals of education, adequate health care, or other basic needs. Government can intervene to redistribute resources from the better-off to the poor. 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. 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 theorists argue that such transfers 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 most individuals agree that governments should provide a social safety net and give their citizens opportunities to reach certain minimum standards of living.

Protecting the Weak

We commonly rely on the government to 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, however, can protect the interests of the unborn and prevent 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. Thus, governments in many countries have increasingly intervened to protect children from abuse or exploitation in their families, in schools, or in the workplace.