



Citizens and Governance

Text with Readings
Second Edition

Illinois State University

Edited by Timothy L. Ruddy

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*Introduction to Politics: Governments & Nations
in the Post Cold War Era*

Martin Slann
Clemson University

Power & Choice: An Introduction to Political Science, Sixth Edition

W. Phillips Shively
University of Minnesota

*World Politics: International Politics on the
World Stage, Brief Third Edition*

John T. Rourke
University of Connecticut

Mark A. Boyer
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Dedicated to my Father

CITIZENS

AND

GOVERNANCE

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Contents

Chapter 1	Introduction: Government and Politics in the Post Cold War Era	1
Chapter 2	Modern Ideologies and Political Philosophy	21
Chapter 3	Political Culture	39
Chapter 4	Policies of the State	57
Chapter 5	Democracy and Its Recent Surge in the World	77
Chapter 6	Autocratic Government	91
Chapter 7	Political Parties and Electoral Systems	105
Chapter 8	Structured Conflict: Interest Groups and Politics	129
Chapter 9	Global Politics: Politics Among States (And Others)	151
Chapter 10	Nationalism: The Traditional Orientation	177
Chapter 11	Political Violence	199
Chapter 12	Ethnic Conflict and the International Constellation	213
Chapter 13	Preserving and Enhancing Human Rights and Dignity	229
Chapter 14	Preserving and Enhancing the Global Commons	251
	Endnotes	279

Chapter 1

Introduction: Government and Politics in the Post Cold War Era

Government is actually a recent innovation whose history goes back about eight thousand years, a very tiny percentage of the time humans have inhabited this planet. Governmental institutions were in large part the result of, and certainly coincided with, the development of agriculture and the establishment of permanent human settlements. The essential purpose of government has not changed since its creation: to achieve and guarantee a degree of social order that enables society's members to enjoy a maximum degree of physical security. This purpose is not easily accomplished. A large proportion of the world's population today remains either under uncertain and frequently incomplete governmental authority, or under government whose policies toward citizenries are so harsh that they threaten rather than provide physical security.

Government, whether acting on behalf of people or otherwise, is the result of politics. Politics is often considered a corrupt and debasing profession that no self-respecting person would consider entering. But politics is also a feature common to all human society. It is an activity that "arises from accepting the fact of the simultaneous existence of different groups, hence different interests and different traditions within a territory ruled."¹ We have and participate in politics because we need it.

Politics is not necessarily a complicated phenomenon. The distinguished political scientist Harold Laswell, for example, has succinctly defined it as a process of determining "who gets what, when, and how." More recently, another respected political scientist, David Easton, defined politics simply as "the authoritative allocation of values." There is little doubt (although often much disgust) that politics has become an important vehicle in the United States and elsewhere in the world for determining nonmaterial and frequently very intimate and personal values. Decisions on how separate church and state should be, whether homosexuals should be excluded from military service, or even on what language a national or subnational student community will be taught in are dilemmas that have been turned over to the political process.

Politics is far from being an isolated activity that occurs in national capitals such as London, Moscow, Tokyo, or Washington. Politics is a common feature of daily human existence that occurs wherever and whenever decisions are made about “who shall get what, when, and how.” Politics may take a variety of forms, some that may be familiar and desirable to us and others that may be neither.

This chapter will introduce you to some of the more current themes in politics as well as activities that continually cause stress in international relations. The chapters that follow will explore all of them in more detail. For the time being, let us develop an acquaintanceship with the issues that influence our lives and promise to continue to do so for the foreseeable future.

GOVERNMENT IN THE POST COLD WAR ERA

Politics and government are not the same thing. Politics often occurs outside of government. Similarly, politics may (and usually does) involve both governmental and nongovernmental actors. Important political actors may not even hold government posts. In the United States, for instance, the very active role First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton took in developing a national health plan in the early 1990s and trying (in this case, unsuccessfully) to coordinate its passage in Congress was apparent from the beginning of the Clinton presidency. Mrs. Clinton has generally been regarded as President Clinton’s closest political advisor.

President Saddam Hussein of Iraq, on the other hand, emphasizes the importance of his eldest son, Uday, who holds no government office, but whose political qualifications consist mainly of driving fast cars, editing a tabloid newspaper, and playing the currency markets. The betting is on Uday to succeed his father,² assuming he continues to survive attempts on his life.

Of course, most of us don’t really care how policy is made as long as it is done in a rational and humane fashion. Government, then, may be defined simply as the formal social instrument that partially or wholly resolves conflicts that arise among individuals or groups. The primary purpose of government is to manage and resolve conflict, thereby providing security and continuity for society as a whole and for its individual members. Successful governments do this and more. A successful government is also one that is not itself a source of conflict. We tend, for example, to condemn the authoritarian government of Iraq because it is the greatest perpetrator of violence in the country: its most visible accomplishment is the war it conducts against segments of its own population. It will come as no surprise that Saddam Hussein is not a fan of Alexander Hamilton, who argued in *Federalist Paper 51* that

in framing a government which is to be administered by men over men, the great difficulty lies in this: you must first enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place to oblige it to control itself.

This is a tall order for most of the world’s regimes, who still insist on either ignoring the people’s legitimate needs or who are determined to make life miserable for their people by denying them basic human rights.

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 is, in this context, instructive. Its economic system was a disaster that became more blatant during its last years. The Soviet population was stunned by the revelation that the communist regime had avoided economic reforms in order to avoid risking its own political power. To the Soviet communist elite, economic stagnation was

a worthwhile price for continued power and privilege. The Soviets had therefore rejected another critical ingredient of successful government by refusing to take the steps necessary to enhance the quality of life for its citizens. During the last two decades of its existence, the Soviet Union became the only industrialized society in history to experience a *decline* in average life expectancy.³ To the Soviet citizen standing in line for hours to purchase basic food-stuffs, often in subfreezing conditions, it was of little comfort to be told that the Soviet military was achieving parity with the United States. Of more immediate concern was whether meat, bread, and milk would be available when finally reaching the head of the line (after an average wait of two hours).

Throughout the twentieth century, American government has taken on an ever increasing load of responsibility for at least two reasons: (1) we want government to do more for us (even though we are reluctant to pay for additional services with additional taxes) and (2) government is able to do more because of modern technology and increased (if unevenly distributed) economic prosperity. One estimate has it that 85 percent of all scientists who have ever lived are alive today.⁴ We are usually the beneficiaries of scientists whose medical and technological breakthroughs are frequently dependent on government funding.

Government in many countries, particularly the more advanced ones in Europe and North America, has unprecedented technological advantages when it comes to delivering services. At the same time, though, government can no longer consider itself the sole monopolizer of information, making pronouncements that the entire citizenry automatically believes. Some governments have a difficult time accepting the fact that satellites and other communication technologies now provide almost instantaneous information to hundreds of millions of people.

But while government is experiencing both unprecedented assistance in delivering services and unprecedented public scrutiny, the collapse of the Soviet Union suddenly created yet a new challenge. While parts of the former Soviet empire are democratizing, others are suffering breakdowns in governmental authority as ethnic and religious strife reach levels unseen in the modern world for many decades.

Estimates of distinct ethnic groups around the world range from five thousand to six thousand communities. Some are very small indigenous tribes numbering only a few thousand members; the Han Chinese are the largest ethnic group in the world, with perhaps a billion people. Only a tiny percentage of the world's ethnic groups have their own territorial state and are equipped with the trappings of political sovereignty, such as a national flag, currency, language, and military. The number of independent states has increased since 1945 from fewer than 60 to nearly 200, but 96 percent or more of the ethnic communities in the world do not have their own sovereign system, and most are unlikely to acquire one. The potential challenges stateless communities pose for international political stability are serious, as we shall see in chapters to follow.

Government and Politics

Democratic governments are a lot more accustomed to dealing with challenges than non-democratic ones because democratic regimes normally have to either respond to problems or risk being replaced at the next election. Politics is apparent in dictatorial regimes, but it is a politics played out within the confines of a political clique or between competing elements within a political elite. This body only reluctantly, if at all, considers public opinion, even if it knows



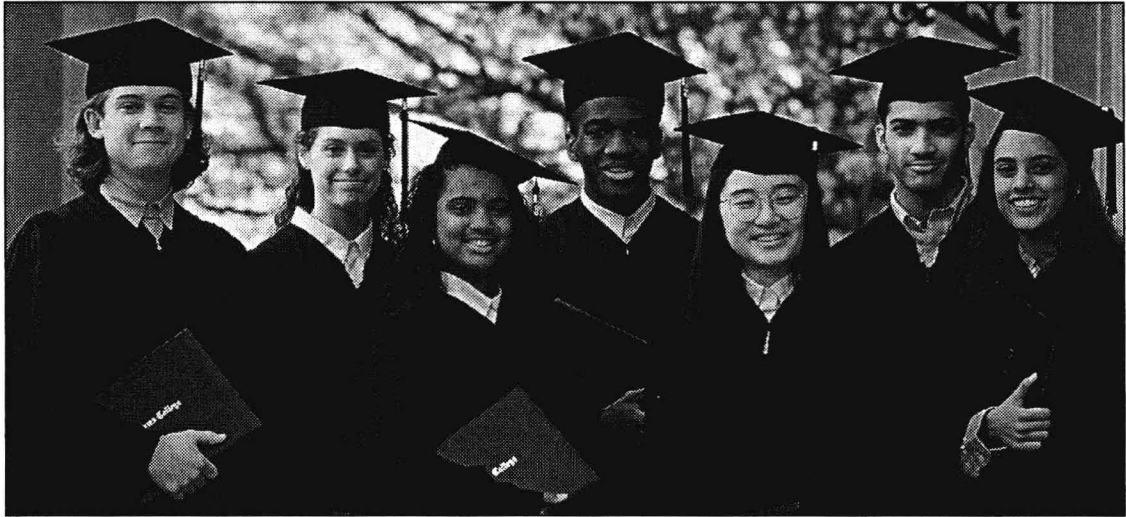
Part of the reason of the collapse of the Soviet Union: Muscovites waiting in long lines for their turn to purchase food.

what public opinion is on a given issue. But this is also why authoritarian government is inherently unstable: the government's lack of interest in and/or knowledge of public concerns is an excellent formula for ensuring that people withdraw both loyalty to and cooperation with the regime. If the public perceives the government as uninterested in or incapable of responding to citizen concerns, there is no point in supporting the regime. With this point in mind, we can make some reasonably safe assumptions about the nature of government and politics:

1. *Politics is a natural phenomenon that rises from human diversity. It should not be replaced by political ideology, a set of comprehensive beliefs about what a government should be doing.* If politics is working right, it will consider but not give way to different and often competing expressions of political ideology.

The art of politics involves the selection of the best possible choice from a set of imperfect but workable alternatives. Politicians don't have all the answers. If they are honest, they admit to this. Ideologues brag that they have all the answers without understanding that their answers could easily be wrong or even dangerous.

2. *People create and employ government to help them live more comfortable, secure, and productive lives.* Because it is a human device, government is often a miserable failure when it comes to fulfilling its mission. Governments fail most often, though, when they are guided either by an ideology or a leadership oblivious to what government is all about. To do its job, government must be cognizant of what the citizenry requires and accurate about what it can



Ethnic diversity on an American college campus.

deliver. Government can do neither if it is uninterested in or intolerant of dissent. Bear in mind, though, that the observation offered by Abraham Lincoln that “government of the people, for the people, and by the people,” is less than a century and a half old. It was a radical suggestion when it was first uttered, and it remains so in much of the world today. Most of the history of government is dominated by authoritarian regimes that operate with differing degrees of brutality.

3. *Political stability is enhanced when as much of the citizenry as possible have legitimate and guaranteed access to government.* Historically speaking, governments have been notoriously lax when it comes to accessibility. Many citizenries today still live under severe limitations on freedom of speech and action. Their governments don’t want to hear from them. In numerous cases, a government doesn’t even want them around: dozens of countries contain minority ethnic, racial, linguistic, and religious communities that they regard as surly and ill-disposed toward “fitting in” with the prevailing majority. Moreover, many such communities are reluctant to accept the legitimacy of the government that has control over them. Many Sikhs in India, Shiite Muslims in Iraq, Muslims in western China, and Tamils in Sri Lanka do not accept the central authority either because they regard the central authority as a detriment to cultural autonomy (as in India) or because the central government is committed to a program of **genocide** against the community (as in Iraq).

4. *Economic prosperity and political democracy are interrelated.* There is no satisfactory way to demonstrate this assumption empirically. We know, however, that the most prosperous economies in history have been democratic, and that when the Soviet Union collapsed, its demise was at least in part the result of a deteriorating economy that had not only failed to “catch up” with the West but had become altogether inoperable. Political scientists debate whether it is feasible for every country to establish a combination of political democracy and an economy dominated by the free market. We shall explore the debate in various discussions below.



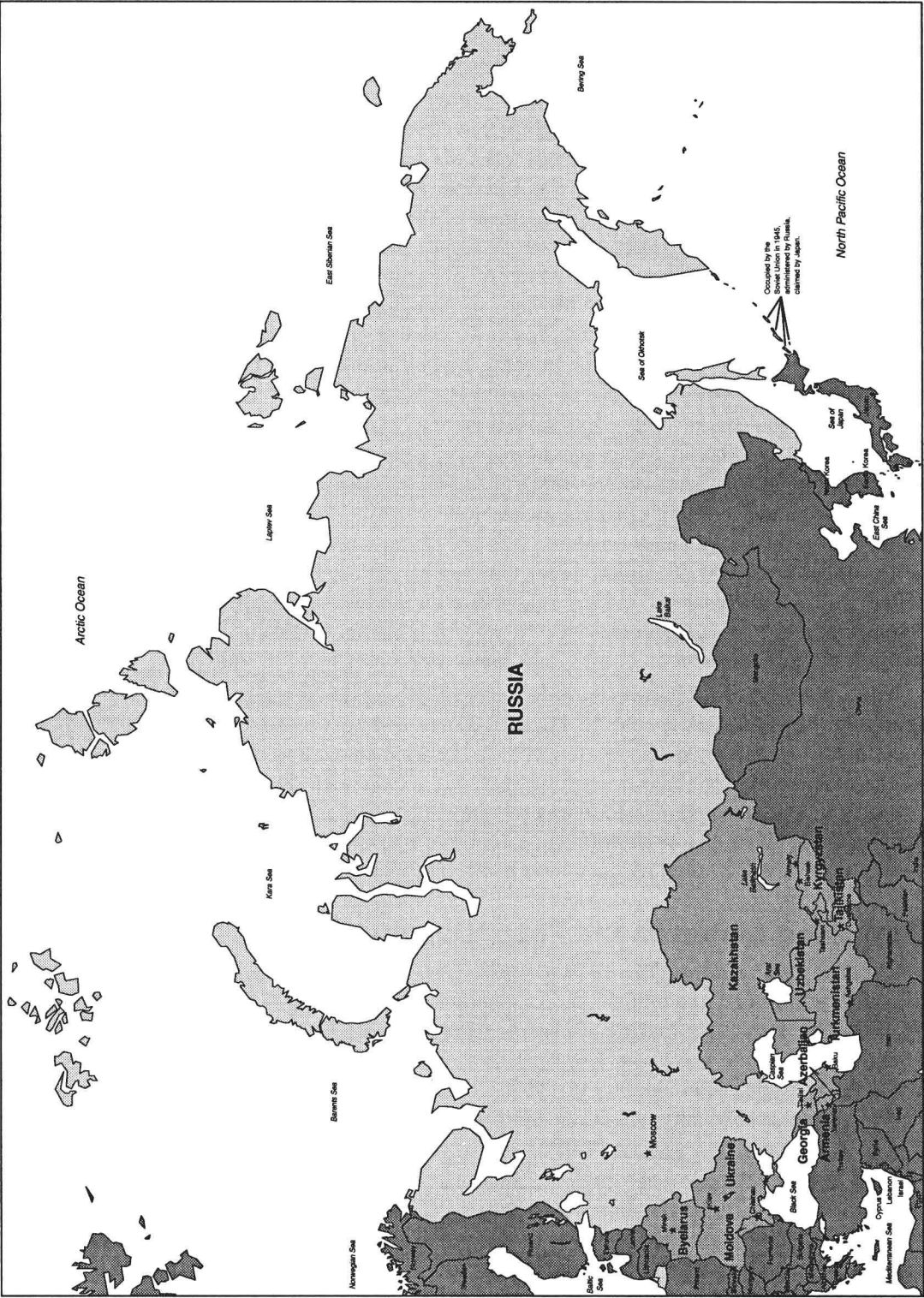
Source: *The Christian Science Monitor*, June 2, 1997, p. 10.

The Collapse of the Soviet Union and the End of the Cold War Era

The Soviet Union officially ceased to exist on December 25, 1991, when its last president, Mikhail Gorbachev, resigned and the Soviet flag flying over the **Kremlin** in Moscow came down for the last time. Months before, the Soviet Union had, for all practical purposes, politically disintegrated as most of its republics seceded and established independent governments and as more and more of its political leadership broke with the Communist party. Boris Yeltsin, for example, became the Russian Republic's first popularly elected president in 1990 after he had turned his back on the party and created his own popular power base. And before then, the Soviet government had begun to wind down its adversarial position with the United States in a remarkable period of international cooperation unseen since World War II that resulted in a build-down of their respective nuclear arsenals.

In retrospect, it was probably inevitable that the Soviet Union would not only lose the Cold War, but experience an implosion. Its economy had ceased to develop for at least the previous two decades. During this same time, the mostly free markets of Western European, North American, and East Asian countries were expanding to the point that, by the late 1980s, they accounted for nearly four-fifths of the global economy, though their citizenries comprised only about a fifth of the world's population. The Soviet model **command economy** had clearly failed, not only in the Soviet Union but everywhere else it had been tried—Eastern Europe, Southeast Asia, North Korea, Ethiopia, and Cuba. Its economy was lagging so far behind that of the free market democracies that the Soviet Union became increasingly recognized as a **Third World** country, though one that, disconcertingly, possessed thousands of nuclear warheads.

In fact, that was the problem. The Soviet Union was a nuclear power and not much else. It could not even begin to compete economically with the West, and its technology was often woefully inadequate to sustain a modern industrial power. Unless Soviet intentions were to destroy



the world (happily, they weren't), there wasn't much use for a nuclear arsenal. It was expensive to build and maintain and, perhaps worst of all, severely detracted from chronically urgent consumer needs. Perhaps even worse, the emphasis on centralized control discouraged innovation. In the last years of its existence, the Soviet Union averaged only 400 patents per year—only a few more than Belgium, whose population was about one-twelfth the size.⁵

The Soviet Union has been referred to as the “last colonial empire.” This is because only about half of the Soviet population was Russian. Nearly 150 million other people represented perhaps a hundred different nationalities, most of them conquered and occupied by a Russia that had been expanding its territory since the sixteenth century. Thus, the Soviet state was doomed to disintegration in part because the communist regime had failed to nurture a coherent loyalty of huge sections of its population. Millions of non-Russians retained historical memories of a politically sovereign past free from Moscow's control. The government never eliminated the desire to restore national autonomy. In some cases, the autonomy had never really existed, but that did not detract from the desire to acquire it anyway.

Ironically, the Soviet Union had served an important purpose for Americans. Nearly two generations of Americans had grown up understanding that Soviet communism was an evil but containable global menace. By the 1980s, most of the American population could not remember or even fantasize about what the world was or would be like without a brutal totalitarian regime that was easy to both condemn and accept as a permanent fixture in our lives. Then, rather suddenly, the Soviet Union under Gorbachev, its youngest leader in decades, seemed to mellow politically. Tensions drained away between the two superpowers, and within the Soviet Union, Gorbachev's government tried to reform both the economic and political systems to make them more efficient and more responsive to the citizenry's needs.

The reform attempts, however, only exposed the Soviet system as hopelessly corrupt and inept. After the failure of a coup in August 1991 to restore a more hard-lined political elite, no defenders of the Soviet system were left to delay what seemed to be an inevitable demise. The leaders of the coup reflected everything that was wrong with the system—they were not only corrupt, but they revealed an astounding incompetence in planning and activating the overthrow. Many of them were also regularly drunk (another chronic problem in Soviet society) or soon became that way after they realized how badly things were going for them.

The United States as the First “Universal Nation”

The Cold War era, roughly 1945 to 1990, was over, and the generation of political leadership that had dominated it and whose perspectives had been forged by the trauma of World War II (1939–1945) was now leaving the scene. George Bush, for example, was the last World War II veteran to become president. His successor, Bill Clinton, was elected president in the first post-Cold War American election in 1992. Clinton was born in 1946, just as the Cold War era was beginning, and became president shortly after it ended.

But during the four-and-one-half decades of the Cold War, the United States had itself changed in dramatic and often unpredictable ways. The population had increased from about 150 million in the 1950 census to over 250 million in the 1990 census. The nation's demographic composition underwent even more startling change. The United States now counts 110 distinct ethnic groups among its population, making Americans one of the most heterogeneous societies in the world.

TABLE 1.1**Global Migratory Patterns**

From	Usual Destination(s)
North Africa (Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia)	France
Turkey, East European countries	Germany
South Asia (Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka) and West Indies	United Kingdom
Central American countries, Cuba, Haiti, Mexico, East Asia	Canada and United States

Millions of people (at least 17 million during 1995) are on the move, mostly from the less economically developed countries to the more prosperous countries of Western Europe and North America. Most of these immigrants are unwelcome in host countries when unemployment is high.

The 1950 census revealed that 90 percent of the population was white; by 1990, only 75 percent were in that category. By the middle of the twenty-first century, this proportion is expected to drop to under 50 percent. In short, the American population is growing in both number and complexity. The fastest growing ethnic group in the United States during the 1980s was the Asian-American community, which doubled its numbers in a decade. At the same time, Americans are becoming an increasingly bilingual society, with about 6 percent of the population speaking Spanish as their first language. And while African-Americans are still the largest single ethnic minority in the country at about 13 percent of the population, the Hispanic-American community is the fastest growing in absolute numbers. One of the fastest growing religions in the United States is Islam.

The United States is still not completely united, and old ghosts still occasionally haunt American society. For example, the state of South Carolina was recently involved in a controversy over the Confederate battle flag flying over the state's capitol dome. Placed there in 1962, it had long been a source of displeasure, especially for South Carolina's African-Americans. This controversy is relatively mild compared to many other gender and ethnic issues that crop up in but are certainly not confined to the United States.

The United States is also one of a handful of industrialized democracies whose populations are steadily increasing, in great part because of relatively lenient immigration policies (table 1.1). Such policies are becoming very restrictive in most of Western Europe and have inspired a resurgence of extreme nationalist political movements, especially in France, Germany, and Italy. Many West European and some of the more prosperous East Asian countries have fairly flat population growth rates, meaning that their populations are "aging" faster than the American populace, and that their labor forces are becoming smaller compared to the rapidly growing number of retired people.

Interestingly, while most Americans are generally aware of the legal and illegal immigrants entering the United States from countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, a substantial proportion of immigrants are arriving from East Asia. Most are university students who have come to study at American universities from China, Taiwan, and Japan.⁶ And a substantial portion will decide to remain in the United States to live and work (usually in well-paid professions such as medicine and engineering). Like previous immigrants, they have found it easy to adapt to the American economic and social systems.

Unprecedented demographic changes are certainly occurring. As they do, the more estab-