# Political Change in the Metropolis

EIGHTH EDITION

Ronald K. Vogel • John J. Harrigan

# POLITICAL CHANGE IN THE METROPOLIS

## EIGHTH EDITION

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Cover Photo: FEMA photo/Andrea Booher

*To my wife Jeanie and my son Alex*

*R.K.V.*

*To Sandy, with respect and appreciation*

*J.J.H.*

# CONTENTS

# PREFACE

The Iraq War has all but pushed cities and domestic policy off the national agenda in the United States. For a short time, it appeared that the flooding of New Orleans might remind us of the continued unmet problems in urban America, including continued high poverty and racial inequality. High debt and deficits associated with the war—now estimated to cost more than $1 trillion and perhaps as much as $2 trillion—foreclose the possibility of a stronger federal role in urban affairs.[1] Even without the war, it is unlikely that the federal government would have invested anew in cities or efforts to address urban problems. Since the 1980s, the federal government has withdrawn its interest and investment in urban affairs, at least in any concerted way.

*Political Change in the Metropolis,* Eighth Edition, tracks these political changes and the reactions of urban scholars to them. It also offers the reader a theoretical framework for interpreting these changing events, as well as scholarly perspectives. Our intent is to analyze the patterns of bias inherent in the organization and operation of urban politics. Government structures and processes are not neutral. For example, early twentieth-century progressive reforms such as nonpartisanship and at-large elections strengthened the political influence of upper-middle-class professionals while reducing the influence of lower-class and working-class immigrants. A major question today, in scholarly research and in the federal courts, is whether these same biases currently undermine the political influence of African Americans and Hispanics.

Part One of this book addresses the basic themes of bias, change, and the metropolitanization of America. Part Two focuses on the rise, decline, and consequences of machine and ethnic politics. Part Three focuses on the contemporary city. Within Part Three, Chapter 5 discusses the increasingly important political roles played by African Americans, Hispanics, and Asians in American cities; Chapter 6 examines the changing urban political economy; and Chapter 7 discusses the contest for dominance in American cities.

Part Four shifts our attention away from the central city and toward the broader metropolis. Chapter 8 treats the challenge that sprawl and growth are posing to suburbia; Chapter 9 covers the various strategies for reforming metropolitan government that have been implemented over the past 50 years and the extent to which these reforms have been successful. This discussion is followed in Chapter 10 by a treatment of incremental metropolitan reforms. Finally, in Part Five, Chapter 11 discusses the changing role of the federal government in urban affairs. Chapter 12 offers a general summary of the major urban changes and the political biases related to them and makes some cautious projections about the probable direction of change over the next

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[1]Bob Herbert, "George Bush's Trillion-Dollar War," the *New York Times,* March 23, 2006, A25.

generation in urban America. In this edition of *Political Change in the Metropolis,* the authors continue to update the text and strive to balance the historical treatment of cities and the metropolis with more contemporary trends. Throughout the book, the authors update tables and figures to provide the latest available data on trends in metropolitan areas including numbers and types of governments; population; social, economic, and fiscal conditions; crime rates; and poverty. The most significant changes from the last edition include a new discussion of the concept of resilient cities; an update on the status of redevelopment of lower Manhattan; a new section on the New Orleans flooding following Hurricane Katrina; a review of the new census terminology for metropolitan areas; updated trends on concentrated poverty; and greater treatment of George W. Bush's urban policies. We hope that the text retains its familiarity to past users while also appealing to those who seek more contemporary coverage of urban affairs.

The authors want to express their appreciation to the editorial team at Longman, especially to Eric Stano, editor-in-chief, and Donna Garnier, editorial assistant. They greatly facilitated the revisions and ensured the manuscript was completed in a timely fashion. Rona Tuccillo, Visual Researcher at Longman, was a great help in finding photos of the New Orleans flooding. We also want to thank Abi Smith, graduate research assistant in the Ph.D. program in Urban and Public Affairs program at the University of Louisville. Abi provided invaluable assistance by gathering data and articles for the updates of tables in the text, responding to editorial queries, and ensuring that the production process stayed on schedule. Melissa Morrison, a graduate assistant in the Master's in Urban Planning program at the University of Louisville, did an excellent job of putting together the index.

The production team at Pre-Press Company, Inc., especially Patrick Franzen, was extremely efficient and professional in editing the manuscript and ensuring that the final product is readable and understandable. Finally, we would like to thank those anonymous reviewers of the previous edition whose helpful feedback proved to be invaluable guidance in shaping this revision: Craig W. Allin, Cornell College; Christopher A. Cooper, Western Carolina University; and Jennifer L. Pfeifer, University of Minnesota.

—*Ronald K. Vogel and John J. Harrigan*

# PART ONE

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# METROPOLITAN CITIES IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans on August 29, 2005, all but destroying the city. The storm riveted the attention of the American people, reminding us of the destructive forces of nature and the fragility of urban infrastructure and the modern systems we depend upon for public services and daily living. Terrorists hijacked two planes and crashed them into the World Trade Center in New York City on September 11, 2001, causing the collapse of the Twin Towers, spreading fear and panic throughout lower Manhattan and indeed the nation at large. The attack led to the grounding of all commercial flights, disrupted all transportation in and out of the city, and left a gaping hole in the skyline of New York. Studies of contemporary urban politics cannot ignore these events. Yet the response—federal, state, and local—must be considered in light of "enduring tensions" in urban politics in the United States. Indeed, the New Orleans flood reminds us of the persistence of widespread poverty and racial inequalities that are the underlying conditions associated with the urban crisis in American cities. Moreover, for the near future, the aging infrastructure in American cities and threats posed by sprawl and overdevelopment to the environment may pose a greater long-term danger to cities and urban life. The goal of this book is to balance understanding contemporary phenomena affecting cities, such as globalization, terrorism, or natural disasters, against a longer-term perspective on urban politics in the United States.

By way of introduction, Chapter 1 highlights the major challenges cities face today and puts them in historical context. These challenges include natural disasters, domestic and international terrorism, concentrated poverty, racial and ethnic tension, and continuing population sprawl beyond the boundaries of cities. Current urban problems are considered against the historical backdrop of the development and politics of the cities.

Chapter 1 traces the organization of urban politics through three historical periods, each with its own biases. The first era, *machine- and ethnic-based politics,* is associated with European immigrants who governed the larger cities of the Northeast and Midwest from the 1840s through the 1920s. The second era, *functional fiefdoms,* began in the 1930s and continued to gain momentum in the post–World War II period. Expansion of governmental services and activities led to the organization of political influence on a functional basis rather than on the ethnic and geographic bases that had predominated in the earlier era. A number of special districts, public authorities, and independent agencies were created under the reform banner to prevent politics from interfering with the judgments of experts, such as local boards of health run by medical professionals.

The third era is that of the *dependent city*. It emerged in the late 1960s and is characterized by a concern about the viability of the city in the face of dramatic contemporary political, economic, and social change. The city is buffeted about by external forces such as reduced federal aid, the rise of a world economy, and continued suburbanization beyond the city limits. Local leaders must respond to these external forces as much as or more than to internal urban politics. The threat of terrorism, both foreign and domestic, may indicate the emergence of a fourth era of urban politics in cities—that of the *vulnerable city*. Adding to the vulnerable city is the growing propensity for natural disasters to affect more people, possibly because more people now live nearer threats, as well as the rise of more complex and fragile urban systems that can easily be disrupted accidentally or deliberately.

Some of the implications of these changes are discussed in Chapter 1. Chapter 2 defines some basic concepts of urbanization, explains why and how America became urbanized, and examines the political biases that have accompanied urbanization and metropolitanization in the United States.

# CHAPTER 1

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# TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY CITIES AND THE CHALLENGE OF URBAN GOVERNANCE

### CHAPTER SYNOPSIS

Resilient Cities: *New York City and the World Trade Center Attack*; *New Orleans and Hurricane Katrina* • Urban Politics and the Bias of Political Organization • Three Historical Periods of Urban Politics: *Ethnic- and Geographic-Based Politics and the Era of the Political Machines; Functional Fiefdoms and the Era of Reform*; *The Dependent City* • A Fragmented System of Local Government • Defining Politics and Power in the City

## Resilient Cities

In the 1980s, cities were viewed as dangerous places associated with urban decline, violent crime, and volatile race relations. This image of the city was somewhat exaggerated but not entirely inaccurate. Crime rates were high, central cities were losing population, and there were growing economic and social disparities between residents of the central cities and of the suburbs.

In contrast, the period from about 1993 to 2001 was one of economic growth and prosperity for American cities. Many declining cities saw their populations stabilize or even increase modestly. Income, economic opportunity, and revenues grew greatly in the urban centers, even if they were sometimes outpaced by the suburbs. Massive investment in central business districts occurred with many cities boasting new stadiums, arenas, performing arts centers, waterfront parks, and the like. Even if inner-city neighborhoods were plagued by severe poverty and (along with first-ring suburbs) showed signs of decline, the cities had shiny new downtowns and enhanced infrastructure and services. Even if the public schools were failing, the cities themselves seemed to be thriving. This was most evident in flush city budgets and in the decline in violent crime (see Chapter 11).

Just as we became more optimistic about the fate of American cities, the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, raised new fears about the health and future of cities.[1] Cities are not just threatened by international terrorists. The bombings at the Atlanta Olympics in 1996 and the Oklahoma City federal building in 1995 were the work of domestic terrorists. In addition, as the Cincinnati riots in 2001 reminded us, circumstances that might spawn a race riot are present in many cities; that is, the

presence of a significant group at the bottom of the social ladder whose members believe they have little chance of advancing. The immediate catalysts for riots are usually charges of police brutality, a shooting of a minority youth, or the acquittal of a police officer charged with excessive force.

Although cities have long been vulnerable to natural and human disasters, almost all of these cities are rebuilt and few cities actually perish.[2] Lawrence J. Vale and Thomas J. Campanella, in a book called *The Resilient City,* distinguish natural disasters from human disasters, which are further classified as accidental or deliberate. Examples of natural disasters that nearly destroyed American cities are the Chicago Fire (1871), the San Francisco Earthquake (1906), and the Yellow Fever Epidemic in Memphis (1878). Human disasters may be accidents such as the chemical release in Bhopal, India (1984) and the nuclear reactor meltdown in Chernobyl, Ukraine (1986). Human disasters also include civil war, for example, the killings and destruction due to bombing and gunfire in Beirut (1980s) and the burning of Atlanta (1864). World War I and World War II destroyed parts or all of places such as London, Berlin, and Tokyo as nations bombed each other's major cities. The U.S. used nuclear bombs to destroy the Japanese cities of Hiroshima (1945) and Nagasaki (1945). International terrorism by Al Qaeda hijacking planes and using them as missiles to destroy the World Trade Center and severely damage the Pentagon (2001) are the most recent human disasters. Cities also face domestic terrorism by right-wing extremists often linked to white supremacist movements as in the case of the bombings at the Atlanta Olympics (1996) by Eric Rudolph and the Oklahoma federal building (1995) by Timothy McVeigh.

The rebuilding of cities reveals the underlying urban politics as well as the way the natural or human disaster may have altered urban politics. As Lawrence J. Vale and Thomas J. Campanella state:

> The process of post-disaster recovery is a window into the power structure of the society that has been stricken. Understanding the meaning of urban disasters therefore entails more than examining the various institutions every society sets up to manage recovery. These institutions—such as civil defense organizations, law enforcement agencies, charities, insurance brokers, and victims compensation funds—are certainly vital aspects of urban resilience. Yet the broad cultural question of recovery is more than a problem of "disaster management," however daunting and important that may be. What we call "recovery" is also driven by value-laden questions about equity. Who sets the priorities for the recovering communities? How are the needs of low-income residents valued in relation to the pressing claims of disrupted businesses? Who decides what will be rebuilt where, and which voices carry forth the dominant narratives that interpret what transpires? Who gets displaced when new facilities are constructed in the name of recovery? What roles do nonlocal agencies, national disaster-assistance policies, and international relief organizations have in setting guidelines for reconstruction? How can urban leaders overcome the lingering stigma inflicted by their city's victimization? What place is there for visionary architecture and long-range planning?[3]

In other words, rebuilding the city is a function of and reflects the urban politics of that city. This becomes clear as we review the cases of New York City and New Orleans.

## New York City and the World Trade Center Attack

At 8:45 a.m. on September 11, 2001, a passenger jet struck the north tower of the World Trade Center (WTC), and 18 minutes later a second airliner hit the south tower.

**New York City, October 4, 2001—An aerial view of the recovery operation under way in lower Manhattan at the site of the collapsed World Trade Center.**
*Source:* Photo by Andrea Booher/FEMA News Photo. http://www.fema.gov/.

At 9:43 a.m., a third plane crashed into the Pentagon, and a fourth flight went down at 10:10 a.m. in Pennsylvania. At 10:28 a.m., the WTC collapsed, watched on television by millions of Americans. Later, it was learned that the four planes had been hijacked by terrorists connected to Osama bin Laden, who was also connected to the bombing of two U.S. embassies in Africa in 1998, to that of the *Cole* battleship in 2000, and to the earlier (1993) bombing of the WTC. All flights in the United States were grounded for several days. New York City was virtually shut down, as bridges and tunnels connecting Manhattan to the mainland were closed. In the following days and weeks, the city searched in vain for survivors and began to clear the rubble.[4] Mayor Rudolph Giuliani emerged as a national hero, universally praised for his courage and resolve in the immediate aftermath of the attack.

The total cost of the terrorist attack on New York City was astounding. At the World Trade Center 2,726 people lost their lives. Among the dead were 23 New York City police officers and 343 firefighters killed when the towers unexpectedly collapsed shortly after the planes crashed into them.[5] The New York City Partnership and Chamber of Commerce estimated the total economic impact on New York City's economy will exceed $83 billion. Even after federal and state assistance and insurance reimbursements, the city faced $16 billion in "net damage to the economy." The chamber study reported 125,000 jobs were lost in the immediate aftermath of the attack—100,000 in lower Manhattan—the heart of the city's financial services industry. In addition, about 25 million square feet of office space, about 30 percent of the office space in lower Manhattan, was lost or damaged. A subway, a power station, and a telephone switching station also need to be rebuilt.[6]

## Our Darkest Day; Our Finest Hour

On September 11, New York City suffered the darkest day in our long history. The destruction of the World Trade Center, and the resulting loss of thousands of lives, has broken our City's heart. But our heart still beats and our City remains strong. We will emerge from this stronger than we have ever been before.

This vicious, unprovoked attack on our City, and our Nation, demonstrates the depths of human cowardice and cruelty. Yet the reaction of New Yorkers to this tragedy has shown us the heights of human generosity and courage. Within moments after the first plane struck, ordinary men and women showed extraordinary bravery in assisting one another to safety, even at the cost of their own lives. Our Fire Fighters and Police Officers have personified courage, and though the losses to their ranks have been terrible, they have set the example for the rest of us by continuing to work with renewed vigor.

The Fire Department, in particular, has suffered greatly. More than 300 members of the Department are dead or missing as of this writing, and we have already held funerals for three of the most beloved and valued members of New York's Bravest: Chief Peter Ganci; First Deputy Commissioner William Feehan; and Father Mychal Judge. These legendary leaders and their many courageous fallen colleagues will never be forgotten.

This tragedy, along with the nearly simultaneous bombing of the Pentagon in Washington and the crash of a hijacked commercial plane near Pittsburgh, has touched the lives of millions of people throughout our City, across the Nation, and around the world. Family members, friends, and co-workers have been suddenly taken from us. This enormous loss provokes our sadness, and it also stirs a sense of outrage and anger. President Bush is right to call this an act of war. He is also right to declare that the terrorist enemies of the United States will face retaliation. Basic justice—and the national interest—demand no less.

Yet even as we mourn our dead and prepare for what could be a long and bitter war against an elusive enemy, let us always remember that our greatest national strengths are our openness, our diversity, our inclusiveness, and our freedom. These are the assets that our terrorist foes seek to destroy, but these are also the values that will guarantee our eventual and total victory. The people of the City of New York will demonstrate that we are stronger than these barbarians. We are not going to participate in group blame or group hatred, because those are the sicknesses that caused this tragedy. Our City is going to continue to honor its immigrant heritage. Through the strength of our example, we are going to send the message that life in our City goes on, undeterred. We will continue to embody the highest ideals of America.

I have always had full confidence in the people of this City, and that confidence has risen even higher as I have watched the behavior of New Yorkers in the wake of this tragedy. They evacuated the scene of destruction in good order; they almost immediately formed long lines to donate blood; they have made generous corporate and individual donations of money and supplies; they have offered welcome encouragement and solace to the relatives of the missing and to our exhausted rescue workers. We are a united City, and I have never been so proud to be a New Yorker.

*Source:* Mayor Rudolph Giuliani's weekly column, New York City, September 24, 2001, from http://www.nyc.gov/html/om/html/2001b/weekly/wkly0924.html.

New York City's main concern is that the site where the World Trade Center stood be redeveloped and that businesses return to the area to ensure that the key corporate and finance sectors remain vital and that New York's status as a global city not be threatened. The federal government, even in the midst of the crisis, was concerned about limiting federal assistance. President George W. Bush initially offered $17 billion, which was subsequently raised to $20 billion, to help rebuild New York City (Governor George Pataki had requested $54 billion).[7] Much of this money is for cleanup from the disaster.[8] New York City's business and civic elite pressured the federal government to do more. In addition to the $20 billion, they sought another $5 billion in tax breaks to returning businesses. An initial concern was whether the promised money would actually appear. Many recall that federal aid promised to Los Angeles after the 1992 riots never materialized. Former President Bill Clinton advised the New York Partnership to "Get the money now."[9] Insurance companies ($19 billion), government ($16 billion), and private charities ($3 billion) paid an additional $38 billion of relief to victims, businesses, and other government agencies.[10]

Initial unity in New York City in the aftermath of 9/11 did not last long. Even during the cleanup, firefighters clashed with city police when the city ordered the police to limit the number of firefighters at "ground zero," because in their concern with recovering victims' remains, they were obstructing efforts to clear the site. Another conflict occurred over a planned memorial depicting three firefighters raising the American flag amid the ruins. It happened that the actual firefighters were white, but the scene in the memorial was made "politically correct" to include an African American and a Hispanic.

Nowhere is the reemergence of urban politics clearer than in the debate over how to rebuild lower Manhattan. John Mollenkopf has identified the politics and interests of those who will decide how to rebuild on the WTC site.[11] They include:

- The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, which owns the land where the World Trade Center stood. It is a public authority with members appointed by the governors of New York and New Jersey.
- Mr. Larry Silverstein, who holds a 99-year lease on the World Trade Center. He claims the legal right to redevelop the site and is preparing to build Freedom Tower.
- The Lower Manhattan Redevelopment Corporation, a 16-member authority created by New York Governor Pataki and charged with overseeing redevelopment.
- The City of New York and Mayor Michael Bloomberg, who has little formal role in the rebuilding. However, the city and the mayor have the resources to obstruct or facilitate all plans for rebuilding lower Manhattan.

Many other groups are also taking an interest. They include victims groups representing families, police officers, and firefighters seeking to memorialize the victims; organizations seeking to encourage the return of small businesses; major corporate interests seeking to ensure that New York City retains a strong base in the corporate service sector and finance; and citizens and neighborhood groups hoping for more balanced development, especially residential. Mollenkopf indicates that a major question will be whether redevelopment will be a top-down or a bottom-up process. At present, it is top-down. He suggests that this does not bode well for future redevelopment,

because the fact that the city is only weakly integrated into the formal decision process and that citizens and neighborhood interests have no direct role will undermine the long-term support necessary for successful redevelopment.

The rebuilding indeed stalled while the developer Larry A. Silverstein and the Port Authority argued over who would develop the project. Silverstein may receive as much as $2.2 billion in insurance claims from the collapse of the Twin Towers. He will use the settlement to develop Freedom Tower, which is destined to be the tallest building in the world when finished in 2009. He is already building a 52-story office building to replace one of the destroyed buildings in the 9/11 attack. He also has plans for four other buildings.[12] However, Mayor Bloomberg believes developer Silverstein should focus on building Freedom Tower and allow the Port Authority, owner of the land leased to Silverstein, to proceed with the rest of the site's development. The mayor says the developer does not have sufficient financial resources to proceed with the development of the entire site. Freedom Tower has been delayed by about a year when design changes were required to improve the building's security, which will likely be a continuing target of terrorists. The Port Authority wants to reclaim land from the lease with Silverstein and take responsibility for the rest of the development, including a building to house its own offices. There is also doubt that businesses will want to rent space in Freedom Tower due to the risk of terrorism. The city and state have agreed to rent 40 percent of the space in Freedom Tower to ensure the project's success. The mayor's criticism of Silverstein is also an attack on the governor in that he controls the Lower Manhattan Redevelopment Corporation, which is in favor of Silverstein's development efforts rather than the Port Authority's proposal.[13]

Mayor Bloomberg and U.S. Senator Charles Schumer have also disagreed over "competing visions for rebuilding ground zero." The mayor has called for building apartments and a hotel rather than just commercial office space. Schumer calls this a "lack of confidence in downtown." He also criticized the plan for the Port Authority to construct a building for its own offices on site rather than move into Freedom Tower. Schumer called for the mayor to provide $1.75 billion of tax-exempt bonds, Liberty Bonds, which were part of the federal aid package to support New York City's economic revitalization. The mayor said he would not use the Liberty Bonds to support a project that he does not think is financially feasible, returning to his doubts about Silverstein's ability to finance his plans. The mayor also expressed doubt that the World Trade Center memorial and museum will be able to raise the $1 billion required to realize their plans and that the city may not be able to help. Governor Pataki is considering running for president so problems with redevelopment would greatly undermine his candidacy.[14] The National Trust for Historic Preservation has also objected that the memorial will cause "substantial destruction" to the historic preservation of the Twin Towers foundation and slabs that the building sat on.[15] Moreover, some family members disagree vehemently with the memorial being placed underground or indeed with any structures being built on the site.

## New Orleans and Hurricane Katrina

On August 29, 2005, Hurricane Katrina came ashore with devastating effects on the Gulf Coast region including Florida, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Alabama. The course of the hurricane seemed to spare New Orleans from the worst of the storm. However,

initial relief turned to horror as officials realized that the dam levees failed, resulting in the flooding of 80 percent of the city.[16] Although most citizens evacuated, some 100,000 people were left behind, mostly poor and black. The city was ill-prepared to evacuate so many people and insufficient shelters or provisions were in place. About 25,000 people were trapped in the Superdome without enough water or food and with poor sanitary conditions. Another 20,000 people went to the Convention Center, which was never intended as a shelter.[17] People watched images on their televisions of survivors having to fend for themselves with no sign of local, state, or federal officials coming to the rescue. Many tried to leave on foot, crossing the Crescent City Convention Bridge only to be turned back at gunpoint by Gretana, Louisiana, sheriffs[18] apparently fearing invasion by mobs of black looters. Viewers had trouble believing this was a disaster in a modern America city rather than a Third World country. The hurricane was a natural disaster but it appears that the flooding was the result of human disaster, a poorly maintained levee system.[19] The effects of the flooding are chronicled by Louise Comfort, who reports on the impact of the disaster in New Orleans and Louisiana.

> The costs are indeed staggering: more than 1,300 dead; 1.5 million people displaced from their homes; 60,000 homes totally destroyed; an estimated $200 billion in disaster assistance and rebuilding costs in addition to the $52 billion already appropriated by Congress, and a possible long-term negative impact on the U.S. economy, given the damage to the oil refineries and production operations of the Port of New Orleans.[20]



New Orleans, La., September 1, 2005—Soldiers watch people boarding buses near the Superdome.
*Source:* AFP/Getty Images.

New Orleans, La., September 8, 2005—FEMA's US&R teams, in route by helicopter to conduct a search in St. Bernard Parish, view the flooding in New Orleans.
Photo: Michael Rieger/FEMA http://www.photolibrary.fema.gov/photodata/original/19250.jpg.

Following 9/11, the framework for emergency planning was changed. The Office of Homeland Security was created and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and other agencies were brought under the new cabinet department's auspices. The emphasis of homeland security was planning and responding to terrorism. Although FEMA has a role to play in this, as evidenced in the response to the destruction of the Twin Towers, FEMA lost its direct access to the president and Congress as it was no longer an independent agency. As initial assessments are made regarding the disaster in New Orleans, the national reorganization certainly appears to have significance.[21] The testimony of Michael Brown, former FEMA head, before a congressional committee pointed out that FEMA was down one-fourth of its workforce and that Secretary Michael Chernoff of Homeland Security would not support FEMA budget requests for more equipment and personnel. The testimony also highlighted the Republican view of the president and Congress that the federal government take a secondary role in emergency planning and response. Of course, this explanation does not match the expectations of citizens and emergency planning laws that the federal government responds when the scale of the disaster overwhelms state and local capacity or resources.

In the case of New Orleans, the flood destroyed the local communication and transportation infrastructure. First responders either abandoned their posts or had no

resources or ability to assess the situation and intervene. No doubt, local officials and the mayor are responsible for inadequate planning. The scale of the disaster also overwhelmed the state of Louisiana. There is also concern that the state had insufficient National Guard or equipment available due to the Iraq War. In addition, there are questions about lack of communication and coordination between state officials and the city on the one hand, and the federal government on the other. Nevertheless, FEMA and the federal government took five days to show up.

Hurricane Katrina and the flooding of New Orleans in August 2005 revealed significant weaknesses in the intergovernmental system to deal with emergency planning. First, the current federal budget process that supports emergency response emphasizes the response and recovery side over mitigation and preparedness (Donaue and Joyce, 2001, p. 728). The failure of the levee system and the difficulty of evacuating New Orleans and the Gulf of Mexico region were anticipated in a simulation exercise in 2004. Moreover, the levee system was built to protect New Orleans from a Category 3 hurricane, not a Category 5. Little effort was made to plan or mitigate flooding in New Orleans. Observers have warned of the consequences of the decline in the coastal wetlands as a brake on a hurricane as well as the migration to coastal regions where half the nation's population now resides.[22]

Some amount of blame for the disaster has to rest with local officials. Researchers Peter Burns and Matthew Thomas trace the failure to evacuate the city and deal with the immediate crisis facing the citizens as result of a poorly developed local governing coalition or regime (see Chapter 7). The mayor had few networks or established patterns of relations to draw upon to help evacuate the city, relate to state and federal officials, or draw upon the aid and resources of private and nongovernmental agencies that could assist him. The lack of trust and bonds was an obstacle. In the aftermath of the storm, Governor Blanco created the Louisiana Recovery Authority to lead the effort to restore the economy, rebuild housing, and assist in the recovery of New Orleans and Louisiana. Mayor Ray Nagin has created the Bring New Orleans Back Commission to develop a master plan to direct federal and state aid to ensure New Orleans recovery. Burns and Thomas are hopeful that these may lead to a stronger regime that may more effectively govern New Orleans. However, they acknowledge that there is still a lack of consensus about the rebuilding agenda.[23] There is still serious concern about whom the city will serve and whether the African American majority will return. The mayor was widely criticized for his speech calling for the return of a *chocolate* city. However, many blacks fear that there is an agenda to prevent New Orleans from returning as a black city by depriving the poorer black residents the location or means to return. Nagin was reelected mayor in a runoff primary against Louisiana Lieutenant Governor Mitch Landrieu, who is white, in May 2006.

Others, such as urbanist Peter Dreier, point a finger more directly at the federal government and the ideology of conservatives such as President Bush who favor market solutions over government action and have eroded the capacity of governments at all levels to act positively and provide effective services and address urban problems. He says:

> Katrina was a human-made disaster more than a natural disaster. The conditions that led to the disaster, and the response by government officials, were the result of policy choices. Government incompetence was an outgrowth of a more serious indifference to the plight of cities and the poor. As a result, the opportunity to reconstruct New Orleans as part of a bold regional renewal plan was lost. Whatever positive things happen in Katrina's aftermath will be

due, in large measure, to the long-term work of grassroots community and union-organizing groups who mobilized quickly to provide a voice for the have-nots and who found allies among professionals to help formulate alternative plans to those developed by business and political elites.[24]

Dreier denounces the Bush administration for its "crony capitalism" and reliance on "disaster profiteers" to rebuild the Gulf area.[25] He cites the fact that many no-bid contracts worth billions of dollars went to companies such as Kellogg Brown & Root, which is a subsidiary of Haliburton. Little effort was made to steer rebuilding jobs and resources to New Orleanors. He also highlights that the president suspended the Davis-Bacon law to allow companies to avoid paying prevailing wages (union level), thus lowering wages.

For Dreier, the real tragedy is that the rebuilding effort in New Orleans could have set the stage for really dealing with urban problems in America. With more than $100 billion in federal money going toward the rebuilding of housing, schools, transportation, parks, and commercial redevelopment, there was an opportunity to cooperatively and democratically set a vision for rebuilding the city and region. Moreover, the disaster could have led to a more ambitious urban agenda that would provide a model for cities throughout the nation with the return of a federal partner for cities.

Undoubtedly, local, state, and national officials were unprepared to deal with the disaster. While the specific failures of various officials, agencies, and systems is likely to be studied in detail over the next several years, there is no doubt that the intergovernmental system and lack of coordination are a major part of the story.

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**Mayor to feds: 'Get off your asses'**

**Transcript of Radio Interview with New Orleans' Nagin**

(CNN)—New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin blasted the slow pace of federal and state relief efforts in an expletive-laced interview with local radio station WWL-AM.

The following is a transcript of WWL correspondent Garland Robinette's interview with Nagin on Thursday night. Robinette asked the mayor about his conversation with President Bush:

**NAGIN:**    I told him we had an incredible crisis here and that his flying over in Air Force One does not do it justice. And that I have been all around this city, and I am very frustrated because we are not able to marshal resources and we're outmanned in just about every respect.

You know the reason why the looters got out of control? Because we had most of our resources saving people, thousands of people that were stuck in attics, man, old ladies. . . . You pull off the doggone ventilator vent and you look down there and they're standing in there in water up to their freaking necks.

And they don't have a clue what's going on down here. They flew down here one time two days after the doggone event was over with TV cameras, AP reporters, all kind of goddamn—excuse my French everybody in America, but I am pissed.

**WWL:**     Did you say to the president of the United States, "I need the military in here"?

**NAGIN:**   I said, "I need everything."

Now, I will tell you this—and I give the president some credit on this—he sent one John Wayne dude down here that can get some stuff done, and his name is [Lt.] Gen. [Russel] Honore.

And he came off the doggone chopper, and he started cussing and people started moving. And he's getting some stuff done.

They ought to give that guy—if they don't want to give it to me, give him full authority to get the job done, and we can save some people.

**WWL:**     What do you need right now to get control of this situation?

**NAGIN:**   I need reinforcements, I need troops, man. I need 500 buses, man. We ain't talking about—you know, one of the briefings we had, they were talking about getting public school bus drivers to come down here and bus people out here.

I'm like, "You got to be kidding me. This is a national disaster. Get every doggone Greyhound bus line in the country and get their asses moving to New Orleans."

That's—they're thinking small, man. And this is a major, major, major deal. And I can't emphasize it enough, man. This is crazy.

I've got 15,000 to 20,000 people over at the convention center. It's bursting at the seams. The poor people in Plaquemines Parish. . . . We don't have anything, and we're sharing with our brothers in Plaquemines Parish.

It's awful down here, man.

**WWL:**     Do you believe that the president is seeing this, holding a news conference on it but can't do anything until [Louisiana Gov.] Kathleen Blanco requested him to do it? And do you know whether or not she has made that request?

**NAGIN:**   I have no idea what they're doing. But I will tell you this: You know, God is looking down on all this, and if they are not doing everything in their power to save people, they are going to pay the price. Because every day that we delay, people are dying and they're dying by the hundreds, I'm willing to bet you.

We're getting reports and calls that are breaking my heart, from people saying, "I've been in my attic. I can't take it anymore. The water is up to my neck. I don't think I can hold out." And that's happening as we speak.

You know what really upsets me, Garland? We told everybody the importance of the 17th Street Canal issue. We said, "Please, please take care of this. We don't care what you do. Figure it out."

**WWL:**     Who'd you say that to?

**NAGIN:**   Everybody: the governor, Homeland Security, FEMA. You name it, we said it.

**Mayor to feds:** *(continued)*

And they allowed that pumping station next to Pumping Station 6 to go under water. Our sewage and water board people . . . stayed there and endangered their lives.

And what happened when that pumping station went down, the water started flowing again in the city, and it starting getting to levels that probably killed more people.

In addition to that, we had water flowing through the pipes in the city. That's a power station over there.

So there's no water flowing anywhere on the east bank of Orleans Parish. So our critical water supply was destroyed because of lack of action.

**WWL:** Why couldn't they drop the 3,000-pound sandbags or the containers that they were talking about earlier? Was it an engineering feat that just couldn't be done?

**NAGIN:** They said it was some pulleys that they had to manufacture. But, you know, in a state of emergency, man, you are creative, you figure out ways to get stuff done.

Then they told me that they went overnight, and they built 17 concrete structures and they had the pulleys on them and they were going to drop them.

I flew over that thing yesterday, and it's in the same shape that it was after the storm hit. There is nothing happening. And they're feeding the public a line of bull and they're spinning, and people are dying down here.

**WWL:** If some of the public called and they're right, that there's a law that the president, that the federal government can't do anything without local or state requests, would you request martial law?

**NAGIN:** I've already called for martial law in the city of New Orleans. We did that a few days ago.

**WWL:** Did the governor do that, too?

**NAGIN:** I don't know. I don't think so.

But we called for martial law when we realized that the looting was getting out of control. And we redirected all of our police officers back to patrolling the streets. They were dead-tired from saving people, but they worked all night because we thought this thing was going to blow wide open last night. And so we redirected all of our resources, and we hold it under check.

I'm not sure if we can do that another night with the current resources.

And I am telling you right now: They're showing all these reports of people looting and doing all that weird stuff, and they are doing that, but people are desperate and they're trying to find food and water, the majority of them.

Now you got some knuckleheads out there, and they are taking advantage of this lawless—this situation where, you know, we can't really control it, and they're doing some awful, awful things. But that's a small majority of the people. Most people are looking to try and survive.

And one of the things people—nobody's talked about this. Drugs flowed in and out of New Orleans and the surrounding metropolitan area so freely it was scary to me, and that's why we were having the escalation in murders. People don't want to talk about this, but I'm going to talk about it.

You have drug addicts that are now walking around this city looking for a fix, and that's the reason why they were breaking in hospitals and drugstores. They're looking for something to take the edge off of their jones, if you will.

And right now, they don't have anything to take the edge off. And they've probably found guns. So what you're seeing is drug-starving crazy addicts, drug addicts, that are wrecking havoc. And we don't have the manpower to adequately deal with it. We can only target certain sections of the city and form a perimeter around them and hope to God that we're not overrun.

**WWL:** Well, you and I must be in the minority. Because apparently there's a section of our citizenry out there that thinks because of a law that says the federal government can't come in unless requested by the proper people, that everything that's going on to this point has been done as good as it can possibly be.

**NAGIN:** Really?

**WWL:** I know you don't feel that way.

**NAGIN:** Well, did the tsunami victims request? Did it go through a formal process to request?

You know, did the Iraqi people request that we go in there? Did they ask us to go in there? What is more important?

And I'll tell you, man, I'm probably going get in a whole bunch of trouble. I'm probably going to get in so much trouble it ain't even funny. You probably won't even want to deal with me after this interview is over.

**WWL:** You and I will be in the funny place together.

**NAGIN:** But we authorized $8 billion to go to Iraq lickety-quick. After 9/11, we gave the president unprecedented powers lickety-quick to take care of New York and other places.

Now, you mean to tell me that a place where most of your oil is coming through, a place that is so unique when you mention New Orleans anywhere around the world, everybody's eyes light up—you mean to tell me that a place where you probably have thousands of people that have died and thousands more that are dying every day,

*(continued)*

**Mayor to feds:** *(continued)*

> that we can't figure out a way to authorize the resources that we need? Come on, man.
>
> You know, I'm not one of those drug addicts. I am thinking very clearly.
>
> And I don't know whose problem it is. I don't know whether it's the governor's problem. I don't know whether it's the president's problem, but somebody needs to get their ass on a plane and sit down, the two of them, and figure this out right now.

**WWL:**   What can we do here?

**NAGIN:**   Keep talking about it.

**WWL:**   We'll do that. What else can we do?

**NAGIN:**   Organize people to write letters and make calls to their congressmen, to the president, to the governor. Flood their doggone offices with requests to do something. This is ridiculous.

> I don't want to see anybody do anymore goddamn press conferences. Put a moratorium on press conferences. Don't do another press conference until the resources are in this city. And then come down to this city and stand with us when there are military trucks and troops that we can't even count.
>
> Don't tell me 40,000 people are coming here. They're not here. It's too doggone late. Now get off your asses and do something, and let's fix the biggest goddamn crisis in the history of this country.

**WWL:**   I'll say it right now, you're the only politician that's called and called for arms like this. And if—whatever it takes, the governor, president—whatever law precedent it takes, whatever it takes, I bet that the people listening to you are on your side.

**NAGIN:**   Well, I hope so, Garland. I am just—I'm at the point now where it don't matter. People are dying. They don't have homes. They don't have jobs. The city of New Orleans will never be the same in this time.

**WWL:**   We're both pretty speechless here.

**NAGIN:**   Yeah, I don't know what to say. I got to go.

**WWL:**   OK. Keep in touch. Keep in touch.

*Source:* http://www.cnn.com/2005/US/09/02/nagin.transcript used with permission of WWL. WWL-AM-FM-WWL.com-3WL 1350am

## Return to Normalcy: Urban Politics and the Bias of Political Organization

As the preceding discussion illustrates, conflicting values and institutional structures shape the way community decisions are made. Immediately after the World Trade Center

collapse, the city and country rallied around New York and Mayor Giuliani. However, even as the city began the recovery effort, the mayor was attempting to extend his term in office by state legislative fiat, and the federal government was trying to reduce its obligations to the city. The disaster creates a large bloc of land available for redevelopment—but as what? Should the towers be rebuilt? Should the site be devoted to a large memorial to the victims? Should a park and commercial space share the site? What about residential housing? And who should decide? The mayor, the residents, or the Port Authority that owned the land and the World Trade Center? How will the redevelopment be financed? And what role should various groups play in the decision making?

Governmental structures are not politically neutral. They are biased in terms of the interests and policy directions they would favor or disfavor. One objective of this book is to identify the biases inherent in the organization of political and governmental power in metropolitan America. *Political bias,* as that term is used here, does not necessarily imply that the political actors are purposely and consciously biased for or against given groups of people. It does imply, as political scientist Harold Lasswell has argued, that the political process in itself in some measure determines *who* gets *what* political or economic benefits, *when* they get them, and *how* they get them.[26] Political bias in the metropolis, then, involves two questions: Who benefits from the ongoing political structure and process in the metropolis? And who pays the cost of those benefits? These political biases can occur either in the input into the political decision-making process or in the resulting policy outcomes.[27]

One must distinguish between the bias of specific actions and the *patterns of bias* that underlie a series of actions. Patterns of bias are indicated when some groups are systematically excluded from the governmental decision-making process and their interests are systematically neglected in governmental policy outcomes. Are some groups or categories of people systematically disadvantaged or ignored or hurt by the nature of the urban political process? And conversely, do some other people systematically benefit from the same process?

## The Nature of Change in Metropolitan Politics

Closely related to the bias of political structures and processes are the changes that occur in the ways in which power is organized in the metropolis. Political change in the United States has been especially marked by its evolutionary nature.[28] Some political analysts believe that changes in the American political system historically have been evolutionary, incremental, and marginal. That is, there has never been a revolutionary overthrow of the class structure of the society or a widespread disavowal of the sanctity of private ownership of the major economic institutions. One political scientist, Kenneth M. Dolbeare, argues that even the Civil War and Reconstruction, which destroyed slavery and set the stage for the far-reaching Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution, did not provoke fundamental political change in the United States.[29] In Dolbeare's view, all political change in this country has been marginal and has left the basic socioeconomic structure of the nation intact.

Most political changes have also been *interdependent* with socioeconomic changes.[30] As the nation's population has become increasingly metropolitan, for example, and as the nation's economy has become dominated by nationally based corporations rather

than locally based proprietorships, there have been political reactions to these changes. To cope with the increasingly metropolitan population, the amount of governance in metropolitan areas increased markedly. And to cope with the transition from a regionally based to a nationally based economy, the regulatory capacity of government—particularly that of the federal government—increased substantially. Much of this change, however, in the view of political scientist Murray Edelman, has been *symbolic* rather than *substantive.* For example, the increase in regulatory capacity has been primarily a symbolic change that appeases the public and diverts attention from the fact that there have been few substantive changes in the distribution of power and wealth.[31] Political changes, in this view, normally focus on the symbols of power and seldom touch the substance.

These perceptive insights regarding change are relevant to metropolitan politics. However, we should be careful not to confuse change with instability. Some political systems can undergo rapid changes in the admission of new elites—such as happens following an election—and yet remain quite stable in terms of the class structure, the tenure of governments, and the widespread acceptance of the shared, underlying political and cultural values of the society.[32] This seems to have been the pattern in the United States. Some other political systems become quite unstable precisely because they are not able to tolerate political changes that would admit new elites into the political decision-making process. Thus it may well be that continuous, incremental, evolutionary change leads to political stability and forestalls the need for drastic revolutionary change. Change that allows emerging sectors in the society to share symbolically and vicariously in the exercise of power may also enable the elites of these emerging sectors to be co-opted into the decision-making structure or to bring about major redistributions of wealth.

In the American metropolises, political change has also occurred in an incremental, not a revolutionary, fashion. But this is change nonetheless. For example, the Tammany Hall political machine was not destroyed overnight. However, the tight control of this machine over New York City government, as it existed under Boss Tweed and some of his successors, was eventually destroyed. And the destruction of that control helped make a significant difference in how New York City is governed and in who benefits from its governance.[33] Thus the mayor of New York now struggles to retain a role in the most important development project the city may undertake in the next 100 years, eclipsed by independent public authorities, private actors and interests, and state-led redevelopment agencies. Table 1.1 reports the most important influences on the American metropolis according to a survey of urban scholars.

## Three Historical Periods

The evolutionary nature of metropolitan political change can be seen in the historical development of political power in American cities. Three distinct evolutionary changes can be noted. First, roughly coterminous with the age of political machines and extensive European immigration was an era in which political power was ethnically and geographically based. (How this came about is described in considerable detail in Chapter 3.) Prior to 1830, political power in many American cities was controlled by very small circles of economic elites labeled variously as patrician, Brahmin, Yankee, Bourbon, or (much later)

**TABLE 1.1    Past and Future Influences on the American Metropolis**

| The Top Ten Influences on the American Metropolis of the Past 50 Years | The Ten Most Likely Influences on the American Metropolis for the Next 50 Years |
|---|---|
| 1. The 1956 Interstate Highway Act and the dominance of the automobile | 1. Growing disparities of wealth |
| 2. Federal Housing Administration mortgage financing and subdivision regulation | 2. Suburban political majority |
| 3. Deindustrialization of central cities | 3. Aging of the baby boomers |
| 4. Urban renewal: downtown redevelopment and public-housing projects (1949 Housing Act) | 4. Perpetual "underclass" in central cities and inner-ring suburbs |
| 5. Levittown (the mass-produced suburban tract house) | 5. "Smart growth": environmental and planning initiatives to limit sprawl |
| 6. Racial segregation and job discrimination in cities and suburbs | 6. Internet |
| 7. Enclosed shopping malls | 7. Deterioration of the "first-ring" post-1945 suburbs |
| 8. Sunbelt-style sprawl | 8. Shrinking household size |
| 9. Air conditioning | 9. Expanded superhighway system of "outer beltways" to serve new edge cities |
| 10. Urban riots of the 1960s | 10. Racial integration as part of the increasing diversity in cities and suburbs |

WASP (white Anglo-Saxon Protestant). The members of these elites typically belonged to the higher-status Protestant churches in their localities. They viewed with considerable distrust both the egalitarian principles of Jacksonian democracy and the Catholic European immigrants who stood to benefit from those principles. From the 1830s until at least the end of the century, there was a steady evolution in the political influence of these European ethnic groups. Much of their political influence was founded on indigenous institutional power bases developed within the ethnic communities. The institutions that formed the base for their indigenous power remained the dominant urban political institutions until the 1930s. The major institutions thus created were the political machines, the urban organization of the Catholic Church dioceses, organized crime, certain labor unions, and some sectors of business. In many instances, these institutions are still influential in today's metropolitan politics, although they are seldom dominant.

The second evolutionary change began with the progressive reform movement at the turn of the century and reached its zenith between the 1940s and the 1970s. The evolutionary change during this period was the emergence of political organization on a *functional basis,* as distinguished from the ethnic and geographic bases of the earlier period. Within given functional areas, public bureaucracies and private interests developed. In public education, for example, the top administrators in the school systems, the teachers' unions, the superintendents' offices, and the state departments of education came to dominate public education and to reduce the power of the boards of education—the elected public officials.[34] A similar phenomenon occurred in public safety. The police bureaucracies, the police officers' associations, and conservative citizens' groups concerned

with law and order insulated the police from effective control by locally elected city councils and mayors.* But the most dramatic example of the emergence of functionally organized power occurred in the arena of public housing and urban renewal. The formulation of urban renewal policy soon got beyond the control of elected officials in most cities. Semiautonomous local public authorities were created in response to federal legislation, and they were financed largely by federal funds. In a sense, functional fiefdoms emerged in which the decision makers acted with considerable independence from control by elected public officials. The mayor of New York may find it difficult to shape the redevelopment of lower Manhattan because independent public bodies retain a great deal of authority over the decisions involved.

The functional organization of power enabled technicians and specialists to supersede elected politicians in making the most fundamental decisions about rebuilding the cities. Equally important, major decisions on metropolitan growth came to be made by specialized agencies called *special districts* rather than by general-purpose governments. Within each functional area the public bureaucracies, the special districts, and the related private interests acted in a fashion somewhat reminiscent of feudal fiefdoms in the Middle Ages, when each fiefdom was virtually autonomous and its nobility was answerable only to itself. In the 1950s and the 1960s, an analogous situation occurred in American metropolitan areas. Within many functional areas of public activity, the appropriate influential people of the community were answerable virtually to themselves alone. Highways, redevelopment, low-income public housing, public health, and public education were all fiefdoms acting independently of one another. Little thought was given to coordinating their activities.

The third evolutionary change began in the mid-1960s; we call it the period of the *dependent city*. In this stage of development, local autonomy has been sharply challenged by outside economic forces over which the local government has little control. Local autonomy has also been reduced by policy mandates from the federal and state governments, which influence not only what policies city governments can pursue but also the procedures for implementing those policies.[35] Some of the chief characteristics of this period of the dependent city are an effort to coordinate the various functional

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*The extent of police department insulation is difficult to measure at best, and elected officials certainly affect the overall environment within which the police departments function. Nevertheless, evidence suggests that police law-enforcement practices are the product more of a bureaucratic imperative than of legislative policy made by the city council in response to broad community demands. Jeffrey Pressman found that the mayor and city council in Oakland were unable to alter the police department's policies regulating handgun use by police officers; see p. 515 of Pressman's "The Preconditions for Mayoral Leadership," *American Political Science Review* 66, no. 2 (June 1972): 511–524. John A. Gardiner studied the enforcement of traffic laws in 697 communities throughout the United States and concluded that there was "almost no evidence to suggest that the police are carrying out publicly established enforcement policies"; see p. 171 of Gardiner's "Police Enforcement of Traffic Laws: A Comparative Analysis," in *City Politics and Public Policy*, ed. James Q. Wilson (New York: Wiley, 1968), pp. 151–172. Input from council members and influential citizens almost always occurred on an ad hoc basis with little implication for overall policies (p. 167). And a study by James Q. Wilson of different approaches toward juvenile delinquency by a professionalized police department and a more traditional, fraternally oriented police department found that the more bureaucratized and professionalized police force was much less sensitive to subtle community mores, was much less flexible in dealing with first offenders, and acted more in accord with the model of "an army of occupation" (p. 190 of James Q. Wilson, "The Police and the Delinquent in Two Cities," in Wilson, *City Politics and Public Policy*, pp. 173–195).

fiefdoms, an attempt to subordinate them to policy-making bodies at the metropolitan level, an overriding concern for public-private partnerships in the quest for economic development, and halfhearted attempts to cope with the massive social problems of poverty, crime, poor education, family breakdown, and racial separation that are increasingly the burden of the central cities.

The central city cannot by itself cope well with all its problems. As the redevelopment of the WTC site illustrates, it depends on state government for legal authority, on the state government and the federal government for whatever financial help it can get, on the business community for participation in economic development projects, and on surrounding suburbs for cooperation in addressing the multitude of problems (such as pollution, transportation, and education) that cross city boundaries. Making all these interdependent relationships work for the benefit of metropolitan residents has required acknowledging the need in recent decades for effective political leaders, especially for effective central-city mayors.

In summary, then, three broad evolutionary changes have been observed in the structure of political power in the metropolis:

- The first change was the emergence of power organized on an ethnic basis and a ward, or geographic, basis.
- Second was the emergence of power organized on a functional basis.
- Third has been the emergence of the dependent city, in which effective political power has become highly fragmented among dozens of local governments, and the central city has lost its dominance over the metropolis.

Urban politics in this contemporary period has become metropolitan in scope. From desegregation of schools to economic development, rarely is there a major public issue that can be dealt with effectively wholly within the boundaries of the central city alone. And often the federal government becomes involved through political mandates or financial incentives.

These evolutionary changes are of more than simple historical interest. Each of these three ways of organizing power *continues* to exist. The first way of organizing power did not destroy the older, closed circles of urban elites of the early nineteenth century. But it did open up new channels of political access for groups in the metropolis that did not have access under the older order. The second political change did not destroy the ethnic organization of power,[36] but it did create new channels of political access beyond the control of the ethnic-dominated political machines. Nor has the third political change destroyed the functional fiefdoms. But it has made the domestic policy and philosophy of whoever controls the White House of great importance to cities and metropolitan areas.

Political change in the metropolis, then, does not mean that one form of political organization replaces a previous form. On the contrary, it means that several forms of political organization have evolved side by side. The net result has been the emergence of a patchwork—an incredibly complex structure that is continually evolving in an incremental fashion. For those who know how to navigate them, there are numerous channels of political access to decision makers. Each channel has its own set of biases. And any one channel offers an opportunity to influence decisions only within a very limited scope of activities.

Even the largest, most extensive general-purpose government in the metropolis as it now exists—the central-city government—has only a very limited scope of action available to it. And in most instances, the evolution of a decision-making capacity at the metropolitan level is not very far advanced. What exists in most metropolises is an open political situation. Anyone with sufficient resources can do something of limited scope (for example, construct an apartment building or delay the extension of a freeway through a residential neighborhood). But no one has the capacity to do something comprehensive that covers several functional sectors or the metropolis at large (for example, to integrate highway construction with planning public transit with sewer construction with residential construction with prior metropolitan land-use planning with equalizing social access to housing, education, and employment opportunities).

## A Fragmented System of Local Government

Kenneth Newton points to "fragmentation as a structural attribute of U.S. urban government" with serious consequences for urban politics and policy.[37] The U.S. Constitution provides for a federal system: the central government and the state governments. The states then set up their own systems of local government, and these 50 systems result in 87,453 local governments in the United States (see Table 1.2 and Figure 1.1). Not only that, but these governments overlap with each other in boundaries and functions.

Although social scientists have noted this fragmentation, their theories, according to Newton, have stressed individualistic explanations. This has led some of them to conclude wrongly that fragmentation is good rather than bad. For example, public-choice theorists focus on how fragmented local government provides individuals with



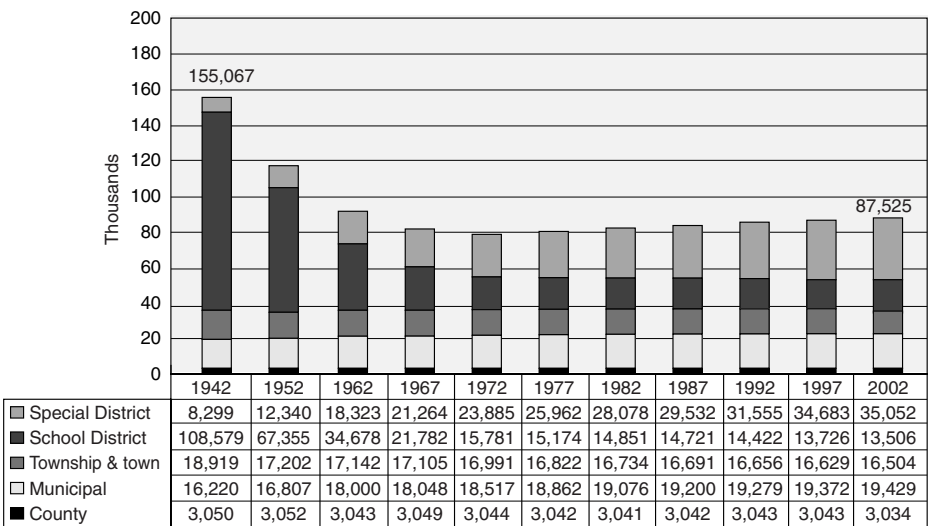|  | 1942 | 1952 | 1962 | 1967 | 1972 | 1977 | 1982 | 1987 | 1992 | 1997 | 2002 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Special District | 8,299 | 12,340 | 18,323 | 21,264 | 23,885 | 25,962 | 28,078 | 29,532 | 31,555 | 34,683 | 35,052 |
| School District | 108,579 | 67,355 | 34,678 | 21,782 | 15,781 | 15,174 | 14,851 | 14,721 | 14,422 | 13,726 | 13,506 |
| Township & town | 18,919 | 17,202 | 17,142 | 17,105 | 16,991 | 16,822 | 16,734 | 16,691 | 16,656 | 16,629 | 16,504 |
| Municipal | 16,220 | 16,807 | 18,000 | 18,048 | 18,517 | 18,862 | 19,076 | 19,200 | 19,279 | 19,372 | 19,429 |
| County | 3,050 | 3,052 | 3,043 | 3,049 | 3,044 | 3,042 | 3,041 | 3,042 | 3,043 | 3,043 | 3,034 |

**FIGURE 1.1   Number of Local Governments in the United States**
*Source:* Statistical Abstract of the United States, 2006, Table 415.

**TABLE 1.2   Description of Local Government**

| | Description | Services Provided | Comment |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Counties* | General-purpose governments that are subdivisions of a state and are set up to carry out traditional state functions at the local level. In some states, counties are referred to as boroughs (Alaska) or parishes (Louisiana). All but two states have this unit of government. | Tax assessment and collection; official record keeping of property transfers; registering births, deaths, marriages, and divorces; elections; road maintenance; law enforcement and jails. | Traditionally, counties were the only government in a rural area. In more modern times, counties have added services, reflecting the urban populations they now serve. These services include health care, mass transit, pollution control, social services, and economic development. |
| *Cities* | General-purpose governments set up to provide urban services to more densely populated areas. Cities, or incorporated places (municipal corporations), are set up under state law. This usually involves citizens petitioning the state legislature to establish a municipality formally. The legislature then grants the city a charter that specifies the boundaries, organization, and powers of the municipality. | Police, fire, sewers, garbage collection, zoning, urban renewal, parks and recreation, roads. | Cities typically were created because urban residents demanded a higher level of public services than that provided by rural county governments. Population growth on the fringe of the city was often brought within the boundaries of the city by a process known as *annexation*, wherein the territory would be appended to the city, usually after a referendum (a vote of the affected citizens). In most instances today, a dual-majority-vote requirement (annexation must be favored by a majority in both the area to be annexed and the city as a whole) results in defeat of the |

*(continued)*

**TABLE 1.2**  Description of Local Government *(continued)*

| | Description | Services Provided | Comment |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | annexation proposal because suburbanites nearly always vote against it. Cities are often created in the suburbs to prevent an older central city from annexing territory. This enables the more affluent residents to isolate themselves from the central city and its taxes and problems. |
| *Towns and Townships* | General-purpose governments that are set up as subdivisions of counties and carry out county services in a subset of the county. These may be rural or urban services. | Roads, law enforcement. | This type of government is found in 20 states in the Northeast and Midwest. In some states towns are more significant than in others. |
| *Special Districts* | Special-purpose governments designed to perform selected functions or services in specified geographic areas. These may be created for any purpose one can imagine, limited only by state law or the state constitution. In some instances, the state may grant city or county government the right to create special districts. | Fire, water supply and management, library, sewers, urban renewal, mosquito control (Florida). | In most cases, these government are insulated from direct control of the voters, and appointed board members make decisions. The rationale for this is that these governments deal with technical issues wherein it is thought that professional expertise should guide action. This type of government has been increasing greatly in the last several decades. |

*(continued)*

**TABLE 1.2** Description of Local Government *(continued)*

| | Description | Services Provided | Comment |
|---|---|---|---|
| *School Districts* | A particular type of special district with an elected board that oversees the public school system. | Setting educational standards and building, maintaining, and operating the public elementary, middle, and high schools. | In some cases, city governments may provide this service. In addition, there may be more than one school district in a county. In the 1970s, many middle-class whites withdrew their children from public schools or moved to the suburbs to avoid busing and school integration. Many school consolidations occurred because of the high expense of providing public education. |

the ability to choose what community to live in on the basis of the level of services and taxes that best meets their needs. They are hypothesized to behave as consumers in the marketplace. Competition among localities for business firms and residents is said to be beneficial because it results in more efficient urban services and lower tax rates.[38]

Pluralist theory focuses on how fragmentation allows greater democracy by providing many access points for groups and individuals to influence decisions that affect them. Pluralism's focus on the question "Who governs?"[39] points to "the power of individuals rather than the power of groups, rules, [and] institutions, or to a consideration of the ways in which certain sorts of structures shape the very nature and distribution of power."[40] Newton believes that the reliance on individualist explanations of urban politics (choices of individual consumers or elites) ignores the more important social and political consequences for urban areas of a fragmented system of local government.

For Newton, the real cause of the fragmentation is the desire of the affluent to separate themselves by creating autonomous suburban communities and leaving the poor and minorities behind in declining central cities. Governments in the metropolitan area strive to use all their powers (such as zoning and taxes) to protect their tax base and limit their responsibility for metropolitan problems outside their own boundaries. One economic consequence of this is that central cities are placed in an untenable position. If they spend money to address the problems of poverty and inner-city decay, they will drive out the affluent individuals and businesses that are the major source of revenue through property and other taxes.[41] Thus the individualist, pluralist, and public-choice theories obscure the larger structural imperatives that drive urban policy. Here, individual behavior and the choices of consumers, businesses, and political and economic leaders operate in the context of the political structure of the metropolis. There exist a myriad of local governments in which certain parts of the community can escape and isolate themselves.

According to Newton:

> The very drawing of political boundary lines may represent the victory of one social group over another, and it may be that different forms of city government and the structure of government within political units are much less important as basic determinants of the patterns of urban politics in the United States than is the drawing of political boundaries around and between different communities. Simply giving a middle-class suburb its autonomy as a unit of local government affects the total system of the metropolis, since money, the life blood of public services, is redirected along different arteries to different bodies politic.[42]

In addition, political fragmentation makes it difficult to assemble sufficient political resources to address problems. It may be impossible to arrive at consensus among so many different jurisdictions, and this may lead to "immobilism and non-decision-making."[43] The structure of political institutions in the metropolis, and the biases associated with them, become permanent. This is usually less of a problem for more affluent residents who can utilize their own resources to meet their needs (e.g., private schools, private security, private health care, private recreation). According to Newton, "fragmentation is a solution to problems—the middle-class solution which tries to ensure that other people's problems do not encroach on their suburbs."[44]

Newton explains that the fragmented system of local government leads to weak "public political authorities" and "strong private interests" whose actions have greater

weight in community decisions—and hence a greater effect on outcomes—than do urban politics confined to city councils and the like. The net result of all this fragmentation in metropolitan areas is that we have "too many governments and not enough government": very weak governments that lack the capacity actually to address problems.[45] Another effect is that the private sector is virtually unregulated, because the local public sector lacks the means to make or enforce regulations. Further, citizens and politicians lower their expectations of what local government can accomplish.

Newton's ideas have not gone unnoticed. Scholars and practitioners alike have periodically called for a restructuring of local government in the United States. David Rusk, former mayor of Albuquerque, has proposed massive consolidation of central cities and county government.[46] He believes that this would help reconnect central cities to the suburbs and ensure that they have an adequate resource base. Rusk also believes this would allow for fair-share housing throughout the region; at present, suburban cities can, through their zoning powers, prevent low-income housing from being built within their boundaries. However, Rusk's proposals would leave most suburban cities intact and would not greatly reduce the fragmentation of local government. Moreover, city-county consolidation would undo the political gains of minorities who have taken over the central cities, because white, middle-class suburbanites would retake control of the city governments. In addition, there is evidence that some central cities today are no longer the ineffectual entities that they were when the boundary changes were originally proposed.[47] Here the calculation of whether the poor and minorities would be better off under the consolidation that Rusk advocates may vary from city to city. We shall revisit these issues in Chapters 9 and 10.

## Bias, Change, and Political Power

To summarize the argument to this point: Urban political structures change slowly in an incremental, evolutionary fashion. As these changes occur, they have the potential to alter the existing patterns of bias concerning the ways in which political power is organized in the metropolis.

In presenting this argument, we have used the terms *politics* and *political power* in a very broad sense. Politics has referred to the struggle over public decisions that determine public policies and allocate values, goods, and services; hence *politics,* as used in this book, refers not only to the election of government officials but also to the making of public decisions and the results of public policy established by those decisions.[48]* It also refers to the broader social and economic processes that establish the constraints, needs, and capabilities that limit governmental action. In the next section, we take a more detailed look at *political power.*

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*Political power also involves what are referred to as *nondecisions.* Nondecisions are the potential issues that never get placed on the agenda for public decision making because they are beyond the pale of what is politically acceptable. The importance of nondecisions to the exercise of power is argued by Peter Bachrach and Morton S. Baratz in "The Two Faces of Power," *American Political Science Review* 56, no. 4 (December 1962): 947–952. The significance of decisions and nondecisions in urban politics is discussed in Chapter 7.

## Political Power

Public policies quite often result from pressure exerted on government by groups and individuals whose interests will be affected by those policies. To the extent that a given group or individual has influence on what a government does or does not do, that group or individual is said to possess political power.[49] To the extent that a given group or individual lacks influence on what a government does or does not do, that group or individual is said to lack political power. Some political scientists have suggested that the concept of power is so vague and so susceptible to multiple interpretations that it ought to be avoided whenever possible.[50] However, because some individuals, groups, and public officials do have the capability to influence government actions, it seems useful to have a term to represent that idea; thus we will use the term *political power* for this purpose. Mayors, city councils, and a host of other governmental officials and agencies are politically powerful because they have the capacity to take official action directly. Interest groups are politically powerful to the extent that they can influence what the governmental actors do.

   Three aspects of political power are important to understanding how metropolises function.

**Context of Power**    First, metropolitan political power is generally contextual; that is, a given group usually has power only in a given context. It has power in those areas of public interest in which it chooses to, or is able to, assert itself. Thus, for example, real estate developers usually exert considerable influence on zoning and land use, but they are seldom influential in questions of air pollution control.

**Structure of Power**    A second important aspect of metropolitan political power is that it is structured: There are patterns to the distribution of power in the metropolis, and some categories of people are more powerful than others. The participating electorate possesses power to the extent that it chooses many of the political leaders and sometimes acts as a restraint on what policy makers can accomplish. Further down the power scale from this real, if somewhat limited, power of the participating electorate is the extremely limited political power of unorganized people and of those who do not participate. In particular, the unorganized and the poor typically exert very little influence on the making of public decisions.[51] In contrast to the limited power of the participating electorate and the extremely limited power of the unorganized and the poor, some highly organized groups consistently exert great influence on public decisions that affect them. Certain businesspeople (especially those from the utilities, the major financial institutions, and the major local retailers) generally have a considerable voice in projects that promote their metropolitan area's economic expansion.[52] The political influence of other groups—groups such as labor unions, political parties, church organizations, and organized crime—varies from one metropolis to another. In Detroit, for example, labor unions are a very strong political force,[53] whereas unions tend to be much weaker in cities of the South and Southwest. But the important point here is that there is always a structure to the organization of political influence in metropolises. This does not necessarily mean that a small elite controls events. It does mean that political decisions do not occur randomly.

**Public Power and Private Power**    Political power is not only contextual and structured; it is also inseparable from private power. The broad sense of the term *political power,* as it is currently used by political scientists, makes drawing fine distinctions between the private and public aspects of power increasingly difficult. To take just one example, for the purely private financial reasons of trying to maximize profit and minimize losses, mortgage banks historically have been reluctant to make mortgage loans in declining areas of American cities. This practice is known as *redlining,* because the bankers supposedly draw a red line around the areas not eligible for loans.[54] Some other neighborhoods are allegedly *greenlined.* The target neighborhoods for urban redevelopment and gentrification, for example, encounter no shortage of mortgage bankers and real estate entrepreneurs who want to redevelop historic buildings or put up new projects.

Although mortgage lenders' decisions to redline neighborhoods are motivated by private reasons and private profits, these decisions have far-reaching public ramifications. The urban neighborhoods that are denied mortgage loans begin to deteriorate. Governments become obliged to spend public funds on stepped-up police and fire protection, public welfare assistance, renewal, and other services to deal with the consequences of that deterioration. The greenlined neighborhoods, by contrast, thrive and see their property values go up. For these reasons, the mortgage lenders' exercise of private power is equally an exercise of public power. Furthermore, if the cities' public authorities do not or cannot use their influence to induce lenders to make loans in redlined areas, then for all practical purposes, the public authorities have publicly acquiesced in and legitimized* these privately made decisions that determine which neighborhoods of the metropolis will deteriorate and which prosper. It is very difficult to call decisions of such magnitude private rather than public decisions, even though they might be made privately, by private businesspeople, for private motives. In this sense, the distinction between private and public has become vague. Private decisions can be public decisions in certain circumstances.

## Privatism and Power

This reliance on private decision makers to decide on developments of extreme public importance we will call *privatism.* According to historian Sam Bass Warner, Jr., privatism has been characteristic of American urban history.[55] But this too is changing. One of the most marked political differences between 1900 and 2000 is the increased ability of governments today to influence private decisions that have public ramifications. In the case of redlining, for example, government has applied pressure on banks to cease the practice.

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*Legitimacy has been defined as the "quality of being justified or willingly accepted by subordinates that converts the exercise of political power into 'rightful' authority"; see Jack C. Plano and Robert E. Riggs, *Dictionary of Political Analysis* (Hinsdale, Ill.: Dryden Press, 1973), p. 45. In this example, the acquiescence of the public authorities in the actions of the mortgage bankers enhances the likelihood of popular acceptance of the notion that bankers have a "rightful authority" to take actions that have such far-reaching consequences. According to Dolbeare, fundamental political change is first of all a process of "delegitimizing" existing institutions and then "legitimizing" new political institutions; see Kenneth M. Dolbeare, *Political Change in the United States* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1974), p. 8. Thus, in this example, fundamental change would first of all involve delegitimizing the existing right of mortgage bankers to decide which areas of a metropolis qualify for mortgage loans. The second step would be to give this right to a new institution.

By contrast, one of the most important goals of the Reagan administration was to put an end to the public sector's encroachment into areas of economic life that had traditionally been private; hence the Reagan administration's support for privatization—that is, the contracting out of many public services to providers in the private sector.

Finally, privatism has its own patterns of bias. It helps make the urban system of politics more responsive to existing powerful and affluent institutions (especially banks and real estate developers) than to low-income individuals. In making the urban system of politics less responsive to low-income people, privatism inhibits the development of lower-class-based political institutions that might give the poor more influence over their city governments. How does privatism do this? By fostering a set of attitudes that encourage in people a self-centered individualism in which their personal ambitions for family, career advancement, and consumption of consumer goods take precedence over concerns for the community as a whole or concerns that all members of the community enjoy a decent living standard.[56] The essence of privatism, according to Warner, is that

> the individual should seek happiness in personal independence and in the search for wealth; socially, privatism meant that the individual should see his first loyalty as his immediate family, and that a community should be a union of such money-making, accumulating families; politically, privatism meant that the community should keep the peace among individual money-makers, and, if possible, help to create an open and thriving setting where each citizen would have some substantial opportunity to prosper.[57]

In such a privatistic value system, there is little room for the notion that the state is responsible for helping those people who fail to prosper. The privatistic person is not receptive to a welfare system and supports the political system only to the extent that the system assists his or her personal advancement. Gone is the ancient Greek belief that the purely private person is useless.

Privatism has different effects on different social classes. It induces the upper middle class to support city governments that would subsidize downtown redevelopment projects and not to support city governments that would dramatically increase welfare or social services in poor neighborhoods.[58] The effect of privatism on the poor classes is the inhibition of voter turnout and of involvement in political activities (such as protest demonstrations and collective bargaining) that would increase their collective influence on city government.

That, at least, is the theory of privatism. To date there is not much empirical research devoted to issues of privatism. But one survey did indeed find that people who scored high on a privatism index were less inclined than others to engage in political or protest activity, cared less about politics, were more materialistic, and were less liberal.[59] Unless the findings of this survey are reinforced by others, we would not be justified in concluding that privatism is as pervasively biased as the argument here suggests. But these findings are suggestive enough for us to take the privatism argument seriously. If the privatism argument is correct, the biases of privatism are quite apparent. Privatism helps the wealthy and the upper middle classes retain their privileged status in our society. And by discouraging a class-based politics, privatism hinders the ability of the urban poor to pursue their own collective self-interest.[60]

## SUMMARY

1. Cities are challenged by a host of natural and human disasters ranging from terrorist attacks on the World Trade Towers in New York City to Hurricane Katrina damaging the levees leading to flooding in New Orleans. Cities are *resilient* and most of the time return, although not necessarily to pre-disaster levels. Modern complex administrative systems require coordination among and between numerous public and private actors at the local, regional, state, and national levels. The New Orleans flooding especially revealed defects in the intergovernmental system and reminded us of the underlying persistence of poverty and racial inequality in American cities. These serious urban problems are largely unaddressed by the American political system at any level.

2. In examining the process of urban politics, this book will look for *patterns of bias* to see whether certain groups of people systematically benefit from the process and whether other groups of people are systematically excluded from the process or are put at a disadvantage by it.

3. Urban political change has been predominantly incremental change rather than revolutionary change.

4. Three distinct periods of urban political change can be noted in America:
   A. 1830s–1930s: the period of ethnic and machine politics
   B. 1930s–1970s: the period of functional fiefdoms
   C. 1960s–present: the period of the dependent city

5. Local government is fragmented in the United States. This fragmentation leads to biases in urban politics and policy. Notably, the middle and upper classes are able to isolate themselves from the problems of the central city and to exclude the poor from their suburban communities.

6. We use the term *politics* in a broad sense to refer to the struggle over public decisions that determine public policies and allocate values, goods, and services.

7. *Political power* is the ability to influence these public decisions. Urban political power is characterized by three features. First, it is contextual. That is, a given group usually has power only in a given context. Second, it is structured. The most powerful groups are those that are permanent and that maintain an ongoing relationship with government. Third, public power is inseparable from private power. Private institutions (such as mortgage banks) make private decisions (such as discouraging mortgage loans in redlined neighborhoods) that have consequences (such as neighborhood deterioration) to which governments must respond.

8. Finally, it can be argued that the tradition of privatism in urban America is itself biased in favor of the upper middle classes and against the interests of the urban poor.

## NOTES

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26. Harold Lasswell, *Politics: Who Gets What, When, How* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1936).

27. Students not familiar with the input-output model of political analysis might find it useful to examine one of the many "systems analysis" models of politics. Much of the systems analysis terminology stems from the writings of David Easton and Gabriel Almond. See David Easton, *A Systems Analysis of Political Life* (New York: Wiley, 1965) and Gabriel Almond and G. Bingham Powell, *Comparative Politics: A Developmental Approach* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1966). Some interesting attempts to concentrate on the output side of this model in order to analyze the costs and benefits of policy outputs are Thomas R. Dye, *Politics, Economics, and the Public: Policy Outcomes in the American States* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1966) and Brett W. Hawkins, *Politics and Urban Policies* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1971).

28. *Political change* has proved to be an elusive term for political scientists to define precisely. The literature on political change has focused primarily on non-Western countries that are perceived as undergoing a modernizing or developmental process. Another focus has been the revolutionary aspects of some change. Prominent examples of these focal points can be found in John H. Kautsky, *Political Change in Underdeveloped Countries: Nationalism and Communism* (New York: Wiley, 1962); David E. Apter, *The Politics of Modernization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965); Leonard Binder, *Iran: Political Development in a Changing Society* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1962); Peter H. Merkl, *Political Continuity and Change* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967); and Chalmers A. Johnson, *Revolutionary Change* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1966).