built. Many of the capabilities used in politics are nominally developed outside the political system. Wealth, knowledge, physical energy, and organizational capacity are products of an economic and social system. That system cannot be controlled precisely by political action, but it can be influenced.

Varieties of Capabilities

Among the many capabilities created, distributed, and maintained by democratic polities, we can distinguish four broad types particularly relevant to governance: rights and authorities, political resources, political competencies, and organizing capacity. *Rights and authorities* empower citizens and officials. They provide discretion over resources and actions. Officials need legitimate authority, and citizens need autonomy. Authority to levy taxes is granted to a legislature. Authority to make certain decisions and allocations, to take certain actions, is granted to an official. By exercising valid authority and having that exercise certified by political institutions and culture, officials establish their existence as officials. The right to vote, the right to engage in free speech, and the right to hold property are granted to a citizen. By making valid claims of rights and having those claims confirmed by political institutions and culture, citizens establish their existence as citizens.

Rights and authorities are capabilities easily enshrined in formal rules but more difficult to maintain in day-to-day political life. The modern terrain of political regimes is populated by impressive legal arrays of rights for citizens and authorities for officials, but many regimes with comprehensive systems of legal protections are models of tyranny in which citizens are routinely mistreated and officials routinely bullied. Rights and authorities are protected, interpreted, and enforced by a structure of norms and institutions that depend almost entirely on public support for their ability to function. Any protection can be ignored and, being ignored, does not exist. Support by any one citizen depends on expectations of support from others, expectations that depend on the perception of those rights and authorities as meeting shared standards of appropriateness. Both the strength and the occasional fragility of rights and authorities stem from this reflective property of legitimacy. And while the

process maintains the norms and institutions that assure stability, it also provides arenas in which rights and authorities are continually being negotiated and renegotiated, interpreted and reinterpreted. Controversies over and discussions about legitimate rights and authorities constitute an important part of the democratic political process.

The second type of capability includes the *resources* available to individuals and institutions. By resources we mean the assets that make it possible for individuals to do (or be) things or to make others do (or be) things. Those assets include money, property, health, time, raw materials, information, facilities, and equipment. They also include such individual attributes as social standing, location, physical size and energy, ethnicity, gender, and age. They include such institutional attributes as size and location. Individuals and institutions vary in their wealth, in their access to other material goods, and in the time they have for (or choose to spend in) politics. They vary in their access to information. Hospitals without bandages cannot function as proper hospitals. Libraries without books cannot function as proper libraries.

Although modern enthusiasms for competitive markets tend to remove normative constraints on the exchange of assets across institutional sectors, democratic polities have traditionally tried to make assets institution-specific. Much of democratic governance involves building and protecting barriers to trade or formulating conversion rules across the borders of institutional spheres. Physical strength cannot legitimately be used to threaten political representatives, bureaucrats, judges, or fellow citizens, but it can be used to work long hours. Money cannot legitimately be used to buy a desired court decision directly, but it can be used to buy the best legal expertise available. Money cannot legitimately be used to have a desired public policy adopted, but it can (within some constraints) be used to support political parties and candidates, professions, or newspapers who work for that outcome. There are few direct rules against spending time in politics, and usually the complaint is that many citizens attend too little, but systems of representation and various access rules tend to constrain the political value of free time and energy. Likewise, inalienable rights and autonomous institutions tend to limit the political value of being a majority.

The third type of capability includes the *competencies* and *knowledge* possessed by individuals, professions, and institutions. Individuals have competencies gained from education, training, and experience that affect their effectiveness in political settings. They know things. To act appropriately as a translator from Arabic to English requires knowledge of both languages. To act appropriately as a police officer requires knowledge of police procedure. Citizens without resources of education cannot function as proper citizens; they have difficulty resisting the sloganized election appeals purchased by campaign spending (Kenny and McBurnett, 1994). Institutions encode knowledge in traditions and rules. They sustain those capabilities through socialization and systems of knowledge retention and retrieval. They have educational systems, libraries, archives, and traditions.

Knowledge is a foundation for political capabilities in most democratic polities (Crozier, 1964; Weber, 1978), but the value of specific knowledge depends on such things as changing political agendas, changing beliefs in political means, and changing competition from groups with alternative knowledge and experiences. For instance, the development of the welfare state increased the political relevance of some professional groups. Medical doctors, nurses, teachers, and their associations became more valued participants. Shifts in professional beliefs also change the political relevance of professional competencies. In many countries during the 1970s and 1980s, Keynesian economists had to surrender political positions to monetarists and supply-side economists. Likewise, one profession may face competition from another. When government by rules is replaced by government by objectives, lawyers and other experts on rules tend to lose positions to economists and other means-end experts.

The political capabilities generated by knowledge are contingent rather than absolute. Democratic grants of authority to experts are constrained by fears of meritocracy. Politicians know that they depend on bureaucrats but try to avoid bureaucratic dominance. In a similar way, the political capabilities of institutions of knowledge, such as the university, vary over time. The ebbs and flows are tied to changing assessments of the risks of ignorance and dependence and are orchestrated by accounts arguing for the self-governance of universities or for their control by political authorities and market forces.

The fourth type of capability is the *organizing capacity* that allows effective utilization of formal rights and authority, resources, and competencies. Democratic political thought has long focused on the dangers of organized factions (Hamilton, Jay, and Madison, 1964) and well-organized military or police forces; such concerns have been echoed in more recent discussions of the organizing rights of antidemocratic parties or movements and of the democratic contributions and threats stemming from corporative representation in democratic politics (Schmitter and Lehmbruch, 1979; Lehmbruch, 1984; Rothstein, 1992). Nevertheless, an important part of the development of democratic polities has been the granting of rights and capacities of organization to deviant groups (Dahl, 1966). Without organizational talents, experience, and understanding, the other capabilities of democracy are likely to be lost in problems of coordination and control, logistics, scheduling, allocation and mobilization of effort, division of labor and specialization, motivation, planning, and the mundane world of meeting deadlines, budgets, and collective expectations. Attention must be focused; activities must be meshed to produce combined effects; people must be consulted and involved; resources must be conserved and expended in a timely fashion.

Capabilities for organizing are partly created by the polity. Legal rights to constitute an organization and to exercise its privileges are typically granted, protected, and regulated by the state. Organizing capabilities in modern democracies are, however, less dependent on political regulations and constraints than on the availability of other political resources and competencies, such as money and knowledge. Although democratic history shows that strong mass organizations have sometimes been developed on a basis of sparse formal knowledge, modest practical organizational experience, and little money, organizational capacities often feed upon and contribute to other political resources and competencies.

The Dynamics of Capabilities

Capabilities can often be created by deliberate action. Wealth can be redistributed. Education can be made available. Rights to participate in political processes can be granted. Organizational capabilities can be created. The welfare state is an experiment in creating, regular-

ing, and reallocating capabilities in a democratic context. But capabilities have a dynamic of their own. Some capabilities are depleted by use; others are augmented by use.

CAPABILITIES THAT ARE DEPLETED BY USE

Many capabilities are expendable. Capabilities that are used at one time or in one place are unavailable for use at another time or place. Many kinds of financial or physical resources fit this description. Spending money or extracting oil leaves less money to spend or oil to extract. Resources devoted to one project are not available for another. Expending energy or political power leaves less energy or political power to expend. Energy used to execute one set of rules is not available for another.

One of the more common complaints about political systems is that legislators fail to consider those opportunity costs. They overload implementing agencies, imposing new obligations without providing resources adequate to fulfill them (Bardach, 1977). They waste their material and political resources on unimportant projects, leaving fewer resources for more important ones. In particular, they devote resources to coping with current crises rather than to reducing the likelihood of future crises. The current political generation taxes future generations by borrowing for current consumption.

Certain kinds of power, rights, and authority also are depleted through exercise. The claim of a right or authority may make its future exercise less feasible because of the sense of imposition that it makes on those responding to the claim. Rights and authorities sometimes draw on a "credit" of tolerance and can exhaust that credit when used repetitively. Similarly, rules of reciprocity are based implicitly on notions of capability depletion. Relationships of friendship, trust, or alliance provide political capabilities. If they assume reciprocity, however, use of the political capabilities provided by the relationship reduces the amount of political capability available for future use (in the absence of reciprocal favors).

CAPABILITIES THAT ARE AUGMENTED BY USE

Some capabilities are augmented by use. Many kinds of technical and organizational skills fit this description, as do some forms of po-

litical power. The more frequently a task is performed, the more competently it is done. The more often an organization faces a problem, the more effectively it deals with it. The more often power is exerted, authority is claimed, or rights are asserted, the more they are conceded to exist. The more claims that are made on (nonreciprocal) friendships, the greater the friendship and the possibility of further claims.

The "learning-by-doing" characteristic of some kinds of capabilities has consequences for governance. On the one hand, it suggests that political capabilities profit from exercise. Even if early experience with a program demanding new competencies or rights results in failure, subsequent experience may be more favorable. The returns from new projects or legitimacies are likely to be disappointing at first, more satisfying later. Insofar as democratic institutions respond to immediate pressures, there is a tendency to abandon activities, rights, or authority before competence is gained, thus a tendency to abandon potentially good initiatives prematurely.

On the other hand, "learning-by-doing" also leads political institutions to become overcommitted to what they have done and are doing. Since current performance depends on both the potential return from an activity and present competence at it, performance shows increasing returns to experience (Arthur, 1984). Each increase in competence at an activity increases the likelihood of rewards for engaging in that activity, thereby further increasing the competence and the likelihood (Argyris and Schön, 1978; David, 1985). It is quite possible for competence in an activity to become great enough to make activities with greater potential unattractive in the short run (Herriott, Levinthal, and March, 1985; Levinthal and March, 1993). The argument extends beyond technical competencies to experience with the rules of a political institution. Experience with a particular combination of rules, rights and authorities tends to develop competence within existing frameworks and makes experimentation with other combinations less likely.

The argument has been used to explain some of the stability in political systems. Proponents of a British parliamentary-cabinet government system in the United States or of an American separation of powers systems in the United Kingdom recognize that the accumulated experience of each country with its own institutions makes a

change unlikely. The accumulation of competence is one reason for the difficulty of moving to a democratic political system after an extended period of centralized authority. It is also one possible partial explanation for the persistence of welfare policies in states where there has been extensive experience with the welfare state and the persistence of market-based policies in states where there has been extensive experience with markets. The technical and political skills required by either system are so developed and refined by experience with them that shifting to another technology of economic and social policy and rights leads (at least for an extended period of time) to a substantial decrease in performance.

Just as political competence is augmented by experience in using it, it atrophies through disuse. When societies do well, settling political issues without effort, or when they are buffered from problems by slack resources, those political capabilities that are susceptible to augmentation through use tend to wither. For example, the political skills involved in forming coalitions, negotiating compromises and deals, and adapting to a changing world may wither when one group or party has an extended period of unchallenged power or when broadly shared values or abundant resources reduce experience with conflict and its effective resolution. When the world is forced to adapt to a dominant actor over an extended period, the capabilities of that actor for adapting to the world are degraded—a traditional problem of dominant cultures, technologies, firms, nations, and religions (Deutsch, 1966; Levinthal and March, 1993).

Nearsightedness in Building Capabilities

Some political capabilities are particularly difficult to build and nurture in a democracy. The difficulties stem from the nearsighted nature of democratic political processes. Democracy has difficulty seeing costs and benefits that are distant, either in time or in space, from the locus of political action. It responds to current and local pressures more easily than to future or distant ones.

NURTURING FUTURE CAPABILITIES

Some capabilities require investments of time and other resources that are well prior to the realization of their benefits. The demands

of current problems exhaust current capabilities, leaving nothing to invest in extending capabilities. The political necessities of immediate problems overwhelm the capabilities of political institutions to sustain a longer-term perspective. This is a direct consequence of the temporal distance, uncertainty, and diffuseness of the returns on investment in capability development. Much of the infrastructure of a polity fits such a description. Returns are diffuse and in the future; costs are immediate and focused.

Since long-run survival depends on sustaining and augmenting capabilities, those tendencies to increase the utilization of current capabilities and reduce investment in capabilities that might be needed in the future make democratic political processes potentially self-destructive. It invites some kinds of governance of intertemporal exchanges. A democratic political system based on bargaining and exchange among self-interested citizens is poorly equipped to deal with those problems. In particular, it is poorly equipped to deal with exchanges between current citizens and future citizens. The problem is not a problem of responsiveness, but a problem of representation. In practice, democracy represents the living better than the unborn. A competitive democratic political system makes the long-run interests of future generations vulnerable to the short-run interests of the current generation of political actors.

In order to deal with those problems, the democratic imperative is to develop some way in which future citizens obtain political representation. The political voice of future citizens must be found by enhancing the political capabilities of those current citizens who might speak for them. To some extent, of course, a political system can commission an explicit spokesperson for defending the rights of future citizens. It can create an agency with responsibility for defending the rights of the unborn. It can also create a climate of concern, guilt, or shame—the traditional way in which the weak have mobilized the strong in their defense.

The main mechanism for strengthening the political position of the unborn, however, is the institutionalization of political action. By the institutionalization of political action, we mean two things. We mean (1) that there are key social institutions that are viewed as existing over time, enduring through generations of individuals, and accumulating a collection of practices and rules that reflect gen-

erations of social and political experience. And we mean (2) that individuals act within the political system as trustees of those institutions, rather than as autonomous individuals. When a farmer sacrifices current crops to maintain the water table for future generations of his family, he acts as a trustee of his family. When a political official refuses to increase the public debt even though it would ameliorate immediate problems of unemployment, inequity, or injustice, he acts as trustee of the future community. The erosion of institutionalized responsibility through the breakdown of institutions of intergenerational continuity, such as the family, and through the ideological glorification of the individual self have weakened the representation of the unborn and have made democratic politics systematically less attentive to the problems of nurturing future capabilities.

NURTURING DIVERSITY IN CAPABILITIES

Political myopia across time is matched by myopia across distance. Democracy tends not only to be unduly attentive to the pressures of the moment. It also tends to be unduly attentive to pressures exerted at the locus of decision. Some institutions and the capabilities associated with them are more valuable than they are powerful. They have to be nurtured by the self-restraint of a political system. We shall mention briefly two specific forms of distance myopia in democracy: The first is the case of institutions whose value to the political system arises from their removal from politics. The second is the case of institutions whose value to the political system lies in their deviance and variety.

Eunuchs, judges, and scientists. Eunuchs are particularly valued in a seraglio because they pose no threat to the sexual order. At the same time, they are vulnerable because they have no basis for protecting their position within that order. Eunuchs who try to protect themselves by seeking autonomous position in the sexual order of the sultanate will probably fail and will compromise the irrelevance that is vital to their being tolerated. If they are successful, they will become sexually significant, but the significance itself makes them socially less useful.

In a similar way, democracy depends on the removal of certain institutions from an active role in politics—the courts, universities, and civil service. Their value is augmented by their disengagement from politics. They defend political institutions and rules, thus are important parts of the political process, but they are separated from party politics and partisanship. That disengagement, however, makes them vulnerable. Judges, teachers, scientists, and civil servants often are tempted to try to protect themselves by improving their capabilities for affecting politics. Whether they succeed or fail, the effort itself compromises their capabilities for serving the political community.

On the other hand, as long as institutions like the courts, universities, and civil service are not present in the political process, they are dependent on self-restraint on the part of others in political arenas. Self-restraint is not always characteristic of political actors. Recent history, in particular, suggests that local political exigencies easily overcome traditions of political support for the eunuch institutions of democracy. The community of science is a case in point. This community can be imagined to be an association of autonomous, independent scientists, autonomous servants of an international conglomeration of political democracies. Professional standards provide the basis of authority. Scientific opinion is formed in overlapping networks of critical judgment (Polanyi, 1962). Scientific advice is provided to political participants as a basis for policy actions. Such a vision of eunuchry is rather distant from the realities of contemporary science. Political institutions are often mired in unsuccessful attempts to control the processes, directions, and conclusions of science. Governments have often tried to strengthen or control science or the networks of science to further social and political policies (Sörlin, 1994), but the hopes of political authorities to shape science have generally been no more satisfied than have the hopes of scientists to do so.

At the same time, science is often deeply compromised by involvement in politics. Scientists exaggerate their knowledge to secure political support. They twist scientific results to justify further appropriations for their institutes and for political programs they like. They confound their science with their ideologies. They seek public approbation and use their scientific reputations as instruments of political pressure (March, 1980). Those perversions are

not accidents. They stem from the underlying instabilities of the eunuch role. The authority, the autonomy, and the innocence of the eunuch are unstable. An effective partnership between eunuchs and their masters is vulnerable to the short-run local advantages either can gain by exploiting the relation. As a result, it is also vulnerable to the consciousness on the part of each of the threat that the other will act exploitatively. The required mutual self-restraint is difficult to sustain.

Requisite variety. Political pressures are Janus-faced with respect to coherence. On the one hand, they tend to be practical. They are directed toward solving immediate problems, particularly problems in maintaining political coalitions. They are more likely to invest in answers than in questions, more likely to adopt reliable procedures than experimental ones. Their horizon is local and current. At the same time, however, they tend to be decentralized. They focus on problems in the near neighborhood of the political arena, and each arena looks at a different set of problems. They respond to the concerns of people who are present more than to those of people who are absent, and the participation patterns change over time and over place.

The result is a continual struggle between centripetal and centrifugal forces in politics. The multiplicity of political arenas, the many semi-autonomous institutions, and the difficulties of coherent political mobilization of interests all conspire to produce a cacophony of policies, actions, and pressures. Those forces are, however, counter-balanced by political, administrative, and mimetic tendencies toward consistency. The ideas of a state, of systematic political programs, and of legal consistency all work against inconsistency. The social construction of legitimacy and the imitative processes by which practices, forms, and rhetorics diffuse through a society lead formally autonomous processes to converge (March and Olsen, 1983).

As we shall note in Chapter 6, where we discuss some of these issues further, determining the optimal level of diversity is itself an exercise in balancing conflicts across time and space, and it is possible that the balance resulting from political struggles may indeed often be fairly sensible. That result, however, would be mostly a happy accident. In addition, the struggle over variety is complicated by strate-

gic exploitation of it. An old principle of organization theory is that each manager wants decentralization (diversity) down to his or her level and centralization (unity) up to it. As one would expect from such a principle, high-level authorities tend to see the short-run advantages of coherence more clearly than the long-run advantages of experimentation, though they may, in the face of adversity, pursue a policy of decentralized autonomy in order to spread responsibility for poor outcomes. Subordinate authorities, on the other hand, seem able to see somewhat more clearly the social advantages to inconsistency, heterogeneity, and variety.

Thus, although many would applaud the variation advantages of pluralism and decentralization, those advantages are often reduced by self-serving exploitation of the resulting independence from control and coordination. Developing semi-autonomous institutional frameworks, for instance, can become not so much a device for protecting variety as a technique for protecting agencies against parliamentary review and influence. And an institutional structure that protects variety runs the danger of fragmenting society into powerful veto groups, representatives of partial interests that use claims of diversity to justify their pursuit of self-interest and prevent a policy directed more to the common good (Willke, 1989, p. 229).

Links Between Capabilities and Identities

The ordinary requirements of survival tend to match identities to the capabilities necessary to sustain them. We can imagine capabilities and identities to arise autonomously and to come together in a match. Inconsistent combinations tend not to endure. Inconsistencies between the two can be seen as failures of a diffuse matching process. Sometimes, however, the links between capabilities and identities are more direct. Capabilities create identities, and identities create capabilities.

IDENTITIES CREATE CAPABILITIES

Most discussions of democracy appropriately emphasize the distribution of political capabilities as a factor in the distribution of power. However, capabilities are not independent of identities. The ability