

Much information about the outside world is required if a satisfactory analysis of the complex problems discussed above is to be carried out and comprehensive, realistic alternatives put before the government. Implicit in much of what Canadians try to do abroad are assumptions about the ways in which institutions work, the strength of forces making for change or for stability, the prospects for increased economic growth, the effects of such growth on political stability, the consequences of increased urbanization and so forth. Yet only infrequently at present do we examine these matters in depth and when we do so it is usually on rather narrow, albeit often important, questions: the status of a certain dissident group, agricultural progress, etc. Usually neglected is a systematic effort to get deeper and broader understanding of the societies with which we deal.

While the relative stability of political institutions in the West may allow us more or less to take them for granted, we cannot afford the luxury of ignoring them in any less developed country. Instability and its causes, the incidence of military governments, one party rule, struggles for power, the relevance or irrelevance of democratic forms and sometimes international connections are all factors which will have broad effects in social, economic and cultural life and which will, therefore, affect Canadian programmes, policies and interests even if we have few formal political entanglements with the countries in question. These political institutions must, accordingly, be studied in their own right.

In addition, political structures have a life of their own rooted in historical tradition, education, law and a variety of other factors. Political structures (parties, courts, governmental institutions, etc.) must be viable themselves or technological, developmental and other economic