

## Part I

# Foundations of global politics

*We cannot always build the future for our youth but we can build our youth for the future.*

**FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT**, 32ND PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

The three chapters that comprise Part I of this book outline important fundamentals for the study of contemporary global politics. They take a pragmatic approach, highlighting the complexities of the subject and recognizing the contributions of historians and modern theorists. They show the need for a question-driven approach by stressing the significance of history and theory to an understanding of how our disordered world works.

Chapter 1 discusses three significant topics that profoundly influence the patterns of world politics today: the perpetual quest for security, the march of globalization, and the complex role of states and identities. Together they help us understand the continuities and changes in global politics.

Chapter 2 shows that the study of global politics requires an understanding of history that is not limited to Europe and North America. It traces the rise and fall of the world's extended empires and great powers from the earliest recorded history to the end of the Cold War. For many centuries it was not clear whether Asia, Europe, or the Middle East would dominate the world. The rise of the modern state and the economic progress that followed the industrial revolution tipped the scale in favor of Europe and, later, the United States. The chapter traces the historical patterns of interaction of the world's great powers over time, concluding with the six areas that dominate global politics today: the United States, China, Japan, India, Russia, and the European Union. In Part II we focus on these great powers today and ask whether the balance of power is about to shift again.

Chapter 3 highlights a broad set of ideas and universal themes about global politics that provide analytical frameworks for the study. It discusses how to approach the subject through levels of analysis and methods and then outlines the best-known and most useful theories that help make sense of our world – realism, liberalism, political economy (Marxism and public choice), social constructivism, feminism, and critical approaches. These theories help guide our enquiry throughout the book and enable us to understand events and behavior in global politics.

Cambridge University Press  
978-0-521-76745-3 - Global Politics in the 21st Century  
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Excerpt  
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## 1

## Introduction to global politics

The world faces many threats to human security and prosperity in the 21st century. Many of them are from people; others are products of the economic and physical environment. Recently, the U.S. Commission on the Prevention of Weapons of Mass Destruction Proliferation and Terrorism produced a slim, powerful volume on future world risks.<sup>1</sup> It concluded that we know the threats we face, we know that our margin of safety is shrinking, and we also know what must be done to counter the risks. With similar concern, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon, declared that rising temperatures due to climate change would “increase pressure on water, food, and land; reverse years of development gains; exacerbate poverty; destabilize fragile states; and topple governments.”<sup>2</sup>

This book describes and explains the factors behind these and other global issues and invites readers to consider whether the conclusions and warnings of the U.S. president’s advisors and the leader of the world organization were well founded. It challenges readers to study, understand, and evaluate power and responsibility in global politics. The most serious threats today include the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, worldwide terrorist networks, the tenuous end to the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, armed conflict in the Middle East and North and Central Africa, world financial

crises, global climate change, global reliance on oil, global poverty, global infectious diseases, and the rising power of hostile actors on the world stage. These and other issues are, or should be, of deep concern to everyone in all parts of our evermore connected world.

Global politics is a dynamic, messy, constantly evolving phenomenon. It is a stimulating, inspiring, even transformational field of study. But it is also ambiguous and puzzling. Students engage with global politics constantly – when friends or family members join the military; when foreign terrorists attack major cities like New York, Washington, London, Madrid, or Mumbai; and when they travel abroad and have trouble obtaining clean water, health care, proper sanitation, and personal security.

A student can easily relate to the three following hypothetical scenarios, the first of which takes place in Spain:

American undergraduates are wandering through the gardens and antechambers of the Alhambra Palace in Granada. They gawk at the intricate lacework decorating the ceiling of the Hall of Diplomats. Having been deprived of all but U.S. history, they are truly amazed when their guide tells them that the same year the Spanish Queen sent Christopher Columbus to find the Americas in 1492 she also expelled the Muslims from Spain, forcing them back to Africa and the Middle East, laying the base for the geographical divisions between Christians and Muslims that we experience today. Later that day, the students learn from the International Herald Tribune that the United States and its allies have attacked Baghdad, Iraq, a city in a leading Muslim country, in response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the United States.

<sup>1</sup> Bob Graham, et al., *The World at Risk: The Report of the Commission on the Prevention of Weapons of Mass Destruction, Proliferation and Terrorism* (New York: Random House, 2008).

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in *The New Yorker*, October 5, 2009, p.23.

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The second scenario takes place in Eastern Europe:

A Canadian student is enjoying a coffee at a Starbucks in Poti, Georgia. She and her two friends are surprised that the brew is exactly the same as the one they drink in their home towns of Vancouver, Los Angeles, and New York. Why is Starbucks always the same, they wonder. Where did they get the coffee? How did it get here? As they contemplate these questions of political economy another event consumes their attention. The television, tuned to CNN in London, announces that Russia has just attacked Georgia, not far from where they are in Poti. They grab their cell phones in anticipation of sending texts and pictures of tanks and soldiers to their friends and parents back home. Only yesterday at the same café, they had listened to results of a girl's swim meet at the Olympics in Beijing. Perhaps tomorrow there would be news about the winter Olympics in Vancouver or about genocide in Darfur, Sudan.

The third scenario takes place in Iran:

Iranian students are sipping tea outside Teheran University. They glance up at the television to see Leon Panetta, former director of the dreaded CIA, describing how no film had been taken of the actual killing of Osama bin Laden by U.S. special forces. "These damned Americans," they muse, "who do they think they are!" Then, they turn to complaining about the lack of civil liberties in their own country and the dictatorial President Ahmadinejad before resuming their ongoing discussions about how the only way Iran can protect itself is by getting nuclear weapons.

Traveling, like education, can be humbling. How do the students interpret these snippets of world news? Daily, they receive disjointed images of violence, pain, death, and chaos, along with more hopeful stories and information that provide continuity and meaning to their life experiences. They form strong perspectives about what can be done about the problems of world conflict and violence. There are many ways to think about global politics, and there is more than one side to each story, but unfortunately, as the students quickly find out, the media rarely provide context for the news they report. As the old adage goes, if a plane takes off and lands, it is not news. If it crashes, it is. If it crashes because a terrorist bomb was aboard, it is headline

news. But is it accurate bad news, or is it exaggerated and distorted?

The daily news is little more than a series of video clips so slowed down that we get to view only one issue at a time. It is as if events are not connected through history and society. We never get to see the complete story, just fragments – or, in the cases described previously, disjointed events. In democracies, we continually hope that the media will lead discussions of public affairs, but they rarely do. Its superficiality is illustrated by the vulgarity and sensationalism of its output. We are fed a steady diet of scandals, secrets, outrages, conflicts, quarrels, sex, celebrities, and gossip. The media is less concerned with what is in the public interest than with what interests the public!

In *A Passage to India*, the great English novelist E. M. Forster advises us to "connect, only connect." But connection is difficult even with television, radio, cell phones, the Internet, Facebook, and Twitter. We want to link our inner moral worlds to the reality outside ourselves – but it is difficult. Our perceptions are distorted by emotions – fear, empathy, helplessness, love of country – and yet our knowledge base is often too slim to meaningfully integrate events from foreign countries. In recent years, the international news has been dominated by such issues as terrorism and civil wars in the Middle East, genocide and poverty in Central Africa, earthquakes in South America and Asia, a global economic depression, and the possibility of Iran obtaining nuclear weapons. These issues are constantly changing, and new ones are considered just as vital. To understand them, comprehend how they are shaping the global agenda, and assess how policymakers are approaching them, students need a background understanding of global politics. If students want to help end hatred, alleviate poverty, reduce the likelihood of war, and prevent global environmental degradation, they need to understand the factors underlying world issues and how actors in the international environment approach them.

In the chapters of this book, we cover the foundations of the discipline of international relations

from a global perspective. We attempt to provide a degree of unity to a disorganized, somewhat shapeless body of information about world politics. The world is a complicated, interrelated, and violent place and the media generally do little to clarify the patterns and make the connections that transform information into knowledge. It is difficult, maybe impossible, to comprehend, let alone judge, the blurbs, bits, and bytes of current news as the broad brush of global politics covers a massive amount of material in which fact competes with opinion.

Apart from specific topics in the news, there are many large, emerging issues and challenges in our changing world. Is the power of the United States diminishing? Is its hegemony on the decline? Is the globalization of trade and finance a force for good or bad? Can it be halted? Is the process weakening sovereign states? Is it increasing the power of societal, international, and transnational actors? What are the sources of and solutions to international terrorism? What are the causes and consequences of global economic inequality? Why is there an Arab Awakening in much of North Africa and the Middle East?

It is hard to be an informed citizen and not study global politics. Close Up 1.1 considers some practical reasons for wanting to do so.

Close Up 1.1 Why study global politics?

Global politics provides a broad understanding of the world that makes one a more informed and discriminating member of society. In doing so it opens a vast number of career options. A few students will become so fascinated with the subject that they will choose to stay in the field, teaching in a school, college, or university where they can continue to do research and explore with their students the vital issues of our disordered world. The various levels of government also employ millions

of people, and employment possibilities span branches dealing with a wide range of international issues and social concerns. Politicians also require the services of consultants and other aides.

Many other professions deal with domestic and foreign governments on a regular basis and they, too, require people who understand how governments work. They need people with the political knowledge, exploratory skills, and methods of analysis that come from studying global politics. Many graduates will therefore find that their courses have given them an extremely useful background for careers in fields such as journalism, law, business, government, interest groups, political activism, social work, and nongovernmental organization (NGO) administration.

Even those who do not wish to specialize in global politics will find that training in this field provides a useful background for many other career choices – sometimes directly following a BA, sometimes later. It can be a stepping stone to law school, journalism school, or some other specialty. But perhaps most importantly, global politics provides an understanding of how the world works, and that is a necessary ingredient for informed citizenship.

**Global politics**

To understand global politics, students need to get beyond Cold War paradigms about how to conceptualize about the world. They also need to study global politics less in terms of their own country's interests and more in terms of the global concerns of others. They need to widen their horizons beyond their comfortable, familiar environment, and relate to the wider world in which they find themselves. For most people around the world, the immediate issues are not nuclear warfare or international

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terrorism but rather those that involve meeting basic human needs such as safe drinking water, the elimination of hunger and malnutrition, and the lack of fuel. Students need to experience the world in all its complexity – to challenge the idea that the world can be understood from a single viewpoint. A distinguishing characteristic of new studies of global politics is the concern to expand beyond the U.S.- or Euro-centric view of the world to include the concerns of all seven billion people who share this globe.

### Globalization, security, and the global system

**International relations** has traditionally been studied as the relations among states, while **global politics** has been defined as the basic patterns of international beliefs and behavior that help define and condition states and other actors. The chapters of this book examine the themes of global politics and illustrate them with important contemporary events. They contextualize the past to illuminate the present, straightforwardly presenting the historical and theoretical perspectives required to fully understand the contemporary world. They discuss the bracing effects that globalization and the search for security have on global affairs, including how to manage the differences that are emerging because of the new global configurations of power and responsibilities.

The domestic politics of individual states are not independent of the relations among countries, and international relations are interwoven with the realities of a variety of different governments throughout the world. As the world grows more interdependent, global politics wields a growing influence on the domestic decision making of political leaders. No country, however powerful, is totally self-sufficient or independent because the actions of each state have repercussions for the others. A great many issues today are **intermestic**, that is, they are simultaneously domestic and transnational or global. Some pundits even use the coined word

*glocal*, meaning global and local at the same time, to characterize this reality.

The **global system** refers to the broad network of relations among states and the activities of their citizens and nonstate institutions in the world. It patterns the behavior of states and nongovernmental actors. The **foreign policy** of countries, on the other hand, is narrower. It depicts state or government behavior that has external ramifications, including diplomatic and military relations among states. Foreign policy is at the forefront of the study of global politics, but understanding foreign policy requires one to look beyond his or her own state borders to consider the world as a whole. It necessitates thinking and caring about global politics as well as one's personal cultural, economic, technological, and, increasingly, ecological interests. In other words, to comprehend foreign policy and global politics it is necessary to interpret the changing world.

In order to provide a map for examining the world, this book introduces students to the *old* and *new* security issues and dilemmas that characterize the contemporary world. The **old security issues** refer basically to state security and how states maintain their vitality in the world. The **new security issues** and dilemmas are about how both states and societies are affected, and perhaps afflicted by, nonstate actors such as networks of terrorists and others who would harm people around the world. They include issues of human security that are posed by economic inequalities, illness, and environmental degradation. The old concept of security is well established in the study of international relations. The new security issues are not as developed and do not constitute uniform concepts or theories in the discipline. Nevertheless, they are central to an understanding of global politics today and vital for achieving a secure future for all of us.

Pablo Picasso's awesome painting *Guernica* expresses the universal horror of war (Figure 1.1). There is nothing accidental or by chance in his work. The painting graphically describes in painful detail the deaths and injuries that resulted on April 26, 1937, when General Franco's allies in the



Spanish Civil War, the German Luftwaffe and Italian air force, bombed the city of Guernica, killing 1,654 civilians. It was the first major event of modern warfare, a horrific expression of what would become known as the importance of *air power* – the use of bombardment not to kill enemy soldiers but to put pummel civilians into submission. This sickening new form of winning wars proved emblematic of the Spanish Civil War and the brutality toward noncombatants that would escalate over the rest of the 20th century to include Nazi death camps, atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the use of Agent Orange in Vietnam, and other brutal, indiscriminate assaults on civilians.

Picasso's *Guernica* raises timeless issues of war and security. Before people can lead healthy and productive lives they must have security. It is the most important requirement for human societies and it is the primary function of states and international organizations to provide it. Until the end of World War II, wars between empires and states were a common form of mass violence, but since then internal or civil wars have become more customary. Since 9/11, terrorism against states and individuals has joined civil war as the subject most in the news. Terrorists do not negotiate or play the democratic game of politics. Instead, they vent their anger in suicide bombings and target civilians with improvised explosive devices. They have no desire for dialogue, preferring to become martyrs or cut off heads and display carcasses on the Internet. Certainly, if there is another event on the scale of 9/11, people will be taking off more than their shoes at the airport.

Another factor that distinguishes traditional international relations courses from new studies is the concern for global issues. Proponents of new studies do not wish to stray from the conceptual and theoretical aspects of the standard problems, but they also want to address global problems. Isolating trends and analyzing the changing nature of the disordered world has become of primary importance because of urgent problems in the global economy, global health, and the global environment. We

need to understand the world's mutual interests and develop shared solutions to common risks.

At one time in ancient Greece the human condition was attributed to the gods, who people believed created the forces of history and caused societal failures and successes. As the Greeks were jealous of the various deities for their lifestyle and longevity, they created the idea of the Olympics so that man could aspire to a status somewhere between gods and humans. Those who won athletic contests were accorded divine-like characteristics, much as well-known sport figures are today. Today we attribute the human condition to forces that are greater than individuals – forces such as the social, economic, climatic, and political conditions that drive human history.

In our study of global politics we expect to make some progress in analysis and explanation – to achieve some tying up of the threads. These are unusual times; no other period is really comparable. And yet we still need to try to understand the forces that drive the human condition. Emblematic of the present situation is how big events such as the 2008–09 worldwide financial meltdown affect everyone from adults in New York to children in Darfur and how small events like the hijacking of ships by pirates off the east coast of Africa or the occurrence of swine flu in Mexico disrupt lives elsewhere. The broadest term used when discussing these diverse phenomena is [globalization](#), the integration of states and people through increasing contact, communication, and trade that binds the world together.

The globalization issue haunts contemporary analysis of world politics. The widespread financial crisis of 2008–09 affected not only the abstract economy but the lives of millions of people, perhaps even the international order. Although poverty has always been with us, globalization and the recent economic meltdown have exacerbated the inequalities of wealth inside states and around the world. Indeed, today the international systems for monitoring the global economy, health, and conflict are now so sensitive that, on occasion,



**Figure 1.1** Picasso's graphic painting captures the horrors of war. The indiscriminate killing of noncombatants from the air in the town of Guernica during the Spanish Civil War was a premonition of wars to follow. *Source:* DACS and Bridgman.

they provide forewarnings that are overly sensitive and scare people more than they help avert catastrophes.

### Globalization and global politics

The idea that the world has become more interdependent is commonplace today. Indeed, Jules Verne's book *Around the World in Eighty Days*,

published in 1873, suggested that the world was shrinking in size. In it, Phileas Fogg circumnavigated the globe with unprecedented speed to prove to his wagerers in the Reform Club that "the world has grown smaller." In recent years, academics and policymakers have adopted the term *globalization* as if it were something completely novel. But as we see in Chapter 2, the process has deep historical roots. Patterns of trade, finance, migration, intercultural influence, and even international systems have



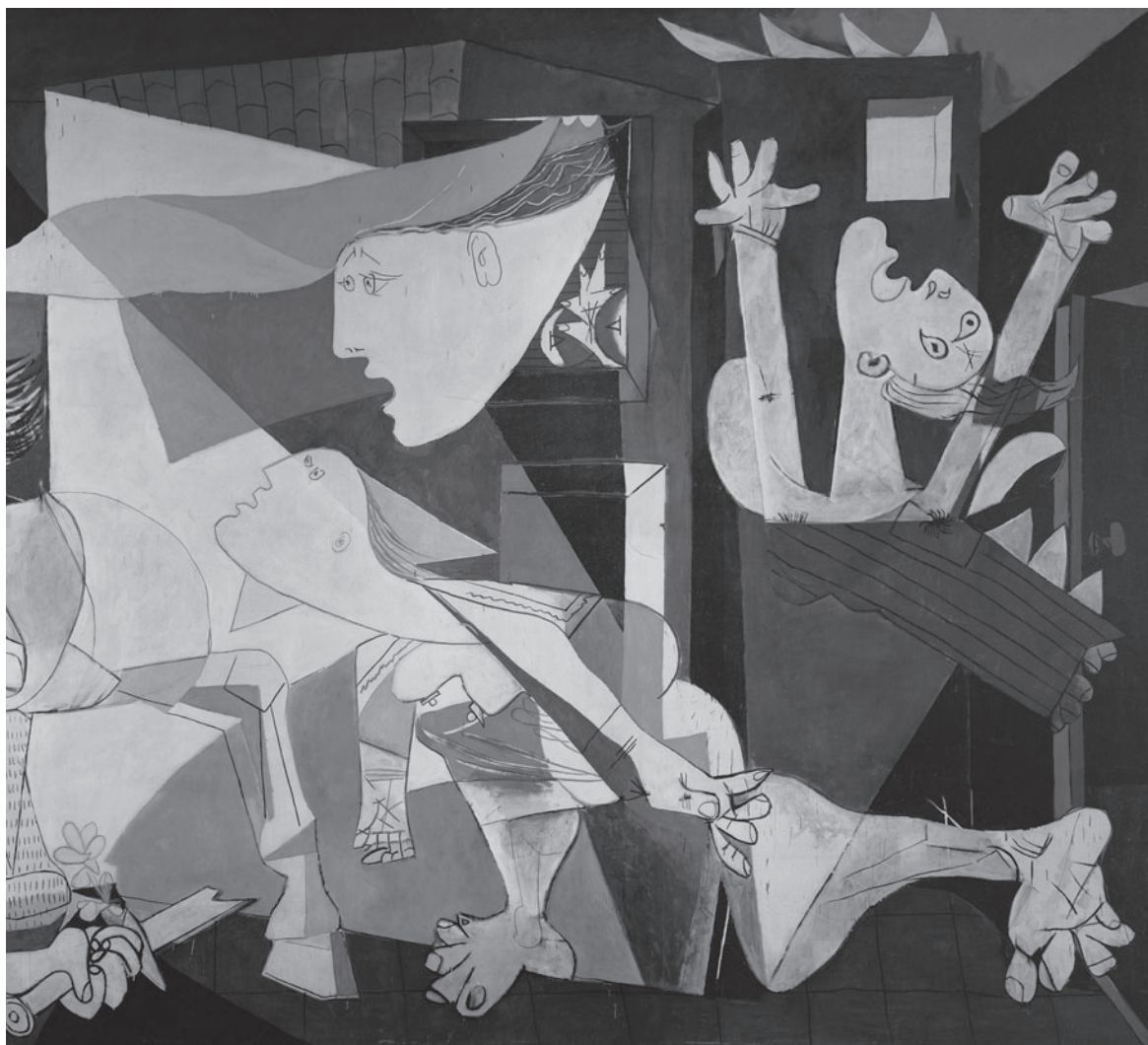


Figure 1.1 (continued)

been developing and undergoing constant change from the beginning of history.

But there is something novel in today's globalization. It is connecting more people and connecting them more closely. Current issues concern not only the existence of globalization as a process but also its rapid development and its impact on state power. This new form of globalization has both critics and supporters. Some theorists believe that globalization has taken on a life of its own – that it creates new institutions and problems – while

others, more optimistically, think that globalization is a positive force for good, creating “a world society and culture.” Many issues that in the past mobilized individuals, groups, and states now possess an international dimension. However, globalization and the march toward one global system do not mean that all states and people are affected in a similar manner. The process has, and will continue to have, divergent effects – both good and bad – in different countries and also on peace and war. Despite important and sometimes bitter differences

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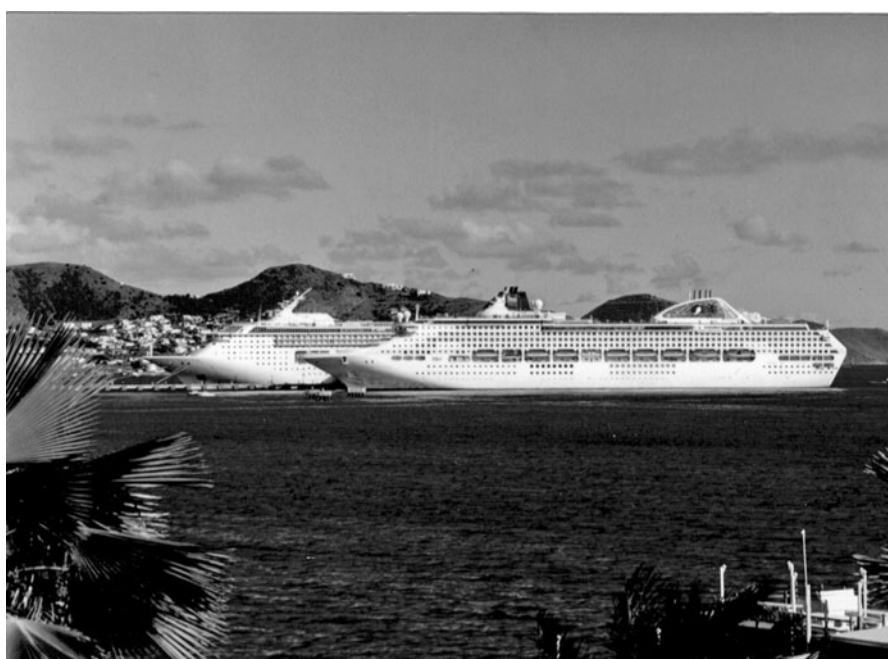
over its normative importance, however, there is no denying the extensive impact of the march of what goes on under the loose rubric of globalization (Figure 1.2).

Globalization means that business, politics, and even the media are becoming more closely intertwined. It means that the world is growing increasingly integrated in terms of economics, communications, and politics. Globalization has significantly increased the volume and velocity of just about everything from goods and services and people to email, drugs, weapons, and even greenhouse gases and viruses. Asian artists can now sell their work in Europe, and Afghan terrorists can communicate easily with their North American followers. Everyone can have an opinion on the wars in Mali and Syria, the use of drones, or the killing of Osama bin Laden. Over time, this process is having an important impact on sovereignty. Today, no country, including the United States, can be a gated community. There is a maze of facts and opinions about globalization, but the important thing to note is that its acceleration is without precedent. Even

when private investment and credit slowed during the 2008–09 economic downturn, the international movement of public funds continued to boom. Keeping abreast of these developments and their implications is imperative in the struggle to maintain social order and provide social justice on a worldwide basis.

Technological advances in communications and transportation have reduced the size of the world in real terms and revolutionized the patterns of interaction between countries and individuals. They have eliminated some social and political problems while creating others. The revolutions in science and technology have also dramatically changed the world. Scientific knowledge more than doubled in each of the decades following World War II and the pace of technological change has accelerated at a comparable rate since then. In short, the consequence of this enhanced technology speeds up and augments globalization.

The speed of change is best illustrated by a few examples. In 1900 the world was still dominated by colonial empires; today those empires no longer



**Figure 1.2** Huge cruise ships in the tiny harbor of St. Kitts and Nevis illustrate both positive and negative aspects of economic globalization. Comparatively wealthy tourists often outnumber their foreign hosts – contributing to the host economy, but often causing resentment because of their cultural intrusion.