**SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS - Chapter 3: The political sphere: societal and business goals**

This chapter has highlighted the importance of legitimacy in governance and politics. As we have seen, it is not an all-or-nothing concept. A formal democratic government may be strongly criticized by parts of the citizenry, and an autocratic one based on traditional authority might enjoy public support. It matters whether citizens feel their voices are being heard and interests being taken into account. This state–society interaction is the basis of the ethical dimension in politics. The social contract as a concept captures the reciprocal obligations which lie at the heart of this relationship. Although an old concept, it resonates in today’s political environment, especially in the context of pro-democracy movements around the world.

Democratic stirrings, featuring calls for elected governments, constitutions and individual freedoms, would seem to suggest that quintessential American values are taking root around the world. But democracy in these new contexts stem from peoples’ desires for self-determination, free from the influences of existing world powers. The desire of the individual person to be somebody captures this idea. The political influence of the US in today’s world is actually waning. The balance of political power internationally is gradually shifting away from the post-war system dominated by the US to one in which the new emerging economies are stamping their own identities on political relations, both in their domestic systems and in international relations. They are redefining the global political landscape, most notably in asserting the importance of the state in global business. Whether they will also be rewriting the social contract with their peoples to reflect changing societal goals is a question whose answer will gradually emerge over time.