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MILTON GREENBERG

THE AMERICAN POLITICAL DICTIONARY

Fourth Edition

The American Political Dictionary

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To Ellen and Sonia

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1 Political Ideas

Absolutism Unrestrained powers exercised by government. Absolutism is the opposite of constitutionalism, which provides for government limited by law. Although constitutionalism or limited government may serve as a means for preventing the rise of absolute power, as in the American system, once established, an absolutist regime typically defines and determines the scope of its own powers whether or not a constitution exists. *See also* AUTOCRACY, page 3; CONSTITUTIONALISM, page 5; DIVINE RIGHT, page 8; FASCISM, page 9; TOTALITARIANISM, page 19.

Significance Prior to the American and French revolutions, absolutism took the form of absolute monarchy based on the theory of the divine right of kings. In modern times, it has taken the form of dictatorship of the right (fascism) or of the left (Stalinist communism). The American Founding Fathers feared absolutism and established a system of separation of powers, with checks and balances to safeguard against it. The historic struggle between absolutism and democratic constitutionalism continues today, both within and between nations. Although no government exercises completely unrestrained powers in all areas, the absolutist model provides a useful concept for political systems where vast powers are exercised by governments free from *legal* restraints.

Accountability The concept, underlying democratic representative government, that elected officials are responsible to the people for their actions. Accountability under law is one of the features distinguishing governments based on the concepts of constitutional democracy from those embracing the principles of absolutism. *See also* DEMOCRACY, page 6; REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT, page 16.

Significance Accountability implies that citizens in a democracy are familiar with their elected officials and the decisions they make, and have an opportunity to pass judgment on them. This in turn requires short ballots, frequent elections, and an effective opposition. In our national government, the voters can hold the President accountable for all decisions and actions undertaken in the executive branch because under the Constitution he alone is accorded authority and responsibility for them. In Congress, accountability is based on individual performance; frequent roll-call votes on important bills and extensive press, television, and radio coverage of the activities of congressmen enable voters to judge members of the House every two years and senators every

six years. When bills are killed through minority blocking tactics, or when parliamentary maneuvers are used to conceal political actions or to confuse voters, accountability is reduced.

Anarchism The doctrine that government is an unnecessary evil and should be replaced by voluntary cooperation among individuals and groups. Anarchists regard the state as an instrument used by the propertied classes to dominate and exploit the people. Anarchist thinking varies from individualism to collectivism, from pacifism to advocacy of violent revolution. All anarchists, however, hold the state's coercive system responsible for the warping of man's personality and look to the day when every form of government will be abolished *See also* NEW LEFT, page 129.

Significance In Europe, anarchism has been represented primarily by syndicalist parties; similarly, in the United States, anarchists have worked through the organization of Industrial Workers of the World. Anarchism has never been a successful political ideology, but its advocates terrorized Europe's royal families and political leaders during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by the widespread use of assassination as a political weapon. Anarchists have also had considerable influence on other political theorists and movements. Marxian communism, for example, views government as an evil instrument of class exploitation and provides for a "final stage" in which government "withers away" and people in a "stateless, classless society" spontaneously cooperate with one another. The New Left movement during the 1960s produced a renaissance of anarchist belief and action in many countries.

Aristocracy The exercise of political power by a small ruling clique of a state's "best" citizens. The selection of the aristocrats may be made on the basis of birth, wealth, or ability, or economic, social, or ecclesiastical position. *See also* ELITE, page 120.

Significance Aristocracies are characterized by limited suffrage and great emphasis on property rights. Postrevolutionary America had characteristics of aristocracy, with property and religious qualifications for voting and holding office. The "Jeffersonian Democracy" of that era emphasized rule by an aristocracy of ability. The democratic reforms ushered in during the age of Jackson provided a leveling influence. In modern America, an "establishment" of WASPs (White Anglo-Saxon Protestants) functioned for many years as an informal aristocracy in government, business, the professions, and the military.

Authoritarianism Concentration of political authority in one man or a small group. Authoritarian regimes emphasize obedience by the people to their rulers and the absolute power of rulers over their subjects. Individual freedoms and rights are completely subordinated to the power of the state. *See also* AUTOCRACY, page 3; FASCISM, page 9; TOTALITARIANISM, page 19.

Significance Political history has been characterized by continuing struggles between the rival doctrines of authoritarianism and democracy. Although authoritarianism was set back by the defeat of the Axis powers in World War II, today it threatens again with the spread of communism and military take-overs in the new states of Asia and Africa. In many cases, modern authoritarian regimes operate behind a facade of democratic and constitutional institutions. Fascism is a highly nationalistic form of authoritarianism of the extreme Right that defends the established economic order; communism, conversely, is a doctrine of the extreme Left that fosters revolutionary change. Both forms can be equally ruthless in pursuit of their objectives.

Autocracy Any system of government in which political power and authority are focused in a single individual. *See also* ABSOLUTISM, page 1; AUTHORITARIANISM, page 2; FASCISM, page 9; TOTALITARIANISM, page 19.

Significance Historically, autocrats have maintained their positions of power by such means as Machiavellian intrigues, myth systems, ideological and religious support systems, and the employment of sheer naked power, unrestrained by moral or ethical concerns. Fascist and Stalinist dictatorships are modern adaptations of ancient autocratic systems. Contemporary autocrats not only use whatever levels of coercion are necessary to maintain their rule but also attempt to use the communications media to cultivate mass support.

Capitalism An economic system based on private ownership of the means of production and on a supply-demand market economy. Capitalism is often related to laissez-faire theory, which emphasizes the absence of governmental restraints on ownership, production, and trade. In theory, the natural balancing forces of the marketplace, guided by Adam Smith's "invisible hand," provided stability for the system. Since World War II, the ideas of Keynesianism have replaced laissez-faire theories, providing for a central role for government in guiding and directing the economy. *See also* CONVERGENCE THEORY, page 385; KEYNESIANISM, page 287; LAISSEZ-FAIRE, page 11.

Significance Capitalism as a working economic system developed in Europe and the United States in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, replacing the state-fostered mercantilist system. Historically, capitalism in its pure state has never been practiced for long, since each major economic group has soon looked to the government of its country to improve its own economic position, and since each government in time has assumed a substantial promotional and regulatory role. Today, all capitalist states have mixed economies in which private ownership and market economies are matched with extensive governmental intervention. Free trade, a hallmark of capitalism, has been replaced by national and regional international trade restrictions, and the concepts of economic freedom that characterize capitalism are being challenged by socialism and communism.

Centrist An individual or political group advocating a moderate or temperate approach to political decision making and to the solution of social problems. Centrists tend generally to uphold the status quo against demands by leftists or rightists for radical change. *See also* LEFTIST, page 11; RIGHTIST, page 17.

Significance In the American political system both major parties and most voters tend to view politics from a centrist perspective. Centrists are sometimes referred to as the "vital majority" that provides substantial support for "the establishment." European center parties, however, have been typically weak in voter appeal because of the tendency toward political polarization and the cultivation of programmatic parties offering change to the voters.

Collectivism A generic term that describes various theories and social movements calling for the ownership and control of all land and means of production by the state or groups rather than by individuals. The term is often used synonymously with the more specific doctrines of socialism

and communism, for collectivism rejects the economic freedoms and individual rights of capitalism. *See also* COMMUNISM, page 4; SOCIALISM, page 18.

Significance The major ideological conflicts of modern times have involved clashes between supporters of collectivist doctrines and defenders of the concepts of individualism. The former have emphasized the advantages of cooperation and group effort, the latter the advantages of competition and individual enterprise. Many Communist countries are increasingly substituting profit motivations for collectivistic planning and control in their economies.

Communism A political, economic, and social theory based on a collectivistic society in which all land and capital are socially owned and political power is exercised by the masses. Modern communism is based on the theories and practices of Karl Marx, V. I. Lenin, Josef Stalin, Nikita Khruschchev, and contemporary Soviet leaders, with variations provided by Mao Tse-tung and the Chinese Communists. Communism in theory espouses the doctrines of historical inevitability, economic determinism, labor value, the "inner contradictions" of capitalism, class conflict, capitalist colonialism and imperialism, world wars resulting from competition for markets, the destruction of the bourgeoisie, the dictatorship of the proletariat, the socialist revolution, and the final "withering away" of the state. Plato and other political theorists have also advocated communism in the form of communal living and various church and social groups have practiced it. *See also* CONVERGENCE THEORY, page 385; ECONOMIC DETERMINISM, page 8.

Significance Since World War II, communism as an ideology has been used by the Communist states, especially the Soviet Union, in a worldwide offensive against capitalism and democracy. Communism in theory is largely destructive, basing its main attack on the evils and weaknesses of nineteenth-century capitalism. In practice, communism has been highly pragmatic: Soviet leaders often supplement their Socialist approaches with capitalistic practices to provide incentives and to secure some degree of political stability and economic viability. During the period of transition from socialism to communism, the "dictatorship of the proletariat" has proved to be a quite permanent dictatorship by one man or by a ruthless oligarchy. Communists have seldom been successful in winning mass support and political elections, but they have been successful in infiltrating and capturing control of several independence movements in Asia and Africa.

Concurrent Majority The political doctrine, expounded by John C. Calhoun of South Carolina prior to the Civil War, that democratic decisions should be made only with the concurrence of all major segments of society. Without such concurrence, Calhoun argued, a decision should not be binding on those groups whose interests it violates. *See also* CONSENSUS, page 5; MAJORITY RULE, page 12; NULLIFICATION, page 39.

Significance The idea of concurrent majority was central to a systematic effort by Calhoun to justify the secession of southern states from the Union. He held that the decisions made by Congress concerning tariffs and slavery were inimical to the interests of the South. Each southern state, therefore, had to decide whether it would accept these decisions or reject them and withdraw from the Union. Today, some interpreters of democratic theory reject majority rule and argue that only decisions reached by consensus are truly democratic.

Consensus Agreement approaching unanimity, usually without a vote. Consensus may range from the acceptance of a society's basic values to concurrence in a specific decision by members of a group. In a democracy, "government by consensus" sometimes replaces majority rule and reduces the role of the opposition. A working bipartisan foreign policy, for example, might eliminate foreign policy issues from a subsequent election. *See also* CONCURRENT MAJORITY, page 4; MAJORITY RULE, page 12.

Significance Consensus provides the cementing force for a society. When consensual bonds are broken and revolution or civil war results, new ones must evolve if stability is to be restored. The process of building a consensus for a specific decision within a group is usually based on compromise or strong leadership. Some political investigators reject the linkage between consensus and stability, holding that a highly pluralistic society may ultimately be more stable than one in which the government forges an artificially high level of consensus.

Conservatism Defense of the status quo against major changes in the political, economic, or social institutions of a society. The classic statement of the philosophy of conservatism was expounded by the English statesman, Edmund Burke. He held that political stability could be maintained only if the forces of change could be moderated by a slow and careful integration of new elements into time-tested institutions. *See also* LIBERALISM, page 12; REACTIONARY, page 16.

Significance Both major American political parties have conservative wings that frequently unite in opposing liberal legislation. Today, in American politics the term "conservative" has no precise meaning and is often used accusatorially against a rival party or candidate. The general conservative position on issues, however, has been fairly consistently opposed to governmental regulation of the economy and civil rights legislation, and in favor of state over federal action, fiscal responsibility, decreased governmental spending, and lower taxes. Although conservatism received a setback in the 1964 defeat of Republican presidential candidate Barry Goldwater, conservative groups in the United States are well organized and remain powerful in American politics. Conservative strength in the United States is divided between the populist, radical, predominantly blue-collar wing, and the upper- and upper-middle-class liaison between the inheritors of wealth and the nouveaux riches.

Constitutionalism The political principle of limited government under a written or unwritten contract (constitution). Constitutionalism assumes that the sovereign people draw up a constitution, by the terms of which a government is created and given powers. In the American system, the Supreme Court acts as the guardian of the Constitution through its powers to void governmental actions that exceed these limitations (judicial review). The Founding Fathers also incorporated into the system various limitations that restrain the individuals who exercise power. The most significant of these include the separation of powers, checks and balances, federalism, subordination of military to civilian control, and the Bill of Rights. *See also* CONSTITUTION, page 24; CONTRACT THEORY, page 6; DEMOCRACY, page 6; MADISONIANISM, page 12.

Significance The American system of constitutional government has been fairly effective throughout most of its history in maintaining limitations upon government. In recent years, however, public sentiment has favored bigger government with more flexible approaches and

expanded powers. The Industrial Revolution, depressions, wars, alien ideologies, and other domestic and foreign threats have overriden the fear of stronger government. Expanding democratic government is viewed by many as a means of achieving better protection for their personal rights, values, and welfare, rather than as a threat. The Nixon Administration sought to reverse this trend toward national centralization through decentralization of domestic programs and a revenue-sharing scheme to help state and local units finance the programs. The problem remains essentially one of maintaining an equilibrium between the needs for liberty and for order, and of enabling government to meet new and challenging responsibilites while still maintaining the restraints of constitutionalism.

Contract Theory A class of theories that seeks to explain the origin of society and government and to set out the respective authority and responsibility of government and individuals under their contractual obligations. Contract theorists regard man as having lived in a state of nature prior to the organization of civil society. Once a "body politic" has been created through a contract or compact among the people, a government is then founded and empowered through a second contract or constitution concluded between the people and the government. The nature of the relationship established by the governmental contract varies, in these theories, from the individualism of John Locke's popular sovereignty and limited government to the authoritarianism of Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan.* *See also* CONSTITUTIONALISM, page 5; DEMOCRACY, page 6; POPULAR SOVEREIGNTY, page 15.

Significance The contract theory was developed by various political philosophers during the Middle Ages as an intellectual challenge to the existing absolutism based on the theory of the divine rights of kings. Progressively the new doctrine gained adherents and the absolute power of some monarchs was mildly curtailed, but its full flowering and broad democratic implications emerged during the Age of Enlightenment. The advocacy of the doctrine by John Locke, Jean Jacques Rousseau, and James Harrington helped to gain the support of the intellectual classes and laid the foundations for the English, American, and French revolutions. The American Declaration of Independence, described by Thomas Jefferson as "pure Locke," based its justification of revolution on the violation of contract by the English government. Although the theories of a social contract are somewhat out of vogue today, the great ideas they fostered remain part of the concept of democracy based on limited government and individual rights.

Democracy A system of government in which ultimate political authority is vested in the people. The term is derived from the Greek words "demos" (the people) and "kratos" (authority). Democracy may be direct, as practiced in ancient Athens and in New England town meetings, or indirect and representative. In the modern pluralistic democratic state, power typically is exercised by groups or institutions in a complex system of interactions that involve compromises and bargaining in the decision process. The Democratic Creed includes the following concepts: (1) individualism, which holds that the primary task of government is to enable each individual to achieve the highest potential of development; (2) liberty, which allows each individual the greatest amount of freedom consistent with order; (3) equality, which maintains that all men are created equal and have equal rights and opportunities; and (4) fraternity, which postulates that individuals will not misuse their freedom but will cooperate in creating a wholesome society. As a political system, democracy starts with the assumption of popular sovereignty, vesting ultimate

power in the people. It presupposes that man can control his destiny, that he can make moral judgments and practical decisions in his daily life. It implies a continuing search for truth in the sense of man's pursuit of improved ways of building social institutions and ordering human relations. Democracy requires a decision-making system based on majority rule, with minority rights protected. Effective guarantees of freedom of speech, press, religion, assembly, and petition, and equality before the law are indispensable to a democratic system of government. Politics, parties, and politicians are the catalytic agents that make democracy workable. *See also* ACCOUNTABILITY, page 1; CONSTITUTIONALISM, page 5; CONTRACT THEORY, page 6; DIRECT DEMOCRACY, page 8; INDIVIDUALISM, page 10; MAJORITY RULE, page 12; NATURAL LAW, page 13; POPULAR SOVEREIGNTY, page 15; REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT, page 16; RULE OF LAW, page 17.

Significance Most Americans think of their political and social systems as best described by the term "democratic." Yet the term appears neither in the Declaration of Independence nor in the United States Constitution. For many centuries democracy was regarded as a dangerous but unworkable doctrine, but its ideas swept the Western world during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as one of the forces unleashed by the American and French revolutions. In the twentieth century, democracy has clashed with new authoritarian ideologies, and the struggle continues, particularly in the new nations of Asia and Africa. Democracy is under attack not only from the ideologies of the extreme right and left, but from within as well—by those who oppose it as a mob rule that vulgarizes society and makes a virtue of incompetence and mediocrity and by those who charge that it is a sham, impossible in practice because of an "iron law of oligarchy." Supporters of democracy reject such attacks, pointing to the evidence of the superiority of democracy as practiced in the United States, Britain, and Scandinavia. Yet a facade of democracy exists in many countries where, despite forms and appearances, a small oligarchic group manipulates all power. Workable democracy seems to require a special environment, including an educated and responsible people, some degree of economic stability, and some social cohesion and consensus. Above all, it demands an acceptance of the democratic "rules of the game," namely, that there will be fair and frequent elections, that the losers will accept the verdict of the voters and allow the majority to govern, that the majority will respect the right of the minority to furnish opposition, and that if the minority wins a future election it will then be permitted to take over the reins of government. Although democracy in practice will never achieve the perfection of the Democratic Creed, yet so long as such goals are held worthy and efforts are made to move in their direction, the system may be called democratic. American democracy, like its British counterpart, is an evolutionary and organic system that has pragmatically overcome obstacles and crises.

Democratic Socialism An economic system established by a democratic nation in which the people, through industrial groups or government, take over ownership and direction of basic industry, banking, communication, transportation, and other segments of the economy. The extent of the government's role in the economy is determined by free elections rather than by ideological dogma. Although a private sector of the economy may continue to exist, much effort is expended by government or groups in planning, directing, and regulating it, and in providing welfare services for the needy. *See also* SOCIALISM, page 18; WELFARE STATE, page 19.

Significance Democratic socialism has been partially instituted in several countries, particularly in Britain and the Scandinavian countries. Some observers regard it as the best answer to

the economic challenge of communism. Communists are especially hostile toward democratic socialism because they fear it will correct the evils and "inner contradictions" of capitalism upon which they place their hope for economic collapse. American conservatives oppose it as a dangerous leftward step toward communism.

Direct Democracy A system of government in which political decisions are made by the people directly rather than by their elected representatives. Under direct democracy, the citizens assemble periodically and function as a legislative body, or they vote on public issues to determine government policies. *See also* INITIATIVE, page 172; RECALL, page 140; REFERENDUM, page 182; REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT, page 16.

Significance Direct democracy has been used in ancient Greece and Rome, in some Swiss cantons, in New England town meetings, and in some midwestern township meetings. A modern adaptation of direct democracy is found in fewer than half the American states—those that provide for initiative, referendum, and recall action by the people. Many local units of government also use binding and advisory referendums in reaching decisions on important issues. Direct democracy, however, is not provided for nor recognized by the United States Constitution. Ordinarily, direct democracy is practicable only in small communities and in resolving simple issues.

Divine Right A theory supporting absolutism based on the divinity of a person or his office, or on a right to rule inherited from ancestors believed to have been appointed by a Supreme Being. *See also* ABSOLUTISM, page 1; THEOCRACY, page 18.

Significance The political philosophy of the divine right of kings was accepted in theory and practice throughout most of the Western world from the fifteenth through the eighteenth centuries. The system was perpetuated through family inheritance of the ruling power and the intermarriage of ruling families. Any challenge to or revolt against a king was regarded not only as a treasonable act but as a sin. In time, the divine right of kings was first weakened and then overcome by the new contract theory, which held that a ruler's power was granted to him not by God but by the sovereign people.

Economic Determinism The theory that the methods of production and exchange of goods control the form of a state's political and social organization and shape the intellectual and moral development of its people. Some economic determinists view history in terms of epochs in which the prevailing economic system pits the servile class against the dominant class, a struggle that eventually results in a new alignment. *See also* COMMUNISM, page 2.

Significance Vague beliefs in some aspects of economic determinism are widespread and are held by people of many persuasions. The most celebrated systematic theory was set forth by Marx and Engels, who used it to explain the movement of history in response to changing economic relationships. Economic determinism is the core of such theories as class struggle, the predicted collapse of captalism, and the eventual victory of communism.

Fascism The political system of the extreme right, which incorporates the principles of the leader (dictator), a one-party state, totalitarian regimentation of economic and social activity, and the arbitrary exercise of absolute power by the regime. After 1922, Benito Mussolini fashioned the fascist prototype in Italy and was emulated in the 1930s by Adolf Hitler in Germany, Francisco Franco in Spain, and Juan Perón in Argentina. Fascism's glorification of the leader makes the system vulnerable and unstable, and poses serious problems of succession. Unlike communism, fascism retains private ownership of land and capital, but most economic activity is controlled and regimented by the state through a system of national socialism. *See also* ABSOLUTISM, page 1; AUTOCRACY, page 3; TOTALITARIANISM, page 19.

Significance Fascism is contemptuous of democratic parliamentarianism and personal liberty but is actively hostile toward communism. Fascists generally have come to power during a crisis in which the landed or industrial leaders of a state have feared the rise of communism. Although fascism was dealt a destructive blow by the defeat of the Axis powers in World War II, neofascism in the form of military dictatorship is on the rise throughout much of the world.

Government The political and administrative hierarchy of an organized state. Governments exercise legislative, executive, and judicial functions; the nature of the governmental system is determined by the distribution of these powers and by the means and extent of control exercised by the people. Government may take many forms, but to rule effectively it must be sufficiently powerful and stable to command obedience and maintain order. A government's position also depends on its acceptance by the community of nations through its diplomatic recognition by other states.

Significance Questions concerning the form of government and who will exercise political power within a state have always been matters of contention. Government has helped to bring peace and order to many states, but it has also been the cause of civil wars, revolutions, ideological struggles, and conflicts between states. As populations grow and technology develops, people become increasingly interdependent and turn to government for help in solving their problems, making government an increasingly significant force for good or evil.

Hamiltonianism The philosophy of Alexander Hamilton, leader of the Federalist party, chief architect of the national monetary system, and promoter of a special government role in support of the nation's economic system. The Hamiltonian model incorporates the idea of a powerful national government with strong executive power providing unity for the nation and a base on which to build a viable national economy. *See also* JEFFERSONIANISM, page 10; MADISONIANISM, page 12; PATERNALISM, page 14.

Significance Under Alexander Hamilton's energetic leadership, the new nation established a national banking system, a standard currency, business subsidies, a tax system, a national debt, a mint, and a protective tariff. The Federalist party generally espoused and supported the philosophy of Hamiltonianism. Many present-day Republicans regard Alexander Hamilton as the ideological godfather of the Republican party.

Ideology The "way of life" of a people reflected in terms of their political system, economic order, social goals, and moral values. Ideology is particularly concerned with the form and role of government and the nature of a state's economic system. Ideology is the means by which the basic values held by a party, class, group, or individual are articulated. *See also* IDEOLOGICAL WARFARE, page 393.

Significance Ideology serves to justify for the individual or for groups an existing social system, or postulates a desirable future social order. Two rival ideologies—communism and capitalism—are dominant today. Other ideologies exist, but they are overshadowed by the size and intensity of this major struggle. Ideology provides the basic propaganda ammunition for psychological warfare. Each side seeks to sell its ideology by emphasizing its own good points and its opponent's weaknesses. An individual tends to derive his attitudes and actions on political, economic, and social issues from the set of primary values that constitute his ideology.

Individualism The political, economic, and social concept that places primary emphasis on the worth, freedom, and well-being of the individual rather than on those of the group, society, or nation. The concept of individualism may be contrasted with that of collectivism, which describes those systems in which primary emphasis is placed on the rights and welfare of the group. *See also* DEMOCRACY, page 6; LAISSEZ-FAIRE, page 11.

Significance Individualism is the central idea in the political doctrine of constitutional democracy and in the economic theory of laissez-faire. The broad guarantees afforded to each person and to his property by the Constitution exemplify the American focus on individual rights. Although the term "individualism" was first used by Alexis de Tocqueville in 1840 in his classic *Democracy in America,* the idea embodied in the concept is several centuries older.

Jacksonian Democracy A political and social equalitarian movement in the United States that rejected political aristocracy and emphasized the "common man." The chief apostle of the new equality and democracy was Andrew Jackson, who brought to the presidency the leveling influences of the frontier. *See also* JEFFERSONIANISM, page 10; LONG BALLOT, page 126; SPOILS SYSTEM, page 231.

Significance The election of Jackson in 1828 ushered in an era of democratic changes on the national, state, and local governmental levels. Jacksonian Democracy emphasized and largely brought about universal manhood suffrage, popular election of officials, short terms of office, and the spoils system. The ideas of Jacksonian Democracy have continued to have an impact on government at all three levels—national, state, and local—especially in expanding the electorate.

Jeffersonianism The philosophy of Thomas Jefferson, espousing a democratic, laissez-faire styled agrarianism. Jeffersonianism rejected the Hamiltonian idea that a strong central government be created to spur the growth of urban industrialism and commercialism. The Jeffersonian model incorporates the ideal of an independent republic, democratically governed by an intellectual aristocracy under a strictly construed constitutional system, with a national government of limited powers and with major emphasis on individual freedom and responsibility and states' rights. *See also* JACKSONIAN DEMOCRACY, page 10; MADISONIANISM, page 12.

Significance The ideal of Jeffersonianism has had an impact on the American political system for two hundred years. Because it represents a relatively simple approach to meeting the needs of society and tends to be negative in relation to governmental powers, it has generally been placed on the defensive in a society that has demanded expanded economic growth and a larger and more powerful role by government. As the small farmer, laboring man, businessman, and artisan began to realize that they could cope with powerful business and industrial interest groups only by gaining political power, the two groups tended to exchange roles. The big businessman in the modern era espouses Jeffersonian laissez-faire freedoms, while the former Jeffersonians demand a more active central government.

Laissez-faire The economic theory, propounded by the French physiocrats and popularized by Adam Smith (*The Wealth of Nations,* 1776), that calls for a "hands-off" policy by government toward the economy. Laissez-faire rejects state control and regulation and emphasizes economic individualism, a market economy, and natural economic laws to guide the production and consumption of goods. Tariffs and other trade restrictions are rejected in favor of a worldwide system of free trade. The economic system becomes self-regulatory in nature, and each individual's pursuit of his own self-interest contributes to the well-being of all. *See also* CAPITALISM, page 3; CAVEAT VENDITOR, page 306; FREE TRADE, page 391; KEYNESIANISM, page 287.

Significance The wide acceptance in practice of the theory of laissez-faire in the Western world during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries ushered in the new economic era of capitalism. Laissez-faire was largely a reaction to the severe production and trade restrictions imposed by governments under the previous system of mercantilism. The American Revolution was a product of these economic forces of change as well as of new political ideas, all of which were based on individualism. Today, laissez-faire has been modified by the expanding role of government in economic affairs, so that the United States now has a "mixed economy" combining capitalism with governmental promotion and regulation.

Leftist An individual or a political group advocating liberal, radical, or revolutionary political or economic programs, an expanded role by democratic government, or empowering the masses. Leftists include such categories as "welfare-statists," democratic socialists, Marxian socialists, Communists, and anarchists. The use of the term stems from the practice in European parliaments of seating radical parties to the left of the presiding officer. *See also* COMMUNISM, page 4; NEW LEFT, page 129; RADICAL, page 16; SOCIALISM, page 18.

Significance The moderate leftist has played a significant role in advocating governmental action to correct injustices and shortcomings in existing societies. Leftists have been particularly active in calling for changes and modifications in capitalism and political democracy. American leftist movements have included the Progressive, the Socialist, the Socialist Labor, and the Socialist Workers parties. The New Left that functioned as a loose coalition of antiwar groups during the Vietnam War largely shunned political parties in favor of direct action through mass protests. Leftist views on social, economic, and political matters have often been in advance of popularly held beliefs. Extremes of the political left, like those of the right, tend to culminate in dictatorship. Leftist groups and parties have received little public support in American politics.

Liberalism A political view that seeks to change the political, economic, or social status quo to foster the development and well-being of the individual. Liberals regard man as a rational creature who can use his intelligence to overcome human and natural obstacles to a good life for all without resorting to violence against the established order. Liberalism is more concerned with process, with the method of solving problems, than with a specific program. *See also* CONSERVATISM, page 5.

Significance Liberalism evolved in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as a doctrine emphasizing the full development of the individual, free from the restraints of government. The twentieth-century liberal, conversely, looks to government as a means of correcting the abuses and shortcomings of society through positive programs of action. In civil rights, for example, today's liberal views government as a positive force that can ameliorate wrongs and expand the freedom of the individual, rather than as, in the traditional sense, the major threat to individual freedom. Liberals have fought totalitarianism of the left and right by pursuing policies that seek to reduce economic and social inequalities and to produce political stability.

Madisonianism The philosophy of James Madison, espousing a political system based on checks and balances, moderation, and the fostering of a harmony of interests. The Madisonian model begins with the assumption that the greatest dangers to republican government are those of the divisive power of faction and the threat of tyranny resulting from too great a concentration of political power. Madison's solution to these problems was to establish a powerful national government that could balance state and local units and maintain its own checks and balances to ensure moderation in the exercise of power. *See also* JACKSONIAN DEMOCRACY, page 10; JEFFERSONIANISM, page 10.

Significance Madisonianism as a philosophy of government has left a continuing imprint on the nature and functioning of the American system. The Constitution that finally emerged from the Philadelphia Convention of 1787 is often referred to as the "Madisonian system" because it incorporates Madison's basic idea that power must be checked and balanced to avoid tyranny. In his contributions to *The Federalist* papers (particularly No. 10 and No. 51) and during his presidential tenure, Madison did much to gain acceptance for a powerful central government limited by its internal system of power equilibrium. He is often regarded as the leading strategist of the American political system.

Majority Rule A basic principle of democracy which asserts that the greater number of citizens in any political unit should select officials and determine policies. A majority is normally 50 percent plus one of the total vote cast, or of the total number of potential voters. Special majorities are sometimes needed for decisions, as, for example, in the constitutional requirement that the Senate approve treaties by a two-thirds vote. In 1971, the Supreme Court held (*Gordon v. Lance,* 403 U.S. 1) that the requirement that a bond issue be adopted by a 60 percent extraordinary majority in a state election does not violate the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. Majority rule is justified on the grounds that it rests on superior force, is commonly accepted in practice, and is a logical means for reaching decisions, and that, pragmatically, no reasonable democratic alternative exists. *See also* CONCURRENT MAJORITY, page 4; CONSENSUS, page 5; DEMOCRACY, page 6; PLURALITY, page 133.