

JACK C. PLANO  
MILTON GREENBERG

THE  
AMERICAN  
POLITICAL  
DICTIONARY  
SEVENTH EDITION



# **THE AMERICAN POLITICAL DICTIONARY**

**SEVENTH EDITION**

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*Western Michigan University*

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# ***Preface to the Seventh Edition***

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Many changes have occurred in the American political system since those halcyon days of the Kennedy administration when *The American Political Dictionary* first emerged to fill what the authors believed to be a critical vacuum in the study of American government. Generations of college and university students have since utilized the dictionary in their efforts to learn more about the American system of government. Comments received from faculty and students who used earlier editions of our book as a teaching/learning tool support and reinforce the authors' belief in the utility of this unique approach to political lexicography.

This seventh edition of *The American Political Dictionary* maintains the format of the first six editions. Materials basic to an understanding of American government and politics are arranged within subject-matter chapters and discussed in the context of their relevance to historical events and to the contemporary political scene. New developments in governmental finance, civil rights and liberties, foreign affairs, defense, social welfare, agriculture, education, economic programs, and national-state relations demanded a revision of many entries and the inclusion of numerous new terms. The extensive cross-reference system has again been expanded in this edition, and the index has been expanded to facilitate locating terms. In addition, the Constitution of the United States has been added to facilitate learning about the American system of government from the primary source.

*The American Political Dictionary* developed out of the authors' experiences as teachers of political science. Students are often reluctant to recognize that the social sciences, like the natural sciences, have a technical language. Those who have not been sufficiently exposed to a specialized language may regard it as unintelligible, meaningless jargon when they hear it used by professionals within the discipline. Nevertheless, com-

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mand of the language is essential for effective communication and for carrying on useful analysis of basic problems. It is in the introductory courses that the language barrier must begin to be surmounted.

As teachers, we have found ourselves faced with the dilemma of how to present the "realities" and "processes" of American government while, at the same time, providing the student with the basic facts and essential language tools needed to probe into the excitement of government in action. We have attempted to meet this problem in a novel way—by an alphabetical arrangement of terms within subject categories so that the term is placed in its proper frame of reference. This book should, therefore, enable the teacher and student to decrease the time spent in the classroom on defining terms and explaining their significance, and permit more time for a fuller analysis of the American governmental process.

This book defines more than 1,200 terms, agencies, court cases, and statutes that the authors consider most relevant for a basic comprehension of American governmental institutions, practices, and problems. Each definition is followed by a statement of its historical or contemporary significance to American government and the citizen. Items have been selected for their pertinency to the general introductory course in American government and to an understanding of contemporary political events. It can be used as a supplement to textbooks and books of readings and serves as a study guide for examinations and quizzes.

The authors have made a special effort to define terms in a way compatible with usage in the political science profession. Many political scientists, in their scholarly articles, books, and other presentations, have helped to conceptualize and define political actions, ideas, and institutions in the field of American government. As a result, the authors are indebted in a general sense to all members of the discipline who have sought to achieve greater precision in the use of political vocabulary. The authors especially want to thank those who have used prior editions of *The American Political Dictionary* in their classes and have taken the time to offer suggestions and criticisms.

It has become commonplace to speak of the need for an informed citizenry to maintain a free society. This necessity is both real and urgent. The authors hope that this volume will contribute to more effective use of classroom time in order to attain this goal.

Jack C. Plano  
Milton Greenberg

# ***A Note on How to Use This Book***

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*The American Political Dictionary* can be used in two ways. It is a *dictionary* in which terms are listed alphabetically by subject matter; the reader can find a term by consulting a particular chapter or, when in doubt as to the usage of a term, by consulting the index. It is also a *study guide*; a complete reading of a chapter will provide the reader with basic information in a subject area and help in preparation for class discussions or examinations.

The material is divided into fourteen chapters, which dovetail with the chapters or groups of chapters found in most textbooks on American government. State and local government issues and procedures are integrated with national practice in most instances, since terms used to describe legislative, executive, or judicial functions are essentially the same at all levels of government. A separate chapter on state and local government focuses on terms that have specific application to state and local governmental problems and practices.

With few exceptions, each chapter has four sections. The first and longest in each case is an alphabetical listing of terms. Each term is defined and then followed by a paragraph on its significance to overall operations, theories, and problems of American government. A few terms are used in more than one chapter because they have more than one meaning or application. In such instances, the definition and significance are related to the subject matter of the particular chapter. For most items, cross-references are provided to similar or closely related terms which elucidate the issues.

The listing of terms is followed by sections on important agencies, cases, and statutes. Each section contains an alphabetical listing of definitions or descriptions of items and a statement of their significance. Many terms found in the first part of a chapter contain mention of agen-

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cies, cases, and statutes, but detailed treatment is given to a highly select group. United Nations agencies and other international organizations in which the United States plays a role are treated as regular items in Chapter 13.

The index contains a complete listing of all major entries as well as all significant terms discussed within these entries.

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# Political Ideas

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**Absolutism** Unrestrained powers exercised by government. Absolutism is the opposite of constitutionalism, which provides for government limited by law. An autocracy is a form of absolutism that involves unlimited authority over others by a single individual. Constitutionalism or limited government may serve as a means for preventing the rise of absolute power, as in the American system. Once established, however, an absolutist regime typically defines and determines the scope of its own powers whether or not a constitution exists. *See also* DIVINE RIGHT, page 10; FASCISM, page 11; TOTALITARIANISM, page 25.

**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* and *political* restraints.

**Accountability** The concept, underlying democratic representative government, that elected and appointed 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. Elected of-



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officeholders ranging from city commissioners to the President are both politically and legally accountable for their actions. Appointed officials are legally accountable through the courts and can be held politically accountable through the elected officials who appointed them. *See also* DEMOCRACY, page 8; REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT, page 22.

**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 the national government, voters can hold the President accountable for 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 evils of society and the warping of the individual's personality and look to the day when every form of government will be abolished. *See also* NEW LEFT, page 158.

**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 149.



**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. In Britain, an aristocracy based on inherited titles and wealth functions as a power elite, with a hereditary right to membership in the House of Lords.

**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 subordinated to the power of the state. *See also* FASCISM, page 11.

**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 many military take-overs in the Third World. Changes of governments occur only rarely in Asia, Africa, and Latin America as a result of free elections. Modern authoritarian regimes often operate behind a façade 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 can be ruthless in pursuit of their objectives, as for example, in the struggle for power in many Latin American countries carried on by right-wing "death squads" and by left-wing revolutionaries who seek to stamp out the defenders of the status quo.

**Authority** Power and influence based on legitimacy. Authority involves the acceptance by others of the right to rule, to issue commands, to make rules, and to expect compliance with them. If an individual or a group recognizes and accepts another's control and direction, the latter functions in a legitimate or rightful capacity and exercises authority over the former. The relationship between them is based on psychological factors and moral imperatives, not necessarily on physical coercion or the threat of force. In a democratic political system, authority serves to keep the competition for power and influence restrained and peaceful. Those who voted for losing candidates and parties usually accept the verdict of the majority because the election provided legitimacy and bestowed authority upon the winners. Scholars who have studied the concept of authority have determined that, historically, its main sources are tradition and custom, law, and the charismatic personalities of leaders. *See also* LEGITIMACY, page 14; POWER, page 20.

## 4 Political Ideas

**Significance** Authority is the means by which political systems function effectively. This occurs because the ruled accept their rulers, and recognize their right to rule. Some authoritarian leaders, such as Adolf Hitler, exercised dictatorial powers but at the same time sought to increase their authority so as to reduce the costs of gaining compliance through force and the threat of force. Typically, myths are used to convince the masses of the "rightful" nature of power and influence exercised over them. Early legitimacy contests involved the myth of the divine right of kings that provided authority for the monarchs of Europe, and the contract theory that involved a transfer of authority from the people to their constitutional rulers. Whenever the legitimacy and authority of rulers are widely questioned, the potential for revolution and civil war exists. During the colonial era, the authority of rulers was absolute, but once the colonial peoples rejected this authority by revolting, legitimacy and authority were shifted to the independence movements and new rulers. In the American system of government, authority is the key to understanding the peaceful transitions of power that can occur with every election.

**Capitalism** An economic system based on individual and corporate ownership of the means of production and 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 classical economic theory, the natural balancing forces of the marketplace, guided by Adam Smith's "invisible hand," provided stability for the system. After World War II, the ideas of Keynesianism replaced laissez-faire theories, providing a central role for government in guiding and directing the economy. However, monetarism, a theoretical alternative to Keynesianism that is more compatible with laissez-faire, has received increasing support in capitalist countries because of the growing dangers of inflation. *See also* KEYNESIANISM, page 361; LAISSEZ-FAIRE, page 13; MONETARISM, page 363.

**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. 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 trade restrictions, and the economic freedom that characterizes capitalism is challenged by socialism and communism.

**Centrist** An individual or political group advocating a moderate approach to political decision making and to the solution of social problems. Centrists tend generally to uphold the status quo against demands by left-



ists or rightists for radical change. *See also* LEFTIST, page 14; RIGHTIST, page 23.

**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 centrist parties, however, have been typically weak because of the tendency of voters to move toward political polarization and programmatic parties offering change to the voters. In the United State, centrists are often said to be engaging in "mainstream politics."

**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. Collectivism rejects the economic freedoms and individual rights of capitalism in favor of group action and social welfare. *See also* COMMUNISM, page 5; SOCIALISM, page 23.

**Significance** The major ideological conflicts of modern times have involved clashes between supporters of collectivist doctrines and defenders of individualism. The former have emphasized the advantages of cooperation and group effort, the latter the advantages of freedom, competition, incentive, and individual enterprise. Many communist countries are supplementing collectivistic planning and control in their economies with some profit motivations, and many capitalist countries have adopted some socialist ideas and programs.

**Communism** A political, economic, and social theory, also known as Marxism-Leninism, that is 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 mainly on the theories and practices of Karl Marx, V. I. Lenin, and Josef Stalin, with variations provided by Mao Tse-Tung and Josip Broz Tito. 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 478; ECONOMIC DETERMINISM, page 11.

**Significance** Since World War II, communism as an ideology has been used by communist states, especially the Soviet Union, in a worldwide ideological propaganda and political offensive against capitalism and democracy. Communism in theory bases its main ideological attack on the evils

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and contradictions of capitalism, predicting its ultimate collapse. 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—a period called “proletarian democracy” and “developed socialism” by Soviet ideologists—the “dictatorship of the proletariat” has often proved to be a quite permanent dictatorship by one man or rule by a ruthless oligarchy. Communists have been successful in winning support in some of the Third World states of Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Today, ideological differences and competition between the East and West are overshadowed by the arms race and the threat of nuclear war.

**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 simple majority decision should not be binding on those groups whose interests it violates. *See also* CONSENSUS VERSUS CONFLICT, page 6.

**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 decisions made by Congress concerning tariffs and slavery were inimical to the interests of the South. Each southern state, therefore, had to decide whether or not it would accept these decisions or reject them and withdraw from the Union. Some contemporary democratic theorists reject majority rule and argue that only decisions reached by consensus are truly democratic.

**Consensus Versus Conflict** Alternative approaches to political action. Consensus involves agreement that approaches or achieves 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, which reduces the role of the opposition. A working bipartisan foreign policy, for example, might eliminate foreign policy issues from a subsequent election. Conflict, conversely, is an approach that involves the pursuit of political goals by force, the threat of force, or the application of pressure through the use of power. Civil war, a revolution, an international war, a coup d'état, an invasion, or an intervention are all examples of the use of conflict to achieve or attempt to achieve political objectives. *See also* CONCURRENT MAJORITY, page 6; MAJORITY RULE, page 16; POWER, page 20.

**Significance** Consensus and conflict are opposing means that tend to dominate decision making. Typically, both are used by power wielders, but one or the other becomes the major approach used in pursuit of specific goals. Consensus provides the cementing force for a society. When



consensual bonds are broken and conflict results, a new consensus must evolve if stability is to be restored. Strong leadership or compromise is needed to forge a consensus for a specific decision. Some observers believe that a highly pluralistic society may be more stable than one in which the leaders forge an artificially high level of consensus. The Vietnam War and the defeat suffered by the United States were partly the result of a breakdown in national 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 15; REACTIONARY, page 22.

**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, heavy government spending, and civil rights legislation. Conservatives tend to favor state over federal action, fiscal responsibility, decreased governmental spending, supply-side economics, the outlawing of abortion, more effective crime control, and lower taxes. Although conservatism received a setback in the 1964 defeat of Republican presidential candidate Barry Goldwater, conservative groups played a major role in Ronald Reagan's successful presidential election campaign in 1980. 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 various limitations that restrain the individuals who exercise power, including the separation of powers, checks and balances, federalism, subordination of military to civilian control, and the Bill of Rights. See also CONTRACT THEORY, page 8; MADISONIANISM, page 15.

**Significance** The American system of constitutional government has been effective throughout most of its history in maintaining limitations upon government. In recent years, however, public sentiment has favored