

1 POLITICS

*Who Gets What, When,
and How*



FPO

Chapter *Outline*

- ★ Politics and Political Science
- ★ Politics and Government
- ★ The Purposes of Government
- ★ The Meaning of Democracy
- ★ The Paradox of Democracy
- ★ Direct Versus Representative Democracy
- ★ Who Really Governs?
- ★ Democracy in America

Politics and Political Science

Politics is deciding “who gets what, when, and how.”¹ It is an activity by which people try to get more of whatever there is to get—money, prestige, jobs, respect, sex, even power itself. Politics occurs in many different settings. We talk about office politics, student politics, union politics, church politics, and so forth. But political science usually limits its attention to *politics in government*.

Political science is the study of politics, or the study of who gets what, when, and how.² The *who* are the participants in politics—voters, special-interest groups, political parties, television and the press, corporations and labor unions, lawyers and lobbyists, foundations and think tanks, and both elected and appointed government officials, including members of Congress, the president and vice president, judges, prosecutors, and bureaucrats. The *what* of politics are public policies—the decisions that governments make concerning social welfare, health care, education, national defense, law enforcement, the environment, taxation, and thousands of other issues that come before governments. The *when* and *how* are the political process—campaigns and elections, political reporting in the news media, television debates, fund raising, lobbying, decision making in the White House and executive agencies, and decision making in the courts.

Political science is generally concerned with three questions. *Who governs? For what ends? By what means?* Throughout this book, we are concerned with who participates in politics, how government decisions are made, who benefits most from those decisions, and who bears their greatest costs (see Figure 1.1).

Politics would be simple if everyone agreed on who should govern, who should get what, who should pay for it, and how and when it should be done. But conflict arises from disagreements over these questions, and sometimes the question of confidence in the government itself underlies the conflict (see *What Do You Think?: “Can You Trust the Government?”*).

Politics and Government

What distinguishes governmental politics from politics in other institutions in society? After all, parents, teachers, unions, banks, corporations, and many other organizations make decisions about who gets what in society. The answer is that only **government** decisions can *extend to the whole society*, and only government can *legitimately use force*. Other institutions encompass only a part of society: for example, students and

Think About Politics

1. Can you trust the government to do what is right most of the time?
YES NO
2. Should any group other than the government have the right to use force?
YES NO
3. Is it ever right to disobey the law?
YES NO
4. Should important decisions in a democracy be submitted to voters rather than decided by Congress?
YES NO
5. Is the government run by a few big interests looking out for themselves?
YES NO
6. In a democracy should “majority rule” be able to limit the rights of members of an unpopular or dangerous minority?
YES NO
7. Is government trying to do too many things that should be left to individuals?
YES NO
8. Does the threat of terrorism on American soil justify increased government surveillance of its citizens?
YES NO

Who has power and how they use it are the basis of all these questions. Issues of power underlie everything we call politics and the study of political science.

★ **politics**

Deciding who gets what, when, and how.

★ **political science**

The study of politics: who governs, for what ends, and by what means.

Figure 1.1 Who Gets What, When, and How

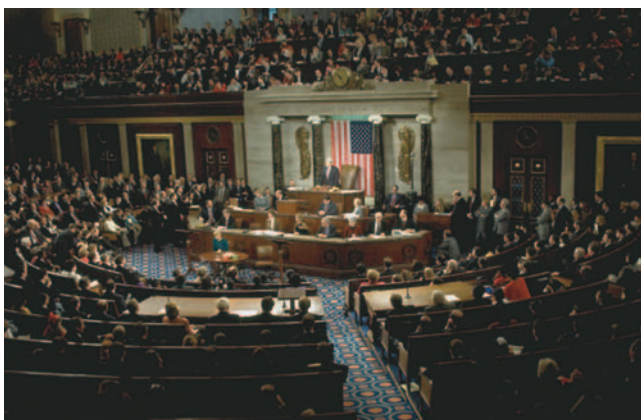
Political science is the study of politics. The distinguished political scientist Harold Lasswell entitled his most popular book *Politics: Who Gets What, When and How*. The first topic of politics is “Who?” (that is, who are the participants in politics, both within and outside of government?), “When and how are political decisions made?” (that is, how do the institutions and processes of politics function?), and “What outcomes are produced?” (that is, what public policies are adopted?). Shown here are some of the topics of concern to political science.

Who Governs: Participants	
<p>Governmental</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> President and White House staff Executive Office of the President, including Office of Management and Budget Cabinet officers and executive agency heads Bureaucrats Congress members Congressional staff Supreme Court justices Federal appellate and district judges 	<p>Nongovernmental</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Voters Campaign contributors Interest-group leaders and members Party leaders and party identifiers in the electorate Corporate and union leaders Media leaders, including press and television anchors and reporters Lawyers and lobbyists Think tanks and foundation personnel
When and How: Institutions and Processes	
<p>Institutions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Constitution <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Separation of powers Checks and balances Federalism Judicial review Amendment procedures Electoral system Presidency Congress <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Senate House of Representatives Courts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supreme Court Appellate courts District courts Parties <ul style="list-style-type: none"> National committees Conventions State and local organizations Media <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Television Press Internet 	<p>Processes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Socialization and learning Opinion formation Party identification Voting Contributing Joining organizations Talking politics Running for office Campaigning Polling Fund raising Parading and demonstrating Nonviolent direct action Violence Lobbying Logrolling Deciding Budgeting Implementing and evaluating Adjudicating Agenda setting News making Interpreting Persuading
What Outcomes: Public Policies	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Civil liberties Civil rights Equality Criminal justice Welfare Social Security Health Education Energy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Environmental protection Economic development Economic stability Taxation Government spending and deficits National defense Foreign affairs Homeland Security

★ government

Organization extending to the whole society that can legitimately use force to carry out its decisions.

faculty in a college, members of a church or union, employees or customers of a corporation. And individuals have a legal right to voluntarily withdraw from nongovernmental organizations. But governments make decisions affecting everyone, and no one can voluntarily withdraw from government’s authority (without leaving the country, and thus becoming subject to some other government’s authority). Some individuals and organizations—muggers, gangs, crime



Conflict All Around

Conflict exists in all political activities as participants struggle over who gets what, when, and how. From the streets to the Congress to the campaign trail, participants in the political process compete to further their goals and ambitions.

families—occasionally use physical force to get what they want. But only governments can use force legitimately—that is, people generally believe it is acceptable for the government to use force if necessary to uphold its laws, but they do not extend this right to other institutions or individuals.

Most people would say that they obey the law in order to avoid fines and stay out of prison. But if large numbers of people all decided to disobey the law at the same time, the government would not have enough police or jails to hold them all.

The government can rely on force only against relatively small numbers of offenders. Most of us, most of the time, obey laws out of habit—the habit of compliance. We have been taught to believe that law and order are necessary and that government is right to punish those who disobey its laws.

Government thus enjoys **legitimacy**, or rightfulness, in its use of force.³ A democratic government has a special claim to legitimacy because it is based on the consent of its people, who participate in the selection of its leaders and the making of its laws. Those who disagree with a law have the option of working for its change by speaking out, petitioning, demonstrating, forming interest groups or parties, voting against unpopular leaders, or running for office themselves. Since people living in a democracy can effect change by “working within the system,” they have a greater moral obligation to obey the law than people living under regimes in which they have no voice. However, there may be some occasions when “civil disobedience” even in a democracy may be morally justified (see *A Conflicting View: “Sometimes It’s Right to Disobey the Law”*).



Should any group other than the government have the right to use force?

★ legitimacy

Widespread acceptance of something as necessary, rightful, and legally binding.



Is violence ever justified as a means of bringing about political change?



What do you *Think*?

Can You Trust the Government?

Americans are suspicious of big government. Many do not trust the government in Washington to “do what is right.” Trust in government has varied over the years, as measured by polls asking, “How much of the time do you think you can trust the government in Washington to do what is right? Just about always? Most of the time? Some of the time? None of the time?” Low levels of trust and confidence in government may represent a profound disaffection with the political system, or a more superficial dissatisfaction with current politicians and political leaders or with policies.^a Americans’ trust in the national government used to be higher. In the 1950s and through the early 1960s, during the Eisenhower, Kennedy, and first years of the Johnson administrations, the public overwhelmingly had confidence in the government. But in the late ‘60s through the ‘70s, with the defeat in Vietnam, the Watergate scandal and the forced resignation of President Richard Nixon—the first resignation of a president in U.S. history—public confidence fell, and kept falling.

Throughout this period of decline, television broadcast many negative images of government and government policy. Television producers want news of scandal, violence, corruption, and incompetence; they want what is simple and sensational, not good news or much in-depth reporting of complicated news (see Chapter 6, “Mass Media: Setting the Agenda”). Meanwhile, more Americans have come to recognize television news anchors and famous reporters than they do presidential candidates or

important members of Congress. And the news anchors and reporters follow their producer’s lead: reporting critically, and even cynically, of politicians and the government.

Economic recessions erode public confidence in government. People expect the president and Congress to lead them out of “hard times.” So while President George H. W. Bush raised public confidence in the early 1990s with the military success of Desert Storm in Iraq, his administration’s perceived failure to act decisively to take the United States out of the economic recession of the early 1990s helped to send public confidence in government back down. But then sustained economic growth in the 1990s under President Clinton improved public trust in government.

But public confidence in government can be revived, as it was during the Reagan presidency. President Reagan’s popularity may have contributed to the restoration of the public’s confidence in government.^b Americans’ trust in government also revived after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Public trust in government doubled immediately after September 11, as America rallied behind the government for the first time since the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. American flags and images of Old Glory sprouted from homes and businesses, and on vehicles. Trust in government “to do the right thing” leaped to levels not seen since the early 1970s. But the public trust gradually eroded as the war in Iraq dragged on.



Think Again

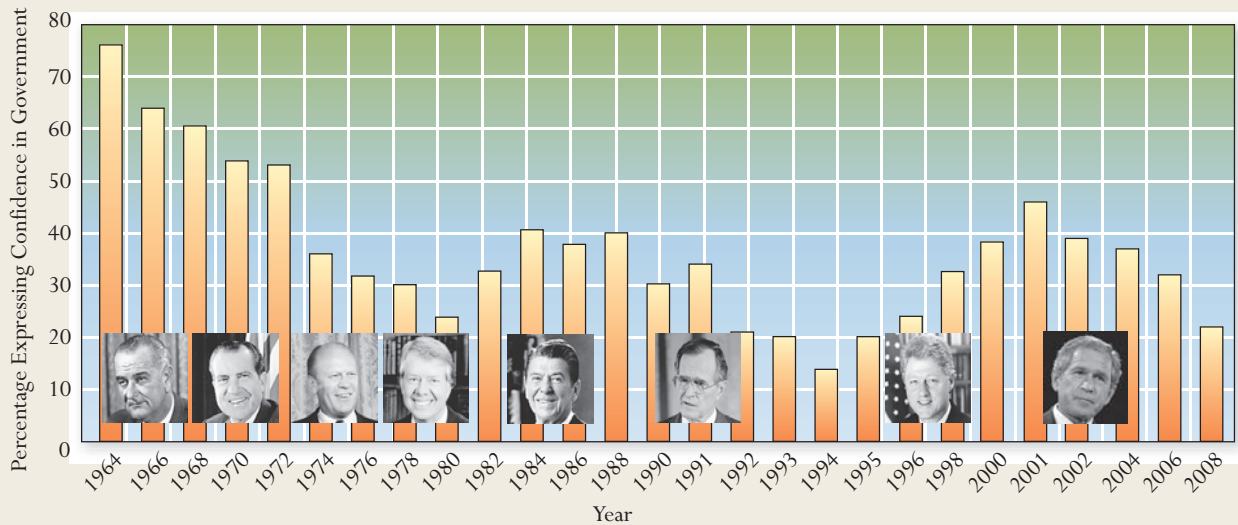
Is it ever right to disobey the law?

The Purposes of Government

All governments tax, penalize, punish, restrict, and regulate their people. Governments in the United States—the federal government in Washington, the 50 state governments, and the more than 87,000 local governments—take nearly 40 cents out of every dollar Americans earn. Each year, the Congress enacts about 500 laws; federal bureaucracies publish about 19,000 rules and regulations, the state legislatures enact about 25,000 laws; and cities, counties, school districts, and other local governments enact countless local ordinances. Each of these laws restricts our freedom in some way.

Why do people put up with governments? An answer to this question can be found in the words of the Preamble to the Constitution of the United States:

We the people of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.



Public Confidence, That the Federal Government Can Be Trusted to "Do What Is Right Most of the Time"

How much of the time do you think you can trust government in Washington to do what is right—just about always, most of the time, or only some of the time?

^aTimothy E. Cook and Paul Gronke, "The Skeptical American," *Journal of Politics* 67 (Aug., 2005): 784–803

^bArthur H. Miller, "Confidence in Government During the 1980s," *American Politics Quarterly* 19 (April 1991): 147–73.

Source: Data from Gallup Opinion Polls (http://www.gallup.com/poll/topics/trust_gov.asd).

General statistics have to be used cautiously, however. ABC News polls after September 11, for example, found that while 68 percent of Americans trusted the government to "do what is right when it comes to handling national security and the war on terrorism,"

just 38 percent had confidence in the government "when it comes to handling social issues like the economy, health care, Social Security, and education." Public trust in government may depend on what part of the government Americans are being polled about.

To Establish Justice and Insure Domestic Tranquility Government manages conflict and maintains order. We might think of government as a **social contract** among people who agree to allow themselves to be regulated and taxed in exchange for protection of their lives and property. No society can allow individuals or groups to settle their conflicts by street fighting, murder, kidnapping, rioting, bombing, or terrorism. Whenever government fails to control such violence, we describe it as "a breakdown in law and order." Without the protection of government, human lives and property are endangered, and only those skilled with fists and weapons have much of a chance of survival. The seventeenth-century English political philosopher Thomas Hobbes described life without government as "a war where every man is enemy to every man," where people live in "continual fear and danger of violent death."⁴

To Provide for the Common Defense Many anthropologists link the origins of government to warfare—to the need of early communities to protect themselves from raids by outsiders and to organize raids against others. Since the Revolutionary War, the U.S. government has been responsible for the country's

★ **social contract**

Idea that government originates as an implied contract among individuals who agree to obey laws in exchange for protection of their rights.

defense. During the long Cold War, when America confronted a nuclear-armed, expansionist-minded, communist-governed Soviet Union, the United States spent nearly half of the federal budget on national defense. With the end of the Cold War, defense spending fell to about 15 percent of the federal budget, but defense spending has begun to creep upward again as the nation confronts the new war on terrorism. National defense will always remain a primary responsibility of United States government.

★ **public goods**

Goods and services that cannot readily be provided by markets, either because they are too expensive for a single individual to buy or because if one person bought them, everyone else would use them without paying.

★ **free market**

Free competition for voluntary exchange among individuals, firms, and corporations.

★ **gross domestic product (GDP)**

Measure of economic performance in terms of the nation's total production of goods and services for a single year, valued in terms of market prices.

★ **externalities**

Costs imposed on people who are not direct participants in an activity.

★ **income transfers**

Government transfers of income from taxpayers to persons regarded as deserving.

To Promote the General Welfare Government promotes the general welfare in a number of ways. It provides **public goods**—goods and services that private markets cannot readily furnish either because they are too expensive for individuals to buy for themselves (for example, a national park, a highway, or a sewage disposal plant) or because if one person bought them, everyone else would “free-ride,” or use them without paying (for example, clean air, police protection, or national defense).

Nevertheless, Americans acquire most of their goods and services on the **free market**, through voluntary exchange among individuals, firms, and corporations. The **gross domestic product (GDP)**—the dollar sum of all the goods and services produced in the United States in a year—amounts to more than \$15 trillion. Government spending in the United States—federal, state, and local governments combined—amounts to about \$4.5 trillion, or an amount equivalent to 30 percent of the gross domestic product.

Governments also regulate society. Free markets cannot function effectively if individuals and firms engage in fraud, deception, or unfair competition, or if contracts cannot be enforced. Moreover, many economic activities impose costs on persons who are not direct participants in these activities. Economists refer to such costs as **externalities**. A factory that produces air pollution or wastewater imposes external costs on community residents who would otherwise enjoy cleaner air or water. A junkyard that creates an eyesore makes life less pleasant for neighbors and passersby. Many government regulations are designed to reduce these external costs.

To promote general welfare, governments also use **income transfers** from taxpayers to people who are regarded as deserving. Government agencies and programs provide support and care for individuals who cannot supply these things for themselves through the private job market, for example, ill, elderly, and disabled people, and dependent children who cannot usually be expected to find productive employment. The largest income transfer programs are Social Security and Medicare, which are paid to the elderly regardless of their personal wealth. Other large transfer payments go to farmers, veterans, and the unemployed, as well as to a wide variety of businesses. As we shall see, the struggle of individuals and groups to obtain direct government payments is a major motivator of political activity.

To Secure the Blessings of Liberty All governments must maintain order, protect national security, provide public goods, regulate society, and care for those unable to fend for themselves. But *democratic* governments have a special added responsibility—to protect individual liberty by ensuring that all people are treated equally before the law. No one is above the law. The president must obey the Constitution and laws of the United States, and so must members of Congress, governors, judges, and the police. A democratic government must protect people's freedom to speak and write what they please, to practice their religion, to petition, to form groups and parties, to enjoy personal privacy, and to exercise their rights if accused of a crime.



A Conflicting *View*

Sometimes It's Right to Disobey the Law

Civil disobedience is the nonviolent violation of laws that people believe to be unjust. Civil disobedience denies the *legitimacy*, or rightfulness, of a law and implies that a higher moral authority takes precedence over unjust laws. It is frequently a political tactic of minorities. (Majorities can more easily change laws through conventional political activity.)

Why resort to civil disobedience in a democracy? Why not work within the democratic system to change unjust laws? In 1963 a group of Alabama clergy posed these questions to Martin Luther King, Jr., and asked him to call off mass demonstrations in Birmingham, Alabama. King, who had been arrested in the demonstrations, replied in his now famous "Letter from Birmingham City Jail":

One may well ask, "How can you advocate breaking some laws and obeying others?" The answer is found in the fact that there are unjust laws. I would be the first to advocate obeying just laws. One has not only a legal but a moral responsibility to obey just laws. Conversely, one has a moral responsibility to disobey unjust laws.

King argued that *nonviolent direct action* was a vital aspect of democratic politics. The political purpose of civil disobedience is to call attention or "to bear witness" to the existence of injustices. Only laws regarded as unjust are broken, and they are broken openly, without hatred or violence. Punishment is actively sought rather than avoided, since punishment will further emphasize the injustice of the laws.

The objective of nonviolent civil disobedience is to stir the conscience of an apathetic majority and to win support for measures that will eliminate the injustices. By accepting punishment for the violation of an unjust law, persons practicing civil disobedience demonstrate their sincerity. They hope to shame the majority and to make it ask itself how far it is willing to go to protect the status quo. Thus, according to King's teachings, civil disobedience is clearly differentiated from hatred and violence:



Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., shown here marching in Mississippi with his wife, Coretta Scott King, and others, used civil disobedience to advance the rights of African Americans during the 1950s and 1960s. (Copyright © Flip Schulke)

One who breaks an unjust law must do it openly, lovingly (not hatefully as the white mothers did in New Orleans when they were seen on television screaming "nigger, nigger, nigger") and with a willingness to accept the penalty. I submit that an individual who breaks a law that conscience tells him is unjust, and willingly accepts the penalty by staying in jail to arouse the conscience of the community over its injustice, is in reality expressing the very highest respect for law.

In 1964 Martin Luther King, Jr., received the Nobel Peace Prize in recognition of his extraordinary contributions to the development of nonviolent methods of social change.

Source: Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter from Birmingham City Jail," April 16, 1963.

The Meaning of Democracy

Throughout the centuries, thinkers in many different cultures contributed to the development of democratic government. Early Greek philosophers contributed the word **democracy**, which means "rule by the many." But there is no single definition of *democracy*, nor is there a tightly organized system of democratic thought. It is better, perhaps, to speak of democratic traditions than of a single democratic ideology.

★ **democracy**

Governing system in which the people govern themselves, from the Greek term meaning "rule by the many."

Unfortunately, the looseness of the term *democracy* allows it to be perverted by *antidemocratic* governments. Hardly a nation in the world exists that does not *claim* to be “democratic.” Governments that outlaw political opposition, suppress dissent, discourage religion, and deny fundamental freedoms of speech and press still claim to be “democracies,” “democratic republics,” or “people’s republics” (for example, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea is the official name of Communist North Korea). These governments defend their use of the term *democracy* by claiming that their policies reflect the true interests of their people. But they are unwilling to allow political freedoms or to hold free elections in order to find out whether their people really agree with their policies. In effect, they use the term as a political slogan rather than a true description of their government.

★ **democratic ideals**

Individual dignity, equality before the law, widespread participation in public decisions, and public decisions by majority rule, with one person having one vote.

The actual existence of **democratic ideals** varies considerably from country to country (see *Compared to What?: “Freedom and Democracy Around the World”*). A meaningful definition of democracy must include the following ideals: (1) recognition of the dignity of every individual; (2) equal protection under the law for every individual; (3) opportunity for everyone to participate in public decisions; and (4) decision making by majority rule, with one person having one vote.

Individual Dignity The underlying value of democracy is the dignity of the individual. Human beings are entitled to life and liberty, personal property, and equal protection under the law. These liberties are *not* granted by governments; they belong to every person born into the world. The English political philosopher John Locke (1632–1704) argued that a higher “natural law” guaranteed liberty to every person and that this natural law was morally superior to all human laws and governments. Each individual possesses “certain inalienable Rights, among these are Life, Liberty, and Property.”⁵ When Thomas Jefferson wrote his eloquent defense of the American Revolution in the Declaration of Independence for the Continental Congress in Philadelphia in 1776, he borrowed heavily from Locke (perhaps even to the point of plagiarism):

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness.

Individual dignity requires personal freedom. People who are directed by governments in every aspect of their lives, people who are “collectivized” and made into workers for the state, people who are enslaved—all are denied the personal dignity to which all human beings are entitled. Democratic governments try to minimize the role of government in the lives of citizens.

Equality True democracy requires equal protection of the law for every individual. Democratic governments cannot discriminate between blacks and whites, or men and women, or rich and poor, or any groups of people in applying the law. Not only must a democratic government refrain from discrimination itself, but it must also work to prevent discrimination in society generally. Today our notion of equality extends to equality of opportunity—the obligation of government to ensure that all Americans have an equal opportunity to develop their full potential.



Should important decisions in a democracy be submitted to voters rather than decided by Congress?

Participation in Decision Making Democracy means individual participation in the decisions that affect individuals’ lives. People should be free to choose for themselves how they want to live. Individual participation in government is necessary for individual dignity. People in a democracy should not have decisions made *for* them but *by* them. Even if they make mistakes, it is better that they be permitted



Compared to *What?*

Freedom and Democracy Around the World

Worldwide progress toward freedom over the past half-century has been impressive. In 1950 there were 22 democracies accounting for 31 percent of the world population that were said to be “free.” By 2007, democracy had spread to 90 “free” countries that constituted 47 percent of the world population; an additional 58 countries or 30 percent lived in nations labeled “partly free.” But 45 “not-free” authoritarian and totalitarian regimes governed more than 23 percent of the world’s population.

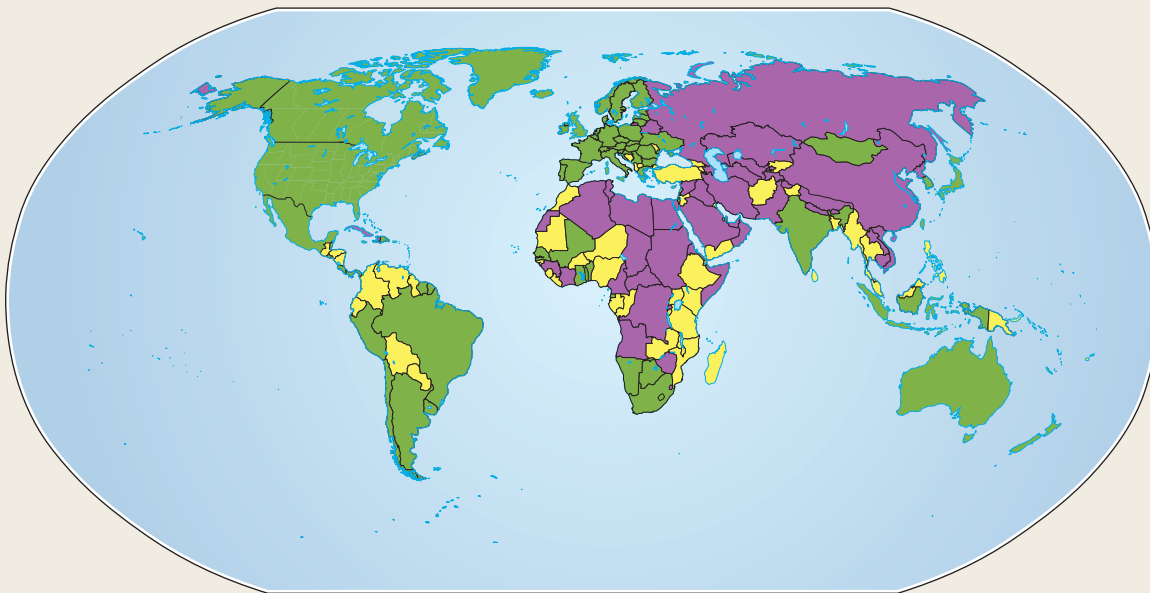
The Freedom House is a New York–based think tank that regularly surveys political conditions around the world (see map).

One way to assess the degree of democracy in a governmental system is to consider its record in ensuring political freedoms—enabling citizens to participate meaningfully in government—and individual liberties. A checklist for political freedoms might include whether the chief executive and national legislature are elected; whether elections are generally fair, with open campaigning and honest tabulation of votes; and whether multiple candidates and parties participate. A checklist for individual liberties might include whether

the press and broadcasting are free and independent of the government; whether people are free to assemble, protest, and form opposition parties; whether religious institutions, labor unions, business organizations, and other groups are free and independent of the government; and whether individuals are free to own property, travel, and move their residence.

Worldwide progress toward freedom and democracy made major strides after 1989 as a result of the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe after the demise of the Soviet Union. But in recent years there has been relatively little change in the global state of freedom. And there have been some worrisome trends that present potentially serious threats to the expansion of freedom in the future. Russia’s score was downgraded by Freedom House in 2004 in its classification and remains only “partly free.” Freedom House denounced President Vladimir Putin’s increasingly restrictive government. And Freedom House notes a growing pushback against democracy in Venezuela, China, Iran, and Zimbabwe that threatens to erode the gains made in the past 30 years.

Map of Freedom 2007



Map Legend ■ Free ■ Partly Free ■ Not Free

Source: Reprinted by permission of Freedom House. www.freedomhouse.org

to do so than to take away their rights to make their own decisions. The true democrat would reject even a wise and benevolent dictatorship because it would threaten the individual’s character, self-reliance, and dignity. The argument for democracy is not that the people will always choose wise policies for themselves, but that people who cannot choose for themselves are not really free.

Majority Rule: One Person, One Vote Collective decision making in democracies must be by majority rule, with each person having one vote. That is, each person's vote must be equal to every other person's, regardless of status, money, or fame. Whenever any individual is denied political equality because of race, sex, or wealth, then the government is not truly democratic. Majorities are not always right. But *majority rule* means that all persons have an equal say in decisions affecting them. If people are truly equal, their votes must count equally, and a majority vote must decide the issue, even if the majority decides foolishly.

✓ Think Again

In a democracy should "majority rule" be able to limit the rights of members of an unpopular or dangerous minority?

✓ Think Again

Is government trying to do too many things that should be left to individuals?

★ **paradox of democracy**
Potential for conflict between individual freedom and majority rule.

More than Majority Role

The paradox of democracy balances the principles of majority rule against the principle of individual liberty. When the German people voted Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party into power, did majority rule give the Nazis free rein to restrict the individual liberties of the people? Or did those who abhorred the trespasses of their government have the right to fight against its power?

The Paradox of Democracy

But what if a *majority* of the people decide to attack the rights of some unpopular individuals or minorities? What if hate, prejudice, or racism infects a majority of people and they vote for leaders who promise to "get rid of the Jews" or "put blacks in their place" or "bash a few gays"? What if a majority of people vote to take away the property of wealthy people and distribute it among themselves.⁶ Do we abide by the principle of majority rule and allow the majority to do what it wants? Or do we defend the principle of individual liberty and limit the majority's power? If we enshrine the principle of majority rule, we are placing all our confidence in the wisdom and righteousness of the majority of the people. Yet we know that democracy means more than majority rule, that it also means freedom and dignity for the individual. How do we resolve this **paradox of democracy**—the potential for conflict between majority rule and individual freedom?

Limiting the Power of Majorities The Founders of the American nation were not sure that freedom would be safe in the hands of the majority. In *The Federalist Papers* in 1787, James Madison warned against a direct democracy: "Pure democracy . . . can admit of no cure for the mischiefs of faction. . . . There is nothing to check the inducements to sacrifice the weaker party, or an obnoxious individual."⁷ So the Founders wrote a Constitution and adopted a Bill of Rights that limited the power of government over the individual, that placed some





Symbols of Totalitarianism

Political sociologists have observed that the military in totalitarian societies has a distinct body language. Soldiers in communist North Korea use a “goose step” when on parade—a march in which the knee is unbent and the foot, encased in a heavy boot, is stamped on the ground, providing a powerful image of authority and force. In democratic societies, the goose step is not employed; indeed, it is regarded as somewhat ridiculous.

personal liberties beyond the reach of majorities. They established the principle of **limited government**—a government that is itself restrained by law. Under a limited government, even if a majority of voters wanted to, they could not prohibit communists or atheists or racists from speaking or writing. Nor could they ban certain religions, set aside the rights of criminal defendants to a fair trial, or prohibit people from moving or quitting their jobs. These rights belong to individuals, not to majorities or governments.

Totalitarianism: Unlimited Government Power No government can be truly democratic if it directs every aspect of its citizens' lives. Individuals must be free to shape their own lives, free from the dictates of governments or even majorities of their fellow citizens. Indeed, we call a government with *un*limited power over its citizens totalitarian. Under **totalitarianism**, the individual possesses no personal liberty. Totalitarian governments decide what people can say or write; what unions, churches, or parties they can join, if any; where people must live; what work they must do; what goods they can find in stores and what they will be allowed to buy and sell; whether citizens will be allowed to travel outside of their country; and so on. Under a totalitarian government, the total life of the individual is subject to government control.

Totalitarian governments undertake to control all agencies of the government, including the military and the police, and virtually all other institutions of society including newspapers, television, schools, churches, businesses, banks, labor unions, and any other organization that might challenge their control. In contrast, democratic societies allow many other institutions to operate independently of the government (see *Politics Up Close: “Confidence in American Institutions”*).

Authoritarianism In many countries throughout the world, a single individual or ruling group monopolizes all *political* power, but allows people to otherwise lead their lives as they wish. **Authoritarianism** is largely concerned with dominating government. People can conduct business and trade, join churches, live where they wish, and otherwise conduct their *private* lives without government interference. They have no role to play in politics, no control over their government, no competitive political parties, no elections, and are otherwise barred from political life. Authoritarianism appears somewhat less oppressive, at least in the everyday lives of the people, than totalitarianism.

★ limited government

Principle that government power over the individual is limited, that there are some personal liberties that even a majority cannot regulate, and that government itself is restrained by law.

★ totalitarianism

Rule by an elite that exercises unlimited power over individuals in all aspects of life.

★ authoritarianism

Monopoly of political power by an individual or small group that otherwise allows people to go about their private lives as they wish.

★ constitutional government

A government limited by rule of law in its power over the liberties of individuals.

Constitutional Government Constitutions, written or unwritten, are the principal means by which governmental powers are limited. Constitutions set forth the liberties of individuals and restrain governments from interfering with these liberties. Consider, for example, the opening words of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." This amendment places religious belief beyond the reach of the government. The government itself is restrained by law. It cannot, even by majority vote, interfere with the personal liberty to worship as one chooses. In addition, armed with the power of judicial review, the courts can declare unconstitutional laws passed by majority vote of Congress or state legislatures (see "Judicial Power" in Chapter 13).

Throughout this book we examine how well limited constitutional government succeeds in preserving individual liberty in the United States. We examine free speech and press, the mass media, religious freedom, the freedom to protest and demonstrate, and the freedom to support political candidates and interest groups of all kinds. We examine how well the U.S. Constitution protects individuals from discrimination and inequality. And we examine how far government should go in protecting society without destroying individual liberty (see *Controversy: "Terrorism's Threat to Democracy"* on page 18).

Direct Versus Representative Democracy

In the Gettysburg Address, Abraham Lincoln spoke about "a government of the people, by the people, for the people," and his ringing phrase remains an American ideal. But can we take this phrase literally? More than 300 million Americans are spread over 4 million square miles. If we brought everyone together, standing shoulder to shoulder, they would occupy 70 square miles. One round of five-minute speeches by everyone would take over 3,000 years. "People could be born, grow old, and die while they waited for the assembly to make one decision."⁸

Direct democracy (also called pure or participatory democracy), where everyone actively participates in every decision, is rare. The closest approximation to direct democracy in American government may be the traditional New England town meeting, where all of the citizens come together face-to-face to decide about town affairs. But today most New England towns vest authority in a board of officials elected by the townspeople to make policy decisions between town meetings, and professional administrators are

★ direct democracy

Governing system in which every person participates actively in every public decision, rather than delegating decision making to representatives.

By the People

Direct democracy still lives in many New England towns, where citizens come together periodically to pass laws, elect officials, and make decisions about such matters as taxation and land use.





Up Close Confidence in American Institutions

American's confidence in their government varies over time, but overall it is much lower than a generation ago. Which institutions in society today enjoy the confidence of the American people? In somewhat of a paradox for a democratic society, the *military* enjoys the greatest confidence of Americans. The *police* also enjoyed a great deal of confidence, although "the criminal justice system" (defined by most respondents as the courts) does not. Among branches of the national government, the president and the Supreme Court rate fairly high in confidence. But Congress is rated very low.



Source: Copyright © 2006 The Gallup Organization.

Q: I am going to read you a list of institutions in American society. Please tell me how much confidence you, yourself, have in each one: a great deal, quite a lot, some, or very little.

	Percent Saying a Great Deal or Quite a Lot
The military	73
The police	58
Organized religion	52
Banks	49
U.S. Supreme Court	40
The medical system	38
Public schools	37
The presidency	33
Television news	31
Newspapers	30
The criminal justice system	25
Organized labor	24
Congress	23
Big business	18
Health maintenance organizations (HMOs)	15

Americans' patriotism and love of the flag as a symbol of their freedom doesn't always translate into confidence in government institutions.

appointed to supervise the day-to-day town services. The town meeting is vanishing because citizens cannot spend so much of their time and energy in community decision making.

Representative democracy recognizes that it is impossible to expect millions of people to come together and decide every issue. Instead, representatives of the people are elected by the people to decide issues on behalf of the people. Elections must be open to competition so that the people can choose representatives who reflect their own views. And elections must take place in an environment of free speech and press, so that both candidates and voters can freely express their views. Finally, elections must be held periodically so that representatives can be thrown out of office if they no longer reflect the views of the majority of the people.

No government can claim to be a representative democracy, then, unless

1. Representatives are selected by vote of all the people.
2. Elections are open to competition.
3. Candidates and voters can freely express themselves.
4. Representatives are selected periodically.

★ representative democracy

Governing system in which public decision making is delegated to representatives of the people chosen by popular vote in free, open, and periodic elections.

So when we hear of “elections” in which only one party is permitted to run candidates, candidates are not free to express their views, or leaders are elected “for life,” then we know that these governments are not really democracies, regardless of what they may call themselves.

Throughout this book, as we examine how well representative democracy works in the United States, we consider such issues as participation in elections—why some people vote and others do not—whether parties and candidates offer the voters real alternatives, whether modern political campaigning informs voters or only confuses them, and whether elected representatives are responsive to the wishes of voters. These are the kinds of issues that concern political science.



Is the government run by a few big interests looking out for themselves?

Who Really Governs?

Democracy is an inspiring ideal. But is democratic government really possible? Is it possible for millions of people to govern themselves, with every voice having equal influence? Or will a small number of people inevitably acquire more power than others? To what extent is democracy attainable in *any* society, and how democratic is the American political system? That is, who really governs?

★ elitism

Political system in which power is concentrated in the hands of a relatively small group of individuals or institutions.

The Elitist Perspective “Government is always government by the few, whether in the name of the few, the one, or the many.”⁹ This quotation from political scientists Harold Lasswell and Daniel Lerner expresses the basic idea of **elitism**. All societies, including democracies, divide themselves into the few who have power and the many who do not. In every society, there is a division of labor. Only a few people are directly involved in governing a nation; most people are content to let others undertake the tasks of government. The *elite* are the few who have power; the *masses* are the many who do not.¹⁰ This theory holds that an elite is inevitable in any social organization. We cannot form a club, a church, a business, or a government without selecting some people to provide leadership. And leaders will always have a perspective on the organization different from that of its members.¹¹

In any large, complex society, then, whether or not it is a democracy, decisions are made by tiny minorities. Out of more than 300 million Americans, only a few thousand individuals at most participate directly in decisions about war and peace, wages and prices, employment and production, law and justice, taxes and benefits, health and welfare.

Elitism does *not* mean that leaders always exploit or oppress members. On the contrary, elites may be very concerned for the welfare of the masses. Elite status may be open to ambitious, talented, or educated individuals from the masses or may be closed to all except the wealthy. Elites may be very responsive to public opinion, or they may ignore the usually apathetic and ill-informed masses. But whether elites are self-seeking or public-spirited, open or closed, responsive or unresponsive, it is they and not the masses who actually make the decisions.

Most people do not regularly concern themselves with decision making in Washington. They are more concerned with their jobs, family, sports, and recreation than they are with politics. They are not well informed about tax laws, foreign policy, or even who represents them in Congress. Since the “masses” are largely apathetic and ill informed about policy questions, their views are likely to

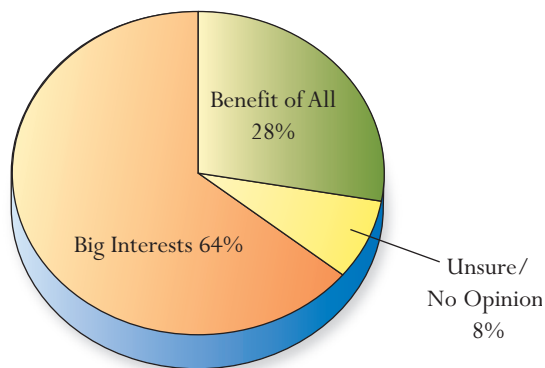


Figure 1.2 **Public Opinion About Who Runs the Country**

Would you say the government is pretty much run by a few big interests looking out for themselves or that it is run for the benefit of all the people?

Source: CBS/New York Time Poll, July 11, 2004, as reputed in The Polling Report, www.pollingreport.com.

be influenced more by what they see and hear on television than by their own experience. Most communication flows downward from elites to masses. Elitism argues that the masses have at best only an indirect influence on the decisions of elites.

Opinion polls indicate that many Americans agree with the elitist contention that government is run by "a few big interests" (see Figure 1.2).

The Pluralist Perspective No one seriously argues that all Americans participate in *all* of the decisions that shape their lives; that majority preferences *always* prevail; that the values of life, liberty, and property are *never* sacrificed; or that every American enjoys equality of opportunity. Nevertheless, most American political scientists argue that the American system of government, which they describe as "pluralist," is the best possible approximation of the democratic ideal in a large, complex society. Pluralism is designed to make the theory of democracy "more realistic."¹²

Pluralism is the belief that democracy can be achieved in a large, complex society by competition, bargaining, and compromise among organized groups and that individuals can participate in decision making through membership in these groups and by choosing among parties and candidates in elections.

Pluralists recognize that the individual acting alone is no match for giant government bureaucracies, big corporations and banks, the television networks, labor unions, or other powerful interest groups. Instead, pluralists rely on *competition* among these organizations to protect the interests of individuals. They hope that countervailing centers of power—big business, big labor, big government—will check one another and prevent any single group from abusing its power and oppressing individual Americans.

Individuals in a pluralist democracy may not participate directly in decision making, but they can join and support *interest groups* whose leaders bargain on their behalf in the political arena. People are more effective in organized groups—for example, the Sierra Club for environmentalists, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) for civil rights advocates, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Urban League for African Americans, the American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars for veterans, and the National Rifle Association (NRA) for opponents of gun control.

According to the pluralist view, the Democratic and Republican parties are really coalitions of groups: the national Democratic Party is a coalition of union members, big-city residents, blacks, Catholics, Jews, and, until recently, southerners; the

★ **pluralism**

Theory that democracy can be achieved through competition among multiple organized groups and that individuals can participate in politics through group memberships and elections.



Controversy

Terrorism's Threat to Democracy

The horrifying images of "9/11" will not be easily forgotten—America's tallest skyscrapers exploding in flames and crumbling to earth—images projected over and over again on the nation's television screens. Commercial airliners, loaded with fuel and passengers, flown at high speeds directly into the symbols of America's financial and military power—the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington. Within minutes, thousands of lives are lost on American soil—more than at any time since the Civil War. After September 11 America found itself in a new war, a war against worldwide networks of terrorists.

The Goal of Terrorism Terrorism is violence directed against innocent civilians to advance political goals. As barbaric as terrorism appears to civilized peoples, it is not without a rationale. Terrorists are not "crazies." Their first goal is to announce in the most dramatic fashion their own grievances, their commitment to violence, and their disregard for human life, often including their own. In its initial phase the success of a terrorist act is directly related to the publicity it receives. Terrorist groups jubilantly claim responsibility for their acts. The more horrendous, the more media coverage, the more damage, the more dead—all add to the success of the terrorists in attracting attention to themselves.

A prolonged campaign of terrorism is designed to inspire pervasive fear among people, to convince them that their government cannot protect them, and to undermine their confidence in their political system. If the government fails to suppress terrorism, people become ever more fearful, more willing to accept restrictions on liberties, and more open to the appeals of demagogues who promise to restore order to protect people at any cost. Or a weakened government

may resort to "negotiations" with the leaders of terrorist groups, implicitly granting them legitimacy and providing them the opportunity to advance their goals.

Security vs. Liberty Threats to national security have historically resulted in challenges to individual liberty. Abraham Lincoln suspended the *writ of habeas corpus* (the requirement that authorities bring defendants before a judge and show cause for their detention) during the Civil War. (Only after the war did the U.S. Supreme Court hold that he had no authority to suspend the writ.^a)

In February 1942, shortly after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, President Franklin D. Roosevelt authorized the removal and internment of Japanese Americans living on the West Coast. The U.S. Supreme Court upheld this flagrant violation of the Constitution;^b not until 1988 did the U.S. Congress vote reparations and make public apologies to the surviving victims.

New Restrictions on Liberty The "9/11" terrorist attack on America inspired Congress and the president to enact and enforce greater restrictions on individual liberty than the nation had experienced since World War II. Congress passed the Patriot Act with near-unanimous support of Democrats and Republicans. Among other things, the Act allows searches without notice to the suspect; grants "roving" wiretap warrants that allow government eavesdropping on any telephones used by suspects; allows the interception of e-mail; allows investigators to obtain information from credit card companies, banks, libraries, and other businesses; authorizes the seizure of properties used to

^aEx parte Milligan (1866).

^b*Korematsu v. U.S.*, 323 U.S. 214 (1944).

Not Forgotten

The horrifying images of "9/11" will not be easily forgotten—America's tallest skyscrapers exploding and crumbling to earth—images projected over and over again on the nation's television screens.



commit or facilitate terrorism; and allows the detention of noncitizens charged with terrorism. President George W. Bush created a new Department of Homeland Security, reorganizing more than forty federal agencies that have a role in combating terrorism.

Terrorism and Democracy Terrorism has brought mixed blessings to American democracy. It has succeeded in uniting Americans, inspiring patriotism, and increasing their trust in government. But it has also inspired a

greater willingness to accept new restrictions on individual liberty. In the past, restrictions on individual liberty have been relaxed when the perceived crisis has subsided. How long will the “war on terrorism” last? Will Americans be asked to sacrifice additional liberties in this war? How far are Americans willing to go in sacrificing individual liberty to achieve national security?

See Robert A. Pape, “The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism,” *American Political Science Review* 97 (August 2003): 343–61.



A Conflicting *View*

Complaints About the American Political System

Overall, Americans are very patriotic. Indeed, most polls conducted in United States and other democratic nations show Americans to be the most patriotic citizens in the free world.

Nonetheless, many Americans express serious reservations about their political system. They believe strongly in the ideals of democracy but they are realistic in their appraisal of its weaknesses as well. A majority of Americans describe as “a major problem”: elected officials caring more about reelection than what’s best for the country; good people being discouraged from running for office because of the high costs of campaigns; citizens who don’t stay informed about politics; a decline in moral and ethical standards in government; and the role that money plays in elections and influencing decisions.



Q: As I read each item, tell me how much of a problem you think it is for the political system today: a major problem, somewhat of a problem, or not much of a problem.

	Major Problem	Somewhat of a Problem	Not much of a Problem
Elected officials caring more about getting reelected than doing what is best for the country	76%	19%	4%
The two major political parties not being responsive enough to people’s concerns	58%	32%	7%
Good people being discouraged from running for office by the high costs of campaigns	71%	22%	6%
Political contributions having too much influence on elections and government policy	66%	25%	7%
Citizens not making enough effort to vote or stay informed about politics and government	68%	26%	5%
A decline in moral and ethical values in politics	59%	30%	9%
Elected officials spending too much of their time raising money for election campaigns	61%	30%	6%
Elected officials seeking or receiving political contributions while making decisions about issues of concern to those giving money	65%	27%	6%

Source: From *Beyond Red and Blue*, Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, May 20, 2005. Copyright © 2005 by the Pew Research Center. Reprinted by permission.



A *Constitutional* Note

Representative Government, Not Direct Democracy

Nowhere in the Constitution do we find a provision for national referenda voting on any topic, however important for the nation. Indeed, nowhere do we find the word “democracy” in the Constitution. Rather, the founders believed in “republican” government, that is, decision making by representatives of the people, *not* by the people themselves. James Madison wrote, “the public voice, pronounced by representatives of the people, will be more consonant to the public good than if pronounced by the people themselves.”

It was not until over a century later that “populism”—a strong political movement mainly in the Midwestern and Western states that appealed especially to farmers—succeeded in getting the initiative and referendum adopted, allowing *state* voters to vote directly on some issues. (The initiative allows citizens to place issues on the ballot by obtaining a certain number of signatures on a petition. The referendum is a popular vote that decides whether the issue

becomes part of the state constitution or state law.) Today about half of the states have the initiative and referendum. (The legislatures of all fifty states can place an issue on the ballot if they choose to do so, usually a change in the state constitution.) But Americans cannot vote directly on *national* issues.

Moreover, some U.S. citizens do not have the right to vote for members of Congress or for the president of the United States. Citizens residing in Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Guam can only elect one “delegate” to Congress. (Although a “delegate” can propose legislation they cannot cast a tie-breaking vote.) Nor can U.S. citizens of these U.S. territories vote for a U.S. Senator or U.S. president. Citizens living in Washington, D.C., were allowed to vote for the U.S. president after the passage of the 23rd Amendment in 1961. They, too, only have a single nonvoting delegate in the House of Representatives and no elected members of the U.S. Senate.

national Republican Party is a coalition of business and professional people, suburbanites, farmers, and white Protestants. When voters choose candidates and parties, they are helping to determine which interest groups will enjoy a better reception in government.

Pluralists contend that there are multiple leadership groups in society (hence the term *pluralism*). They contend that power is widely dispersed among these groups; that no one group, not even the wealthy upper class, dominates decision making; and that groups that are influential in one area of decision making are not necessarily the same groups that are influential in other areas of decision making. Different groups of leaders make decisions in different issue areas.

Pluralism recognizes that public policy does not always coincide with majority preferences. Instead, public policy is the “equilibrium” reached in the conflict among group interests. It is the balance of competing interest groups, and therefore, say the pluralists, it is a reasonable approximation of society’s preferences.

Democracy in America

Is democracy alive and well in America today? Elitism raises serious questions about the possibility of achieving true democracy in any large, complex society. Pluralism is more comforting; it offers a way of reaffirming democratic values and providing some practical solutions to the problem of individual participation in a modern society.

There is no doubt about the strength of democratic *ideals* in American society. These ideals—individual dignity, equality, popular participation in government,

and majority rule—are the standards by which we judge the performance of the American political system. But we are still faced with the task of describing the *reality* of American politics.

This book explores who gets what, when, and how in the American political system; who participates in politics; what policies are decided upon; and when and how these decisions are made. In so doing, it raises many controversial questions about the realities of democracy, elitism, and pluralism in American life. But this book does not supply the answers; as a responsible citizen, you have to provide your own answers. At the completion of your studies, you will have to decide for yourself whether the American political system is truly democratic. Your studies will help inform your judgment, but, in the end, you yourself must make that judgment. That is the burden of freedom.

Summary

Who Gets What: Summary

Politics is deciding who gets what, when, and how. It occurs in many different settings, but political science focuses on politics in *government*.

- ★ Political science focuses on three central questions:
Who governs?
For what ends?
By what means?
- ★ Government is distinguished from other social organizations in that it
Extends to the whole society.
Can legitimately use force.
- ★ The purposes of government are to
Maintain order in society.
Provide for national defense.
Provide “public goods.”
Regulate society.
Transfer income.
Protect individual liberty.
- ★ The ideals of democracy include
Recognition of individual dignity and personal freedom.
Equality before the law.
Widespread participation in decision making.
Majority rule, with one person equaling one vote.
- ★ The principles of democracy pose a paradox: How can we resolve conflicts between our belief in majority rule and our belief in individual freedom?
- ★ Limited government places individual liberty beyond the reach of majorities. Constitutions are the principal means of limiting government power.
- ★ Direct democracy, in which everyone participates in every public decision, is very rare. Representative democracy means that public decisions are made by representatives elected by the people, in elections held periodically and open to competition, in which candidates and voters freely express themselves.
- ★ Threats to national security have historically reduced the scope of individual liberty in our nation. The terrorist attack on America of September 11, 2001, inspired greater unity, patriotism, and trust in government among the people. But it also brought greater restrictions on individual liberty.
- ★ Who really governs? The elitist perspective on American democracy focuses on the small number of leaders who actually decide national issues, compared to the mass of citizens who are apathetic and ill informed about politics. A pluralist perspective focuses on competition among organized groups in society, with individuals participating through group membership and voting for parties and candidates in elections.
- ★ How democratic is American government today? Democratic ideals are widely shared in our society. But you must make your own informed judgment about the realities of American politics.

Key Terms

politics 3	free market 8	democratic ideals 10	constitutional
political science 3	gross domestic product (GDP) 8	paradox of democracy 12	government 14
government 4	externalities 8	limited government 13	representative
legitimacy 5	income transfers 8	totalitarianism 13	democracy 15
social contract 7	democracy 9	authoritarianism 13	elitism 16
public goods 8		direct democracy 14	pluralism 17

Suggested Readings

- Cronin, Thomas J. *Direct Democracy*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989. A thoughtful discussion of direct versus representative democracy, as well as a review of initiative, referendum, and recall devices.
- Dahl, Robert A. *Democracy and Its Critics*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1989. A defense of modern democracy from the pluralist perspective.
- Dye, Thomas R., and Harmon Zeigler. *The Irony of Democracy*. 14th ed. New York: Wadsworth, 2008. An interpretation of American politics from the elitist perspective.
- Fukuyama, Francis. *Trust*. New York: Free Press, 1995. Argues that the breakdown of trust in America—not only in the government but at a person-to-person level—is burdening the nation with formal rules and regulations, lengthy contracts, bureaucracy, lawyers, and lawsuits.
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- Lasswell, Harold. *Politics: Who Gets What, When, and How*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1936. Classic description of the nature of politics and the study of political science by America's foremost political scientist of the twentieth century.
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- Neiman, Max. *Defending Government: Why Big Government Works*. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 2000. A spirited defense of how big government can improve the lives of people.
- Putnam, Robert D. *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of the American Community*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001. An argument that Americans are increasingly disconnected from one another, harming the health of democracy.
- Roskin, Michael G. *Political Science: An Introduction*. 10th ed. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 2008. A text introduction to the basic theories and concepts of political science.

Suggested Websites

- American Political Science Association** www.apsanet.org
Association of college and university teachers advises students how to study political science.
- Council for Excellence in Government** www.excelgov.org
A Washington-based think tank, relatively unbiased, that regularly publishes polls and studies on key issues facing the nation.
- DefenseLink** www.defenselink.gov
Official site of the U.S. Department of Defense, with current news as well as links to Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine, and other defense agencies.
- Democracy Net** www.dnet.org
Democracy site of the League of Women Voters linking ZIP codes to your federal, state, and local representatives.

Freedom House www.freedomhouse.org

A think tank monitoring the ongoing evolution of global human rights and liberty; provides an annual world survey covering freedom's progress throughout the state system.

Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy www.utm.edu/research/iep/

At this site, you can find a concise description of social contract theory along with a discussion of John Locke's writing.

The King Center www.theKingCenter.com

Atlanta-based center commemorates the life and teachings of Martin Luther King, Jr.

National Endowment for Democracy www.ned.org

Private advocacy group for worldwide democracy and human rights.

New Rules Project www.newrules.org

An organization advocating local government solutions and "direct democracy," including the New England town meeting.

The Terrorism Research Center www.terrorism.com

News and information on terrorist attacks around the world and list of terrorist organizations.

U.S. Information Agency www.usinfo.state.gov/products/pubs/whatsdem

Official government site defining democracy, individual rights, and the culture of democracy.