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1 POLITICS: WHO GETS WHAT, AND HOW?

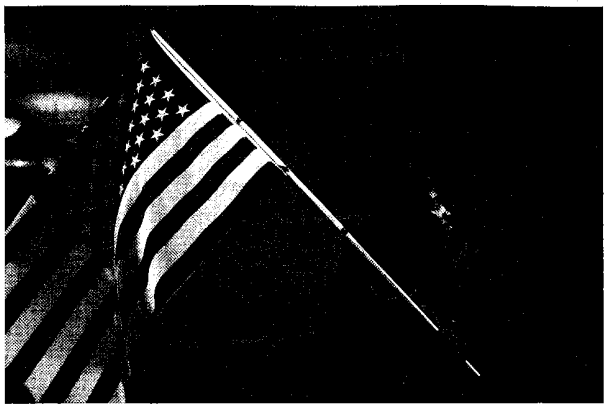
In Your Own Words

After you've read this chapter, you will be able to

- Describe the role that politics plays in determining how power and resources, including control of information, are distributed in a society.
- Compare how power is distributed between citizens and government in different economic and political systems.
- Explain the historical origins of American democracy.
- Describe the enduring tension in the United States between self-interested human nature and public-spirited government.
- Apply the five steps of critical thinking to this book's themes of power and citizenship in American politics.

What's at Stake . . . in "Hashtag Activism"?

LIKE SO MANY OTHERS, twenty-four-year-old Matthew Brandi heard the call through the Internet. "I actually decided to go protest after seeing online videos of protesters being arrested, with the caption, 'for each one they take away, two will replace them!'" He says, "It's like it was my duty to go. I owed it to the person who got arrested. They stepped up and got taken out, so someone had to replace them."[1] And so, on October 1, 2011, Matt and his friends marched across the Brooklyn Bridge to protest the growing income gap between the top 1 percent of income earners in this country and everyone else. The Occupy Wall Street movement claimed that economic inequality was the result of a rigged system, that politicians by themselves could not solve the problem because they were a central part of it. The protestors' rallying cry—"We are the 99%!"—was particularly attractive to young Americans, struggling in the difficult economy and frustrated with the status quo that seemed to enrich the few at the expense of the many. It was a message fired up and sustained via Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and other forms of electronic messaging.



Scott Olson/Getty Images

America, in Black and White

More than a year after Laquan McDonald, a black teenager, was shot to death by a white Chicago police officer, the city released video footage of the encounter, revealing that McDonald, armed only with a knife, was shot multiple times, from a distance of about 10 feet, by a single officer who had just arrived on the scene. Sensing an attempt to cover up the incident, demonstrators with Black Lives Matter converged on City Hall, calling for resignations from the mayor and the county state's attorney.

Like the Occupy movement and occurring at about the same time, the It Gets Better Project was fueled and spread by the Internet. Appalled by a number of highly publicized suicides by young lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender kids who were bullied at school and online, gay activist and writer Dan Savage (see *Profiles in Citizenship*) and his husband Terry Miller created a YouTube video to tell vulnerable kids that, despite the torment they were experiencing, their lives would indeed "get better" as they grew older. The video went viral and inspired others to record their stories of hope and encouragement. Eventually the It Gets Better Project grew to a collection of more than 50,000 videos made by celebrities, politicians, sports figures, and everyday people. The videos have surpassed 50 million views, the movement has spread to over thirteen countries, and in 2012 the project was recognized with a special Emmy Award for setting a "great example of strategically, creatively and powerfully utilizing the media to educate and inspire."[2]

The hashtag *#blacklivesmatter* took off on social media in 2012 as a protest after the acquittal of George Zimmerman, the self-appointed vigilante who killed Trayvon Martin, a young black man, in Florida. In 2014, when police killed Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, and Eric Garner in New York City, Black Lives Matter (BLM) organized street protests and demonstrations, which continued as other African Americans—including Tamir Rice, Sandra Bland, Freddie Gray, and Laquan McDonald—were killed by police or died in police custody. BLM activists embraced the concept of intersectionality—the idea that if you identified with more than one oppressed group (if you were black and female, black and gay or transgender, black and disabled, for instance), then your struggle was compounded and more likely to be unrecognized by the traditional limits and channels of the civil rights movement. By 2015, BLM members were meeting with Senator Bernie Sanders and former secretary of state Hillary Clinton and their presidential campaigns, pushing the candidates to take a stand on the idea that black lives matter in all respects and across all elements of society.

Young people have been notoriously uninvolved in politics, often seeing it as irrelevant to their lives and the things they really care about. Knowing that they pay little attention and tend not to vote in large numbers, politicians feel free to ignore their concerns, reinforcing their cynicism and apathy. Young people did turn out in 2008 and 2012 in larger-than-usual numbers, and they were excited by the 2016 presidential candidacy of Sanders, who emphasized many of the same themes as the Occupy movement. In the general election they supported Hillary Clinton over Donald Trump by 55 to 37 percent, but nearly 10 percent supported a third party candidate. Traditional political channels didn't seem as attractive to them, but the Internet opened up a whole new realm of political action.

The American founders weren't crazy about the idea of mass movements, political demonstrations, or even political parties, but they did value political engagement and they knew that democracies needed care and attention in order to survive. In 1787, when Benjamin Franklin was asked by a woman what he and other founders of the Constitution had created, he replied, "A republic, madam, if you can keep it." Today, many commentators worry that we are not "keeping the republic" and that, as new generations who find politics a turn-off become disaffected adults, the system will start to unravel. As one writer says, "a nation that hates politics will not long thrive as a democracy."[3]

Yet protesters like Matt Brandi, organizers like Dan Savage, and all the voices of Black Lives Matter sound as committed to democracy as Benjamin Franklin could have wished, even though their efforts are not focused on voting or traditional methods of political engagement. Is a nation of these young activists a nation in trouble, or can movements begun over an Internet even Benjamin Franklin could not have imagined help to keep the republic? What, exactly, is at stake in *hashtag activism*—what one writer called a "netroots outcry" to follow an online call to political action? We return to this question after we learn more about the meaning of politics and the difference it makes in our lives. «

HAVE you got grand ambitions for your life? Do you want a powerful position in business, influence in high places, money to make things happen? Perhaps you would like to make a difference in the world, heal the sick, fight for peace, feed the poor. Or maybe all you want from life is a good education; a well-paying job; a comfortable home; and a safe, prosperous, contented existence. Think politics has nothing to do with any of those things? Think again.

All the things that make those goals attainable—a strong national defense, student loans, economic prosperity, favorable mortgage rates, secure streets and neighborhoods, cheap and efficient public transportation, and family leave protections—are influenced by or are the products of politics.

Yet, if you listen to the news, politics may seem like one long campaign commercial: eternal bickering and finger-pointing by public servants who seem more interested in winning an argument against their ideological opponents than actually solving our collective problems. Way more often than not, political actors with the big bucks seem to have more influence over the process than those of us with normal bank accounts. Politics, which we would like to think of as a noble and even morally elevated activity, can take on all the worst characteristics of the business world, where we expect people to take advantage of each other and pursue their own private interests. Can this really be the heritage of Thomas Jefferson and Abraham Lincoln? Can this be the "world's greatest democracy" at work?

In this chapter we get to the heart of what politics is, how it relates to other concepts such as power, government, rules, economics, and citizenship. We propose that politics can best be understood as the struggle over who gets power and resources in society, and the fight to control the narrative, or story, that defines each contestant. Politics produces winners and losers, and much of the reason it can look so ugly is that people fight desperately to be the former, and to create and perpetuate narratives that celebrate their wins and put the best face possible on their losses. It can get pretty confusing for the average observer.

As we will see, it is the beauty of a democracy that *all* the people, including the everyday people like us, get to fight for what they want. Not everyone can win, of course, and many never come close. There is no denying that some people bring resources to the process that give them an edge, and that the rules give advantages to some groups of people over others.

politics who gets what, when, and how; a process of determining how power and resources are distributed in a society without recourse to violence

power the ability to get other people to do what you want

But the people who pay attention and who learn how the rules work can begin to use those rules to increase their chances of getting what they want, whether it is a lower personal tax bill, greater pollution controls, a more aggressive foreign policy, safer streets, a better-educated population, or more public parks. If they become very skilled citizens, they can even begin to change the rules so that they can fight more easily for the kind of society they think is important, and so that people like them have a greater chance to end up winners in the high-stakes game we call politics.

The government our founders created for us gives us a remarkable playing field on which to engage in that game. Like any other politicians, the designers of the American system were caught up in the struggle for power and resources, and in the desire to write laws that would maximize the chances that they, and people like them, would be winners in the new system. Nonetheless, they crafted a government impressive for its ability to generate compromise and stability, and also for its potential to realize freedom and prosperity for its citizens.

WHAT IS POLITICS?

A peaceful means of determining who gets power and influence in society

Over two thousand years ago, the Greek philosopher Aristotle said that we are political animals, and political animals we seem destined to remain. The truth is that politics is a fundamental and complex human activity. In some ways it is our capacity to be political—to cooperate, bargain, and compromise—that helps distinguish us from all the other animals out there. Politics may have its baser moments, but it also allows us to reach more exalted heights than we could ever achieve alone, from dedicating a new public library or building a national highway system, to curing deadly diseases or exploring the stars.

Since this book is about politics, in all its glory as well as its dishonor, we need to begin with a clear definition. One of the most famous definitions, put forth by the well-known political scientist Harold Lasswell, is still one of the best, and we use it to frame our discussion throughout this book. Lasswell defined **politics** as "who gets what when and how."[4] Politics is a way of determining, without recourse to violence, who gets power and resources in society, and how they get them. **Power** is the ability to get other people to do what you want them to do. The resources in question here might be government jobs, tax revenues, laws that help you get your way, or public policies that work to your advantage. A major political resource that helps people to gain and maintain power is the ability to control the channels through which



Water Under the Bridge

Political parties and their leaders frequently clash on issues and ideology—but when politics is out of the picture, the nature of the game can change. President Barack Obama and former House Speaker John Boehner lampooned their retirement from public life in a viral video for the White House Correspondents' Dinner in 2016.

White House

people get information about politics. These days we live in a world of so many complex information networks that sorting out and keeping track of what is actually happening around us is a task in itself. Anyone who can influence the stories that are told has a big advantage.

Politics provides a process through which we can try to arrange our collective lives in some kind of **social order** so that we can live without crashing into each other at every turn, and to provide ourselves with goods and services we could not obtain alone. But politics is also about getting our own way. Our way may be a noble goal for society or pure self-interest, but the struggle we engage in is a political struggle. Because politics is about power and other scarce resources, there will always be winners and losers in politics. If we could always get our own way, politics would disappear. It is because we cannot always get what we want that politics exists.

Our capacity to be political gives us tools with which to settle disputes about the social order and to allocate scarce resources. The tools of politics are compromise and cooperation; discussion and debate; deal making, horse trading, bargaining, storytelling; even, sometimes, bribery and deceit. We use those tools to agree on the principles that should guide our handling of power and other scarce resources and to live our collective lives according to those principles. Because there are many potential theories about how to manage power—who should have it, how it should be used, how it should be transferred—agreement on those principles can break down. What is key about the tools of politics is that they do not include violence. When people resort to armed confrontation to solve their differences—when they drop bombs, blow themselves up, or fly airplanes into buildings—it means that they have tried to impose their ideas about the social order through nonpolitical means. That may be because the channels of politics have failed, because they cannot agree on basic principles, because they don't share a common understanding and trust over what counts as bargaining and negotiation and so cannot craft compromises, because they are unwilling to compromise, or because they don't really care about deal making at all—they just want to impose their will or make a point. The threat of violence may be a political tool used as leverage to get a deal, but when violence is employed, politics has broken down. Indeed, the human history of warfare attests to the fragility of political life.

It is easy to imagine what a world without politics would be like. There would be no resolution or compromise between conflicting interests, because those are certainly political activities. There would be no agreements struck, bargains made, or alliances formed. Unless there were enough of every valued resource to go around, or unless the world were big enough that we could live our lives without coming into contact with other human beings, life would be constant conflict—what the philosopher Thomas Hobbes called in the seventeenth century a "war of all against all." Individuals, unable to cooperate with one another (because cooperation is essentially political), would have no option but to resort to brute force to settle disputes and allocate resources. Politics is essential to our living a civilized life.

POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT

Although the words *politics* and *government* are sometimes used interchangeably, they refer to different things. Politics, we know, is a process or an activity through which power and resources are gained and lost. **Government**, by contrast, is a system or organization for exercising authority over a body of people.

social order the way we organize and live our collective lives

government a system or organization for exercising authority over a body of people

American politics is what happens in the halls of Congress, on the campaign trail, at Washington cocktail parties, and in neighborhood association meetings. It is the making of promises, deals, and laws. American government is the Constitution and the institutions set up by the Constitution for the exercise of authority by the American people, over the American people.

Authority is power that citizens view as **legitimate**, or "right"—power to which we have given our implicit consent. You can think of it this way: as children, we probably did as our parents told us, or submitted to their punishment if we didn't, because we recognized their authority over us. As we became adults, we started to claim that our parents had less authority over us, that we could do what we wanted. We no longer saw their power as wholly legitimate or appropriate. Governments exercise authority because people recognize them as legitimate even if they often do not like doing what they are told (paying taxes, for instance). When governments cease to be regarded as legitimate, the result may be revolution or civil war, unless the state is powerful enough to suppress all opposition.

RULES AND INSTITUTIONS

Government is shaped by the process of politics, but it in turn provides the rules and institutions that shape the way politics continues to operate. The rules and institutions of government have a profound effect on how power is distributed and who wins and who loses in the political arena. Life is different for people in other countries not only because they speak different languages and eat different foods but also because their governments establish rules that cause life to be lived in different ways.

Rules can be thought of as the *how* in the definition "who gets what . . . and how." They are directives that determine how resources are allocated and how collective action takes place—that is, they determine how we try to get the things we want. The point of the rules is to provide some framework for us to solve without violence the problems that our collective lives generate.

Because the rules we choose can influence which people will get what they want most often, understanding the rules is crucial to understanding politics. Consider for a moment the impact a change of rules would have on the outcome of the sport of basketball, for instance. What if the average height of the players could be no more than 5'10"? What if the baskets were lowered? What if foul shots counted for two points rather than one? Basketball would be a very different game, and the teams recruited would look quite unlike the teams for which we now cheer. So it is with governments and politics: change the people who are allowed to vote or the length of time a person can serve in office, and the political process and the potential winners and losers change drastically.

authority power that is recognized as legitimate, or right

legitimate accepted as "right" or proper

rules directives that specify how resources will be distributed or what procedures govern collective activity

institutions organizations in which government power is exercised

political narrative persuasive story about the nature of power, who should have it and how it should be used

We can think of **institutions** as the *where* of the political struggle, though Lasswell didn't include a "where" in his definition. They are the organizations where government power is exercised. In the United States, our rules provide for the institutions of a representative democracy—that is, rule by the elected representatives of the people, and for a federal political system. Our Constitution lays the foundation for the institutions of Congress, the presidency, the courts, and the bureaucracy as a stage on which the drama of politics plays itself out. Other systems might call for different institutions—perhaps an all-powerful parliament, or a monarch, or even a committee of rulers.

These complicated systems of rules and institutions do not appear out of thin air. They are carefully designed by the founders of different systems to create the kinds of society they think will be stable and prosperous, but also where people like themselves are likely to be winners. Remember that not only the rules but also the institutions we choose influence who most easily and most often get their own way.

POWER AND INFORMATION

These days we take for granted the ease with which we can communicate ideas to others all over the globe. Just a hundred years ago, radio was state of the art and television had yet to be invented. Today many of us carry access to a world of information and instant communication in our pockets. Control of political information has always been a crucial resource when it comes to making and upholding a claim that one should be able to tell other people how to live their lives, but it used to be a power reserved for a few. Creation and dissemination of **political narratives**—the stories that people believe about who has power, who wants power, who deserves power, and what someone has done to get and maintain power—were the prerogative of authoritative sources like priests, kings, and their agents.

Before the seventeenth-century era known as the Enlightenment, individuals—most unable to read or write—had

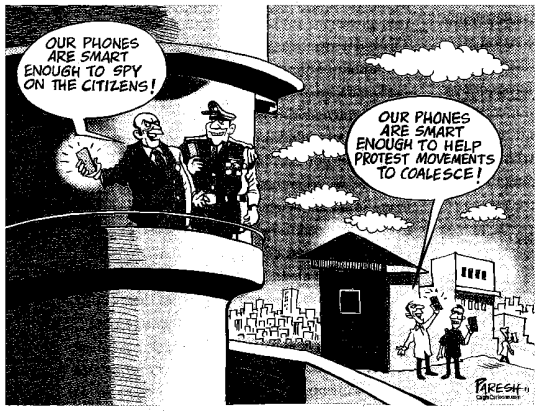
no way to decide for themselves if power was legitimate. There may have been competing narratives about who had claims to power, but they were not that hard to figure out. People's allegiance to power was based on tribal loyalties, religious faith, or conquest. Governments were legitimate through the authority of God or the sword, and that was that.

Even when those theories of legitimacy changed, information was still easily controlled because literacy rates were low and horses and wind determined the speed of communication until the advent of steam engines and radios. Early newspapers were read aloud, shared, and re-shared, and a good deal of the news of the day was delivered from the pulpit. As we will see when we discuss the American founding, there were lively debates about whether independence was a good idea and what kind of political system should replace our colonial power structure, but by the time information reached citizens, it had been largely processed and filtered by those higher up the power ladder. Even the American rebels were elite and powerful men who could control their own narratives. Remember the importance of this when we read the story behind the Declaration of Independence in Chapter 3.

In today's world, governed by instant communication and 24/7 access to news from any source we opt to follow, the only filters on the information we get are ones we choose. We may not choose them knowingly, but if that is the case, then we have only ourselves to blame for not exercising due diligence. It is now possible to self-select the information we like or want to get by following only sources that reinforce our own views, and by "liking" people in social networks who repeat those views. As a result, it is easy to find ourselves living in a closed **information bubble**, where all the information we receive reinforces what we already think and no new ideas get in to challenge what we think we know. Living in an information bubble is a way to deal with the abundance of information out there without the anxiety that dealing with multiple sources and figuring out the right answers on our own may give us. A lot of people with a lot of money and power would prefer that people stay tucked neatly inside their bubbles, buying the narratives they are fed by the rich and powerful as people have done through history simply because their information options were limited.

However, the old adage that knowledge is power is true, and, although we may opt to abdicate our power by remaining in a cozy bubble, the digital age also allows us to grab some narrative-telling power of our own with the use of a little critical thinking (see *Don't Be Fooled by . . . Your Own Information Bubble*). The Occupy, It Gets Better, and Black Lives Matter movements we discussed in the chapter opener are excellent examples of citizens seizing the initiative and using available communication resources to change or create their own narratives to compete with those of the powerful. Like those activists, we can read many sources, compare them, fact-check them, think critically about them, and figure out what is really going on in the political world around us. We can publish our conclusions in a variety of ways and, if what we say is compelling, we can influence those around us and develop a following. Many major electronic news sources today were started by people with few or no resources. The Internet and social media give all of us a megaphone if we choose to use it.

The power and information equation is much more complicated today than it used to be. Sophisticated communication gives those with resources many more ways to control information, but as we saw in *What's at Stake . . . ?*, it also gives those without any resources at all the opportunity to fight back. We will pay close attention to this anomaly throughout this book and emphasize critical thinking as a key way for people to take back power from those who would like to monopolize it.



PARESH NATH, THE KHALEEJ TIMES, UAE via Cagle Cartoons

POLITICS AND ECONOMICS

Whereas politics is concerned with the distribution of power and resources in society, **economics** is concerned specifically with the production and distribution of society's wealth—material goods such as bread, toothpaste, and housing, and services such as medical care, education, and entertainment. Because both politics and economics focus on the distribution of society's resources, political and economic questions often get confused in contemporary life. Questions about how to pay for government, about government's role in the economy, and about whether government or the private sector should provide certain services have political and economic dimensions. Because there are no clear-cut distinctions here, it can be difficult to keep these terms straight.

The sources of the words *politics* and *economics* suggest that their meanings were once more distinct than they are today. The Greek source of the word *political* was *polis*, or "city-state," the basic political unit of ancient Greece. For the free male citizens of the city-state of Athens (by no means the majority of the inhabitants), politics was a prestigious and jealously restricted

information bubble a closed cycle in which all the information we get reinforces the information we already have, solidifying our beliefs without reference to outside reality checks

economics production and distribution of a society's material resources and services



DON'T BE FOOLED BY . . .

Your Own Information Bubble

Technologies that enable citizens to connect with one another, to engage in lively debate, and to organize for common purposes hold great promise for democracy. The power to communicate on a massive scale was once held only by governments and those with access to print or broadcast media outlets, but today it is in the hands of anyone who has access to a cell phone. As every superhero learns quickly, along with great power comes great responsibility. There is no guarantee that what you learn through social media is true, and if you are sharing information that isn't reality-based, you are helping to perpetuate a false narrative.

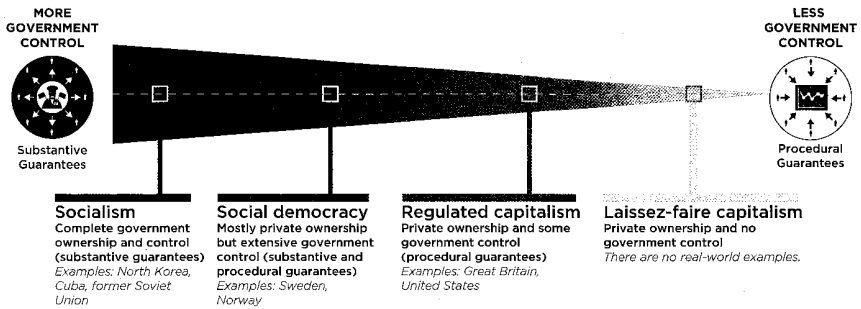
In addition, your social media feeds and even your browser are working against you, ensuring that the news that comes your way is tailored to your interests and preconceptions, creating what one observer calls a filter bubble.[5] Whether your news feed is custom made or crowd sourced, always look before you "like" since social media algorithms can channel information to you that reinforces the narrative you get about "who gets what and how" in today's political world.

What to Watch Out For

- **Don't create your own echo chamber.** Social networking sites and other tools make it easy to create your own custom news channel, ensuring that you see stories from sources you like, about subjects that interest you. Important stories can easily slip past you, and your understanding of political matters will suffer. But if you follow only the political sources you like, that will get you in trouble, too. So open yourself up to alternative sources of news and opinions that you might find offensive or wrong. If what's showing up in your news feed does not challenge your ideas and beliefs from time to time, consider whether you've been censoring news that you don't like. Make sure you're getting all sides of the story, not just the one that you want to hear.[6]
- **Don't trust your browser.** It's not just your self-selected social media feeds that are shaping your information diet: every link you click and word you search is fed into complex algorithms that tailor your results into a custom feed of "things you might like." Just as Amazon knows what items to suggest on your personal Amazon front page based on your browsing and purchase history, your Google results are similarly parsed and packaged for your viewing pleasure. Two people searching on a particular topic will get very different results.[7] Search around—don't just click on the first links offered to you.
- **Separate truth from truthiness.** Some of the most compelling (and viral) political material on the Internet comes from people who are intent on selling you on their narrative. Their arguments may be valid, and their evidence may be strong—but bear in mind that an opinion piece is different from a statement of fact. Take care to seek out news sources that strive for objectivity and don't have an ax to grind (such as the Associated Press or the news pages of the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, or Politico) alongside those that offer analysis and argument.
- **Don't be complacent about conventional news sources.** While you are watching your social networks and second-guessing Google algorithms, don't neglect old-fashioned news sources. If you watch television news, make a point of changing the channel often, especially if one of the stations has an ideological agenda like Fox or MSNBC. Ditto on the radio shows and late night comedy. In fact, try to have political discussions with different groups of people too. The more sources you use to gather information, the harder it will be for you to lose touch with political reality.

FIGURE 1.1

A Comparison of Economic Systems



Economic systems are defined largely by the degree to which government owns the means by which material resources are produced (for example, factories and industry) and controls economic decision making. On a scale ranging from socialism—complete government ownership and control of the economy (on the left)—to laissez-faire capitalism—complete individual ownership and control of the economy (on the right)—social democracies would be located in the center. These hybrid systems are characterized by mostly private ownership of the means of production but considerable government control over economic decisions.

activity. However, the public, political world of Athens was possible only because a whole class of people (slaves and women) existed to support the private world, the *oikonomia*, or "household." This early division of the world into the political and the economic clearly separated the two realms. Political life was public, and economic life was private. Today that distinction is not nearly so simple. What is public and private now depends on what is controlled by government. The various forms of possible economic systems are shown in Figure 1.1.

CAPITALISM In a pure **capitalist economy**, all the means used to produce material resources (industry, business, and land, for instance) are owned privately, and decisions about production and distribution are left to individuals operating through the free-market process. Capitalist economies rely on the market—the process of supply and demand—to decide how much of a given item to produce or how much to charge for it. In capitalist countries, people do not believe that the government is capable of making such judgments (like how much toothpaste to produce), and they want to keep such decisions out of the hands of government and in the hands of individuals who they believe know best about what they want. The philosophy that corresponds with this belief is called **laissez-faire capitalism**, from a French term that, loosely translated, means "let people do as they wish." The government has no economic role at all in such a system. However, no economic system today maintains a purely unregulated form of capitalism, with the government completely uninvolved.

Like most other countries today, the United States has a system of **regulated capitalism**. It maintains a capitalist economy and individual freedom from government interference remains the norm, but it allows government to step in and regulate the economy to guarantee individual rights and to provide **procedural guarantees** that the rules will work smoothly and fairly. Although in theory the market ought to provide everything that people need and want, and should regulate itself as well, sometimes the market breaks down, or fails. In regulated capitalism, the government steps in to try to fix it.

Markets have cycles, with periods of growth often followed by periods of slowdown or recession. Individuals and businesses look to government for protection from these cyclical effects. For example, President Franklin D. Roosevelt created the Works Progress Administration to get Americans back to work during the Great Depression, and more recently, Congress acted to stabilize the economy in the wake of the financial collapse caused by the subprime mortgage crisis in the fall of 2008. Government may also act to ensure the safety of the consumer public and of working people, or to encourage fair business practices (like prevention of monopolies), or to provide goods and services that people have no incentive to produce themselves.

capitalist economy an economic system in which the market determines production, distribution, and price decisions, and property is privately owned

laissez-faire capitalism an economic system in which the market makes all decisions and the government plays no role

regulated capitalism a market system in which the government intervenes to protect rights and make procedural guarantees

procedural guarantees government assurance that the rules will work smoothly and treat everyone fairly, with no promise of particular outcomes

Highways, streetlights, libraries, museums, schools, Social Security, national defense, and a clean environment are some examples of the goods and services that many people are unable or unwilling to produce privately. Consequently, government undertakes to provide these things (with money provided by taxpayers) and, in doing so, becomes not only a political actor but an economic actor as well. To the extent that government gets involved in a capitalist economy, we move away from laissez-faire to regulated capitalism.



Building a Better Rocket?

SpaceX, headed by Tesla Motors CEO Elon Musk, is a private company that develops launch vehicles and spacecraft, including the Dragon unmanned shuttle that has been delivering cargo to the International Space Station since 2012. Capitalism enables ambitious entrepreneurs like Musk, but technological advances like space travel would not be possible (or profitable) without the years—and billions of dollars—of previous government investment in space technology.

Patrick T. Fallon/Bloomberg via Getty Images

SOCIALISM In a **socialist economy** like that of the former Soviet Union (based loosely on the ideas of German economist Karl Marx), economic decisions are made not by individuals through the market but rather by politicians, based on their judgment of what society needs. Rather than allowing the market to determine the proper distribution of material resources, politicians decide what the distribution ought to be and then create economic policy to bring about that outcome. In other words, they emphasize not procedural guarantees of fair rules and process, but rather **substantive guarantees** of what they believe to be fair outcomes.

According to the basic values of a socialist or communist system (although the two systems have some theoretical differences, for our purposes they are similar), it is unjust for some people to own more property than others and to have power over them because of it. Consequently, the theory goes, the state or society—not corporations or individuals—should own the property (like land, factories, and corporations). In such systems, the public and private spheres overlap, and politics controls the distribution of all resources. The societies that have tried to put these theories into practice have ended up with very repressive political systems, but Marx hoped that eventually socialism would evolve to a point where each individual had control over his or her own life—a radical form of democracy.

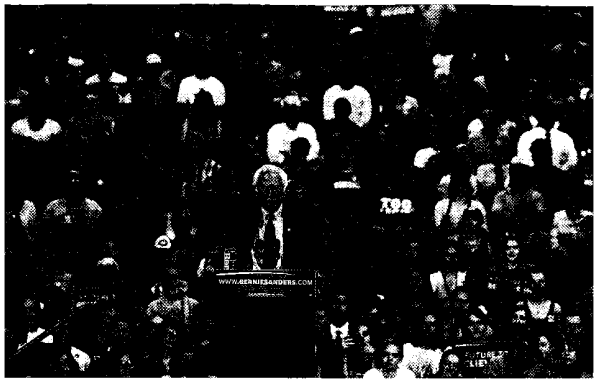
socialist economy an economic system in which the state determines production, distribution, and price decisions, and property is government owned

substantive guarantees government assurance of particular outcomes or results

social democracy a hybrid system combining a capitalist economy and a government that supports equality

Many theories hold that socialism is possible only after a revolution that thoroughly overthrows the old system to make way for new values and institutions. This is what happened in Russia in 1917 and in China in the 1940s. Since the socialist economies of the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe have fallen apart, socialism has been left with few supporters, although some nations, such as China, North Korea, and Cuba, still claim allegiance to it. Even China, however, introduced market-based reforms in the 1970s and in 2015 ranked as the world's second largest economy, after the United States.

SOCIAL DEMOCRACY Some countries in Western Europe, especially the Scandinavian nations of Norway, Denmark, and Sweden, have developed hybrid economic systems. As noted in Figure 1.1, these systems represent something of a middle ground between socialist and capitalist systems. Primarily capitalist, in that they believe most property can be held privately, proponents of **social democracy** argue nonetheless that the values of equality promoted by socialism are attractive and can be brought about by democratic reform rather than revolution. Believing that the economy does not have to be owned by the state for its effects to be controlled by the state, social democratic countries attempt to strike a difficult balance between providing substantive guarantees of fair outcomes and procedural guarantees of fair rules.



Ty Wright/Bloomberg via Getty Images

Bern, Baby, Bern

During the 2016 presidential primaries, Democratic Party outsider Bernie Sanders (who joined the party only a year or so before seeking its nomination) captured the imaginations of young voters with his advocacy of what he called "democratic socialism." But the embrace of any kind of "socialism" proved too alien for Americans for whom capitalism defines the ideal and he lost the nomination to Hillary Clinton.

Since World War II, the citizens of many Western European nations have elected social democrats to office, where they have enacted policies to bring about more equality—for instance, the elimination of poverty and unemployment, better housing, and adequate health care for all. Even where social democratic governments are voted out of office, such programs have proved so popular that it is often difficult for new leaders to alter them. Few people in the United States would identify themselves with social democratic values, as presidential candidate Bernie Sanders found out in 2016, although his campaign did help people understand that some versions of socialism did not require a wholesale elimination of capitalism and many of his proposals found their way into the Democratic Party platform.

In Your Own Words Describe the role that politics plays in determining how power and resources, including control of information, are distributed in a society.

POLITICAL SYSTEMS AND THE CONCEPT OF CITIZENSHIP

Competing ideas about power and the social order, different models of governing

Just as there are different kinds of economic systems, there are many sorts of political systems, based on competing ideas about who should have power and what the social order should be—that is, how much public regulation there should be over individual behavior. For our purposes, we can divide political systems into two types: those in which the government has the power to impose a particular social order, deciding how individuals ought to behave, and those in which individuals exercise personal power over most of their own behavior and ultimately over government as well. These two types of systems are not just different in a theoretical sense. The differences have very real implications for the people who live in them. Thus the notion of citizenship (or the lack of it) is tied closely to the kind of political system a nation has.

Figure 1.2 offers a comparison of these systems. One type of system, called authoritarian government, potentially has total power over its subjects; the other type, nonauthoritarian government, permits citizens to limit the state's power by claiming rights that the government must protect. Another way to think about the distinction is that, in authoritarian systems, government makes substantive decisions about how people ought to live their lives; in nonauthoritarian systems, government merely guarantees that there are fair rules and leaves the rest to individual control. Sometimes governments that exercise substantive decision making in the economic realm also do so with respect to the social order. But, as Figure 1.3 shows, there are several possible combinations of economic and political systems.

AUTHORITARIAN SYSTEMS

Authoritarian governments give ultimate power to the state rather than to the people to decide how they ought to live their lives. By "authoritarian governments," we usually mean those in which the people cannot effectively claim rights against the state; where the state chooses to exercise its power, the people have no choice but to submit to its will.

authoritarian governments systems in which the state holds all power over the social order

totalitarian a system in which absolute power is exercised over every aspect of life

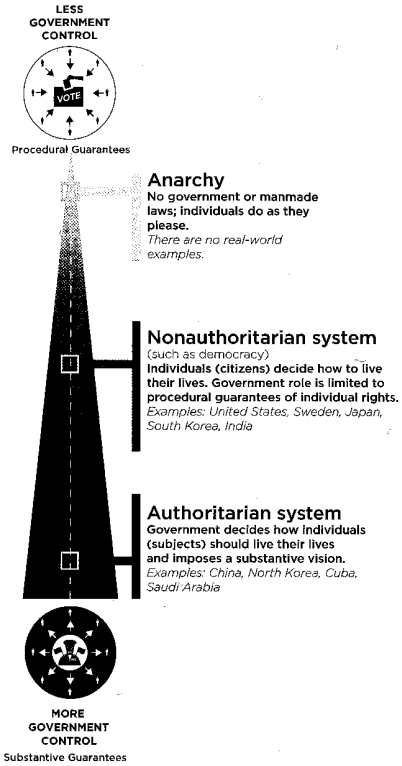
authoritarian capitalism a system in which the state allows people economic freedom but maintains stringent social regulations to limit noneconomic behavior

anarchy the absence of government and law

democracy government that vests power in the people

FIGURE 1.2

A Comparison of Political Systems



Political systems are defined by the extent to which individual citizens or governments decide what the social order should look like—that is, how people should live their collective, noneconomic lives. Except for anarchies, every system allots a role to government to regulate individual behavior—for example, to prohibit murder, rape, and theft. But beyond such basic regulation, they differ radically on who gets to determine how individuals live their lives, and whether government's role is simply to provide procedural guarantees that protect individuals' rights to make their own decisions or to provide a much more substantive view of how individuals should behave.

Authoritarian governments can take various forms: sovereignty can be vested in an individual (dictatorship or monarchy), in God (theocracy), in the state itself (fascism), or in a ruling class (oligarchy). When a system combines an authoritarian government with a socialist economy, we say that the system is **totalitarian.** As in the earlier example of the former Soviet Union, a totalitarian system exercises its power over every part of society—economic, social, political, and moral—leaving little or no private realm for individuals.

But an authoritarian state may also limit its own power. In such cases, it may deny individuals rights in those spheres where it chooses to act, but it may leave large areas of society, such as a capitalist economy, free from government interference. Singapore is an example of this type of **authoritarian capitalism,** where people have considerable economic freedom but stringent social regulations limit their noneconomic behavior. When American teenager Michael Fay was caught vandalizing cars in Singapore in 1994, the government there sentenced him to be caned. In the United States, people have rights that prevent cruel and unusual punishment like caning, but in Singapore, Fay had no such rights and had to submit to the government's will despite the vocal opposition of those in his home country.

Authoritarian governments often pay lip service to the people, but when push comes to shove, as it usually does in such states, the people have no effective power against the government. Again, to use the terminology we introduced earlier, government does not provide guarantees of fair processes for individuals; it guarantees a substantive vision of what life will be like—what individuals will believe, how they will act, what they will choose.

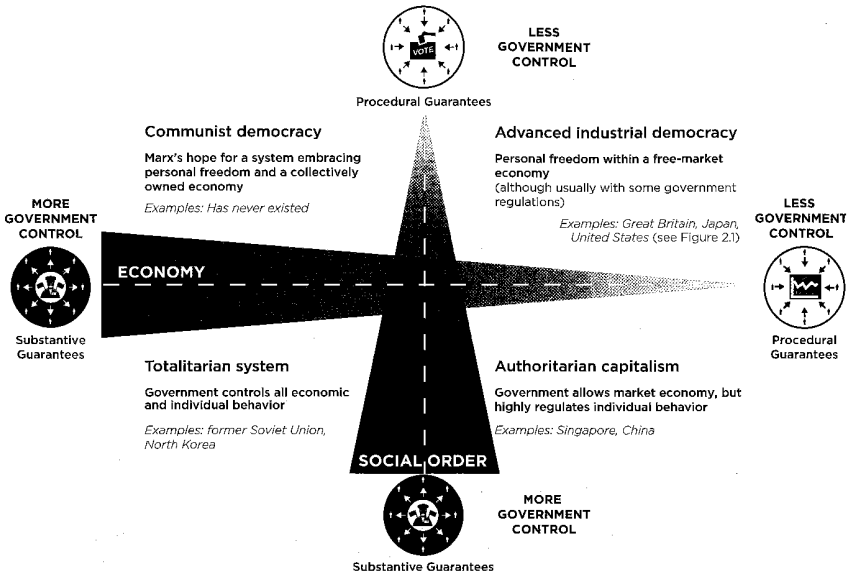
NONAUTHORITARIAN SYSTEMS

In nonauthoritarian systems, ultimate power rests with individuals to make decisions concerning their lives. The most extreme form of nonauthoritarianism is called **anarchy.** Anarchists would do away with government and laws altogether. People advocate anarchy because they value the freedom to do whatever they want more than they value the order and security that governments provide by forbidding or regulating certain kinds of behavior. Few people are true anarchists, however. Anarchy may sound attractive in theory, but the inherent difficulties of the position make it hard to practice. For instance, how could you even organize a revolution to get rid of government without some rules about who is to do what and how decisions are to be made?

DEMOCRACY A less extreme form of nonauthoritarian government, and one much more familiar to us, is **democracy** (from the Greek *demos*, meaning "people"). In democracies, government is not external to the people, as it is

FIGURE 1.3

Political and Economic Systems



Political systems work in conjunction with economic systems, but government control over the economy does not necessarily translate into tight control over the social order. We have identified four possible combinations of these systems, signified by the labeled points in each quadrant. These points are approximate, however, and some nations cannot be classified so easily. Sweden is an advanced industrial democracy by most measures, for instance, but because of its commitment to substantive economic values, it would be located much closer to the vertical axis.

in authoritarian systems; in a fundamental sense, government *is* the people. Recognizing that collective life usually calls for some restrictions on what individuals may do (laws forbidding murder, for instance, or theft), democracies nevertheless try to maximize freedom for the individuals who live under them. Although they generally make decisions through some sort of majority rule, democracies still provide procedural guarantees to preserve individual rights—usually protections of due process and minority rights. This means that if individuals living in a democracy feel their rights have been violated, they have the right to ask government to remedy the situation.

Democracies are based on the principle of **popular sovereignty**; that is, there is no power higher than the people and, in the United States, the document establishing their authority, the Constitution. The central idea here is that no government is considered legitimate unless the governed consent to it, and people are not truly free unless they live under a law of their own making.

TYPES OF DEMOCRACY Generally, as we indicated, democracies hold that the will of the majority should prevail. This is misleadingly simple, however. Some theories of democracy hold that all the people should agree on political decisions. This rule of unanimity makes decision making very slow, and sometimes impossible, since everyone has to be persuaded to agree. Even when majority rule is the norm, there are many ways of calculating the majority. Is it 50 percent plus one? Two-thirds? Three-fourths? Decision making becomes increasingly difficult as the number of people who are required to agree grows. And, of course, majority rule brings with it the problem of minority rights. If the majority gets its way, what happens to the rights of those who disagree?

popular sovereignty the concept that the citizens are the ultimate source of political power

Philosophers who study democracy have tried to grapple with these problems in various ways, none of them entirely satisfactory to all people.

- Theorists of *elite democracy* propose that democracy is merely a system of choosing among competing leaders; for the average citizen, input ends after the leader is chosen.[8] In this view, elections are merely symbolic—to perpetuate the illusion that citizens have consented to their government.
- Advocates of *pluralist democracy* argue that what is important is not so much individual participation but rather membership in groups that participate in government decision making on their members' behalf.[9] As a way of trying to influence a system that gives them a limited voice, citizens join groups of people with whom they share an interest, such as labor unions, professional associations, and environmental or business groups.
- Supporters of *participatory democracy* claim that individuals have the right to control *all* the circumstances of their lives, and direct democratic participation should take place not only in government but in industry, education, and community affairs as well.[10] For advocates of this view, democracy is more than a way to make decisions: it is a way of life, an end in itself. These theories about how democracy should (or does) work locate the focus of power in individuals, groups, and elites. Real-world examples of democracy probably include elements of more than one of these theories; they are not mutually exclusive.

The people of many Western countries have found the idea of democracy persuasive enough to found their governments on it. In recent years, especially since the mid-1980s, democracy has been spreading rapidly through the rest of the world as the preferred form of government. No longer the primary province of industrialized Western nations, attempts at democratic governance now extend into Asia, Latin America, Africa, Eastern Europe, and the republics of the former Soviet Union. There are many varieties of democracy other than our own. Some democracies make the legislature (the representatives of the people) the most important authority; some retain a monarch with limited powers; and some hold referenda at the national level to get direct feedback on how the people want them to act on specific issues.

Most democratic forms of government, because of their commitment to procedural values, practice a capitalist form of economics. Fledgling democracies may rely on a high degree of government economic regulation, but **advanced industrial democracies** combine a considerable amount of personal freedom with a free-market (though still usually regulated) economy. It is rare to find a country that is truly committed to individual political freedom that also tries to regulate the economy heavily. The philosopher Karl Marx believed that radical democracy would coexist with communally owned property, in a form of **communist democracy**, but such a system has never existed, and most real-world systems fall somewhere along the horizontal continuum shown in Figure 1.3.

advanced industrial democracy a system in which a democratic government allows citizens a considerable amount of personal freedom and maintains a free-market (though still usually regulated) economy

communist democracy a utopian system in which property is communally owned and all decisions are made democratically

subjects individuals who are obliged to submit to a government authority against which they have no rights

citizens members of a political community with both rights and responsibilities

THE ROLE OF THE PEOPLE

What is important about the political and economic systems we have been sorting out here is that they have direct impact on the lives of the people who live in them. So far we have given a good deal of attention to the latter parts of Lasswell's definition of politics. But easily as important as the *what* and the *how* in Lasswell's formulation is the *who*. Underlying the different political theories we have looked at are fundamental differences in the powers and opportunities possessed by everyday people.

THE PEOPLE AS SUBJECTS In authoritarian systems, the people are **subjects** of their government. They possess no rights that protect them from that government; they must do whatever the government says or face the consequences, without any other recourse. They have obligations to the state but no rights or privileges to offset those obligations. They may be winners or losers in government decisions, but they have very little control over which it may be.

THE PEOPLE AS CITIZENS Everyday people in democratic systems have a potentially powerful role to play. They are more than mere subjects; they are **citizens**, or members of a political community with rights as well as obligations. Democratic theory says that power is drawn from the

people, that the people are sovereign, that they must consent to be governed, and that their government must respond to their will. In practical terms, this may not seem to mean much, since not consenting doesn't necessarily give us the right to disobey government. It does give us the option of leaving, however, and seeking a more congenial set of rules elsewhere.

Theoretically, democracies are ruled by "the people," but different democracies have at times been very selective about whom they count as citizens. Beginning with our days as colonists, Americans have excluded many groups of people from citizenship: people of the "wrong" religion, income bracket, race, ethnic group, lifestyle, and gender have all been excluded from enjoying the full rights of colonial or U.S. citizenship at different times. In fact, American history is the story of those various groups fighting to be included as citizens. Just because a system is called a democracy is no guarantee that all or even most of its residents possess the status of citizen.

In democratic systems, the rules of government can provide for all sorts of different roles for those they designate as citizens. At a minimum, citizens possess certain rights, or powers to act, that government cannot limit. Just what these rights are varies in different democracies, but they usually include freedoms of speech and the press, the right to assemble, and certain legal protections guaranteeing fair treatment in the criminal justice system. Almost all of these rights are designed to allow citizens to criticize their government openly without threat of retribution by that government—in essence to retain some of that power over the narrative that we discussed earlier. Citizens can usually vote in periodic and free elections. They may be able to run for office, subject to certain conditions, like age or residence. They can support candidates for office, organize political groups or parties, attend meetings, write letters to officials or the press, march in protest or support of various causes, even speak out on street corners. As we noted, increasingly, citizens can vocalize their views and disseminate them electronically, through social networks, blogs, and self-published work.

Citizens of democracies also possess obligations or responsibilities to the public realm. They have the obligation to obey the law, for instance, once they have consented to the government (even if that consent amounts only to not leaving); they may also have the obligation to pay taxes, serve in the military, or sit on juries. Some theorists argue that truly virtuous citizens should put community interests ahead of personal interests. A less extreme version of this view holds that while citizens may go about their own business and pursue their own interests, they must continue to pay attention to their government, following the news to keep a critical eye on their elected officials. There is nothing automatic about democracy. Participating in government decision-making processes is the price of maintaining their own liberty and, by extension, the liberty of the whole.

In Your Own Words Compare how power is distributed between citizens and government. Different economic and political systems.

ORIGINS OF DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA

From divine right to social contract

Government in the United States is the product of particular decisions the founders made about the who, what, and how of American politics. There was nothing inevitable about those decisions, and had the founders decided otherwise, our system would look very different indeed.

Given the world in which the founders lived, democracy was not an obvious choice for them, and many scholars argue that in some respects the system they created is not really very democratic. We can see this more clearly if we understand the intellectual heritage of the early Americans, their historical experience, and the theories about government that informed them.

EUROPEAN SOURCES OF DEMOCRATIC THOUGHT AND PRACTICE

The heyday of democracy, of course, was ancient Athens, from about 500 to 300 BCE. Even Athenian democracy, as we have already indicated, was a pretty selective business. To be sure, it was rule by "the people," but "the people" was defined narrowly to exclude women, slaves, youth, and resident aliens. Athenian democracy was not built on values of equality, even of opportunity, except for the 10 percent of the population defined as citizens. We can see parallels here to early American democracy, which restricted participation in political affairs to a relatively small number of white men.

Limited as Athenian democracy was, it was positively wide open compared to most of the forms of government that existed during the Middle Ages, from roughly AD 600 to 1500. During this period, monarchs gradually consolidated their power over their subjects, and some even challenged the greatest political power of the time, the Catholic Church. As we mentioned earlier, some earthly rulers claimed to take their authority from God, in a principle called the **divine right of kings**. Privileged groups in society, like the clergy or the nobles, had some rights, but ordinary individuals were quite powerless politically. Subjects of authoritarian governments and an authoritarian church, they had obligations to their rulers but no rights they could claim as their own.

divine right of kings the principle that earthly rulers receive their authority from God

That changed between 1500 and 1700, when important changes took place in the ways that people thought about politics and their political leaders. The Protestant Reformation led the way in the 1500s, claiming essentially that individuals could pray directly to God and receive salvation on faith alone, without the church's involvement. The ideas of Martin Luther, the German priest who spearheaded the Reformation, spread and were embraced by a number of European monarchs, leading to a split between Catholic and Protestant countries. Where the church was seen as unnecessary, it lost political as well as religious clout, and its decline paved the way for new ideas about the world. Those new ideas came with the *Enlightenment* period of the late 1600s and 1700s, when ideas about science and the possibilities of knowledge began to blow away the shadows and cobwebs of medieval superstition. Enlightenment philosophy said that human beings were not at the mercy of a world they could not understand, but rather, as rational human beings, they could learn the secrets of nature and harness the world to do their bidding.



Hesham Fathy/Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

Democracy Is Messy
The "Arab Spring" uprisings that spread across the Middle East in 2011 fueled hopes that democracy would take root in Middle Eastern countries, but they also illustrate just how difficult it can be to establish and maintain democracy. In 2016, antigovernment demonstrators in Giza, Egypt, mark the fifth anniversary of the short-lived Egyptian Revolution, carrying posters of the country's first democratically elected president, Mohamed Morsi. Morsi was ousted in a military coup just a year after taking office.

Do subjects enjoy any advantages that citizens don't have?

THE SOCIAL CONTRACT

Not only did scientific and economic development take off, but philosophers applied the intoxicating new way of thinking to the political world. Two English philosophers, Thomas Hobbes (who slightly preceded the Enlightenment) and John Locke (who lived through it) both came up with theories of government that discredited divine right. Governments are born not because God ordains them, but because life without government is "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short" in Hobbes's words, and "inconvenient" in Locke's. The foundation of government is reason, not faith, and reason leads people to consent to being governed because they are better off that way.

social contract the notion that society is based on an agreement between government and the governed in which people agree to give up some rights in exchange for the protection of others

The idea of citizenship that was born in the Enlightenment constituted another break with the past. People have freedom and rights before government exists, declared Locke. When they decide they are better off with government than without it, they enter into a **social contract**, giving up a few of those rights in exchange for the protection of the rest of their rights by a government established by the majority. If that government fails to protect their rights, then it has broken the contract and the people are free to form a new government, or not, as they please. But the key element here is that, for authority to be legitimate, citizens must consent to it. Note, however, that nowhere did Locke suggest that all people ought to participate in politics, or that people are necessarily equal. In fact, he was concerned mostly with the preservation of private property, suggesting that only property owners would have cause to be bothered with government because only they have something concrete to lose.

SOURCES OF DEMOCRACY CLOSER TO HOME

While philosophers in Europe were beginning to explore the idea of individual rights and democratic governance, there had long been democratic stirrings on the founders' home continent. The Iroquois Confederacy was an alliance

PROFILES IN CITIZENSHIP



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We printed this Chapter 1 Profile in full to give you a taste of what's in store when you go to ***edge.sagepub.com/barbour8e****, where you'll find expanded versions of each chapter's* Profile in Citizenship, *along with other digital resources to help you master the content of this book.*

Dan Savage could not tell us about the start of his It Gets Better Project without choking up, and we could not hear about it without tears of our own. It started with the news about the desperate, lonely suicide of a young man named Steven Lucas, who had been bullied in school because kids said he was gay, which filled Savage with rage on a train one day in New York in 2010. It infuriated and grieved Savage that Lucas did not have someone to reassure him that things would indeed get better and who could tell him in concrete ways how to survive the crappy, terrorized years so that he could have caught a hopeful glimpse of the full life that would have one day been his.

Savage, a journalist and the author of the advice column and podcast *Savage Love* at the Seattle indy paper *The Stranger*, survived the tough, bullying years of high school because, he says, he had always divided the gay people he knew into two groups: "'I'm gay, there's something wrong with me,' and 'I'm gay, . . . but all these people out there who have a problem with gay people are the ones with the problem, not me; my gayness is not a problem.' And I was lucky enough to fall into that second camp. I never regarded my homosexuality as something damaged, or wrong, or sinful about myself. I regarded the homophobia, and the hatred, and the discrimination, and the violence as the problem."

That confidence in who he is and his Catholic upbringing and education also fueled a fiery sense of social justice and a steely patience that made Savage realize real change happened slowly, one doable action at a time. He had come of age as an activist in Act Up, which, he says, "punched above its weight because Act Up was this small core of crazy people, myself included, at this stage of my life, in the early '90s, who were really organized and could call people out into the streets without guilt-tripping them about not being at the meeting. . . . It was really hyper-organized and included this structure where people could show up and participate and then melt back into the crowd and go home . . . I've always felt that one of the jobs from people like me, who still considers himself an activist, is not to guilt, and not to harangue, and not to 'where were you' when you weren't at the meeting; it's to identify the doable thing that people who can't be active 24/7 can do, and say, 'here's this doable thing, do it.'"

The "one doable thing" philosophy informed Savage's work in Seattle, where he acquired an army of devoted *Savage Love* followers by basically entertaining them most of the time and urging them to action a tiny bit of the time. He says, with wry smile, "what I realized was that, if I kept my powder dry, this column was a great tool because people read me, they liked me, and trusted me, and if every once in a while I came into the column and said here's a thing to do, they would do it. I would call them my flying monkeys and they would go do it."

So sitting on that train in 2010, fuming with anger at the kids who had tormented Billy Lucas and then taken to his Facebook page to continue the bullying after his death, Savage remembers thinking "we [in the LGBT community] have all this knowledge that we can't impart, because we don't raise the next generation of LGBT kids, we don't bring them up. A black kid can go home to black parents, who can share with them their coping mechanisms, they can talk about the racist teacher or cop or whatever they encountered and strategize with their black parents and hear about how their black parents navigate the racism in the world successfully, hopefully. Gay kid goes home to straight parents and they can't access those coping mechanisms."

But there *was* that one, doable thing.

So when Savage got home to Seattle, he and his husband Terry Miller sat in front of their computer and videotaped a simple message to those kids: "It Gets Better." It told of the misery of the bullying they faced as kids and the joyful family and love-filled moments of the lives they live today, the promise that the ignorant intolerance of others would one day fade in importance if they could just endure and look forward. He and Terry posted their video on YouTube and the flying monkeys spread the word—"Here's a doable thing. You can sit in front of your computer for ten minutes and you can talk." In time all kinds of people—gay, straight, police officers and sports teams, entertainers and even the president and vice president of the United States—added their own stories—one, doable thing at a time—until today there are more than fifty thousand videos on the itgetsbetter.org website.

Billy Lucas, who could only conceive of the one doable thing that would end his life, had become a catalyst for the saving of so many others. And in the process, it accelerated the incredible normalization of being LGBT as a simple part of being human. It's hard to demonize those who open their hearts and lives and show you they are just like you. Just for example, when Savage began his campaign, it was still illegal for gays to serve openly in the military. Today, marriage equality is the law of the land and supported by majorities of Americans.

Did Savage's one doable act make that happen? Perhaps not by itself. But the nature of single doable acts is that they don't work alone. They build and they gather speed and they don't require the organization of armies, just the willingness of one person at a time to carry the sword. It is Savage's genius to take advantage of that and to use social media to avoid the pitfalls and infighting and burnout that political organization in pursuit of social change so often falls victim to.

On patriotism

We're an idea, and we're a document, and we're a promise. . . . I do believe that the United States is the last best hope on Earth as Lincoln said, and not because the United States is or always has been perfect, but because the United States, in its founding documents, in its founding idea, was an idea about creating a more perfect union, and this was always something that was a moving target, and that could be reassessed as we went on and as we learned more about the world. . . . that's what fills me with kind of a patriotic fervor. It's the political process and the idea that America is an unfinished thing that is imperfect and will never be perfect, but that we can keep working on making more perfect.

On keeping the republic

You're either going to be the person who can identify the doable thing, which I think is the most effective kind of activism, or be a person who is willing to jump in when asked to do the doable thing. Those are your options. Pick one or pick the other. Don't be that person who does nothing: doesn't pitch in, doesn't help, can't be bothered to do the doable thing, and then sit there and complain about the state of the world . . .

of five (and eventually six) East Coast Native American nations whose constitution, the "Great Law of Peace," impressed American leaders such as Benjamin Franklin with its suggestions of federalism, separation of powers, checks and balances, and consensus building. Although historians are not sure that these ideas had any direct influence on the founders' thinking about American governance, they were clearly part of the stew of ideas that the founders could dip in to, and some scholars make the case that their influence was significant.[11]

In Your Own Words Explain the historical origins of democracy in America.

AMERICAN CITIZENSHIP TODAY

The tension between a self-interested nature and a public-interested ideal

For our purposes, the most important thing about these ideas about politics is that they were prevalent at the same time the American founders were thinking about how to build a new government. Locke particularly influenced the writings of James Madison, a major author of our Constitution. The founders wanted to base their new government on popular consent, but they did not want to go too far. Madison, as we will see, was particularly worried about a system that was too democratic.

Madison's expectations of the American public initially came from an earlier tradition that had put great faith in the ability of democratic men to put the interests of the community ahead of their own, to act with what scholars call "republican virtue." Citizens' decisions would be guided not by their self-interest but by their public-interested spirit. At the time of the founding, hope was strong that, although the court of the British monarch had become corrupt beyond redemption, America was still a land where virtue could triumph over greed. In fact, for many people this was a crucial argument for American independence: severing the ties would prevent that corruption from creeping across the Atlantic and would allow the new country to keep its virtuous political nature free from the British taint.[12] Madison and others who had such hopes were destined for disappointment, however.

When democratic rules that relied on the virtue, or public interestedness, of the American citizen were put into effect, especially in the days immediately after independence, these expectations seemed to be doomed. Instead of acting for the good of the community, Americans seemed to be just as self-interested as the British had been. When given nearly free rein to rule themselves under the government established by the Articles of Confederation—the document that tied the states together before the Constitution was drafted—they had no trouble remembering the rights of citizenship but ignored the responsibilities



Citizens Stepping Up

Although Americans emphasize the individual, they don't always shun collective action, and online communication is providing new ways for citizens to organize and work together. When Hurricane Sandy struck the East Coast in 2012, the Occupy Wall Street movement was able to nimbly refocus its attention on helping those affected, utilizing its existing social network to organize relief and rebuilding efforts quickly and more efficiently than could larger organizations—including the government.

Ramin Talaie/Getty Images

that come with it. They passed laws in state legislatures that canceled debts and contracts and otherwise worked to the advantage of the poor majority of farmers and debtors—and that seriously threatened the economic and political stability of the more well-to-do.

Like Locke, Madison thought government had a duty to protect property, and if people who didn't have property could get involved in politics, they might not care about protecting the property of others. Worse, he worried that they might form "factions," groups pursuing their own self-interests rather than the public interest, and even try to get some of that property for themselves. Public behavior under the Articles seemed to bear this out and Madison ended up rejecting notions of "pure democracy," in which all citizens would have direct power to control government, opting instead for what he called a "republic."

A **republic**, according to Madison, would differ from a democracy by relying on representation and would be more appropriate in a large polity where there would be a lot of citizens to be heard. Madison thought a republic would be safer than direct participation because the representatives would be older, wealthier, and wiser than the average American, and they would be better able to make cooler and more rational decisions. Since people had proved, so he thought, not to be activated by virtue, a government was needed that would produce virtuous results, regardless of the character of the citizens who participated in it.

In Your Own Words Describe the enduring tension in the United States between self-interested human nature and public-spirited government.

AMERICAN CITIZENSHIP TODAY

Two competing narratives about what citizenship should mean still exist in the United States today. **Individualistic citizenship**, echoing Madison, sees human nature as self-interested and holds that individual participation in government should be limited, that "too much" democracy is a bad thing. **Collectivist citizenship** continues to put its faith in the citizen's ability to act virtuously, not just for his or her own good but for the common good. President John F. Kennedy movingly evoked such a view in his inaugural address in 1960, when he urged Americans to "ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country." The *Snapshot of America* illustrates the kinds of citizenship activity in which Americans engage.

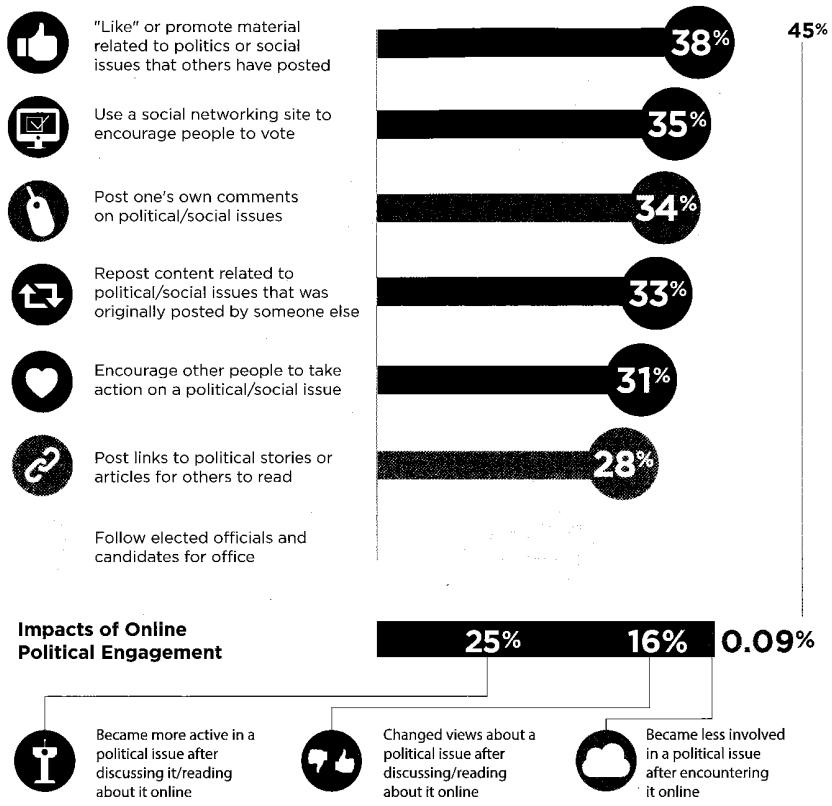
These opposing views of citizenship have coexisted throughout our history. Especially in times of crisis such as war or national tragedy, the second view of individual sacrifice for the public good has seemed more prominent. In the wake of September 11, 2001, citizens freely gave their time and money to help their fellow countrypeople and were more willing to join the military and volunteer for community service. At other times, and particularly at the national level of politics, the dominant view of citizenship has appeared to be one of self-interested actors going about their own business with little regard for the public good, especially at moments such as the one in 2011 when a standoff between the president and Congress brought the nation to the brink of economic default for the sake of a political dispute. When observers claim, as they often do today, that there is a crisis of American citizenship, they usually mean

republic a government in which decisions are made through representatives of the people

individualistic citizenship a view of citizenship focused on action to realize an individual citizen's interests

collectivist citizenship a view of citizenship focused on action to realize the common good

Snapshot of America: *How Do We Engage Politically Online?*



Behind the Numbers

Social media enables citizens to engage with their government, the news media, and with each other much more efficiently than in previous decades. But widespread and easy access to political information comes to us with few quality checks. Did you engage politically during the 2016 presidential election in any of the ways listed above? In what ways might social media affect political outcomes?

Source: Pew Research Center: Internet, Science & Tech, "Politics Fact Sheet," www.pewinternet.org/fact-sheets/politics-fact-sheet/ (accessed March 15, 2016).

that civic virtue is taking second place to self-interest as a guiding principle of citizenship.

These two notions of citizenship do not necessarily have to be at loggerheads, however. Where self-interest and public spirit meet in democratic practice is in the process of deliberation, collectively considering and evaluating goals and ideals for communal life and action. Individuals bring their own agendas and interests, but in the process of discussing them with others holding different views, parties can find common ground and turn it into a base for collective action. Conflict can erupt, too, of course, but the process of deliberation at least creates a forum from which the possibility of consensus might emerge. Scholar and journalist E. J. Dionne reflects on this possibility: "At the heart of republicanism [remember that this is not a reference to our modern parties] is the belief that self-government is not a drab necessity but a joy to be treasured. It is the view that politics is not simply a grubby confrontation of competing interests but an arena in which citizens can learn from each other and discover an 'enlightened self-interest' in common." Despite evidence of a growing American disaffection for politics, Dionne hopes that Americans will find again the "joy" in self-governance because, he warns, "A nation that hates politics will not long thrive as a democracy."[13]

When, if ever, should individuals be asked to sacrifice their own good for that of their country?

One way in which Dionne's hopes might be fulfilled is in the possibilities opened up by electronic communication and social media. Although money and material assets are still highly correlated with political power, the liberating force of the Internet gives the less powerful an effective way to push back. Electronic channels enable movements like Occupy Wall Street, Black Lives Matter, and the It Gets Better Project to thrive and grow, which shows how ordinary people can accomplish extraordinary things when they make themselves heard. Through the Internet we can communicate, organize, and participate in, or encourage participation in, community, state, national, and even international events. Perhaps most important, we can help to determine and shape political narratives through **hashtag activism**, although as the *CLUES to Critical Thinking* piece at the end of the chapter indicates, such activism fails if not accompanied by traditional actions, like voting. The electronic age holds out the possibility of revolutionizing the political world for those citizens who are ready to grab the opportunity that technology has presented to them. But it can also open us up to tyranny and oppression if we aren't prepared. The choice is ours. How we respond will play a key role in how well we manage to keep the republic the founders gave us.

hashtag activism a form of political engagement that occurs by organizing individuals online around a particular issue

THINKING CRITICALLY ABOUT AMERICAN POLITICS

How to use the themes and features in this book

Our primary goal in this book is to get you thinking critically about American politics, and especially about the political narratives that you encounter every day. Critical thinking is the analysis and evaluation of ideas and arguments based on reason and evidence—it means digging deep into what you read and what you hear and asking tough questions. Critical thinking is what all good scholars do, and it is also what savvy citizens do.

Our analytic and evaluative tasks in this book focus on the twin themes of power and citizenship. We have adopted the classic definition of politics proposed by the late political scientist Harold Lasswell that politics is "who gets what when and how." We simplify his understanding by dropping the "when" and focusing on politics as the struggle by citizens over who gets power and resources in society and how they get them, but we also consider how the struggle for power and resources can change dramatically over time.

ANALYSIS

Lasswell's definition of politics gives us a framework of analysis for this book; that is, it outlines how we break down politics into its component parts in order to understand it. Analysis helps us understand how something works, much like taking apart a car and putting it back together again helps us understand how it runs. Lasswell's definition provides a strong analytic framework because it focuses our attention on questions we can ask to figure out what is going on in politics.

Accordingly, in this book, we analyze American politics in terms of three sets of questions:

- Who are the parties involved? What resources, powers, and rights do they bring to the struggle?
- What do they have at stake? What do they stand to win or lose? Is it power, influence, position, policy, or values?
- How do the rules shape the outcome? Where do the rules come from? What strategies or tactics do the political actors employ to use the rules to get what they want?

THINKING LIKE A POLITICAL SCIENTIST

The Critical Importance of Critical Thinking

This book is an introduction to American politics, and in a way it is also an introduction to political science. Political science is not exactly the same kind of science as biology or geology. Not only is it difficult to put our subjects (people and political systems) under a microscope to observe their behavior, but we are also somewhat limited in our ability to test our theories. We cannot replay World War II to test our ideas about what caused it, for example. A further problem is our subjectivity; we are the phenomena under investigation, and so we may have stronger feelings about our research and our findings than we would about, say, cells and rocks.

These difficulties do not make a science of politics impossible, but they do mean we must proceed with caution. Even among political scientists, disagreement exists about whether a rigorous science of the political world is a reasonable goal. We can agree, however, that it is possible to advance our understanding of politics beyond mere guessing or debates about political preferences. Although we use many methods in our work (statistical analysis, mathematical modeling, case studies, and philosophical reasoning, to name only a few), what political scientists have in common is an emphasis on critical thinking about politics.

Critical thinking means challenging the conclusions of others, asking why or why not, turning the accepted wisdom upside down, and exploring alternative interpretations. It means considering the sources of information—not accepting an explanation just because someone in authority offers it, or because you have always been told that it is the true explanation, but because you have discovered independently that there are good reasons for accepting it. You may emerge from reading this textbook with the same ideas about politics that you have always had; it is not our goal to change your mind. But as a critical thinker, you will be able to back up your old ideas with new and persuasive arguments of your own, or to move beyond your current ideas to see politics in a new light.

Becoming adept at critical thinking has a number of benefits:

- **We learn to be good democratic citizens.** Critical thinking helps us sort through the barrage of information that regularly assails us, and it teaches us to process this information thoughtfully. Critical awareness of what our leaders are doing and the ability to understand and evaluate what they tell us is the lifeblood of democratic government.
- **We are better able to hold our own in political (or other) arguments.** We think more logically and clearly, we are more persuasive, and we impress people with our grasp of reason and fact. There is not a career in the world that is not enhanced by critical thinking skills.
- **We become much better students.** The skills of the critical thinker are not just the skills of the good citizen; they are the skills of the scholar. When we read critically, we figure out what is important quickly and easily, we know what questions to ask to tease out more meaning, we can decide whether what we are reading is worth our time, and we know what to take with us and what to discard.

Although it may sound a little dull and dusty, critical thinking can be a vital and enjoyable activity. When we are good at it, it empowers and liberates us. We are not at the mercy of others' conclusions and decisions. We can evaluate facts and arguments for ourselves, turning conventional wisdom upside down and exploring the world of ideas with confidence.

How does one learn to think critically?

The trick to learning how to think critically is to do it. It helps to have a model to follow, however, and we provide one in *The Big Picture*. The focus of critical thinking here is on understanding political argument. Argument in this case refers not to a confrontation or a fight, but rather to a political contention, based on a set of assumptions, supported by evidence, and leading to a clear, well-developed conclusion with consequences for how we understand the world.

Critical thinking involves constantly asking questions about the arguments we read: Who has created it, what is the basic case and what values underlie it, what evidence is used to back it up, what conclusions are drawn, and what difference does the whole thing make? To help you remember the questions to ask, we have used a mnemonic device that creates an acronym from the five major steps of critical thinking. Until asking these questions becomes second nature, thinking of them as CLUES to critical thinking about American politics will help you keep them in mind. To help you develop the critical thinking habit, readings featured in each chapter of this book will provide a CLUES model for you to follow.

This is what CLUES stands for:

- Consider the source and the audience
- Lay out the argument and the underlying values and assumptions
- Uncover the evidence
- Evaluate the conclusion
- Sort out the political implications

When you read each of the *CLUES to Critical Thinking* features in the book, keep in mind *The Big Picture* from page 22, which traces this process.

Source: Adapted from the authors' "Preface to the Student," in Christine Barbour and Matthew J. Streb, eds., *Clued in to Politics: A Critical Thinking Reader in American Government*, 3rd ed. (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2010).

THE BIG PICTURE:
How To Think Critically

Follow the CLUES to Critical Thinking

START
Your Comfort Zone

CONSIDER THE SOURCE

Where does this information come from?
Who is the author?
Who is he or she talking to?
How do the source and the audience shape the author's perspective?

I read it on the Internet. It must be true.

My parents always watch this TV station. Of course it's reliable.

LAY OUT THE ARGUMENT

ASK YOURSELF

What argument is the author asking you to accept?
If you accept the argument, what values are you also buying?
Does the argument hold together logically?

OCEAN OF EXCUSES

Arguments sound like conflict. I hate conflict.

Values are private. It's rude to pry.

Logic gives me hives!

Data means numbers. Numbers freak me out.

UNCOVER THE EVIDENCE

ASK YOURSELF

- *Did the author do research to back up the conclusions?*
- *Is there any evidence or data that is not provided that should be there?*
- *If there is no evidence provided, does there need to be?*

BRIDGE to ENLIGHTENMENT

What, do I look like some kind of detective?

Who cares? What do I need to know for the test?

SEA OF CONFUSION

There is no way to know what conclusions are right.

Ouch! Thinking is hard work. Wake me up when it's over.

WISDOM HAPPINESS GOAL SUCCESS BIG BUCKS

SORT OUT THE POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE

ASK YOURSELF

What difference does this argument make to your understanding of the political world?
How does it affect who gets what and how they get it?
Was getting this information valuable to you or did it waste your time?

How would I know?

These ideas make me really uncomfortable. They don't click with anything I think I know. Time for a beer!

I don't like this person's values. Why should I care about his or her conclusions?

EVALUATE THE CONCLUSIONS

ASK YOURSELF

What's the punch line here?
Did the author convince you that he or she is correct?
Does accepting the conclusion to this argument require you to change any of your ideas about the world?

If you know who is involved in a political situation, what is at stake, and how (under what rules) the conflict over resources will eventually be resolved, you will have a pretty good grasp of what is going on, and you will probably be able to figure out new situations, even when your days of taking a course in American government are far behind you. To get you in the habit of asking those questions, we have designed several features in this text explicitly to reinforce them.

As you found at the start of your reading, each chapter opens with key tasks that we expect you to be able to perform, *In Your Own Words*, which will help you to set goals for your reading and evaluate whether or not you've accomplished them. Each chapter begins with a *What's at Stake . . . ?* feature that analyzes a political situation in terms of what various groups of citizens stand to win or lose, and ends with *Let's Revisit . . .*, in which we reconsider those issues once you have the substantive material of the chapter under your belt. We also focus our analysis along the way by closing each major chapter section, beginning in Chapter 2, with a *Pause and Review* feature that explicitly addresses the questions of who gets what, and how they get it; concisely summarizes what you have learned; and asks you to put your understanding in your own words.

We reinforce the task of analysis with a *Don't Be Fooled by . . .* feature that discusses ways you can improve your critical thinking skills by analyzing (that is, taking apart) different kinds of sources of information about politics. Similarly, *CLUES to Critical Thinking* readings in each chapter provide a text that is central to the substantive material you are learning to give you some practice in using the critical thinking model we described on *The Big Picture* on pages 22–23.

In addition to focusing on analysis of what you read, we offer graphics that will help you visualize processes and data that affect and are affected by politics. *The Big Picture* infographics relate the book's themes to the big concepts, big processes, and big data that will help you make sense of American politics. *Snapshots of America* provide you with a lot more data to help you understand who the American people are and to help you dig into the question of what challenges our diversity poses for the task of governance. Finally, *Thinking Outside the Box* questions, found throughout each chapter, challenge you take the analysis one step further: What if the rules or the actors or the stakes were different? What would be the impact on American politics? How would it work differently?

EVALUATION

As political scientists, however, we want not only to understand how the system works but also to assess how well it works. A second task of critical thinking is evaluation, or seeing how well something measures up according to a standard or principle. We could choose any number of standards by which to evaluate American politics, but the most relevant, for most of us, is the principle of democracy and the role of citizens.

We can draw on the two traditions of self-interested and public-interested citizenship we have discussed to evaluate the powers, opportunities, and challenges presented to American citizens by the system of government under which they live. In addition to the two competing threads of citizenship in America, we can also look at the kinds of action that citizens engage in and whether they take advantage of the options available to them. For instance, citizen action might be restricted by the rules, or by popular interest, to merely choosing between competing candidates for office, as in the model of elite democracy described earlier. Alternatively, the rules of the system might encourage citizens to band together in groups to get what they want, as they do in pluralist democracy. Or the system might be open and offer highly motivated citizens a variety of opportunities to get involved, as they do in participatory democracy. American democracy has elements of all three of these models, and one way to evaluate citizenship in America is to look at what opportunities for each type of participation exist and whether citizens take advantage of them.

Why does critical thinking feel like so much more work than "regular thinking"?

To evaluate how democratic the United States is, we include in most chapters a section called *The Citizens and . . .*, which looks at the changing concept and practice of citizenship in this country with respect to the chapter's subject matter. That feature looks at citizenship from many angles, considering the following types of questions: What role do "the people" have in American politics? How has that role expanded or diminished over time? What kinds of political participation do the rules of American politics (formal and informal) allow, encourage, or require citizens to take? What kinds of political participation are discouraged, limited, or forbidden? Do citizens take advantage of the opportunities for political action that the rules provide them? How do they react to the rules that limit their participation? How have citizens in different times exercised their rights and responsibilities? What do citizens need to do to keep the republic? How democratic is the United States?

To put all this in perspective, the book uses two features to give you a more concrete idea of what citizen participation might mean on a personal level. *Profiles in Citizenship* introduce you to individuals who have committed a good part of their lives to public service and focus on what citizenship means to those people and what inspired them to take on a public role. Longer versions of their stories are available at **edge.sagepub.com/barbour8e.** The *Snapshots of America*, described earlier, provide demographic data to bring the diversity of the American citizenry front and center and to highlight the difficulties inherent in uniting into a single nation individuals and groups with such different and often conflicting interests.

We have outlined several features that recur throughout this book. Remember that each is designed to help you to think critically about American politics, either by analyzing power in terms of who gets what, and how, or by evaluating citizenship to determine how well we are following Benjamin Franklin's mandate to keep the republic. And remember that further exploration of the book's themes is always available on the companion web site at **edge.sagepub.com/barbour8e.**

In Your Own Words Apply the five steps of critical thinking to this book's themes of power and citizenship in American politics.

LET'S REVISIT: *What's at Stake . . .*

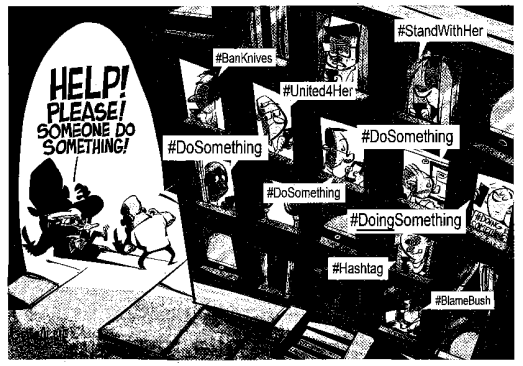
We began this chapter by looking at the power of hashtag activism in response to an electronic call to action to change the prevailing narrative and bring about political change. We asked whether Benjamin Franklin would consider such movements as fulfilling his admonishment to keep the republic. Since then, we have covered a lot of ground, arguing that politics is fundamental to human life and, in fact, makes life easier for us by giving us a nonviolent way to resolve disputes. We pointed out that politics is a method by which power and resources get distributed in society: politics is who gets what and how they get it. Citizens who are aware and involved stand a much better chance of getting what they want from the system than do those who check out or turn away. One clear consequence when young people disregard politics, then, is that they are far less likely to get what they want from the political system. This is exactly what happens.

But the hashtag activists we met in this chapter have been instrumental in changing the narrative of contemporary American politics. As Occupy protester Matt Brandi says:

> The objective of Occupy was to change the direction of the national dialogue and debate . . . . By appearing in strong numbers and generating media interest (both new/social and commercial/mass), Occupy was able to influence the national dialogue. We protested about inequality and exploitation, the corruption of our government by wealth and influence; and while we did not make "demands," people began to talk about inequality, exploitation, and the corruption of democracy. The very way people talked and thought about these issues changed.

What Matt is suggesting was at stake for the Occupy protesters was, in the language of political scientists, agenda setting. A problem not defined as a problem, or not on the national agenda, cannot be solved by public action. By defining income inequality, which many of us simply took for granted, as a problem in need of a solution, Occupy did indeed change the conversation. President Obama and his 2012 Republican challenger, Mitt Romney, participated in the conversation Occupy had begun, although they had different answers to the problem the movement defined. And the plight of the 99 percent formed the basis for Bernie Sander's insurgent campaign in 2016, nudging his fellow primary candidate and eventual party nominee Hillary Clinton to take more progressive positions than she had started with and moving the entire Democratic Party platform leftward. Whether those policies will be realized will depend on how well the new president and Congress can work together.

Similarly, the It Gets Better Project helped change the narrative on both bullying and gay rights. In the years since the movement began in 2011, as more and more



"mainstream" people have posted videos promising LGBT youth that it does indeed get better, the world in fact *has* gotten better. Public opinion in the United States swung sharply in favor of expanded rights for gays, politicians' views on gay marriage "evolved," and the Supreme Court made marriage equality the law of the land. Certainly the It Gets Better Project was not solely responsible for these changes, but in significant ways it helped change the narrative that made the changes possible.

And the debates over systemic racism and intersectionality in the 2016 election, at least on the Democratic side, make clear that Black Lives Matter had changed the narrative on race, too. President Obama had been cautious about making race a centerpiece of his administration, but his presidency and the BLM movement freed Hillary Clinton, as candidate, to address it in a more comprehensive way. BLM helped to change the narrative about what was and was not acceptable police treatment of African Americans, although it may have had the ironic consequence of driving more white voters to the polls to elect Donald Trump.

These movements highlight the value of grassroots action, and the power of stepping outside the system to put pressure on the status quo to respond to unmet and even previously unvoiced needs. It might not have been what Benjamin Franklin had in mind, but occupying the republic may very well be another means of keeping it.

CLUES to Critical Thinking

Excerpts from President Barack Obama's Howard University commencement address, May 7, 2016

President Obama gave a moving address at Howard University his final spring in office, calling for the class of 2016 to be aware of how much the world had changed, how "If you had to choose one moment in history in which you could be born, and you didn't know ahead of time who you were going to be—what nationality, what gender, what race, whether you'd be rich or poor, gay or straight, what faith you'd be born into—you wouldn't choose 100 years ago. You wouldn't choose the fifties, or the sixties, or the seventies. You'd choose right now. If you had to choose a time to be, in the words of Lorraine Hansberry, 'young, gifted, and black' in America, you would choose right now." He offered graduates three pieces of advice: to be confident in the many ways there were to be black today, to be aware of the struggle that came before them and the structural racism that still pervades the system, and finally, this call for action.

You have to go through life with more than just passion for change; you need a strategy. I'll repeat that. I want you to have passion, but you have to have a strategy. Not just awareness, but action. Not just hashtags, but votes.

You see, change requires more than righteous anger . . . . And I'm so proud of the new guard of black civil rights leaders who understand this. It's thanks in large part to the activism of young people like many of you, from Black Twitter to Black Lives Matter, that America's eyes have been opened—white, black, Democrat, Republican—to the real problems, for example, in our criminal justice system.

But to bring about structural change, lasting change, awareness is not enough. It requires changes in law, changes in custom. If you care about mass incarceration, let me ask you: How are you pressuring members of Congress to pass the criminal justice reform bill now pending before them? If you care about better policing, do you know who your district attorney is? Do you know who your state's attorney general is? Do you know the difference? Do you know who appoints the police chief and who writes the police training manual? Find out who they are, what their responsibilities are. Mobilize the community, present them with a plan, work with them to bring about change, hold them accountable if they do not deliver. Passion is vital, but you've got to have a strategy.

And your plan better include voting—not just some of the time, but all the time. It is absolutely true that 50 years after the Voting Rights Act, there are still too many barriers in this country to vote. There are too many people trying to erect new barriers to voting. This is the only advanced democracy on Earth that goes out of its way to make it difficult for people to vote. And there's a reason for that. There's a legacy to that.

But let me say this: Even if we dismantled every barrier to voting, that alone would not change the fact that America has some of the lowest voting rates in the free world. In 2014, only 36 percent of Americans turned out to vote in the midterms—the second lowest participation rate on record. Youth turnout—that would be you—was less than 20 percent. Less than 20 percent. Four out of five did not vote. In 2012, nearly two in three African Americans turned out. And then, in 2014, only two in five turned out. You don't think that made a difference in terms of the Congress I've got to deal with? And then people are wondering, well, how come Obama hasn't gotten this done? How come he didn't get that done? You don't think that made a difference? What would have happened if you had turned out at 50, 60, 70 percent, all across this country? People try to make this political thing really complicated. Like, what kind of reforms do we need? And how do we need to do that? You know what, just vote. It's math. If you have more votes than the other guy, you get to do what you want. It's not that complicated.

And you don't have excuses. You don't have to guess the number of jellybeans in a jar or bubbles on a bar of soap to register to vote. You don't have to risk your life to cast a ballot. Other people already did that for you. Your grandparents, your great grandparents might be here today if they were working on it. What's your excuse? When we don't vote, we give away our power, disenfranchise ourselves—right when we need to use the power that we have; right when we need your power to stop others from taking away the vote and rights of those more vulnerable than you are—the elderly and the poor, the formerly incarcerated trying to earn their second chance.

So you've got to vote all the time, not just when it's cool, not just when it's time to elect a President, not just when you're inspired. It's your duty. When it's time to elect a member of Congress or a city councilman, or a school board member, or a sheriff. That's how we change our politics—by electing people at every level who are representative of and accountable to us. It is not that complicated. Don't make it complicated.

And, finally, change requires more than just speaking out—it requires listening, as well. In particular, it requires listening to those with whom you disagree, and being prepared to compromise. When I was a state senator, I helped pass Illinois's first racial profiling law, and one of the first laws in the nation requiring the videotaping of confessions in capital cases. And we were successful because, early on, I engaged law enforcement. I didn't say to them, oh, you guys are so racist, you need to do something. I understood, as many of you do, that the overwhelming majority of police officers are good, and honest, and courageous, and fair, and love the communities they serve. . . .

And I can say this unequivocally: Without at least the acceptance of the police organizations in Illinois, I could never have gotten those bills passed. Very simple. They would have blocked them.

—

The point is, you need allies in a democracy . . . — democracy requires compromise, even when you are 100 percent right. This is hard to explain sometimes. You can be completely right, and you still are going to have to engage folks who disagree with you. If you think that the only way forward is to be as uncompromising as possible, you will feel good about yourself, you will enjoy a certain moral purity, but you're not going to get what you want. And if you don't get what you want long enough, you will eventually think the whole system is rigged. And that will lead to more cynicism, and less participation, and a downward spiral of more injustice and more anger and more despair. And that's never been the source of our progress. That's how we cheat ourselves of progress. . . .

So don't try to shut folks out, don't try to shut them down, no matter how much you might disagree with them. There's been a trend around the country of trying to get colleges to disinvite speakers with a different point of view, or disrupt a politician's rally. Don't do that—no matter how ridiculous or offensive you might find the things that come out of their mouths. Because as my grandmother used to tell me, every time a fool speaks, they are just advertising their own ignorance. Let them talk. Let them talk. If you don't, you just make them a victim, and then they can avoid accountability.

That doesn't mean you shouldn't challenge them. Have the confidence to challenge them, the confidence in the rightness of your position. There will be times when you shouldn't compromise your core values, your integrity, and you will have the responsibility to speak up in the face of injustice. But listen. Engage. If the other side has a point, learn from them. If they're wrong, rebut them. Teach them. Beat them on the battlefield of ideas. And you might as well start practicing now, because one thing I can guarantee you—you will have to deal with ignorance, hatred, racism, foolishness, trifling folks. I promise you, you will have to deal with all that at every stage of your life. That may not seem fair, but life has never been completely fair. Nobody promised you a crystal stair. And if you want to make life fair, then you've got to start with the world as it is.

So that's my advice. That's how you change things. Change isn't something that happens every four years or eight years; change is not placing your faith in any particular politician and then just putting your feet up and saying, okay, go. Change is the effort of committed citizens who hitch their wagons to something bigger than themselves and fight for it every single day.

C*onsider the source and the audience:* In the last year of his presidency, Obama is speaking to an audience at a black university that has graduated some notable political figures. He is tailoring his remarks to an African American audience. Is that the only audience he is speaking to? Who else might he expect to be listening?

L*ay out the argument and the underlying values and assumptions:* The part of the speech we focus on here is about the importance of taking action, going beyond the kind of hashtag activism we talked about early in this chapter. "Not just hashtags, but votes," says Obama. What kind of democracy is he advocating here? What are the values that support democracy?

U*ncover the evidence:* In parts of the speech we had to cut for length, Obama gives many examples of people, primarily Howard grads, who were able to change the world they lived in by practicing the principles he calls for. Would that kind of anecdotal evidence be sufficient to persuade you that he is right? He also draws on his own personal experience. Is that persuasive?

E*valuate the conclusion:* Obama wants the class of 2016 to understand that they won't get the change they seek in the world without taking action, especially voting and working with others. Are you persuaded? What other alternatives might there be to effecting political change?

S*ort out the political significance:* What is the historical context in which Obama is writing? Have the Republicans he has had to deal with in Congress practiced democracy as he defines it? What would have been the political results if they had? What fate does he worry will befall movements like Black Lives Matter if they are not backed by action, hard work, and votes?

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▶ *News Clip: Obama defends Black Lives Matter movement*

Review

What Is Politics?

Politics may appear to be a grubby, greedy pursuit, filled with scandal and backroom dealing. In fact, despite its shortcomings and sometimes shabby reputation, politics is an essential means for resolving differences and determining how power and resources are distributed in society. Politics is about who gets power and resources in society—and how they get them.

Government, by contrast, is the system established for exercising authority over a group of people. In the United States, the government is embodied in the Constitution and the institutions set up by the Constitution. Government is shaped not only by politics but also by economics, which is concerned specifically with the distribution of wealth and society's resources.

politics (p. 3)
power (p. 3)
social order (p. 4)
government (p. 4)
authority (p. 5)
legitimate (p. 5)
rules (p. 5)
institutions (p. 5)

▶ *News Clip: Bernie Sanders revs up Los Angeles supporters*

▶ *News Clip: Sanders explains, defends "democratic socialism"*

▶ *News Clip: Occupy Wall Street march in lower Manhattan*

▶ *News Clip: Secret Service investigates Obama "death poll" on Facebook*

political narrative (p. 5)
information bubble (p. 7)
economics (p. 7)
capitalist economy (p. 8)
laissez-faire capitalism (p. 8)
regulated capitalism (p. 8)
procedural guarantees (p. 8)
socialist economy (p. 9)
substantive guarantees (p. 9)
social democracy (p. 9)

Political Systems and the Concept of Citizenship

Political systems dictate how power is distributed among leaders and citizens, and these systems take many forms. Authoritarian governments give ultimate power to the state. Nonauthoritarian systems, like democracy, place power largely in the hands of the people. Democracy is based on the principle of popular sovereignty, giving the people the ultimate power to govern. The meaning of citizenship is key to the definition of democracy. Citizens are believed to have rights protecting them from government as well as responsibilities to the public realm.

authoritarian governments (p. 10)
totalitarian (p. 10)
authoritarian capitalism (p. 10)
anarchy (p. 10)
democracy (p. 10)
popular sovereignty (p. 12)
advanced industrial democracy (p. 13)
communist democracy (p. 13)
subjects (p. 13)
citizens (p. 13)

Origins of Democracy in America

Democracy was not an obvious choice for the founders—their decisions were based on their own intellectual heritage, their historical experience, and the theories about government that informed them.

divine right of kings (p. 14)
social contract (p. 15)
republic (p. 18)

American Citizenship Today

At the time of our nation's founding, two competing views of citizenship emerged. The first view, articulated by James Madison, sees the citizen as fundamentally self-interested; this view led the founders to fear too much citizen participation in government. The second view puts faith in citizens' ability to act for the common good, to put their obligation to the public ahead of their own self-interest. Both views are still alive and well today, and we can see evidence of both sentiments at work in political life.

individualistic citizenship (p. 18)
collectivist citizenship (p. 18)
hashtag activism (p. 20)

Thinking Critically About American Politics

In this textbook, we rely on two underlying themes to analyze how our American political system works, and to evaluate how well it works. The first theme is power, and how it functions in our system: we look at political events in terms of who the actors are, what they have to win or lose, and how the rules shape the way these actors engage in their struggle. The second theme is citizenship, specifically, how diverse citizens participate in political life to improve their own individual situations and to promote the interests of the community at large. Throughout this book, we will evaluate citizenship carefully as a means to determine how well the American system is working.

▶ *News Clip: Trump Pushes Border Wall, Gun Rights in Arizona*

Some people come to the United States for other reasons and do not seek permanent residency. In recent years the influx of undocumented immigrants, particularly in the southwestern states, has occupied national debate. Advocates of strict immigration policy complain that undocumented immigrants consume government services without paying taxes. Opponents of these policies support the provision of basic services for people who, like our ancestors, are escaping hardship and hoping for a better future. Congress, with the president's approval, makes immigration law, but these rules change frequently.

immigrants (p. 32)
naturalization (p. 34)
asylum (p. 34)
refugees (p. 34)
nativism (p. 35)

The Ideas That Unite Us

Americans share common values and beliefs about how the world should work that allow us to be a nation despite our diversity. The American political culture is described as both procedural and individualistic. Because we focus more on fair rules than on the outcomes of those rules, our culture has a procedural nature. In addition, our individualistic nature means that we assume that individuals know what is best for them and that individuals, not government or society, are responsible for their own well-being.

Democracy, freedom, and equality are three central American values. Generally, Americans acknowledge democracy as the most appropriate way to make public decisions. We value freedom for the individual from government restraint, and we value equality of opportunity rather than equality of result.

political culture (p. 39)
values (p. 39)
normative (p. 39)
procedural guarantees (p. 39)
individualism (p. 42)

The Ideas That Divide Us

Although the range of ideological debate is fairly narrow in America when compared to other countries, there exists an ideological division among economic liberals, social liberals, economic conservatives, and social conservatives based largely on attitudes toward government control of the economy and of the social order.

ideologies (p. 44)
conservatives (p. 45)
liberals (p. 45)
economic liberals (p. 47)
economic conservatives (p. 47)
libertarians (p. 47)
social liberals (p. 47)
communitarians (p. 47)
social conservatives (p. 47)

The Citizens and American Political Beliefs

America's growing political apathy is well documented. Yet despite abysmal voting rates, the country continues to function, a fact that may be explained by several theories. However, many people claim that such apathy may indeed signal a crisis of democracy.

▶ *News Clip: Governors Seek to Block Syrian Refugees*

▶ *News Clip: More States Object to Refugee Resettlement*



3 POLITICS OF THE AMERICAN FOUNDING

In Your Own Words

After you've read this chapter, you will be able to

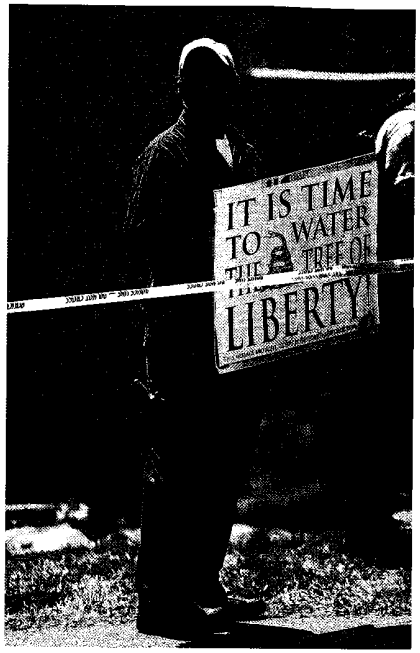
- Describe the power relationships among different groups in colonial America.
- Outline the events and political motivations that led to the colonies' split with England.
- Explain who won and who lost under the Articles of Confederation.
- Identify the competing narratives, goals, and compromises that shaped the Constitution.
- Summarize the debate over ratification of the Constitution.
- Explain the role of everyday citizens in the founding of the United States.

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What's at Stake . . . in Challenging the Legitimacy of the U.S. Government?

DECLARING WAR ON THE U.S. GOVERNMENT is a risky business. Governments depend for their authority on people believing their power is legitimate—when that legitimacy is challenged, so is their authority. Still, the United States is a democracy that guarantees free speech and the right to assemble peacefully, so handling rebellion can be tricky.

That was why the federal government reacted cautiously when Ammon Bundy, leader of a militia group called Citizens for Constitutional Freedom and the son of antigovernment activist Cliven Bundy, responded to what he said was a divine instruction to take over the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in eastern Oregon on January 2, 2016. Bundy said he was acting to support two ranchers who had been arrested for arson on federal land, though the ranchers disavowed the group. Specifically, Bundy demanded that the wildlife refuge land be given back to the state.



AP Photo/Joel Page

Is That a Gun in Your Pocket?

Outside a 2009 Obama town hall meeting in New Hampshire, an armed demonstrator's sign refers to the Thomas Jefferson quote, "The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants."

The federal government, which owned the land but was wary of causing a bloody showdown, waited. As various militias came to join the effort, police were able to apprehend Bundy and several of the other leaders traveling in a convoy. Although one person was shot and killed, most surrendered and the siege ended on February 28.[1]

The Malheur National Wildlife Refuge occupation reflected a movement that has gained traction in recent years: declaring that the federal government is abusing the power of the Constitution, and that that power must be returned to the people via the action of local, private citizens. Timothy McVeigh's 1995 attack on the federal building in Oklahoma City, which killed 168 people, including 19 children, was the bloodiest incident in the insurgency movement. But the broadest and strongest expression of the antigovernment movement—the one that has gained the most longevity and legitimacy—is the Tea Party movement, some of whose members have become part of the federal government themselves.

The birth of the Tea Party in 2010 might have been 1773 all over again. Antitax and antigovernment, the protesters were angry, and if they didn't go as far as to empty shiploads of tea into Boston Harbor, they made their displeasure known in other ways. Though their ire was directed at government in general, the Tea Party had specific targets. In particular, they opposed the George W. Bush administration's bailouts of big financial institutions through the Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP) in 2008 and other measures taken in response to the economic crisis that began that year, including mortgage assistance for people facing foreclosure, the stimulus bill, and the health reform act, all passed by Congress in 2009 and 2010 with the strong backing of President Barack Obama.

The Tea Party movement was a decentralized mix of many groups—mostly simply frustrated Republicans (the major party that most Tea Partiers identify with or lean toward). Ted Cruz from Texas and Marco Rubio from Florida won seats in the U.S. Senate with Tea Party support and went on to run for the presidency in 2016. Tea Party members elected to Congress caused many headaches for Speaker of the House John Boehner, leading to his resignation in 2015.

But other members of the rebellious faction chose less establishment paths. David Barstow of the *New York Times* wrote in early 2010 that a "significant undercurrent within the Tea Party movement" was less like a part of the Republican Party than it was like "the Patriot movement, a brand of politics historically associated with libertarians, militia groups, anti-immigration advocates and those who argue for the abolition of the Federal Reserve." He quoted a Tea Party leader so worried about the impending tyranny threatening her country that she could imagine being called to violence in its defense: "I don't see us being the ones to start it, but I would give up my life for my country .... Peaceful means are the best way of going about it. But sometimes you are not given a choice."[2]

Like the extreme Tea Partiers quoted above, McVeigh and his associates, the Bundys, and other militia-group members are everyday men and women who say they are the ideological heirs of the American Revolution. They liken themselves to the colonial Sons of Liberty, who rejected the authority of the British government and took it upon themselves to enforce the laws they thought were just. The Sons of Liberty instigated the Boston Massacre and the Boston Tea Party, historical events that we celebrate as patriotic but that would be considered treason or terrorism if they took place today—and were considered as such by the British back when they occurred.

Today's so-called Patriot groups claim that the federal government has become as tyrannical as the British government ever was, that it deprives citizens of their liberty and over-regulates their everyday lives. They reject federal laws that do everything from limiting the weapons that individual citizens can own, to imposing taxes on income, to requiring the registration of motor vehicles, to creating the Federal Reserve Bank, to reforming the health care system. The groups base their claim to legitimate existence on the Constitution's Second Amendment, which reads, "A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed." Members of state militias, and other groups like them, take this amendment literally and absolutely. The website teaparty.org, though not representative of all Tea Party groups, says "gun ownership is sacred."[3]

Some militias go even further. They may blend their quests for individual liberty with white supremacy or anti-Semitism and see conspiracies aimed at reducing the power of white citizens in the government's actions. In August 2012, with the November election in the offing, a Texas judge, Tom Head, actually called for a tax increase so that police could be prepared for what he anticipated would happen if President Obama were reelected. He said, "He's going to try to hand over the sovereignty of the United States to the UN, and what is going to happen when that happens? ... I'm thinking the worst. Civil unrest, civil disobedience, civil war maybe."[4]

Although there are some indications that militia membership had declined after the Oklahoma City bombing, it surged after Obama's first election, as did arguments that the federal government (or at least the president) was not legitimate.[5] Donald Trump's loud support for the birther movement, which argued that Obama was not qualified by birth for the presidency, presaged Trump's presidential campaign, which seemed to capitalize on the same anger the Tea Party had thrived on. A number of writers have argued that some of this increased anger is a panicky reaction of a shrinking white majority to demographic change and the presence of a black man in the White House.[6] In any case it helped propel Donald Trump there in 2016.

The federal government has reacted strongly to limit the threat presented by state militias and others who believe that its authority is not legitimate. Congress passed an antiterrorism bill signed by President Bill Clinton in 1996 that would make it easier for federal agencies to monitor the activities of such groups, and these powers were broadened after September 11, 2001. In June 2014, in reaction to the surging numbers of radicalized people within the country, then-attorney general Eric Holder announced that he would revive the domestic terrorism task force that had been formed after the Oklahoma City bombings but had not met since 9/11 turned the nation's attention to terrorism overseas.

How should the federal government respond to these challenges to its legitimacy? Are these groups, as they claim, the embodiment of revolutionary patriotism? Do they support the Constitution, or sabotage it? And where do we draw the line between a Tea Party member who wants to sound off against elected officials and policies she doesn't like, and one who advocates resorting to violence to protect her particular reading of the Constitution? Think about these questions as you read this chapter on the founding of the United States. At the end of this chapter we revisit the question of what's at stake for American politics in a revolutionary challenge to government authority. «

FROM the moment students start coloring in pictures of grateful Pilgrims and cutting out construction paper turkeys in grade school, the founding of the United States is a recurring focus of American education, and with good reason. Democratic societies, as we saw in Chapter 1, rely on the consent of their citizens to maintain lawful behavior and public order. To be committed to the rules and the goals of the American system requires that we feel good about that system. What better way to stir up good feelings and patriotism than by recounting thrilling stories of bravery and derring-do on the part of selfless heroes dedicated to the cause of American liberty? We celebrate the Fourth of July with fireworks and parades, displaying publicly our commitment to American values and our belief that our country is special, in the same way that other nations celebrate their origins all over the world. Bastille Day (July 14) in France, May 17 in Norway, October 1 in China, July 6 in Malawi, Africa—all are days on which people rally together to celebrate their common past and their hopes for the future.

Of course people feel real pride in their countries and of course many nations, not only our own, do have amazing stories to tell about their earliest days. But as political scientists, we must separate myth from reality. For us, the founding of the United States is central not because it inspires warm feelings of patriotism but because it can teach us about American politics, the struggles for power that forged the political system that continues to shape our collective struggles today.

The history of the American founding has been told from many points of view. You are probably most familiar with this account: The early colonists escaped from Europe to avoid religious persecution. Having arrived on the shores of the New World, they built communities that allowed them to practice their religions in peace and to govern themselves as free people. When the tyrannical British king made unreasonable demands on the colonists, they had no choice but to protect their liberty by going to war and by establishing a new government of their own.

But sound historical evidence suggests that the story is more complicated, and more interesting, than that. A closer look shows that the early Americans were complex beings with economic and political agendas as well as religious and philosophical motives. After much struggle among themselves, the majority of Americans decided that those agendas could be carried out better and more profitably if they broke their ties with England.[7]

Just because a controversial event like the founding is recounted by historians or political scientists one or two hundred years after it happens does not guarantee that there is common agreement on what actually took place. People write history not from a position of absolute truth but from particular points of view. When we read a historical narrative, as critical thinkers we need to ask the same probing questions we ask about contemporary political narratives: Who is telling the story? What point of view is being represented? What values and priorities lie behind it? If I accept this interpretation, what else will I have to accept?

In this chapter we talk a lot about history—the history of the American founding and the creation of the Constitution. As we point out in *Don't Be Fooled by . . . Your Textbook* on page 59, we, like all other authors, have a particular point of view that affects how we tell the story. True to the first basic theme of this book, we are interested in power and politics. We want to understand American government in terms of who the winners and losers are likely to be. It makes sense for us to begin by looking at the founding to see who the winners and losers were then. We are also interested in how rules and institutions make it more likely that some people will win and others lose. Certainly an examination of the early debates about rules and institutions will help us understand that. Finally, because we are interested in winners and losers, we are interested in understanding how people come to be defined as players in the system in the first place, the focus of the second theme of this book—citizenship. It was during the founding that many of the initial decisions were made about who "We the People" would actually be.

POLITICS IN THE ENGLISH COLONIES

Power struggles in the new world

America was a battlefield—both political and military—long before the war for independence from Britain was fought. Not only did the English settlers have to struggle with brutal winters, harsh droughts, disease, and other unanticipated natural disasters, but they quickly came into conflict with the people who already inhabited the New World when they arrived—Native Americans and Spanish and French colonists.

Declaring that they had a legitimate right to colonize unoccupied territory, the British set about populating the eastern coast of America. Many Native Americans initially helped the British overcome the rigors of life in the New World. But cultural differences between the Indians and the British—and the latter's conviction that their beliefs and practices were superior to Indian ways—made the relationship between the two unpredictable. Some Indians engaged in political dealings with the Europeans, forming military coalitions (partnerships), trade alliances, and other arrangements. Others were more hostile, particularly in the face of the European assumption that the New World was theirs to subdue and exploit.

The Spanish, too, were an obstacle to English domination. Spain in the sixteenth century seemed to be well on its way to owning the New World. Spanish explorers had laid claim to both eastern and western North America as well as key parts of Central and South America. The ancestors of many of the 41 million Spanish-speaking people in America today were living in what is now New Mexico, California, Colorado, and Texas, for instance, before many people were speaking English in America at all. But the monarchs of England liked the idea of getting a piece of the treasure that was being exported regularly from the Americas. Spain and England were already in conflict in Europe, and Spain was vulnerable. Despite treaties, Spanish spies, intrigue with Native Americans, and occasional military action, Britain edged Spain out of the colonial picture in eastern America. Had Spain been able to enforce the treaties Britain had signed, or had it been able to form a more constant and productive alliance with France, it might have been able to reverse its fortunes. In due time, the English would have to fend off the Dutch and the French, as well, but by the late 1700s the eastern seaboard colonies were heavily English. Though Spain maintained its presence in the West and the Southwest, those territories did not figure in American politics until much later.

REASONS FOR LEAVING ENGLAND

Many British subjects were eager and willing to try their luck across the Atlantic. They came to America to make their fortunes, to practice their religions without interference, to become landowners—to take advantage of a host of opportunities that England, still struggling out of the straightjacket of the middle ages, could not offer.

Although the colonists did not know it, life in England in the 1600s was on the brink of major change. Within the century, political thinkers would begin to reject the idea that monarchs ruled through divine right, would favor increasing the power of Parliament at the expense of the king, and would promote the idea that individuals were not merely subjects but citizens, with rights that government could not violate.

But in the early 1600s, settlers came to America in part because England seemed resistant to change. That does not mean, however, that the colonists, having been repressed in England, came to America hoping to achieve liberty for all people. The colonists emigrated in order to practice their religions freely (but not necessarily to let others practice theirs),



DON'T BE FOOLED BY . . .

Consider these two passages describing the same familiar event: Christopher Columbus's arrival in the Americas.[1]

From a 1947 textbook

> At last the rulers of Spain gave Columbus three small ships, and he sailed away to the west across the Atlantic Ocean. His sailors became frightened. They were sure the ships would come to the edge of the world and just fall off into space. The sailors were ready to throw their captain into the ocean and turn around and go back. Then, at last they all saw the land ahead. They saw low green shores with tall palm trees swaying in the wind. Columbus had found the New World. This happened on October 12, 1492. It was a great day for Christopher Columbus—and for the whole world as well.

And from a 1991 text

> When Columbus stepped ashore on Guanahani Island in October 1492, he planted the Spanish flag in the sand and claimed the land as a possession of Ferdinand and Isabella. He did so despite the obvious fact that the island already belonged to someone else—the "Indians" who gathered on the beach to gaze with wonder at the strangers who had suddenly arrived in three great, white-winged canoes. He gave no thought to the rights of the local inhabitants. Nearly every later explorer—French, English, Dutch and all the others as well as the Spanish—thoughtlessly dismissed the people they encountered. What we like to think of as the discovery of America was actually the invasion and conquest of America.

Which one of these passages is "true"? The first was the conventional textbook wisdom through the 1950s and 1960s in America. The latter reflects a growing criticism that traditional American history has been told from the perspective of history's "winners," largely white, middle-class males of European background. Together they highlight the point that history does vary depending on who is telling it, when they are telling it, and even to whom they are telling it. The telling of a historical narrative is a potent political act, as one recent study explains, citing George Orwell's *1984* that "who controls the past controls the future."[2] What this means to you is that the critical vigilance we urge you to apply to all the information that regularly bombards you should be applied to your textbooks as well. And, yes, that means this textbook, too.

There is some truth to the idea that history is written by the winners, but it is also true that the winners change over time. If history was once securely in the hands of the white European male, it is now the battleground of a cultural war between those who believe the old way of telling (and teaching) history was accurate, those who believe it left out the considerable achievements of women and minorities and masked some of the less admirable episodes of our past in order to glorify our heritage, and those who feel the pendulum has swung too far in a direction critical of our mainstream heritage.[3]

The question of bias in textbooks is not reserved for history books; this textbook itself has a point of view. In these pages we have an interest in highlighting the issues of power and citizenship, and in focusing on the impact of the rules in American politics. In addition, we take a multicultural approach. We do not think that the outstanding political accomplishments of the traditional heroes of American history warrant creating narratives that ignore the contributions, also substantial, of people who have not historically been powerful.

The fact that all textbooks have some sort of bias means you must be as critically careful in what you accept from textbook authors as you are (or should be) in what you accept from any other information source.

What to Watch Out For

Here are some things you should think about when you are reading any textbook:

- **Who selected the book?** Textbooks are rarely (if ever) chosen by the end users: yours were likely picked by your individual instructors or departmental committees. Publishers have tailored the content to appeal to those making the selection. How does the politics of those individuals affect what you have been given to read?
- **What is the book's audience?** If it is a big, colorful book, it is probably aimed at a wide market. If so, what might that say about its content? If it is a smaller book with a narrower focus, who is it trying to appeal to?
- **What is the author's point of view?** Where is the author coming from? Does he or she promote particular values or ideas? Are any points of view left out of the story being told? Do you think there are points of view presented that should have been left out? Do the authors make an effort to cover both sides of an issue or a controversy? Read the footnotes, and if something troubles you, locate the primary source (the one the authors refer to) and read it yourself.

(Continued)

(Continued)

- **What were your own reactions?** Did the book cause you to look at a subject in a new way? Are its conclusions surprising? Exciting? Troublesome? What is the source of your reaction? Is it intellectual, or emotional? What caused you to react this way?

1. These two passages were cited in a chart accompanying Sam Dillon, "Schools Growing Harsher in Scrutiny of Columbus," *New York Times*, October 12, 1992, 4, web version. The first paragraph is from Merlin M. Ames, *My Country* (Sacramento: California State Department of Education, 1947); the second is from John A. Garraty, *The Story of America* (New York: Holt Rinehart Winston, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1991).

2. Laura Hein and Mark Seldon, eds., *Censoring History: Citizenship and Memory in Japan, Germany, and the United States* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2000).

3. Frances Fitzgerald, *America Revised* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979); James McKinley Jr., "Texas Conservatives Win Curriculum Change," *New York Times*, March 12, 2010, www.nytimes.com/2010/03/13/education/13texas.html; Laura Moser, "Texas Is Debuting Textbooks That Downplay Jim Crow and Frame Slavery as a Side Issue in the Civil War," *Slate*, July 7, 2015, www.slate.com/blogs/schooled/2015/07/07/texas_textbook_revisionism_new_textbooks_in_the_lone_star_state_downplay.html.

to own land, to engage in trade, to avoid debtors' prison. England also had a national interest in sending colonists to America. Under the economic system of mercantilism, nations competed for the world's resources through trade, and colonies were a primary source of raw materials for manufacturing. Entrepreneurs often supported colonization as an investment, and the government issued charters to companies, giving them the right to settle land as English colonies.

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN THE COLONIES

It shouldn't surprise us, therefore, to find that the settlers often created communities that were in some ways as restrictive and repressive as the ones they had left behind in England. The difference, of course, was that they were now the ones doing the repressing rather than the ones being repressed. In other ways, life in America was more open than life in Britain. Land was widely available. Although much of it was inhabited by Native Americans, many of them believed in communal or shared use of property. The Europeans arrived with notions of private property and the sophisticated weaponry to defend the land they took from the Indians. Some colonies set up systems of self-rule, with representative assemblies. Though they had governors, often appointed by the king, at least until the late 1600s the colonies were left largely, though not exclusively, to their own devices.

A useful way to understand who had power in the colonies is to look at the rules regulating political participation—that is, who was allowed to vote in colonial lawmaking bodies, who wasn't, and why. Each colony set its own voting rules, based on such factors as religion, property, gender, and race:

- **Religion.** At least in the earliest days of colonial government the tightest requirements for voting were moral or religious qualifications. The northern colonies, especially, were concerned about keeping the ungodly out of government. By 1640, for instance, religious tests for voting prevented three-fourths of the Massachusetts population from having any political power. By 1691, however, Massachusetts had moved into line with Virginia and the other colonies that based an individual's political rights on his wealth rather than his character.
- **Property.** Conventional British wisdom held that if you didn't own property, you were unlikely to take a serious interest in government. Gradually the colonies too adopted that view and began to require of voters some degree of property ownership or, later, tax-paying status.
- **Gender.** Women weren't officially excluded from political participation in America until the Revolution. Until then, as in England, they occasionally could exercise the vote when they satisfied the property requirement and when there were no voting males in their households. In some localities, widows, in particular, or daughters who had inherited a parent's property, could vote or participate in church meetings (which sometimes amounted to the same thing).[8]
- **Race.** Initially, Africans in America were subject to the same laws and codes of behavior as Europeans there.[9] However, the colonies required tremendous amounts of cheap labor to produce the raw materials and goods needed for trade with England under the mercantilist system, and when English people from the Caribbean island of Barbados settled in South Carolina in 1670, they brought with them the institution of **slavery**. Slavery proved economically profitable even in the more commercial areas of New England, but it utterly transformed the tobacco plantations of Maryland and Virginia.[10]

Not surprisingly, as slavery became accepted in the colonies, the rights of blacks were gradually stripped away. In the 1640s, Maryland denied blacks the right to bear arms. A 1669 Virginia law declared that if a slave "should chance to die" when resisting his or her master or the master's agent, it would not be a felony—a crime that legally required malice—because no one would destroy his own property with malice. Most politically damaging, by the 1680s, free blacks were forbidden to own property, the only access to political power that colonial society recognized.[11]

slavery the ownership, for forced labor, of one people by another

Reasons for these legal changes are not hard to find. Slavery can work only if slaves are dependent, defenseless, and afraid to escape. Also, an institution as dehumanizing as slavery requires some justification that enables slaveholders to live with themselves, especially in the Enlightenment era, when words like "natural rights" and "liberty" were on everyone's tongue. It was said that the Africans were childlike, lazy, and undisciplined, and that they needed the supervision of slave owners. The worse slaves were treated, the more their humanity was denied. **Racism**, the belief that one race is superior to another, undoubtedly existed before slavery was well established in America, but the institution of slavery made it a part of American political culture. We discuss the issue of race in American politics in more detail in Chapter 6.



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A Political Divide

Under English rule, some women in the American colonies were able to participate in politics. Once the United States was formed, however, the states crafted a firm political divide that restricted voting primarily to wealthy, landowning men.

PAUSE AND REVIEW Who, What, How

The English colonists wanted, first and foremost, to find new opportunities in America. But those opportunities were not available to all. Religious and property qualifications for the vote, and the exclusion of women and blacks from political life, meant that the colonial leaders did not feel that simply living in a place or obeying the laws or even paying taxes carried with it the right to participate in government. Following the rigid British social hierarchy, they wanted rules to ensure that the "right kind" of people could participate, people who could be depended on to make the kind of rules that would ensure their status and maintain the established order. The danger of expanding the vote, of course, is that the new majority might want something very different from what the old majority wanted.

In Your Own Words Describe the power relationships among different groups in colonial America.

racism the belief that one race is superior to another

French and Indian War a war fought between France and England, and allied Indians, from 1754 to 1763; resulted in France's expulsion from the New World

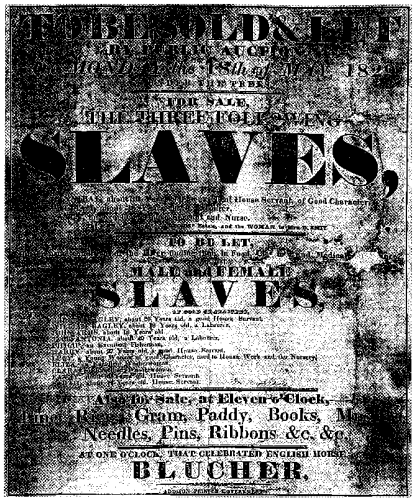
THE SPLIT FROM ENGLAND

Making the transition from British subjects to American citizens

Both England and America accepted as perfectly normal the relationships of colonial power that initially bound them together. Americans, as colonists, were obliged to make England their primary trading partner, and all goods they traded to other countries had to pass through Britain, where a tax was collected on them. The benefits of being a colony, however, including financial support by British corporations, military defense by the British army and navy, and a secure market for their agricultural products, usually outweighed any burdens of colonial obligation. Eventually the relationship started to sour as the colonists developed an identity as Americans rather than as transplanted English people, and as the British became a more intrusive political presence. Even then, they searched painstakingly for a way to fix the relationship before they decided to eliminate it altogether. Revolution was not an idea that occurred readily to either side.

BRITISH ATTEMPTS TO GAIN CONTROL OF THE COLONIES

Whether the British government had actually become oppressive in the years before 1776 is open to interpretation. Certainly the colonists thought so. Britain was deeply in debt, having won the **French and Indian War**, which effectively



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Human Trade

Slaves were used to meet the needs of the South's burgeoning economy in tobacco and cotton, which required plentiful, cheap labor. They were shipped from Africa and sold to farmers alongside rice, books, and other goods. In the eighteenth century, approximately 275,000 slaves were shipped to the American colonies. Many did not survive the harsh conditions of the passage.

forced the French to leave North America and the Spanish to vacate Florida and retreat west of the Mississippi. Britain, having done its protective duty as a colonial power and having taxed British citizens heavily to finance the war, turned to its colonies to help pay for their defense. It chose to do that by levying taxes on the colonies and by attempting to enforce more strictly the trade laws that would increase British profits from American resources.

The irony is that, with the British victory in the war, the colonies were largely free of Spanish, French, and Indian threat. No longer in need of British protection, they could afford to resist British efforts to make them help pay for it.[12] The series of acts the British passed to gain revenue infuriated the colonists, who saw them as intolerable violations of their rights, even though the British were being taxed at home too. To show their displeasure with the Tea Act of 1773, they hurled 342 chests of tea into Boston Harbor in the infamous Boston Tea Party. Britain responded by passing the Coercive Acts of 1774, designed to punish the citizens of Massachusetts. In the process, Parliament sowed the seeds that would blossom into revolution in just a few years.

CHANGING IDEAS ABOUT POLITICS

The American reluctance to cooperate with Britain was reinforced by the colonists' changing political culture and the narrative that supported it. Philosophical ideas that were fermenting in England and the European Enlightenment as a whole, especially those of John Locke, were flourishing in America. For the British, the sovereign authority was Parliament, which established the rule of law and constitutional principles. But the colonists rejected that in favor of the principle of **popular sovereignty**; that is, the ultimate authority, the power to govern, belonged in the hands of the people.[13]

These philosophical changes meant that any British colonial authority had begun to seem illegitimate to the colonial elite, and that lack of legitimacy began to figure heavily in the narratives they told about political power. Much has been made in American schoolbooks about the colonists' defiant rejection of British taxation without representation. The British had offered Americans representation in Parliament, however, and they had rejected it in the assemblies of South Carolina and Virginia.[14] It wasn't just taxation the colonists objected to; it was the sovereignty of the British parliament itself. Some loyalists to the Crown continued to support British authority, but for the rest of the colonists, it became harder and harder to recognize British power over them as legitimate authority.

REVOLUTION

From the moment that the unpopularly taxed tea plunged into Boston Harbor in December 1773, it became apparent that the Americans were not going to settle down and behave like proper and orthodox colonists. Even before the Tea Party, mobs in many towns were demonstrating and rioting against British control. Calling themselves the Sons of Liberty, and under the guidance of the eccentric Samuel Adams (cousin to the future president John Adams), rebellious colonists routinely caused extensive damage and, in early 1770, provoked the so-called Boston Massacre, an attack by British soldiers that left six civilians dead and further inflamed popular sentiments.

By the time of the Boston Tea Party, also incited by the Sons of Liberty, passions were at a fever pitch. The American patriots called a meeting in Philadelphia in September 1774. Known as the First Continental Congress, the meeting declared the Coercive Acts void, announced a plan to stop

popular sovereignty the concept that the citizens are the ultimate source of political power

trade with England, and called for a second meeting in May 1775. Before they could meet again, in the early spring of 1775, the king's army went marching to arrest Samuel Adams and another patriot, John Hancock, and to discover the hiding place of the colonists' weapons. Roused by the silversmith Paul Revere, Americans in Lexington and Concord fired the first shots of rebellion at the British, and revolution was truly under way.

The narrative about where the locus of power should be spread quickly. The mobs were not fed by social media or connected electronically—the story was passed by word of mouth and, therefore, could be controlled relatively easily because each person could not disseminate ideas widely. The people who stood to gain the most financially from independence—the propertied and economic elite, the attendees at the Continental Congress—were translating a philosophical explanation for the masses to act on. Because many colonists could not read, they got their news from the tavern or at the Sunday pulpit, and then passed it on. The vast majority of citizens were passive recipients of the narrative.

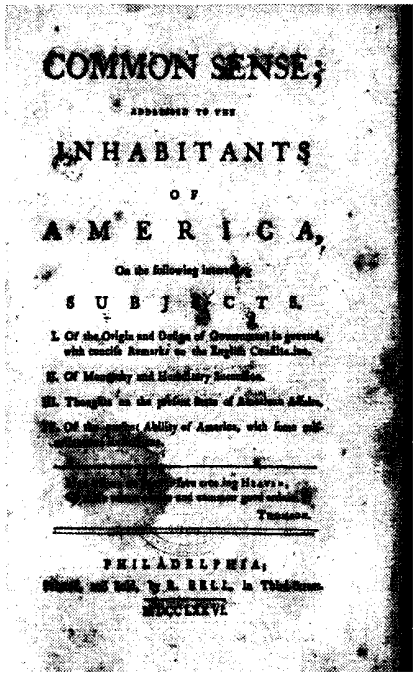
THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

Even in the midst of war, the colonists did not at first clearly articulate a desire for independence from England. But publication of the pamphlet ***Common Sense***, written by the English-born Thomas Paine, turned their old ideas upside-down. In this immensely popular pamphlet, which sold more than 150,000 copies in just a few weeks (the colonial equivalent of "going viral"),[15] Paine called for the rejection of the king, for independence, and for republican government, and his passionate writing crystallized the thinking of the colonial leaders.[16]

In 1776, at the direction of a committee of the Continental Congress, thirty-four-year-old Thomas Jefferson sat down to write a declaration of independence from England. His training as a lawyer at the College of William and Mary, and his service as a representative in the Virginia House of Burgesses, helped prepare him for his task, but he had an impressive intellect in any case. President John F. Kennedy once announced to a group of Nobel Prize winners he was entertaining that they were "the most extraordinary collection of talents that has ever gathered at the White House, with the possible exception of when Thomas Jefferson dined alone."[17] A testimony to Jefferson's capabilities is the strategically brilliant document that he produced.

Common Sense the pamphlet written by Thomas Paine in 1776 that persuaded many Americans to support the revolutionary cause

Declaration of Independence the political document that dissolved the colonial ties between the United States and Britain



Courtesy of Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division

America's First Viral Message

More than 150,000 copies of Thomas Paine's influential essay Common Sense *were sold in 1776 alone, and those were circulated and read aloud in taverns and meeting places throughout the colonies. Eventually more than a half-million copies made their way across the colonies and Europe.*

The **Declaration of Independence** is first and foremost a political document. Having decided to make the break from England, the American founders had to create a narrative that convinced themselves, their fellow colonists, and the rest of the world that they were doing the right thing. Jefferson did not have to hunt further than the writing of John Locke for a good reason for his revolution.

Recall from Chapter 1 that Locke said that government is based on a contract between the rulers and the ruled. The ruled agree to obey the laws as long as the rulers protect their basic rights to life, liberty, and property. If the rulers fail to do that, they break the contract and the ruled are free to set up another government. This is exactly what the second paragraph of the Declaration of Independence says, except that Jefferson changed "property" to "the pursuit of happiness," perhaps to garner the support of those Americans who didn't own enough property to

worry about. Having established that the breaking of the social contract was a good reason for revolution, Jefferson could justify the American Revolution if he could show that Britain had broken such a contract by violating the colonists' rights.

Consequently, he spelled out all the things that King George III had allegedly done to breach the social contract. Take a look at the Declaration in the *CLUES to Critical Thinking* feature at the end of this chapter and notice the extensive list of grievances against the king. For twenty-seven paragraphs, Jefferson documented just how badly the monarch had treated the colonists. Note, however, that many of the things the colonists complained of were the normal acts of a colonial power. No one had told the king that he was a party to a Lockean contract, so it isn't surprising that he violated it at every turn. Furthermore, some of the things he was blamed for were the acts of Parliament, not of the king at all. Perhaps because the colonists intended to have some sort of parliament of their own, or perhaps, as some scholars have argued, because they simply did not recognize Parliament's authority over them, George III was the sole focus of their wrath and resentment. But the clear goal of the document was to discredit George III so thoroughly that this revolution became inevitable in the eyes of every American, and the world.

Are there any circumstances in which it would be justifiable for groups in the United States to rebel against the federal government today?

"... THAT ALL MEN ARE CREATED EQUAL"

The Declaration of Independence begins with a statement of the equality of all men. Since so much of this document relies heavily on Locke, and since clearly the colonists did not mean that all men are created equal, it is worth turning to Locke for some help in seeing exactly what they did mean. In his most famous work, *A Second Treatise on Government*, Locke wrote,

> Though I have said above that all men are by nature equal, I cannot be supposed to understand all sorts of equality. Age or virtue may give men a just precedency. Excellency of parts and merit may place others above the common level. Birth may subject some, and alliance or benefits others, to pay an observance to those whom nature, gratitude, or other respects may have made it due.[18]

Men are equal in a natural sense, said Locke, but society quickly establishes many dimensions on which they may be unequal. A particularly sticky point for Locke's ideas on equality is his treatment of slavery, which he did not endorse but ultimately failed to condemn. Here, too, our founders would have been in agreement with him.

The founders' ambivalence about slavery and equality can be seen in a passage that Jefferson included in the original draft of the Declaration, as part of the political indictment of George III. He wrote:

> He [George III] has waged cruel war against human nature itself, violating its most sacred rights of life and liberty in the persons of a distant people who never offended him, captivating and carrying them into slavery in another hemisphere or to incur miserable death in their transportation thither.[19]

Blaming King George for the institution of slavery, and including it on a list of behaviors so horrible that they justify revolution, was an amazing act on the part of a man who not only owned slaves himself but also was writing on behalf of many other slave owners. His action shows just how politically confusing and morally ambiguous the issue was at that time. Reflecting the political realities of the time, the passage was eventually deleted.

AFRICAN AMERICANS AND THE REVOLUTION The Revolution was a mixed blessing for American slaves. On the one hand, many slaves won their freedom as a result of the war; slavery was outlawed north of Maryland, and many slaves in the Upper South also were freed. The British offered freedom in exchange for service in the British army, although the conditions they provided were not always a great improvement over enslavement. The abolitionist, or antislavery, movement gathered steam in some northern cities, expressing moral and constitutional objections to the institution of slavery. Whereas before the Revolution only about 5 percent of American blacks were free, the number grew tremendously with the coming of war.[20]

Many African Americans served in the war. There were probably about twelve blacks in the first battle at Lexington and Concord, in Massachusetts, for example. The South feared the idea of arming slaves, for obvious reasons, but by the time Congress began to fix troop quotas for each state, southerners were drafting slaves to serve in their masters' places.

In the aftermath of war, however, African Americans did not find their lot greatly improved, despite the ringing rhetoric of equality that fed the Revolution. The economic profitability of slave labor still existed in the South, and slaves continued to be imported from Africa in large numbers. The explanatory narrative—that all men were created equal but that blacks weren't quite men and thus could be treated unequally—spread throughout the new country, including the North, making even free blacks unwelcome in many communities. By 1786 New Jersey prohibited free blacks from entering the state, and within twenty years northern states had started passing laws specifically denying free blacks the right to vote.[21] No wonder the well-known black abolitionist Frederick Douglass said, in 1852: "This Fourth of July is yours, not mine. You may rejoice, I must mourn."

NATIVE AMERICANS AND THE REVOLUTION Native Americans were another group the founders did not consider to be prospective citizens. Not only were they already considered members of their own sovereign nations, but their communal property holding, their nonmonarchical political systems, and their divisions of labor between women working in the fields and men hunting for game were not compatible with European political notions. Pushed farther and farther west by land-hungry colonists, the Indians were actively hostile to the American cause in the Revolution. Knowing this, the British hoped to gain their allegiance in the war. But the colonists, having asked in vain for the Indians to stay out of what they called a "family quarrel," were able to suppress early on the Indians' attempts to get revenge for their treatment at the hands of the settlers.[22] There was certainly no suggestion that the claim of equality at the beginning of the Declaration of Independence might include the peoples who had lived on the continent for centuries before the white man arrived.



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Women at War

Deborah Sampson and a few other women disguised themselves as males and served in the colonial army. Sampson served under George Washington's command but was dishonorably discharged after the war when it became known she was a woman. Ten years later, after Washington's intervention, she became the first woman in the U.S. Army to receive a soldier's pension.

WOMEN AND THE REVOLUTION Neither was there any question that "all men" might somehow be a generic term for human beings that would include women. The Revolution proved to be a step backward for women politically. It was after the war that states began specifically to prohibit women, even those with property, from voting.[23] That doesn't mean, however, that women did not get involved in the war effort. Within the constraints of society, they contributed what they could to the American cause. They boycotted tea and other British imports, sewed flags, made bandages and clothing, nursed and housed soldiers, and collected money to support the Continental Army. Under the name Daughters of Liberty, women in many towns met publicly to discuss the events of the day, spinning and weaving to make the colonies less dependent on imported cotton and woolens from England, and drinking herbal tea instead of tea that was taxed by the British. Some women moved beyond such mild patriotic activities to outright political behavior, writing pamphlets urging independence, spying on enemy troops, carrying messages, and even, in isolated instances, fighting on the battlefields.[24]

Men's understanding of women's place in early American politics was nicely put by Thomas Jefferson, writing from Europe to a woman in America in 1788:

> But our good ladies, I trust, have been too wise to wrinkle their foreheads with politics. They are contented to soothe & calm the minds of their husbands returning ruffled from political debate. They have the good sense to value domestic happiness above all others. There is no part of the earth where so much of this is enjoyed as in America.[25]

Women's role with respect to politics at the time was plain: they may be wise and prudent, but their proper sphere was the domestic, not the political, world. They were seen as almost "too good" for politics, representing peace and serenity, moral happiness rather than political dissension, the values of the home over the values of the state. This narrative provided a flattering reason for keeping women in "their place," while allowing men to reign in the world of politics.

PAUSE AND REVIEW Who, What, How

By the mid-1700s the interests of the British and the colonists were clearly beginning to separate. If the colonists had played by the rules of imperial politics, England would have been content. It would have taxed the colonies to pay its war debts, but it also would have continued to protect them and rule benignly from across the sea.

The colonial leaders, however, changed the rules. Rejecting British authority, they established new rules based on Enlightenment thought. Then they used impassioned rhetoric and inspiring theory to engage the rest of the colonists in their rebellion. Finally, they used revolution to sever their ties with England.

The Revolution dramatically changed American fortunes, but not everyone's life was altered for the good by political independence. Many of those who were not enfranchised before the war—slaves and free blacks, American Indians, and women—remained powerless afterward, and in some cases voting rules became even more restrictive.

In Your Own Words Outline the events and political motivations that led to the colonies' split with England

THE ARTICLES OF CONFEDERATION

Political and economic instability under the nation's first constitution

In 1777 the Continental Congress met to try to come up with a framework or constitution for the new government. We use the word *constitution* in the United States almost as if it could refer only to one specific document. In truth, a **constitution** is any establishment of rules that "constitutes"—that is, makes up—a government. It may be written, as in our case, or unwritten, as in Great Britain's. One constitution can endure for over two hundred years, as ours has, or it can change quite frequently, as the French constitution has. What's important about a constitution is that it defines a political body, the rules and institutions for running a government. As we have said before, those rules have direct consequences for how politics works in a given country, who the winners are and who the losers will be.

The **Articles of Confederation**, our first constitution, created the kind of government the founders, fresh from their colonial experience, preferred. The rules set up by the Articles of Confederation show the states' jealousy of their own power. Having just won their independence from one large national power, the last thing they wanted to do was create another. They were also extremely wary of one another, and much of the debate over the Articles of Confederation reflected wide concern that the rules not give any states preferential treatment. (See the Appendix for the text of the Articles of Confederation.)

The Articles established a "firm league of friendship" among the thirteen American states, but they did not empower a central government to act effectively on behalf of those states. The Articles were ultimately replaced because, without a strong central government, they were unable to provide the economic and political stability that the founders wanted. Even so, under this set of rules, some people were better off, and some problems, namely the resolution of boundary disputes and the political organization of new territories, were handled extremely well.

THE PROVISIONS OF THE ARTICLES

The government set up by the Articles was called a **confederation** because it established a system in which each state would retain almost all of its own power to do what it wanted. In other words, in a confederation, each state is sovereign, and the central government has only the job of running the collective business of the states. It has no independent source of power and resources for its operations. Another characteristic of a confederation is that, because it is founded on state sovereignty (authority), it says nothing about individuals. It creates neither rights nor obligations for individual citizens, leaving such matters to be handled by state constitutions.

Under the Articles of Confederation, Congress had many formal powers, including the power to establish and direct the armed forces, to decide matters of war and peace, to coin money, and to enter into treaties. Its powers, however, were quite limited. For example, although Congress controlled the armed forces, it had no power to draft soldiers or to tax citizens to pay for its military needs. Its inability to tax put Congress—and the central government as a whole—at the mercy of the states. The government could ask, but it was up to the states to contribute or not as they chose. Furthermore, Congress lacked the ability to regulate commerce between states, and between states and foreign powers. It could not establish a common and stable monetary system. In essence, the Articles allowed the states to be thirteen independent units, printing their own currencies, setting their own tariffs, and establishing their own laws with regard to financial and political matters. In every critical case—national security, national economic prosperity, and the general welfare—the U.S. government had to rely on the voluntary goodwill and cooperation of the state governments. That meant that the success of the new nation depended on what went on in state legislatures around the country.

constitution the rules that establish a government

Articles of Confederation the first constitution of the United States (1777) creating an association of states with weak central government

confederation a government in which independent states unite for common purpose but retain their own sovereignty

SOME WINNERS, SOME LOSERS

The era of American history following the Revolution was dubbed "this critical period" by John Quincy Adams, nephew of patriot Samuel Adams, son of John Adams, and himself a future president of the country. During this time, while the states were under the weak union of the Articles, the future of the United States was very much up in the air. The lack of an effective central government meant that the country had difficulty conducting business with other countries and enforcing harmonious trade relations and treaties. Domestic politics was equally difficult. Economic conditions following the war were poor. Many people owed money and could not pay their debts. State taxes were high and the economy was depressed, offering farmers few opportunities to sell their produce, for example, and hindering those with commercial interests from conducting business as they had before the war.

The radical poverty of some Americans seemed particularly unjust to those hardest hit, especially in light of the rhetoric of the Revolution about equality for all. This is a difficulty of having a narrative controlled from on high—if it doesn't match up with the reality on the ground, new narratives can develop. Having used "equality" as a rallying cry during the war, the founders were afterward faced with a population that wanted to take equality seriously and eliminate the differences that existed between men.[26]

One of the ways this passion for equality manifested itself was in some of the state legislatures, where laws were passed to ease the burden of debtors and farmers. Often the focus of the laws was property, but rather than preserving property, as per the Lockean narrative, these laws frequently were designed to confiscate or redistribute property instead. The have-nots in society, and the people acting on their behalf, were using the law to redress what they saw as injustices in early American life. To relieve postwar suffering, they printed paper money, seized property, and suspended "the ordinary means for the recovery of debts."[27] In other words, in those states, people with debts and mortgages could legally escape or postpone paying the money they owed. With so much economic insecurity, naturally those who owned property would not continue to invest and lend money. The Articles of Confederation, in their effort to preserve power for the states, had provided for no checks or limitations on state legislatures. In fact, such action would have been seen under the Articles as infringing on the sovereignty of the states. What you had was a clash between two visions of what America was to be about.

How would American politics be different today if we had retained the Articles of Confederation instead of adopting the Constitution?

The political elite in the new country started to grumble about **popular tyranny**. In a monarchy, one feared the unrestrained power of the king, but perhaps in a republican government one had to fear the unrestrained power of the people. The final straw was **Shays's Rebellion**. Massachusetts was a state whose legislature, dominated by wealthy and secure citizens, had not taken measures to aid the debt-ridden population. In an effort to keep their land from foreclosure (seizure by those to whom they owed money), a mob of angry musket-wielding farmers from western Massachusetts, led by a former officer of the Continental Army, Daniel Shays, stormed a federal armory in Springfield that housed 450 tons of military supplies in January 1787. The mob was turned back after a violent clash with state militia, but the attack frightened and embarrassed the leaders of the United States, who feared that the rebellion foreshadowed the failure of their grand experiment in self-governance, and certainly challenged their story of what it was about. In their minds, it underscored the importance of discovering what James Madison would call "a republican remedy for those diseases most incident to republican government."[28] The leaders had to find a way to contain and limit the will of the people in a government that was to be based on the will of the people. If the rules of government were not producing the "right" winners and losers, then the rules would have to be changed before the elite lost control of their narrative and the power to change the rules.

popular tyranny the unrestrained power of the people

Shays's Rebellion a grassroots uprising (1787) by armed Massachusetts farmers protesting foreclosures

PAUSE AND REVIEW Who, What, How

The fledgling states had an enormous amount at stake as they forged their new government after the Revolution. Perceiving that alarming abuses of power by the British king had come from a strong national government, they were determined to limit the central power of the new nation. The solution was to form a "firm league of friendship" among the several states but to keep the power of any central institutions as weak as possible.

With widespread land ownership possible and with the need for popular support, most farmers and artisans enjoyed the status of citizenship. Given easy access to the state legislatures under the Articles of Confederation, they were able to use the rules of the new political system to take the edge off the economic hardships they

were facing, and to build a power base and create their own narrative about the purpose of government.

But the same rules that made it so easy for the new citizens to influence their state governments made it more difficult for the political and economic leaders of the former colonies to protect their own economic security. In their eyes, new rules were needed that would remove government from the rough-and-ready hands of the farmers and protect it from what they saw as unreasonable demands.

In Your Own Words Explain who won and who lost under the Articles of Confederation.

THE CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION

Division and compromise over state power and representation

Even before Shays and his men attacked the Springfield armory, delegates from key states had met in Annapolis, Maryland, to discuss the nation's commercial weaknesses. There they adopted a proposal to have each state send delegates to a national convention to be held in Philadelphia in May 1787. The purpose of the meeting would be to make the national government strong enough to handle the demands of united action.

The Philadelphia Convention was authorized to try to fix the Articles of Confederation, but it was clear that many of the fifty-five state delegates who gathered in May were not interested in saving the existing framework at all. Many of the delegates represented the elite of American society, and thus they were among those being most injured under the terms of the Articles. When it became apparent that the **Constitutional Convention** was replacing, not revising, the Articles, some delegates refused to attend, declaring that such a convention was outside the Articles of Confederation and therefore illegal—in fact, it was treason. The convention was in essence overthrowing the government.

"AN ASSEMBLY OF DEMIGODS"

When Thomas Jefferson, unable to attend the convention because he was on a diplomatic mission to Europe, heard about the Philadelphia meeting, he called it "an assembly of demigods."[29] As you'll see from *Snapshot of America: Who Were the Founders?*, the delegates were among the most educated, powerful, and wealthy citizens of the new country. Some leading figures were absent. Not only was Jefferson in Paris, but John Adams was also in Europe. Samuel Adams had not been elected but had declared his general disapproval of the "unconstitutional" undertaking, as had Patrick Henry, another hotheaded revolutionary patriot and advocate of states' rights. But there was George Washington, from Virginia, the general who had led American troops to victory in the Revolution. Also from Virginia were George Mason, Edmund Randolph, and James Madison, the sickly and diminutive but brilliant politician who would make a greater imprint on the final Constitution than all the other delegates combined. Other delegates were also impressive, including eighty-one-year-old Benjamin Franklin, as mentally astute as ever, if increasingly feeble in body; Gouverneur Morris from Pennsylvania; and Alexander Hamilton among the New Yorkers.

These delegates represented the very cream of American society. As the *Snapshot of America* shows, they were well educated in an age when most of the population was not. They were also wealthy, and even though they were, on the whole, a young group, they were politically experienced. Many had been active in revolutionary politics, and they were well read in the political theories of the day.

Members of the delegations met through a sweltering Philadelphia summer to reconstruct the foundations of American government. The heat and humidity were heightened because the windows of Convention Hall were kept closed against listening ears and, consequently, the possibility of a cooling breeze.[30] We owe most of what we know about the convention today to the notes of James Madison, which he insisted not be published until after the deaths of all the convention delegates.[31]

As the delegates had hoped, the debates at the Constitutional Convention produced a very different narrative about power and a different system of rules than that established by the Articles of Confederation. Many of these rules were compromises to resolve the conflicting interests brought by delegates to the convention. In fact, the importance of political compromise became one the prevailing narratives that emerged from the convention and that still carries considerable weight today.

Imagine that you face the delegates' challenge—to construct a new government from scratch. You can create all the rules, arrange all the institutions, just to your liking. The only hitch is that you have other delegates to work with. Delegate A, for instance, is a merchant with a lot of property; he has big plans for a strong government that can ensure secure conditions for conducting business and can adequately protect property. Delegate B is a planter. In Delegate B's experience, big governments are dangerous. Big governments are removed from the people, and it is easy for corruption to take root

Constitutional Convention the assembly of fifty-five delegates in the summer of 1787 to recast the Articles of Confederation; the result was the U.S. Constitution

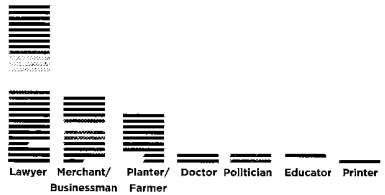
Snapshot of America: *Who Were the Founders?*



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■ CT ■ DE ■ GA ■ MD ■ MA ▩ NH NJ ▩ NY ■ NC ■ PA ■ RI ■ SC ■ VA

Occupations of the Founders



Religions of the Founders

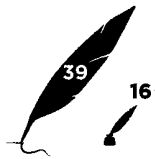


Ratification by State



New Hampshire - June 21, 1788
New York - July 26, 1788
Massachusetts - Feb. 7, 1788 **(including Maine)**
Connecticut - Jan. 9, 1788
Rhode Island - May 29, 1790
Pennsylvania - Dec. 12, 1787
New Jersey - Dec. 18, 1787
Delaware - Dec. 7, 1787
Maryland - Apr. 28, 1788
Virginia - June 26, 1788
North Carolina - Nov. 21, 1789
South Carolina - May 23, 1788
Georgia - Jan. 2, 1788

How Many Signed and How Many Didn't?



Walked out and didn't sign
Oliver Ellsworth (CT)
James McClurg (VA)
George Wythe (VA)
Alexander Martin (NC)
William R Davie (NC)
Robert Yates (NY)
John Lansing Jr. (NY)
William Houstoun (GA)
William Pierce (GA)
Caleb Strong (MA)
John F Mercer (MD)
Luther Martin (MD)
William Houston (NJ)

Abstained from signing
Elbridge Gerry (MA)
George Mason (VA)
Edmund J Randolph (VA)

Behind the Numbers

The founders were clearly an elite group of men. They attended the top schools and most were successful and wealthy. In general, how does one's economic and social status affect one's political views? Are your views shaped by your own circumstances? Can a government created by "an assembly of demigods" work for the rest of us mortals?

when people can't keep a close eye on what their officials are doing. People like Delegate B think that they do better when power is broken up and localized and there is no strong central government. In fact, Delegate B would prefer a government like that provided by the Articles of Confederation. How do you reconcile these two very different agendas?

The solution adopted under the Articles of Confederation had basically favored Delegate B's position. The new Constitution, given the profiles of the delegates in attendance, was moving strongly in favor of Delegate A's position. Naturally the agreement of all those who followed Delegate B would be important in ratifying, or getting approval for, the final Constitution, so their concerns could not be ignored. The compromise chosen by the founders at the Constitutional Convention was called **federalism**. Unlike a confederation, in which the states retain the ultimate power over the whole, federalism gives the central government its own source of power, in this case the Constitution of the people of the United States. But unlike a unitary system, which we discuss in Chapter 4, federalism also gives independent power to the states.

Compared to how they fared under the Articles of Confederation, the advocates of states' rights were losers under the new Constitution, but they were better off than they might have been. The states could have had all their power stripped away. The economic elite, people like Delegate A, were clear winners under the new rules. This proved to be one of the central issues during the ratification debates. Those who sided with the federalism alternative, who mostly resembled Delegate A, came to be known as **Federalists**. The people like Delegate B, who continued to hold on to the strong state–weak central government option, were called **Anti-Federalists**. We will return to them shortly.

LARGE STATES, SMALL STATES

Once the convention delegates agreed that federalism would provide the framework of the new government, they had to decide how to allot power among the states. Should all states count the same in decision making, or should the larger states have more power than the smaller ones? The rules chosen here could have a crucial impact on the politics of the country. If small states and large states had equal amounts of power in national government, residents of large states such as Virginia, Massachusetts, and New York would effectively have less voice in the government than would residents of small states, like New Jersey and Rhode Island, since they would have proportionately less influence on how their power was wielded. If power were allocated on the basis of size, however, the importance of the small states would be reduced.

Two plans were offered by convention delegates to resolve this issue. The first, the **Virginia Plan**, was created by James Madison and presented at the convention by Edmund Randolph. The Virginia Plan represented the preference of the large, more populous states. This plan proposed that the country would have a strong national government, run by a bicameral (two-house) legislature. One house would be elected directly by the people, one indirectly by a combination of the state legislatures and the popularly elected national house. But the numbers of representatives would be determined by the taxes paid by the residents of the state, which would reflect the free population in the state. In other words, large states would have more representatives in both houses of the legislature, and national law and policy would be weighted heavily in their favor. Just three large states, Virginia, Massachusetts, and Pennsylvania, would be able to form a majority and carry national legislation their way. The Virginia Plan also called for a single executive, to see that the laws were carried out, and a national judiciary, both appointed by the legislature, and it gave the national government power to override state laws.

A different plan, presented by William Paterson of New Jersey, was designed by the smaller states to offer the convention an alternative that would better protect their interests. The **New Jersey Plan** amounted to a reinforcement, not a replacement, of the Articles of Confederation. It provided for a multiperson executive, so that no one person could possess too much power, and for congressional acts to be the "supreme law of the land." Most significantly, however, the Congress was much like the one that had existed under the Articles. In a unicameral (one-house) legislature, each state got only one vote. The delegates would be chosen by state legislatures. The powers of Congress were stronger than under the Articles, but the national government was still dependent on the states for some of its funding. The large states disliked this plan because small states together could block what the larger states wanted, even though the larger states had more people and contributed more revenue.

The prospects for a new government could have foundered on this issue. The stuffy heat of the closed Convention Hall shortened the tempers of the weary delegates, and frustration made compromise difficult. Each side had too much to lose by yielding to the other's plan. The solution finally arrived at was politics at its best and shows the triumph of the compromise narrative. The **Great Compromise** kept much of the framework of the Virginia Plan. It was a strong federal structure headed by a central government with sufficient power to tax its citizens, regulate commerce, conduct foreign affairs, organize the military, and exercise other central powers. It called for a single executive and a national judicial system. The compromise that allowed the smaller states to live with it involved the composition of the legislature. Like the Virginia Plan, it provided for two houses. The House of Representatives would be based on state population, giving the large states the extra clout they felt they deserved, but in the Senate each state had two votes. This gave the smaller states relatively much more power in the Senate than in the House of Representatives. Members of the House of Representatives would be elected directly by the people, members of the Senate by the state legislatures. Thus the government would be directly binding on the people as well as on the states. A key to the compromise was that most legislation would need the approval of both houses, so that neither large states nor small states could hold the entire government hostage to their wishes. The smaller states were sufficiently happy with this plan that most of them voted to approve, or ratify, the Constitution quickly and easily. *The Big Picture* compares the Constitution with the Articles of Confederation, and shows how we got there via a number of compromises.

federalism a political system in which power is divided between the central and regional units

Federalists supporters of the Constitution who favored a strong central government

Anti-Federalists advocates of states' rights who opposed the Constitution

Virginia Plan a proposal at the Constitutional Convention that congressional representation be based on population, thus favoring the large states

New Jersey Plan a proposal at the Constitutional Convention that congressional representation be equal, thus favoring the small states

NORTH AND SOUTH

The compromise reconciling the large and small states was not the only one crafted by the delegates. The northern and the southern states, which is to say the non-slave-owning and the slave-owning states, were at odds over how population was to be determined for purposes of representation in the House of Representatives. The southern states wanted to count slaves as part of their populations when determining how many representatives they got, even though they had no intention of letting the slaves vote. Including slaves would give them more representatives and, thus, more power in the House. For exactly that reason, the northern states said that if slaves could not vote, they should not be counted. The compromise, also a triumph of politics if not humanity, is known as the **Three-fifths Compromise**. It was based on a formula developed by the Confederation Congress in 1763 to allocate tax assessments among the states. According to this compromise, for representation purposes, each slave would count as three-fifths of a person, every five slaves counting as three people. Interestingly, the actual language in the Constitution is a good deal cagier than this. It says that representatives and taxes shall be determined according to population, figured "by adding to the whole Number of free Persons, including those bound to Service for a Term of Years, and excluding Indians not taxed, three fifths of all other persons."

The issue of slavery was divisive enough for the early Americans that the most politically safe approach was not to mention it explicitly at all and thus to avoid having to endorse or condemn it. Implicitly, of course, the silence had the effect of letting slavery continue. Article I, Section 9, of the Constitution, in similarly vague language, allows that "The Migration or Importation of such Persons as any of the States now existing shall think proper to admit, shall not be prohibited by Congress prior to the Year one thousand eight hundred and eight, but a Tax or duty may be imposed on such Importation, not exceeding ten dollars for each Person." Even more damning, Article IV, Section 2, obliquely provides for the return of runaway slaves: "No Person held to Service or Labour in one State under the Laws thereof, escaping into another, shall, in Consequence of any Law or Regulation therein, be discharged from such Service or Labour, but shall be delivered up on Claim of the Party to whom such Service or Labour may be due." The word *slavery* did not appear in the Constitution until it was expressly outlawed in the Thirteenth Amendment, passed in December 1865, over eighty years after the writing of the Constitution.

Great Compromise the constitutional solution to congressional representation: equal votes in the Senate, votes by population in the House

Three-fifths Compromise the formula for counting five slaves as three people for purposes of representation, which reconciled northern and southern factions at the Constitutional Convention

PAUSE AND REVIEW Who, What, How

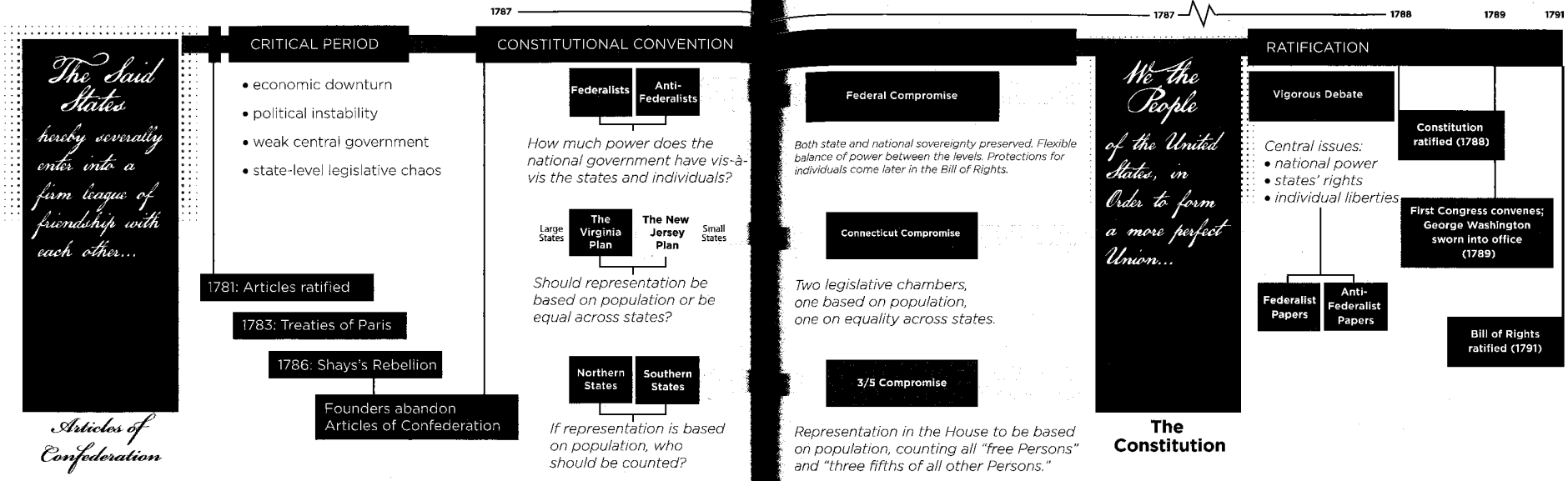
Not only the political and economic elite but also the everyday citizens who did not attend the Constitutional Convention stood to gain or lose dramatically from the proceedings. At stake that summer were the very rules that would provide the framework for so many political battles in the future and the stories that justified them.

Differences clearly existed among the founding elites. Those representing large states, of course, wanted rules that would give their states more power, based on their larger population, tax base, and size. Representatives of small states, by contrast, wanted rules that would give the states equal power, so that they would not be squashed by the large states. North and South also differed on the rules. The North wanted representation to be based on the population of free citizens, while the South wanted to include slaves in the population count. The Great Compromise and the Three-fifths Compromise solved both disagreements.

The people at the convention were divided along another dimension as well. The Federalists sought to create a strong central government more resistant to the whims of popular opinion. Opposing them, the Anti-Federalists wanted a decentralized government, closer to the control of the people. It was the Federalists who controlled the agenda at the convention and who ultimately determined the structure of the new government.

In Your Own Words Identify the competing narratives, goals, and compromises that shaped the Constitution.

THE BIG PICTURE:
How We Got to the Constitution From the Articles of Confederation



Articles of Confederation

State sovereignty

State law is supreme

Unicameral legislature; equal votes for all states

Two-thirds vote to pass important laws

No congressional power to levy taxes, regulate commerce

No executive branch; laws executed by congressional committee

No national judiciary

All states required to pass amendments

The Virginia Plan

National law is supreme

Majority vote to pass laws

No restriction on strong single executive

Popular ratification of amendments

The New Jersey Plan

State sovereignty

State law is supreme

Unicameral legislature; one vote per state

Extraordinary majority to pass laws

Congressional power to regulate commerce and tax

Multiple executive

No national judiciary

All states required to pass amendments

The Constitution

National law is supreme

Simple majority to pass laws in Congress; presidential veto

Strong executive

Amendment process is complex

RATIFICATION

Selling the Constitution to Americans

For the Constitution to become the law of the land, it had to go through the process of **ratification**—being voted on and approved by state conventions in at least nine of the states. As it happens, the Constitution was eventually ratified by all thirteen states, but not until some major political battles had been fought.

FEDERALISTS VERSUS ANTI-FEDERALISTS

So strongly partisan were the supporters and opponents of the Constitution that, if the battle were taking place today, Twitter feeds would be on fire and we would probably find the two sides sniping at each other on cable shows like *The Sean Hannity Show* and *Hardball With Chris Matthews*, and Samantha Bee would be busy mocking both groups. It was a fierce, lively battle to control the narrative of what the new republic would be like, but instead of producing viral videos and high television ratings, it yielded some of the finest writings for and against the American system.

Those in favor of ratification called themselves the Federalists. The Federalists, like Delegate A in our hypothetical constitution-building scenario, were mostly men with a considerable economic stake in the new nation. Having fared poorly under the Articles, they were certain that if America were to grow as an economic and world power, it needed to be the kind of country in which people with property would want to invest. Security and order were key values, as was popular control. The Federalists thought people like themselves should be in charge of the government, although some of them did not object to an expanded suffrage if government had enough built-in protections. Mostly, these students of the Enlightenment were convinced that a good government could be designed if the underlying principles of human behavior were known. If people were ambitious and tended toward corruption, then government should make use of those characteristics to produce good outcomes.

The Anti-Federalists told a different story. They rejected the notion that ambition and corruption were inevitable parts of human nature. If government could be kept small and local, and popular scrutiny truly vigilant, then Americans could live happy and contented lives without getting involved in the seamier side of politics. If America did not stray from its rural roots and values, it could permanently avoid the creeping corruption that they believed threatened it. The Articles of Confederation were more attractive to the Anti-Federalists than was the Constitution because they did not call for a strong central government that, tucked away from the voters' eyes, could become a hotbed of political intrigue. Instead, the Articles vested power in the state governments, which could be more easily watched and controlled.

Writing under various aliases as well as their own names, the Federalists and Anti-Federalists fired arguments back and forth in pamphlets and newspaper editorials, aimed at persuading undecided Americans to come out for or against the Constitution. Because the channels of communication were limited, the competing ideas were concentrated into two streams. The Federalists were far more aggressive and organized in their "media blitz," hitting New York newspapers with a series of eloquent editorials published under the pen name Publius, but really written by Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay. These essays were bound and distributed in other states where the ratification struggle was close. Known as ***The Federalist Papers***, they are one of the main texts on early American politics today. In response, the Anti-Federalists published essays written under such names as Cato, Brutus, and The Federal Farmer.[32]

THE FEDERALIST PAPERS

Eighty-five essays were written by Publius. These essays are clever, well thought out, and logical, but they are also tricky and persuasive examples of the hard sell. We take a close look at two of the most important of the essays, numbers 10 and 51, in Chapters 13 and 4, respectively. Their archaic language makes *The Federalist Papers* generally difficult reading for contemporary students. However, the arguments in support of the Constitution are laid out so beautifully that taking the trouble to read them is worthwhile. It would be a good idea to turn to them and read them carefully now.

In *Federalist* No. 10, Madison tried to convince Americans that a large country was no more likely to succumb to the effects of special interests than a small one (preferred by the Anti-Federalists). He explained that the greatest danger to a republic came from **factions**—what we might call interest groups. Factions are groups of people motivated by a common interest, but one different from the interest of the country as a whole. Farmers, for instance, have an interest in keeping food prices high, even though that would make most Americans worse off. Businesspeople prefer high import duties on foreign goods, even though they make both foreign and domestic goods more expensive for the rest of us. Factions are not a particular problem when they constitute a minority of the population because they are offset by majority rule. They become problematic, however, when they are a majority. Factions usually have economic roots, the most basic being between the haves and have-nots in society. One of the majority factions that worried Madison was the mass of propertyless people whose behavior was so threatening to property holders under the Articles of Confederation.

ratification the process through which a proposal is formally approved and adopted by vote

The Federalist Papers a series of essays written to build support for ratification of the Constitution

factions groups of citizens united by some common passion or interest and opposed to the rights of other citizens or to the interests of the whole community

To control the causes of factions would be to infringe on individual liberty. But Madison believed that the effects of factions were easily managed in a large republic. First of all, representation would dilute the effects of factions, and it was in this essay that Madison made his famous distinction between "pure democracy" and a "republic." In addition, if the territory were sufficiently large, factions would be neutralized because there would be so many of them that no one would be likely to become a majority. Furthermore, it would be difficult for people who shared common interests to find one another if some lived in South Carolina, for instance, and others lived in New Hampshire. Clearly Madison never anticipated social media, or even the telegraph. We discuss Madison's argument about factions again in Chapter 13, when we take up the topic of interest groups. In the meantime, however, notice how Madison relied on mechanical elements of politics (size and representation) to remedy a flaw in human nature (the tendency to form divisive factions). This is typical of the Federalists' approach to government, and it reflects the importance of institutions as well as rules in bringing about desired outcomes in politics.

We see the same emphasis on mechanical solutions to political problems in *Federalist* No. 51. Madison argued there that the institutions proposed in the Constitution would lead to neither corruption nor tyranny. The solution was the principles of checks and balances and separation of powers. We discuss these at length in Chapter 4, but it is worth looking at Madison's interesting explanation of why such checks work. Again building his case on a potential defect of human character, he said, "Ambition must be made to counteract ambition."[33] If men tend to be ambitious, give two ambitious men the job of watching over each other, and neither will let the other have an advantage.

Federalist No. 84 was written by Hamilton. It doesn't reflect great principles, but it is interesting politically because the Constitution was ratified in spite of it, not because of it. In this essay, Hamilton argued that a **Bill of Rights**—a listing of the protections against government infringement of individual rights guaranteed to citizens by government itself—was not necessary in a constitution (see the *CLUES to Critical Thinking* in Chapter 5).

Bill of Rights a summary of citizen rights guaranteed and protected by a government; added to the Constitution as its first ten amendments in order to achieve ratification

The original draft of the Constitution contained no Bill of Rights. Some state constitutions had them, and so the Federalists argued that a federal Bill of Rights would be redundant. Moreover, the limited government set up by the federal Constitution didn't have the power to infringe on individual rights anyway, and many of the rights that would be included in a Bill of Rights were already in the body of the text. To the Anti-Federalists, already afraid of the invasive power of the national government, this omission was more appalling than any other aspect of the Constitution.

Hamilton argued that a Bill of Rights was unnecessary, even dangerous. As it stood, Hamilton said, the limited national government didn't have the power to interfere with citizens' lives in many ways, and any interference at all would be suspect. But if the Constitution were prefaced with a list of things government could not do to individuals, then government would assume it had the power to do anything that wasn't expressly forbidden. Therefore, government, instead of being unlikely to trespass on its citizens' rights, would be more likely to do so with a Bill of Rights than without. This argument was so unpersuasive to Americans at that time that the Federalists were forced to give in to Anti-Federalist pressure during the ratification process. The price of ratification exacted by several states was the Bill of Rights, really a Bill of "Limits" on the federal government, added to the Constitution as the first ten amendments. We look at those limits in detail in Chapter 5, on fundamental American liberties.

Would we have more freedoms today, or fewer, without the Bill of Rights?

THE FINAL VOTE

The smaller states, gratified by the compromise that gave them equal representation in the Senate, and believing they would be better off as part of a strong nation, ratified the Constitution quickly. The vote was unanimous in Delaware, New Jersey, and Georgia. In Connecticut (128–40) and Pennsylvania (46–23), the convention votes, though not unanimous, were strongly in favor of the Constitution. This may have helped to tip the balance for Massachusetts, voting much more closely to ratify (187–168). Maryland (63–11) and South Carolina (149–73) voted in favor of ratification in the spring of 1788, leaving only one more state to supply the requisite nine to make the Constitution law.

The battles in the remaining states were much tighter. When the Virginia convention met in June 1788, the



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Federalists felt that it could provide the decisive vote and threw much of their effort into securing passage. Madison and his Federalist colleagues debated with such Anti-Federalist advocates as George Mason and Patrick Henry, promising as they had in Massachusetts to support a Bill of Rights. Virginia ratified the Constitution by the narrow margin of 89 to 79, preceded by a few days by New Hampshire, voting 57 to 47. Establishment of the Constitution as the law of the land was ensured with approval of ten states. New York also narrowly passed the Constitution, 30 to 27, but North Carolina defeated it (193–75) and Rhode Island, which had not sent delegates to the Constitutional Convention, refused to call a state convention to put it to the vote. Later both North Carolina and Rhode Island voted to ratify and join the union, in November 1789 and May 1790, respectively.[34] The *Snapshot of America* on page 69 summarizes the voting on the Constitution.

Again we can see how important rules are in determining outcomes. The Articles of Confederation had required the approval of all the states. Had the Constitutional Convention chosen a similar rule of unanimity, the Constitution may very well have been defeated. Recognizing that unanimous approval was not probable, however, the Federalists decided to require ratification by only nine of the thirteen, making adoption of the Constitution far more likely.

PAUSE AND REVIEW Who, What, How

The fight over ratification of the Constitution not only had the actual form of government at stake but also represented a conflict between narratives about the nature of human beings and the possibilities of republican government. The Federalists favored the new Constitution. For the Anti-Federalists, the Constitution seemed to present innumerable opportunities for corruption to fester. Knowing they had lost the battle for public opinion and for votes, they made the attachment of a Bill of Rights a condition of their acquiescence.

In Your Own Words Summarize the debate over ratification of the Constitution.

THE CITIZENS AND THE FOUNDING

New rights bring obligations

As we said at the beginning of this chapter, there are different narratives to be told about the American founding. We did not want to fall into the oversimplification trap, portraying the founding as a headlong rush to liberty on the part of an oppressed people. Politics is always a good deal more complicated than that, and this is a book about politics. We also wanted to avoid telling a story that errs on the other end of one-sidedness, depicting the American founding as an elite-driven period of history, in which the political, economic, and religious leaders decided they were better off without English rule; inspired the masses to revolt; and then created a Constitution that established rules that benefited people like themselves. Neither of these stories is entirely untrue, but they obscure two very important points.

COMPETING ELITES

The first point is that there was not just one "elite" group at work during the founding period. Although political and economic leaders might have acted together over the matter of the break with England (even then, important elites remained loyal to Britain), once the business of independence was settled, it was clear that competing elite groups existed. These groups included leaders of big states and leaders of small states, leaders of the northern states and leaders of southern states, merchant elites and agricultural elites, and elites who found their security in a strong national government and those who found it in decentralized power. The power struggle between all those adversaries resulted in the compromises that form the framework of our government today.

THE RISE OF THE "ORDINARY" CITIZEN

The second point is that not all the actors during the founding period were among the top tier of political, economic, and religious leadership. Just because the Revolution and the government-building that followed it were not the product of ordinary citizens zealous for liberty does not mean that ordinary citizens had nothing to do with it.


Chip Somodevilla/Getty Images

PROFILES IN CITIZENSHIP

History is anything but dull when it comes from the mouth of the man who started off his professional life teaching it and ended up making so much of it. Newt Gingrich is the architect of the "Contract With America," a document that helped propel the Republicans into the majority in Congress in 1994 for the first time in forty years, and made him Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives from 1995 to 1998. As you will see in Chapter 7, his ideas and the policies they generated still inform the terms of political debate in this country nearly two decades later, a fact that no doubt encouraged him to make his unsuccessful run for the presidency in 2012.

On why students should study history

If you've never run out of gas, you may not understand why filling your gas tank matters. And if you've never had your brakes fail, you may not care about having your brakes checked. And if you've never slid on an icy road, you may not understand why learning to drive on ice really matters. For citizens, if you haven't lived in a bombed-out city like Beirut or Baghdad, if you haven't seen a genocidal massacre like Rwanda, if you haven't been in a situation where people were starving to death, like Calcutta, you may not understand why you ought to study history. Because your life is good and it's easy and it's soft.

But for most of the history of the human race, most people, most of the time, have lived as slaves or as subjects to other people. And they lived lives that were short and desperate and where they had very little hope. And the primary breakthroughs have all been historic. It was the Greeks discovering the concept of self-governance, it was the Romans creating the objective sense of law, it was the Jewish tradition of being endowed by God—those came together and fused in Britain with the Magna Carta, and created a sense of rights that we take for granted every day. Because we have several hundred years of history protecting us. And the morning that history disappears, there's no reason to believe we'll be any better than Beirut or Baghdad.

On keeping the republic

Be responsible, live out your responsibilities as a citizen, dedicate some amount of your time every day or every week to knowing what is going on in the world, be active in campaigns, and if nobody is worthy of your support, run yourself. . . . The whole notion of civil society [is] doing something as a volunteer, doing something, helping your fellow American, being involved with human beings. America only works as an organic society. . . . We're the most stunningly voluntaristic society in the world. And so if voluntarism dries up, in some ways America dries up.

Source: Newt Gingrich spoke with Christine Barbour on March 21, 2005.

Citizenship as we know it today was a fledgling creation at the time of the founding. The British had not been citizens of the English government but subjects of the English Crown. There is a world of difference between a subject and a citizen, as we pointed out in Chapter 1. The subject has a personal tie to the monarch; the citizen has a legal tie to a national territory. The subject has obligations; the citizen has both obligations and rights. The source for these new ideas about citizenship was Enlightenment thinking. We have seen in the ideas of John Locke the concept of the social contract—that citizenship is the product of a contractual agreement between rulers and ruled that makes obeying the law contingent on having one's rights protected by the state.

But having transitioned from subjecthood to citizenship is not to say that citizenship conferred equal rights. Here principle clashed with profound prejudice. We saw throughout this chapter that the rights of citizenship were systematically denied to Native Americans, to African Americans, and to women. The ideals of citizenship that were born during the founding are truly innovative and inspiring, but they were unavailable in practice to a major portion of the population for well over a hundred years. It is conventional today to be appalled at the failure of the founders to practice the principles of equality they preached, and certainly that failure is appalling in light of today's values, but we should remember that the whole project of citizenship was new to the founders and that in many ways they were far more democratic than any who had come before them. One of our tasks in this book will be to trace the evolving narratives and practice of American citizenship, as the conferral of equal rights so majestically proclaimed in the Declaration slowly becomes reality for all Americans. Another related task will be to see the empowerment of individual citizens as their ability to create and share their own narratives is enhanced by technology.

In Your Own Words Explain the role of everyday citizens in the founding of the United States.

LET'S REVISIT: *What's at Stake . . .*

Having read the history of revolutionary America, what would you say is at stake in the modern militia movement? The existence of state militias and similar groups poses a troubling dilemma for the federal government; and groups whose members are mostly benign, like the Tea Partiers, are even trickier for the government to deal with. Bill Clinton, who was president when Timothy McVeigh bombed the federal building in Oklahoma City, warned at the time of the fifteenth anniversary of those attacks that "there can be real consequences when what you say animates people who do things you would never do." Angry rhetoric and narratives that justify that anger can result in violence that those who goad the anger might not necessarily endorse. The violence at Trump rallies in 2016 was a case in point, and there are those out there, like McVeigh and the Bundys, who "were profoundly alienated, disconnected people who bought into this militant antigovernment line."[35]

The dilemma is that, on the one hand, the purpose of government is to protect our rights, and the Constitution surely guarantees Americans freedom of speech and assembly. On the other hand, government must hold the monopoly on the legitimate use of force in society or it will fall, just as the British government fell to the American colonies. If groups are allowed to amass weapons and forcibly resist or even attack U.S. law enforcers, then they constitute "mini-governments," or competing centers of authority, and life for citizens becomes chaotic and dangerous.

The American system was designed to be relatively responsive to the wishes of the American public. Citizens can get involved; they can vote, run for office, change the laws, and amend the Constitution. By permitting these legitimate ways of affecting American politics, the founders hoped to prevent the rise of groups, like the Bundys, that would promote and act toward violence. The founders intended to create a society characterized by political stability, not by revolution, which is why Jefferson's Declaration of Independence is so careful to point out that revolutions should occur only when there is no alternative course of action.

Some militia members reject the idea of working through the system; they say, as did McVeigh, that they consider themselves at war with the federal government. We call disregard for the law at the individual level "crime," at the group level "terrorism" or "insurrection," and at the majority level "revolution." It is the job of any government worth its salt to prevent all three kinds of activities. Thus it is not the existence or the beliefs of the militia groups that government seeks to control but rather their activities.

What's at stake in challenges to the legitimacy of government are the very issues of government authority and the rights of individual citizens. It is difficult to draw the line between the protection of individual rights and the exercise of government authority. In a democracy, we want to respect the rights of all citizens, but this respect can be thwarted when a small number of individuals reject the rules of the game agreed on by the vast majority.

CLUES to Critical Thinking

The Declaration of Independence

By Thomas Jefferson, July 4, 1776

We discuss the Declaration of Independence at length in this chapter, but it is often a good idea to read for yourself the primary sources by which our history has been shaped.

IN CONGRESS, JULY 4, 1776

The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen United States of America

When in the Course of human events it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

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. — That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, — That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shewn that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security. — Such has been the patient sufferance of these Colonies; and such is now the necessity which constrains them to alter their former Systems of Government. The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States. To prove this, let Facts be submitted to a candid world.

He has refused his Assent to Laws, the most wholesome and necessary for the public good.

He has forbidden his Governors to pass Laws of immediate and pressing importance, unless suspended in their operation till his Assent should be obtained; and when so suspended, he has utterly neglected to attend to them.

He has refused to pass other Laws for the accommodation of large districts of people, unless those people would relinquish the right of Representation in the Legislature, a right inestimable to them and formidable to tyrants only.

He has called together legislative bodies at places unusual, uncomfortable, and distant from the depository of their Public Records, for the sole purpose of fatiguing them into compliance with his measures.

He has dissolved Representative Houses repeatedly, for opposing with manly firmness his invasions on the rights of the people.

He has refused for a long time, after such dissolutions, to cause others to be elected, whereby the Legislative Powers, incapable of Annihilation, have returned to the People at large for their exercise; the State remaining in the mean time exposed to all the dangers of invasion from without, and convulsions within.

He has endeavoured to prevent the population of these States; for that purpose obstructing the Laws for Naturalization of Foreigners; refusing to pass others to encourage their migrations hither, and raising the conditions of new Appropriations of Lands.

He has obstructed the Administration of Justice by refusing his Assent to Laws for establishing Judiciary Powers.

He has made Judges dependent on his Will alone for the tenure of their offices, and the amount and payment of their salaries.

He has erected a multitude of New Offices, and sent hither swarms of Officers to harass our people and eat out their substance.

He has kept among us, in times of peace, Standing Armies without the Consent of our legislatures.

He has affected to render the Military independent of and superior to the Civil Power.

He has combined with others to subject us to a jurisdiction foreign to our constitution, and unacknowledged by our laws; giving his Assent to their Acts of pretended Legislation:

For quartering large bodies of armed troops among us:

For protecting them, by a mock Trial from punishment for any Murders which they should commit on the Inhabitants of these States:

For cutting off our Trade with all parts of the world:

For imposing Taxes on us without our Consent:

For depriving us in many cases, of the benefit of Trial by Jury:

For transporting us beyond Seas to be tried for pretended offences:

For abolishing the free System of English Laws in a neighbouring Province, establishing therein an Arbitrary government, and enlarging its Boundaries so as to render it at once an example and fit instrument for introducing the same absolute rule into these Colonies:

For taking away our Charters, abolishing our most valuable Laws and altering fundamentally the Forms of our Governments:

For suspending our own Legislatures, and declaring themselves invested with power to legislate for us in all cases whatsoever.

He has abdicated Government here, by declaring us out of his Protection and waging War against us.

He has plundered our seas, ravaged our coasts, burnt our towns, and destroyed the lives of our people.

He is at this time transporting large Armies of foreign Mercenaries to compleat the works of death, desolation, and tyranny, already begun with circumstances of Cruelty & Perfidy scarcely paralleled in the most barbarous ages, and totally unworthy the Head of a civilized nation.

He has constrained our fellow Citizens taken Captive on the high Seas to bear Arms against their Country, to become the executioners of their friends and Brethren, or to fall themselves by their Hands.

He has excited domestic insurrections amongst us, and has endeavoured to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian Savages whose known rule of warfare, is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes and conditions.

In every stage of these Oppressions We have Petitioned for Redress in the most humble terms: Our repeated Petitions have been answered only by repeated injury. A Prince, whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a Tyrant, is unfit to be the ruler of a free people.

Nor have We been wanting in attentions to our British brethren. We have warned them from time to time of attempts by their legislature to extend an unwarrantable jurisdiction over us. We have reminded them of the circumstances of our emigration and settlement here. We have appealed to their native justice and magnanimity, and we have conjured them by the ties of our common kindred to disavow these usurpations, which would inevitably interrupt our connections and correspondence. They too have been deaf to the voice of justice and of consanguinity. We must, therefore, acquiesce in the necessity, which denounces our Separation, and hold them, as we hold the rest of mankind, Enemies in War, in Peace Friends.

We, therefore, the Representatives of the united States of America, in General Congress, Assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the Name, and by Authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly publish and declare, That these united Colonies are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States, that they are Absolved from all Allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain, is and ought to be totally dissolved; and that as Free and Independent States, they have full Power to levy War, conclude Peace, contract Alliances, establish Commerce, and to do all other Acts and Things which Independent States may of right do. — And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor.

Source: National Archives, http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/declaration_transcript.html.

C*onsider the source and the audience:* Thomas Jefferson is writing here to rally American colonists as well as to justify the American Revolution to the world. How do those twin goals affect his writing?

L*ay out the argument and the underlying values and assumptions:* Jefferson painstakingly lays out an argument here that, if the logic holds, leads inescapably to the conclusion that Americans must declare independence. What is that argument? What values about equality, rights, and political legitimacy underlie his argument about the social contract?

U*ncover the evidence:* What evidence does Jefferson offer for the premise of his argument, that all men are created equal and possess certain rights? To show that George III has broken the social contract, he offers certain "facts" to a "candid world." What are those facts? Are they all evidence of George III's misdeeds?

E*valuate the conclusion:* Jefferson concludes that the argument he has made and the facts he has presented mean that the colonies are "absolved from allegiance to the British crown." Assuming the facts he presents are true, was it possible to come to any other conclusion?

S*ort out the political implications:* The political implications of Jefferson's work were obvious and immediate: The colonies launched a war of independence that created the United States. How did this declaration smooth the way for that to happen? What if Jefferson had failed in his task—where would we be today?

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Review

Politics in the English Colonies

The politics of the American founding shaped the political compromises embodied in the Constitution. This in turn defined the institutions and many of the rules that do much to determine the winners and losers in political struggles today.

The battle for America involved a number of different groups, including American Indians, the Spanish, the French, and the British colonists. The English settlers came for many reasons, including religious and economic, but then duplicated many of the politically restrictive practices in the colonies that they had sought to escape in England. These included restrictions on political participation and a narrow definition of citizenship.

slavery (p. 60) **racism (p. 61)**

The Split From England

The Revolution was caused by many factors, including British attempts to get the colonies to pay for the costs of the wars fought to protect them. The pressures from the Crown for additional taxes coincided with new ideas about the proper role of government among colonial elites. These ideas are embodied in Jefferson's politically masterful writing of the Declaration of Independence.

French and Indian War (p. 61) **popular sovereignty (p. 62)** ***Common Sense* (p. 63)** **Declaration of Independence (p. 63)**

The Articles of Confederation

The government under the Articles of Confederation granted too much power to the states, which in a number of cases came to serve the interests of farmers and debtors. The Constitutional Convention was called to design a government with stronger centralized powers that would overcome the weaknesses elites perceived in the Articles.

constitution (p. 66) **Articles of Confederation (p. 66)** **confederation (p. 66)** **popular tyranny (p. 67)** **Shays's rebellion (p. 67)**

The Constitutional Convention

The new Constitution was derived from a number of key compromises: federalism was set as a principle to allocate power to both the central government and the states; the Great Compromise allocated power in the new national legislature; and the Three-fifths Compromise provided a political solution to the problem of counting slaves in the southern states for purposes of representation in the House of Representatives.

Constitutional Convention (p. 68) **federalism (p. 70)** **Federalists (p. 70)** **Anti-Federalists (p. 70)** **Virginia Plan (p. 70)** **New Jersey Plan (p. 70)** **Great Compromise (p. 71)** **Three-fifths Compromise (p. 71)**