

FOUNDATIONS OF AMERICAN DEMOCRACY VOCAB

Unit 1A: Government Power and Individual Rights

1. **Limited government** – Governmental power is restricted or limited by law, usually in a written constitution.
2. **Natural rights** – The rights of all people to dignity and worth.
3. **Popular sovereignty** – A doctrine in political theory that government is created by and subject to the will of the people.
4. **Republicanism** – Form of representational government in which leaders are elected for a specific period by the majority of the citizenry, and laws are passed by these leaders for the benefit of the entire republic.
5. **Social contract** – A “contract” in which a group of people agree to give up certain rights and accept a central authority in order to protect their other rights.
6. **Declaration of Independence** – Formal statement written by Thomas Jefferson declaring the freedom of the thirteen American colonies from Great Britain.
7. **The Grand Committee** – Committee organized at the Constitutional Convention that was created to solve the issue of how to apportion representatives in the national legislature.
8. **Democracy** – Government by the people, both directly or indirectly, with free and frequent elections.
9. **Direct democracy** – Government in which citizens vote on laws and select officials directly.
10. **Initiative** – Procedure whereby a certain number of voters may, by petition, propose a law or constitutional amendment and have it submitted to the voters.
11. **Referendum** – Procedure for submitting to popular vote measures passed by the legislature or proposed amendments to a state constitution.
12. **Recall** – Procedure for submitting to popular vote the removal of officials from office before the end of their term.
13. **Representative democracy** – Government in which the people elect those who govern and pass laws; also called a *republic*.
14. **Participatory democracy** – Emphasizes broad, direct participation in politics and civil society, in which most or all citizens participate in politics directly.
15. **Pluralist democracy** – Political power rests with competing interest groups so that no one group dominates political decisions.
16. **Elite democracy** – A small number of people, usually those who are wealthy and well-educated, influence political decision making.
17. **Popular consent** – The idea that a just government must derive its powers from the consent of the people it governs.
18. **Majority rule** – Governance according to the expressed preferences of the majority.
19. **Majority** – The candidate or party that wins more than half the votes cast in an election.
20. **Plurality** – Candidate or party with the most votes cast in an election, not necessarily more than half.
21. **Constitutionalism** – *The set of arrangements, including checks and balances, federalism, separation of powers, rule of law, due process, and a bill of rights, that requires our leaders to listen, think, bargain, and explain before they act or make laws. We then hold them politically and legally accountable for how they exercise their powers.*
22. **Statism** – *The idea that the rights of the nation are supreme over the rights of the individuals who make up the nation.*
23. **Theocracy** – *Government by religious leaders, who claim divine guidance.*

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Unit 1B: The Constitution

1. **Articles of Confederation** – The first governing document of the confederated states drafted in 1777, ratified in 1781, and replaced by the present Constitution in 1789.
2. **Federalist No. 10** – Essay written by James Madison arguing for ratification of the Constitution; dealt with the issue of factions and how best to control them.
3. **Brutus No. 1** – First in a series of essays designed to encourage New Yorkers to reject the proposed Constitution; Counter to the *Federalist Papers*.
4. **Faction** – A group of individuals within a larger entity, such as a political party, a trade union or other group, or simply a political climate, united by a particular common political purpose that differs in some respect to the rest of the entity.
5. **Shays' Rebellion** – Rebellion led by Daniel Shays of farmers in western Massachusetts in 1786-1787, protesting mortgage foreclosures. It highlighted the need for a strong national government just as the call for the Constitutional Convention went out.
6. **The Constitution** – Supreme law of the U.S. after it replaced the Articles of Confederation; Consists of a preamble, seven articles, and amendments.
7. **Bicameralism** – The principle of a two-house legislature.
8. **Virginia Plan** – Initial proposal at the Constitutional Convention made by the Virginia delegation for a strong central government with a bicameral legislature dominated by the big states.
9. **New Jersey Plan** – Proposal at the Constitutional Convention made by William Paterson of New Jersey for a central government with a single-house legislature in which each state would be represented equally.
10. **Connecticut (Great) Compromise** – Compromise agreement by states at the Constitutional Convention for a bicameral legislature with a lower house in which representation would be based on population and an upper house in which each state would have two senators.
11. **Three-fifths Compromise** – Compromise between northern and southern states at the Constitutional Convention that three-fifths of the slave population would be counted for determining direct taxation and representation in the House of Representatives.
12. **Electoral College** – The electoral system used in electing the president and vice president, in which voters vote for electors pledged to cast their ballots for a particular party's candidate.
13. **Federalists** – Supporters of ratification of the Constitution and of a strong central government.
14. **Antifederalists** – Opponents of ratification of the Constitution and of a strong central government, generally.
15. **The Federalist** – Essays promoting ratification of the Constitution, published anonymously by Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, and James Madison in 1787 and 1788.
16. **Separation of powers** – Constitutional division of powers among the legislative, executive, and judicial branches, with the legislative branch making law, the executive applying and enforcing the law, and the judiciary interpreting the law.
17. **Checks and balances** – Constitutional grant of powers that enables each of the three branches of government to check some acts of the others and therefore ensure that no branch can dominate.
18. **Electoral College** – The electoral system used in electing the president and vice president, in which voters vote for electors pledged to cast their ballots for a particular party's candidate.
19. **Judicial review** – The power of a court to review laws or government regulations to determine whether they are consistent with the U.S. Constitution, or in a state court, the state constitution.
20. **Congressional elaboration** – *Congressional legislation that gives further meaning to the Constitution based on sometimes vague constitutional authority, such as the necessary and proper clause.*
21. **Executive order** – *Directive issued by a president or governor that has the force of law.*
22. **Constitutional Convention** – *The convention in Philadelphia, May 25 to September 17, 1787, that debated and agreed upon the Constitution of the United States.*
23. **Originalist approach** – *An approach to constitutional interpretation that envisions the document as having a fixed meaning that might be determined by a strict reading of the text or the Framers' intent.*
24. **Adaptive approach** – *A method used to interpret the Constitution that understands the document to be flexible and responsive to the changing needs of the times.*
25. **Partisanship** – *Strong allegiance to one's own political party, often leading to unwillingness to compromise with members of the opposing party.*
26. **Divided government** – *Governance divided between the parties, especially when one holds the presidency and the other controls one or both houses of Congress.*
27. **Unified government** – *Governance in which one party controls both the White House and both houses of Congress.*
28. **Autocracy** – *A type of government in which one person with unlimited power rules.*

FOUNDATIONS OF AMERICAN DEMOCRACY VOCAB

Unit 1C: Federalism

- 1. Federalism** – Division of power between a central government and subdivisional governments, called *states* in the United States.
- 2. Unitary system** – Constitutional arrangement that concentrates power in a central government.
- 3. Confederation** – Constitutional arrangement in which sovereign nations or states, by compact, create a central government but carefully limit its power and do not give it direct authority over individuals.
- 4. Exclusive powers** – Powers that only the federal government can exercise.
- 5. Expressed powers** – Powers that are specifically named in the Constitution (sometimes called delegated powers or enumerated powers).
- 6. Implied powers** – Powers inferred from the express powers that allow Congress to carry out its functions.
- 7. Reserved powers** – All powers not specifically delegated to the national government by the Constitution. The reserve power can be found in the 10th Amendment to the Constitution.
- 8. Concurrent powers** – Powers that the Constitution gives to both the national and state governments, such as the power to levy taxes.
- 9. Necessary and proper clause** – Clause of the Constitution (Article 1, Section 8, Clause 3) setting forth the implied powers of Congress. It states that Congress, in addition to its express powers has the right to make all laws necessary and proper to carry out all powers the Constitution vests in the national government.
- 10. Inherent powers** – The powers of the national government in foreign affairs that the Supreme Court has declared do not depend on constitutional grants but rather grow out of the very existence of the national government.
- 11. Supremacy clause** – Contained in Article IV of the Constitution, the clause gives national laws the absolute power even when states have enacted a competing law.
- 12. Commerce clause** – The clause in the Constitution (Article 1, Section 8, Clause 1) that gives Congress the power to regulate all business activities that cross state lines or affect more than one state or other nations.
- 13. Federal mandate** – A requirement the federal government imposes as a condition for receiving federal funds.
- 14. Federal Revenue Sharing** – Money collected by the federal government (through taxes) that was given to state and local governments.
- 15. Full faith and credit clause** – Clause in the Constitution (Article 4, Section 1) requiring each state to recognize the civil judgments rendered by the courts of the other states and to accept their public records and acts as valid.
- 16. Centralists** – People who favor national action over action at the state and local levels.
- 17. Decentralists** – People who favor state or local action rather than national action.
- 18. Dual (“layer cake”) federalism** – State governments and national government each remain supreme within their own spheres; Powers and policy assignments of the layers of government were distinct.
- 19. Cooperative (“marble cake”) federalism** – Mingling of responsibilities between the state and national government; Sharing powers and policy assignments.
- 20. Policymaking** – The process of formulating policies (creating laws or setting standards).
- 21. Devolution revolution** – The effort to slow the growth of the federal government by returning many functions to the states.
- 22. National supremacy** – *Constitutional doctrine that whenever conflict occurs between the constitutionally authorized actions of the national government and those of a state or local government, the actions of the federal government will prevail.*
- 23. Preemption** – *The right of a federal law or a regulation to preclude enforcement of a state or local law or regulation.*