PART I

The Roots of American Government

1. The Nature of Government

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GOVERNMENT has two beginnings and no end. It began somewhere in the dawn of mankind and it begins anew in the life of each person. It has no end because no one can dispense with government, although some have tried, and because no one has proved that a future without it is possible. That government is inevitable is fairly certain. No more monumental error in the history of political theory can be recorded than the assertion of Karl Marx that communism would bring about a "withering away of the state." The triumph of communism, first in Russia and since then in other areas, has proved to be a direct route to totalitarian government, which is the exact opposite of no government at all. There is probably more truth than the average man realizes in the popular saying that "only two things are certain: death and taxes," taxes being the life companion of government. Particular governments can end. Government can change, of course, as character and

customs can change. But government itself is endless, save with the end of man.

Government a part of human nature

Government begins and ends with man—such a sweeping fact can be accepted only if one understands that government is part of human nature. The nature of government is the nature of man. Government is as personal to man as his appearance, his character, his religion, his friends, or his enemies. It is part of his own troubles and reflects his own genius. He can neither manage it to his entire satisfaction nor separate himself from it. He may stop reading newspapers; he may score zero on a quiz about the facts of his government; he may denounce all politics as useless or downright evil; but he need only see a policeman, hear the national anthem, go to school, or pay a tax, in order to be embraced by attitudes, ideas, fears, hopes, or some other actual or imagined experience having to do with government. Robinson Crusoe, as soon as another man joined him on his island, faced major problems of government: he sought means of winning the respect of his Good Man Friday, of gaining power, of avoiding revolt, and of planning for education, defense, collective production, and social security. In brief, he entered inevitably into government.

Government defined

If government must exist and is part of man's nature, it is important enough to be clearly defined. Therefore let the term "government" refer to *men acting in the name of the people of a land.* The definition is simple and disarming; it makes government seem insignificant and transient. All that is needed to have government is that in any group some members act in the name of all the members. But it is not so simple to say what the definition implies. Millions of men have died under the banner of a government; peoples have drifted apart in language and culture because they lived under different governments; one out of every seven employed Americans is on a government payroll.

In truth the definition gives little inkling of the enormity of the problem of government. The larger meaning of those bland words, "men acting in the name of the people of a land," opens up a world of infinite causes and effects, loves and hates, laws and rulelessness. Perhaps the best way to understand the phrase and its consequences is to look out upon government as it began to develop with mankind and as it comes into the ken of the child.

THE ORIGINS OF GOVERNMENT

The historical development

No one knows when government began; but most scholars believe that in a real sense it began with man himself. Probably man has always lived

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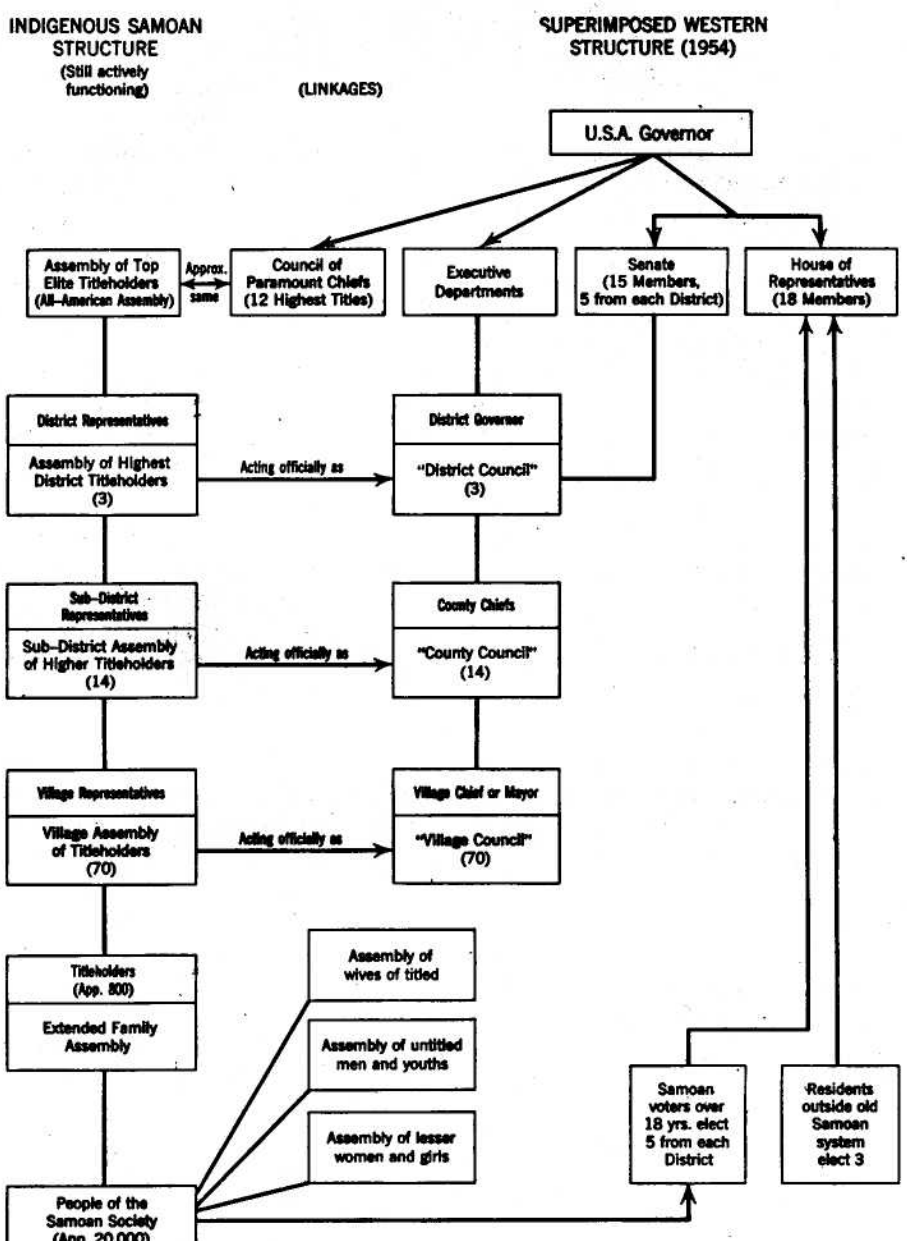
"Adoption of the Connecticut 'Fundamental Orders,' January, 1639." A mural painting by Albert Herter serves to show the strong original attachment of the New England colonists to the doctrine of the social compact.



Keesing, Felix M. and Marie M., "Elite Communication in a non-Western Society: A Study of Leadership in Samoa" (unpublished manuscript).

Figure 1. The Original and Imposed Governments of American Samoa. The ancient government is still functioning and a second government has been placed alongside it. The new one is a copy of the American government in many ways whereas the old one has the strong emphasis on family organization and village assemblies that is found in a great many simple communities.

in some kind of family life. The family in turn has the fundamental traits of government, for a parent acts in the name of the other members. The usual notion of government draws rapidly closer with the form of society known as the *extended family.* In this arrangement grandparents, uncles, relatives by marriage, and cousins reside together or near one another. It is a common form of primitive society, and sometimes the form even lasts into a well-developed culture. The Scottish clan is a widely known example of the extended family. The American Indian tribe is based upon an extended family structure. So, too, is the Samoan native government, whose structure is shown in Figure 1. Frequently the oldest man rules the group, or a council of elders or of warriors decides the policies of the group. This primitive state already has the major features of the colossal states to come. It has a government, laws, a sense of owning territory, and interests in social welfare and religion.

How the family expands into the larger society has been explained in several ways by different scholars. More than one of these explanations may be true of some times and places. A series of favorable events may allow one patriarch with one or more wives, many sons, daughters, and other dependents, and great ingenuity, to gather enough property, inspire enough fear, and garner enough allies so as to establish a durable nomadic or agricultural community. Certain peoples have traced their governments back to an original lawgiver—a Hebrew Moses, a Cretan Minos, a Spartan Lycurgus, or a Roman Numa. The half-forgotten memory of a grand patriarch is suggested in the beliefs. Probably such men were leaders and codifiers of law (bringing together older laws and customs, and making them clear and consistent), rather than founders of larger societies. Americans speak of the Founding Fathers in much the same way as these ancient peoples spoke of their patriarchs centuries later.

The social compact

Another important theory to explain the source of government is the *social compact* (or contract). The social compact theory holds that government has its origins in a convenient agreement among free individuals and families to establish a method of ruling among themselves. There are few historical cases to lend forceful support to this theory. Perhaps the numerous instances of confederations provide the best examples of a kind of contract. Confederation is a voluntary and cooperative merger of various smaller governments into a larger organization. The United States under the Articles of Confederation (from 1781 until 1788) is one example. Another is the temporary combining of several Great Plains Indian tribes for buffalo hunts, after which the compounded society would disband. Also some Teutonic tribes formed temporary unions for marauding the Roman Empire in its declining years. Even the United Nations organization (UN) is a kind of confederation based on a contractual agreement among free national groups. (See Figure 123, Chapter 48.)

However, in all these cases, groups larger than individuals or families were "contracting." Only when men have been thrown together under

extraordinary circumstances have examples of individual or familial contracting occurred. During the chaotic centuries following the end of the Roman Empire in western Europe, many such contracts were negotiated between the great landed nobles and lesser men, to gain servants for the former and protection for the latter; these agreements fixed mutual rights and obligations. More nearly the perfect type of the social contract was

MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT

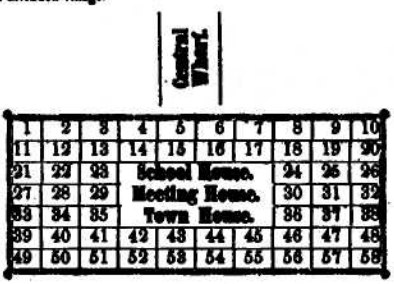
We, the undersigned, are desirous of engaging in an enterprise on the golden shores of California, the paradise of America, where Summer reigns perpetually, while the fertile soil is yielding its increase abundantly, fruits growing spontaneously, fishes sporting most plentifully, and where wild game is most prolific, on the shores of the Pacific. Our object is to settle a Township, or effect a permanent settlement on the Coast of California, at some central point, in some capacious and commodious harbor, where the salubrity of the climate, the fertility of the soil, mill privileges, timber for ship building and other purposes, conveniences for the fisheries, for coasting, and other natural advantages, shall warrant a healthy and rapid settlement.

For the accomplishment of the above-mentioned object, we appoint GEORGE KIMBALL, of Fruitfort, county of Waldo, and State of Maine, as our lawful Agent, to purchase or build, man and equip a ship suitable to perform said voyage to California; said ship to be ready for sea by the tenth day of October, 1849. And said ship is to be considered as divided into Shares of $101 each; and we severally agree to take as many Shares and pay as many Dollars as are set against our names below; no one to own more than five shares in said ship. The payment of said Shares to be made as follows, viz: $10 per Share to be paid to George Kimball, our Agent, by the tenth day of April, 1849; $41 July 15, and $50 per Share to be paid to the Agent, owner or builder, September 15, and said ship is to be ready to launch by the last day of September, 1849, at which time bills of sale are to pass from the lawful owner to the several Shareowners, who shall have made payment according to the above agreement.

Among our reasons for leaving our native shores, are the following, viz: 1st, the land has nearly all passed from government, into the hands of speculators, who exact more for the soil than we are able to pay; 2d, the lumber is nearly gone, and the fishing business is very uncertain; 3d, the land fails to yield its usual increase, the potatoe and some other crops being almost an entire failure; 4th, the summers are so short, and the winters so long, that we have to become the humble servants of our cattle about eight months of the year; 5th, the despotism of fashion is so oppressive, and its exactions so insupportable, that like our Puritan Fathers, in order to preserve our integrity, we flee into the wilds of the far distant west; 6th, at this trying moment, Providence has opened to us a door of mercy and hope, and we gladly accept the proffered favor; 7th, we go because a continual summer, a salubrious climate, a fertile soil, and other natural advantages, open to us an unbounded field for industry and enterprise in that region.

From two to three hundred of us will build and own a fine Packet of 600 tons, by paying $101 each; this Packet will make one voyage per annum from Maine to California, taking out passengers, produce, &c., and return with the exports of the Pacific. We take our Families, Furniture, Tools for the Mechanic, apparatus for a Saw-Mill. On our arrival the first object will be to select our Township; 2d, build a Saw-Mill; 3d, erect a public depot for our families and baggage until private dwellings can be built. When the Packet sails, a school will commence for all on board, where the art of Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, Navigation, Surveying, and such other branches of Natural Science will be taught as will be most needed in the new settlement.

Below is a plan of our intended village.



Each man drawn by lot one block or house lot in each tier, and each lot to contain about one half an acre; all are to settle as near together as convenient, for mutual aid and protection.

This "California Packet" is now lying at Central Wharf, Boston, February 4, 1850.

Figure 2. The Social Compact in Western Settlement. Facsimile of an agreement among pioneers to found a colony in California. Note how the plan for a new home calls for the establishment of old and familiar institutions such as the New England Town Square. No reference to the gold rush is made; perhaps to search for gold was not a respectable ideal in their society.

the Mayflower Compact, signed aboard ship by the Pilgrim men before landing and establishing Plymouth colony. The Fundamental Orders of the elders of the Connecticut Colony, drafted somewhat later, furnish another analogue. The picture that introduces this chapter shows that scene as a painter has imagined it. Even more close to the ideal was the formation of wagon trains or ships' companies to move West in pioneer days, when temporary governments had to be established for the long journey and the new settlement. Even here people were moving only from one government to another which was closer to their own ideas and interests; often the new resembled the old almost to the smallest detail. Figure 2 shows a reproduction of a contract made prior to the voyage of a ship to California.

Expansion by conquest

It is unlikely that the social compact theory, with its benign accent on the growth of government through cooperative endeavor, explains as much history as the development of government through conquest of one people by another. Probably more multi-family groups and permanent unions of peoples have occurred through the use of force than through any other means. Man may be ultimately destined to a government by cooperation of individuals or small villages, but history has given few previews of this blessed condition. On the other hand, to retrace the history of many governments is to recall, one after another, with monotonous frequency, their various conquerors, until finally the government is lost to recorded history or archeology.

UNIVERSAL BELIEFS ABOUT GOVERNMENT

The feeling of belonging

Governments during history have arisen in connection with several fundamental ideas held by men. Wherever one finds government, one finds these attitudes as well. Among them is the feeling of belonging together: men believe that they belong willingly, by their own consent, to their country and people, and that they are among those in whose name the government speaks. The illusion of free choice can become so strong as to let one pridefully sing, like the Englishman in Gilbert and Sullivan's operetta *H.M.S. Pinafore:*

> For he might have been a Roosian,
> A French or Turk or Proosian,
> Or perhaps Itali-an
> But in spite of all temptations
> To belong to other nations
> He remains an Englishman.

Comic though excesses of egotism may be, loss of a feeling of belonging would be tragic for most people. Most children and adults are deeply touched by the story of "The Man without a Country," doomed to a life in accord with his own wish that he might never see or hear the name of America again, a wish that to many hearers would be blasphemous. Feel-

ing at one with the people and the government is akin to feeling oneself part of a family; a person is inclined to believe that both groups are right in disputes over any subject unless proved indubitably wrong. Although "my country, may she always be right, but my country, right or wrong," is a toast to a nation and not to a government, whatever government is in office benefits by the halo of near-sacredness encircling the sense of patriotism.

Respect for authority

Beside the sentiment that government exists by consent of the people stands the notion that the government demands respect. The government "is usually right" and "should be obeyed." Pronouncements of government are more respected than are those of private citizens, no matter how brilliant the men may be, nor how great their prestige. Perhaps respect for power goes back to the innumerable conquests men have made of one another. The repressive features of government have always been noteworthy; rarely has the whip or the chain been far from the hand that rules. Wanting to belong to the group they are inalterably part of, men change their attitude toward sheer power. Instead of reluctantly conceding that the government in fact has, or ought to have, naked power—the ability to bend others to its will—they assign to government a rightful power that is called *authority*.

Civic training

In its turn the government, to make its work easier and its acceptance among the people greater, trains each generation in citizenship. Primitive headmen or elders may not call it by name, but they will faithfully attend to the civic training of their population. In both the simplest and the most complex societies, citizens learn those political beliefs that people must hold and those government symbols that must be admired or adored. The flag, the national anthem, patriotic holidays, and other such institutions are the modern counterparts of the age-old training of men to fit well the role they must play in government. A thoroughly trained population is likely to feel at one with the government—superior to other peoples, respectful of the government's authority, and eager to assist it in its operations and endeavors.

Sovereignty and law

In fact, the belief in authority often reaches such an intensity that people hold their government to be all-powerful; it has to account to no one; it is a free agent in the world. Many people will become quite angry when this belief about their government is disputed, either by insiders or by foreigners; indeed, the defense of national sovereignty (a term which, though it has several meanings, is often used to describe this belief) has been a major justification for at least one side in most of the international wars that have occurred in the past three centuries.

From its august and austere throne of sovereignty, authority, and power, the government makes rules known as laws. Laws direct people to behave

or not to behave in certain ways; there is an excellent chance that their violation will result in the arrest, conviction, and punishment of the culprit. Laws are obeyed for one or more of the following reasons: people believe that the government should be obeyed; they are habituated to obeying laws; they realize that other people cherish the laws; and they are directly afraid of the penalties or sanctions of the law.

THE WEAKNESS OF GOVERNMENT

Despite all its sources of support, government is never immune to change by the people in whose name it rules. It must constantly recruit new officials; being itself composed of people, it must have some contact with other people who are not government officials; there may be disgruntled elements in the government; and outside factions and critics abound. All of these forces play a part in bringing change to government. A political process ensues—politics more or less as Americans know it—that consists of the varied efforts of men and women to achieve different goals under the umbrella of government. Sometimes they try to hold the umbrella themselves. On occasion the political process becomes so chaotic that the sovereignty and authority of the government vanish. A revolution follows. Then power, stripped of authority, has to be constantly proved before its orders are carried out; manipulation, violence, and propaganda flourish. People feel insecure, unloved, suspicious, and some even become neurotic, until political order is reborn.

The average life of states

Some government must exist; however, particular governments are far from permanent. To begin with, the classic political unit is the *state* (not to be confused with an American State, which is not a *state* in the accepted sense). A state may be defined as a group of people inhabiting a definite territory under a relatively stable government which possesses sovereignty. (The American States do not possess full sovereignty.) Figure 3 demonstrates how in the Chinese language these elements are combined to form the single ideogram for "state." Following this definition, the average life of states through history is shorter than 300 years, far shorter than that of a good olive grove or a clump of California redwood trees. About two-thirds of the states of the present world did not exist at the time of the American Revolution. One-third did not exist before World War I.

But states last longer than kinds of governments. If one noted changes from monarchies to republics, republics to dictatorships, and so on, one would find that even among the old states there are very few old governments. Of the ninety-odd states in the world, barely a half-dozen have a general frame of government as old as that of the United States.

Particular governments fall into the shadows of history at an even faster rate than general frames of government. A particular government may be regarded as the rule of any one individual or group within a general frame of government. One speaks of the "government" of the Conservative Party

in Great Britain, and of the "government" of Marshal Bulganin in the Soviet Union. American constitutions prescribe a rapid rate of turnover for the particular governments. The turnover is periodic (for example, two years for the House of Representatives) and fixed. Other governments turn over quite rapidly but erratically; for instance, the French government, composed of the Premier and his cabinet, changed twenty times between 1945 and 1955 alone, at irregular intervals.

Durability of cultures

The state, or the nation, as it is sometimes called, exists longer than kinds of governments or particular governments, as can be seen from the definition

Figure 3. An Ancient Chinese Idea of the "State." The Chinese ideograph for "state," in modern script, is:

Perhaps for 2000 years, Chinese lexicographers, in analyzing this symbol, have given to it a meaning remarkably similar to that used by modern political science. A traditional analysis of the graph maintains the following:

that  represents the defined boundaries of the state

that  represents the force or military power by which the state is defended

that  stands for the unified character of the country, and

that  signifies the ruler or his capital

above. Cultures and civilizations, such as the Greco-Roman and the Arabic, are the most long-lived of all great communities, for they may include one after another several great states which possess the same cultural characteristics. For evident reasons, they are also fewest in number: Oswald Spengler, in his *Decline of the West,* unearthed only eight major cultural cycles; and Arnold Toynbee, using in his *Study of History* somewhat different grounds of choice from those of Spengler, discovered only twenty-one of what he considered to be authentic civilizations in the history of mankind.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE IDEA OF GOVERNMENT IN THE CHILD

The infant obviously is not born with a sense of government. He is not born with a sense of anything outside himself. He has no outer world. The separation of himself from his surroundings is a slow and painful task that begins immediately after birth, continues at a fairly rapid pace, moves from near objects to far objects, and in fact never really ends until the grave. In this sustained process, things that are observed are later interpreted and classified by what is seen and learned earlier. Little children in nursery school often at first call their teachers "mother." Government too is interpreted according to familial experiences, beginning with the protection and feeding by the mother and extending to the activities of the larger household.

The family as state

Consequently, although the child may be baffled by the idea of government when he first encounters it, he already possesses some fundamental ideas about government. The ideas come from the family. It was said above that the family was probably the primeval government. It is also the birthplace of government in the life of each individual. In the family are found the problems and aspects of government in miniature: a code of ethics regarding sex, manners, and property; economic specialization between the wage-earner (or hunter) and the kitchen supervisor; the ruling and education of the young; laws regarding the creation, use, and transfer of property; sanctions for violations of ethics and rules that include force, deprivation of food, and ostracism or milder psychological penalties; feelings that the parents are all-powerful, right, and authorized to penalize offenders; and the opposing rebellious feelings that come from parental inconsistency, outsiders' "subversive" comments, and the frustrating of strong desires of all kinds.

The parents as governors

The infant is born helpless and utterly dependent upon his attendants. Not until puberty do most children lose their need for immediate attention; not until passing through adolescence are most of them freed completely of physical dependence. During all of this time, they learn of the "superpower" of their parents to love and to punish. Wherever they may go, and however independent they may feel, people as adults are likely to expect,

to some degree, a similar kind of super-power in the government. The place of the parents is assumed by the rulers of the motherland or fatherland. Government is expected to rule as parents do—with laws, sanctions, mercy, and competence. Government is expected to help one, as parents do. It is more remote and indirect than parents; but that distance is well adapted to one who has passed into adulthood.

Earliest impressions of political government

The child learns in his first few years of life that the government is an unusual "they." "They" are protectors; the police, the army, and the firemen are common visitors to the child's mind. "They" are also punitive; police can arrest speeders and soldiers can kill "bad" enemies. "They" are inclusive: those that belong with them have a warming comradeship, with flags, songs, holidays, processions, and heroic stories; the belongers, their land, and the government are all together part of the political community known as the state. "They" are also restrictive; those that do not belong with "them" are different, suspect, perhaps to be feared or admired at a distance. "They" are demanding; they ask for taxes or service, so that at times it seems a rather exacting family to belong to.

Thus goes the process of learning about government as a child: ideas that are first acquired in the family are transferred to new conditions and underlie the child's notions of government. Lest the picture be painted too sharply, it is well to realize that, as families vary greatly, so likewise do children's and adults' relations with the government. These are the differences that make politics. The point to be made is that certain experiences are sufficiently widespread among families and cultures to have influence upon the organization and operations of government, in America as well as in the rest of the world.

QUESTIONS AND PROBLEMS

1. What is meant by the statement that government is part of human nature?
2. In what ways does the foundation of a club, sorority, fraternity, association, or another group on campus resemble the theory of the social compact? How may it be different?
3. Write a 300-word essay on what you can recall as your first impressions of government.
4. Using the *Statesman's Year-Book*, the *Encyclopedia Americana*, or the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, find one case of a state that has existed for more than 500 years, one state with a form of government that has lasted for over 200 years, and one particular government that has held office for twenty-five years. Avoid examples given in the text.
5. Write a 300-word essay comparing your family "government" when you were a child with the general psychological characteristics of government as outlined in the text.
6. In what ways do the following organizations possess one or more of the four cardinal elements of the state? Canada; Illinois; Hong Kong; the Communist Party of the Soviet Union; the American Navy; the Congress of Industrial Organizations; the United Automobile Workers; the American Medical Association; the Episcopal Church; the Roman Catholic Church; the Democratic

Party; the National Association of Manufacturers; and, finally, your own family structure.

7. Name two states whose citizens speak more than one language; name two states whose territory is little more than that of one city; name one state in which the tribal pattern of constantly changing residence is still quite noticeable; name three states whose existence may be questioned because it is difficult to decide whether or not they are independent. Explain your answers.