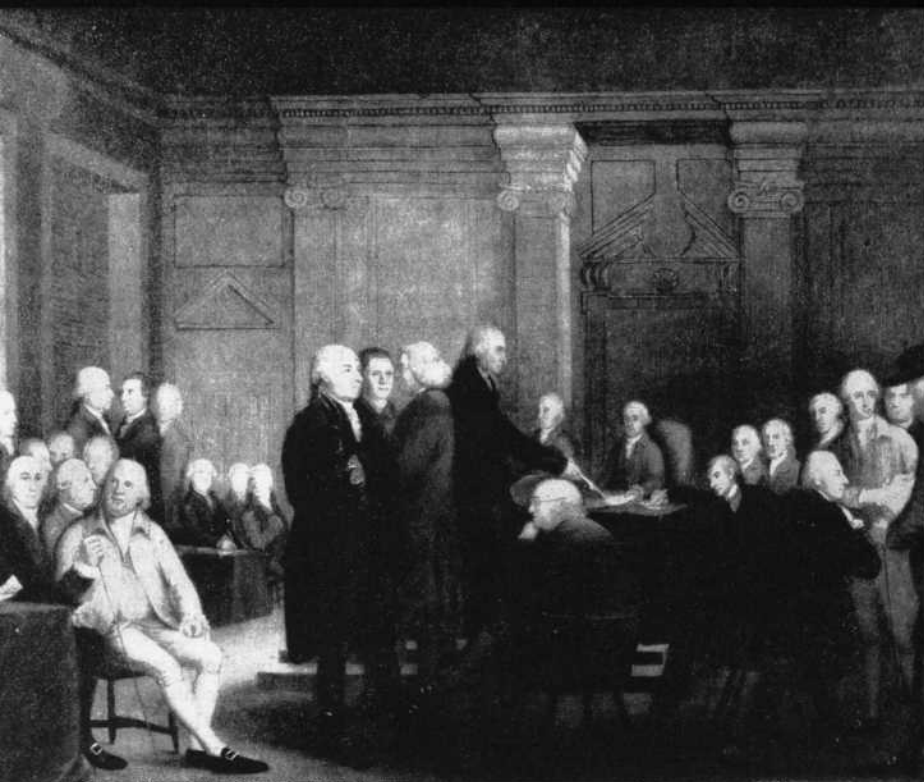


2. American and Foreign Governments



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SURELY," someone will say, "a government is more than a mental complex." It is indeed. Be it American or Japanese, it is also made up of ideas, people, tasks, and tools. This chapter will introduce these four elements of government and show how the American way of government shares them in an essential manner with the governments of other peoples but puts them together in a different fashion.

POLITICAL DOCTRINES

Political doctrines are the beliefs that men hold about the nature and the goals of the state. What is the aim of government? Who should be helped

or harmed by government? What persons make the best leaders and how should they be chosen? What are the limits to the things that governments should do and to the ways in which they are done? These are questions that one poses to the political philosophers because the political philosophers are, in a way, specialists in advising people what is good for them. However, often the philosophers do not agree in their prescriptions, so that one must choose from among them. Furthermore, for better or worse, most people—both the ordinary sort and the highly placed—have never adopted the habit of consulting philosophers. But two other classes of moral advisers are available—public opinion and politicians. All three groups yield political doctrines in abundance; that is, they give many and conflicting answers to the questions set forth above.

Merely knowing this fact is useful. When the question is asked: "What is American political doctrine?" or "What are the American ideals?" a preliminary (and sometimes annoying) logical response can be made, as follows:

American political doctrines or ideals (and those of any other nation, for that matter) consist of:

1. *The doctrines of political philosophers*, who (a) when they are alive, are usually to be found in universities, writing, conferring, and lecturing; and who (b) when they are dead, give the present generation ideas in broad forms: as written works, exemplary lives, and living laws and institutions founded in part upon their beliefs.

2. *The doctrines of politicians*, who (a) may be alive and able to apply their beliefs to current issues or (b) may be dead and afford the present their writings and deeds, and the laws and institutions descended from them.

3. *The doctrines of the public*, which (a) may be the present public, whose habits and beliefs weigh heavily in the reckonings of philosophers and politicians as to what should be done and what can be done by the government, and (b) may have been another generation or a series of generations and whose ideas have affected the present as popular beliefs, myths, folk tales, practices, and customs—many of them incorporated into the present institutions of government.

The response to the question, "What is American political doctrine?" should also point out that none of the groups mentioned is or has been unanimous in its conclusions. Most of the time the groups have been split. The philosophers argue amongst themselves and with dead philosophers; they argue with living and dead politicians; they argue before a living audience; and so on. Whether or not their human occupants are aware of it, the dining halls, barber shops, newspaper offices, and workshops of the land play their part. The debate is complicated and endless. It is bewildering, fascinating, and, of course, crucial in the lives of all Americans.

"Congress Voting Independence," July 4, 1776, painting by R. E. Pine and Edward Savage. The Declaration of Independence was a document and an event with many meanings. It is particularly important to this chapter inasmuch as it presented to the world a clear and complete set of political doctrines to which a group of political leaders subscribed their lives and fortunes.

for both people and leaders. The Declaration, whose text appears in Figure 4, describes the conditions under which revolution is morally permissible; both proclaim the sovereignty of the people; and the Preamble asserts that the ends of the government are to "form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquillity, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity." All of these doctrines have long histories in political philosophy and political activity; the Declaration, for example, takes almost verbatim phrases from the writings of a philosopher dead nearly three-quarters of a century in 1776, John Locke (1632-1704); and Locke himself had imbibed from Aristotle and the heady draughts of rebellion in seventeenth-century England. Other principles of the Constitution, such as the right to own property, the freedom of religion, and the like, are discussed more fully in later chapters, as a glance at the Index will show.

The Constitution does not clearly emphasize the belief in equality; but anyone with a slight knowledge of Americans will adduce the belief as perhaps the most prominent of all. Alexis de Tocqueville (1805-1859), the famous early French writer on American government, and Gunnar Myrdal, a present-day Swedish sociologist who came to the United States a century after de Tocqueville, are expert foreign witnesses to the preeminence of the belief in equality. The list presented in Table 1 contains some of the other attitudes of Americans and the behavior associated with these attitudes.

Differences between doctrine and behavior

These are some of the important fundamental political beliefs of large numbers of Americans. They lack concreteness, of course. They do not describe at all accurately the moral or ethical *conduct* of American politicians and the American public. They are ideals separated from the institutions that are set up to carry them out. One cannot judge their full meaning, nor their effectiveness as ideals, unless one follows them into the everyday thinking of Americans. One would not say that a man who cheats his neighbor six days a week and on the seventh worships a God of charity who taught, "And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise," could be described as one who *practiced* Christian doctrine. One would not say so even if the man held this belief to be a cardinal truth.

The behavior of Americans deviates to a considerable extent from the fundamental doctrines they profess. For instance, some of the belief in equality is withdrawn by some Americans in special ways. Thus, American Negroes are sometimes not treated as equals, even by persons who believe in equality for everyone else. Also, part of the belief in equality holds that every man is entitled to occupy public office; yet many believe that government offices should be manned by those especially trained for careers in government. That is, Americans display the lapses from the state of grace that are typical of mankind. Also, they frequently deny specific portions of the doctrine of equality of opportunity, the right of revolt, the freedom of speech and the press, and others. There is a long list of deliberate-deviations from avowed belief, and the frequency of these deviations is rather great. How-

**TABLE 1. TRAITS THAT WRITERS HAVE AGREED ARE
TYPICALLY AMERICAN¹**

Despite opposing evidence and diverging opinion, it was possible for Mr. Coleman to compile a list of traits which were so often mentioned by writers on Americanism that they may well have a strong basis in fact.

- Sovereignty of the people***, characteristically exercised through *public opinion* (a manifestation of democracy that receives such emphasis as to necessitate separate mention).
- Equality of all***, a fundamental belief and in large degree a fact.
- Individualism***, rugged or otherwise, in all realms of life, but especially in the economic.
- Worship of schooling, and universal public education***—this whether the motivation be materialistic or idealistic, and despite superficiality of the schooling and a distrust of academic theory in practical life.
- Distrust of strong government***, especially as expressed in an over-emphasis on division of responsibility and "checks and balances."
- Love of size and bigness***, based on an actual fact of bigness everywhere.
- Adaptability and freedom from the past***; openness to change, and fact of constant change and revolution.
- Associational activity***, an aptitude for organization that makes Americans the world's greatest organizers and joiners, and the doing by means of such voluntary organizations of many things that elsewhere would be done by governmental action or not at all.
- Optimism***, especially as expressed in a belief in progress and a faith in the perfectability [*sic*] of man.
- Opportunity***, especially the belief in equal opportunity for all and the fact of much greater opportunity than in most other countries.
- Constitutional government and the great power of the judiciary***—limitation on the immediate will of the majority and the presence of a power higher than the legislature, plus the position of the judges as arbiters of the validity of laws.
- "Localism"***—local government, local patriotism, local initiative and responsibility.
- "Missionary spirit"***—reforming others, interfering with their lives, making over the world.
- Humanitarianism and philanthropy***, sympathy for the "under-dog"—this more than in any other country in the world.
- Spirit of the pioneer and tradition of the frontier***—the strong influence of the "great open spaces" and the pioneer way.
- National self-consciousness and conceit***, incessant bragging and boasting, sensitiveness to criticism.
- Mobility, migration, restlessness***—the world's most mobile people.
- Liberty, freedom, independence***—all-important ideals and to a large extent actualities, except for some notable exceptions.
- Emphasis on money-making***, and belief that it is duty and virtue—but not money-making to the exclusion of idealism, philanthropy, and "service."
- Desire for peace and disbelief in war***, especially as expressed in pacifism, and a belief in arbitration and the rights of neutrals.
- Political isolationism***, "freedom from entangling alliances."
- Practicality***, absence of theories and philosophizing, and disbelief in them.
- Dominance of women***, their freedom and high status.
- Party government and party loyalty***, straight-party voting.
- Widespread popular knowledge and education***—this despite credulousness and a "passion for humbug."
- Glorification of the "common man"*** at the expense of the "expert" and the intellectual.
- Ingenuity and invention***, high level of initiative and research.

¹ From "What is American," Coleman, Lee, *Social Forces*, 19 (1940-1941), 496-497.

ever, for all human beings there is a gap between fundamental doctrine and actual behavior. Still, it is most questionable whether Americans tend, more than most Europeans, South Americans, or Asiatics, to violate their protestations of doctrine.

POLITICAL LEADERS

Doctrine helps to establish, and then permeates, the governmental structure. The doctrines of the Founding Fathers live today in the structure of government that issues from the Constitution. Leaders direct institutions, and, to a greater or lesser extent, accomplish changes in them. Leaders are, particularly in America, in close contact with the public, so that the behavior of both contributes to the structure of government.

Traditional classification of leaders

The question of what types of political leaders dominate a government was one that greatly concerned the ancient Greeks. The most famous of all classifications came from them; it is still very widely used. It distinguishes three types of governments, according to the number of their political leaders: governments directed by one man, by the few, and by the many. The first was called a tyranny (a word which for the Greeks did not have the exclusively bad sense that it has today); the second, an oligarchy; and the third, a democracy. Sometimes the first form was termed a monarchy; and sometimes the second, an aristocracy.

Confusion in classification

These categories have been useful, but they have also caused much confusion. For example, the British government has the form of a monarchy, since it has a single hereditary ruler. Yet it has also been called a democracy, for all the people vote for and elect Parliament, which is the source of the active power of the government. Moreover, England was for many years an obvious aristocracy, since power was concentrated in the grasp of a few wealthy, landed nobles and businessmen. There have been other governments which have shared traits of more than one type of government, according to the Greek system of classification.

Indeed, it is noteworthy that there have been and are many governments that were or are democracies in form but oligarchies in fact. Some of the most evident instances today include the Soviet Union, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Eastern Germany, China, and so on; many Latin American countries also fit this pattern. In fact, when the government of any country is closely inspected, it reveals some degree of concentration of power in a few hands. Even a country as near to an absolute tyranny as that which exists in Yugoslavia under Marshal Tito, for example, exhibits traces of oligarchy; for the leader depends heavily upon the men about him, and they exercise great powers in their own right.

Consequently the ancient classification has been to some degree sup-

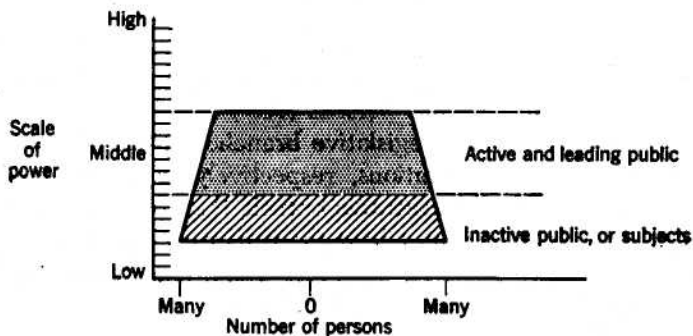
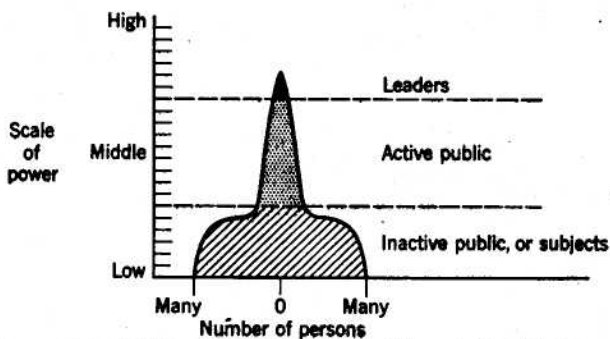
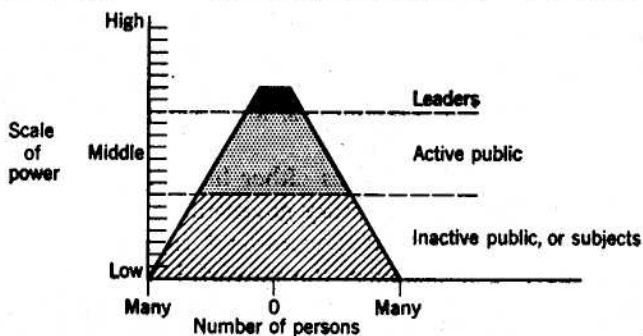
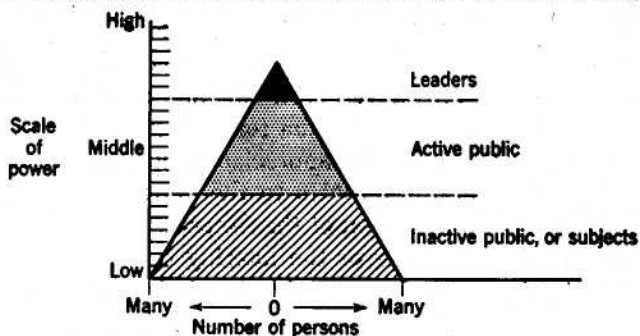
planted in modern times by the theory that all governments, whatever their form, are ruled more or less by a few leaders. They are all oligarchies of some kind. The important phrase here is "more or less." How exclusive are the few? How powerful are they? How do they become powerful? What are their policies? In other words, the formal name of the kind of government is an important fact; but to appreciate who actually runs the government, one must discover the answers to the above questions.

Much will be said later of the situation of the American government with respect to the concentration of power or the filtering down of power into the public; this latter, of course, is a trend toward democracy. At the moment, it is well to declare merely that the size of the effective ruling group in America is very large by standards of past and present governments. The form of American government is not fully democratic; that is, there is some ambiguity about its being in form a democracy, because there are limitations in its structure on the rule of the majority of the people. Examples are the non-elected federal judges, and equal representation of the States in the Senate.

Governments are also often classified as either hereditary or republican. Here again there is confusion. A hereditary government is usually, but not always, a monarchy; and a republican government is frequently, but not necessarily, a democracy. For instance, the powerful, wealthy, and long-lived Venetian Republic actually became a hereditary oligarchy. The Roman Republic was long ruled by a hereditary Senate. The French Senate in 1804 put forward the remarkable proposition that "The government of the Republic is entrusted to an emperor," and a popular vote approved making Napoléon the hereditary ruler of the French "Republic." But today at least, no one would term a government with hereditary leaders a republic. Too, it is certain that the United States is a republic without formal hereditary offices. The whole distinction between republican and hereditary forms achieved renown in those particular eras in history when certain secondary hereditary leaders—the landed noblemen—fought for power under the banners of kings or of commoners.

Centralized and decentralized leadership

One other important way of classifying leading groups or institutions is according to whether they are centralized or decentralized. Centralized leadership generally comprises a pyramid capped by one or a few preeminent individuals (see Figure 5A); decentralized leadership more nearly resembles a truncated pyramid, with a plane at the top made up of a fairly large number of comparatively equal persons (see Figure 5B). The leaderships of the executive and of the legislative branches of the American national government provide illustrations, respectively, of centralized and decentralized leadership. In the executive branch, the President is supreme over all other officials; he alone must bear the responsibility for the actions of the presidency. In Congress, on the other hand, leadership is divided first by the fact of two houses; then it is subdivided in each house among



the outstanding Representatives and Senators, each of whom is the legal and constitutional equal of each of the others. The very fact, of course, that the American national government is composed of several independent organs—the President, Congress, and the Supreme Court—makes it as a whole a decentralized government. The federal system, admitting additional independent authority to the State governments, makes the total governmental picture even more decentralized. Foreign contrasts are provided by England, where the sum of powers given the Prime Minister and his cabinet is very large, and by the Soviet Union, where despite all doctrine the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Communist Party centralizes all power.

THE PUBLIC

The *public* comprises that part of the population that has influential and active connections with the leaders. Thus, the American public elects its officials, may criticize them, may run for offices, and may engage in a general political activity that is denied many populations of the world. Those populations that have no active connections with their leaders, in either fact or doctrine, may be termed *subject populations* or *masses*.

The modern public

In most modern industrial nations the population is divided into political leaders, a larger group of active citizens, and a very large number of persons who are inactive and uninfluential, as shown in Figure 5C. However, these latter groups are not often legally barred from political activity. The formal organization of both the Soviet Union and the United States provides for officials and a public which embraces all the remaining adult population; in neither are there subject masses (see Figure 5D). Certainly, in Soviet Russia, power is concentrated in very few hands; but everyone theoretically has equal formal rights under the constitution of the USSR; and, in fact, there is a large amount of participation, though not influence, among the general population. In the United States, more of the public becomes part of the leading groups, and, as in the Soviet Union, there are no subject population or masses.

On the other hand, in societies where the caste, status, or feudal system

Figure 5. Four Types of Power-Pyramids. A. The ideally proportioned pyramid: In this pyramid, the greater the amount of power, the smaller the number of people possessing it. Available evidence suggests that this chart greatly overestimates the number of people who are active. Therefore this pyramid does not resemble any known real distribution of power. It reflects an ideally centralized structure with one man, or a few men, having the greatest power. B. The truncated pyramid: In this pyramid, there are numerous leaders possessing approximately equal power. This chart portrays an ideally decentralized leadership. C. Probably the typical distribution of power resembles this chart, which has the contours of an upside-down mushroom. D. Distribution with an active and leading public. This situation has been found among only a few small tribes, or cities, or non-governmental organizations such as the Society of Friends (Quakers).

prevails, there is a large mass of people without the vote, without political influence or power, and a small ruling nobility or special caste group that is charged with political affairs. Similarly, the peoples of the medieval and early modern kingdoms in Europe and England could only be called the ruled masses, for they lived at the base of a pyramid, the top of which was occupied by the king and the nobles. As recently as 1830, only 220,000 Englishmen had the right to vote for the 656 members of the House of Commons. Not until the end of the eighteenth century was it generally advocated that whole nations should constitute publics; previous examples of such publics were to be found only among smaller territories, such as the Greek cities of ancient times, the Italian cities of the Middle Ages and early modern era, and the Swiss cantons. But since the American and French Revolutions, the public has come to be deemed an essential part of the leading group in democratic countries. Hence a great deal of attention has been devoted to the problem of relating this public to the leading group in such a way as to maximize the power of individual citizens without destroying the order, stability, and prudence of the government.

One after another of the modern states has faced crises in dealing with the enormous present-day publics, trained by universal education and vested with the power of the vote. Russia, after various revolts brought on by pressures from the peasants and factory workers, led by intellectuals, had only a few months of constitutional government in 1917; then a tiny Bolshevik faction overthrew this regime and installed a communist dictatorship. Italy and Germany could not cope, either, with the problem of gearing a large active public into the government; they succumbed to Fascism and Nazism. Other countries have likewise yielded; still others have managed to beat off recurrent threats to constitutional government from the extremists.

The United States has, on the whole, successfully coped with the pressures generated by movements of extremists within the public. Yet it has had such extreme movements as Shays' Rebellion in Massachusetts in 1786; the Jacobin panic in the 1790's about the immigration of French revolutionaries; civil war in Rhode Island in 1842 over the right to vote; the Know-Nothing movement of the 1850's; the Greenbackers and the Populists after the Civil War; the anarchist rebels against all government, especially after 1900; Nazi imitators; and a small communist organization. The chief problem aroused by the massive publics of the twentieth century lies in the different interests, values, and doctrines that exist among various parts of the population. When one moves up and down the ladder of occupations, one acquires different political views; conservatism increases as one moves from the less wealthy and less skilled occupations to the better-paid and more skilled ones.

How to adjust these differences peaceably is a critical problem of government. They put a constant strain upon the relations between leaders and the public; and any upsetting conditions, such as war or economic depression, are likely to bring disaster to the structure of government. Obviously one of the most important concerns in the study of American government is to learn how the American structure is built to resist such strains.

THE TASKS OF GOVERNMENT

What is usually thought to be the "structure" of the government comprises the offices, departments, bureaus, and their various subdivisions that conduct public business. But a moment's thought will persuade one that these are only the most visible and tangible evidences of structure. Ideals and men, too, are essential to offices and tasks; for the structure of human action requires goals and leaders.

If the doctrines of the leaders are known, their tasks become fairly plain to the observer. If rulers are dedicated to religion, churches will be many; it took a long time for thousands of workers to build the great pyramids of Egypt, and another long period for hosts of artisans to erect the cathedral at Rheims. If the rulers are devoted to commerce, the nation will have myriad counting-houses and an ample shipping fleet. Conversely, the tasks being performed are evidence of the intent. When one tours a country, he judges the ambition of the people by what they are doing and what they have done. Although there may be a gap between doctrine and behavior, the leading doctrines are discernible in behavior, and the most important activities can be anticipated from the major doctrines.

However, a complication interferes with the easy transition from doctrine to activity, or from activity to doctrine. The subject here is *governmental* tasks or activity; but tasks which are governmental in one place are executed by private individuals in another place. Consequently, unless one knows that a leading doctrine calls upon the government itself to perform certain publicly desired tasks, one cannot be sure who will be managing a given activity.

Certain elemental tasks are performed by all governments. Some governments do them well; others do them poorly. Such tasks include the maintenance of law and order, and protection of the citizens against foreign enemies. Other tasks are carried out only by some governments; such a task is the management of government-owned commercial farms, which do not even exist in the United States. Literally hundreds of different tasks are performed by most governments, each task of course representing some doctrine or belief of the leading individuals in the community. Chapter 30 will explain in detail the extent to which governments are devoted to these tasks. At the moment, it is enough to consider that the size and shape of government—its contents that must be understood—are given it by the number and kinds of tasks it performs.

THE TOOLS OF GOVERNMENT

Whatever the state may want to do at a particular time demands some method of implementation. A decision or policy must be carried out; the whole community, or a great part of it, must move in accord. The major forms of getting the desired activity under way and of preventing or meeting opposition to it are: domination, education, force, and economic pressure.

Most states use all these means. Different states are apt to use one method more frequently than others, depending upon what sort of treatment their populations are accustomed to. For instance, to enforce the laws, the Russians usually prefer force where the Americans would prefer economic pressure. But new situations may require new means. Violent death in the arena could rarely shake the Christian martyrs. Imprisonment never abated Ghandi's resolve. Reductions in wages will not destroy labor unions.

Domination is the determining of men's wills and actions through sheer commands. The commands depend upon the strength of fundamental loyalties to the government for their effect. Thus, when a policeman tells a crowd to move along, most people simply move without question. Of all these means, education is the most subtle and demands the longest time to instill, but is perhaps most durable in its power to impose conformity upon men's wills. Force is least subtle, can be applied immediately, and often loses its effectiveness once it is removed. Napoleon once said that man can do anything with bayonets except sit on them; but it is notable that he did not rule long enough to test the truth of his witticism. Economic pressure is the management of wealth and of means of production, especially by various taxes, to obtain conformity. For example, when the federal government during the last generation has wanted to restrict the production of certain crops, it has paid for their non-production instead of resorting to simple command.

Such are the general tools of government. In any given government—such as the American—specific kinds of political organization or structure are set up to manage the instruments of control. A glance at the table of contents for this book will show that a general organization of this type is present in the United States, and what is true here is also true abroad. Governments have organs of command in the form of councils or legislative bodies, executive or administrative establishments, and judiciaries. They further provide agencies for dealing with internal order (police), with external order (armed forces), with education (school systems and information offices), and with economic measures (the treasury and budget offices). Since these highly important agencies are discussed in detail as the book proceeds, they need not be considered further here.

QUESTIONS AND PROBLEMS

1. Besides those named in the text, suggest other political doctrines that are prevalent among the American public; use your own beliefs and those you have observed that many other people possess.

2. Recite as many instances as you can of differences between American doctrine and American behavior.

3. Realizing that a great variety of opinions exist regarding what the goals of government should be, what do you personally believe the goals of the American government should be?

4. From any two issues of the *New York Times* make a list of all actions mentioned as having been performed by officials at any level of American government, national, State, or local. In each case determine whether the official employed force, economic management, or education.