

AP Government Study Guide

Unit One: Constitutional Underpinnings

Fundamental Principles of Democracy

- **Direct Democracy** – citizens meet and vote directly on government decisions
- **Representative Democracy (Republic)** – citizens choose officials who make decisions on government policy
- **Magna Carta (1215)** – the first ever attempt to limit the power of the British King, guaranteed all people certain rights
- **Enlightenment Philosophers –Locke and Rousseau**

○ **Social Contract Theory** – principle that people enter into a social contract with the government and allow to be ruled

○ **Consent of the Governed** – principle that there are no supreme rulers, all rulers depend on the approval of the people; when governments fail to protect rights the people have the right to change the government

○ **Natural Rights** – principle that all people are born with certain rights: life, liberty, and property (Jefferson changes property into pursuit of happiness)

- **Declaration of Independence** – Thomas Jefferson's document built on principles of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" consent of the governed, and social contract theory. It also justified American revolution against England
- **Common Good** – Belief in doing what's best for the nation overall
- **Popular Sovereignty** – Belief that the ultimate authority rests with the people
- **Majority Rule** – Belief that government is run based on the will of the majority

The First Government – **Articles of Confederation**

- Weak association of states (states very independent)
- No central executive power
- No federal power to tax citizens directly
- Federal government could raise an army, (but not pay for it), print money, declare war, and run the post office

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