

TABLE 2.1

Political principles across the spectrum

	CONSERVATISM	SOCIAL DEMOCRACY	LIBERALISM
<i>Individualism vs. collectivism</i>	Society is composed of individuals, each of whom bears responsibility for his or her own life.	Society is composed of groups and classes.	Society is composed of both individuals and groups.
<i>Competition vs. communalism</i>	Individuals are naturally competitive, trying to advance their self-interest.	People naturally form social units. The good of the many outweighs the self-interest of individuals.	Individuals are competitive, but so too are they communal animals, caring about the public interest.
<i>Rationalism</i>	Individuals are capable of deciding independently how best to lead their lives. Individuals naturally look out for themselves and their families.	People generally have regard for others and try to care for one another.	Individuals will seek not only self-interest but also the best interests of society.
<i>Liberty</i>	One should be free to lead one's own life as one wants, free from interference.	Social compassion should outweigh individualistic competition. Individual liberty needs to be regulated and balanced by concern for collective interests.	Individuals should have wide entitlements to liberty, subject to reasonable state controls designed to protect and promote the public welfare.

	CONSERVATISM	SOCIAL DEMOCRACY	LIBERALISM
<i>Equality</i>	Equality of opportunity is paramount.	Equality of condition is paramount.	Equality of opportunity and condition are both important in structuring a decent life in society.
<i>Democracy</i>	Individuals should be able to choose who governs them, but a government is best when it has minimal impact on individual liberty.	The people should be able to choose who governs them, and society and its economy should be subject to the direction and control of democratically elected governments.	The people should be able to choose who governs them, and governments should promote both individual rights and interests and the social needs of the community.
<i>Materialism</i>	Individuals naturally seek to acquire material possessions.	The wealth of society should be shared by the members of society.	Individuals will seek their own material self-interest, but so too must the state promote the material interests of the broader society.
<i>Private vs. public property</i>	One should be free to acquire and control one's own wealth. The private sector is and should be the driving force of the society and its economy.	The economy should be structured in the interests of the vast majority of people. Public ownership of strategic industries is often desired, although in recent decades, state regulation rather than direct public ownership has become a more common policy option.	There should be a mixed economy based on a thriving private sector, along with a strong public sector to address matters of collective need. Some strategic industries should be under public ownership, but regulatory direction rather than direct ownership is now the more common policy option.
<i>Free enterprise vs. state socio-economic control</i>	Capitalism is the best form of organization for economic growth, wealth generation, and individual liberty.	The government should take the lead in setting and directing economic and social policies to promote the common welfare of society.	The state has a significant role to play in regulating the economy and in promoting social welfare policy.
<i>Tradition</i>	Traditions and social norms must be respected and upheld.	Social change should be evolutionary and democratic.	Social traditions should be respected, but society should always be seeking ways to progress.