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Overview | June 1, 1998

About The Third Way

America and the world have changed dramatically in the closing decades of the 20th century. The industrial order of the 20th century is rapidly yielding to the networked "New Economy" of the 21st century. Our political and governing systems, however, have lagged behind the rest of society in adapting to these seismic shifts. They remain stuck in the left-right debates and the top-down bureaucracies of the industrial past.

The [Democratic Leadership Council](#), and its affiliated think tank the [Progressive Policy Institute](#), have been catalysts for modernizing politics and government. From their political analysis and policy innovations has emerged a progressive alternative to the worn-out dogmas of traditional liberalism and conservatism. The core principles and ideas of this "Third Way" movement are set forth in The New Progressive Declaration: A Political Philosophy for the Information Age.

Starting with Bill Clinton's Presidential campaign in 1992, Third Way thinking is reshaping progressive politics throughout the world. Inspired by the example of Clinton and the New Democrats, Tony Blair in Britain led a revitalized [New Labour](#) party back to power in 1997. The victory of Gerhard Shroeder and the [Social Democrats](#) in Germany the next year confirmed the revival of center-left parties which either control or are part of the governing coalition forming throughout the European Union. From Latin America to Australia and New Zealand, Third Way ideas also are taking hold.

On Sunday, April 25, 1999, the President Clinton and the DLC hosted a [historic roundtable discussion](#). The Third Way: Progressive Governance for the 21st Century, with five world leaders including British PM Tony Blair, German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder, Dutch PM Wim Kok, and Italian PM Massimo D'Alema, the First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton and DLC President Al From.

The Third Way philosophy seeks to adapt enduring progressive values to the new challenges of the information age. It rests on three cornerstones: the idea that government should promote equal opportunity for all while granting special privilege for none; an ethic of mutual responsibility that equally rejects the politics of entitlement and the politics of social abandonment; and, a new approach to governing that empowers citizens to act for themselves.

The Third Way approach to economic opportunity and security stresses technological innovation, competitive enterprise, and education rather than top-down redistribution or laissez faire. On questions of values, it embraces "tolerant traditionalism," honoring traditional moral and family values while resisting attempts to impose them on others. It favors an enabling rather than a bureaucratic government, expanding choices for citizens, using market means to achieve public ends and encouraging civic and community institutions to play a larger role in public life. The Third Way works to build inclusive, multiethnic societies based on common allegiance to democratic values.

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