

Government: A permanent structure in which people make and enforce decisions on how social conflicts will be resolved; decide “who gets what” and has the power and authority to enforce the rules.

Social conflict: idea that people in a society disagree over beliefs, values and what society’s priorities should be. Inevitable. Examples: how should a society use its scarce resources (like land, oil, water, etc.) or who should receive government benefits like health care and welfare (or should there be government benefits in the first place).

Politics: a way to resolve social conflict; who gets what, when and how in our society; another term used for government.

Political participation: when a person says or does anything that affects politics/gov’t.

--most common way to participate in politics is voting.

--most people get involved in politics over common interests – concern/interest over how politics will affect their group/job etc.

Examples: African –Americans, Hispanic Americans, women, older people are concerned about equality and fair treatment; consumers, farmers, small business owners, corporate leaders all want gov’t. to make political and economic decisions that favor their group (usually at the expense of the others). Think gas prices.

--some people don’t want to be involved in politics but apathy—not caring about issues is involvement. It is a political statement and helps determine who gets elected and the outcome of issues.

Purpose of Government

1. **Resolving conflict**: necessary b/c people's wants are unlimited but a country's resources are limited. To decide how resources are used and enforce those decisions, a government has power---the ability to cause others to change their behavior; get people to do what ordinarily they would not do (all kids 6-16 have to go to school; speed limits).
--governments also have authority—the right to cause citizens to change their behavior---if power is legitimate. Legitimate power--- power is recognized and accepted by society as legal.
--power and authority allow gov't. to resolve conflict by making and enforcing laws and setting up court systems.
2. **Providing public services**: undertake projects individuals could not do on their own like building roadways, operating schools, providing police and fire protection, welfare, etc.
3. **Providing for national security and common defense**: military and agencies like FBI and Homeland security
4. **Setting goals for public policies**: getting behind local, state and federal programs/goals that affect people's lives. Examples: a state program to clean up a river to help the environment or a city's efforts to help with illiteracy by getting behind their goal to add reading classes.

5. **Preserving culture**: culture includes customs, language, shared beliefs, values and history. Main protection is keeping invaders out but also done by observing national holidays that promote our history, like 4th of July, Veteran's Day, Memorial Day, Patriot's Day, Thanksgiving, etc.

Nation/country: a group of people who occupy a specific area and organized under a gov't. that make laws without the approval of a higher authority. World's basic political unit. Over 210 nations, all slightly different.

Characteristics of a nation

1. **Population**—people inside its boundaries.
2. **territory**—area with borders (boundaries) recognized by other nations. Disputes over national boundaries cause of many wars as is the attempt by one nation to take over the territory of another nation.
3. **Government**—political organization that makes and enforces laws. Most governments are **unitary** or **federal**.
 - unitary gov't.**: all authority rests with central gov't.
 - federal gov't.**: power divided between central and state gov't with federal having more power.
 - confederal gov't.**: (rare) made up of several independent states with weak central gov't. States have more power.

4. Sovereignty---The power and authority to govern itself. Decide what type of gov't. and economic system you want w/out interference from other governments.

Types of Governments

I. Autocracy---power rests with one person.

A. Monarchy: Gov't. controlled by a king, queen, emperor, tsar, etc. who usually obtains power through inheritance (blood line)

1. Absolute Monarchy---total, unlimited power “granted” to the ruler by God. Has the “*divine right*” to rule.

--Dynasty—continuous rule by members of same family

2. Constitutional Monarchy---king/queen share power with elected lawmakers, their power limited by a constitution. Often just figureheads.

B. Dictatorship—a person or group of people rule; not inherited position but usually through force and fear.

----Authoritarian---dictator has total power, not subject to rules from Constitution, not responsible to people. Change in leaders comes through death, resignation or forcible change (coup d'etat).

----Totalitarian--- leader tries to control all aspects of social and economic life; needs of nation come before needs of individual. Ex---Hitler's Nazi Germany, Stalin in Soviet Union, Saddam Hussein in Iraq

1. Theocracy----total control by religious leaders in the name of God.

2. Plutocracy----total control by a few wealthy people

3. Aristocracy---control by the members of the nobility

II. **Democracy**---supreme political power rests with the people.

A. *Direct democracy*---people participate directly in government decision making; discuss and vote on all issues. Only works in smaller groups.

B. *Representative democracy* (indirect democracy)—people elect leaders to make decisions for them (also called a Republic).

1. Presidential: law making and law enforcing branches are separate. U.S. system.

2. Parliamentary: law making and law enforcement branches overlap. Ex—Great Britain where Prime Minister and the Cabinet (enforcement) are also part of Parliament (law making).

Principles of Democracy

1. **Equality in voting**: voting not based on skin color, gender, wealth, etc.

2. **Individual freedom**: have all freedoms possible w/out interfering with anyone's rights.

3. **Equality of all persons**: no discrimination in the laws.

4. **Majority rule and minority rights**: majority should rule but rights of minority should be guaranteed.

5. **Voluntary consent to be governed**: people in a democracy must agree to voluntarily follow laws passed by their representatives.

Interdependence: nations relying on each other for trade, law enforcement and help preserving environment (resources).

--More important today as “world gets smaller” due to internet bringing real time news events and also online international commerce.

--Problem with internet, etc. is countries learn of abuses against the environment or human rights and want to do something—can any nation tell another nation how they should treat their citizens or their resources? Once these problems were “out of sight, out of mind” but not with modern technology.

Birth of the United States

---1607 British colony founded at Jamestown, Va., and leaders given some right to govern themselves while remaining loyal to Britain.

---As years go by colonists become Americans and have less loyalty to Britain, start to grow tired of paying taxes to Britain

---colonists angered by British making settlement west of the Appalachian Mts. illegal in 1763. Sugar Act in 1764 and Stamp Act in 1765 raised taxes to support British troops in colonies.

---1770 Boston Massacre, 1773 Boston Tea Party; many colonists begin to believe there should be “no taxation without representation” (colonists want a voice in British Parliament when it comes to governing American colonies).

---April 1775 American and British troops fight at Lexington and Concord, start of American Revolution.

---April-May 1775 Second Continental Congress appoints G. Washington commander of American Army, becomes government for American colonists during war.

- June/July 1776 Declaration of Independence written by Thomas Jefferson. Presented to Congress, a few changes are made to make southern colonies happy---didn't get rid of slavery like Jefferson wanted. Adopted by Congress and signed by John Hancock on July 4th.
- Two important ideas in Dec. of Ind.: people have inherent rights that cannot be taken away or denied by gov't.---those are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness **and** gov't. exists to protect people's inherent rights and if they don't, the people have the right to rebel and change the gov't.