

# Principles of Government

*INTRODUCTION TO AP GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS*

Fact: There are over 87,500  
Governments in the USA

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## HOW MANY CAN YOU NAME?

Take 1 minute to WRITE on your own...

**1** FEDERAL

STATE **50**

**3,034** COUNTY

SCHOOL DISTRICTS **13,506**

**16,504** TOWNSHIP

MUNICIPAL **19,429**

**35,502** SPECIAL  
PURPOSE

# Learning Objectives

- 1.) IDENTIFY THE MEANING OF GOVERNMENT.
- 2.) EXPLORE THE PURPOSE OF GOVERNMENT.
- 3.) EXPLAIN THE VARIOUS DISTRIBUTION OF POWER.
- 4.) DESCRIBE THE VARIOUS FORMS OF GOVERNMENT.

# What is government?

*The institutions, people, and processes by which a nation-state or political unit is ruled and its public policy created.*

- Nation-State: a form of political organization under which a relatively homogeneous people inhabits a sovereign state; *especially* : a state containing one as opposed to several nationalities

# Nation vs. State

## **NATION**

- Psychological rather than an institutional concept.
- Cultural, linguistic, and other identities that tie people together.
  - ex: Chechens - Russia

## **STATE**

- Broader concept that includes all institutions and individuals that exercise power.

# What is politics?

*Activities that relate to influencing the actions and policies of a government or getting and keeping power in a government.*

# What is the purpose of government?

- 1.) Protection/Sovereignty
- 2.) Maintenance of public order
- 3.) Resolution of social conflicts
- 4.) Responsibility for a stable economy
- 5.) Provision of public service



# How is power distributed?

- Evolution Theory
  - ex: tribal rule
- Force Theory
  - ex: Hitler & Germany
- Divine Right Theory
  - ex: monarchy (UK)
- Social Contract Theory:
  - power to govern was a result of decisions made freely by the people.

# How is Power gained/maintained?

## ● Marxist Theory (Marx)

- those who hold control of the economy have the real power in a society
- Government is merely a tool of the rich
  - ie: corporation and financial institutions

## ● “Power Elite” (Mills)

- important policies are made by three groups:
  - corporate leaders, top military offices, and a few key political leaders

# How is Power gained/maintained?\*

## ● The Bureaucrats (Weber)

- elites are not well-known, visible heads of state or business tycoons, but people behind the scenes.
- bureaucrats whose expertise and specialized talents are responsible for managing societies.
- carry out the day to day workings of government and hold the real power.

## ● The Pluralists

- elites are not easily identified as one specific group holding power, money or prestige.
- Power is split among many different elites

# Forms of Government

Elites may spread political power in three different ways:

1. Geographic distribution
2. Separation of powers
3. Number of participants

# Geographic distribution

Governments may center their power in one location, or scatter power among several places.

- Unitary Government - all powers of the government are held by a single unit or agency
  - ex: Great Britain or China
- Federal Government - governmental powers are divided between a central authority and a number of regional political subdivisions.
  - ex: United States or Mexico

# Geographic distribution

- Confederation - political system in which a weak central government has limited authority and states have ultimate power.
  - ex: European Union

# Systems of Government

For a fun break from the notes --

Check out this Monty Python video clip! :)

The Annoying Peasant

# Legislative & Executive Branches


- Power may be distributed between those that make the laws and those that execute the laws.
- Power may not to divided equally.





# Legislative & Executive Branches

## Parliamentary Government

- form of government in which the executive leaders are chosen by and responsible to the legislature.
- 
- Prime Minister - chosen from the majority party in power.

## Presidential Government

- form of government in which the legislative and executive branches are separate and function independently.
- Chief executive holds a fixed term and is chosen separately from the legislature by popular vote

# \*\*Hybrid Government

- Combination of parliamentary and presidential system.
  - Prime Minister works closely with the legislature and the President has an independent power base.
    - Ex: Russia

# Number who participate

Aristotle's early attempt to classify governments according to its members who participate:

- Rule by one
- Rule by few
- Rule by many

# Rule by one

- Absolute Monarchy
  - Ruler gains power through inheritance
  - Absolute = no restraints on power
  - Monarchs are ceremonial or constitutional.
    - Generally have little power
- Dictatorship
  - absolute ruler controls the power, often through fear or force, ignores the will of the people.
  - Modern version of autocracy
  - Does not allow political opposition.

# Rule by few

- Aristocracy
  - Rule by the finest
    - Social position, wealth or education
- Theocracy
  - power lies in the hands of a religious group
  - rarely exists in pure form
  - ex: Iran
- Political Party
  - Ex: China - controlled by Communist party
  - Leaders are selected from tops ranks for party

# Rule by many

- Direct or Participatory Democracy
  - democratic system of government in which all citizens participate in politics and decision-making.
- Democratic Centralism
  - government is democratic if it serves the true interest of the people.
    - Associate with communist party
    - Decisions made through community discussion
- Representative Democracy
  - democratic system of government in which policies are made by officials accountable to the people who elected them.

# Linkage Institutions

*Groups that connect the government to its citizens:*

- Political Parties
- Interest Groups
- Print and electronic media

# Electoral Systems and Elections

*rules that decide how votes are cast, counted, and translated into seats in a legislature.*

- **First-past-the-post** - denoting an electoral system in which a candidate or party is selected by achievement of a simple majority.
  - Single Member District Plurality - (SMDP) candidates compete for a single representative's seat.
  - AKA: Plurality system or winner-take-all



# Plurality System

- Individual candidates run in single-member districts
  - Votes cast for individual candidates
    - Candidate with more votes than other candidates wins the seat
      - One result is a two (or few) party system

# Proportional Representation

- Voting is arranged in multimember districts.
  - Voters cast votes for parties
    - Seats are divided among parties on the basis of percentages of overall vote.
      - Proportional representation generally results in a multiparty system.

# Mixed System

- Voting is arranged in combination of multi-member and single-member districts.
  - Voters cast votes for individuals and parties
    - Some seats are filled by winners in plurality races; others are filled by party
      - A mixed system results in an in-between number of parties.