

Chapter 1: Principles of Government

Section 1

Lecture Notes

AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

PEARSON

► Objectives

1. Define government and the basic powers every government holds.
2. Describe the four defining characteristics of a state.
3. Identify four theories that attempt to explain the origin of the state.
4. Understand the purpose of government in the United States and other countries.

▶ Key Terms

- **government:** the institution through which a society makes and enforces public policies
- **public policies:** all the things a government decides to do
- **legislative power:** the power to make laws
- **executive power:** the power to enforce and administer laws
- **judicial power:** the power to interpret laws
- **dictatorship:** a government in which all power rests with an individual or small group

▶ Key Terms, cont.

- **democracy:** a government in which supreme authority rests with the people
- **state:** a body of people, living in a defined territory, with a government that can make and enforce law without the consent of any higher authority
- **sovereign:** to have supreme and absolute power within a territory
- **divine right:** the theory that governments gain their authority from the will of God

- What is government and what is its purpose?
 - Government is the institution that allows a society to make and enforce public policies
 - Every government has three basic types of power. These include the **legislative power** to make laws, the **executive power** to enforce laws, and the **judicial power** to interpret laws and settle disputes.

▶ Basic Types of Government

- In a **dictatorship**, all powers are held by one person or group.
- In a **democracy**, authority lies with the people.
- The U.S. government gives executive power to the President, legislative power to Congress, and judicial power to the Supreme Court.

The President is the Head of State, and executes the laws.



The Supreme Court interprets the laws to ensure they are constitutional.



Congress creates the laws and frames public policy.



▶ The State

- States are the main unit of government in the world today.
 - There are more than 200 states, varying greatly in size, population, and power.
 - A state is not strictly the same thing as a nation (which refers to large groups of people) or a country (which refers to a particular region).
- Every state has four basic characteristics: **population, territory, sovereignty, and a government.**

► Population and Territory

- Every state has a **population**, whether large or small, diverse or homogeneous.
 - China (right) has a large population that is reflected in its landscape.
- A state must have **territory**, land with known and recognized boundaries.



► Sovereignty and Government

- Every state has **sovereignty**, the absolute power within its own territory to decide domestic and foreign policies.
- Each state has a **government**, a political organization to make and enforce its policies.



► Origins of the State

- Many theories have been developed to explain the origins of the state.
- These include the **force theory, the evolutionary theory, the divine right theory,** and the **social contract theory.**

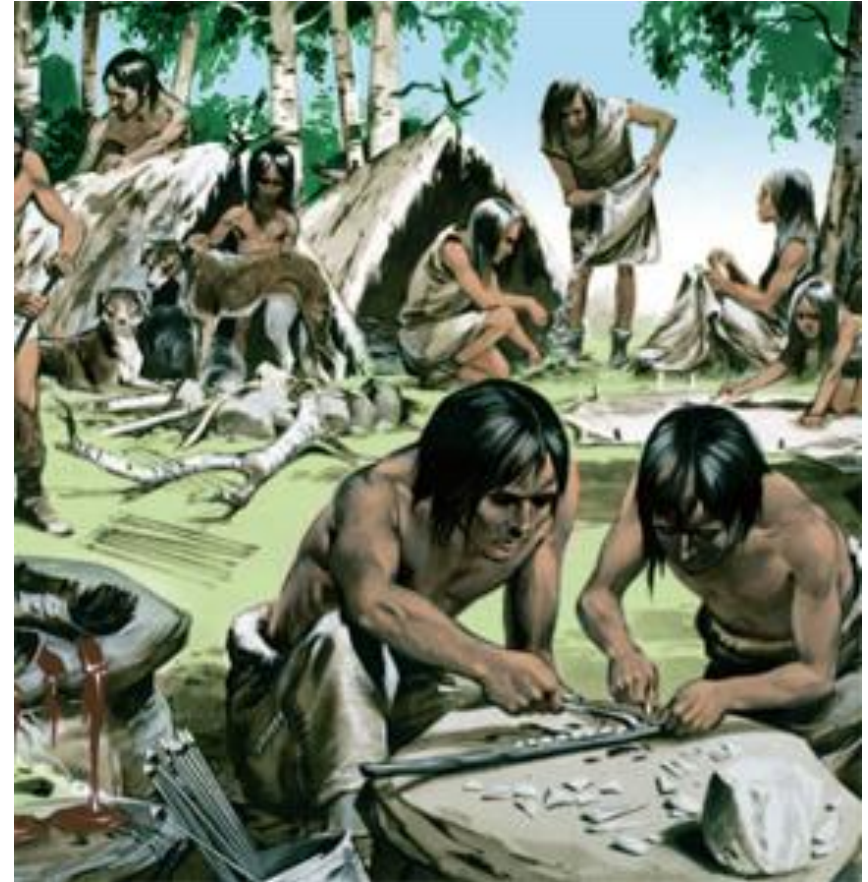
► The Force Theory

- The *force theory* holds that an individual or group claims control over a territory and forces the population to submit.
- The state then becomes sovereign and those in control form a government.



▶ Evolutionary Theory

- The *evolutionary theory* says that a population formed out of primitive families.
- The heads of these families became the government.
- When these families settled in one territory and claimed it as their own, they became a sovereign state.



▶ Divine Right Theory

- The *divine right theory* holds that God created the state, making it sovereign.
- The government is made up of those chosen by God to rule a certain territory. The population must obey their ruler.



► Social Contract Theory

- Checkpoint: What is the Social Contract Theory?
 - The *social contract theory* was developed by philosophers such as Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Jean Jacques Rousseau and has had the greatest influence on United States government.
 - This theory holds that the people chose to give the state enough power to promote the well-being of everyone and that all political power comes from the will of the people.



► Social Contract Theory, cont.

- Social contract theory holds that the people can withhold power from an unjust government.
- In the political cartoon, what types of government might restrict people from “having it as good as this”?



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▶ Purpose of Government

- The Preamble to the U.S. Constitution sets forth the basic purposes of America's government.
 - It forms “a more perfect Union” by uniting the state governments and the American people.
 - It establishes justice by attempting to create and administer laws in a fair, reasonable, and impartial fashion.

► Purpose of Government, cont.

- Government offers domestic tranquility, or peace at home, by providing law and order.
- Government provides for the nation's defense by maintaining armed forces and safeguarding national security.

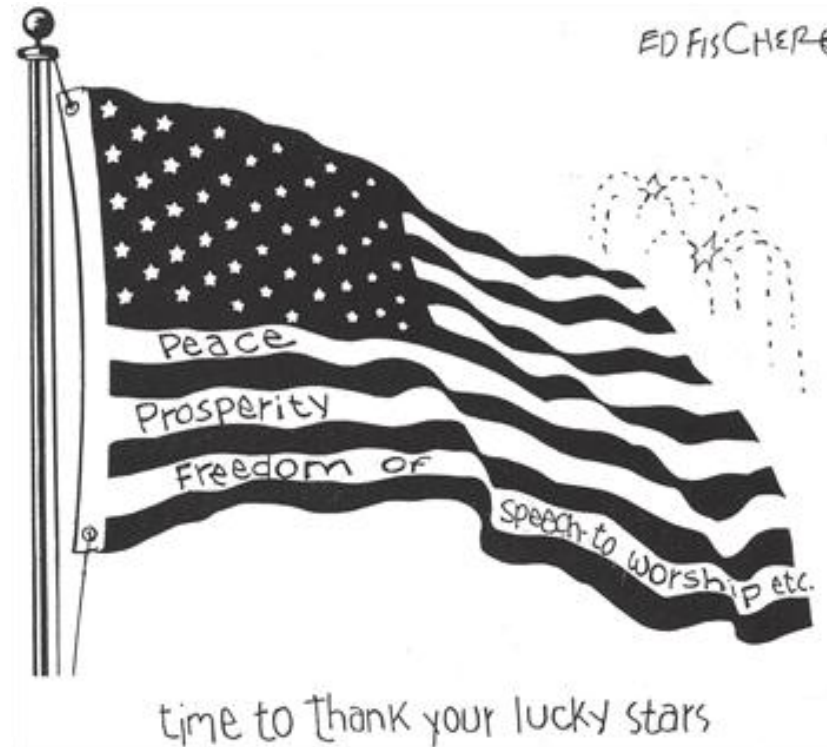


► Purpose of Government, cont.

- The U.S. government promotes the general welfare of citizens by providing services, such as public education, that benefit all or most people.
- The government helps secure the blessings of liberty by guaranteeing many individual rights and liberties.
 - These freedoms are not absolute—you are not free to violate the liberties of others.

► Purpose of Government, cont.

- Each generation must strive for patriotism by learning and protecting these freedoms.
 - What does the phrase “thank your lucky stars” in the political cartoon at right refer to?



▶ Review

- Now that you have learned about what government is and what its purpose is, go back and answer the Chapter Essential Question.
 - Is government necessary?