

Chapter 2


Government and Civics

Chapter Preview

Terms

government, sovereignty, legislative branch, executive branch, judicial branch, unitary government, confederation government, federal government, autocracy, dictatorship, absolute monarchy, head of government, oligarchy, democracy, parliamentary democracy, head of state, constitutional monarchy, presidential democracy

Above: A country's flag represents its people, history, and government.



Rules are a part of our lives. Sometimes we like them, sometimes we do not. People have learned that rules help people live and work more effectively. However, people do not always agree on the best ways to make or enforce the rules. In a family, parents are usually the rule makers and enforcers. If a mom says chores must be done, and a child does not follow that rule, the mom will decide on a consequence. In a school, principals and teachers usually make the rules and decide on consequences for students who do not follow them.

Groups of people living together in an orderly community may form a society. A society has some way of making rules, or laws, and enforcing them to keep order. Over time, people around the world have developed different types of societies that are ruled, or governed, in different ways.

There are many different ways to organize government, or the system by which a nation, state, or community is ruled. Nations also have citizens who have different rights and responsibilities. The study of these rights and responsibilities is called civics. This chapter focuses on some of the types of government in the world, how leaders gain power, how laws are made, and the role of the citizen in different countries around the world.

As you learn about other government systems in the world, think about how they are like those found in the United States, but also think about how they are different. What would life be like living under a very different type of government?

“

Government is instituted for the common good; for the protection, safety, prosperity, and happiness of the people; and not for profit, honor, or private interest of any one man, family, or class of men.

– John Adams

Background: The United States Constitution, signed in 1787, organized a federal government without a monarchy.

Section 1

What Is Government?


 Setting a Purpose

As you read, look for

- ▶ the purpose of governments;
- ▶ examples of how governments protect their citizens;
- ▶ the three branches of government and the responsibilities of each branch;
- ▶ terms: **government, sovereignty, legislative branch, executive branch, judicial branch.**



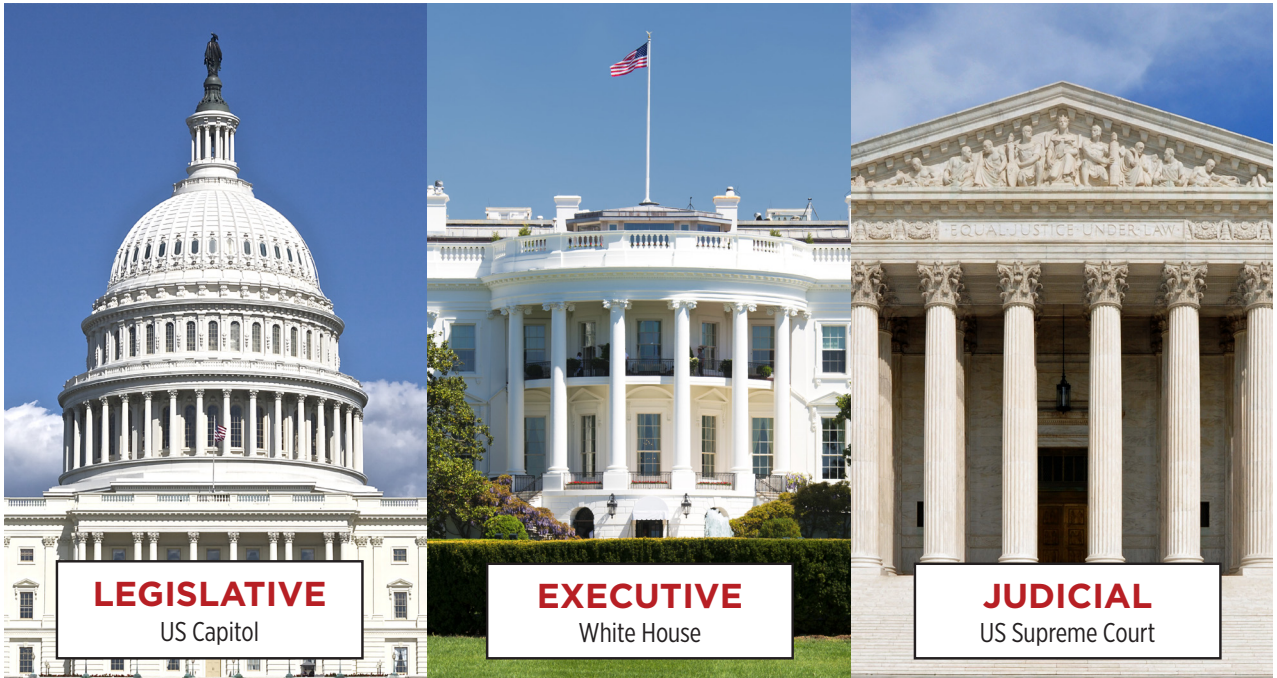
Above: Nero was emperor of Rome from AD 54 to AD 68. As emperor, he had absolute power in the empire.

Right: Abraham Lincoln served as the 16th president of the United States. As president, his powers were limited by the US Constitution.

Forms of Government

Do you believe government should be “of the people, by the people, for the people”? Abraham Lincoln believed it when he delivered these words as part of his Gettysburg Address in 1863. Most Americans probably would agree as well. However, governments around the world do not always share this idea. What would be the opposite? Here is one possible example: a government led by the emperor, under his total control, and for the purpose of keeping and expanding his power and wealth. Under such a government, rights such as a trial by jury, freedom of speech, and freedom of religion, or ideas such as “innocent until proven guilty” might not exist. Government is a part of our lives in more ways than we often realize.





So what is government? To put it simply, **government** is the system by which a country is organized. Governments are everywhere. From the earliest tribes to the most powerful nations today, governments in some form have been created to ensure safety and order. The type of government and the role a government should have is debated today. Still, every society across time has had some form of government, either as simple as the leader of a group of prehistoric people or as complex as the government of the United States in the 21st century.

People create governments to keep civil order and protect the people. But what rules are necessary or desirable? There are many different answers to this question. In fact, countries around the world have answered it in many different ways leading to different types of government and law.

Governments first evolved as people discovered that protection was easier if they stayed together in groups and if they all agreed that one person in the group should have more power than others. This recognition is the basis of **sovereignty**, or the right of a group of people to be free of outside interference. A country needs not only to protect its citizens from one another but also to prevent an outside attack. Sometimes governments have built great walls and guarded them carefully from invaders. Other times they have led their followers to safe areas protected by high mountains, wide rivers, or vast deserts. Governments have raised armies, and the most successful ones have trained and armed special groups to defend their citizens. Governments may form alliances (agreements to defend each other) and fight wars in the name of protection and order.

Branches of Government

Government functions are usually broken down into three main branches: legislative, executive, and judicial. In some forms of government, the three branches are separate. In other forms of government, the three branches' powers are combined.

Above: The Constitution of the United States divides power into three branches of government: legislative, executive, and judicial.

The **legislative branch** is usually made up of people who are elected by the citizens of the country. Its main purpose is to create laws for the country. There are two common forms of legislatures: bicameral and unicameral. In a bicameral model, the legislature is divided into two assemblies, or houses. In a unicameral model, the legislature is just one assembly, or house. In some types of government, the legislative branch is equal to the executive and checks the power of the executive. In other forms of government, the legislative branch is weaker than the executive branch.

The main purpose of the **executive branch** is to enforce, or carry out, the laws passed by the legislative branch. The executive branch develops a foreign policy, or strategy for the best ways to deal with other countries. Members of the executive branch are also responsible for meeting with leaders of other countries as a representative of the whole country.

The final branch of government is the **judicial branch**. It is in charge of the courts in a country that settle disputes among citizens and between citizens and the government. In many countries, the highest court is called the Supreme Court. The main purpose of the judicial branch is to interpret the laws of a country and apply them to court cases.



Reviewing the Section

1. What is government? Explain in your own words.
2. Why do countries have governments?
3. What are some of the things governments have done to protect their citizens?
4. What are the three branches of government and what is the responsibility of each branch?

Above: This statue of Justice is on the historic courthouse of Tehran, Iran. The balance (scale) represents the strength of arguments for each side in a case.

Bottom: The logo for South Africa's highest court, the Constitutional Court, depicts a crowd of people sheltered and protected under a tree. The tree represents the constitution, which protects the people but must also be protected by the people.



Section 2

Distribution of Power in Government

Below: The National Assembly Building in Seoul, South Korea, is the meeting place of the country's legislature, the Kuk Hoe.

As you read, look for

- ▶ the meaning of “distribution of power”;
- ▶ the three ways governments may distribute power;
- ▶ terms: **unitary government, confederation government, federal government.**



The Distribution of Power

People in each country must decide how to set up its government. Countries must decide how to organize and how to distribute power. Governments can have all the power held by one central government, or they can spread out the power to lower levels of government. Governments may be unitary, confederation, or federal. When trying to determine the type of distribution of power of a country, ask yourself this question: Which level or levels of government have the most power?

Levels of Government

In a **unitary government**, the central (national) government holds almost all the power. Local governments, like states or counties, have very little power. In fact, the central government has the power to change the way states or counties operate or even remove them altogether. Some unitary governments have elected officials who, once elected, may make or enforce laws without listening to the opinions of those at lower levels of the government. Examples of countries with unitary governments include China and Saudi Arabia.





In a **confederation government**, local governments hold all the power. The central government is weak, and it depends on the local governments for its existence. In other words, the central government only has as much power as the local governments are willing to give it. This is the least common type of distribution of power. Two examples of confederations are the United Nations and the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). The United Nations can only offer advice and assistance when the member nations agree to cooperate. OPEC can only advise countries on the amount of oil they are producing.

In a **federal government**, power is shared among different levels of government. Power is shared between the national (central) government and the local governments. The United States is an example of a country with a federal system. The national, or federal, government has elected leaders such as congresspersons and the United States president. However, states have their own elections. A governor of a state is elected by the people of the state and works for them. The governor does not work for the president, and the president has no direct control over how a state is operated. Laws related to divorce or family matters, wills, and injuries from car wrecks are examples of laws of the state, not the national government. In the same way, states do not pass laws related to the defense of the country or make budgets for the military. These are duties of the national government. Other countries with a federal system include Nigeria and India.



Top: The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) has many members from Southwest Asia. The group's actions help determine world oil prices. **Above:** The Knesset is Israel's legislative branch of government. It meets in this building in Jerusalem.

Reviewing the Section

1. What does the phrase "distribution of power" mean in terms of government structure?
2. Explain the difference between a unitary and a federal government.
3. Which type of government has the weakest national government? Why is it considered weak?
4. Putting It All Together: Which type of distribution of power do you think is the best? Why?

Section 3

Citizen Participation in Government



As you read, look for

- ▶ the meaning of “citizen participation”;
- ▶ how involved citizens can be in choosing their leaders;
- ▶ terms: **autocracy, dictatorship, absolute monarchy, head of government, oligarchy, democracy.**

The Power of Citizens

Another way to look at the structure of a government is to look at citizen participation. In other words, how much power do the citizens in a country have in terms of rights and selecting their leaders? There are three types of citizen participation: autocracy, oligarchy, and democracy. These three forms of government have some important differences. The most important difference is based on who or how many people rule or control the government. People who live under different types of government often find that there are large differences in the rights given to individual citizens. When trying to determine which type of citizen participation a country has, ask yourself these questions: How is the head of a country chosen, and what type of freedoms do the citizens have?



Bottom: South Korean citizens protest against their president, Park Geun-hye. Freedom of assembly and freedom of speech are not protected rights in every country, however.



Types of Citizen Participation

In an **autocracy**, the ruler has absolute, or total, power to do whatever the ruler wishes. The ruler can even make and enforce whatever laws he or she chooses. Citizens who live in an autocracy have very few rights. They do not get to choose their leader. They also do not get to vote on which laws are made and put into practice. In an autocratic government, people usually have little to no power to use against the government



if they disagree with decisions that the government or ruler has made. There are two main types of autocracy in the world today: dictatorship and absolute monarchy. In a **dictatorship**, one person controls the entire country. The dictator usually is supported by the military. North Korea is an example of a dictatorship. In an **absolute monarchy**, the sovereign, such as a king or queen, has all the power. The sovereign gains power by being the heir, or descendent, of the last sovereign.

Citizens have no choice of sovereign. The dictator or sovereign serves as **head of government**, that is, the person in charge of the day-to-day business of running the country. Saudi Arabia is an example of a country with an absolute monarchy.

In an **oligarchy**, a political party or other small group makes all the major decisions. The name *oligarchy* means “rule by a few.” The citizens in the country have little choice but to go along with the decisions that are made by the group in power. In this way, an oligarchy is similar to an autocracy. While the citizens have a little more power because there are more people in control of the country, citizens’ right to choose their leader is limited. Iran and China are examples of oligarchies. Iran’s government is classified as an oligarchy because a small group of religious and political leaders make many of the important decisions, but there is a president who is head of government. In China, the leaders of the Chinese Communist Party control the government, and the president is head of government.



DID YOU KNOW?

In Australia, all eligible citizens are required by law to vote in elections. Failing to do so can result in a fine.

Top Left: This statue in Pyongyang, North Korea, honors the country’s first communist dictator, Kim Il Sung. **Top Right:** King Salman of Saudi Arabia has served as head of the Saudi monarchy, the House of Saud, since January 23, 2015. **Right:** The president of the People’s Republic of China, Xi Jinping, attended the Nuclear Security Summit in Washington, DC. In 2018, China’s constitution was changed to allow Xi Jinping to remain in power for life.



In a **democracy**, citizens have the power in choosing their leaders. The word *democracy* comes from the Greek words *demos*, which means “people,” and *kratia*, which means “rule.” In this type of government, the citizens have most of the power because they have the ability to vote for the leaders who will make laws. In a direct democracy, citizens vote on all decisions. In a large, complex country such as the United States, a direct democracy would not be workable. Most citizens do not have the time or interest to study each issue and make good decisions. Instead, the United States is a republic, a system in which supreme power lies in the citizens who vote for people to represent them in government. Systems are in place to allow the elected representatives to vote on laws and other government decisions. A head of government, such as a president or prime minister, may be elected to manage the government on a day-to-day basis. Other democracies include South Africa and Israel.

Reviewing the Section

1. What does the phrase “citizen participation” mean in government?
2. Name two countries that are autocracies.
3. Name two countries that are oligarchies.
4. What is one reason the United States is a republic instead of a direct democracy?
5. Putting It All Together: In which type of citizen participation do the citizens have the most freedoms? Why?

Above: President Joe Biden (left) and Vice-President Kamala Harris (right) took office in January 2021.

special Feature



The United Nations

World War I was often called “the war to end all wars.” To ensure that such a war would never happen again, there was much discussion about creating a global organization that would work to resolve problems between countries and make the world a safer place to live. A proposal by US President Woodrow Wilson led to the formation of the League of Nations, with its headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland. However, it lost support of the United States Senate and was unable to prevent World War II.

During World War II, the United States found itself fighting on two fronts—against Germany in Europe and against Japan in Asia. While the war was going on, there was again talk about forming a global organization that would work together for the common good of the world. An opportunity to take the first step in creating such an organization came on January 1, 1942, about a month after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. At that time, representatives from 26 nations at war with the Axis Powers met in Washington, DC. The nations in attendance signed a Declaration of the United Nations pledging their full resources against the Axis and agreeing not to make a separate peace. This was the first time the name “United Nations” was used.

In August and September 1944, representatives from the United States, United Kingdom, Soviet Union, and China, met in Washington, DC, to draft the charter for a postwar international organization. In 1945, fifty nations met in San Francisco to complete the charter for the United Nations. The charter called for an Economic and Social Council, an International Court of Justice, a Trusteeship Council to oversee certain colonial territories, and a Secretariat under a Secretary-General. On July 28, 1945, the US Senate by a vote of 89-2 approved the United Nations Charter. The United Nations officially came into existence on October 24, 1945, after World War II ended, when its charter was approved by 51 nations. It moved to its headquarters in New York City on January 9, 1951.

Top Right: The olive branches on the United Nations flag are a symbol of peace, and the map represents all the people and countries of the world.



The two most visible parts of the United Nations are the General Assembly and the Security Council. The General Assembly, which includes all 193

member nations, conducts discussions on international issues. It is the policy-making body of the organization and the only group where all members have a vote. At the beginning of each session of the United Nations, the General Assembly holds a debate in which all members participate and raise issues of international concern. After discussion, a vote is taken on each resolution. The resolutions contain recommendations, but the United Nations has no power to enforce them.

The Security Council has fifteen members, five of which are permanent members. The permanent members include the United States, the United Kingdom, the Russian Federation, France, and China. The other ten members are selected by the General Assembly and serve two-year rotating terms. The Security Council is responsible for maintaining peace and security as well as deciding when and where a United Nations peacekeeping force should be sent. It responds to crises around the world on a case-by-case basis. Member nations must implement the decisions of the Security Council. The permanent members, however, have veto power, which means they can prevent the adoption of any resolution.

Some global issues that have been and are continuing to be addressed by the United Nations include human rights, humanitarian needs, justice and international law, international peace and security, drug control, counterterrorism, climate change, health issues, advancement for women, aging, hunger, poverty, and refugees. What other important issues might be addressed by the United Nations?



Top Left: United Nations headquarters in New York City. **Background:** Ukraine President Petro Poroshenko spoke at the general debate of the 70th session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York.

Section 4

Two Types of Democracies



Setting a Purpose

As you read, look for


- ▶ two forms of democracy;
- ▶ how the head of government is chosen in a parliamentary versus a presidential democracy;
- ▶ the difference between absolute monarchies and constitutional monarchies;
- ▶ terms: **parliamentary democracy, head of state, constitutional monarchy, presidential democracy.**

Forms of Democracy

A democratic government is one in which citizens vote on laws and make decisions directly or vote for representatives to do these tasks. Today, there are two major forms of democratic governments, parliamentary and presidential. Each of these is designed to represent and protect the rights of the people in their country.

Parliamentary Democracy

In a **parliamentary democracy**, the citizens can vote for a representative from a political party that they feel best represents their views and opinions. In most countries with a parliamentary democracy, the elected representatives are known as members of parliament or MPs. Parliament's main job is to make and carry out the laws of the country. After the election, the political party that wins the most seats in parliament picks the head of government, who is called a prime minister or a premier. The prime minister is the head of the executive branch. The prime minister holds power for whatever term of office the country's constitution allows.



Right: The Sangiin, or House of Councillors, is the upper house of the Japanese Diet (legislature).



In many parliamentary governments, there is also a position called **head of state**. The head of state may be a leader who does not have very much power. For example, the country of Japan is a **constitutional monarchy** with a sovereign as head of state. This means the sovereign is only allowed whatever powers are stated in the constitution. The sovereign serves as the head of state with limited power, while the prime minister is the head of government and runs the country. Other examples of parliamentary democracies include India and Turkey.

In *Other* Words

A monarch may also be known as a sovereign, king, queen, emperor, or empress, among other titles.

Presidential Democracy

In a **presidential democracy**, citizens elect the president as head of government separately from the legislature. The legislative and executive branches are separate from each other and usually serve as checks on each other (having the power to stop the other branches' powers). The legislature passes laws while the president makes sure laws are enforced. The legislature cannot dismiss the president, nor can the president dismiss the legislature. The president is an official head of government, and may be head of state. Examples of countries with presidential democracies include the Republic of Korea and Kenya.



Reviewing the Section

1. How is the head of government chosen in a parliamentary democracy?
2. How are absolute monarchies different from constitutional monarchies?
3. How is the head of government chosen in a presidential democracy?
4. Putting It All Together: Create a Venn diagram that compares and contrasts parliamentary and presidential democracies. Put at least two statements in each part of the Venn diagram.

Top Left: Emperor Akihito of Japan became monarch in 1989. The Yamato family has held the title of emperor since 660 BC. **Above:** Muhammadu Buhari was elected president of Nigeria in 2015. His country has a presidential democracy.

Chapter Review

Chapter Summary

Section 1: What Is Government?

- Government is a system by which a country is organized generally in order to protect people and ensure civil order.
- The legislative branch creates laws for the country.
- The executive branch enforces laws and represents the country when interacting with other governments.
- The judicial branch is in charge of the courts and interprets the country's laws.

Section 2: Distribution of Power in Government

- Different types of governments organize power across the system in various ways.
- In a unitary government, the central government holds almost all the power and does not have to consult anyone when making decisions.
- In a confederation government, local governments hold almost all the power, and the central government would cease to exist without their consent.
- In a federal government, power is shared across all levels, and different levels of government have different responsibilities.

Section 3: Citizen Participation in Government

- Citizen participation refers to how many rights citizens have and how much power they have to select their leaders.
- In an autocracy, citizens have very few rights and do not choose their ruler, who has absolute power.
- In an oligarchy, citizens have limited ability to select leaders, and the country is run by a small group of powerful people.
- In a democracy, citizens have power to elect their leaders and, in some cases, vote on every law.

Section 4: Two Types of Democracies

- A democratic government is one in which citizens vote on the laws themselves or vote for a representative to do this for them.
- In a parliamentary democracy, citizens vote on a representative, and the political group with the most representatives selects the head of government.
- In a presidential democracy, citizens directly vote on the head of government separately from other branches of government.

Activities for Learning

Reviewing People, Places, and Things



Imagine you recently returned from a trip to Washington, DC. Write a short letter to a friend describing what you learned about governments using at least eight of the words below. Underline the words used in your story.

sovereignty
 presidential democracy
 parliamentary democracy
 executive branch
 legislative branch
 judicial branch
 federal government
 dictatorship
 government
 absolute monarchy

Understanding the Facts



1. Why did people start forming governments?
2. What branch of government enforces laws?
3. Who has the most power in a confederation government?
4. What branch of government makes the laws?
5. To what does citizen participation refer?
6. What is the difference between an autocracy and an oligarchy system of government?
7. What is a dictatorship?
8. In which democracy do representatives, not citizens, select the head of government?

Developing Critical Thinking



1. Review unitary, confederation, and federal governments. Which system do you think would be the easiest to operate? Which system would likely have strong alliances? Why?
2. This chapter reviews many different forms of citizen participation in government. How do you think historical events, environments, and/or values shaped participation?

Writing across the Curriculum



Write a short report stating two reasons why humans started forming governments. Give examples of how governments continue to address these issues today.

Applying Your Skills



Create a Venn diagram to compare and contrast parliamentary and presidential democracies.

Exploring Technology



The United Nations agreed upon a Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. This document can be read at www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/. Visit the website and read the document. Choose one of the articles and summarize the meaning of the human right in your own words. Explain why you think the UN members wanted to include this right in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Are there places in the world that you know about where people are not guaranteed this right?