Chapter 1: Principles of Government Section 1

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
* **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

Introduction

* 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 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.
  + 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

* 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 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”?

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.
* 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 safe-guarding national security.
* 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.
* 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?