

AMERICAN GOVERNMENT/CIVICS

SSCG1: Compare and contrast various systems of government.

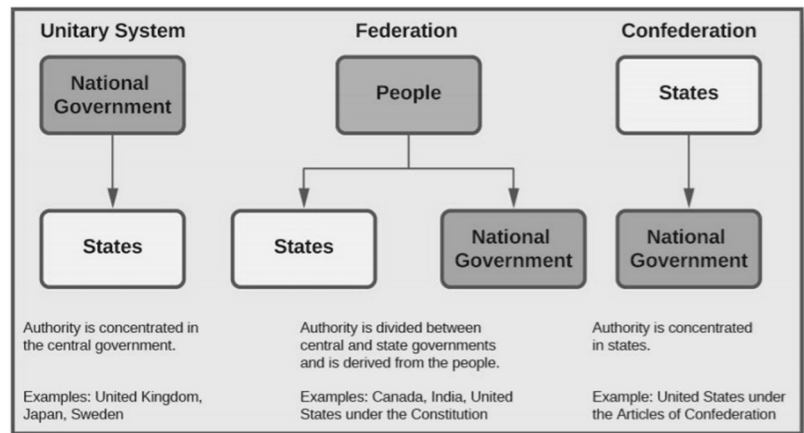
Determine how governments differ in geographic distribution of power, particularly unitary, confederal, and federal types of government.

Sovereignty is a political concept that refers to dominant power or supreme authority. In a monarchy, supreme power resides in the "sovereign", or king. In modern democracies, sovereign power rests with the people and is exercised through representative bodies such as Congress or Parliament. The Sovereign is the one who exercises power without limitation. Sovereignty is essentially the power to make laws. To have sovereign power is to be beyond the power of others to interfere. Sovereignty may lie with a single individual, a small group, or an entire population. There are three basic forms of government: unitary, federal, and confederate governments.

*A **unitary government** can be described as a centralized government. All of the powers are held by one, single, central agency. The central government can create local units; however, the local units only have those powers that the central government gives to them. Most of the governments in the world are unitary. Do not confuse a unitary government with a dictatorship. Although a unitary government has powers concentrated in the central government, other powers can be given to local units. The best example of a unitary government is Great Britain. A single central organization, Parliament, holds all of the government's power, but local governments are given some powers to relieve some of the burdens from Parliament and make local decision-making more efficient.

* A **federal government** is one in which the powers of government are divided between a central, or national, government and several lower levels of government. Federal governments have a division of powers. The United States is the best example of a federal government. The central, or national, government has certain powers, and the 50 states have other powers. The United States Constitution outlines the division of powers. Furthermore, the states give certain powers to local governments. Other countries with a federal structure of government include: Australia, Mexico, Canada, Germany, India, and Switzerland. In the United States, the terms national government and federal government are used interchangeably.

*A **confederate government** is an alliance of independent states. The central government, or confederate government, only handles matters that the independent states assign to it. A confederate government is usually formed for the purposes of national defense and trade, and these are typically the only powers assigned to it. The best example of a confederate government is the European Union (EU). The individual member states (or countries) retain their own identity, laws, etc. The member countries only coordinate on issues such as defense and trade.



- 1) _____ You want the central government to have the most power.
- 2) _____ You want both national laws and state laws to exist.
- 3) _____ You want laws to be the same throughout the country.
- 4) _____ You want the central government to have the least power.
- 5) _____ You don't care whether individual states have any power.
- 6) _____ You want individual states to keep as much independence as possible.
- 7) _____ You want a balance between power in the states and the central government.

SSCG1: Compare and contrast various systems of government.

Determine how some forms of government differ in their level of citizen participation particularly authoritarian (autocracy and oligarchy), and democratic.

Rule by None

In an **anarchy**, nobody is in control—or everyone is, depending on how you look at it. Sometimes the word anarchy is used to refer to an out-of-control mob. When it comes to government, anarchy would be one way to describe the human state of existence before any governments developed. It would be similar to the way animals live in the wild, with everyone looking out for themselves. Today, people who call themselves anarchists usually believe that people should be allowed to freely associate together without being subject to any nation or government. There are no countries that have anarchy as their form of government.



An A inside a circle is the traditional symbol for anarchy.

Someone’s Got to Be In Charge

If you compared all the governments in the world, you would find one thing in common: Someone is in charge. The question is, who? There are many different forms of government. Some have one leader who has all the control. Others give power to the people. Here are some forms of government that exist (or have existed) in the world:

An **autocracy** is a government in which one person has all the power. There are two main types of autocracy: a monarchy and a dictatorship.

In a **monarchy**, a king or queen rules the country. The king or queen is known as a monarch. Monarchs usually come to power through their family line: The current king or queen’s oldest child becomes the next king or queen. In some monarchies, especially those in historical times, the monarch held all the power and had the final say over the government. In modern times, monarchs usually share power with other parts of government. Often they are also subject to the country’s constitution.

A **dictatorship** is a form of government where one leader has absolute control over citizens’ lives. If there is a constitution, the dictator has control over that, too—so it doesn’t mean much. Although other parts of the government may exist, such as courts or a lawmaking body, these branches always do what the dictator wants them to do. They do not represent citizens.

In an **oligarchy** (OH-lih-gar-kee), a small group of people has all the power. Oligarchy is a Greek word that means “rule by a few.” Sometimes this means that only a certain group has political rights, such as members of one political party, one social class, or one race. For example, in some societies, only noble families who owned land could participate in politics. An oligarchy can also mean that a few people control the country. For example, a junta is a small group of people—usually military officers—who rule a country after taking it over by force. A junta often operates much like a dictatorship, except that several people share power.

A **theocracy** is a government that recognizes God or a divine being as the ultimate authority. (“Theo” is a Greek word that means god.) In a theocracy, religious law is used to settle disputes and rule the people. A theocracy can also be a democracy, dictatorship, monarchy, or just about any other kind of government. For example, the Republic of Iran recognizes Islamic law, but Iran’s citizens vote to elect their leaders. Modern theocracies are usually found in countries where the population is strongly religious.

Visit PlanetRulers.com to find examples of each type of ruler.

Absolute Monarch	Oligarch	Military Dictator

SSCG2: Demonstrate knowledge of the political philosophies that shaped the development of United States constitutional government.

Analyze key ideas of limited government and the rule of law as seen in the Magna Carta, the Petition of Right, and the English Bill of Rights.

*1215 – **the Magna Carta**, also known as The Great Charter, was signed by King John. It was a document forced on King John of England by a group of feudal barons who were seeking to limit the power of the King. The Magna Carta introduced the ideas of limited government, due process of law, trial by jury, and the protection of private property and civil liberties. The Magna Carta established that the power of the monarchy was not absolute.

*1689 – the **English Bill of Rights** was passed by English Parliament. This document is related to the Glorious Revolution and the abuse of power by the monarchy, William and Mary. The document prohibited a standing army during peacetime, unless Parliament gives consent and required that all parliamentary elections be free. The monarchy was forbidden to create and collect taxes without consent of Parliament. The citizens were given the right to petition the king without the fear of being punished. The document reinforced earlier rights approved in previous documents, such as the right to bear arms, no cruel and unusual punishment, and no excessive fines or bail. Finally, Parliament was given the right to free speech and debate.



SSCG2: Demonstrate knowledge of the political philosophies that shaped the development of United States constitutional government.

Analyze the impact of the writings of Hobbes (*Leviathan*), Locke (*Second Treatise on Government*), Rousseau (*The Social Contract*), and Montesquieu (*The Spirit of the Laws*) on our concept of government.

***Thomas Hobbes** (1588 – 1679) was a political philosopher. His book, *Leviathan*, was written in 1651, and established the foundation for most of western political philosophy from the perspective of social contract theory. *Leviathan* is a defense of the absolute power of kings. A leviathan is a mythological sea creature that devoured entire ships and likened the leviathan to government – a powerful state created to impose order.

Hobbes described the state of nature where all individuals were naturally equal. Every person was free to do what was needed for survival. In the state of nature, there are no laws nor anyone to enforce laws. According to Hobbes, the only way out of this situation is to create a supreme power to impose peace. Hobbes asserted that people agreed among themselves to ‘lay down’ their natural rights of equality and freedom to give absolute power to a sovereign. The sovereign could be a person or a group. The sovereign would make and enforce the laws to secure a peaceful society, making life, liberty, and property possible. Hobbes called this agreement ‘the social contract’. He believed that a king was the best form of sovereignty, and once the people gave absolute power to the king, they had no right to revolt against him. According to Hobbes, the agreement was not between the king and the people but only among the people. Hobbes warned against the church meddling in the king’s government. He feared that religion would be a cause of civil war. He advised that the church should be a department under the king’s government.

LEVIATHAN



***Jean-Jacques Rousseau** (1712 – 1778) – Rousseau was a philosopher, writer, and composer. His ideas influenced the Enlightenment. His book, *The Social Contract*, was published in 1762. He thought that citizens should abandon their natural rights in favor of a social contract. Rousseau believed that direct democracy, with the citizens being the sovereign, was the best form of government. The actual government would be comprised of magistrates whose duty would be to enforce the laws and protect the general welfare of the people. He did not agree with the idea of a representative government.

Foundations of Government

Across

1. Form of autocracy gained by birth
4. System where the government has total control over everything
7. Type of monarchy in which the King/Queen is ceremonial and the Parliament runs the government
10. Type of monarchy where King/Queen runs the government with complete control
12. Political philosopher who described the state of nature as “nasty, brutish, and short.”
13. Governing system with the national government in charge
15. The Great Charter which limited the power of the King of England
16. Rule by a few

Down

2. Governing system with the state governments in charge
3. Institution thru which the state maintains order, provides services, and enforces binding decisions
5. Theory that people agree to surrender some freedoms in exchange for government protection and order
6. Form of autocracy gained by fear or force
8. One person holds unlimited political power
9. The final authority of a government within its territorial boundaries
11. A government controlling the economic, political, and social lives of the citizens
14. System with no government or form of authority

