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What Is Government?



As a Young Political Scientist, I will be able to...

- **Define what Government Is**
- **Explain the need for Government**

Well...What is it?

Government- the institution through which a society makes & enforces its policies

A series of rules that push human behavior in all sorts of ways

People want positive outcomes, but will argue over what the “right” choices are

How do we, or should we, develop rules to achieve goals?

The background of the entire slide is a close-up, slightly blurred image of the American flag, showing the stars and stripes in warm, golden tones.

Why Government?

Thomas Hobbes (1600s)- Argued that government is needed to maintain order

Without government, humans would “exist in a state of nature where life is solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, & short”

Believed in a social contract with rulers where people give up some power to a government & agree not to be violent

Government agrees to this & enforces the laws & regulations

Why Government

John Locke (1600s)- Built on the idea of a social contract between people & those who rule

Argued that all humans have a natural right to “life, liberty, & property.”

The purpose of government is to protect the property rights of individuals

Property = Power!

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Why Government

David Hume (1700s)- Believed in the concept of a “public good” meaning the economy

There are 2 features of a public good...

1. A public good is non-excludable: Once it exists, everyone can enjoy it

2. It is non-rival in how it's used. The amount of the good doesn't diminish the more it's used.

Example: Air! How does that work???

Why Government?

David Hume believed that government is supposed to provide public goods for the benefit of everyone

However, once something is public, there is no desire to contribute to it further.

Example: Are cars bad for air?

Collective Action Theory- The creation of institutions help shape human behavior by giving incentives & then create government

The Need for Government

Public Policy- The deliberate decisions, actions, & laws created by government bodies

Public Policies cover things such as...

- a. Taxation**
- b. Defense**
- c. Education**
- d. Crime**
- e. Healthcare**
- f. Civil Rights**
- g. Working Conditions**



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Basic Powers of Government

There are **THREE Branches** of the United States Government & each branch has specific duties...

Legislative Branch- Power to make laws & policies (Congress & the Senate)

Executive Branch- Power to enforce the laws (The President)

Judicial Branch- Power to interpret laws (The Supreme Court)

Where Do We Get Our Rules????

Powers are outlined in a **constitution**.

Constitution- Body of fundamental laws setting out the structures & process of government.

Democracy- Supreme authority rests with people.

Government as Human Invention

Earliest evidence of government date to ancient Egypt

This set up our “pyramid” idea of power & structure

SKETCH & DEFINE!

Aristotle, a Greek philosopher, said “Man is by nature a political animal”

What does that mean??????

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Government as Human Invention

Politics is a process, Government is an institution.

What does this mean???????

Politics- Society decides how power & resources will be distributed.

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The Breakdown!

Why do We Need Government?

1. To Keep Order & Prevent Chaos! (Hobbes)

2. To protect peoples rights like life, liberty, & property (Locke)

3. To provide public goods that everyone needs like clean air, safety, & education (Hume)

4. To solve problems that individuals can't fix alone (like national defense)

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The Breakdown!

Why do We Need Government?

5. To create rules (institutions) that help people work together

6. To encourage cooperation through things like taxes, laws, & rewards

7. To prevent free riders, or people who enjoy benefits without helping to create them