



Unit 2: Government and Governance

2021 Year 3 Social Studies

Essential Questions

- Why do we need governments?
- How do governments work?
- How can democracy ensure good governance?



Unit Key Understandings

- **Part 1: Why governments exist**
 - The need for government
 - Managing competing interests with trade-offs
- **Part 2: How governments work**
 - Parts and functions of government
 - Principles of governance
- **Part 3: Democratic government**
 - Definition and features of democracy
 - The value and limitations of democracy





Politics

The **activity** by which groups reach **binding collective decisions** through attempting to reconcile differences among their members (Miller, 1991)

Politics

- Political decisions are those that are public and authoritative; they take place within a society or community—a **political system**
- Politics deals with **collective decisions** that extend beyond individual and private life, typically involving government action (public vs. private spheres)
- Political decisions are **binding** for members of that political system; governments and authorities may use persuasion, inducements, or brute force to ensure compliance

(Powell, Dalton & Strøm, 2012)

Government

- Organisations of individuals **who have the power to make binding decisions** on behalf of a particular community
- Have **authoritative and coercive powers** and do many things (wage war, promote/restrict trade, control borders, tax populations, etc.)

(Powell, Dalton & Strøm, 2012)

Government

- Any mechanism through which ordered rule is maintained, central features being the **ability to make collective decisions** and the **capacity to enforce them**... can thus be identified in almost all **social institutions**: families, schools, ...
- More commonly understood to refer to **formal and institutional processes** which operate at the **national level** to maintain order and facilitate collective action ... core functions are thus to **make law** (legislation), **implement law** (execution) and **interpret law** (adjudication)

(Heywood, 2000)

Key Political Concepts

- Power
 - The **ability** to influence the behaviour of others in a manner not of their choosing; associated with the ability to punish and reward
- Authority
 - The **right** to influence the behaviour of others, based on an acknowledged duty to obey rather than any form of coercion or manipulation (“**legitimate power**”)
 - May be traditional, charismatic or legal-rational

Key Political Concepts

- Five bases of power:
 - **Coercive**: force or threat of force
 - **Reward**: incentives (+ve or -ve)
 - **Expert**: knowledge, experience or skills
 - **Referent**: charisma (inspired admiration/respect)
 - **Legitimate**: recognised position(s) and right(s)

(French & Raven, 1959)

Monty Python and the Holy Grail (1975)



Part 1: Why Governments Exist

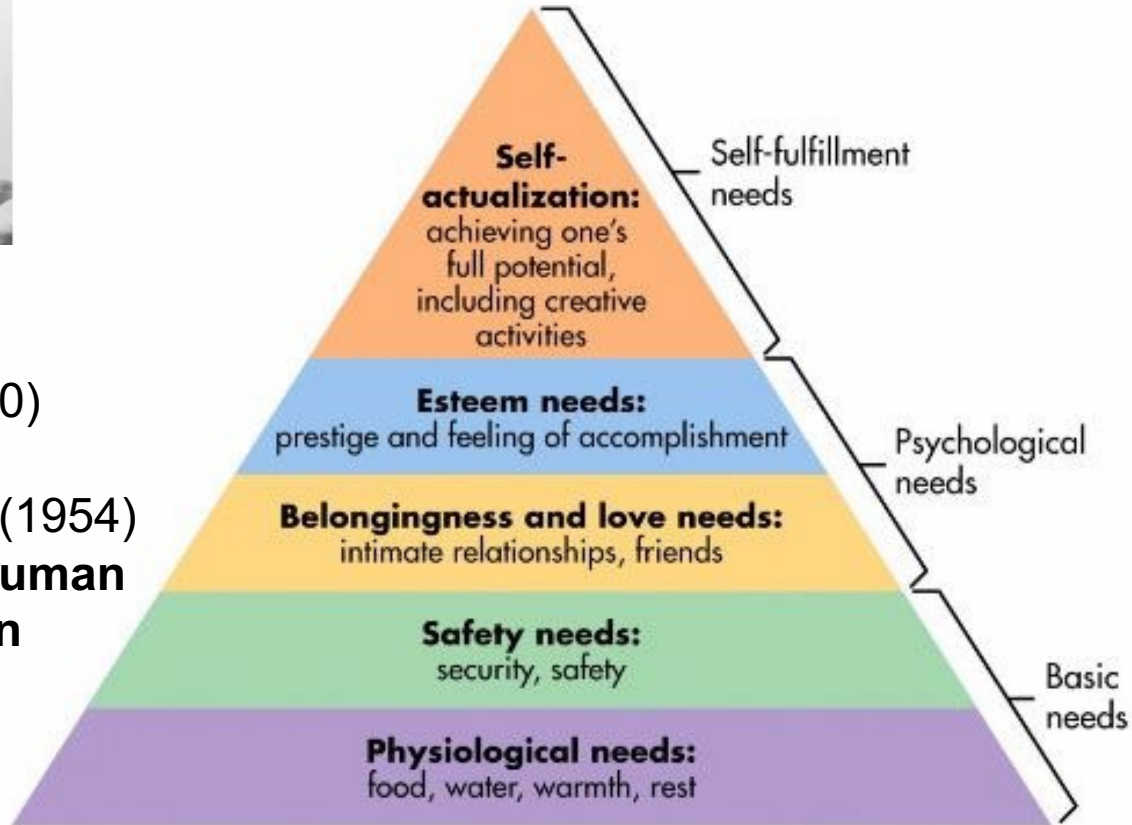


Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



Abraham
Maslow
(1908-1970)

Hierarchy (1954)
explains **human
motivation**



Why Governments?

Reasons For

- Community- and Nation-Building
- Security and Order
- Protecting Rights
- Promoting Economic Efficiency and Growth
- Social Justice
- Protecting the Weak

Reasons Against

- Destruction of Community
- Violations of Basic Rights
- Economic Inefficiency
- Government for Private Gain
- Vested Interests and Inertia

Reasons For Government

- Community- and nation-building
 - Creates and maintains a **community** in which people can **feel safe and comfortable**, using common language, norms and values, myths and symbols, national identity
 - Helps instill common world views, values and expectations, particularly a **national political culture**



Reasons For Government

- Security and order
 - Ensures **external security** against other states with armed forces and diplomatic effort, and **internal security** (preservation of law and order) with legislation, surveillance and enforcement



Reasons For Government

- Protecting rights
 - Protects **property rights** essential to growth in capitalist economic systems using laws and contracts arbitrated and enforced by the state *e.g. IPOS protection of copyrights, trade marks and patents and CPFTA and Lemon Law protecting consumers in Singapore*
 - Guarantees **civil and political rights** that protect against discrimination or repression (via freedoms of speech, association, movement etc.), particularly minorities (religious, ethnic, disabled etc.) *e.g. US 1st Amendment protecting freedom of speech*

Reasons For Government

- Promoting efficiency and growth
 - State intervention necessary for **correcting market failures** through:
 - **Providing public goods**: education, healthcare, security, transport and infrastructure, utilities etc.
 - **Controlling negative externalities** like pollution
 - **Promoting competition** by preventing collusion and monopolies
e.g. Microsoft charged with violating US antitrust laws in 2001

Reasons For Government

- Social justice
 - Counters economic inequality by **redistributing wealth** and providing **social safety nets** via taxes, grants, subsidies, and other benefits *e.g. UK Housing Benefit subsidises or covers rent for the unemployed, Singapore's Workfare scheme supplements low incomes*



Reasons For Government

- Protecting the weak
 - Looking out for and protecting rights and interests of those that **cannot speak for themselves** or have **limited ability** to do so: disabled, the very young, future generations, and non-humans; with child services, environmental protection/climate change legislation, animal welfare legislation *e.g. Singapore's Animals and Birds Act criminalising animal cruelty*

Role of Government in SG

- (SS textbook p. 69-81)
- Maintaining order and external security
 - E.g. MHA, MINDEF and MFA
- Ensuring justice
 - E.g. PPO via Family Justice Courts
- Providing goods and services for the public
 - E.g. public transportation
- Safeguarding the interests of citizens
 - E.g. WorkRight Initiative

Discussion Question

- The Singapore government meets the needs of its citizens by addressing specific areas of concern. Which of the concerns highlighted in this section **is the most important to you?** Explain your answer.

Reasons Against Government

- Destruction of community
 - Govts. can destroy natural communities by imposing order based on coercion, hierarchy and threat of force e.g. China during the Cultural Revolution (1966-76)
 - Strong govts. can create great inequalities in power, resulting in a “client society” where people learn subservience and become reliant on govt. to meet their needs



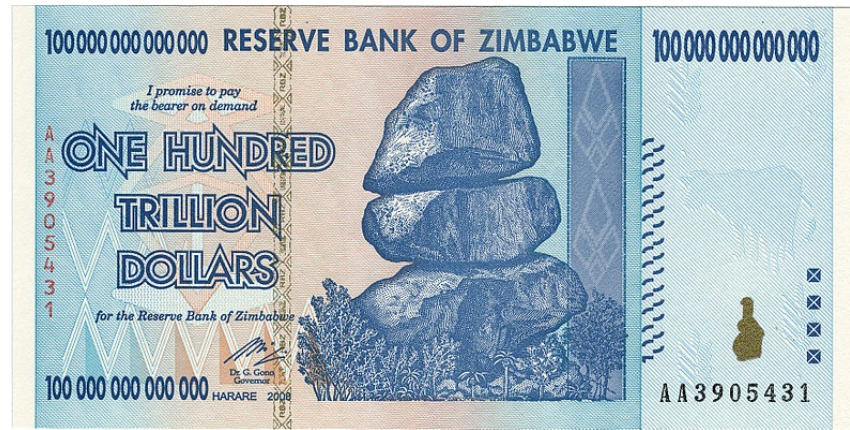
Reasons Against Government

- Violation of basic rights
 - Restrictions of human rights; political persecution e.g. Great Terror in Stalin's USSR (1936-38); genocide during The Holocaust in Nazi Germany (1941-45); ISIS brutality (2012-)

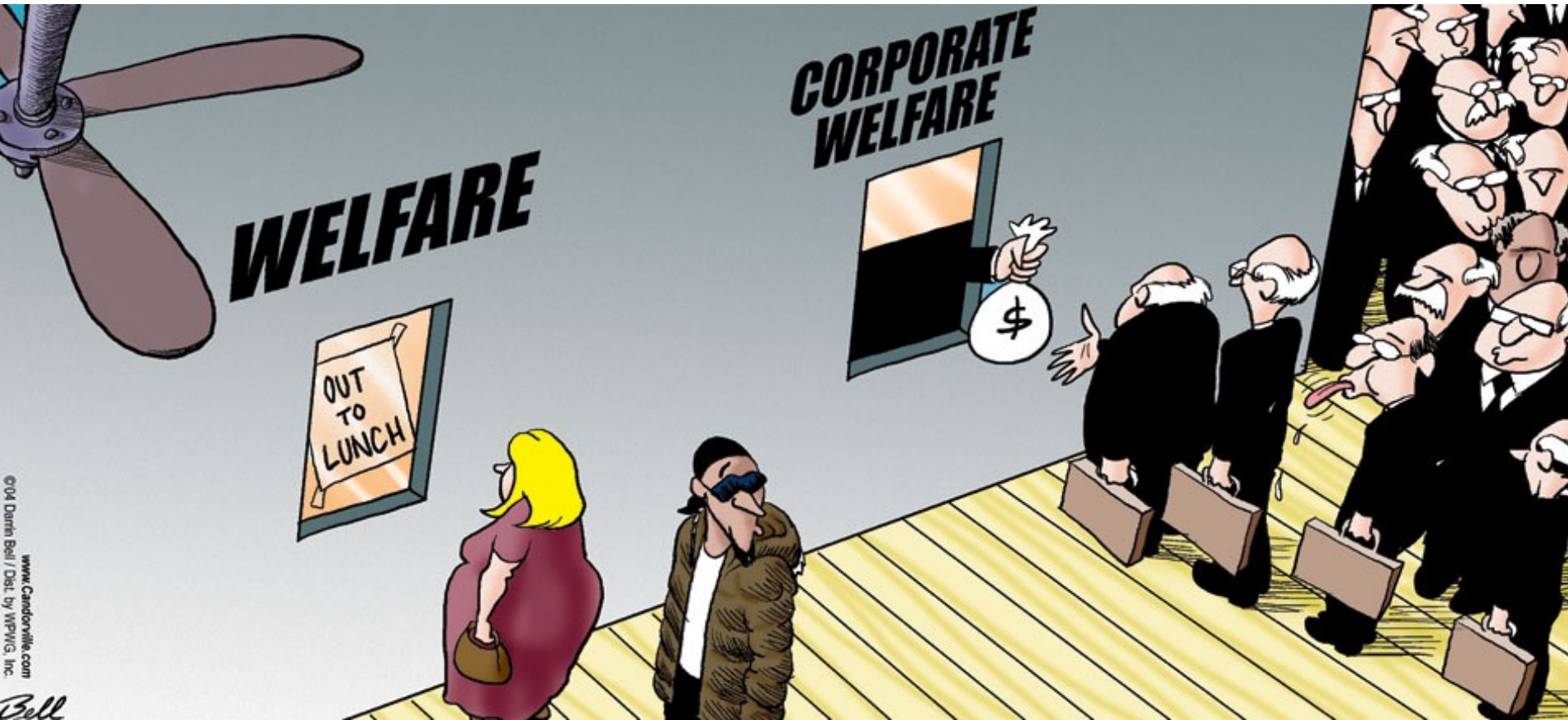


Reasons Against Government

- Economic inefficiency
 - Poor economic planning/policies and corruption can restrict a state's economic potential e.g. hyperinflation in Zimbabwe (2008-09); Greek government debt crisis (2009-)



US sub-prime mortgage crisis and govt. bailout of banks deemed “too big to fail” (2008)



Reasons Against Government

- Government for private gain
 - Rent-seeking govt. behaviour and outright corruption that benefits public officials instead of the public leads to economic inefficiency *e.g. Mobutu Sese Seko's rule of Zaire (DR Congo) from 1965-97*



GOVERNMENT
OF THE PEOPLE,
BY THE PEOPLE
AND FOR THE PEOPLE...

GO AWAY!
CAN'T YOU
SEE I'M BUSY?

THE RICH,
BIG CORPORATIONS
AND LOBBYISTS

AVERAGE
CITIZENS

Reasons Against Government

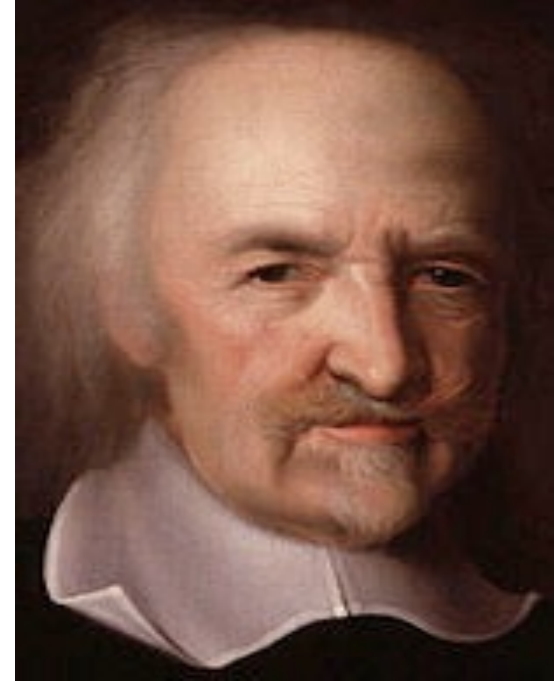
- Vested interests and inertia
 - Any govt. will foster office holders and beneficiaries with a vested interest in maintaining or enlarging the govt., and promote the status quo, making it difficult to change policies or increase their efficiency e.g. UK House of Lords, democracy in Thailand (complicated by entrenched influence of royalty, military and top bureaucrats)

The Social Contract

- A social contract entails individuals giving up certain rights and freedoms by submitting to the authority of the state, and taking on responsibilities
- In return, individuals receive certain benefits provided by government (protection from harm, social services) and guarantees of other freedoms (property & civil rights)
- A social contract grants rulers legitimacy or the right to rule; governments have no authority without the consent of the ruled

Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679)

- State of nature filled with fear and violence, “a war of all against all”; the life of man is “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short.”
- Government must be strong and have absolute power to enforce peace – a case for benevolent absolute monarchy or dictatorship
- Social contract entails individuals giving up some freedoms in exchange for protection from harm

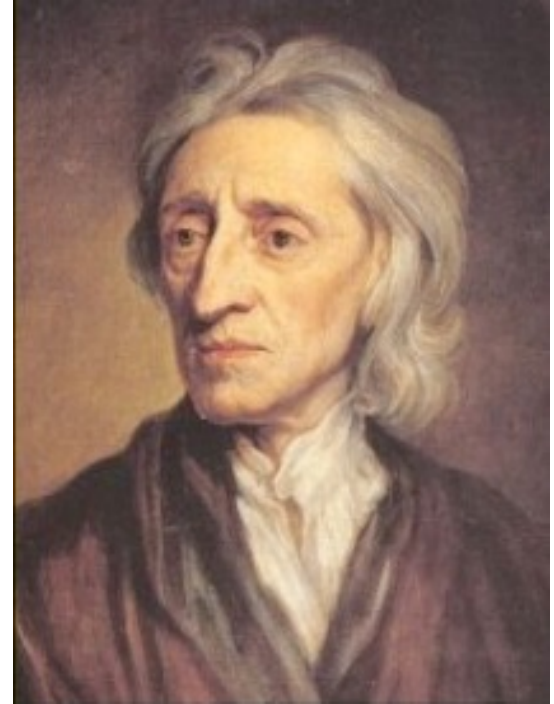




"A multitude of men, are made one person, when they are by one man, or one person, represented; so that it be done with the consent of every one of that multitude in particular"
Hobbes, Leviathan, I.16.13

John Locke (1632-1704)

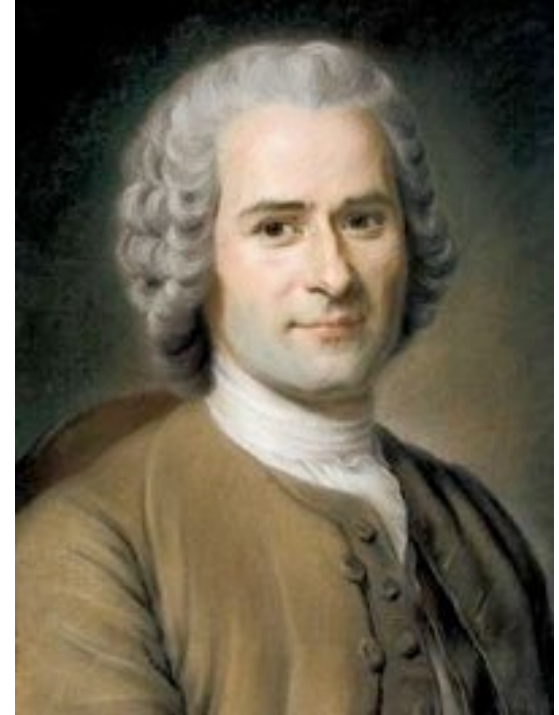
- State of nature generally peaceful: individuals live their lives as they want, guided by morality; war arises when violence is used to protect lives or property
- Government should exist only protect lives, property rights, and liberties of individuals – a case for limited government
- Social contract entails individuals giving up the right to violence in order to enjoy peace





Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778)

- State of nature one where man is free and equal to everyone else; social and economic inequalities restrict that freedom and equality (“Man is born free and yet everywhere he is in chains”)
- Government must ensure that everyone’s interests are addressed – a case for direct democracy
- Social contract entails individuals submitting to a collective will directed towards the common good in order to protect our freedom







Do We Need Government? (8-Bit Philosophy)