

as in the example of the Zhou leader, Wu. But to be considered a legitimate ruler, Wu had to convince the people he conquered of his right to govern them.

To enhance Wu's standing among the Shang, the Zhou introduced the **mandate of heaven**—a doctrine of legitimacy that would endure for more than 2,000 years. According to this doctrine, the Chinese ruler was the “son of heaven” and thus had authority over “all under heaven.” The ruler retained this right only so long as he ruled his subjects in a moral manner. If he failed to rule well, the mandate of heaven would pass to someone else. The Shang leader, they argued, had lost the mandate of heaven to Wu, who had been sent by heaven to unseat him.

In the 1500s, powerful European monarchs proclaimed a similar doctrine of legitimacy, known as the **divine right of kings**. This doctrine, like the mandate of heaven, held that monarchs represented God on Earth. Because their right to rule was divine, or God-given, monarchs did not have to answer to the people for their actions. God had granted them absolute power to govern as they saw fit.

Before long, some Europeans began to challenge this doctrine. The English philosophers Thomas Hobbes and John Locke popularized what became known as the **social-contract theory** of government.



The Mayflower Compact is an example of how a central government can stabilize a group of people. In addition to quelling revolts, the Mayflower Compact also became the foundation of the colonists' government once they landed at Plymouth.

According to this theory, the legitimacy of a government stems from an unwritten contract between the ruler and the ruled. Under the terms of this contract, the people agree to obey a ruler in exchange for the ruler's promise to protect their rights. A ruler who breaks this contract by abusing power loses legitimacy and should be removed from power.

1.3 The Foundations of Government

In 1620, a group of English colonists arrived off the shore of Plymouth, Massachusetts. They hoped to settle there as a community. However, before their ship landed, some colonists threatened to split off from the others. To quell this revolt, the group's leaders demanded that all adult males sign a document promising to obey the rules and laws enacted by the group. This agreement, the Mayflower Compact, organized the signers into a “civil body politic,” or a government.

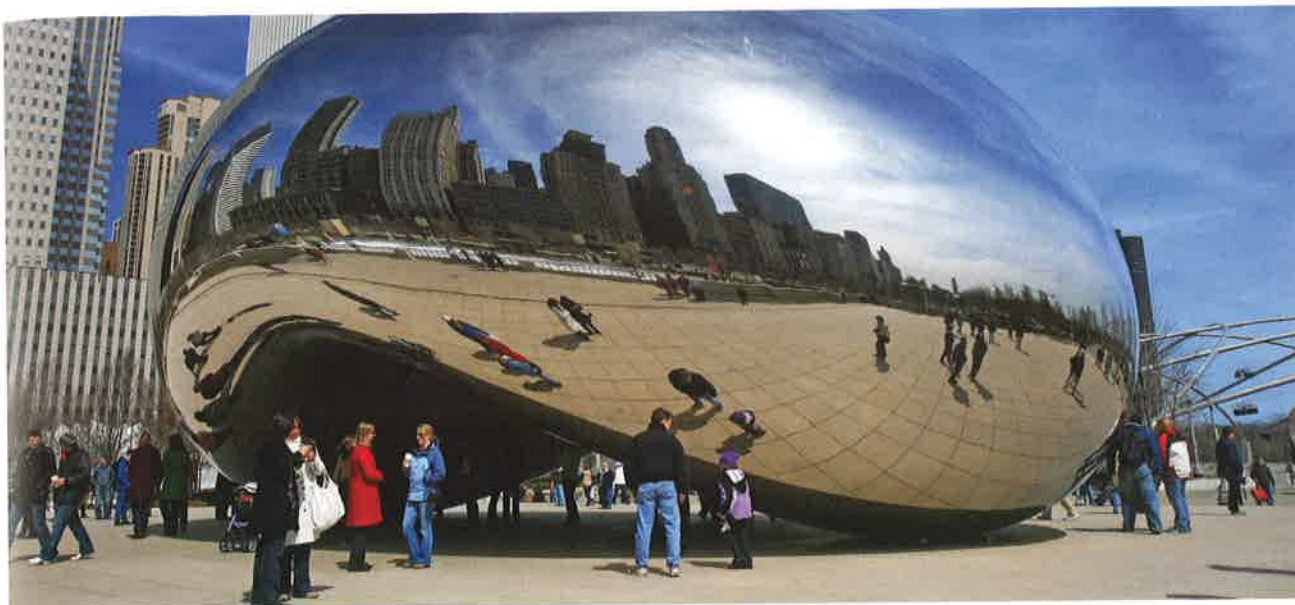
The Purposes of Government: Order, Protection, and Public Goods

Like the signers of the Mayflower Compact, groups of all shapes and sizes throughout history have felt the need for some sort of government. Government serves many purposes. Among the most important are maintaining public order, protecting life and property, and providing **public goods**.

Living in violent times, both Hobbes and Locke emphasized the need for government to preserve order and protect people's lives and property. Without such protection, wrote Hobbes, people would be condemned to live in “continual fear and danger of violent death.”

Today, governments are equally concerned with providing a wide range of public goods to their citizens. You benefit directly from public goods. Your community's schools, the roads you travel on to get to school, and the fire and police protection you enjoy are all public goods that you receive from your government. You also benefit from public goods when you visit a national park or feel safer knowing that our nation is protected by the armed forces.

Public goods have two key characteristics. First, more than one person can consume them without reducing the amount available to others. Consider



Public goods, such as Millennium Park in Chicago, Illinois, belong to all citizens. Government creates public goods, and citizens pay for them with their tax dollars. Unlike private goods, public goods are available to everyone. Once they are established, even people who pay no taxes are free to use them.

streetlamps. If you walk under a streetlamp, you do not reduce the ability of others to use its light. Second, once a public good is made available, all people have the right to use it. After being installed, a streetlamp shines its light on everyone.

Neither of these characteristics is true of private goods. Consider an apple that you buy at a grocery store. Once you take a bite of the apple, you have reduced the amount available to others. And since you own the apple, nobody else has a right to consume it. Your apple is a private good.

The Building Blocks of Government: Coercion and Revenue Collection

Governments throughout history have had two key powers that are essential for providing protection and public goods. These two building blocks of government are (1) a means of coercion and (2) a means of collecting revenue.

Coercion refers to the various ways in which government can use its power to force citizens to behave in certain ways. The most obvious means of coercion include the police, the courts, and the prison system. Governments use the threat of arrest and punishment to maintain public order and keep people secure in their homes and in public spaces.

Other means of coercion relate to involuntary services required of citizens. One example is conscription,

or a military draft, in which government compels young men and women to serve in the armed forces. Another involuntary service is jury duty, in which a panel of citizens decides an accused person's guilt or innocence.

The second building block of government is a means of collecting **revenue**. All governments need money to provide security and pay for public goods. They generally get that money from the people they govern or control.

The ways that governments collect revenue have varied historically. Ancient empires extracted **tribute**, or payments, from the smaller states they controlled. Such "gifts" of goods or money were a sign of submission from the smaller states. For much of its history, China received tribute from peoples on its borders. China also levied taxes on its citizens. Through taxation, the Qin dynasty acquired the resources it needed to build one of history's early public goods: the Great Wall.

Who Should Rule: The One, the Few, or the Many?

Governments take many forms. In the past, most governments, like that of China, were headed by a single, powerful ruler. In contrast, the ancient Greeks experimented with forms of government ranging from rule by the rich and powerful to rule by all male citizens.

Aristotle's Classification of Governments

The ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle sought to determine the best form of government. He considered the number of people who might take part in governing and the moral character of those who held power. He concluded that power spread out over a large number of people lessened the chances of tyranny—whether by a single, selfish leader or a thoughtless mob.

Who Holds Power

One



A Few



The Many



Rule Motivated by the Common Good

Kingship

Government by one virtuous ruler

Aristocracy

Government by the virtuous few for the good of all

Polity

Constitutional government in which everyone has a share in political power

Rule Motivated by Self-Interest

Tyranny

Rule by one lawless ruler

Oligarchy

Rule by the wealthy few in their own interest

Democracy

Rule by the poor in their own interest

The ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle, who is revered as the father of political science, thought deeply about who should have the power to rule. Aristotle was motivated by an interest in ethics, or proper conduct. This led him to an examination of many possible forms of government.

Aristotle categorized governments along two lines. One was how many people are involved in governing—one powerful ruler, a few upper-class aristocrats, or the mass of common people. The second was their motivation in making decisions. Ideal rulers, he said, cared about the common good. Corrupt rulers, in contrast, cared only about advancing their own selfish interests.

As a philosopher, Aristotle liked to consider ideal forms. The ideal form of government, he reasoned, was a monarchy led by a single, virtuous ruler. But Aristotle also prided himself on being a realist. Rule by a single person, he knew from experience, could easily lead to the abuse of power. He admitted that

Political writers, although they have excellent ideas, are often impractical. We should consider, not only what form of government is best, but also what is possible and what is easily attainable by all.

—Aristotle, *The Politics*, Book IV

In the real world, Aristotle wrote, rule by the well-intentioned many would suit most societies. He called this kind of government a **polity**. In a polity, he argued, the best-qualified citizens, whether rich or poor, would dominate government.

Two thousand years after Aristotle wrote about government, the founders of the United States faced some of the same questions he had explored. Although they ended up creating a different kind of government than imagined by Aristotle, his writings strongly influenced their thinking.

The Governments of Modern Nation-States

When political scientists study government today, they are usually concerned with the larger and complicated governments of **nation-states**. All nation-states share these four characteristics:

Territorial integrity. A nation-state occupies a specific geographic territory, with internationally recognized boundaries.

Stable population. A nation-state has people living permanently within its boundaries.

Code of laws. The people of a nation-state agree to live under a common legal system.

National sovereignty. A nation-state is independent and self-governing.

The nation-state is a fairly modern political phenomenon. It merges two concepts: the nation and the state. A nation is a group of people who share a common ethnic origin, culture, and language. A state is a geographical area controlled by a single government.

The governments of modern nation-states are quite varied. In some, power is concentrated in the hands of one or a very few powerful leaders. In others, like the United States, power comes from the people and is broadly distributed throughout the government.

1.4 Politics and Political Activity

The idea that governments should provide public goods is not new. In the early American republic, federal and state governments supported the building of ports, roads, and canals to facilitate travel and commerce. These projects did not come together overnight. The idea for the Erie Canal, for example, was first proposed in 1724, when New York was still a colony. The first bill supporting the building of the canal reached the state legislature in 1787 but failed

Rule by the Many in the United States

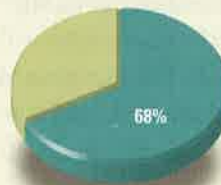
In the United States, the people govern by participating in elections and politics. These graphs show the percentage of American adults who participated in political activities during the presidential election year of 2008. Can you see yourself doing all of these things or just a few?

Political Activity in the 2008 Presidential Election

Becoming Informed on the Campaign



Watched TV

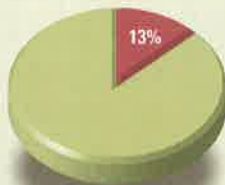


Read newspapers

Becoming Involved in the Campaign



Displayed a campaign button or bumper sticker



Gave money to a campaign



Attended a political meeting



Worked for a party or candidate

Voting



Registered to vote



Voted



Tried to influence how others voted

Source: *The ANES Guide to Public Opinion and Electoral Behavior*, American National Election Studies, www.electionstudies.org.