

Second Edition

Systems of Democracy



An Introductory Politics Module

**Sam Buchanan
Curriculum Project**

Contents

1.	Systems of Democracy – Who Elects the Government?	2
2.	State, Nation and Citizenship	6
3.	Systems of Democracy – Elections	8
4.	Defining Democracy	14
5.	Systems of Democracy – How Laws are Made	19
6.	The Purpose of a Constitution	21
7.	Structure of Governments	23
8.	Political Corruption	27
9.	‘Authoritarian Democracy’	30
10.	Becoming a Democracy	32
11.	Political Theories	36
	Appendix 1: Vocabulary	40
	Appendix 2: More on Political Theories	42

1. Systems of Democracy – Who elects the government?

The Invention of Democracy

Brainstorm

What is democracy?

Where did democracy begin? When did democracy begin?

What makes a country democratic?

Preview

Skills:
Mind-map

Make a mind-map. Think of all the words you know about democracy.

Democracy is a Greek word meaning “rule by the people”. About 2500 years ago, some Greek **city states** began electing their leaders and voting on what laws they should have and what they wanted their city’s government to do. Not all Greeks were allowed to vote and take part in politics. Children, women, slaves, foreigners and people who weren’t born in the city were not defined as **citizens**.

The Greek people who were defined as citizens took part in public debates, volunteered to carry out the work of the government and participated in the military in addition to voting. People who didn’t take part were seen as lazy and as bad citizens. In some cities, people were chosen for political duties by choosing a name at **random** from among the citizens.



At this time, Greek writers began discussing political ideas:

- What rights should people have?
- Who should be allowed to take part in political decision-making?
- Should slavery exist?

Greeks thought politicians shouldn’t rule, they should only work to carry out the decisions of citizens. Some cities held a vote every year to choose the least popular person in the city. That person was **exiled** from the city!

Exercises

Skills:
Reading
comprehension

Answer the questions.

1. What does the word ‘democracy’ mean?
2. Which Greeks could vote?
3. List the political duties Greek citizens were expected to carry out.

Participation

In ancient Greece many people could not vote. It is the same in modern democracies. The age at which you are allowed to vote **varies** from country to country. In Turkey you must be 21 years old to vote. In the Philippines you can vote as soon as you are 15. Most democracies allow everyone to vote once they turn 18 or 20.

Discussion

How old do you think people should be before they are allowed to vote?

A few countries have a maximum age for voting. Some countries do not allow people in prison or in psychiatric hospitals to vote.

Kuwait, in the Middle East, only allows people to vote if they are male and their family had a male living in the country before 1920. Only about eight per cent of people in Kuwait have the right to vote and most never do, as the parliament is very weak – the royal family has most of the power. Kuwait is not a real democracy.

Exercise

Skills:
Guessing

In some countries women weren't given the right to vote until long after men. Can you match the countries in the column on the left with the year in which women won the right to vote?

<i>New Zealand</i>	<i>1965</i>
<i>United States</i>	<i>1918</i>
<i>Iran</i>	<i>1971</i>
<i>Switzerland</i>	<i>1893</i>
<i>Britain</i>	<i>1937</i>
<i>Japan</i>	<i>1920</i>
<i>Philippines</i>	<i>1947</i>

In a 1971 **referendum**, the people of Switzerland voted to allow women to vote in national elections, but in some areas women still couldn't vote in local elections. In one province women weren't able to vote until 1990.



Women in the United States campaign to be allowed to vote.

In the past, countries such as Japan, England and the United States only allowed richer people to vote. In England they had to prove that they owned a certain amount of land.

Australia held its first election in 1842, but the only voters were male colonists – men whose families had come from Britain and other countries. Female colonists were allowed to vote after 1902. Aborigines, the first people of Australia, weren't allowed to vote in their own country until 1967.

Discussion

In the United States only about half the people who are allowed to vote actually do. The other half don't vote. Why do you think people choose not to vote?

In Australia it is **compulsory** to vote, people who don't vote have to pay a fine of about 2000 baht. Do you think people should be made to vote if they don't want to?

Exercises

Skills:
Reading
comprehension

Answer the questions.

1. Can a 20 year-old man in Turkey vote?
2. What kind of government holds power in Kuwait?
3. Could women in the United States vote in the year 1900?
4. Can English people who don't own any land vote in elections today?

On your own

Skills:
Developing
an opinion

In your opinion, who should be allowed to vote when Burma gets democracy? Who should not be allowed to vote? Think about:

- *people's age*
- *people in prison*
- *people from other countries who live in Burma*
- *people who were born in Burma, but their families come from another country*
- *people you think shouldn't have the right to vote*

Write a paragraph of rules. Give the reasons for your rules.

What is government?

Some definitions:

Government (noun)

1. The political institutions, laws, and customs that organise society.
2. The power that rules a community, state, or nation.
3. The people **authorised** to administer the laws.
4. Control and **restraint**.

A **government** is an organization that has the power to make and **enforce** laws for a geographical area. There are several definitions on what exactly makes a government. Generally, "govern" means using power to administrate, whether over an area of land or a group of people.

Exercises

Skills:
Matching
information

Here are some quotations about 'Government'.

Which definition of government (1-4) is the speaker using?

It is dangerous
to be right when the
government is wrong.

Voltaire, French philosopher

Under a government
which imprisons any unjustly,
the true place for a just man is
also a prison.

Henry Thoreau, American writer

Government
employees like to
solve problems. If
there are no problems
available, they will
create their own
problems.

Unknown

The primary
function of the
government is to spew
out paper.

Dave Barry, American comedian

Any woman who
understands the problems of
running a home will be nearer to
understanding the problems of
running a government.

Margaret Thatcher, British Prime Minister

Good government
is no substitute for
self-government.

Mahatma Ghandi, Indian leader

In order to rally people,
governments need enemies. They
want us to be afraid, to hate, so
we will support them. And if
they do not have a real enemy,
they will invent one.

Thich Nhat Hanh, Vietnamese monk

Group work

Skills: Making
examples

In groups, choose a quotation.

Discuss the meaning of this quotation, and give an example relevant to your life and situation.

What does a Government Do?

Discussion

Skills:
Applying
information

Who governs you? What government is there in your situation?

What roles does it play in your life and the life of your community?

What is the purpose of a government?

1) To protect individual freedoms

This means the government makes laws that are in the **direct** self-interest of the people. e.g.

- *Freedom of Speech* laws protect your right to say what you want.
- *Libel* laws mean that when someone says untrue things about you in public, you have the right to take them to court.

2) To limit individual freedoms

Sometimes governments feel it is necessary for the government to control individual freedoms, in the interest of the community as a whole, or to protect shared resources.

These laws may be against our self-interest, but may have long term benefits, for example:

Freedom of speech protects our right to say what we want.

But there are laws that control what we can say (limit our freedom). for example, no person can tell government secrets to another country's government.

Freedom to travel protects our right to go where we want.

But some laws restrict where we can go. For example, there are areas set up to protect wildlife. Humans may not be allowed into these places.

Citizens should be free to choose any job, or own any kind of business.

But all citizens have to pay taxes, get **licenses**, and not participate in illegal trades.

3) To take responsibility for common needs

These include:

- Maintaining international relations and diplomatic responsibilities.
- Setting economic rules, such as exchange rate, and import and export rules.
- National security (such as maintaining an army, and building weapons).
- Establishing a police force to maintain law and order
- Holding elections.

Different political **ideologies** have different ideas about these roles for government, and how much governments should focus on each of these roles. For example, **authoritarian** governments believe it is necessary to place strong limits on individual freedoms. Communists believe government should take a lot of responsibility for common needs. Capitalists believe that the government should take less responsibility for common needs. They think that individuals and private companies should take responsibility. We will look more closely at ideologies in chapter 11.

Group work

Skills: Making
lists and
examples

In groups, make lists of actions and responsibilities of the government in each of these three categories: *protecting individual freedoms*, *limiting individual freedoms* and *taking responsibility for common needs*.

2. State, Nation and Citizenship

What is a State?

Brainstorm What do the words *state* and *nation* mean? Write down your ideas.

A state is a territory (area of land) which is ruled by its own government.

A state is an organized political community, which occupies a clear territory, has an organized government, and possesses *sovereignty*. There are three meanings of *state* that relate to politics:

1. *State* can mean a country. For example, Burma, Thailand and Japan are *states*.
2. *State* can mean a part of a county, which has its own government. These are often states within a federal system. For example, in Burma there are 7 states; Kachin, Karen, Arakan, Shan, Chin, Karenni, and Mon. In America there are 50 states, such as Florida, California, and Washington.
3. '*The state*' means the government.

Sovereignty is the right to exercise supreme authority over a geographic region, and/or group of people. Sovereignty over a nation is usually given to a government, although sometimes it is held by an individual. A monarch (king) who rules a sovereign country can also be referred to as the **sovereign** of that country. Recognition of a state's claim to independence, by other states, is important to the establishment of its sovereignty.

Exercises

Skills:
Rephrasing

1. In your own words, write the three definitions of state.
2. In your own words, write the meaning of sovereignty.

What is a nation?

A nation refers to a large community or society of people.
The word '*nation*' can be understood in two ways:

One meaning relates to ethnic communities.

- The ethnic understanding of nation relates to traditional culture, including language, and history. It is talking about people who are born with the same language and culture, who have a history as a political community, or see themselves as a political community. *e.g. Karen, Palaung, Maori (New Zealand) Sioux (Native American), Zulu (one of the peoples who live in Southern Africa)*

The other meaning of the nation is associated with modern states.

- The civic understanding of nation is the entire population that lives in a territory, possesses a common economy and laws and a public education system.
e.g. Burma, Thailand, New Zealand, the USA, Canada, South Africa

Exercises

Skills:
Identifying
information

Do you think these examples are ethnic or civic nations?

Chin

Thailand

Burma

Burman

United States of America

Maori (native people of New Zealand)

Shan

Pa-O

France

Which nation or nations do you belong to?

Group work

Skills:
Making lists,
Classifying

Nation and *state* are two ways to group people.

What are some other groups of people?

Make a list of ways to group people, and describe who belongs to these groups, e.g.

- Community** - 1. *people who live in the same place* **or**
2. *people who have something in common (e.g. the Muslim community in Mae La, the farming community)*

Citizenship

Discussion

In a country or community, who can be involved in politics?

To answer this question, we need to think about who can be a citizen. Being a citizen of a country means you share something in common with the other people in the country. It can be language, culture, history or geography. Citizenship is also about having duties. In a democracy, this can be duties to vote and to follow the law. Citizens of many countries also have duties to join the military and fight in wars.

In the USA, people can become citizens after they have lived in the country for five years, and sit an exam. They have to answer questions about US history and geography. In Australia, people have to stay in the country for a few years before they can become a citizen. In Germany, anyone who is ethnically German can become a citizen, even if they've been living in other countries for hundreds of years. In Israel, anyone who is Jewish can become a citizen.

Group work

Skills:
Expressing
an opinion,
Making
decisions,
Negotiating

Roleplay.

You are members of the Citizenship Committee for the Democratic Union of Burma. Have a meeting where you decide the rules for Burmese citizenship. Think about these questions:

Who can be a citizen?

Who cannot be a citizen?

What do people need to do to become a citizen?

What duties do they have?

Discussion

Now in 2005, Chinese and Indian people cannot get Burmese citizenship.

Should this law change?

Why/why not?

3. Systems of Democracy – Elections

Preview

Have you ever voted in an election? What happened?
Think about elections in schools, organisations and communities.
Did the candidate you support win? Why/Why not?
Tell the class.



Different ways to organise elections

Most systems of democracy use **representatives**. This means that people chose a person to speak for them and make decisions for them. People use elections to choose their representatives. This is a very important part of democracy.

How do we know what election systems are best?
First we need to think about what makes an election successful.

Read through these ideas for judging elections.

- *One vote, one value. This means that every person's vote is equal.*
- *The election should result in a winner.*
- *Everyone's vote is important for the results.*
- *The election should be easy for people to understand.*
- *The election should find a winner quickly.*
- *The winner is the person that the majority of people want.*
- *The people who are elected are allowed to do the jobs they were chosen to do.*
- *It is difficult to cheat in the election.*
- *It is unlikely that people will argue about the results.*
- *Everyone can vote easily, even if they can't read or write.*
- *It is difficult for one person or political party to control the election.*

Discussion

Think about the elections you have participated in. Did they use the ideas in the text?

Group work

Skills:
Prioritising,
Making
decisions,
Negotiating

Roleplay

There will be an election in Burma next year. You are on the National Election Committee.
What are the most important things for the election to be successful?
Discuss the ideas for judging elections.
In groups, decide the five most important ideas and number them 1-5, with 1 as the most important.

Single member or multi member systems?

Elections can be single member or multi-member. A single member election means each **constituency** chooses one representative only. Multi-member elections are when two or more representatives are chosen for each constituency.

The European Parliament uses a multi-member system. India uses a single member system. The country is divided into 543 constituencies. Each area chooses one representative. Each area has a different ballot on election day.



Getting the ballot to remote villages.

India is the world's largest democracy. It has had regular elections since independence from Britain in 1947. The electoral system in India is called *First Past The Post*. Each constituency chooses one candidate from a list. They do this by marking a box. The person with the most votes becomes the MP. The government is the party that has the most MPs. In some constituencies, only people from smaller nationalities are allowed to be in the election. The government also thinking about making a rule so at least 33% of people elected are women.

Elections in India are held every five years. They are a huge job. In the 2004 election, nearly 400 million people voted. 4.5 million people worked on the administration of the election. They sometimes used camels and elephants to bring **ballots** to villages far from roads. Because many people cannot read, the ballots included pictures for each candidate.

Exercise

Skills:
Applying
information

What does an Indian ballot form look like? Use the information in the text to draw one.

Group work

Skills:
Developing an
argument

What are advantages and disadvantages of using first past the post? Complete this table:

advantages	disadvantages

Discussion

Skills:
Developing an
argument

Why are there rules to help smaller nationalities and women win elections?
Is this a good idea for Burma? If so, what groups should have help?

Group work

Skills:
Presenting an
argument

50 percent of the seats in the future parliament of Burma should be kept for women.
Debate this.

Single Transferable Vote (STV)

STV is a system used for multi-member constituencies. Each constituency has two or more representatives. Constituencies can be as small as villages or as large as countries. To vote, people write '1' next to their favourite candidate, '2' next to their second favourite candidate, '3' next to their third favourite candidate and so on. The candidate with the least votes loses, and they are taken out of the vote. The loser's votes are given to their number two choice on the voters' ballots. This continues until all the representatives needed are elected.

An advantage of STV is that no votes are wasted. People who vote for unpopular candidates get their votes counted again. The people who win the elections are the people who are supported by the majority. STV is used in Australia, Ireland and in many local elections around the world.

Discussion Which system is best for national elections in Burma: *First Past the Post* or *STV*?



In the USA we have separate elections for parliament – we call it Congress – and for the president. We vote for the president every four years. Senators are elected every six years, they are members of the Senate who represent each state. There are two from each state, making 100 in all. We also elect 435 members of the House of Representatives from districts divided up according to their population. The House of Representatives plus the Senate equals Congress.

We choose our president by electing a group of people called an electoral college. The electoral college then chooses the president from among the candidates. This is called an indirect system – people don't actually vote for the president, they vote for the people who choose him or her.

In England we used to vote at public meetings. Everybody could see who we voted for. Now we vote with a secret ballot. This means we write on a card and put the card in a box. Nobody can see what we write and the cards don't have our names on them.



Discussion Why do you think democracy supports secret ballots?
What are some problems with open voting?

Group work Choose an organization in your community that holds elections, e.g.

Skills:
Research,
Presentation

- camp or village committee
- youth or student organization
- women's organization
- political group
- school committee

Who is allowed to vote?

How do their elections work?

Do you think their system is fair to all members?

Use the ideas for judging elections from page 5.

Problems with elections

a) Money



Rich parties can spend more money on advertising and election campaigns. Political parties can get big donations if they have policies that rich people and big companies support. Political parties whose policies favour poor people may have trouble getting enough money to campaign.

Some countries have laws **restricting** the amount of money a party can spend on its campaign.

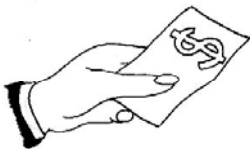
IN MANY Western countries, such as Britain and the United States, two or three large political parties dominate parliament. They have very similar policies and get big donations from businesses. It is very hard for smaller political parties to compete.

b) Media Ownership



In most countries newspapers, radio and television stations are owned by the government or by big companies. It is easy for a government to put people in charge of the **state-owned** media who are supporters of the ruling party. Media companies may give more **publicity** to candidates who support policies that will help them do business, or to rich candidates who can buy a lot of advertising in the paper, on radio or TV.

IN ALBANIA under the old communist government, people were told they lived in one of the richest countries in the world. In fact, the country was very poor, but as the government controlled all the television and radio stations, and newspapers, people could not prove that this was a total lie.

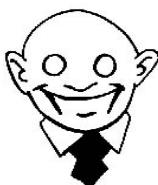


c) Corruption

Corrupt politicians can use government money and other resources for their campaigns, or to advertise the success of their policies.

They can also pay people to vote for them, or pay community leaders to provide votes from their communities (**vote buying**).

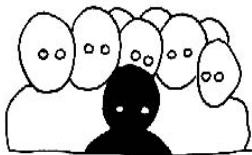
DURING a drought in the African country of Zimbabwe, president Mugabe sent food aid to areas where people had voted for him. People who didn't join his party were not given food.



d) Lying politicians

Voters usually choose politicians who say things they agree with, but politicians often lie during campaigns, or once elected don't keep promises. It's hard to make politicians keep their promises and easy for politicians to find excuses for not doing what the things they promised.

IN 1984, New Zealand voters elected a party that had always been in favour of a mix of government and private control of the economy. When they won the election, the party quickly sold many government-owned business to private companies.



e) Tyranny of the Majority

Voters may elect politicians whose policies are unfair to minorities or to people who cannot vote, such as new **immigrants** or refugees.

Political parties usually choose people for candidates who they think will appeal to the majority of voters. Major parties seldom choose women and people from ethnic and religious minorities as candidates.

HITLER GOT into parliament in democratic elections in Germany. Once elected, he destroyed democracy and started genocide against Jewish people and Roma, and killed many gay, lesbian and disabled people.

Exercises

Skills:
Reading
comprehension

Answer the questions.

1. Why would a newspaper give more publicity to a rich candidate than a poor one?
2. Was communist Albania one of the richest countries in the world?
3. Who did president Mugabe give food aid to?
4. Why don't major parties choose politicians from ethnic minorities?

Brainstorm

How many countries can you think of who have, or have ever had, a woman president or prime minister?

Which countries have never elected a woman leader?

Some woman leaders, past and present



- a. *Sirimavo Bandaranaike, Prime Minister of Sri Lanka three times between 1960 and 2000.*
- b. *Indira Gandhi, Prime Minister of India 1966 and 1980 – 1984.*
- c. *Golda Meir, Prime Minister of Israel 1969 – 1974.*
- d. *Benazir Bhutto, Prime Minister of Pakistan 1988 – 1990 and 1993 – 1996*
- e. *Gro Harlem Brundtland, Prime Minister of Norway three times between 1981 and 1996.*
- f. *Helen Clark, Prime Minister of New Zealand 1999 - currently (2005)*
- g. *Margaret Thatcher, Prime Minister of Britain 1979 – 1990*
- h. *Khaleda Zia, Prime Minister of Bangladesh 1991 – 1996 and (2002).*

Coalition Governments

Coalition governments are formed when two or more parties agree to work together in government. They have to meet and discuss what their policies will be and who will take leadership positions in the government. Once they have agreed they work together as if they were a single party. Coalitions often break up after arguments between the parties.

The following newspaper article is from a Burmese newspaper of the future.

New Light of Myanmar
17th of November, 2024

Coalition Government a Probable Outcome

A COALITION government looks likely after discussion among Burma's minor parties.

The National League for Democracy (NLD) was the biggest winner in Tuesday's poll, taking 41 per cent of the vote. However, the second biggest party, the Karen-dominated Ethnic Minority Alliance (EMA) announced today that it will form a coalition with the All-Burma Democratic Party (ABDP).

The EMA gained 32 percent of the vote and the ABDP 14 per cent, making the new coalition the largest grouping in parliament. Daw Win Win, Professor of Political Science at Rangoon University says the

NLD will probably accept that it will be in opposition for the next five-year term.

The NLD is quite happy to hand over power at this time as economic conditions are worsening and they have no solution. They are happy to see another party in government to face the inevitable criticism. The possibility of the NLD forming a coalition of its own appears unlikely. The only possible partner is the Peace, Progress and National Development Party (PPNDP), who took six per cent of the vote. The PPNDP's leadership of former military officers have a deep distrust of the NLD.

Exercises

Skills:

Reading
comprehension

Complete the sentences:

1. A coalition government consists of _____ or more parties.
2. The coalition in the newspaper article has _____ per cent of the vote.
3. The second biggest party in parliament is called the _____ party.

Discussion

Why does the political scientist think the NLD doesn't want to stay in government?
Do you think that it is possible a party may not want to win an election?

4. Defining Democracy

What is Democracy?

Democracy is a political system based on human freedom and dignity.

Democracy is based on the belief that all people have their own **dignity** which makes them human. Democracy believes that human dignity is not something that is given to the people by the state, but is something that belongs to every human being, because they are human. Under democracy, people should have rights that protect their freedom and dignity, including freedom of religion, freedom to organise one's private life, freedom of speech. Freedom also means protection against unfair imprisonment and a fair **trial** before a court of law. State power exists to serve one aim; to secure free and **humane** life.

Exercises

Skills:
Rephrasing

1. In your own words explain *human dignity*.
2. How is human dignity protected?

Direct and Representative Democracy

In a *direct democracy*, all citizens can directly take part in making public decisions. This means that all the citizens can attend meetings and discuss and make decisions. This was the form of democracy practiced by the ancient Greeks, where all the citizens would vote when decisions needed to be made.

Direct democracy is only practical with small numbers of people, such as a community organization or tribal council. In a direct democracy, all the members need to meet in a single place to discuss issues and arrive at decisions by **consensus** or majority vote. With big populations this is not possible. You could not get the entire population of Burma to meet in one room to discuss issues.



In Porto Alegre, Brazil, 30,000 people meet to discuss how the local government should spend their budget.

In modern states populations are very big, so direct democracy is not possible. Today, the most common form of democracy is *representative democracy*. This means the citizens elect officials to represent them and to make political decisions, laws, and administer programs on their behalf. In a representative democracy people elect officials who they believe will make sure their ideas and needs are heard.

Exercises

Skills:
Compare and contrast

What are the characteristics of *direct democracy* and *representative democracy*? Complete this chart.

direct democracy	representative democracy

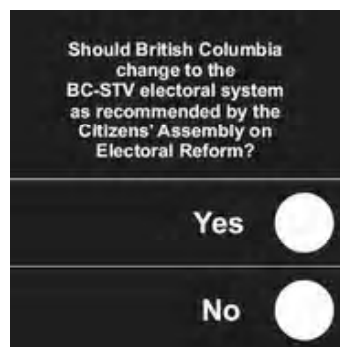
Discussion

Skills:
Advantages /
disadvantages

What are the disadvantages of direct democracy?

Can you think of any problems with representative democracy?

Referenda



Some countries hold referenda to decide important **consitutional** issues. New Zealanders decided how to change their voting system. Chileans decided they didn't want military rule. East Timor decided not to be part of Indonesia. The Spanish decided to accept a new constitution. Many Eastern European countries held referenda to decide what kind of post-communist political system they wanted. A few countries and states; Switzerland, Italy and many US states, use referenda to find out public opinion on non-constitutional issues.

In the last 150 years, there have been over 500 national referenda in Switzerland. Most have been called by the government, but about a quarter have been called by citizens. The Swiss have voted on **budget** issues, military spending and their relationship with Europe. Switzerland is a wealthy country with a fairly small population of 6.5 million.

Discussion

What are the practical problems with holding referenda?

Group work

Skills:
Applying
information

Think of an issue that could be brought to a referendum. What exactly would people decide? Who would you put it to? In groups, design a referendum form.

Accountability

Democratic governments are held **accountable** for their actions. This means that the people are able to express their approval or disapproval of what the government and politicians are doing. Governments and politicians have to act **on behalf of** the people and do what the people want. If people are unhappy with the government's actions, for example if politicians don't keep their election promises, the people can vote them out of office at the next election.

Indira Ghandi was prime minister of India from 1966-1977. She had many problems in office - her enforced birth control programme was widely unpopular, and her efforts to fight corruption met resistance. She proclaimed a **State of Emergency** in 1975, and gave herself dictatorial powers. In 1977 she called for free elections, and Indians responded by voting her out of office.

Exercises

Skills:
Reading
comrehension

Answer the questions.

1. Why did Indians vote against Indira Ghandi?
2. What are *dictatorial powers*?
3. In your own words, what does accountability mean?

Discussion

Skills:
Applying
information

Can you think of an occasion when someone in your community was *held accountable* for her/his actions?

Democracy today

Until very recently, the majority of human beings have had non-democratic rulers. The leaders of non-democratic regimes often claimed that most people do not have the ability to take part in the running of a country. People would be better off if they leave the difficult business of governing the country to people wiser than they are (i.e. the leaders).

During the second half of the twentieth century many political changes occurred. Democracy became more popular, and old systems where power was held by the monarchy or the wealthy began to disappear. People no longer believed that power should only be in the hands of the wealthy. Many anti-democratic regimes of the twentieth century – communist, fascist, Nazi – disappeared. Military dictatorships were no longer acceptable to the international community.

But democracy does not have the support of all people throughout the world. Democratic governments exist in fewer than half the countries of the world, which contain less than half the world's population. One fifth of the world's people live in China, which in its four thousand years of history has never experienced democratic government. In Russia, which made the transition to democracy only in the last decade of the twentieth century, democracy is very weak. Even in countries where democracy has long been established, there are still problems.

Discussion

Discuss the first paragraph. Do you agree? Should government be left to wiser people?

Exercises

Skills:

Reading
comprehension,
Inferring

Answer the questions.

1. Why do you think democracy became more popular during the twentieth century?
2. Why do you think many countries around the world do not support democracy?

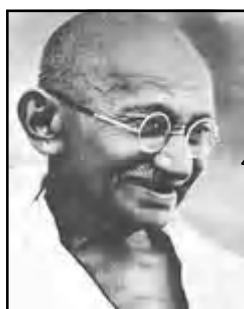
Group work

Skills:

Reading
comprehension,
Rephrasing

Look at these quotations about democracy. What do they mean?

Rephrase the quotations in your own words.



The spirit of democracy cannot be imposed from without. It has to come from within.

Mahatma Gandhi, Indian Independence leader

Although the whole world is preaching democracy, it does not mean we have to follow them.

Mswati III, King of Swaziland



Malaysia and Indonesia carry the promise that Muslims can run democratic systems of government. However, we must keep in mind that democratic elections in Indonesia are in their infancy.

Lee Kuan Yew, former Singaporean Prime Minister

The best argument against democracy is a five minute conversation with the average voter.



Winston Churchill, former British Prime Minister



Mahatir Mohammed, former Malaysian Prime Minister

The crisis of modern democracy is a profound one. Free elections, a free press and an independent judiciary mean little when the free market has reduced them to commodities available on sale to the highest bidder.

The western type of democracy will not help the Asian nations. A controlled democracy is most suited for a nation like Malaysia.



Arundhati Roy, Indian Environmentalist



George W. Bush, US President

If this were a dictatorship, it would be a heck of a lot easier just so long as I'm the dictator.

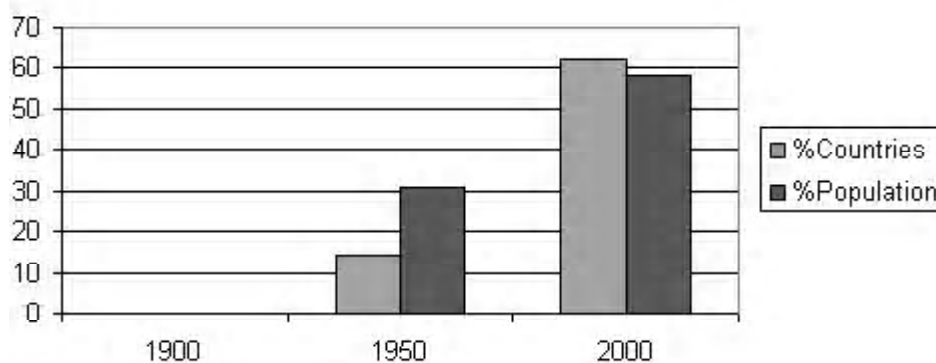
Building a strong Asian democratic tradition is one of the biggest challenges facing the Asian region in this century.



Franklin M. Drilon, Philippino Senator

This chart shows the growth of democracy in the world since 1900.

Democracy's Share: Democratic governments elected by universal suffrage



Exercises

Skills:
Understanding graphs

Answer the questions.

1. What does 'Democratic governments elected by universal suffrage' mean?
2. Are these sentences true or false?
 - a. More countries have democratically elected government now than in 1950.
 - b. Democracy has declined in the last 50 years.
 - c. Nearly 60% of the world's population has a democratically elected government.
 - d. In 1900, no countries had democratic governments.

Brainstorm

Skills:
Understanding graphs

Brainstorm as many statements as you can about democracy in the world since 1900.

Group work**Test your knowledge of world political systems.**

Skills:
Matching
information

All countries in the world can be classified into these five categories.
In your groups, make lists of countries in each category.

Democracies: These are political systems whose leaders are elected in competitive multi-party and multi-candidate processes in which opposition parties have a legitimate chance of attaining power or participating in power.

Restricted Democracies: These are countries that have limited democracy, but the ruling party controls the access to power; including access to the media, freedom of speech, and the electoral process. In these countries it is very difficult for opposition groups to challenge the ruling party. Sometimes called *authoritarian democracies*.

Authoritarian Regimes: One-party states and military dictatorships.

Monarchies: These are countries ruled by a monarch. The category does not include constitutional monarchies, in which a constitution limits the powers of the monarch and in which most power is held by elected governments.

Protectorates: These are countries that are under the temporary protection of another country or the international community.

Your teacher will give you a list of countries, so you can check your answers.

Review: Basic principles of democracy

People from around the world have identified the basic **principles** which must exist in order to have a democratic government. These principles often become a part of the constitution in a democratic society. Though no two democratic countries are exactly alike, people in democracies support many of the same basic principles:

- Citizen participation
- Equality
- Political tolerance
- Accountability
- Transparency
- Regular, free and fair elections
- Economic Freedom
- Control of the abuse of power
- Bill of rights
- Accepting the results of elections
- Human rights
- Multi-party system
- The rule of law

Group work**Teach the class.**

Skills:
Presentation

Your teacher will give you information about some of these principles. Discuss these principles in your groups. In your own words, explain these principles to the class.

5. Systems of Democracy - How Laws are Made

Group work

Skills: Making lists

Who makes the laws in your community?

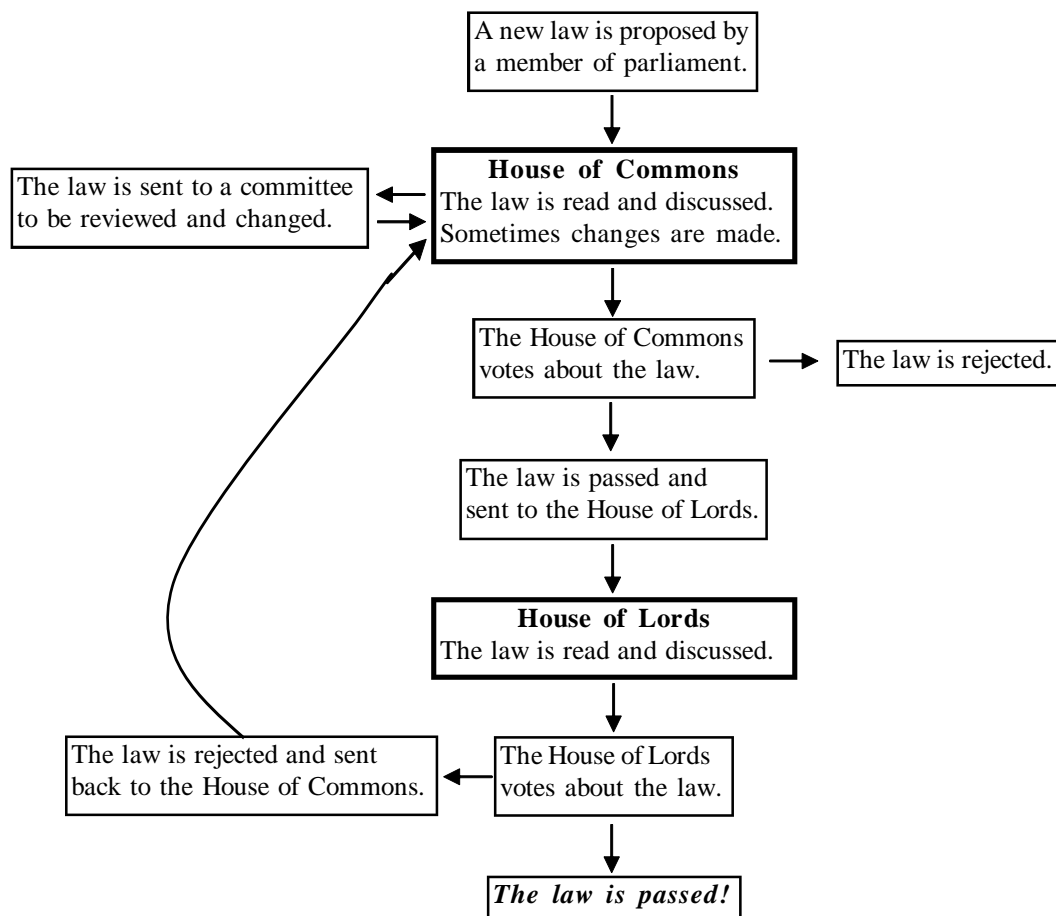
Have a group brainstorm. How many laws can you think of in three minutes?

Many countries have two houses of parliament: The first house is where the government introduces laws. The second house reviews the laws and asks questions. If they don't agree with the law, they can reject it. Laws have to be studied twice before they are accepted. In many countries, the first house is called the *House of Representatives* and the second house is called the *Senate*. Having two houses of parliament is an important part of the parliamentary system.

In a *presidential system*, the president also has to agree with laws. In the US, majorities in both houses of parliament have to agree with a law. The president has to sign it. If the president doesn't agree, they can **veto** it. This means they stop it from becoming law.

If the president vetoes a law, the members of the Congress and the Senate can vote on it again. If more than two thirds of the Congress members and Senators vote in favour, the law passes even if the president disagrees with it.

Here is a diagram showing how Britain makes laws. In Britain, the house of representatives is called the House of Commons and the Senate is called the House of Lords.



On your own

Skills: Research, Making diagrams

How are laws made in your community?

Investigate the local government, camp committee or another authority that makes laws. Draw a diagram.

Saw Min and Ma Khin are arguing about politics...



Saw Min: "It's better to give the prime minister more power, and let parliament have less, things get done faster when one person makes the decisions."

Ma Khin: "But if parliament chooses a bad prime minister, he or she might do things that hurt the country. I'd rather give parliament more power, even if decisions take a bit longer."

Saw Min: "Yeah, but, if we had an elected president instead of letting parliament choose the prime minister, we wouldn't vote for a bad candidate."

Ma Khin: "Then we would have to have elections for president as well as for parliament, and holding elections costs the country a lot of money. Besides, it's hard to know if somebody will make a good president before they are elected."

Saw Min: "You're not very democratic - we can't have democracy without spending some money, and in a democracy people have to be allowed to elect whoever they like, even if they don't turn out to be good at the job."

Ma Khin: "That's true, but giving a president a lot of power isn't very democratic either, I think it's better to trust parliament to make decisions than leave it up to one person."

Saw Min: "You're not very realistic."

Ma Khin: "you're pretty stupid."



Exercises

Skills:
Reading
comprehension

Answer the questions.

1. Why doesn't Ma Khin want a powerful president?
2. Do Saw Min and Ma Khin agree that parliament can take a long time to make decisions?
3. Why does Saw Min want an elected president?
4. Do Saw Min and Ma Khin think the president shouldn't get the job if they aren't good at it?

Discussion

Skills: Finding
solutions

If parliament elected a bad prime minister, what could people do about it?

If people elected a bad president, what could be done?



A session of the United States Congress

6. The Purpose of a Constitution

Preview

What is a constitution?

What do you know about the constitution-building process in Burma?

Most countries have a constitution. A constitution is a **legal document** which sets out the rights of people in a country and the way a government can make laws. It is the highest law in a country. Everyone has to follow the constitution.

Constitutions are designed to be harder to change than ordinary laws. A constitution is useless if a government can change it easily – the most important reason for having a constitution is to protect people from bad governments.

Constitutions also protect minority groups by giving people rights which cannot be taken away by anyone, even by a majority of a country's people. This protects people from "The Tyranny of the Majority". For example a constitution may say that people have a right to practice any religion they choose. This protects them from **interference** by governments or other people who follow a different religion.

Constitutions also protect democracy. A constitution may say how long a government can rule before it must hold an election. It may say how many members of parliament there should be, and who is allowed to vote for them.

Some countries do not have constitutions. Citizens' rights are only set out in ordinary laws. In the United States the constitution is considered very important. Many court cases have resulted from arguments about whether something is allowed or not allowed according to the constitution.

Constitutions cannot protect people from governments which are willing to break the law. The only protection from governments of this sort is their fear of **pressure** from other countries or pressure or **rebellion** by their own people.

Exercises

Skills:
Reading
comprehension

Answer the questions.

1. What is the difference between a constitution and an ordinary law?
2. Do all countries have constitutions?
3. Why do countries have constitutions?
4. What is "the Tyranny of the Majority"?

What can a constitution do? Write yes or no.

1. Say how long a government is allowed to stay in power.
2. Say what religion people must be.
3. Say how often elections are to be held.
4. Say who is allowed to vote.
5. Stop the government from breaking the law.
6. Protect the rights of minority groups..

Group work

Skills:
Identifying
information

Do the *Texts Around the Room* activity with the Thai Constitution.

Discussion

Skills:
Developing
opinions

The US constitution says people have the right to carry weapons. Today, many people in the United States say this means they are allowed to carry guns to protect themselves from criminals. However, the original purpose of this law was to prevent the central government from interfering in the affairs of state governments. The law allowed each state to organise an army to protect itself from the central government.

Do you think states in Burma should have their own armies?

Ancient Chinese writers said the government was under the protection of the gods. They believed that if a rebellion **overthrew** the government, it was a sign that the old government had been bad and the gods were no longer protecting it, so people had been correct to rebel. This has been called a “right to rebel”.

Do you think people have a right to rebel against a government they don’t like?

Discussion

Skills:
Applying
information

Separation of Powers

Who makes the laws in your community? Who administers these laws?

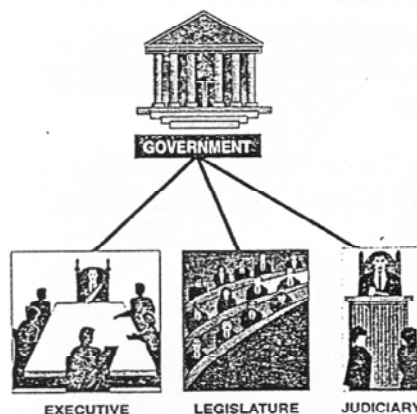
An important part of democracy is *Separation of Powers*. This means that people in different parts of government have clearly defined jobs. They should not try and tell people in other parts of the government what to do. This is to stop one part of government becoming too strong.

The *legislature* makes the laws. It is often called a *parliament* – in the United States and the Philippines it’s called the *Congress*.

The Prime Minister/President and his/her advisors and ministers are called the *executive*. Usually the executive is divided into **ministries**, e.g. Defence, Education, Foreign Affairs, Health, Finance, etc. These ministries have the task of running the government and implementing policies. It cannot tell the legislature what laws to make, or tell the judiciary how to **administer** the law.

The judges and court officials are called the *judiciary*. They are responsible for making people follow these laws. They solve conflicts and punish people who break laws. They cannot tell a parliament what laws they should make.

Separation of powers prevents people in government becoming too powerful. Judges must be able to stop politicians or officials breaking the law. Judges shouldn’t make the laws, as this is the job of elected politicians. Many people find this difficult. For example a judge may feel he or she is more qualified to make changes in laws than an elected politician.



The system of separation of powers

Exercises

Skills:
Reading
comprehension

Fill the gaps, and answer the question.

1. _____ - makes sure everyone follows the law
2. Executive - _____
3. Legislature - _____
4. _____ - can’t punish people for breaking laws, or control what laws are made.
5. Judiciary - can’t _____
6. _____ - can’t punish people for breaking the law or run the country’s economy.
7. In a democracy, why is it a good idea for the executive, legislature and judiciary to have clearly defined responsibilities?

7. Structure of Governments

Preview

Who organizes the schools in your community?
Who builds the roads?
Who decides where people can build a shop?

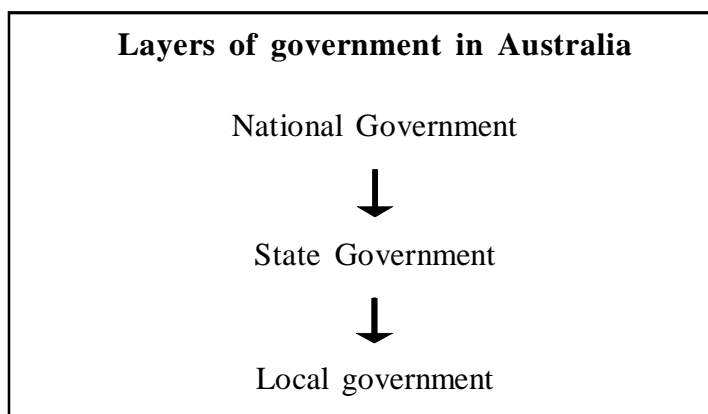
In big countries such as Malaysia, the USA, Thailand and Australia there are many layers of government. At the top is the national government which rules over the whole country. The next layer is the state or provincial government. In the USA the country is divided into 50 states, in Australia there are eight and Malaysia has 15. Thailand has 73 provinces.

The third layer of government is called local government. These are the authorities who run cities, towns and rural areas. There are many different types of local government depending on the country, and the number of people living in the area. Most cities around the world have their own governments. Bigger cities also have divisions into smaller areas, known as boroughs or districts. Villages and small towns are usually grouped together into an area with a single government.

Smaller countries may have less layers of government. Many do not have states or provinces. The smallest countries only have a single layer of government.

Different layers of government have different responsibilities. In some countries the police force is run by local government, in some by state governments and in some by the national government. In some countries there are different police forces run by different levels of government – national police, state police, city police and so on.

In Australia, the national government is responsible for immigration, international trade, printing money, welfare and some tax. The state government is responsible for schools, hospitals, some tax, police and roads. The local government is responsible for libraries, town planning, community centres, public toilets and building permits.



Discussion

Skills:
Making lists

What are the different levels of government in Burma, or in your situation?
Make a list, e.g. *village authorities*...
What are these authorities responsible for?

Group work**Skills:** Making decisions

Who do you think should run government services in a democratic Burma?
First decide which of these services should be run by private businesses and which by government.

schools**bus services****water supply****protection of the environment****tourism****natural resources****hospitals****television****military****police****cinemas****hotels****railways****roads****electricity****universities**

Now decide which level of government – local, state or national – should operate each of the services you have decided should be government-run.

Talk about the choices you made. Do you think they will be popular with people in Burma?
Do you think organizations representing ethnic minority groups will support your choices?

Federations

Preview

Do you think several different independent states can live together as one country?
What kind of government would this country have?
What is a federation?
Do you know any countries that have federal systems?

The European Union

The European Union is a federation of many different countries. Each national government has agreed to let the European government make laws which cover the whole area of Europe, but have kept the right to make laws for their own countries.

Europe has a parliament and government officials. The European government acts like another layer of government covering an area bigger than one country. Many countries in Europe now use the same money – the Euro. You can travel between many European countries without being stopped by police or customs officials, or showing your passport.

People in Europe disagree as to how much power the European government should have. Some say it has too much power and threatens the independence of the individual countries. Some think their countries should leave the European Union and be fully independent again.

Other people think it should have more power and that Europe should become one big country like India or Brazil.

Exercises

Skills:
Reading
Comprehension

Answer the questions.

1. Does everyone in Europe think the European Union is a good thing?
2. Does the European Union make all the laws for European countries?
3. Do all European countries have their own money?
4. Who gave the European government the right to make laws?

Losing and gaining independence

Most countries make agreements with other countries. These agreements allow people to do things such as run businesses or use medical services when they are visiting or living in the other country. Some countries share control of areas of land or areas of sea. Many countries have made **trade agreements** with their neighbours to let goods be traded without paying taxes. Countries that do these things lose some of their independence.

The European Union is said to be a collection of independent countries. Other federations are more like one country divided into states. It is not always clear when a country is independent and when it is just a part of a bigger country.

Australia and the United States of America also began as several separate countries that joined to become federations of states. Each state has the right to make their own laws. In both cases the power of state governments declined. Today, these federations do not seem very different to other large countries.

In the 1860s some of the southern states of the US broke away and formed a separate federation. These southern states said they were allowed to leave the US if they chose to. The northern states said this was not allowed, and a civil war began. The northern states won and the US became one country again.



After a four-year civil war the United States became one country again.

A number of island nations in the Caribbean joined together in 1958 to form the Federation of the West Indies. In 1962 these countries decided they wanted to be independent and the federation broke up.

In 1958, Syria and Egypt joined together to form the United Arab Republic. After three years, they decided to be separate countries again.

Malaysia used to be a collection of states ruled by royal families. These states were British colonies. In 1948, the British organized the states to become one country. After independence in 1957, the country agreed to continue to be one country. But each state kept the right to make laws for its own people. Singapore joined the federation in 1963, but left it two years later, to become an independent country.



Exercises

Skills:
Reading
Comprehension

Answer the questions.

1. Who won the US civil war?
2. Is the European Union one country?
3. Is Singapore part of Malaysia?
4. Since Australia became a federation, has the power of Australian state governments increased?
5. Which of the following federations have never had member states leave: Australia, Malaysia, West Indies, United States.

Discussion

Skills:
Summarising,
Expressing
opinions

What makes a country independent?

Do you think European countries are no longer independent? Is this good or bad?

Switzerland - A Successful Federation

Switzerland is a federation of 26 states called cantons. Each canton has a lot of independence. The Swiss Confederation has been very successful despite having a population divided by different religions and ethnic groups and speaking four different languages. The Swiss Confederation began more than 700 years ago when farming communities in three valleys made an agreement to help each other if they were **invaded**.

Switzerland has three levels of government – federal or national government, canton or state government and commune or local government. The cantons are the most important. They decide what powers the federal government has.

Swiss people often hold referenda to decide difficult political questions. A referendum is like an election, but instead of electing politicians to make decisions, people vote for or against a suggestion for a change in a law. This is called direct democracy, it is similar to the system in ancient Greece. Switzerland holds both local and national referenda.

Exercises

Skills:
Reading
Comprehension

Answer the questions.

1. How many levels of government does Switzerland have? What are they?
2. Which level of government is the most important?
3. Do politicians decide all political questions in Switzerland?
4. How many different languages are there in Switzerland?

Discussion

Skills: Making
decisions

Imagine that you live in a federal system, similar to Switzerland.

Who do you think should decide these things – national, provincial or local government?

1. Which languages are used to teach in schools.
2. Which rural communities get water and electricity first.
3. Whether the country goes to war with another country.
4. Whether foreigners are allowed to own land.
5. What happens when people complain about police behaviour.
6. Which drugs, if any, are illegal.
7. What age people are allowed to marry.

8. Political corruption

Preview

Skills:
Making
examples

What is political corruption?

Can you think of any examples of political corruption?

Win elections and get rich

Corruption is when politicians use their jobs to benefit themselves, rather than working for the good of the country. Corrupt politicians or officials may be using their position to make money, or to stay in power. Many politicians use government money to win votes instead of spending it where it is most needed.

In the United States it is common for powerful politicians to give **government contracts** (especially for military equipment) to businesses in areas which vote for them. Politicians may say this is done to help people in their area get jobs, not to win votes.

The British government has been accused of a similar form of corruption – offering to give countries financial aid if they agree to buy weapons from British companies.

Corruption is much easier to prove when politicians are simply using their position to get money:

- sell government land or businesses to their friends at cheap prices
- take **bribes** from people who want them to support a particular policy
- use government resources to run their private businesses
- give their friends or relatives government jobs.

Some people think parties which accept big donations from businesses for election campaigns are corrupt. They say the parties choose policies to help the businesses which give them money.

Some corrupt politicians, such as President Marcos of the Philippines, President Mobutu of Zaire and President Suharto of Indonesia grew very rich by stealing from their countries.



President Nixon of the United States and president Mobutu of Zaire. Both lost their positions due to corruption. Nixon resigned after it was found he used criminals to spy on his opponents during an election campaign. Mobutu's government was overthrown by a coup after he stole millions of dollars from Zaire.

Exercises

Skills:
Reading
Comprehension

Answer the questions.

1. How do corrupt politicians use government money to benefit themselves?
2. Why did president Nixon lose his job?
3. Who owns the money that the government uses to pay for its activities?
4. How does it help a politician if government contracts are given to the areas that elect them?
5. Find four examples of different types of corruption in the text.

Group work

Skills:
Making
decisions

Decide if the following examples are corruption. Why or why not?

1. A politician uses government money to buy his wife a car.
2. A politician uses government money to build a dam in an area where she wants to win votes, although her advisors tell her it would benefit people more if built somewhere else.
3. A politician's friend is arrested, she telephones a lawyer and offers to pay him to help his friend.
4. A politician's friend is arrested, he telephones the police and asks them to release his friend.
5. A politician telephones a friend and tells her to apply for a job which he has heard is available with a government department.
6. A politician tells a government official that his friend is a good worker and should be given a job in the official's department.
7. A politician spends her personal money on school supplies for a school in her home village.

Think of some more examples of corruption.

Roleplay

Skills:
Expressing
opinions,
Making
decisions,
Negotiating,
Presentation

The Student Committee's Problem.

Central Post-10 School has a student committee, elected by the students. There are five members on this committee; a chairperson, secretary, treasurer and two committee members.

For six months, the school has been raising money to build a library. The student committee is in charge of this money. They have almost enough money to start building the library.

The chairperson's mother is the head teacher of the local primary school. One day a fire sweeps through the primary school, and destroys all the buildings and equipment. The head teacher asks the student committee chairperson if she can borrow the money to repair the primary school. The chairperson and the treasurer take the money from the library fund and give it to the primary school.

Work in groups of five or six. Have a meeting to discuss this situation.

1. You are the chairperson. You arranged to give the money to your mother to repair the primary school. You know she will give back the money later.

2. You are the treasurer. You think the primary school needs the money more than the Post-10 library, so you agreed to lend the money.

3. You are a committee member. You are quite annoyed - you think the chairperson and treasurer should have discussed the situation with all the committee before they lent the money.

4. You are a committee member. You are very angry. You think the money should be spent on the library, and only the library. You want the chairperson and treasurer to resign.

5. You are the secretary. You are writing the notes for the meeting.

6. You are
You think

In your group, practice your roleplay.
Perform your roleplay to the class.

Have a class vote. Is this an example of corruption?

9. 'Authoritarian Democracy'

Preview

Look up the word 'authoritarian'. What does it mean?
What governments can be called authoritarian?
Is it possible to have an authoritarian democracy?
What do you think an '*authoritarian democracy*' is?

A common form of government in South East Asia does not follow any clear political theory. It can be called "authoritarian democracy".

Authoritarian democracies such as Malaysia and Singapore hold elections and allow different political parties, but laws make most political activity illegal. Therefore it is almost impossible for a party other than the ruling party to be elected.

Any strong **criticism** of the government or politicians is regarded as criminal. The ruling parties have close links with the police and judges, and with newspapers and television stations. It is easy for them to silence **critics** by accusing them of breaking the law. It is easy for the ruling party to spend government money in ways that will benefit people who support them.

These governments usually say that:

- *Full democracy can only come after the country has developed its economy.*
- *Allowing political activity will lead to disorder and allow individuals to damage the nation.*
- *Full democracy is a European idea which is unsuitable for Asian countries. Forcing Asian countries to adopt Western-style democracy is a type of colonialism.*

Discussion

Do you agree with these arguments?

Skills:
Developing
an opinion

Do you think countries have to choose between development and democracy?



A political demonstration on election day, Cambodia. The Cambodian government allows some opposition, but often arrests and imprisons opposition members of parliament and activists. Many Cambodian journalists have been jailed for criticising the government.

Arguments against authoritarian democracy

- In a full democracy, a bad government can be quickly voted out of office. In an authoritarian democracy it can be difficult to get rid of bad politicians.
- Corruption is difficult to find out about if politicians or their friends control the media. Even if you find out about it, how can you expose it if newspapers will not print the story? Also, it is dangerous to accuse a politician of doing something wrong if the law makes it easy to have you arrested for **libel**.
- If laws prevent people organising political organisations and **trade unions**, the benefits of development may be kept by a few rich people.

Businesspeople with friends who are politicians can get laws made that benefit themselves, or get paid a lot of money to do work for the government. This is sometimes called “crony capitalism”, when politicians or government officials use the resources of government to help their friends’ businesses, rather than working for the good of everyone in the country.

Group work

Skills:
Summarising

Outline the main characteristics of an authoritarian democracy...

Now, list these characteristics under *authoritarian* and *democracy*, e. g.

authoritarian	democracy

Discussion

Skills:
Applying
information

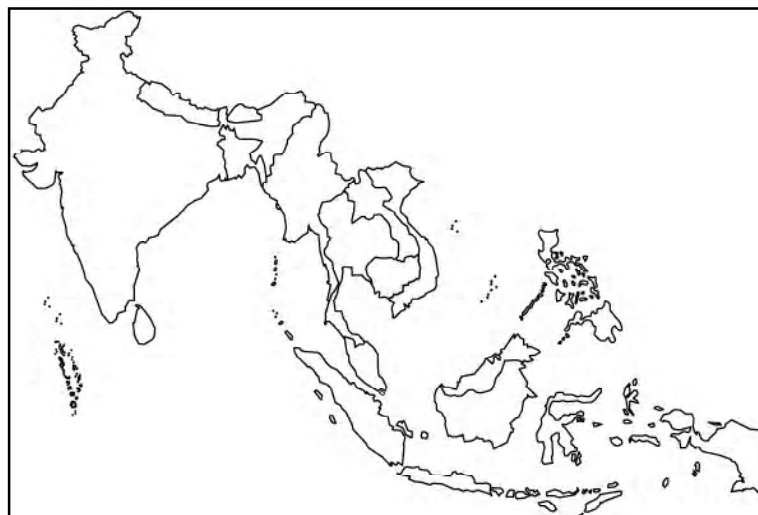
In what ways can authoritarian democracy be corrupt?

How could this be prevented in a true democracy?

Discussion

Which countries are in ASEAN? Label them on the map.

Which ASEAN countries could you describe as authoritarian democracies?



10. Becoming a democracy

Preview

Do you know any countries that have recently become democracies?
What problems do you think a new democracy might face?

Democratic Transition

Between 1974 and 1990, at least 30 countries made transitions to democracy, just about doubling the number of democratic governments in the world.

There have been three ‘waves’ of transitions to democracy in the history of the modern world. The first wave began in the 1820s and continued for almost 100 years. By 1926 there were 29 democracies in the world.



Voters in East Timor’s general election, 2002. East Timor is the world’s newest country. It gained independence from Indonesia in 1999.

This was followed by a ‘reverse wave’, and by 1942 the number of democracies in the world had reduced to 12. However, the victory of the Allies in World War II started a second wave of democratization and by 1962 the number of democracies had increased to 36. This was again followed by a reverse wave. By 1975 the number of democracies had decreased to 30.

Today there are about 60 democratic countries in the world. Will the number of democracies continue to increase? Or, will there be another reverse wave eliminating many of the new democracies?

There are several reasons why countries in the third-wave made transitions to democracy:

- Authoritarian regimes are no longer seen as legitimate (legal) in a world where democratic values were widely accepted.
- The global economic growth of the 1960s raised living standards, increased education, and greatly expanded the urban middle class in many countries.
- Changes in the policies of other countries, such as the European Community, the United States, and the Soviet Union.
- Countries were able to observe earlier countries that made the transition to democracy, and use them as models for efforts at democratisation.

Discussion

Skills:
Inferring

Can you think of reasons why a country that has made a transition to democracy might lose this democracy?

Military Coup in Pakistan

Although Pakistan was founded as a democracy in 1956, the army has remained one of the country's most powerful institutions. Pakistan suffers a lot of problems: conflict with India over Kashmir, economic difficulties, and widespread political corruption. In 1999, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif faced opposition from within his government and violent street protests, so General Pervez Musharraf led an army **coup**. The army claimed that this was necessary for Pakistan's **stability**.



Methods of Democratic Transition

There are three types of political transition from an authoritarian regime to a democratic one:

- *overthrow*
- *reform*
- *compromise*

Overthrow:

If a regime refuses to change its ways it can be overthrown. In these cases the opposition becomes stronger and stronger until they are able to remove the regime from power. As the opposition gains political strength the authoritarian regime loses strength. Democratization occurs after the authoritarian government collapses or is overthrown and the opposition comes to power.

Reform:

When reform happens, the old government plays an important role in the shift to democracy. In these cases the opposition is weak, and the old government decides the type of change and how quickly it will happen. Sometimes a group within the authoritarian regime steps forward and helps establish democracy. In this situation, the old regime still keeps control at some level even though they have allowed a democratic government to come to power. As these former leaders keep a lot of power, they can have some control over what happens in the transitional process.

Compromise:

In countries where change is the result of compromise, the existing regime and opposing forces have equal strength and cannot make the transition to democracy without each other.

Exercises

Skills:

Applying
information,
Distinguishing

Read these three examples, decide if they are overthrow, reform or compromise.

1. The government and the opposition in a country have equal power. They work together to negotiate change and to establish democracy.
2. The opposition gains more support and becomes more powerful. Eventually they are able to force the old regime out of power. Then the opposition works to establish democracy.
3. An influential part of the old government works to bring democracy slowly to the country. The opposition party does not take part in the process.

Group work

Skills:
Applying
information,
Distinguishing

These countries have all become democratic in the last forty years.

Here are some brief summaries of their transition to democracy.

Was the transition process an *overthrow*, *reform* or *compromise*?

Cambodia

The Khmer Rouge regime took over Cambodia in 1975. Under the Maoist Khmer Rouge, about 2 million Cambodians died from disease, overwork, starvation, or execution. In 1979, neighboring Vietnam toppled the Khmer Rouge and installed a Communist regime. Fighting continued throughout the 1980s between the Vietnamese allies, Khmer Rouge, Monarchists and other **factions**. In 1991, representatives of the different factions met in France, and signed a peace agreement. The United Nations came to Cambodia to help set up democratic elections. Free parliamentary elections were held in 1993.



These Cambodians fled as refugees during the Khmer Rouge regime, and re-settled in the USA. After the Peace agreement was signed, they returned to Cambodia.



King Juan Carlos

Spain

After the Spanish Civil War from 1936-39, Spain had a fascist system under General Franco. members of the opposition were killed, jailed and **exiled**. Before Franco died in 1975, he appointed Prince Juan Carlos to become leader and king. Franco thought the Prince supported his ideas. However, when he became king, Juan Carlos decided to help Spain change to a democratic system. He co-operated with opposition groups and members of the old fascist regime to hold elections, and Spain gradually became more and more democratic. Now Spain has a constitutional monarchy with a democratically elected government.

Indonesia

For 32 years, Indonesia was ruled by the military under General Suharto. His regime jailed banned opposition parties, and concentrated power in himself, and his family and friends. By 1997 Indonesia was having major economic problems. Suharto resigned in May 1998 following huge street demonstrations. Vice President B.J. Habibie, a long-time Suharto supporter was appointed president, but agreed to hold elections in June 1999.

South Africa

From 1948, South Africa had an *apartheid* system, where only white people were allowed to vote and participate in national politics. Black, Asian and mixed-race South Africans did not have the same rights as white people. International economic sanctions and civil **unrest** eventually forced the South African government to negotiate. President Frederick de Klerk worked with Nelson Mandela, the leader of the opposition African National Congress, to hold democratic elections. In 1994, Mandela was elected president.



Apartheid-era President De Klerk discusses the transition with ANC leader Nelson Mandela.

The Philippines

For fourteen years the Philippines was under the dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos. Although Marcos allowed elections, he **riggered** the results and continued to rule. In 1986 a huge 'People Power' movement, involving students, workers and church officials took to the streets. Many military personnel also joined People Power. Marcos and his regime were forced out of office. Corazon Aquino, the winner of the previous election, was able to take up her position as president.



People Power in action in the Philippines, 1986

Nigeria

The military ruled Nigeria until 1999. Generals and their backers argued that they were the only ones who could control **tensions** between Muslims and Christians, and among the country's 250 ethnic groups. Between 1993 and 1999, Nigeria was ruled by General Sani Abacha. When he died in 1999, the new military leaders agreed to oversee a transition to **civilian** rule, and the first presidential elections were held that year.

Russia

Since 1917, Russia was under a one-party, communist system as part of a wider 'Union of Soviet Socialist Republics' (USSR) that included Russia and all the smaller countries surrounding Russia. The Soviet leader from 1985-1991, Mikhail Gorbachev, encouraged a *glasnost* (public openness) policy. Many people started talking about democratic reform, and many countries in the USSR started talking about independence. In 1991 the USSR split into fourteen independent countries. Russia decided on a presidential system, and had presidential elections in June 1991.

Discussion Where can you get more information on these countries?

Group work

Skills:

Research,
Presentation

Research Project.

Choose one of these countries and research the current political situation.

Present your information to the class.

11. Political Theories

Preview

What is a political theory?

Which of these are political theories?

capitalism	socialism	optimism	buddhism	anarchism
communism	facism	criticism	libertarianism	organism



The Russian leader V.I. Lenin developed communist theories.

People have tried to organize society in many different ways. When a way of organizing society is given a name it is called a political theory. Some theories were written about and discussed before being put into practice. Others, such as capitalism, were developed by examining how an existing society worked. Political theories describe what people would like to do. Even powerful rulers have found they are unable to change society as much as they would like. They have to make compromise between their theories and the situation in the country they are ruling.

It can be very difficult to know which theory a party is really following. Parties often change their ideas, but keep the same name. Sometimes parties say they follow one theory, but act differently in practice.

For example, the ruling parties in Vietnam and China are now practicing social democratic economic policies – a mixture of private business and state-owned business – but still call themselves “communists” and don’t allow other political parties to exist.

In many countries, governments claim to believe in free-trade economics (also called liberal capitalism) – allowing businesses to operate without any government support or interference – but none actually operate their economies this way. However, these governments often tell other countries this is the way they should run their own economies.

Different Political Theories and Systems

1. Liberal Capitalism

Liberal Capitalism is the belief that people are better off if most things are run by privately-owned businesses and the government doesn’t interfere with them or run services itself.

Liberal capitalists think government control isn’t necessary as businesses must do what their customers want or go out of business. Modern liberal capitalism, sometimes called neo-liberalism, says governments should allow companies to operate anywhere in the world, and should be allowed to import and export goods without paying taxes. This economic system is called a free-market system.

Examples: *United States, Canada, New Zealand, Britain, Argentina.*



United States capitalist politician Henry Kissenger meets communist Chinese leader Mao Zedong. The two countries developed good relations despite their theoretical differences.

2. Social Democracy

Social democrats say capitalism is a good economic system, but the government must set rules for businesses and charge them tax in order to look after people who cannot find work, or are old, sick or are looking after children.

Usually social democrats think the government should run essential services, such as schools and hospitals, so it can make sure that everybody can use them, whether they are rich or poor.

Examples: *France, Japan, Switzerland, Germany.*

3. Communism

Communists think it is unfair for some people to own things such as land and factories, making money from the people who work for them. They think the things people need to survive should be owned by everybody. Under communism, the state would control all the land, factories and transport.

Communists say that when society is run by the workers, the government would become unnecessary. No communist country has ever reached this stage.

Examples: *The Soviet Union, China, Vietnam, Laos, North Korea, Cuba.*



Ho Chi Minh, communist leader of Vietnam until 1969.



Adolf Hitler lead the party that ruled Germany from 1933 until the end of World War Two.

4. Fascism

Fascists also think that the capitalist economic system is unfair, but instead of changing the ownership of things, they think the government should make sure that everyone in a country shares in that country's wealth. They wanted everyone who owned, worked in or used a part of the economy, such as farming or transport, to elect representatives to make rules for everyone to follow. Fascists have usually been very nationalistic, have oppressed minority groups and built large armies.

Examples: *Modern Syria. Italy, Germany, Japan and Thailand until 1945. Spain and Portugal until the 1970s.*



After World War II, Germany was divided into two countries, one communist and one capitalist. Here, an injured refugee is carried into capitalist West Germany.

5. Anarchism

Anarchists want a society in which everyone has equal power. There would be no government, instead everyone would take part in making decisions for their community. They want land and other property to be owned by these democratic communities, not by businesses or individuals. Communities would work in cooperation with others when they found it useful to do so.

Anarchism has only been tried out for short periods of time, for example by peasants in Mexico between 1910 and 1920, and in some Spanish cities and villages in the 1930s.

6. Monarchy

A monarchy is a country ruled by a King, Queen or other members of a royal family. There are two types of monarchy – *absolute monarchies* and *constitutional monarchies*.



Elizabeth II, Queen of England, a constitutional monarch.

In an absolute monarchy, all decisions are made by the ruler, the monarch, although he or she may have advisors. There are few absolute monarchies in the world today. Brunei, Tonga (a Pacific Island nation) and Swaziland in southern Africa are absolute monarchies. Constitutional monarchies usually have an elected government as well as a monarch. In most constitutional monarchies the elected parliament is the main power; the monarch has few powers and their main job is to participate in ceremonies. In some, such as Britain, Sweden and Australia, the monarch is tolerated as long as they do not interfere in the running of the country – although legally they have the power to interfere. In countries such as Jordan and Nepal power is shared between parliament and the monarch. There are often many arguments about sharing power.



Taufa'ahau Tupou IV, King of Tonga, an absolute monarch.

7. Socialism

Socialism includes any political theory that says businesses shouldn't be run by individuals, but should be controlled by the government or by communities. It includes anarchists, communists and fascists. Some social democrats call themselves socialists, but others do not like this term.

Exercises

Skills:
Reading
Comprehension

Answer the questions.

1. In what ways are the Vietnamese and Chinese governments undemocratic?
2. What are the main characteristics of free-market capitalism?
3. What's the difference between liberal capitalist and social democratic ideas?
4. Who has power in an anarchist society?
5. Who has the most power in a constitutional monarchy?

Group work

Skills:
Developing
opinions

In groups, discuss what you think is good and bad about each theory?
Which theory do you think is best? Why?

Group work

Skills:
Making
Questions

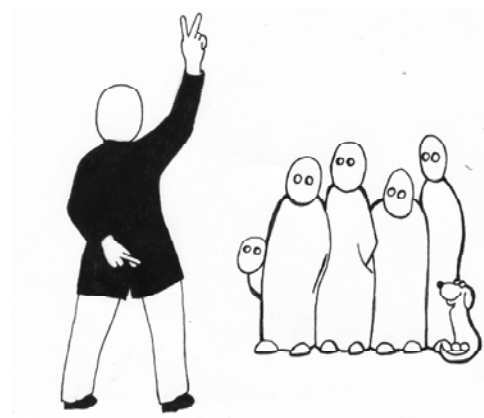
Have a quiz competition.

Work in groups, and write five questions using information from this chapter.

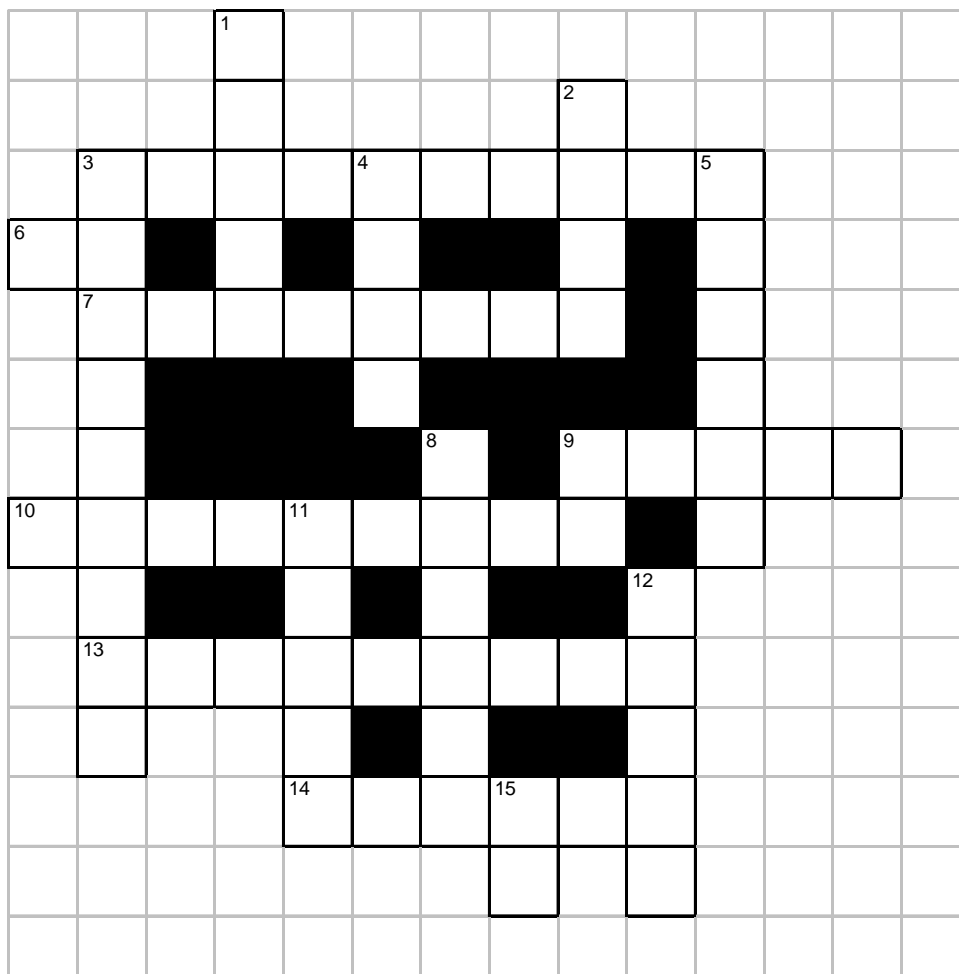
Ask the other groups your questions, they write down their answers.

Every correct answer gets a point.

The winner is the group with the most points.



Exercise Complete the crossword



Across

3. Political theory which thinks most things should be run by private business.
6. First name of Vietnamese communist leader.
7. State ruled by a King or Queen.
9. Another name for the media.
10. Political theory which opposes both governments and businesses.
13. General term for a person who thinks businesses shouldn't be run by individual people.
14. A corrupt politician may face

Down

1. Asian country with a Social Democratic government.
2. Democracy was invented instates.
3. A person who believes the state should control land, factories and other things.
4. The president of the United States is elected for a four- year.....
5. Neo-liberals believe in a free-.....
8. Leader of the fascists in Germany.
9. Abbreviation of prime minister.
11. The largest communist country in the world.
12. A part of a country.
15. Abbreviation of European Union.

Appendix 1: Vocabulary

accountable (*adj*) responsible for the effects of your actions, and prepared to explain them.
The government is accountable to the people.

administer (*v*) to manage and organise.
The principal administers the school

authorise (*v*) to have power to give permission.
I can't authorise this - please talk to my boss.

authoritarian (*adj*) forcing people to obey rules.
The regime is very authoritarian. If you drop litter, the police will beat you with a cane.

ballot (*n*) A piece of paper or form you use to vote.
I folded my ballot and put it in the box.

bribe (*v, n*) to offer someone money or gifts to persuade them to do something.
The company bribed the government to give them the contract.

budget (*n*) plan to spend available money
The government's budget for 2006 prioritised spending on health care.

citizen (*n*) A person who legally belongs to a state.
Although he lives in Thailand, he is a British citizen.

city state (*n*) An independent nation-state that is all in one city.
The Vatican is the smallest city-state in the world.

civilian (*n, adj*) People who are not part of the military or police.
20 soldiers and 5 civilians were killed in the fighting.

compulsory (*adj*) You must do this.
Schooling is compulsory between the ages 5-16.

consensus (*n*) an agreement reached by everyone in a group.
We reached a consensus on how to spend the money.

constituency (*n*) an area that elects officials within a country, or the people who live and vote there.
The MP's constituency was the area between the two rivers.

constitutional (*adj*) officially allowed according to the constitution.
To forbid the meeting was unconstitutional.

corrupt (*adj*) dishonest, takes bribes to do illegal things.
Giving the government contract to his brother's company was a corrupt act.

coup (*n*) To take power in your country by force
In Burma, there was a military coup in 1962.

critic (*n*) Someone who judges something.
She is a severe critic of the government's policies.

criticism (*n*) The act of judging whether something is good or bad.
My criticism of him is that he has no original ideas.

dignity (*n*) worthy of respect
She behaved with dignity throughout her trial

direct (*adj*) without dealing with anyone else first
Speak directly to me, don't tell my secretary first.

exile (*n, v*) living outside your own country, to force someone to live outside their own country.
After the 1988 uprising, many people went into exile.

faction (*n*) Small group of people, who have different ideas from the main group they are part of.
They formed a left-wing faction in the labour Party.

government contract - signed agreement to do some work for the government.
The company got a government contract to build a bridge.

humane (*adj*) treating people kindly, with respect
Torture is an inhumane act.

ideology (*n*) political ideas and beliefs.
Fidel Castro followed a communist ideology.

immigrant (*n*) A person who goes to live in another country.
Immigrants often get low-paid jobs when they arrive.

interfere (*v*) to get involved in another person's or country's issues, when you are not wanted.
Stop interfering in my personal life!

invade (*v*) to enter a place using military force.
Germany invaded Poland in 1939.

legal document (*n*) a piece of paper with official information approved by law.
A marriage licence is a legal document.

libel (*n*) the illegal act of writing or publishing information about someone that is not true.
The newspaper committed libel when they said that the President had six wives.

licence (*n*) an official document saying you are legally allowed to do something.
You can get a driving licence when you are 18.

ministry (*n*) A government department.
She works for the Ministry of Education.

on behalf of doing something for someone, instead of them doing it.

I am speaking on behalf of all poor people in the world.

overthrow (v) to remove by force

The rebels are trying to overthrow the government.

pressure (n, v) to try to persuade someone to do something using arguments, influence or threats.

The ministers put pressure on the president to resign.

principles (n) A set of moral rules and beliefs that guide your behaviour.

One of my firm principles is that all people are equal.

publicity (n) media attention

He got a lot of publicity from his controversial speech.

random (adj) happening without plan or pattern

Six representatives were chosen at random from the organisation.

rebellion (n) an organised attempt to change the government, often using violence

Public anger helped start the rebellion.

referendum (n, plural **referenda**) A process where all citizens vote on an important policy decision.

There was a referendum on changing the voting system.

representative (n) someone chosen to speak or vote on behalf of a group.

We elected a representative to go to the community council.

restraint (n) something that controls what you do

Please exercise restraint when you speak at the meeting, strong opinions might make people angry.

restrict (v) to limit what people can do

Entry is restricted to people over the age of 18.

rig (v) to dishonestly arrange the results of an election.

The party rigged the election so that they could not lose.

sovereignty (n) independence, can govern itself

The country has sovereignty over its coastline.

stability (n) strong, steady, not changing.

A country needs stability to develop economically.

State of Emergency when the government takes extra powers to get the country in order.

During the floods, the government declared a State of Emergency,

state-owned (adj) owned by the government.

The state-owned railways are being sold to a private company.

tension (n) feeling of stress, pressure, mistrust

Efforts to calm racial tension might help the situation.

trade agreement formal co-operation between two or more countries to increase trade between them.

Thailand signed a trade agreement with Australia.

trade union an organisation that fights for the rights of workers. Also **union**.

The clothing worker's union called on the government to increase the minimum wage for sewing machine operators.

trial (n) The legal process of deciding whether someone is guilty or innocent of a crime.

She was out on trial for corruption.

unrest (n) social or political tension

There was a lot of unrest before the election.

vary (v) to change often

The speakers varied a lot; first was a young socialist man, then an elderly conservative woman, then a monk.

veto (v, n) to officially stop something from happening.

The decision to impose sanctions was vetoed by China.

vote-buying (n) the practice of offering money in exchange for voting for someone.

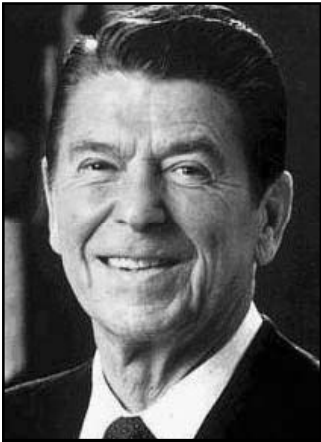
The party was accused of vote-buying last election.

waste (v) to use something in a way that is not effective, not useful.

While she was in power, she wasted the opportunity to improve conditions for the poor in her country.

Appendix 2: More on Political Theories

Liberal Capitalism



US president Ronald Reagan. His government used many social democratic methods while claiming to be capitalist.

The belief that the economy works best if privately-owned business is not supported by governments or made to follow too many regulations. Liberal capitalists believe that if businesses are allowed to do whatever they like, customers will choose which businesses they prefer and businesses which do not attract customers will lose money and close. They will be replaced with businesses which provide better services.

According to the theory, government spending or regulation makes the system less efficient, as businesses are less dependent on keeping customers happy.

For example: if a railway company is made to follow strong government safety regulations, they will have to charge customers more. They should be allowed to decide for themselves what level of safety will satisfy their customers, if they make mistakes and have many accidents their customers will find another way to travel. If the government makes them pay higher wages, they will employ less people or charge more for their tickets.

Liberal capitalists believe countries should allow companies to operate anywhere in the world, and should be allowed to import and export goods freely.

Political parties that claim to support liberal capitalist policies have found these policies unpopular when they get into power and try to implement them. Many operate social democratic policies when in government.

Where there are few regulations, large companies can grow so large that only a few businesses are selling a product or service. The companies can then agree to raise prices as people have nowhere else to buy what they need. This is called a cartel. When only one company is selling a service it is called a monopoly. Without regulations to protect workers, companies can reduce wages until people are very poor, or they can threaten to move factories to other countries where wages are lower, so people must accept lower wages or lose their jobs.

Businesses often oppose liberal capitalist policies; Although they don't like regulations, they want the government to subsidise them and to pay them to do jobs for the government.

Liberal capitalists usually believe government must be chosen by democratic elections. Some people think that liberal capitalism is too weak and that government shouldn't regulate business at all. Private companies should run such things as roads, hospitals and schools. Only courts, police and the army should be run by the state. This theory is called Libertarianism.



Prime minister Margaret Thatcher led Britain away from social democracy and towards liberal capitalism.

Social Democracy

Social democracy is a mix of state control and liberal capitalism. Businesses are owned privately, but regulated by the state. The government also sets laws to make sure workers are fairly treated by their employers and runs hospitals and schools. Some other types of business, such as railways may be run by the government, or by private companies which follow the rules the government sets on safety and treatment of workers.

Usually social democrats believe the state should provide money for those people who cannot work because they cannot find a job, are sick, old or must look after children. This is called social welfare.

Social democracy has been a very successful theory. Even countries which claim to be following other theories have often had to adopt social democratic methods. However, many social democratic governments have found it difficult to pay for services run by the government and for their social welfare programmes. They have often had to borrow money or make people pay very high taxes.

Social democrats believe parties must be democratically elected. Japan and most Western countries have social democratic governments, although many do not call themselves this.

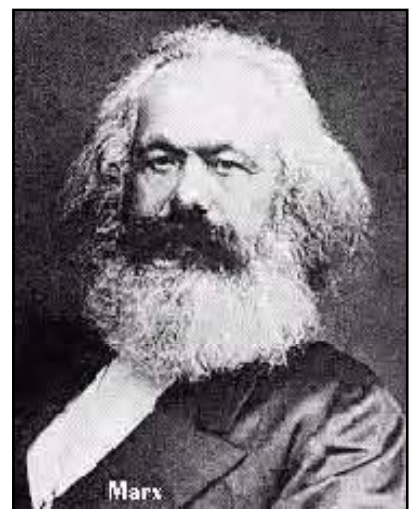


The wartime leaders of Britain, the United States and the Soviet Union. Their countries fought together against the fascist countries despite their political differences. After World War II, Britain and the US confronted the communist Soviet Union.

Communism

Communists follow the theories of Karl Marx. He was a 19th century writer and political activist. Communists are therefore often called Marxists. Marxists say they want a democratic society in which everyone together owns the things needed to produce what people need to live – tools, machines, factories and land (Marxists call these things ‘the means of production’).

In practice, Marxist governments have not been democratic. Karl Marx believed that history followed scientific rules over which people had no control. He thought progress was made by a series of revolutions in which one class took power and ran the government to suit its own interests. Marx said the final step was when workers organised themselves to make a revolution to overthrow capitalism and replace it with communism. He thought the capitalist system helped only the rich people and that communism would be the best system for workers.



Karl Marx, the founder of communism



Fidel Castro, leader of communist Cuba

Marx didn't think a communist revolution could happen in a country without industry, but this was proved wrong in China and Vietnam, where communist revolutions were made by peasant farmers. Communists believe the revolution will be led by a political party which represents workers and understands the rule of history. The communist party would control the whole society until they had organised a new democratic system with community ownership of the means of production. Private business would be illegal although most communist governments have allowed small businesses to exist) and all business would be run by the government.

Communist countries have worked very differently from Marx's ideas. In fact, communist parties have never given up control of the economy to community ownership. They have usually been opposed to democracy and have made other political parties illegal.

Central planning of an economy has proved very difficult and people in communist countries have sometimes suffered from shortages of food and other goods.

Communists first came to power in Russia after the 1917 revolution, where they ruled until 1989. Communists also ran North Korea and most Eastern European countries after 1945, China since 1949. Laos, Vietnam and China are still run by parties that call themselves communist, but allow both large and small private business to exist. They no longer claim to be introducing community ownership.

Fascism

Fascists agreed with Marx that different classes wanted different government policies, but thought everyone in a nation should work together with the government making sure everybody received benefits. They wanted to keep businesses owned privately, but ensure they followed the government's economic plans.

Society would be organised into large corporations run by representatives of workers, businesspeople and communities. For example, railways would be part of the transport corporation run by a committee of railway workers, the company owners and people who travelled on the railways. The government would set regulations and committee would be told what it needed to do to take part in the government's plan to develop the country.

Governments calling themselves fascist have usually been badly organised and unwilling to let corporations make decision. The real power has been held by a dictator and a small group of his or her followers. They have often been very nationalistic and racist, and have spent large amounts of money on the military.

The first fascist government was in Italy from 1920 to 1944 under Mussolini, Germany, Japan and Thailand had fascist governments in the 1930s and 1940s, as did Spain and Portugal until the 1970s. Iraq under Saddam Hussein, and the present government of Syria follow a similar theory called Ba'athism.



Pibul Songgram, Thailand's pro-fascist leader, allied his country with Japan.

Anarchism



Anarchist activist Emma Goldman worked for anarchism and women's rights in both Russia and the United States.

Anarchists believe society should be as democratic as possible.

- Land, machines and factories would be owned by the communities who use them.
- Decisions would be made by community meetings and by people who work together.
- Leaders would be elected to carry out particular jobs, but would not form a permanent government.

For example, railways would be run by committees of railway workers who would meet with community committees to plan services.

Anarchists usually oppose elected governments because they think they aren't democratic enough. They want people to be more involved with making decisions, not just voting for leaders very few years.

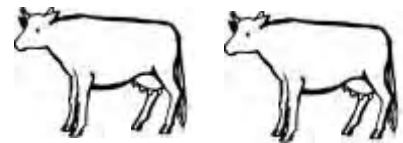
Anarchist movements have existed in many countries, including Japan, Russia, China and Korea, but anarchists have only been able to try out their ideas for short periods of time, for example, in parts of Spain in 1936 and 1937 and rural areas of Mexico between 1910 and 1920.

Political Theory and Practice

These cows show the application of different political theories. They were designed as a joke - you should not take them too seriously!

CAPITALISM:

You have two cows, you sell one and buy a bull.



COMMUNISM:

You have two cows, the government takes both and gives you the milk.

SOCIALISM:

You have two cows, the government takes some of the milk and gives it to your neighbour.

FASCISM:

You have two cows. Give the milk to the government.

MILITARY RULE:

You have two cows. The army takes the milk.

ANARCHISM

Two cows share your living space. The community meets to decide who gets the milk..

DIRECT DEMOCRACY:

You have two cows. All your neighbours decide who gets the milk.

REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY:

You have two cows. Your neighbours choose someone to decide who gets the milk.