

Democracy

A democracy is a government where power is vested in the people, who follow a constitution upheld by elected representatives. The example of democracy we will be studying for this unit is the government of the United States. The United States follows a system of checks and balances that limits any one branch of government from becoming too powerful.

Executive Branch

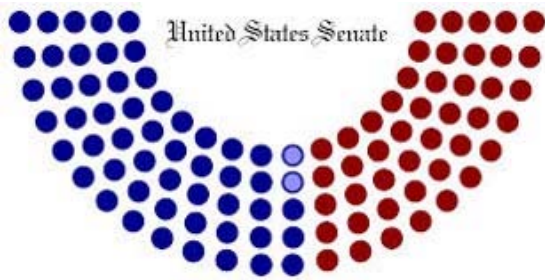


The *President* is the official head of state, elected by the people every four years. Any native-born citizen of the United States over the age of 35 can be elected for 2 four-year terms in office. The President is given his power through the Constitution, which requires him to uphold federal law, appoint executive and judicial positions, and setting foreign and domestic policies. The current President of the United States is Donald Trump.



The *Cabinet* is a group of high-ranking advisors who are appointed by the President to help make decisions and guide him. Members of the Cabinet are the heads of different departments of the federal government, such as the Secretaries of State, Treasury, Education, Agriculture, etc. Cabinet members are replaced with each new President, and the President can dismiss them or appoint them to other posts before his term is over.

Legislative Branch



The *Senate* is a group of elected officials who serve a 6 year term and represent each state equally. Each of the 50 states is represented by 2 Senators (100 Senators total). The Senate's main duties are to vote on any Cabinet members, Supreme Court nominees, and other federal officials the President may want to appoint. The Senate also has to approve any treaties or alliances the President may want to enter with other countries.



The *House of Representatives* are elected for 2 year terms. Their seats, or positions, represent the states based on population size. There are currently 435 voting members in the House of Representatives. The main responsibility of a Representative is to write federal legislation before it is passes to the Senate and impeach federal officers who do not perform their jobs. If necessary, they may even impeach the President. Together with the Senate they make up Congress.

Judicial Branch



The *Supreme Court* makes all final decisions for our country in court based on their interpretation of the U.S. Constitution. Justices are appointed by the President and voted into office by Congress. Most of the time, the President will choose a nominee who will support the agenda the President has set up for his term. However, there have been instances where a President chooses a nominee from an opposing party who still wishes to be flexible in his interpretation of the law. Supreme Court Justices will serve life-long terms until they pass away, decide to retire, or are forcibly removed from office.

Checks & Balances

The government of the United States employs a system of *checks and balances* to separate the powers of each of the three branches. With this system, there won't be one branch of government that is stronger than the other. Checks and balances also forces the branches of government to work with each other, especially when the branches are from differing political parties and ideologies.

Constitutional Monarchy

A constitutional monarchy is a form of government in which a king or queen acts as Head of State, or the symbolic leader of the government. Legislative power resides with an elected Prime Minister and Parliament, not with the Monarch. For the purpose of this exercise, we will be studying the government of the United Kingdom as an example of Constitutional Monarchy.

Sovereign



The current *sovereign* of the United Kingdom is Queen Elizabeth II. She was crowned in 1952 and has ruled without interruption for over 65 years, making her the longest-serving monarch in British history. She does not have any power to create policy, but foreign heads of state will meet with her rather than the elected officials. She symbolically represents the policies of the legislative, judiciary, and executive branches of the United Kingdom, and advises the elected government of their responsibility to the people of the United Kingdom

as the Privy Council. When Queen Elizabeth II dies or retires from official duties, the Crown will pass to her son, Charles, Prince of Wales. The line of succession will continue with Prince William, Duke of Cambridge and his son, Prince George of Cambridge, for the next generations if the monarchy continues as expected.



Executive Powers



The current *Prime Minister* of the United Kingdom is Boris Johnson. He makes up the executive branch of the government along with the Cabinet. The Prime Minister is elected by the citizens, and he is invited by the Privy Council to form a government and appoint ministers, usually from her own party. The Prime Minister serves for as long as the Queen wants him to, or until he decides to vacate the position. The duties include meeting with foreign dignitaries on official matters (foreign policy), maintaining the Treasury (money) and upholding the rights of the Crown, the people, and the countries of the United Kingdom.



The *Cabinet* is made up of ministers (officials) who oversee various departments that provide services to the people. These departments include transportation, public health, agriculture, and education, among others. They work with the Prime Minister to enforce laws and public policy. The Prime Minister will appoint the ministers (usually members of the same party), and can dismiss them at will.

The Queen and selected nobles serve as the *Privy Council* to remind the Cabinet and Prime Minister of their duties to people of the territories of the Commonwealth, the places around the world that belong to the United Kingdom. The Queen is not allowed to vote in elections.

Legislative Powers

Parliament is the law-making body of the United Kingdom. Bills and policies that turn into laws are written in this branch of the government. They also approve of alliances and declarations of war, They also set and collect taxes from the citizens, and vote to represent their interests. Parliament is set up to be a bicameral legislature, meaning that there are two houses to write legislation: The House of Lords and the House of Commons.



The *House of Lords* is made up of British peers, people who come from noble families who have served for over hundreds of years in British history. These may be wealthy families, but they are mostly families who have received titles from previous kings and queens. They are also made up of religious leaders, usually of the Church of England. The House of Lords has a lot less power than the House of Commons, and they cannot vote in elections.

The *House of Commons* is made up of Members of Parliament who do not hold noble titles, and they are the most powerful house. All bills and acts of legislation must originate in the Commons, and they can veto any legislation that comes from the Prime Minister. Positions in the House of Commons are up for election every 5 years, and there are no term limits.



Judicial Powers



The Supreme Court of the United Kingdom interprets the laws for all of the United Kingdom. Up until 2005, the Supreme Court was a branch of the House of Lords. The Supreme Court is still made up of British peers (from noble families), and they are the highest appellate court in the entire realm except for Scotland, which has one more appellate level. The Justiciary Court of Scotland is the highest-ranking appellate court in Scotland, but it only tries cases that originate in the Scottish judicial system.

Devolution in the United Kingdom

The United Kingdom is a collection of countries all across the world, but the four main countries that are allowed to form their separate policies are England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. Devolution grants each of these countries power to form their own government policies but remain territories of the United Kingdom as a whole. Each of these countries has a powerful central government, and that power is distributed to counties and cities.

Absolute Monarchy

In an absolute monarchy in which all legislative, executive, and judiciary power ultimately rests in the hands of the hereditary Sultan. After the end of World War I, there were very few monarchies left where the ruler had absolute power over his government and people. However, the Sultanate of Oman still retains absolute monarchical power.

Sultan of Oman



*Sultan Qaboos bin Said al Said is the head of state and also directly controls the foreign affairs and defense departments. The sultan has absolute power and issues laws by decree, which means that there are quick, unchallenged changes to or creation of the law made by a single person or small group. Sultan Qaboos is the longest-serving ruler in the Middle East. Sultan Qaboos' political duties also include serving as *Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, Prime Minister of Defense, Prime Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Prime Minister of Finance.**

The present Sultan has no direct heir, and has not publicly designated a successor. Instead, the ruling family will unanimously designate a new Sultan after his death. If they do not designate a new ruler after three days, then they open a letter left to them by the deceased Sultan, containing a recommendation for a new Sultan.

Legislation

The Sultanate of Oman has neither political parties nor legislature, although bicameral representative bodies provide the government with advice.

The populated regions of Oman are divided into 59 districts (wilayats), presided over by governors (walis) responsible for settling local disputes, collecting taxes, and maintaining peace. Most wilayats are small; an exception is the wilayat of Dhofar, which comprises the whole province. The wali of Dhofar is an important government figure, holding cabinet rank, while other walis operate under the guidance of the Ministry of Interior.

Judiciary

The court system in Oman is regulated by Royal Decree 90/99. There are three court levels in Oman; the Elementary Court is the lowest court, followed by the Court of Appeal, and then the Supreme Court as the highest court in the country. In addition to this there is an Administrative Court that looks into cases made against the government.

Consultative Council

In November 1991, Sultan Qaboos created the Consultative Council to systematize and broaden public participation in government. The Assembly has 84 elected members and exercise some legislative powers. Representatives are chosen in the following manner: Local caucuses in each of the 59 districts sent forward the names of three nominees, whose credentials were reviewed by a cabinet committee. These names are then forwarded to the Sultan, who makes the final selection. The Consultative Council serves as a channel of information between the people and the government ministries. It is empowered to review drafts of economic and social legislation prepared by service ministries, such as communications and housing, and to provide recommendations.

Dictatorship

A dictatorship is a type of government where one person, or a small group of people, has control over the actions and legislation of the government system. The entities, or groups, in charge usually exercise this control by using the military or police force to enact their laws. Common citizens have very little, if any, active input in their government. For the purpose of our learning, we will be using Cuba as an example of a dictatorship.

First Secretary of the Communist Party of Cuba



The First Secretary of the Communist Party of Cuba is Raul Castro, who has held the office since 2008, after his brother, founder of the Cuban Revolution Fidel Castro, decided to retire. The First Secretary is considered to be a more powerful position than President or Prime Minister. Previously, Raul Castro was also the President of the Council of State of Cuba. After his brother's resignation, a new term limit was set on Presidential positions, which now state that Presidents serve a length of 5 years and can be re-elected once. Raul Castro's term as President expired in 2018, and the National Assembly selected Miguel Canel-Diaz to succeed him. However, the new President still refers to the advice given by the First Secretary on government policy.

The President of Cuba also holds four different titles that describe his duties in the Cuban government:

- President of the Council of State of Cuba (2018: Miguel Canel-Diaz)
- First Secretary of the Cuban Communist Party
- Commander in Chief of the Cuban Armed Forces
- Premier of the Council of Ministers of Cuba

Revolutionary Armed Forces

The *Cuban Revolutionary Armed Forces* (Spanish: Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias—FAR) consist of ground forces, naval forces, air and air defense forces, and other paramilitary bodies including the Territorial Troops Militia, Youth Labor Army, and the Defense and Production Brigades, plus the Civil Defense Organization, and the National Reserves Institution.

The armed forces has long been the most powerful institution in Cuba and high-ranking generals are believed to play crucial roles in all conceivable succession scenarios. The military controls 60 percent of the economy through the management of hundreds of enterprises in key economic sectors. The military is also Raúl Castro's base. In numerous speeches, Raúl Castro has emphasized the military's role as a people's partner.

Legislative

Cuba has an elected national legislature, the *National Assembly of People's Power* (Asamblea Nacional del Poder Popular), which has 612 members, elected every 5 years and holds brief sessions to ratify decisions by executive branch. The National Assembly convenes twice a year in ordinary periods of sessions. However, it has permanent commissions to look after issues of legislative interest. Among its permanent or temporary commissions are those in charge of issues concerning the economy, sugar industry, industries, transportation and communications, constructions, foreign affairs, public health, defense and interior order. The National Assembly also has permanent departments that oversee the

work of the Commissions, Local Assemblies of the People's Power, International Relations, Judicial Affairs and the Administration.

Executive

The *Council of State* (Spanish: Consejo de Estado) of Cuba is a 31-member body of the government of Cuba, elected by the National Assembly of People's Power. It has the authority to exercise most legislative power between sessions of the National Assembly of People's Power, subject to its approval, and to call the National Assembly of People's Power into session between its scheduled twice yearly sessions. The membership consists of a President, a Secretary, a First Vice President, five Vice Presidents, and 27 additional members. The President, the Secretary, the First Vice President, and the five Vice Presidents are also members of the Council of Ministers.

The *Council of Ministers* (Spanish: Consejo de Ministros), also referred to as simply the Cabinet of Cuba, is the highest ranking executive and administrative body of the Republic of Cuba, and constitutes the nation's government. It consists of the President, the First Vice President and the seven Vice Presidents of the Council of State, the Secretary of the Executive Committee, the heads of the national ministries, and other members as established by law. The Council of Ministers is responsible for the implementation of policy agreements authorized by the National Assembly of People's Power. These are designated to individual ministries. The council also proposes general plans for economic and social development, which are in turn authorized by the National Assembly twice yearly. The Council of Ministers also directs Cuba's foreign policy and its relations with other governments; approves international treaties before passing them over for ratification of the Council of State; directs and oversees foreign trade and the State budget. The Council of Ministers enforces laws authorized by the National Assembly, which are passed by the Council of State.

Judicial

The People's Supreme Court is the highest judicial body. The constitution states that all legally recognized civil liberties can be denied to anyone who opposes the decision of the Cuban people to build socialism. They rule on constitutional matters, and review final appeals from lower courts including all criminal, civil, administrative, labor law, and economic cases.

The Cuban government has been accused of numerous human rights abuses, including torture, arbitrary imprisonment, unfair trials, and extrajudicial executions (a.k.a. "El Paredón"). Human Rights Watch reports that the government represses nearly all forms of political dissent. There are many restrictions on leaving the country.

Totalitarianism

Totalitarianism is a political system in which the state recognizes no limits to its authority and strives to regulate every aspect of the public and private lives of its citizens. Totalitarian regimes stay in political power through an all-encompassing propaganda campaign that is spread through the state-controlled mass media, a single party that is often marked by political repression, personality cultism, total economic control, regulation and restriction of speech, mass surveillance, and widespread use of terror.

The example of totalitarianism we will be studying in class is the People's Democratic Republic of North Korea.

Dear Leader: Kim Jong-Un



Kim Jong-un heads all major governing structures: he is First Secretary of the Worker's Party of Korea, First Chairman of the National Defense Commission, and Supreme Commander of the Korean People's Army. Kim Jong-un is the grandson of North Korea's founder, Kim IL-Sung, and was largely absent from the public and government service until the mid-2000s. Like his father, Kim Jong-IL, he lacks any formal military training or service. Although he is still a new ruler, the development of a personality cult is well underway, with large numbers of posters, signs, and other propaganda being placed all over the country. Some commentators have noted that his striking likeness in appearance to Kim IL-sung has helped solidify him as the undisputed ruler in the minds of the people.

Worker's Party of North Korea

The Workers' Party of Korea (WPK) has an estimated 3,000,000 members and dominates every aspect of North Korean politics. Party ideology has recently focused on perceived enemies of the party and state, and on legitimizing the Kim family's dominance of the political system. It is the largest party represented in the Supreme People's Assembly (although the country's elections are widely considered to be fraudulent and the SPA has no real political power). The WPK is the sole governing party of North Korea, although it coexists in name only with two other political parties, which is regarded as merely a means to appear superficially democratic to citizens and foreigners.

Administrative

The *Premier* represents and oversees the cabinet, which is charged with executing the policies decided by the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea. The office has no policy-making authority of its own.

The premier now shares power with the *President of the Presidium* of the Supreme People's Assembly (i.e. the head of State) and the *Chairman of the National Defense Commission*, although it has the lowest authority of the three: for example, Kim Jong-il was NDC Chairman uninterruptedly from 1993 until 2011, and Kim Yong-nam has been President of the SPA Presidium since 1998, while the Premiers have often changed.

The Cabinet, as the executive branch of the North Korean state, is responsible for implementing the state's economic policies, as guided by the Workers' Party. The cabinet is not responsible for defense and security issues. The Cabinet is responsible for:

- Adopting measures to execute state policy.
- Institute, amend, and supplement regulations concerning state management based on the Constitution and departmental laws.
- Guide the work of the Cabinet commissions, ministries, direct organs of the Cabinet, local people's committees.
- Draft the State plan for the development of the national economy and adopt measures to put it into effect.
- Compile the State budget and adopt measures to implement it.
- Organize and exercise works in the fields of industry, agriculture, construction, transportation, communications, commerce, trade, land management, city management, education, science, culture, health, physical training, labor administration, environmental protection, tourism and others.
- Adopt measures to strengthen the monetary and banking system.
- Do inspection and control work to establish a state management order.
- Adopt measures to maintain social order, protect State and social cooperation body's possession and interests, and to guarantee citizens' rights.
- Conclude treaties with foreign countries, and conduct external activities.
- Abolish decisions and directions by economic administrative organs, which run counter to the Cabinet decisions or directions.

Legislative

The unicameral *Supreme People's Assembly* (SPA) is the highest organ of state authority and holds the legislative power. Its 687 members are elected every five years. Supreme People's Assembly sessions are convened by the SPA Presidium, whose president represents the state in relations with foreign countries. Deputies formally elect the President, the vice-presidents and members of the Presidium and take part in the constitutionally appointed activities of the legislature: pass laws, establish domestic and foreign policies, appoint members of the cabinet, review and approve the state economic plan, among others. The SPA itself cannot initiate any legislation independently of party or state organs. It is unknown whether it has ever criticized or amended bills placed before it, and the elections are based around a single list of approved candidates who stand without opposition.

Judicial

North Korea's judiciary is headed by the *Central Court of North Korea*, which consists of a Chief Justice and two People's Assessors; three judges may be present in some cases. Their terms of office coincide with those of the members of the Supreme People's Assembly. Every court in North Korea has the same composition as the Central Court. The judicial system is held accountable by the SPA.

The judiciary does not practice judicial review, since the country's security forces often interfere with the actions of the judiciary that the conclusion of most cases is hardly reached; experts outside North Korea and numerous defectors confirm this to be a widespread problem. Most defendants in the Central Court's cases will often "disappear" before trial. They are often taken to jails or work camps, sometimes being tortured or even killed for their crimes.

In a review of 183 countries, Freedom House listed North Korea in last place in terms of citizens' human rights.

Theocracy

A theocracy is a form of government where religious law is instituted and followed by the government. There is no separation between church and state, and followers of other faiths are often purposefully excluded or persecuted for their beliefs.

For the purpose of today's learning, we will be studying the government of Iran as an example of Theocracy.

Supreme Leader



The *Supreme Leader* is the head of the Iranian government and the highest-ranking cleric (pastor) in the nation. It is his interpretations of the Quran that is enacted as Sharia Law. Duties of the Supreme Leader including being the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces, controlling military intelligence and security operations, and has sole power to declare war or peace. The heads of the judiciary, state radio and television networks, the commanders of the police and military forces and six of the twelve members of the Guardian Council are appointed by the Supreme Leader.

The Supreme Leader is the highest authority in Iran. His powers rank above those of the President, and he has the authority to dismiss and replace members of the government. All three branches of the government must follow his directives and guidance.

The current Supreme Leader of Iran is Ali Khamenei. All Supreme Leaders are selected to serve life terms.

Executive Branch



The *President* is responsible for the implementation of the Constitution and for the exercise of executive powers, except for matters directly related to the Supreme Leader, who has the final say in all matters. The President appoints and supervises the Council of Ministers, coordinates government decisions, and selects government policies to be placed before the legislature. The President is elected by universal suffrage for a term of four years and can only be re-elected for one additional term. Presidential candidates must be approved by the Guardian Council before running, in order to ensure their allegiance to the ideals of Islam. The current President of Iran is Hassan Rouhani.

The *Council of Ministers* is the equivalent of a Cabinet- all ministers are heads of different government departments that provide services to the people of Iran. These departments include Housing Development, Commerce, Agriculture, Labor, and Islamic Law. There are 22 departments total, and they work with the President to coordinate government policies. All ministers must be approved by the legislature.

Legislative Branch

The legislative branch of Iran is a unicameral body, which means that it only has one house. The 290 members of the *Islamic Consultative Assembly* are elected to serve 4-year terms, but they must be approved by the Guardian Council before they can begin campaigning for office. The duties of the Islamic

Consultative Assembly include approving candidates for the Council of Ministers, drafting legislation to be approved by the President and Supreme Leader, ratify treaties, and approving national budgets.

Judicial Branch

The *Chief Justice of Iran* monitors the activity in the legal system of Iran. He also monitors interactions between the Supreme Leader and the three branches of government, often challenging the legality of any government body that challenges the power of the Supreme Leader. All cases that are eligible for appeal will receive the final verdict from the Chief Justice. They serve 5-year terms, and can remain in office until they retire or until the Supreme Leader has decided to appoint a new Chief Justice. The current Chief Justice, Sadeq Larijani, has been in office since 1999.

The court system of Iran is divided into many branches, but there are two which deal specifically with its citizens. The *Public Courts* are divided into four main courts: Civil, Special Civil, First Class Criminal, and Second Class Criminal. Public courts mainly deal with civil and criminal trials, including divorce, custody arrangements, robbery, theft, adultery, and murder. Unless the case has extreme publicity in the media, there are no juries, as the judge will determine guilt or innocence.

The *Revolutionary Courts* try cases dealing with threats against national security, drug smuggling, and acts that undermine the Islamic Republic. The decisions of the Revolutionary court are considered to be final and cannot be appealed. There is a prosecutor for the court, but there are no defense attorneys, and no one is allowed to assist in the defense of the accused. While the Public Courts are generally considered to be neutral and based on written law, the Revolutionary Courts are known to be aligned with the Supreme Leader and his interpretations of Islamic law.

Sharia law is the Islamic laws that govern the members of the Islamic faith. Sharia deals with many topics in its teachings, including marriage, crime, politics, and economics, amongst others. There are even specific punishments written in Sharia for a wide range of crimes. Although Sharia was written as a form of religious law, many countries like Iran have adopted Sharia for public law as well. This has often been a point of debate with other religious groups as well as political bodies who advocate for the separation of church and state in order to maintain justice. Many human and civil rights groups also argue that sharia is not acceptable for widespread equality.

Guardian Council

The Guardian Council is an appointed and constitutionally-mandated 12-member council that wields considerable power and influence in Iran. The Iranian constitution calls for the council to be composed of six Islamic faqihs (expert in Islamic Law), to be selected by the Supreme Leader, and six jurists who specializing in different areas of law, to be elected by the Islamic Consultative Assembly. The duties of the Guardian Council include interpreting Iran's Constitution, supervising elections and approving of candidates for President and the Assembly, and ensuring the compatibility of legislation drafted by the Assembly with sharia law.