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SS1 Government – Week 1

Topic: Defining Government

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1. Meaning/Definition of Government

Government is the organization or institution through which political authority is exercised and public policies are made and enforced in a state. It is the system that governs a community, state, or nation. It consists of institutions, processes, and people who carry out the will of the state.

Government can also be defined in three contexts:

1. As an Institution of the State: It is the body that administers the state's affairs, such as the presidency, legislature, and judiciary.
2. As a Process or Art of Governing: This refers to the act of ruling or administering policies.
3. As an Academic Field of Study: It is a subject studied in schools that deals with political systems, power, constitutions, rights, and responsibilities.

2. Characteristics of Government

These are the features that define a government:

1. Legitimacy: The right to govern must be recognized by the people.
2. Sovereignty: The power to govern without interference from outside.
3. Territorial Jurisdiction: It operates within a defined geographical area.
4. Authority: The legal power to make and enforce laws.
5. Constitutionality: It operates under a legal framework or constitution.

6. Permanence: The institution of government is continuous, even if its leaders change.

7. Public Organization: It serves the interest of the entire society.

3. Functions of Government

Government performs numerous vital roles in society. These include:

1. Law Making: Establishing rules to guide behavior and ensure order.

2. Maintaining Law and Order: Using law enforcement agencies to prevent crime.

3. Protection of Citizens: Through the military and police.

4. Provision of Social Services: Healthcare, education, roads, water, electricity, etc.

5. Promoting Economic Development: Creating jobs, regulating businesses, controlling inflation.

6. Foreign Relations: Representing the country in international affairs.

7. Justice Administration: Settling disputes and protecting rights.

8. Policy Implementation: Carrying out laws through ministries and civil servants.

4. Government as a Process of Governing

Beyond its structure, government involves activities or processes such as:

Rule-making: Developing laws and policies.

Rule implementation: Enforcing and executing those laws.

Rule adjudication: Interpreting and applying laws in disputes.

This process ensures the smooth running of a society and the realization of public goals.

5. Structure of Government (The Three Arms)

i. The Legislature (Rule-Making)

The arm that makes laws.

It is made up of elected representatives (e.g., National Assembly in Nigeria).

They debate, amend, and pass laws,

approve budgets, and check the executive.

Example: Senate and House of Representatives.

ii. The Executive (Rule Implementation)

Implements laws and administers public policies.

Headed by the President or Governor.

Includes Ministers, Commissioners, and Civil Servants.

Manages national security, economy, and international relations.

iii. The Judiciary (Rule Adjudication)

Interprets the law and settles legal

disputes.

Ensures justice and protects individual rights.

Operates independently from the other arms.

Headed by the Chief Justice and includes all courts.

6. Characteristics and Functions of Each Arm

Arm of Government	Key Features	Main Functions
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Legislature	Made up of elected lawmakers	Makes laws, approves
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budgets, checks the executive
Executive Headed by President or
Governor Implements policies, manages
state affairs

Judiciary Independent and impartial
judges Interprets laws, protects rights,
resolves disputes

7. Definition and Features of the State

A state is a defined political territory with sovereignty, a government, and a population. It is the permanent entity recognized by international law.

Features of a State:

1. Population: The people living in the state.

2. Territory: A clearly defined geographical area.

3. Government: The institution managing state affairs.

4. Sovereignty: Independence in internal and external affairs.

5. Recognition: Legal acceptance by other states and international bodies.

8. Relationship Between the State and

Government

The State is the political entity made up of people, territory, and sovereignty.

The Government is the mechanism through which the state operates and policies are implemented.

Key Differences:

State	Government
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Permanent	Temporary (changes with elections)
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Made up of people, land, etc.	Made up of officials and institutions
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Can exist without a particular government	Cannot exist without the state
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Has sovereignty	Exercises power on behalf of the state
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9. Policy Formulation and Implementation

Policy Formulation:

The process by which decisions or strategies are made to solve national problems.

Involves the President, Ministers, Legislature, experts, and interest groups.

Policy Implementation:

Putting policies into action through ministries, agencies, and public servants.

Example: A new education policy is carried

out through schools and teachers.

10. Rule-Making, Rule Implementation, and Rule Adjudication

Rule-Making:

Handled by the Legislature.

Laws and regulations are created to guide society.

Rule Implementation:

Carried out by the Executive.

Enforces and administers the laws.

Rule Adjudication:

Managed by the Judiciary.

Settles disputes and ensures justice through courts.

Conclusion

Understanding the structure and operation of government helps citizens to actively participate in governance, know their rights, and demand accountability.

Government is the life-wire of every modern state and it operates through clearly defined structures and roles that ensure stability and development.

