

SS1 Government – Week 1

Topic: Introduction to Government

Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson, students should be able to:

1. Define government from different perspectives.
 2. Explain the major characteristics of government.
 3. Describe the core functions of government in a society.
 4. Understand government as a process and as a governing institution.
 5. Identify the three arms of government and explain their structure and roles.
 6. Define a state and highlight its features.
 7. Distinguish clearly between a state and government.
 8. Explain policy formulation, rule-making, implementation, and adjudication.
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1. Definition of Government

Government can be understood in three broad senses:

(a) Government as an Institution

This refers to the **machinery or system** through which the **will of the state is formulated, expressed, and implemented**. It consists of structures such as the **executive, legislature, and judiciary**.

Example: The Federal Government of Nigeria.

(b) Government as a Process

Government is also seen as the **process of governing** — the series of actions and interactions involved in **decision-making, law-making, and administration**.

Example: Electoral processes, legislative debates, policy implementation.

(c) Government as a Field of Study

This is the **academic study** of political institutions, public administration, political behavior, constitutions, and international relations.

Example: Students taking "Government" or "Political Science" in school.

◆ 2. Characteristics of Government

These are key features that describe any legitimate government:

1. **Constitutionality** – Operates under a guiding document (constitution).
 2. **Legitimacy** – Recognized by the people as lawful and rightful.
 3. **Sovereignty** – Has absolute authority within its territory.
 4. **Periodic Elections** – Exists for a fixed term; leadership changes through elections.
 5. **Public Institutions** – Maintains institutions like the police, army, courts, and ministries.
 6. **Revenue Collection** – Collects taxes and revenue to fund public services.
 7. **Territorial Jurisdiction** – Operates within a specific geographical area.
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◆ 3. Functions of Government

Every government has key responsibilities which include:

Function	Explanation
Law-Making	Through the legislature, government formulates rules that govern society.
Security	Government provides internal and external security through police and military.
Social Services	Builds infrastructure like roads, schools, hospitals, and ensures public welfare.
Economic Regulation	Controls financial institutions, budgets, and sets economic policies.
Foreign Policy	Manages relationships with other countries through diplomacy.

Function	Explanation
Justice Administration	Maintains courts to ensure fair legal processes and protect citizens' rights.
Taxation	Collects money from citizens to fund its operations.

◆ 4. Government as a Process or Act of Governing

Government doesn't just exist as an institution — it **functions through active decision-making, enforcement, and policy development**:

◆ Processes include:

- **Policy formulation** – Developing strategic plans to address public issues.
 - **Rule-making** – Creating laws and regulations.
 - **Rule-implementation** – Executing laws via public services.
 - **Rule-adjudication** – Settling disputes and interpreting laws in courts.
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◆ 5. Three Arms of Government

Government is structured into **three major arms**, each with distinct functions to ensure **separation of powers** and prevent abuse.

(i) Legislative Arm

- **Main Function:** Law-making
- **Structure:** In Nigeria, it consists of the **National Assembly**, which includes:
 - The **Senate**
 - The **House of Representatives**

Other Duties:

- Approves national budgets
- Ratifies treaties

- Checks the activities of the executive (oversight)
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(ii) Executive Arm

- **Main Function:** Implementation of laws and administration of government.
- **Structure:**
 - **Federal Level:** President, Vice President, Ministers
 - **State Level:** Governors, Commissioners
 - **Local Level:** Local Government Chairmen and Councillors

Other Duties:

- Heads the armed forces
 - Manages public services
 - Signs bills into law
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(iii) Judicial Arm

- **Main Function:** Interpretation of laws and adjudication of disputes.
- **Structure:**
 - Supreme Court (highest)
 - Court of Appeal
 - High Courts, Magistrate Courts, Customary/Religious Courts

Other Duties:

- Protects constitutional rights
 - Checks illegal actions of government
 - Ensures justice and rule of law
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6. Definition and Features of the State

Definition of a State

A **state** is a politically organized and recognized body of people, occupying a defined territory, under a government with full sovereignty.

✓ Features of the State

1. **Population** – A group of people living within a territory.
2. **Territory** – A clearly defined geographical area.
3. **Government** – A recognized authority managing affairs of the people.
4. **Sovereignty** – Supreme authority with independence from external control.
5. **Recognition** – Legal acceptance both nationally and internationally.

◆ 7. Differences Between State and Government

Feature	State	Government
Definition	Permanent political organization	Temporary administrators of the state
Components	Includes population, territory, sovereignty, and government	One arm of the state
Duration	Continuous and enduring	Transient – can be changed or replaced
Example	Nigeria as a state	Buhari or Tinubu Administration as a government

◆ 8. Policy Formulation and Implementation

- **Policy Formulation:** Process by which governments **develop plans** to solve public problems (e.g. education reform).
- **Implementation:** Ensuring that laws or policies are **put into practice** by relevant agencies or ministries.

◆ 9. Rule-Making, Rule-Implementation, Rule-Adjudication

These are the **core functions** of government carried out by its three arms:

Process	Description	Responsible Arm
Rule-making	Formulation of laws	Legislature
Rule-implementation	Execution/enforcement of laws	Executive
Rule-adjudication	Interpretation and application of laws	Judiciary