**1.1 Foundations and Constitution**

**SSCG1: Compare and contrast various systems of government.**

**SSCG1a: Determine how governments differ in geographic distribution of power, particularly unitary, confederal, and federal types of government.**

For this element, you will gain an understanding of the differences in systems of power based on geography. There are three basic forms of government: unitary, federal, and confederate governments.

\*A **unitary government** can be described as a centralized government. All of the powers are held by one, single, central agency. The central government can create local units; however, the local units only have those powers that the central government gives to them. Most of the governments in the world are unitary. However, do not confuse a unitary government with a dictatorship. Although a unitary government has powers concentrated in the central government, other powers can be given to local units. The best example of a unitary government is Great Britain. A single central organization, Parliament, holds all of the government’s power, but local governments are given some powers to relieve some of the burdens from Parliament and make local decision-making more efficient.

\* A **federal government** is one in which the powers of government are divided between a central, or national, government and several lower levels of government. Federal governments have a division of powers. The United States is the best example of a federal government. The central, or national, government has certain powers, and the 50 states have other powers. The United States Constitution outlines the division of powers. Furthermore, the states give certain powers to local governments. Other countries with a federal structure of government include: Australia, Mexico, Canada, Germany, India, and Switzerland. In the United States, the terms national government and federal government are used interchangeably.

\*A **confederate government** is an alliance of independent states. The central government, or confederate government, only handles matters that the independent states assign to it. A confederate government is usually formed for the purposes of national defense and trade, and these are typically the only powers assigned to it. The best example of a confederate government is the European Union (EU). The individual member states (or countries) retain their own identity, laws, etc. The member countries only coordinate on issues such as defense and trade.

**SSCG1b: Determine how some forms of government differ in their level of citizen participation particularly authoritarian (autocracy and oligarchy), and democratic.**

For this element, you will gain an understanding of the differences between authoritarian and democratic forms of government and how citizen participation is affected.

\*An authoritarian form of government is often referred to as a dictatorship. Dictatorships can be organized as an **autocracy**, a government in which one person holds unlimited political power, or an **oligarchy**, a government in which the power is held by a small, often self-appointed elite. ALL dictatorships are authoritarian. Autocracies and oligarchies are often led by the military leaders. By using military force, authoritarian governments can wield their strength to gain complete control over the citizens. In an authoritarian government, the people have no rights. Often, the government determines their occupations, where they live, how resources are rationed, and what goods and services are made available to citizens. The most well-known examples of dictatorships are: Nazi Germany (1933 – 1945), Fascist Italy (1922 – 1943), and North Korea (present day). If the citizens are given the opportunity to vote in elections, the votes are closely controlled and often offer only one candidate or one political party.

\*In a **democracy**, supreme power rests with the people. The government is conducted only with the consent of the people. In a democratic form of government, citizens participate in elections and choose who will represent them.

**SSCG1c: Determine how the role of the executive differs in presidential and parliamentary systems of governments.**

In this element, you will compare and contrast the role of the executive in presidential and parliamentary systems. You will gain an understanding of how the executive is chosen along with powers held by the executive.

\*In a **presidential government**, the executive and legislative powers are separate and independent from one another and are co-equal. The executive includes the chief executive, the president, and the cabinet. The president is elected by the people. The United States is the best example of a presidential government. The executive is elected every four years.

\*In a **parliamentary government**, the executive and legislative are one. The executive is chosen by the legislature. The executive is made up of the prime minister and his or her cabinet. The prime minister and cabinet members are chosen from the members of parliament. The prime minister is chosen from the majority party in Parliament. The executive and cabinet remain in power as long as their policies have the support of the majority of the members of Parliament. If an important matter arises and Parliament votes down a policy put forth by the prime minister and cabinet, then the prime minister and cabinet must resign. This is called a vote of no confidence. A majority of governmental systems in the world today are parliamentary.

The following diagram outlines the differences in how the executive is chosen in the presidential versus the parliamentary government:



**SSCG1d: Differentiate between a direct democracy, representative democracy, and/or a republic.**

In this element, you should be able to describe the differences between the different types of democracies. You should not use these terms interchangeably. In any democracy, the people are sovereign.

\*A **direct democracy** is where the will of the people is translated into public policy directly through mass meetings where citizens gather and make decisions regarding policy. Obviously this can only work in smaller communities. Direct democracy does not exist at the national level in any countries around the world today.

\*A **representative democracy** has representatives chosen through elections. A small group is chosen to represent the overall will of the people. This is the type of democracy we have in the United States. The best examples at the national level are Senators and House of Representatives members. These representatives are responsible for carrying out the day-to-day functions of government, such as making laws and focusing on issues that are important to their constituents. At regularly scheduled elections, the people can express their approval or disapproval of their representatives by voting for them or against them. They govern with the consent of the governed. It is sometimes referred to as a **republic.**

**SSCG2: Demonstrate knowledge of the political philosophies that shaped the development of United States constitutional government.**

**SSCG2a: Analyze key ideas of limited government and the rule of law as seen in the Magna Carta, the Petition of Right, and the English Bill of Rights.**

\*1215 – the **Magna Carta**, also known as The Great Charter, was signed by King John. It was a document forced on King John of England by a group of feudal barons who were seeking to limit the power of the King. The Magna Carta introduced the ideas of limited government, due process of law, trial by jury, and the protection of private property and civil liberties. The Magna Carta established that the power of the monarchy was not absolute.

\*1628 – a document called the **Petition of Right** was signed by King Charles I of England. By this time, England had a Parliament, but the monarchy still exercised great power over the people. The King asked Parliament for more money in taxes for war; in return for the money, Parliament forced Charles I to sign the Petition of Right. The rights established by this document included: no cruel punishment, no excessive bail or fines, the right to bear arms, and the right to petition. The King could no longer declare martial law in times of peace or require homeowners to share their home with the King’s troops without permission from the owner, and the document required the punishment of any person to be determined by a judgment of his peers. The Petition of Right challenged the divine right theory; even monarchs were expected to obey the law of the land.

\*1689 – the **English Bill of Rights** was passed by English Parliament. This document is related to the Glorious Revolution and the abuse of power by the monarchy, William and Mary. The document prohibited a standing army during peacetime, unless Parliament gives consent and required that all parliamentary elections be free. The monarchy was forbidden to create and collect taxes without consent of Parliament. The citizens were given the right to petition the king without the fear of being punished. The document reinforced earlier rights approved in previous documents, such as the right to bear arms, no cruel and unusual punishment, and no excessive fines or bail. Finally, Parliament was given the right to free speech and debate.

**SSCG2b: Analyze the impact of the writings of Hobbes (Leviathan), Locke (Second Treatise on Government), Rousseau (The Social Contract), and Montesquieu (The Spirit of the Laws) on our concept of government.**

\***Thomas Hobbes** (1588 – 1679) was a political philosopher. His book, ***Leviathan****,* was written in 1651, and established the foundation for most of western political philosophy from the perspective of social contract theory. *Leviathan* is a defense of the absolute power of kings. A leviathan is a mythological sea creature that devoured entire ships and likened the leviathan to government – a powerful state created to impose order.

Hobbes described the state of nature where all individuals were naturally equal. Every person was free to do what was needed for survival. In the state of nature, there are no laws or anyone to enforce laws. According to Hobbes, the only way out of this situation is to create a supreme power to impose peace. Hobbes asserted that people agreed among themselves to ‘lay down’ their natural rights of equality and freedom to give absolute power to a sovereign. The sovereign could be a person or a group. The sovereign would make and enforce the laws to secure a peaceful society, making life, liberty, and property possible. Hobbes called this agreement ‘the social contract’. He believed that a king was the best form of sovereignty, and once the people gave absolute power to the king, they had no right to revolt against him. According to Hobbes, the agreement was not between the king and the people but only among the people. Hobbes warned against the church meddling in the king’s government. He feared that religion would be a cause of civil war. He advised that the church should be a department under the king’s government.

\***John Locke** (1632 – 1704) – Locke was an English philosopher and physician. He is considered one of the most influential Enlightenment thinkers. He studied science and medicine at Oxford University and became a professor there. In 1690, he published ***Two Treatises of Government.***He agreed with Hobbes about the need for a social contract to assure peace. Locke disagreed with Hobbes on two points: 1) Locke argued that natural rights, such as life, liberty, and property, existed in a state of nature and could not be taken away or voluntarily surrendered. These rights are ‘unalienable’, or impossible to surrender. 2) Locke disagreed with the social contract and stated that the agreement was not just among the people but between the people and the king. According to Locke, the natural rights of the people limited the power of the king. He argued that the king did not have absolute power; his role was to protect the natural rights of the citizens. If the sovereign violated these rights, the social contract was broken, and the people had the right to revolt and establish a new government.

Thomas Jefferson used Locke’s ideology as a foundation for The Declaration of Independence. Locke’s idea of representative government was also used in the creation of the government of the United States. In keeping with the times, Locke suggested that the representatives of the government should be comprised only of men who owned property or business. He did not think that the rest of the masses were fit to vote.

\***Jean-Jacques Rousseau** (1712 – 1778) – Rousseau was a philosopher, writer, and composer. His ideas influenced the Enlightenment. His book, ***The Social Contract****,* was published in 1762. He thought that citizens should abandon their natural rights in favor of a social contract. Rousseau believed that direct democracy, with the citizens being the sovereign, was the best form of government. The actual government would be comprised of magistrates whose duty would be to enforce the laws and protect the general welfare of the people. He did not agree with the idea of a representative government.

\***Charles Montesquieu** (1689 – 1755) – Montesquieu was a French nobleman who was educated in law. In 1748, he published his greatest work entitled ***The Spirit of the Laws****.* Unlike Hobbes and Locke, he believed that in a state of nature, individuals were so fearful that they avoided violence and war.

Montesquieu’s view was that the need for food caused humans to associate with others and seek to build a society. In his view, the main purpose of government was to maintain law and order, political liberty, and the property of the individual. He opposed the establishment of an absolute monarchy. Montesquieu supported the idea of the king being balanced by the Parliament; he suggested that further balance would be created with the establishment of an independent court system. This is where we first see the idea of three branches of government, operating independently from one another with a system of checks and balances. His theory on this issue eventually became the foundation for the United States Constitution.

 **SSCG2c: Analyze the ways in which the philosophies listed in element 2b influenced the Declaration of Independence.**

The following philosophies and ideas contained in element 2b were integrated into the **Declaration of Independence**, which was authored by Thomas Jefferson:

* All men are created equal
* Unalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness
* Governments are instituted among men and derive their power from the consent of the governed
* It is the right of the people to alter or abolish government and institute a new government

Jefferson then lists violations by the King of Great Britain in abusing his power upon the people in various territories owned by Britain. All of these abuses of power were covered in the philosophies listed in element 2b, such as forcing standing armies in times of peace, quartering large bodies of armed troops, imposing taxes without consent, depriving the people of a trial by jury, not abiding by the laws of the land, and burning their towns and plundering their seas.