Levels of Government

Universal definitions pertaining to the structure and function of governments
State

• Basic organization of a group of people into a sovereign state with defined borders
  • Synonymously a country
Gaining Statehood

• Have a defined territory with permanent population and functional government
• Declare and effectively gain independence
• Gain recognition from established states as sovereign state
• Join the United Nations General Assembly
Sovereignty

• Ultimate authority for decisions pertaining to government, defense, and foreign politics
  • Simply put: Complete control of decision making without outside interference
Nation

• A group of people in a given geographical area with common heritage, and culture
Nation-State

- A mostly ethnically homogenous state with a sovereign government with clearly defined borders
- Often nations will push for independence citing differing nationality
Territory

• An area of land under the jurisdiction of a state but has not yet gained full rights of being part of the state
  • Ex. Voting rights, representation, etc.
Frontier

- Zone where no state exercises political control
  - Referred to as *Terra Nullius* or “Land belonging to no one”
Executive Branch

- Body of government broadly responsible for implementing, supporting, and enforcing the laws made by the legislative branch and interpreted by the judicial branch
- Large amounts of variation from country to country in the types of limitations of power on the country’s executive branch
  - Ex. Chief executive of North Korea has total and complete authority
Legislative Branch

• A deliberative body responsible for debating, formulating, and passing the series of laws which the citizens of a country abide by.

• Using a representative based body which reflects the general will of the people
  • Representatives of a state’s legislative body act as either delegates where representatives directly respond to the wills of the people, or as trustees where representatives make decisions based on what they feel is best for the people
Judicial Branch

• Body of government ensuring the legal operation of the government within the confines of the established state’s constitution.
  • Interpret laws to determine government’s legal obligations to meet the requirements of the law
• Will be used as a method for checking, or adding constitutional credibility to the actions of the other branches.