

## International Conversation Café

Lifestyle Topic: Government

Government has always been important for all people. Whether you lived in imperial Rome, or in a tribal village in Africa, you had to answer this question: 'How should we be governed? What makes a good government?' Political thinkers across time have tried to answer this question, and writers have written hundreds of books and pamphlets trying to convince other people that their system of government is the best. Today, we will get a chance to look at several theories of government, and discuss them as a group.

*What kind of government does your home country have?*

*How would you describe the advantages and disadvantages of your country's government?*

Below are a few quotes by many influential political writers and thinkers about government. Read through the quotes and then choose the ones you would like to discuss as a group:

**"A state is better governed which has few laws, and those laws strictly observed."** –Rene Descartes

*What do you think this quote means?*

*Do you agree or disagree? Why?*

*How does your home country deal with this?*

**"Patriotism is loyalty to the country always: Loyalty to the government, when it deserves it."**

–Mark Twain

*What do you think this quote means?*

*Do you agree or disagree? Why?*

*How do you express patriotism in your culture?*

**"Governing a great nation is like cooking a small fish - too much handling will spoil it."** –Lao Tzu

*What do you think this quote means?*

*Do you agree or disagree? Why?*

*Do you have any examples of a time when you experience 'too much handling'?*

**"I am sometimes a fox and sometimes a lion. The whole secret of government lies in knowing when to be the one or the other."** –Napoleon Bonaparte

*What do you think this quote means?*

*Do you agree or disagree? Why?*

*Would you want a ruler who obeyed this quote?*

**Government is not reason, it is not eloquence, —it is force! Like fire, it is a dangerous servant, and a fearful master; never for a moment should it be left to irresponsible action.** –George Washington

*What do you think this quote means?*

*Do you agree or disagree? Why? How would you keep a government from 'irresponsible actions'?*