

Name:

Civics Group: 6C

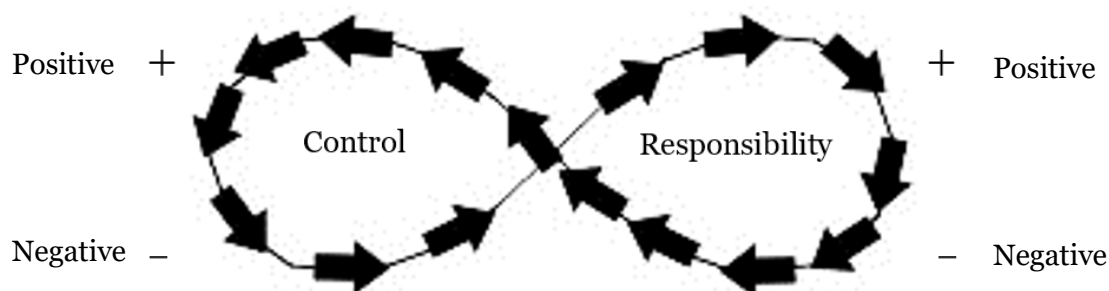
GCE Advanced Level | General Paper T1W9 and W10: Control and Responsibility

Overview of lectures

- Acquiring distinctions in your question analysis
- Examining value & importance, power
- **Control & responsibility**
- Examining change & continuity

Control and Responsibility

- Providing a framework to help unpack questions tackling **ceding control** vs **taking on responsibility** – e.g. *what happens when there's too much or too little control in society? Who's to blame when things go wrong? When do we take responsibility?*
- These two concepts of control and responsibility are complementary and are **not negative** in themselves; depending on the **context**, one might want more control or less.
- However, if there is too much control, or we have taken on too much responsibility, that's when we start seeking the other side of the loop:



Essential questions guiding this lecture:

Part 1	Part 2
1. What is control?	1. What is responsibility?
2. Who controls?	2. Who is responsible?
3. Why control?	3. Why allow for responsibility? (<i>and not control?</i>)
4. Should we control?	

Relevant essay questions (*list is non-exhaustive*)

- ★ Should research into expensive medical treatments be allowed when only a few can afford them? [2008]
- ★ Should poorer countries develop their tourist industry when the basic needs of their own people are not being met? [2008]
- ★ 'Only educated people should have the right to vote in elections.' What is your view? [2009]
- ★ Should every country have the right to carry out unlimited scientific research? [2009]
- ★ How far can an individual be held responsible for crimes against humanity? [2009]
- ★ Should people be allowed to have children by artificial means? [2012]
- ★ How far, in your society, should unpopular views be open to discussion? [2013]
- ★ How far should firms be allowed to limit their workers' rights when profits are at stake? [2014]
- ★ 'Parents have no right to impose their own values and beliefs on their children.' Discuss. [2015]
- ★ 'Countries experiencing conflict should be left to sort out their own problems.' How far DYA? [2016]
- ★ How far should a state have the right to monitor the actions of people within its borders? [2018]
- ★ 'In a free society, there should be no restrictions on freedom of speech.' Discuss. [2020]
- ★ 'What an individual eats or drinks should not be the concern of the state.' [2021]
- ★ To what extent can individuals shape their own lives when the world is so unpredictable? [2022]
- ★ Consider the argument that there should be no censorship of the arts in modern society. [2023]
- ★ Evaluate the measures taken in your society to deter crime and punish criminals. [2024]

Control

1. What is control?

• {noun} the power to influence or direct people's behaviour or the course of events • {verb} to determine the behaviour or supervise the running of	<i>Synonymous terms:</i> jurisdiction, sway, power authority, command, dominance, domination, government, mastery, leadership, rule, hegemony
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While the term 'control' often carries the connotation of oppression or suppression, it is imperative to note that control is neither inherently good nor bad.

The effects of control can be both positive and negative, depending on the rationale and extent of the control enforced as well as the context in which it is being enacted. The exertion of control can also change across time, in response to evolving societal values, beliefs and norms.

Forms of control

1. Formal (*often written, legislated*)
 - Government legislation, national education systems
 - Religious control: beliefs, rituals, rites, patterns of behaviour
2. Informal (*often spoken, online*)
 - Cultural norms
 - Social cues (shaming, praising, criticising, disapproval)
 - Mass Media (what's promoted sets a perceived standard for things such as beauty, love)

My notes / examples:

2. Who controls and why do they control?

Typically, major institutions anchor the value systems of societies, by entrenching regulation and control over various domains at both micro and macro levels.

Domain	Why control?	My notes / examples
Family	To protect the basic unit of society, which serves as a mechanism for allocation of resources, rights, duties and the systematic passing down of names, lineage, status and privilege.	
Work	To ensure societal health and sustainability, since we work collectively in a society for the preservation of the commons (which are cultural and natural resources accessible to all members of society).	
Corporations	Corporations have tremendous influence over large swathes of society. Control is also needed <i>over</i> them because their actions impact and involve consumers as well as employees, who may be unaware of unfair treatment or exploitation at the hands of these corporations.	
Government	To regulate developments that could unduly threaten societal stability and compromise order, through the instruments of law and justice.	

Education / Schools	To create a citizenry that fits with the nation's social imperatives; for social engineering.	
The Media	To highlight issues that are most pertinent for society to address, to safeguard against deceit from public institutions or businesses or argue against damaging paradigms.	
Religion	For the imbibing of moral values and to establish our accountability to a higher being; as a means of social or political control.	
The Arts	Regulation can infringe on or protect the use of the Arts as a medium for social or political commentary, as well as to critique misgivings in society and to highlight societal deviance which could be blind to us.	

3. Should we control?

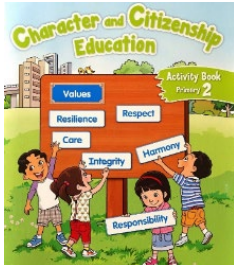
The following factors explore the consequences, contexts and capacity for control in determining whether or not it should be established. These factors flesh out the extent to which control needs to be enforced (*should we allow, or regulate, or fully control?*).

a) <u>Tangible cost</u> - Is it sensible to implement control if it will challenge ingrained social standards or compromise existing values, even if this is done for the greater good of society? - Will control lead to the stagnation of innovation and ingenuity in favour of stability and safety?	
b) <u>Trust and authority</u> - Can those tasked with regulating or enforcing control be trusted to do so in a fair and just manner? - Does the authority figure have a track record of accountability and transparency?	
c) <u>Jurisdiction</u> - Is it legal for the freedoms in a specific domain to be curtailed?	
d) <u>Maturity of audience</u> - Is it logical to expect an under-aged/incapacitated audience to be able to discern for themselves between right and wrong, or must controls be enforced to guide them towards doing so?	

4. Positives of Control

a) Stability

- Regulation and varying degrees of control established across key societal institutions ensure a degree of conformity, solidarity and continuity in a particular group or society.
- This is particularly important given the heterogeneous nature of many pluralistic and multicultural societies, where diverse beliefs, values, political inclinations and perspectives can threaten to pull a society apart.



[Example] To maintain social cohesion in Singapore and protect the delicate fabric of the nation (and its potential fault lines of race and religion), various laws and regulations are in place with regard to offensive content, the distribution of races across public housing nationwide, the creation of a consistent national narrative as well as accepted family forms. This is done to maintain deeply entrenched cultural norms. The education system, for instance, is strongly tied to the national narrative of creating and maintaining an active citizenry committed to serving the nation and protecting its interests. This consistent messaging is transmitted to all schools uniformly using platforms such as CCE lessons.

My notes / examples:

b) Efficiency

- Organisational controls (rules, guidelines, procedures and other protocols) provide a blueprint for consistent decision-making, increasing efficiency and productivity.
- These regulations, when enforced socially, can prescribe and encourage positive behaviours, minimising societal disruptions while maintaining overall safety.

[Example] The Broken Windows Theory was put forth by social scientist James Wilson and criminologist George Kelling. The term “broken windows” refers to an observation made in the 1980s that when a building window is broken and left unrepaired, the rest of the windows will soon be broken too. An unrepaired window is a signal that no one cares. The duo found that in environments where disorderly behaviour goes unchecked – where for example prostitutes ply their trade freely or beggars accost passers-by – more serious street crime flourishes. Applied to law enforcement, the experts assert that police officers who keep streets orderly and punish even small signs of misbehaviour with a warning or arrest will result in people generally behaving in a more orderly way. This enforcement saw the New York City murder rate drop 88% from 1993 to 2013.

My notes / examples:

c) Accountability

- Control and regulations prescribe an ordered set of expected behaviours, which is central to the functioning of any group or society.
- With established controls, everyone can be held to a non-negotiable standard of expected behaviour and this serves to ensure malevolent, dangerous, immoral or unethical behaviour can be identified and dealt with.

[Example] Since 1974, American hospitals, universities and research institutions have had Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) to ensure the informed consent of participants in studies, and to regulate human subject research. The IRBs, made up of both scientific peers and lay persons, can approve research proposals, make modifications, or disapprove them entirely. Non-compliance can result in sanctions from the institution, such as revoked access to facilities, suspension and dismissal.

My notes / examples:

5. Drawbacks of Control

a) Complacency and Stagnation

- The stability and efficiency guaranteed by tighter controls and regulations in organisations can lead to complacency and stagnation when taken to the extreme.
- A mentality which favours preserving the status quo can hinder and hurt the very innovation and vitality that once brought the organisation its success.
- This is dangerous, particularly when individuals override their differing perspectives and viewpoints to defer to the authority. Innovation and creativity cannot thrive in such environments, and this can have severe implications across domains, many of which are built on the pursuit of new knowledge (sciences, research, technology and the arts).

[Example] Kodak, founded in 1892, was once one of the most successful film companies, with a rich history of curating the pictorial memories of the masses. By the 1990s, several competitors, notably from Japan, were catching up with them in technological developments, as film photography became a waning hobby. Kodak spent billions developing technology for taking pictures using mobile phones, but held back from going fully digital for fear of cannibalising its core business of film. Ironically, Kodak engineer Steve Sasson was the first to invent the digital camera – but the company's bosses preferred to preserve its 'golden egg', shunning innovative practices. Kodak filed for bankruptcy in 2012.

My notes / examples:

b) Distrust and lack of ownership

- Ironically, excessive controls and regulations can create a sense of distrust, which can then lead to bottlenecks in planning and execution, and a lowered level of overall efficiency.



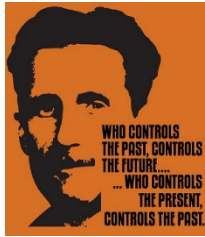
[Example] When Steve Ballmer took over as Microsoft's CEO (2000-2014), he implemented a stack-ranking performance review system, where a high level of control, intended to ensure quality and consistency, ultimately achieved the opposite, by creating environments where employees felt distrusted and unable to take ownership of their work. Excessive documentation was required to justify decisions, and there was a slow response to market changes due to bureaucratic approval chains. The company's value barely improved over his tenure, and only started to rise again under the new CEO, who made widespread changes, giving back much autonomy to the employees.

My notes / examples:

c) Corruption and abuse of power

- When control is excessively contained, there are fewer checks on the authority, which can undermine the integrity of any system in place.
- Individuals or groups wielding immense power can craft rules and regulations to protect themselves or to abuse their position of trust.

[Example] Disgraced South Korean ex-President Park Geun-hye came to power as the nationally loved, long-suffering daughter of Korea's third president, Park Chung-hee. In this commanding position, Park came under the influence of long-time friend Choi Soon-sil, who kept an unnaturally tight circle of control around the President even though she held no official position in the government. Choi wielded almost unchecked influence, exerting control over the President's policy direction, the hiring of senior government officials and even what Park wore. The former also channelled money from lucrative, illicit deals with Korean conglomerates. Park was impeached, and Choi sentenced to jail, in 2017.



My notes / examples:

Post-lecture consolidation activities

Q1: 'Parents have no right to impose their own values and beliefs on their children.'
Discuss. [2015]

Factors for consideration	Possible arguments
b) Trust and Authority – <i>Fair and just?</i>	
c) Jurisdiction – <i>Legal?</i>	
d) Maturity of the audience – <i>Logical to expect discernment?</i>	

Q2: How far should a state have the right to monitor the actions of people within its borders? [2018]

Factors for consideration	Possible arguments
a) Stability – <i>Regulation and varying degrees of control established across key societal institutions ensure a degree of conformity, solidarity and continuity in a particular group or society.</i>	
c) Corruption and/or abuse of power – <i>Individuals or groups wielding immense power can craft rules and regulations to <u>protect themselves</u> or to <u>abuse their position of trust</u>.</i>	

Responsibility

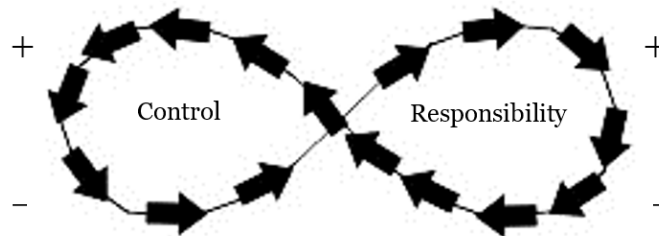
1. What is responsibility?

What comes to mind when you think of the flipside of control?

However, to extend the concepts further, we can think about how the freedom to make certain choices **comes with** the concept of **taking responsibility and ownership** over these choices.

Once stakeholders fight for the freedom to make their own decisions, they are also taking responsibility over the **consequences** of these decisions.

Going back to the loop, once there is too much control, one begins to take on more responsibility for oneself. And similarly, when there is too much responsibility, one begins to desire more top-down control.



2. Who is responsible?

The following principles of responsibility will help when weighing where responsibility lies; i.e. deciding which stakeholder should take on more responsibility.

On the individual level, one can also use these principles to decide why one should be responsible for one's own actions.

→ Why should **you** care?

→ Why do **you** have a stake in what's happening?

Lastly, for large-scale issues, there is usually no **one** stakeholder who has full responsibility to solve the problems surrounding the issue. These require the cooperation and ownership of **multiple** stakeholders to tackle different aspects of the problem.

Principles of responsibility	My notes / examples
1. Knowledge Once a stakeholder has knowledge of an incident that has happened, or the ramifications if one does nothing, then they have a moral obligation to take responsibility. However, under the law, ignorance is <i>not</i> an excuse for irresponsibility.	<i>What if you had the ability to find out more, but didn't?</i>
2. Ability If one has the means and resources to effect change, some level of responsibility also lies with them. This could be in terms of time, money, or the ability to create and enforce laws/regulations. This could also be in terms of the expertise / skills that are needed to handle the situation.	<i>Although governments (especially rich ones) and MNCs are the first stakeholders that might come to mind, does this mean that the individual is powerless and thus absolved of responsibility?</i>

3. Privilege/power If one is in a position of power or influence, one might also have the moral obligation to take responsibility over a situation.	<i>How far might this influence extend? How much responsibility can this stakeholder take?</i>
4. Social contract Since we live in a community, there is an unwritten consensus that we need to help one another for society to survive and thrive. Thus, if we see someone in need, we are responsible for helping (and can expect others to help us in return).	<i>How might you weigh this factor against the other factors, e.g. ability?</i>
5. Formal contract This is where a stakeholder has the written and formal obligation to take responsibility over a given situation; where it is formally acknowledged that one has the duty to help.	<i>Would these stakeholders then be “the first line of defence”? What might hinder them?</i>
6. Causality If someone directly caused an issue through their actions or negligence, they are often considered responsible, at least in part. If they had an indirect but significant contribution, then they might also bear responsibility.	<i>Did the stakeholder’s actions/lack of action trigger the problem in the first place?</i>

3. Why allow for responsibility? (and not be controlled?)

Here, we will investigate some of the positives of taking on responsibility, and some of the drawbacks. Remember that these ideas are transferable – use them to apply across different contexts and towards different stakeholders.

Positives of taking responsibility

a) Self-respect | dignity | sense of ownership

The ability to choose is fundamental to who a person is and their core identity. Freedom and choice give us self-worth and empowerment, and ultimately our human dignity.

[Example] The euthanasia debate centres on people with terminal illnesses advocating the right to choose to die with dignity.

[Example] Feminism, as the broad movement, seeks equality between the sexes, with much focus (from past to present) on women’s rights to vote, to own property, to be able to choose their marriage partners, to have reproductive rights, etc.

[Example] Entrepreneurship is on the rise especially among the young, to have the freedom to create their career paths. About 60% of teenagers in USA are more interested in someday starting their own business instead of working a traditional job, according to a 2022 survey. Nearly 20% of teens surveyed said their inspiration for entrepreneurship mostly came from social media influencers and celebrities.

My notes / examples:

b) Engaged citizenry

- As a result of having a greater sense of ownership over their lives, many people would also start having a concomitant rise in the sense of ownership and responsibility over their nations. They would be more driven to act and push for change to create a better country.
- The young might be a particularly strong driving force in this desire for responsibility and change, with today's younger generations being more educated, empowered and vocal than ever before.

[Example] Activism has long been synonymous with youth culture. From the May 1968 protests in France, and demonstrations against the Vietnam War and the Civil Rights Movement in the US, to the global Occupy movement and the Arab Spring of the late noughties, young people have a record of pushing forward social change. Today, global data from research firm Edelman shows 70% of Gen Zers are involved in a social or political cause. And although not all the 10,000 people surveyed said they would call themselves fully fledged activists, they're still highly socially involved, advocating for causes they believe in through how they spend and earn. They're the most likely generation to boycott a product, company, country or state because of a political, social or environmental stance.

[Example] Celebrities are wielding their influence to drive change as well. In the USA, voter registrations among young Americans shot up in the wake of pop megastar Taylor Swift's Instagram post in 2023, where the singer encouraged her 272 million followers to register to vote. Afterward, the website she directed her fans to – the nonpartisan nonprofit Vote.org – recorded more than 35,000 registrations. Vote.org also reported a 1,226% jump in participation in the hour after the post.

[Example] Dr. Susan Pick founded the Mexican Institute for Family and Population Research, known as “Yo Quiero Yo Puedo” (“I Want, I Can”). Operating in Mexico and 17 other countries, the organisation has impacted over 21 million people through more than 60 programs in education, health, and poverty reduction. By enhancing knowledge, life skills, and reducing psychosocial barriers, it empowers individuals to take control of their lives. This has led to lower school drop-out rates, reduced acceptance of child marriage, and improved health practices, influencing national policies and societal norms, demonstrating the impact of personal responsibility and autonomy on broader social change.

My notes / examples:

c) Innovation

- Having the freedom to explore and forge one's own path also leads to an increase in innovation, with leaps and bounds being made in almost all areas of human endeavours.
- With the freedom to be unconventional and not needing to follow in the ways of the previous generations, people today are approaching problems in new ways, conceptualising problems differently, and understanding their positions in relation to any particular situation differently.
- The younger generation is especially creative in their use of technology, being digital natives as well as seeking efficiency and mobility in their tasks.

[Example] At Fuji Kindergarten outside Tokyo, the roof of their oval-shaped school is an endless playground, and trees grow right through classrooms.

[Example] Platforms like TikTok and Instagram Reels have been driven by young creators who have innovated new forms of storytelling, humour, and educational content in concise, engaging formats. This has influenced how information is disseminated, with young people using these platforms for everything from social activism to small business promotion. Even the industry of content creation is a fairly new one, driven by the younger generation breaking new ground in using technology to earn a living. One example is Tyler “Ninja” Blevins, who transformed video gaming into a multimillion-dollar career, showing how Gen Z monetises hobbies through technology, live streaming, and content creation.

My notes / examples:

Drawbacks of taking responsibility

a) Anarchy/ chaos/ lack of governance

- When people want more freedom and the responsibilities that come with making their own decisions, there might not always be enough thought into what comes after the change has occurred. Taking on responsibility without a level of preparedness and plans for what comes next might thus lead to chaos and unwanted violence.



[Example] America's gun control debate: with the freedom/right to own guns seeming to be out of control, leading to spikes in violence and people taking advantage of the loopholes in purchasing firearms. Scarily, 1 out of 3 homes with children have guns and nearly 1.7 million children live in a home with an unlocked, loaded gun.

My notes / examples:

b) Feelings of uncertainty/ being overwhelmed

- Related to the point above, on a more individual scale, the idea of having too much freedom can become overwhelming. With an abundance of options, opportunities and possibilities, the endless choices also mean endless choices that they are missing out on.
- The combination of a very high level of individual freedom and an enormous number of possibilities due to education and skills and the fear of failure has led to a generation that 'needs to find themselves' in their mid-twenties.
- Increased choice, then, can also make us miserable because of regret, self-blame and opportunity costs. Worse, increased choice has created a new problem: the escalation in expectations. Choice shifts from having a positive relationship with happiness to an inverse one.
- When people are overwhelmed by choice and when they are anxious about it, they often turn to denial, ignorance and wilful blindness.

[Example] "Jam study" experiment: A team of researchers set up a table of jam samples in a grocery store. One table had a selection of 24 jams. Another, a selection of 6. As expected, 60% of customers were drawn toward the wide selection, while only 40% towards the small one. As humans, we think bigger = better, but the surprising thing was that 30% of the customers who sampled the 6 jams bought a jar. But only 3% of the customers who sampled the 24 jams bought a jar.

[Example] Japan's soshoku danshi or "herbivore men" who, so corrupted by the endless choices offered by online pornography, are no longer interested in romance or real-life relationships.

[Example] Psychologist and author Barry Schwartz postulates that an abundance of choice, instead of increasing our sense of well-being, is increasing our levels of anxiety, depression, and wasted time: "Clinical depression has exploded in the industrial world in the last generation. I believe a significant — not the only, but a significant — contributor to this explosion of depression, and also suicide, is that people have experiences that are disappointing because their standards are so high, and then when they have to explain these experiences to themselves, they think they're at fault."

My notes / examples:

Enduring Understanding / Resolution

- Control and responsibility should not be looked at as opposing ideas, but concepts that **actively influence one another** across both the macro and micro levels of society.
- Few societies, if any, incorporate only control or full responsibility. The greater challenge lies, therefore, in **negotiating the factors, conditions and arguments** that can tilt one in favour of either a more controlling, or more liberal system.
- Context is key** and plays a critical role in determining which side of the loop a particular society is more inclined to favour.
- Four types of contexts you can take note of:

Context	Implications on control and responsibility
Cultural contexts	Control is seen as a crucial component of the Bhutanese approach to nature and conservation [conservation is one of the four pillars of the uniquely Bhutanese Gross National Happiness philosophy]. At any one time, 60 per cent of its land must be preserved under forest cover. In this case, control = respect for the natural environment.
Historical influences	The concept of liberty is deeply embedded in the French national psyche, dating back to the French revolution. This historical legacy has greatly informed the nation's response to crises such as shooting of Charlie Hebdo journalists in 2015. The attack, carried out by Islamic extremists as a response to the satirical magazine's publishing of Prophet Muhammad cartoons, was met by French citizens standing in solidarity in support of freedom of expression. The slogan 'Je suis Charlie' [I am Charlie] galvanised both local and international audiences. In this case, responsibility = identity.
National narratives	Singapore, a small country thrust into independence in 1965, quickly formulated its own governing philosophy to ensure its survival. A high level of control that could ensure political and social stability amid a period of turbulence was perceived to be what was needed in order for the country to <i>survive</i> , before it could even begin to consider what would be crucial for the city-state to <i>thrive</i> . In this case, control = survival.
Situational context	Since 2015, Germany has received over a million asylum seekers as part of the country's liberal, compassionate approach to migration. Years later, however, the country has been quietly closing the window on asylum applications and ramping up deportations, amid reports of sexual attacks on women by groups of these asylum seekers. Protests and public backlash have forced the country's authorities to crack down on immigration to regain public trust and ensure social safety and stability. In this case, where previously responsibility = empowerment, following situational changes, control= safety/trust.

- Perceptions on the levels of control and responsibility required within a given context can be at odds when viewed from the perspective of **various stakeholders**, for example, the individual versus that of the government. Often, this incongruity can be the spark that leads to change, whether for better or worse.
- Discovering where **you** stand on the loop can facilitate this tricky navigation.
- How you decide whether control or personal responsibility is important to you depends on how you assess the **worth** of each factor on your **sense of self**.
 - If you feel that controlling measures merely serve to repress your identity, you would veer more towards favouring principles of responsibility and even then, your views on this might change as you get older or encounter different situations in life.

Post-lecture consolidation activities

Responsibility

Application of concepts

Q1: 'The government, not the people, should be responsible for protecting the environment.' Do you agree?

Factors for consideration	Possible arguments
1. Knowledge	
2. Ability	
3. Privilege / power	
4. Social contract	
5. Formal contract	

Application of concepts

Q2: How far, in your society, should unpopular views be open to discussion? [2013]

Factors for consideration	Possible arguments
a) Anarchy/ chaos/ lack of governance	
b) Engaged citizenry	
c) Innovation	