



# [ FORMS OF GOVERNMENT ]

Types, Subtypes, &  
Definitions

# Definition of Government

- A system of “coercion”—control.
- Those leaders and segments of the population with:
  - a) The legal right to use force, and
  - b) The right to make laws

# [ Introduction ]

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- Many different types of governments exist in the world, or have existed at some point in history.
- The following definitions are “ideal-types”; in reality governments do not fit perfectly inside such definitions, and often are combinations of several.

# [ 1) Anarchy ]

- No Government
- No organized public institutions in society.
- “State of Nature”
- There are several different opinions of what an anarchy would be like:

# [ Supporters of Anarchy ]

- The ultimate form of liberty and freedom.
- No government to use force over individuals, or interfere with private lives and personal freedoms.
- People would live with voluntary cooperation.

# [ Opposers of Anarchy ]

- It would be mass chaos or civil war.
- There would be no protection of any rights.
- Violent people would harm and steal from others.
- There would be no public services provided that individuals could not do on their own.

## [ 2) Aristocracy ]

- Government ruled by the few (a small group of elite people).
- Often the rule by a privileged upper class.
- E.g.—the most wealthy, the most educated, a hereditary nobility, etc.
- Also called Oligarchy or Plutocracy

# [ 3) Monarchy ]

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- Rule by a single individual (“mono-”) who inherits the right to rule by being born into the royal family.
- There are two types of monarchies:



# [ A) Absolute Monarchy ]

- Traditional form
- Undivided power over the government (King or Queen does not share power with any other part of the government).
- Is not responsible to the people
- There is no legal method of change

## B) Constitutional Monarchy

- A monarch with limited power.
- Must recognize certain rights and political involvement of others.

# [ 4) Theocracy ]

- A government ruled by religious leaders.
- The leaders are regarded as having “divine guidance” (guidance by a god or spiritual force).
- God has chosen the rulers; the ruler is a god; or, the basis of lawmaking and policy decisions is the religion.

# [ 5) Socialism ]

- A belief in social and economic equality.
- Achieved by sharing all property and wealth.
- Attempting to eliminate poverty and suffering, and greed.
- Pure form—“communal socialism” (i.e., a community that operates as a direct democracy with a socialist system of work, property, and distribution of wealth).

# 6) Dictatorships

## Totalitarian

- A government ruled by a dictator...  
(note: very few dictatorships are totalitarian—every aspect of society is politically controlled.)
- Who achieves total control over society and the lives of individuals...
- By convincing and/or forcing everyone to support or follow a single system of beliefs.

# [ Totalitarianism (cont.) ]

- Controls all communication and media;
- Eliminates opposition and other political parties (One-Party system);
- Controls education (what is taught in schools);
- Uses military and secret police to intimidate and coerce the people.

# Authoritarian

Authoritarian gov't.: leader or small group governs without opposition, but is less powerful or belief-centered than totalitarian gov'ts.

NOTE: Totalitarian and Authoritarian govts. are both dictatorships—they simply indicate the different **degrees of control** that dictators may have over their societies.

# **Types of Totalitarian or Authoritarian Dictatorships**

- a) Communism
- b) Fascism
- c) Military Dictatorship



# [ A) Communism ]

- Based on the ideas of Karl Marx and Vladimir Lenin, and, perhaps, Mao Tse-Tung. (Note: not all communist states are totalitarian.)
- Focuses on struggles between classes.
- Violent revolution by the working classes (Proletariat) to overthrow the middle classes (Bourgeoisie—land and factory owners).

# [ Communism ]

- Take over the “means of production” (factories, equipment, farm land, etc.)
- Abolish private property & replace with public or government ownership and central planning of the economy
- Until equality and a classless society is achieved in the communes, & then the government can fade away—  
”stateless” society → pure communism

## B) Fascism

- Led by a supreme, charismatic leader
- Focus on nationalism & superiority
- Glorifies military power and expansion (taking over more lands)
- Goals of modernization through a “Corporate State” (every personal has a role to contribute to the nation; individuals are worth nothing outside of the state)

# [ C) Military Dictatorship ]

- Autocracy—a gov't. ruled by a single person, or group of military officers with *nearly* unlimited power.
- There have been very few “pure” totalitarian governments in history, with “total” control over society,
- But there have been many dictators who used the military to keep power.

# [ 7) Democracy ]

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- The people are allowed to rule themselves by participating in government.
- Belief in individual rights and liberties.
- Two types:

# [ A) Direct Democracy ]

- True or pure democracy
- Rule by the people.
- Citizens have the opportunity to be involved in making all of the public decisions and laws.
- Only possible in small societies (communal).

# B) Republican Democracy

- A Republic
- Rule for the people.
- The citizens vote to elect representatives to government, who then make the decisions for them.