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

- 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

- 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

- 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.