

Forms of Government – A Summary



Democracy

The word democracy comes from ancient Greek words meaning 'people' and 'rule of government'. It is a system of government of a country whose leaders have been elected by the people.

When the elected representatives meet in parliament to make laws, the form of government is a **parliamentary democracy**.

Monarchy

A monarchy is a form of government led by an individual who holds the position for life, having inherited the position, and who passes it on to a relative, usually a son or daughter.

In the past, all monarchs held great power and made the all decisions and laws of the country. This is known as **absolute monarchy**. Today most monarchs act as Head of State, filling a ceremonial role with little or no power regarding the actual governing of the country.



A **constitutional monarchy** is a country which has a written Constitution that sets out the rules for how the country will be governed and the rights and responsibilities of its people, and has a monarch as Head of State.

Republicanism



A republic is a country whose head of government is an elected or chosen president. Sometimes the president is also the head of state, for example the President of the United States. Presidents are usually elected for a specific length of time, called a term of office. In some countries a president may only serve a particular number of terms.

The United States Capitol building in Washington DC, meeting place of representatives elected by the people

A republic may or may not be democratic. In a democratic republic, the people choose their leaders through elections, although in countries where president is a ceremonial role, it may be by government appointment rather than by election.

In some undemocratic republics the leaders are chosen by a small number of people and may stay in office for a long time, sometimes without ever being elected or re-elected. In some cases there may be elections, but these may be conducted in corrupt ways, or electors are not given a free choice of who to vote for.

Totalitarianism

In a totalitarian society the government holds absolute control over all aspects of the lives of its people. A set of beliefs is imposed on the people, who have to conform or face unpleasant consequences. This form of government came into being in the 1920s and 1930s when the fascist governments of Italy and Nazi Germany came into power.

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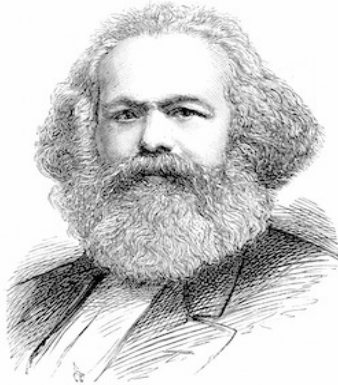
Fascism

Fascism is a form of government usually headed by a dictator. It involves total government control of political, economic, cultural, religious and social activities. Some industries may be owned by individuals, but under government control. This form of government includes extreme patriotism, warlike policies and extreme discrimination against minority groups.

Dictatorship

In a dictatorship, one person, called a Dictator, has absolute power. This differs from totalitarianism in that it is less controlling and not marked by a rigid set of beliefs. Sometimes a country run by dictatorship may be called a republic. Such republics have only one political party and the Dictator makes most government policies and decisions.

Communism



KARL MARX

Communism is an economic system in which there is little or no private ownership - property is held by the community rather than by individuals. All economic activity is controlled by the government, including things like what crops are grown, what goods are manufactured, and to whom they are sold and at what prices. The decisions made by communist governments are those that are normally made by private individuals in non-communist countries.

Karl Marx's beliefs formed a foundation of communism.

Communist governments are usually a form of totalitarianism, and traditionally allow only approved candidates to stand for election and there is usually little or no choice of candidate at an election.

Oligarchy

An oligarchy is a form of government in which only a few wealthy people hold power. A republic may be an oligarchy if just a few people have the right to vote. An example of this was the time of apartheid in South Africa. In most oligarchies, the power of the leadership is supported by the wealthy and the military.

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