

Governments can be classified into several types. Some of the more common types of governments are:

1. Democracy

The word "democracy" literally means "rule by the people." In a democracy, the people govern.

2. Republic A literal democracy is impossible in a political system containing more than a few people. All "democracies" are really republics. In a republic, the people elect representatives to make and enforce laws.

3. Monarchy A monarchy consists of rule by a king or queen. Sometimes a king is called an "emperor," especially if there is a large empire, such as China before 1911. There are no large monarchies today. The United Kingdom, which has a queen, is really a republic because the queen has virtually no political power.

4. Aristocracy An aristocracy is rule by the aristocrats. Aristocrats are typically wealthy, educated people. Many monarchies have really been ruled by aristocrats. Today, typically, the term "aristocracy" is used negatively to accuse a republic of being dominated by rich people, such as saying, "The United States has become an aristocracy."

5. Dictatorship A dictatorship consists of rule by one person or a group of people. Very few dictators admit they are dictators; they almost always claim to be leaders of democracies. The dictator may be one person, such as Castro in Cuba or Hitler in Germany, or a group of people, such as the Communist Party in China.

6. Democratic Republic Usually, a "democratic republic" is not democratic and is not a republic. A government that officially calls itself a "democratic republic" is usually a dictatorship. Communist dictatorships have been especially prone to use this term. For example, the official name of North Vietnam was "The Democratic Republic of Vietnam." China uses a variant, "The People's Republic of China."

Descriptions of governments can be based on:

Economy - what provides the goods and services that are bought, sold, and used?

Capitalism	Socialism	Communism
(Russia)	(Norway)	(Cuba)
In a capitalist or free-market economy, people own their own businesses and property and must buy services for private use, such as healthcare.	Socialist governments own many of the larger industries and provide education, health and welfare services while allowing citizens some economic choices	In a communist country, the government owns all businesses and farms and provides its people's healthcare, education and welfare.

Politics - how is the government run?

Dictatorship	Totalitarian	Theocracy	Monarchy	Parliamentary	Republic	Anarchy
(Iraq)	(China)	(Iran)	(Jordan)	(Israel)	(USA)	(Afghanistan?)
Rule by a single leader who has not been elected and may use force to keep control. In a military dictatorship, the army is in control. Usually, there is little or no attention to public opinion or individual rights.	Rule by a single political party. People are forced to do what the government tells them and may also be prevented from leaving the country.	A form of government where the rulers claim to be ruling on behalf of a set of religious ideas, or as direct agents of a deity.	A monarchy has a king or queen, who sometimes has absolute power. Power is passed along through the family	A parliamentary system is led by representatives of the people. Each is chosen as a member of a political party and remains in power as long as his/her party does	A republic is led by representatives of the voters. Each is individually chosen for a set period of time.	Anarchy is a situation where there is no government. This can happen after a civil war in a country, when a government has been destroyed and rival groups are fighting to take its place.

Authority - who picks the government?

Revolutionary	Totalitarian	Oligarchy/Plutocracy	Democracy
<u>(USA, France, USSR etc)</u>	<u>(North Korea)</u>	<u>(Pakistan)</u>	<u>(India)</u>
The existing structure is overthrown by a completely new group. The new group can be very small - such as the military - or very large - as in a popular revolution. After a period of time, this 'becomes' one of the other type of government (unless there is another coup or uprising).	Rule by a single political party. Votes for alternative candidates and parties are simply not allowed. Citizens are allowed and encouraged to vote, but only for the government's chosen candidates.	A form of government which consists of rule by an elite group who rule in their own interests, especially the accumulation of wealth and privilege. Only certain members of society have a valid voice in the government. This can reflect (but is not limited to) economic interests, a particular religious tradition (theocracy), or familial rule (monarchy).	In a democracy, the government is elected by the people. Everyone who is eligible to vote - which is a majority of the population - has a chance to have their say over who runs the country.

REMEMBER: nearly every country in the world is ruled by a system that combines 2 or more of these (for example, the USA is not a true capitalist society, since the government actually provides some services for its citizens). Additionally, one person's opinion of the type of government may differ from another's (many argue that the USA is actually a plutocracy rather than a democracy).