

The Five Main Forms of Governance

Monarchy

In an absolute monarchy, the monarch holds supreme autocratic authority. State power is held by a single family that inherits rule from one generation to the next.

In recent times, the majority of monarchical governments have transitioned to constitutional monarchies, where the head of state only performs ceremonial roles with limited state powers. The people elect members of a parliament to make laws and run the country. Examples of this type of rule include Great Britain, Denmark, and Japan.

Republic

A government system without a monarch. Republics can be authoritarian or democratic.

In a democratic republic, laws are made by representatives chosen by the people. Republics usually comply with a constitution, and/or a bill of rights that specifically protects the rights of the minority from the will of the majority. Examples include Argentina, Bolivia, the Czech Republic, France, Brazil, and the United States of America.

Communism

A government system of social organisation based on a particular ideology of a single party or group of people who run the state. A common vision which collectively serves the interests of the community. All property is owed by the community and citizens are given certain jobs or life duties. Private ownership is extremely limited or banned altogether, enabling the ruling party to control all resources in the society. Opposition or dissent is not tolerated. The people do not elect party members into power. The party elects itself and usually remains in power for many years. Examples include China, Cuba and Vietnam.

Democracy

A government system where the people determine the law of the land. The law holds supreme power under rules set out in a written constitution, underpinned by the rule of law. Laws are made through the parliament, which consists of chosen representatives elected by the people, working for the people. Universal suffrage is conducted regularly by secret ballot.

Democracy supports human rights and fundamental freedoms with power limited through checks and balances, such as the separation of powers between the legislature, senior government executive, and an independent judiciary. Decisions are made transparently and regularly scrutinised by the people and media organisations. Successful democracies educate their citizens in recognising their civic rights and responsibilities, promoting a culture of lawfulness.

Dictatorship

A single person who has absolute authority to rule the state. An authoritarian form of government where one person makes the law and controls how the law is enforced, usually through brutal means.

This tyrannical regime often includes military organization and backing, unfair elections (if any) and multiple human rights violations. A dictator seizes control of the state by force or through an election process that is corrupt. Dictators are not held accountable for their actions, such as by media organisations. Burundi, Chad, Equatorial Guinea and North Korea are examples of countries run by a dictator.

