



# TYPES OF GOVERNMENT

■ **Government 14(B)** Compare how democracy, dictatorship, monarchy, republic, theocracy, and totalitarian systems operate in specific countries.



In this chapter, you will examine several different types of government — monarchy, republic, democracy, dictatorship, totalitarian regime, and theocracy.

## AN ESSENTIAL QUESTION

— What is the best form of government? —

### — IMPORTANT IDEAS —

- A. There are several different types of government:
- In a **monarchy**, a hereditary ruler controls the government and decides what it should do.
  - In a **republic**, people govern themselves without a monarch.
  - In a **democracy**, ordinary citizens hold supreme power because all government decisions ultimately comes from the people.
  - In a **dictatorship**, power rests in the hands of an individual or a small group that tells everyone else what to do.
  - In a **totalitarian system**, a dictatorial government closely controls every aspect of a citizen's life.
  - In a **theocracy**, religious leaders control government.

### GEOGRAPHIC TERMINOLOGY IN THIS CHAPTER

- |                          |                            |                   |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|
| ■ Monarchy               | ■ Democracy                | ■ Dictatorship    |
| ■ Constitutional Monarch | ■ Direct Democracy         | ■ Totalitarianism |
| ■ Republic               | ■ Representative Democracy | ■ Theocracy       |

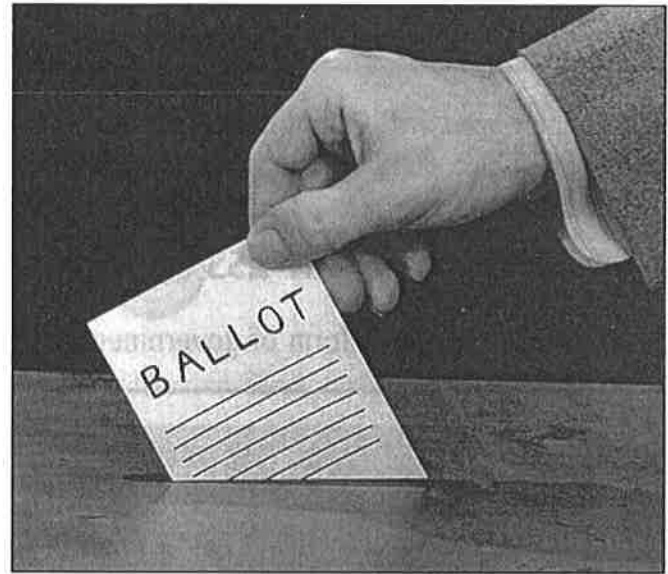
Human beings need the help of one another to survive and prosper. They therefore live in communities. The organization that people set up to protect their community and to enforce its rules is called **government**.



# POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY

In this unit, you will learn about governments and their impact on geography. You will learn about different types and levels of governments, and how these political units create borders between one another.

You will also explore how political power is distributed spatially, and how this distribution can be displayed on maps. Finally, you will consider how concepts of citizenship differ from place to place.



*Voting in elections is a major characteristic of a democratic government.*

**Chapter 14. Types of Government.** In this chapter, you will learn about different types of government, including a monarchy, republic, democracy, dictatorship, totalitarian system and theocracy.

**Chapter 15. Nations: Borders and Powers.** In this chapter, you will explore how governments establish boundaries and use their power. Finally, you will look at how independent sovereign states interact with each other.

**Chapter 16. Political Processes and Citizenship.** In this chapter, you will learn how different points of view influence public policies and decision-making at the local, state, national and international levels. You will also look at several political "hot spots" in the world today.

The role of government is to protect the lives, liberties and property of members of the community and to provide those services that individuals cannot otherwise provide on their own. To exercise authority, governments are given **power** — the authority to use force.

## TYPES OF GOVERNMENT

There are many different types of governments:

### MONARCHY

**Monarchy** is probably the oldest form of government. The main characteristic of a monarchy is that the ruler *inherits* power. When the ruler dies, power automatically passes to one of the monarch's children or close relatives. Monarchs — kings, emperors, or sultans — fulfill their role as supreme ruler by surrounding themselves with followers and advisors who help them govern.



*King Henry VIII of England  
was a monarch.*

### RULE BY DIVINE RIGHT

In older forms of monarchy, the king or queen claimed absolute power. Rulers often claimed to hold this power by “**divine right**,” or the will of God. Ordinary people had no rights or freedoms, except those that the monarch allowed.

### CONSTITUTIONAL MONARCHY

In more recent times, monarchs have shared power with an elected legislature. Subjects of the monarch enjoy many traditional, protected rights. This system is known as a **constitutional monarchy**. Great Britain provides an example of a constitutional monarchy. Britain has a hereditary monarch and an elected House of Commons. The monarch serves as the symbolic head of state while elected members of Parliament govern the country.

### REPUBLIC

When a society overturns its monarchy, it becomes a republic. A **republic** is simply a government without a king or queen. Often, the people in a republic choose representatives to make decisions. The United States, for example, is a republic. A republic might also be governed by a group of hereditary nobles, such as the Republics of Venice and Genoa once were.

## DEMOCRACY

In a **democracy**, government authority is based on the will of the people. People either vote on issues directly, or they elect representatives who make government decisions for them. In a democracy, people also enjoy certain basic rights. This gives them the confidence to criticize the government freely.

### DIRECT DEMOCRACY

The first known democracy arose in ancient Athens in the fifth century B.C. In fact, the very word **democracy** is Greek for “people-power.” Citizens of ancient Athens assembled to make important decisions facing their city-state. They voted on these issues directly. This system is sometimes referred to as **direct democracy**.

### REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY

The Romans developed the first **representative democracy**. Different social groups elected their own representatives, who met in assemblies. The nobles were represented in the **Senate**. Governmental power was divided between these two branches and they voted on various issues.

### LATER DEMOCRACIES

Later in history, various countries developed their own national assemblies. In England, land owners elected representatives to the House of Commons, one of the two chambers in the English Parliament. When the English set up colonies in North America, each colony had its own colonial legislature. After the United States became independent, it created an elected national law-making body, known as Congress. In the nineteenth century, several Latin American countries became democracies after achieving independence. Many countries in Europe became democratic after World War I. After World War II, many countries in Africa and Asia established democracies when they attained their independence.



*Ghanaians celebrating 50 years of independence. In 1957, Ghana became the first sub-Saharan African country to gain independence from colonial rule.*

## DICTATORSHIP

A **dictatorship** is a system of government in which a single person or small group exercises complete power over others. A dictator does not inherit power like a king.

The dictator either seizes control by force, or is placed into a position of authority by others. In some countries, especially in Latin America and Africa, the military sometimes seized power and established a dictatorship. After achieving their independence, some African nations became one-party states in which some leaders became dictators. For example, **Idi Amin Dada** became a brutal military dictator while serving as President of Uganda from 1971 to 1979. In Zimbabwe, **Robert Mugabe** was elected to power. He quickly became a dictator who used police to block opponents from voting. Mugabe even arrested and tortured opponents.

Dictators are free to do as they please, while other citizens in a dictatorship have few rights. Ordinary citizens in a dictatorship have very little influence over government policies. The main advantage of a dictatorship is that decisions can be made quickly. In ancient times, the Romans appointed a dictator when they were at war and needed strong leadership. When the war was over, the dictator was supposed to give up his power. In more recent times, dictators tend to hold on to power until they are overthrown.

Dictators sometimes hold elections to obtain legitimacy for their government. An election victory may appear to justify the rule of the dictator, but in reality these elections are not truly free. People are afraid to criticize or oppose the dictator, and opposition parties are not permitted.

## TOTALITARIAN SYSTEMS

Modern dictators, like Adolf Hitler in Germany, Joseph Stalin in the Soviet Union, and Saddam Hussein in Iraq, established **totalitarian systems** in which the government controlled all aspects of individual life.

Under totalitarianism, people can only belong to organizations controlled by the government. No separate political parties, labor unions, or other organizations are allowed. The government either controls or prohibits all churches and religious groups. One leader or political party maintains total control over all aspects of society. This control extends to the police, military, communications, economy and the educational system.



*Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin*

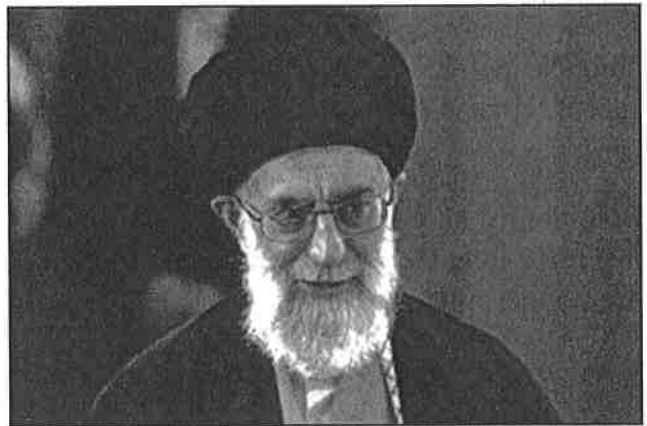
The government also controls all television, radio, and newspapers. Government censorship prohibits all books or articles criticizing the government. All dissent is suppressed and citizens are terrorized by secret police. People who oppose the government are arrested and sent to labor camps or killed.

# THEOCRACY

A **theocracy** is a government run by religious leaders. Like monarchy, theocracy is an old form of government. In a theocracy, the government claims to be directed by God, or divinely blessed. There is no legal separation between church and state, and citizens of other faiths are often excluded or expelled.

In ancient times, rulers were often priests. The Pharaohs of ancient Egypt, for example, were believed to be gods. The Byzantine Empire was ruled by an emperor who was also head of the church. In the Middle Ages, the head of the Catholic Church, the Pope, ruled extensive territories in Italy. In early colonial times, Puritan ministers helped govern Massachusetts.

**Iran's Theocracy.** More recently, Muslim religious leaders seized power in Iran in 1979. The Iranian Constitution emphasizes the importance of religion and Islamic law (*Sharia*). Today, Iran has both a theocratic and democratic government. Voters elect the President and representatives to the legislature. However, these officials remain subject to the control of Iran's religious leader — the head of state or **Supreme Leader** — an Islamic cleric who is appointed for life. As the name indicates, the Supreme Leader is the head of government, even above the elected President. The Supreme Leader interprets religious law, can dismiss the President, and can declare war.



*The Supreme Leader of Iran, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, rules Iran as a theocracy.*

## APPLYING WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNED

Choose one type of government discussed above. Look up this type of government on the Internet or in the library. Find a country where this type exists or once existed. Then briefly describe how it operates (or operated).

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## WHICH IS THE BEST FORM OF GOVERNMENT?

It would be interesting if you could listen to a discussion by leaders who actually once directed these different governments. Imagine what it would be like to overhear:

- ★ **Thomas Jefferson**, the principal author of the Declaration of Independence and third U.S. President, who is recognized as a leading supporter of **democracy**;
- ★ **Joseph Stalin**, a former leader of the Soviet Union, who was a feared **dictator**;
- ★ **Louis XIV**, King of France in the late 17th century, who built up the power and authority of the French **monarchy**.

If you listen very carefully, you might be able to hear these three men discussing which is the best type of government:

**Jefferson:** Gentlemen, a dictatorship and monarchy may have advantages, but democracy is surely the best government. Only a democracy protects its citizens' rights. In a dictatorship or monarchy, people who express dissatisfaction with the government are often arrested. Except for the king or dictator, no one else has any real say in how the government is run. People live in fear. Dictatorship and monarchy are based on the ruler's will. This is not so in a democracy.

**Stalin:** Comrade Jefferson, I agree that the purpose of government is to help the people. This was always my goal as ruler. The problem is that people don't always know what is best. A good ruler can do more than a bunch of arguing politicians unable to make up their minds. I was able to improve our economy in a shorter period than any democracy could have done.

**Louis XIV:** Messieurs, I agree with Stalin. Democracy is unable to truly protect people's rights. In a democracy, the people have to protect their own rights. What kind of government is that? It's a government of chaos, fighting, and disorder. Nobody benefits. In a monarchy, the king is the true representative of the interests of the people before God. A king has only his people's welfare at heart. God tells the king what is best for his people, and the king carries out God's will.

**Stalin:** Comrades, a dictator is not chosen by birth, like a king. A dictator is chosen on the basis of talent. A dictator fights to get to the top. Only the best individual will succeed. Once in power, the dictator can bring together all the interests of society to achieve a single goal. A dictator's aim is always to improve the welfare of the people. The dictator has the advantage of absolute power to achieve this end. A dictator can do more in two years than a democracy can in twenty. In a democracy, listening to everybody's opinion takes far too much time and forces people to make poor compromises. For centuries, Russia was ruled by monarchs and fell far behind the West. I changed all that. We built factories, produced cement and steel, and manufactured tractors.

CONTINUED

Some people who disagreed with me died along the way, but that is not so important. In the long run, we were all be better off.

**Louis XIV:** I agree with you, Monsieur Stalin. The will of one person can achieve wonderful things when given complete control over a society. Everyone bends to that person's rule. Society moves towards one goal — whether it is building the economy or defeating an enemy. In contrast, citizens in a democracy are always disagreeing. As soon as the government starts to accomplish something, a new group is voted into power and changes direction. Dictatorships have one weakness, however: the dictator does not rule by inheritance, like a king. For this reason, the dictator is always insecure, always out to win public support through great deeds or by terrorizing opponents. The dictator never knows when someone might try to overthrow him. Your own career is proof of this, Monsieur Stalin. You murdered millions to keep control. You were never sure of yourself. No king would ever act this way by waging war on his own people.

**Jefferson:** Gentlemen, both of you pretend that the ruler has the interests of the people at heart, but is this true? Your own records are not very convincing. Mr. Stalin, you killed millions in your desire for power. Your Majesty was little better. You dragged your country into senseless wars to increase your glory and power.

**Stalin:** Comrade Jefferson, you oversimplify. You say democracy protects the people from over-active governments, but what about poor harvests, floods, or attacks from enemies? By the time a democracy agrees to act, it is often too late. If I did not have total power, my nation could not have responded quickly to threats.

**Jefferson:** Gentlemen, no system of government is perfect. At times there may have been a good dictator or king, but most dictators and kings have proven to be short-sighted, vain, and selfish. The people can only rely on themselves to create a government that looks after their interests. Only democracy recognizes the dignity of each person. I prefer putting my trust in the people.

### APPLYING WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNED

★ Which government do you think is best? \_\_\_\_\_ Explain your answer.

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

★ What would the ruler of a theocracy add to this debate? \_\_\_\_\_

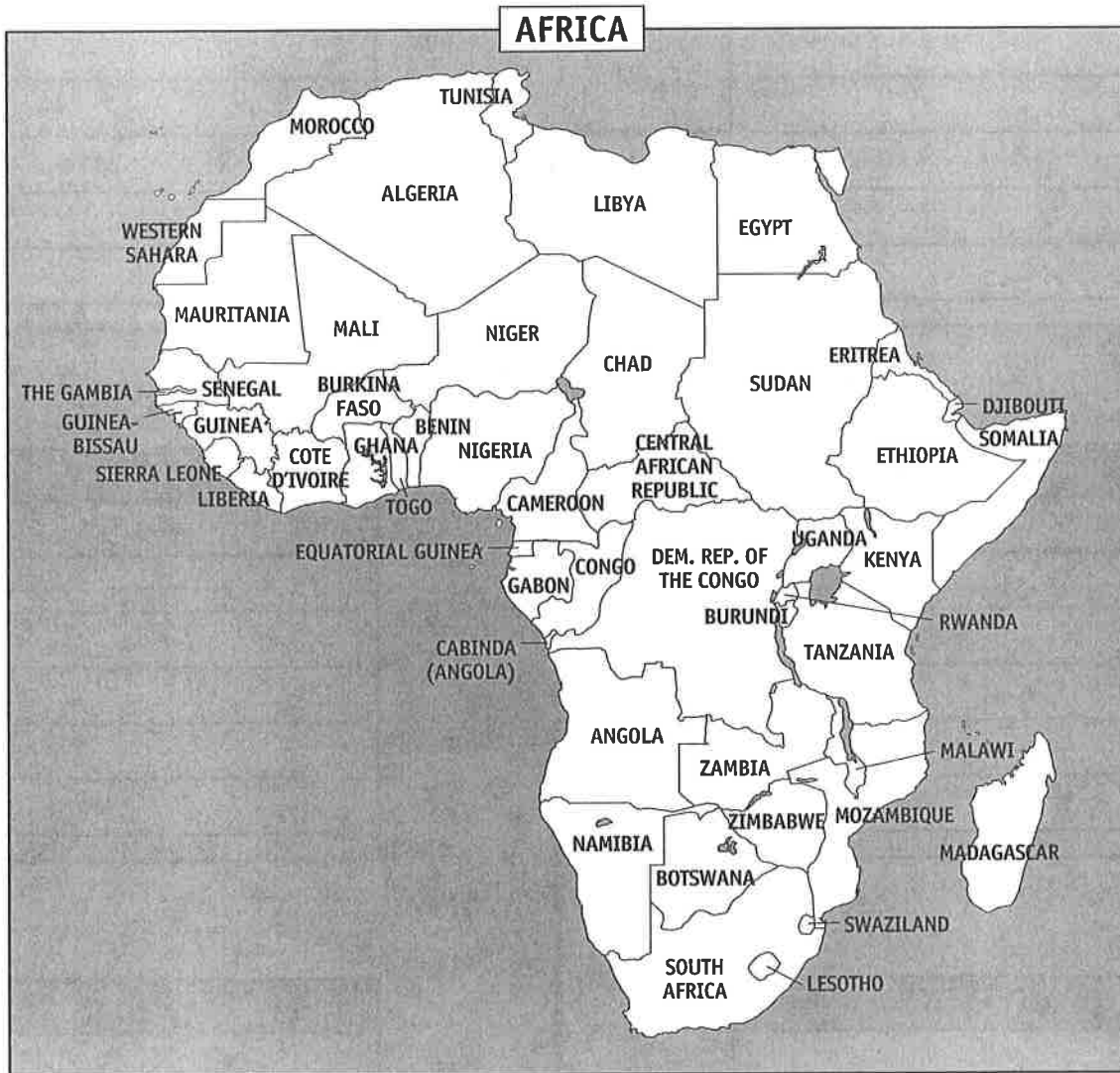
\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_



## ACTING AS AN AMATEUR GEOGRAPHER



- ★ Using the Internet, an encyclopedia, or a recent almanac, select ten countries in Africa and identify the type of government each country has today. Using the map below, make your own map showing those ten governments. Create a legend in the lower left corner with symbols or colors identifying each type of government.



- ★ What patterns in government do you see on your map? Can you draw any conclusions from this map?

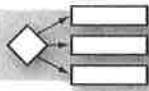
---



---



---



# LEARNING WITH GRAPHIC ORGANIZERS



Complete the graphic organizer below. Describe each type of government and provide one example.

