

Types of Government

Form of Government	Description of Governmental Form
totalitarianism	total governmental control
authoritarianism	micromanagement of citizens via government structure; military control, tyranny
monarchy	rule of one; undivided rule; typically hereditary rule; backed by oligarchical power
oligarchy	rule of few (well-connected, socially, financially, physically powerful); elites rule
republic	indirect rule of citizens through representatives; rule of law; limited government
direct democracy	rule of citizens; simple majority rule; no restraint on majority
anarchy	no order/control; no government structure; power vacuum

In forming a system of government, two basic questions have to be answered:

How much power should a government have?

How will the political power be distributed?

The ***United States Constitution*** is the basis of our democratic government and establishes the framework of political institutions: the structure of government including the executive branch (President), the legislature (Congress), and the judiciary (Supreme Court).

The first seven words of the **Preamble** “We the People of the United States” establishes that sovereignty comes from the citizens (for the people, by the people).

Limits are placed on the power of the government to stop it from overstepping on peoples’ rights. **The Constitution is the Supreme Law of the Land** and it provides the institutions of government to make and carry out its policies and at the same time safeguards the people from having a too powerful government that infringes on their liberties.

Different forms of government distribute power in very different ways:

Totalitarian Governments have no limits on their own power.

Authoritarian Governments do not hold free and fair elections and they suppress the voices of their citizens to keep their grip on power.

Unlike totalitarian systems, authoritarian systems may have some economic or social institutions not under government control that may serve to moderate the government’s power, and the government does not exert total control over citizens’ lives.

