

STRUCTURES OF GOVERNMENT
Democratic v. Authoritarian Nations

What is a Democracy?

In a democratic society, individual citizens have the power, and the right, to influence decisions made about how their country will be governed. Citizens have the political right to say and write what they wish, to go where they please, to live in privacy and security and to not be arrested or imprisoned without due legal process.

Modern democracies are representative. Citizens of a country elect politicians to represent their interests.

Rights of citizens in a democracy are protected under a constitution, or bylaws, defining how the country will be governed. The U.S. constitution establishes:

- Fundamental rights of citizens to live in safety without fear of being attacked
- When elections should be held
- Powers of various offices of state
- How laws should be made.
- Places limits on powers of government
- Guarantees political rights and freedoms of individuals

Democratic government has three branches, and may have four functions.
Ceremonial Head of State [4th function].

King or Queen with a ceremonial role but no real power

Executive Branch

Initiates and carries out policy

Positions: president, prime minister, chancellor and his/her cabinet

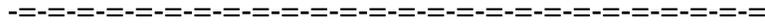
Sometimes referred to as "The Government"

Judicial Branch

Interpret and enforce law and decide legal arguments when the law is not clear

Legislative Branch

Debates and approves laws arising from policies of executive branch



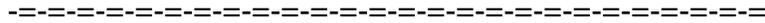
What are Authoritarian States?

Authoritarian states are nations where one single voice, individual or ideology governs the state [the country].

Authoritarian nations frequently arise in lands with violent civil conflict. Or are a byproduct of monarchy rule - rule by a single king or queen.

An authoritarian state can also be formed as a reaction to the abuse of one country's resources by foreign nations and individuals. For example, Cuba and China shut their doors to foreigners in order to cultivate strong national identities of their own, free from the interference of outsiders. By doing so, these countries were also able to protect their nations' natural resources from ongoing outside exploitation.

Authoritarian governments are:
absolute monarchies
dictatorships
despotisms
theocracies and
police-run states [also known as militarchies]



Strong Points of Democracies

In democratic governments, citizens have the right:

- To protest

- To have freedom of speech

- To assemble

Citizens have freedom to choose representatives
and to vote representatives out of office

Elected representatives have finite terms of office

Integrity of elections is protected by both government monitoring
and citizen watchdog groups

Equality Under the Law:

- Every person regardless of status

- must act within boundaries of law and constitution

Every person has the same political rights

The power of government is separated into individual branches

- There is a system of Checks and Balances in government
and no one branch holds all the power

Public has a right to expect that their elected representatives
will not abuse the power they have been given

Separation of Church and State

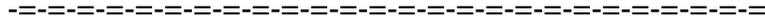
- guarantees religious freedom

Strong Points of Authoritarian States

This form of government presents
"A way to force civility onto a third world country." — Singapore's first Prime
Minister

Removes barriers to economic expansion
- as one central agency [the government] controls production, export and
expenses

Citizens have a strong national loyalty,
as national welfare takes precedence over individual needs



Detracting Points of Democracies

- **Point One:**

Under certain conditions, a democratic government becomes an authoritarian one.

- **Point Two:**

Citizens with the best command of language and most skilled in logical argument, become the government and judicial leaders. Those with less language skill may have little or no voice in the making of laws and may have inadequate representation in the judicial system.

- **Point Three:**

Most countries embrace the religious ideology of one particular religion over all others.

Detracting Points of an Authoritarian Government

- Point One

State is able to make laws without citizens having a say in defining them.

- Point Two

The self-expression of individuals, and other personal freedoms, may be limited.

- Point Three

Peace achieved by imposing authoritarian rule may disappear when that rule is relaxed or lifted.

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