

What is a Political System?

Different governments and states manage their people's political, economic, and social affairs worldwide. The government does so to maintain law and order within its territories. Without law and order, chaos and conflict are likely to emerge, making it very difficult for any government to govern effectively. Political systems are established to ensure the government is effective and smooth running. Therefore, the **political system** definition is a set of different institutions established politically, to ensure the free and fair distribution of resources within a given society.

According to *David Easton*, "A political system can be designated as the interactions through which values are authoritatively allocated for a society". Political system refers broadly to the process by which laws are made and public resources allocated in a society, and to the relationships among those involved in making these decisions

The political systems are formed with certain objectives, like determining who will be leaders, their roles, and critical responsibilities. One of the major characteristics of the political system is that it enjoys the monopoly of using legitimate force to control its citizens and run their affairs. It also has the power to propose and implement policies that are beneficial to its people.

Political systems are critical within the society, as they play significant roles in implementing policies, like health and education policies. Ensuring the society lives in harmony and peacefully, and protecting the country from external threats, like terrorists.

Types of Political Systems

The type of government or political arrangement under which a certain group of people live has critical impacts on their freedoms, basic rights, and economic welfare. The following are the most popular types of political systems and their main aspects.

Monarchy

A **monarchy** is a type of political system where the president gets into power without an election. In this political arrangement, the president assumes power through inheritance within the family. The citizens under the monarchy systems have no right or voice to elect their leader. Monarchies are divided into two categories. **Autocracy** monarchies are where the leader is the head of the government and enjoys full state power. The ruling family has absolute power, which they share with no one within the entire kingdom. Saudi Arabia, ancient Egypt during pharaoh regimes, practiced absolute monarchies. Democratic, or **constitutional monarchies** are found in modern countries like Britain, Sweden, Denmark, and Japan. The president, or the ruling family, has controlled state powers in these countries. The parliament always checks the monarch's powers, and their state functions are mainly ceremonial. The real state power is under the office of the prime minister.

Dictatorship

Dictatorship is a type of political system where the ruling person has full control of the state institutions and the entire society. They gain state powers through rigged elections or by overthrowing the government. In these systems of government, human rights, and liberties are never respected, and are almost always violated. Most of the decisions of the state are made by the president with the help of police or military officers. The citizens under the dictatorship are never consulted, and only a few benefit. Those who question or criticize the government are assassinated or imprisoned, while others seek exile. North Korea is an example of a country that runs through a dictatorship.

Oligarchy and Aristocracy

An **oligarchy** is a type of political system where the entire government is ruled and run by a small group of people. These groups of people belong to a particular class and, in most cases, are very wealthy. The few ruling are mostly corrupt and not elected by citizens. They concentrate power among themselves, and the rest of the citizens have little or no say in the major government decisions. Oligarchs

concentrate on maintaining and protecting their wealth. The city of Sparta was run under an oligarchy.

On the other hand, **aristocracy** is a political system where wealthy landowners control the government and state power. The rulers in this system are considered the best and the most qualified to govern, simply because of their intellectual prowess. Most of the aristocracies were passed from one generation to another. The United Kingdom, under King Henry III, was an aristocracy. France, during the Middle Ages, was also under the aristocracy system.

Communism

In a **communist** type of political system, the entire economy and state resources are distributed and controlled by the governing class. The communist government is driven by ideas of a classless society, where every citizen has basic needs and shares the means of production. Cuba, under the leadership of Fidel Castro, practiced communism. The Soviet Union was also run through the ideology of communism.

Democracy

In a **democratic** type of political system, the government is formed through free and fair elections. Citizens are allowed to participate in major government decisions. Human rights and their liberties are protected and well respected. In democratic societies, the citizens enjoy the right to participate in elections and change the government when they feel their concerns are not well represented.

Representative democracy is a type of democracy where the citizens of a particular country elect their representatives to make laws and decisions on their behalf. The representatives are mostly elected to be members of the legislature and senate. The United States, France, Kenya, India, and Germany are some of the examples of countries that practice democracy.

Political System Examples

Different countries practice different forms of political systems. The following are some political system examples:

- **Monarchy:** A political system example where the monarch is very powerful and inherits the government, this is common in Saudi Arabia and Jordan.
- **Dictatorship:** This is an example of a political system where the president makes decisions without questions, and they enjoy full states power. North

Korea, under Kim Jong-un, and Iraq, under the leadership of Saddam Hussein, are good examples of dictatorship political structures.

- Communism: Communism is a political structure example that was mainly found in Cuba during the Fidel Castro regime.
- Democracy: Most of the world countries are run through democracy. This is an example of political structure that is found in the United States, South Africa, Germany, South Korea, and Nigeria.
- Oligarchy and Aristocracy: Not common nowadays, but is an example of political structure mainly found in Sparta and France at the time of middle age.

Lesson Summary

Every nation has a right to govern itself and its people. A political system is a set of political structures that helps the government run and ensure fair distribution of resources to society. There are several political structures practiced all over the world. Monarchy is a system where the president is not elected and gains power through inheritance within the family. Dictatorship is a structure where the president has full control of the state and makes decisions singly. Oligarchy happens when a few people, who associate themselves with a certain class, run and control the government. At the same time, elite landowners form a structure of aristocracy. Communism is a political structure that advocates for a classless society. Finally, democracy is a political structure where citizens participate in major government decisions.

There are several different political structure examples found around the world. Monarchy is very common in Saudi Arabia, while dictatorship is usually found in North Korea. Communism is in Cuba, while democracy can be found in the United States, France, and Germany. Finally, Oligarchy and Aristocracy were exercised in Sparta and France, during the middle ages.