

PICK A GOVERNMENT

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Living in a democracy, we are periodically cursed (blessed?) with election year mania. Occasionally, it all seems to amount to naught, and people have been heard to ask: "Isn't there another way?" Of course there is. Different types of government abound. More than eighty varieties are presented below. As you read through them, perhaps you'll find one that sounds a little better than democracy. On the other hand, a look at these alternatives might be enough to renew everyone's faith in the electoral process.

For the sake of this discussion, I have limited consideration to forms of government ending in -archy (Greek "arkhos" = ruler) and -ocracy (Greek "kratos" = strength, power). Admirers of dynasticism, feudalism, tribalism, and related governments needn't fear -- there are regimes here bound to please anyone. To begin with, my personal favorite is LOGOCRACY, "a community or system of government in which words are the ruling power" (OED).

By The Numbers

Everyone knows that a monarchy is a state headed by a single ruler. Lesser-known appellations referring to a specific number of leaders are listed here:

AUTOCRACY, MONOCRACY one ruler
BIARCHY, DIARCHY (DYARCHY), DUARCHY two rulers
TRIARCHY three rulers
TETRADARCHY (TETRARCHY) four rulers
PENTARCHY five rulers
HEPTARCHY, SEPTARCHY seven rulers
OCTARCHY eight rulers
DECARCHY (DEKARCHY, DECADARCHY) ten rulers
DODECARCHY twelve rulers
HECATONTARCHY (HECATONARCHY) one hundred rulers

Oddly, the term HEXARCHY refers to a group of six states, not a government of six leaders. A "nine-archy" appears to be missing altogether; I have checked both the OED and Webster's Third, but have found no listing. I see no good reason why there cannot be a government of nine persons. Perhaps such a government has never existed, but it certainly could in theory. I thus propose NONARCHY (derived from nonary, a notation having nine as its basis).

Additional governments are named in accordance with the percentage of the populace involved. If you think democracy means majority rule, then this list is for you:

ARITHMOCRACY rule of the numerical majority
 DEMOCRACY state vested in the people as a whole
 ISOCRACY government where all have equal power
 OLIGARCHY government by the few
 PANTARCHY state vested in the people as a whole
 PANTISOCRACY Utopian community where all are equal and rule
 POLYARCHY (POLARCHY, POLYGARCHY, POLYCRACY)
 government by the many, or by a number of persons
 SOCIOCRACY government by society as a whole

The Good And The Bad

Some of the governments listed here sound too good to be true. Others, though undesirable, sound suspiciously familiar. The good and the bad are:

ANGELOCRACY by angels
 ARISTARCHY by the most qualified people
 ARISTOCRACY in the literal sense, government of a state by its best persons
 BOOBOCRACY by boobs
 DEMONOCRACY by demons
 DIABOLARCHY (DIABOLOCRACY) by devils
 FOOLOCRACY by fools
 KAKISTOCRACY by the worst citizens
 MOBOCRACY by a mob
 NEOCRACY by amateurs
 OCHLOCRACY by a mob or by the lowest of the people
 PEDANTOCRACY by pedants

For The Religious

The Moral Majority and friends would probably approve of the governments in this category. But if these are not for you, then you might prefer living in a STATOCRACY: government by the state alone, uncontrolled by ecclesiastical powers. The religious governments are:

HAGIARCHY (HAGIOCRACY) rule by persons considered holy
 HIEROCRACY (HIERARCHY) rule by priests or members of the clergy
 JESUITOCRACY rule or government of Jesuits
 PAPARCHY rule by a Pope
 PARSONARCHY rule by parsons
 THEARCHY rule by God or a god
 THEOCRACY rule by a priestly order claiming divine commission

By Wealth Or Class

This category provides for everyone, regardless of their economic status:

CHRYSOCRACY by the wealthy
 DULOCRACY (DOULOCRACY) by slaves or servants
 ERGATOCRACY by workers
 MESOCRACY by the middle class
 MILLOCRACY by mill-owners; the body of mill-owners regarded as a dominant class
 PLANTOCRACY by planters
 PLUTARCHY (PLUTOOCRACY) by the wealthy
 PTOCHOCRACY by the poor
 SHOPOCRACY by shop-keepers
 SLAVOCRACY (SLAVEOCRACY) by slave-owners
 SQUIREARCHY by the landed gentry
 TIMOCRACY rule by the wealthy (Aristotle); rule by those who love honor (Plato)

By Sex

Both feminists and male supremacists will find a polity to their liking here:

ANDROCRACY government with men as the ruling class
 GYNARCHY (GYNEOCRACY, GYNAEOCRACY) government by a woman or women
 GYNOCRACY government with women as the ruling class
 HETAEROOCRACY government by concubines (hetaerae); government by college fellows!
 MATRIARCHY, METROCRACY society organized with the mother as head, with descent traced through the female line
 PATRIARCHY society organized with the father or oldest male as head, with descent traced through the male line
 PORNOCRACY government by profligate women

By Age

This category is quite small, but nonetheless worthy of separate consideration:

GERONTOCRACY by old people
 PAEDARCHY by a child or children

Miscellaneous

Here are all the unique governments that defy categorization. Some intriguing concepts appear in this final selection:

ATHLETOCRACY government by athletes
 AUTARCHY government with absolute power

COSMOCRACY rule over the whole world
 HAMARCHY ruling together (distinct parts have individual action,
 but all parts work together)
 IDEOCRACY government founded on theories or abstract ideas
 KRITARCHY rule of judges in ancient Israel
 NOMOCRACY government founded on system or code of laws
 PANARCHY rule over the entire universe
 PAPYROCRACY government by paper (by newspapers or liter-
 ature)
 RIOTOCRACY government in which violence and disorder prevails
 STRATOCRACY military government
 SYNARCHY government by joint rule (people have a share in
 power with their rulers)
 TECHNOCRACY government by experts following rules laid down
 by technicians
 THALASSOCRACY sovereignty of the sea
 THEATROCRACY absolute power exercised by ancient Athenian
 democracy

Conclusion

To my mind, democracy is as good as any of these other govern-
 ments. But if absolutely none of the above sound good to you, I leave
 you with one final entry:

ANARCHY no government at all