

CHARACTERISTICS OF LIMITED AND UNLIMITED GOVERNMENTS

Purpose of Government

There are almost 200 countries in the world today, and each one has a specific type of government. Countries have governments to create laws for people to follow so that people are kept safe. Laws also exist so that people know what they can and cannot do. Governments also provide a military to protect people from invasion by other countries. In many countries, governments also provide services to citizens which are funded by taxes paid by citizens. The amount of power given to governments depends on the type of government that the country creates. Governments are often categorized as being unlimited or limited. Historically, most governments were categorized as unlimited, but today, most countries' governments are categorized as limited. Sometimes, countries have elements of both limited and unlimited governments.

Limited Governments

In a limited government, the leaders do not have complete control over every part of a citizen's life. There are restrictions placed on what the government can do, and the citizens are given freedoms and rights. The government is bound by laws typically written out in a constitution that limits the power of the leaders and lists out the rights given to citizens. Citizens in limited governments enjoy freedoms such as freedom of speech. They also enjoy freedom of the press, as the media can criticize the government openly. Citizens have the right to vote for their leaders and can also vote on some laws. Leaders of countries with limited governments must also follow the law. Countries that have limited governments usually establish different branches of government that are given distinct powers so that one branch does not become too powerful. This system is known as "checks and balances." Types of government that are limited include representative democracies and constitutional monarchies. Representative democracies are the most common type of limited government in the world today. In representative democracies, citizens elect representatives who vote on laws. Citizens participate in government by voting regularly in elections. Citizens can also contact their elected representatives to give their thoughts and opinions on how they want their representative to vote on new laws.

Unlimited Governments

In an unlimited government, leaders are not restricted in their powers, and citizens do not have many freedoms and rights. The most common type of unlimited government that has existed throughout history is the absolute monarchy, in which a king or queen is the leader. People often believed that the power of the king or queen to rule came from a higher power, such as God. This was known as "divine right." Today, unlimited governments are not common in the

world, but they do still exist. Unlimited governments today might be ruled by a dictator rather than a king or queen, but they share the characteristic that one person is in charge and holds all of the power over the lives of citizens. Citizens do not have many freedoms in unlimited governments and must abide by the laws created by the ruler. Citizens do not have the freedom to criticize their leader and can be punished for speaking out against the government. Often in unlimited governments, the leader will employ a secret police force or find ways of spying on citizens to keep them under control.

Sources

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