

Forms of Government: Dictatorships and Democracies

Introduction: What is a dictatorship? What is a democracy?

- In the years before World War Two, Europe was tensely divided between democracies and dictatorships.
- In a dictatorship, one person rules the country how they see fit.
- In a democracy, everyone has the power. They elect leaders regularly.

Discussion point: What are the advantages and disadvantages of each system of government?

Introduction: What are the different types of dictatorship and democracy?

You may have heard people describe themselves as being “Left-Wing” or “Right-Wing” in their political beliefs. Some people would even describe themselves as “Extreme Left-Wing” (Communist) or “Extreme Right-Wing” (Fascist). In this exercise you will find out a little bit about which of these categories most clearly describes your beliefs.

A basic overview of political ideologies can be seen in this table:

Communist Dictatorship	Democratic Party Politics		Fascist Dictatorship		
	a. Extreme Left-Wing	b. Left-Wing (Socialist)		c. Right-Wing (Capitalist)	d. Extreme Right-Wing
	“Brotherhood”	“Co-operation”		“Competition”	“Conflict”
USSR (Stalin) China (Mao)	UK: Labour (MacDonald, Attlee) USA: Democrats	UK: Conservatives (Chamberlain, Churchill) USA: Republicans	Germany (Hitler) Italy (Mussolini)		

Task 1

Individual Work

- For the first row of **Table 1** (overleaf), highlight the point of view you agree with most.
- Next, write C, F, L or R next to each of the 4 statements depending on whether you think it is Communist, Fascist, Left and Right Wing.

Class Discussion

- Go through each row, taking a class vote on the most popular option.
- Your teacher will then tell you which is. Write C, F, L or R next to each statement as appropriate.

Table 1

Foreign affairs	International – countries should work together to ensure peace and understanding	Countries should be abolished altogether – a ‘world revolution’ should create one massive brotherhood of man	Countries are destined to fight each other to the death	Countries should try to preserve their independence – ‘vive la difference’!
Tax	100% tax and no private property – the government can then provide everything that people need	Very low taxes; raise money instead by colonising less economically developed countries	Low Taxes so people can choose how to spend their money (e.g. on private education, pensions, healthcare)	High Taxes to pay for lots of public services (e.g. free education, pensions, healthcare) especially for the disadvantaged
Industry	Privatise industries and work closely with powerful businesspeople to keep the workers in their place	Privatise key industries so there can be more competition and cheaper prices	Nationalise key industries so long-term strategies can be developed	Nationalise all industries and work closely with the workers to break the power of the former bosses
The State	Emotional: The state should be small and keep out of the lives of its citizens; its role should be to inspire patriotism	Functional: The State needs to be large to look after the people, but is simply a tool to do a job	Functional: The state will start off massive, but will eventually ‘wither away’ once the perfect society has been made.	Emotional: The role of the state should be to inspire such patriotism that people think “my country, right or wrong”

Key definitions:

Tax: Money raised by the government by charging people for its services.

Nationalisation: When industries owned by private companies are bought by the government.

Privatisation: When industries owned by the government are sold off to private companies.

State: The machinery of the government (e.g. courts, police, army)

Citizen: A full member of a society.

Patriotism: Pride in one’s country.

Task 2

- Now fill in Table 2 with the correct points, using the information from Table 1 to help you.

Table 2:

	Communist Dictatorship	Democratic Party Politics		Fascist Dictatorship
	a. Extreme Left-Wing	b. Left-Wing	c. Right-Wing	d. Extreme Right-Wing
	“Brotherhood”	“Co-operation”	“Competition”	“Conflict”
	USSR (Stalin)	UK: Labour (MacDonald, Attlee)	UK: Conservatives (Chamberlain, Churchill)	Germany (Hitler)
	China (Mao)	USA: Democrats	USA: Republicans	Italy (Mussolini)
Foreign Affairs				
Tax				
Industry				
The State				

In no more than 25 words for each, outline the difference between:

(a) Fascism and Communism;

(b) Dictatorship and democracy;

(c) Left and Right Wing politics.

4. On the basis of these results, would you describe yourself as being (a) Extreme Left-Wing, (b) Left-Wing, (c) Right-Wing or (d) Extreme Right-Wing?

5. Discussion Point: From all of our tables, how could we work out the political profile of the class as a whole? (TIP: try to think of more than one method)

6. Assess the political profile of the class from each of the methods you came up with. Do they all come up with the same result?

Key Point: Although ideologically communists and fascists are at opposite extremes, in practice they share a number of common characteristics: in particular, the fact that they have extreme beliefs means that they have very few supporters, with the result that they rely on oppressive dictatorship to ensure that their orders are followed – in other words, they share a common ground of intolerance.

Discussion Points:

1. Can you find any evidence that the UK is not democratic? Explain your answer.
2. "Democracies are less efficient than dictatorships. On this basis, do you think that the UK should become a dictatorship? Explain your answer".