**Political Systems**Throughout history, many kinds of *political systems* developed in different areas of the world depending on the needs of the people, and the economic resources available.

In Europe, as well as in parts of China, India, Africa, and South America, a system known as **monarchy** developed. Beginning in ancient Greece, the practice of **democracy** has continued into the 21st century. In both Europe and Japan, **feudalism** had developed by the 1100s.

By the 1500s, **absolutism**, and **divine right** **monarchy**, had emerged, especially in Europe. The **Enlightenment**, a rejection of absolutism, forced political changes in Europe, North America and Western Asia. The 1850s saw the rapid spread of an anti-**capitalist** economic & political system called **communism**.

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| **Related Political Systems** |
| **monarchy** | a political system in which the government is under the control of one powerful leader. |
| **oligarchy** | a political system in which the government is under the control of the merchant class. |
| **theocracy** | a political system in which the government is under the control of a religious organization or its officials. |
| **aristocracy** | a political system in which the government is under the control of wealthy landowners. |
| **democracy** | a political system in which the government is under the control of the citizens themselves, or elected representatives chosen from eligible citizens. |

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| **Monarchy** |

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| **Kingship in the Ancient World** **China**Chinese emperors justified their actions by claiming the **Mandate of Heaven**, or **divine right** of rule. The Mandate of Heaven was later used to explain the **Dynastic Cycle**. A dynasty would remain in power only as long as it was providing good **government**. When a dynasty went into decline, and began to abuse its power, it was said to lose the Mandate of Heaven, or the favor of the gods. A strong leader would usually emerge to claim the Mandate, and establish a new dynasty. The dynastic cycle would then begin again. http://www.regentsprep.org/Regents/global/themes/politicalsystems/images/dynasticcycle.gif**India** The Indus Valley had long been divided into rival kingdoms. In 321 BCE., **Chandragupta Maurya** founded the Maurya dynasty. The **Mauryan Empire** had a **strong central government** and an **proficient** **bureaucracy**, a system of operating government through departments run by officials. |

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| **Absolutism** |

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| **The European Model**Throughout the 1500s and 1600s, absolutism, when kings or queens have complete control over government and the lives of their subjects, was the most widespread political system in use in Europe and parts of Asia.In the 1500s, Spain emerged as the first modern European power. Spain's king, Charles V, was involved in almost constant warfare. His son, **Philip II**, expanded Spanish influence, strengthened the **Catholic Church**, and, believing he ruled by **divine right**, made his own power absolute. Under him, Spain became the most powerful state in Europe. Religious wars between Catholics and **Protestants** tore France apart in the late 1500s. In the 1640s, under **Louis XIV**, who assumed **absolute power** with the help of **Cardinal Richelieu**, France became the most powerful state in Europe. Louis, known as "The Sun King," ruled for 72 years. His claim to power was furthered by Jacques Bousset, who argued that Louis was **god's representative** here on earth. In Russia, **Peter the Great** used autocratic methods to modernize Russia, pushing through social and economic reforms and importing western technology. Later, **Catherine the Great** achieved the Russian dream of a warm-water port on the Black Sea by waging war against the **Ottoman Empire**.**The Response to Absolutism in England**Beginning in 1603 in England, the Stuart kings James I and Charles I, clashed with **Parliament** over royal authority, money, **foreign policy**, and religion. **Civil war** broke out in 1642 when Charles I tried to arrest the radical leaders of the House of Commons. In the end, a victorious Parliament executed Charles, **abolished the monarchy**, and created a **republic** headed by **Oliver Cromwell**. The **Glorious Revolution** of 1688, which established the **English Bill of Rights**, ensured the supremacy of Parliament over the monarchy. Under the Bill of Rights, England became a **constitutional monarchy**. The king or queen would now be only a symbol for the country.**The Islamic World**There are also several examples of **absolute monarchy** in the Muslim world. In **Islamic** history, the Ottoman sultan **Suleiman** is considered to be the perfect ruler. He is said to have had all of the most important qualities of an Islamic ruler, especially knowledge of justice. In addition, he is viewed by many as a law giver, a great soldier, and a magnificent poet.A contemporary of Suleiman, **Akbar the Great**, ascended the throne in 1556, at the age of thirteen. The third **Mughal** emperor of India, Akbar won the support of **Hindus** and Muslims. His greatest accomplishment was the institution of an efficient bureaucracy that helped to run the empire. |
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| **Democracy** |

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| **Greece**The Ancient Greeks were the first to use **democracy** as a form of government. Under Pericles, male citizens in Athens participated in the daily running of government. This form of direct democracy excluded all **non-citizens**, such as **women** and **slaves**. Today, many governments around the world practice some form of democracy.In Ancient **Rome**, a government where officials were chosen from among eligible citizens was established. A **republic**, a this form of democratic government is known, is not a direct democracy. It is called **representative democracy**, since only a few chosen officials represent the citizens as a whole. **Rome**During the period when Rome was a republic, from about 509 BCE to around 270 BCE ., the **Senate** was the most powerful branch of government. **Senators**were elected for life, and only came from the group of land-owning aristocrats called **Patricians**. Senators, in turn, elected two **consuls**, who were responsible for the daily business management of the government, and who were in charge of the army. A consul is like a president, but is appointed, and serves for only one year.Problems arose in Rome because the lower class **plebeians** had little power in government, and had to rely on the **patronage** of patricians in order to make changes. In fact, by 450 BCE, plebeians had succeeded in getting the laws of Rome written down for all to see. The ***Laws of the Twelve Tables***were the basis of Roman law, and influenced later democratic thinkers during the **Enlightenment**, over 2000 years later.In the later Republic, a few patricians, such as the brothers Gaius and Tiberius Gracchus, began lobbying for expanded plebeian rights. Politically, it was a dangerous job, and many patricians struggling for plebeian representation were assassinated.By the beginning of the **Common Era**, Rome had conquered nearly all of the land around the Mediterranean Sea. Attempts to reform Roman government led to a series of **civil wars**, and the republican form of government lost out to a veiled kind of **monarchy** with an **emperor** at its head. The emperor still maintained the Senate, but they were at his command, and rarely voted contrary his wishes. By the end of the **Pax Romana**, democracy was nearly dead in Rome.**Northern European Democracy and its Descendants**As a form of government, democracy was virtually unheard of in Europe after about 150 CE. In 1215 CE, the nobility in England forced King John to sign a Great Charter, the **Magna Carta**, recognizing their rights as land-owners, citizens of England, and subjects of the king. After that, it was not until the late 1600s that democratic ideals began to resurface in Europe, when some English and French **philosophers** began promoting democratic government in place of the **absolute monarchies** under which they lived.In England, the **English Bill of Rights** was passed by **Parliament** after the **Glorious Revolution** of 1688. Power was transferred from Catholic James II to his son-in-law and daughter, **William and Mary**, both of whom were **Protestant**. The Bill of Rights **ensured the supremacy of Parliament** over the monarchy in England. England was still not a true democracy, but it was taking steps toward becoming one.As children of England, the colonies in America had the benefit of knowing a democratic form of government. In **1776**, the American colonies declared their independence from England based on many real and perceived wrongs that they had suffered. The original **revolutionaries** wrote a declaration outlining their grievances, and claimed the right to self rule, or sovereignty. The Declaration of Independence included many Enlightenment ideas: the right to life, liberty and property (**John Locke**); religious toleration and freedom of speech (**Voltaire**); separation of powers (**Baron de Montesquieu**).The success of the **American Revolution** and its guiding principles was a major inspiration of the **French Revolution** in 1789, and the **Latin American Revolutions** of the 1790s and early 1800s. Proof that foreign rule and slave chains could be thrown off was extremely encouraging to the mixed-blood inhabitants of the Caribbean islands, and Latin America. **The Modern World**In the 1830s and 1840s, a series of democratic revolutions occurred throughout Europe. Most of them were harshly put down. After **World War II**, most of northern, western and southern Europe, America, Japan, South America and the parts of the former British Empire, practiced some form of democracy. Today, democracy is one of the most widely practiced political systems in the world.  |
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| **Communism** |

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| **Explanation and Background of Socialism and Marxism****Socialism** and **Communism** are more accurately called **economic and social systems** rather than political systems. However, the real world application of the economics behind socialism and communism requires a particular form of government able to support it.Early socialists wanted to create self-sufficient communities where everyone owned everything together, and where no one was left in need of anything. In other words, **all property and work was shared** for the benefit of the entire community. Socialists believed that if there was no money and everyone's needs were met, war and fighting would stop.**Marxist Socialism**In 1848, **Karl Marx**, a German living in London, England, and **Friedrich Engels** wrote ***The Communist Manifesto*** to explain their ideas. In it, Marx and Engels claimed that all of **history was a continuous struggle** between people who had material goods and wealth, and people who did not have any (the "haves" vs. the "have nots"). They also said that **capitalism**, an economic system in which factories and businesses are owned by private individuals or corporations, took advantage of the working class, and, therefore, should be abolished.Marx and Engels believed that all over Europe the working class, the **proletariat**, would overthrow the capitalist system and form their own governments in response to capitalist abuses. Further, they thought that such governments would create a classless society in which all wealth and power would be shared equally among all people. The **Communist Revolution**, as predicted by Marx and Engels, did not occur. What neither man had considered, was that **nationalism**, a feeling of intense pride and devotion to one's country, was even stronger than the desire to be free from capitalist oppression.**Communist Successes****The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (U.S.S.R.) / Soviet Union**Ironically, the first time Communists successfully overthrew an established government, it was not even a capitalist one. In Russia, in 1917, **V.I. Lenin** and Leon Trotsky led a group of socialist revolutionaries called **Bolsheviks**, in a coup against **Czar Nicholas II**. Lenin promised the people "peace, land and bread," but used secret police and brutality to create a one-party government where **the** **Communist Party**, and not the people, **had the ultimate power**.Lenin's successor, **Josef Stalin**, turned Russia, now called the **Soviet Union**, into a **totalitarian state**. Every aspect of people's lives was controlled by the government. To strengthen its control, **command economy**, where government officials made all economic decisions, was put in place by the Communist Party.Stalin forced peasants to give up ownership of their land and live on government-owned farms called **collectives**. On a collective farm, all animals and equipment were **owned by the state**. The government controlled the prices paid to the farmers for their products, and forced them to fill **quotas**, or production goals. Stalin also tried to spur industrial production, hoping to catch up to the United States as a world superpower. People who refused to give up their factories and businesses and become workers of the government, or conform, were arrested and sent to prison. Tens of millions of political protesters, uncooperative peasants and Stalin's personal enemies disappeared forever.**The People's Republic of China**As in Russia, the communist **revolution** in China was not one of workers vs. owners, but one of imperial government vs. poor starving peasants who felt that government had abandoned them. After years of **civil war**, China became a Communist nation in 1949. The newly communist China looked to the Soviet Union for leadership, but quickly turned in a different direction. The leader of the Chinese Communist Party, **Mao Zedong**, wanted to transform China from an agricultural society into a modern industrial power. Mao undertook a number of programs in order to achieve his goal. He created **communes**, a Chinese version of the Russian collective, tried to renew Chinese culture. He also launched a series of agricultural and industrial production initiatives, and improved the social standing of women.**Conclusions**In both China and the Soviet Union, human rights were overlooked in the effort to create a strong Communist nation. Tens of millions of dissenters, people who strongly disagree with a policy or idea, were killed. In each county, the goal of turning previously agricultural nations into powerful industrial giants only led to famine and further suffering for the general populace because of popular resistance to government policies.Both China and the Soviet Union created something very different from the socialist *utopia* envisioned by Marx and Engels in 1848. Mao and Stalin transformed their nations from **absolute monarchies** into **totalitarian states** with **command economies**. In both cases, private citizens ended up in even more strictly controlled societies, where personal **freedoms** were **severely restricted**, and most people feared to speak out against government corruption or abuse.The Soviet Union fell apart in 1991 after most of its satellite states regained their independence. China is still controlled by a communist government. |