

# HOW TO RULE

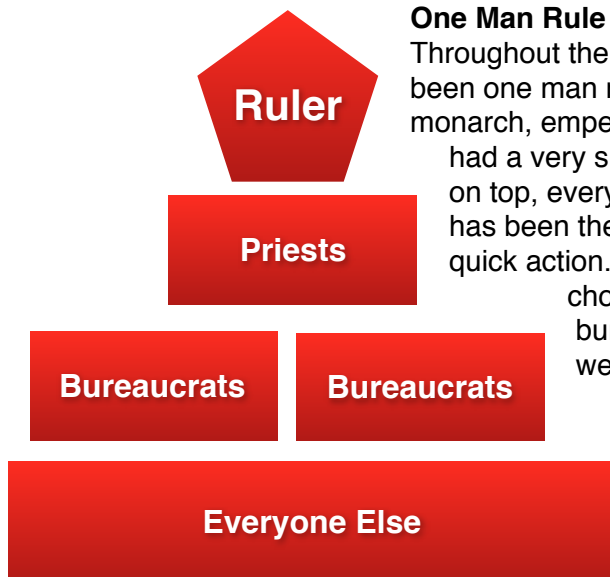
## Introduction

As hunting and gathering tribes began to settle down to farm around 8,500 BC, they soon began to realize that they had a problem: their farms were being raided. The farms were easy food sources for other hunting and gathering tribes. Like an ancient McDonalds, nomadic tribes would storm in, raid the stores of food on the farm, and go on their way. The farmers had a difficult decision to make: keep their total freedom and get raided by nomadic tribes... or, sacrifice some freedoms by working with other farmers and be protected. Thus, farmers began working together, creating a central government to organize the people, make laws, and work together for the protection of all.

Centralized Government is one of the seven core components of civilization. When discussing centralized government, a series of important questions arise: who has the right to rule? Is it the person with the strongest army? The most religious? The one who has the most money? Or, does power not belong in the hands of one man but of many? If that is the case, which people get to bear that responsibility and how do they keep each other from gaining too much power and influence?

This idea of power and government is a conceptual thread that we will be tracing throughout the course. A civilization's answer to this question has massive repercussions in every area of the life; from how they make and enforce laws to the freedoms and privileges (or lack of privileges) people enjoy on a daily basis.

During the period of Ancient History, every imaginable type of government was created and experimented with. This document will examine different types of governments, while looking at examples from each category.



## One Man Rule

Throughout the history of the world, the most common type of government has been one man rule. These rulers had different titles: tyrant, dictator, king, monarch, emperor, Pharaoh, Caesar, Khan, Tsar, Kaiser, Sultan... But they all had a very similar structure to their government: one man (sometime woman) on top, everyone else beneath them. Whatever that person says is law. This has been the simplest and most efficient government design, allowing for quick action. When the society became too big for one person, he would choose people to help him rule. These administrators were called bureaucracy. These bureaucrats were typically other rich people who were friends with the ruler... or pretended to be friends with the ruler.

One man rule has some problems. There is a saying that “absolute power corrupts absolutely.” In systems with one man rule, there are typically gross abuses of power and corruption. The rulers spend massive amounts of tax money on displaying their power, with lavish palaces and expensive clothing. If a ruler became too arrogant or lost touch with reality, there were

no way of “checking” his power. If a person disagreed with the ruler, if he felt they were a threat or if he just didn’t like them... some combination of death, imprisonment, torture, banishment or death would result. Because of the draw of absolute power, there was always the threat of assassination and revolt. The threat typically would come from the bureaucrats who often times were friendly with the ruler, while they waited for an opportunity to take the throne for themselves.

## The Right to Rule

How does one man justify his right to be the sole ruler over thousands or millions of people?

The first and most common way was military might. The first people chosen to rule over the farms were the people who could provide protection from the raiding nomads or neighboring city-states. Tyrants and Dictators typically come to power by violently overthrowing the person in charge. Once in power, the ruler used their military might to crush any opposition. Alexander the Great of Macedonia and Julius Caesar of Rome were excellent examples. Both men began their careers in the military, earning the loyalty of the soldiers. When a chance for power came, both men used the loyal soldiers to kill the opposition. Alexander and Julius used their militaries to conquer their neighbors and expand their empires. When Alexander died, his generals divided up his empire. When Julius was killed, his nephew Augustus took power and killed any new opposition.



The second way was religion: being blessed by the god(s). Ancient civilizations were highly religious. Religion was the way of explaining the unexplainable. A ruler would use the priests and prophets (messengers of the gods), artwork, and massive ceremonies to demonstrate to people that the ruler was in charge because he the god(s) said so. To go against the ruler would not only be

rebellious against the man in charge, it would be disobeying the gods. Disobeying the gods would possibly bring punishment in this life and the afterlife.

Sometimes the ruler also served as the chief priest. When the priest(s) were the head of the government, it was called a Theocracy.

While there are hundreds of examples (from Hammurabi of Babylon being shown personally talk to the gods to the Kings of Persia), the best example is Ancient China. In China, power was passed through dynasties, or through the family (typically from father to son). The Emperor and his family ruled because they had the Mandate of Heaven. The gods had given the family the right to rule and they were to be the chief representatives of the gods on earth. If the rulers acted inappropriately, the gods would take the mandate away and give it to another family.



The third way was religion, but with a twist... the ruler was no longer a man blessed by the gods, he was worshiped as a living god. Rulers were now immortal beings. This was the gift of the Ancient Egyptians. Their rulers were the Pharaohs, sons of the sun god, Ra. The ruler MUST have a nice place to live because you must treat your gods well. The ruler MUST be worshiped after he dies, because he is a god. When a ruler was just "blessed" by the gods... one could argue that the blessing was taken away and given to someone else. But when the ruler IS a god, you cannot "replace" him with just anyone. Only a person with divine blood from the dynasty could ascend to the throne. This idea spread rapidly through the Middle East and perhaps most famously with the Caesars of Rome, who claimed to be living gods.

## Multi-Person Rule

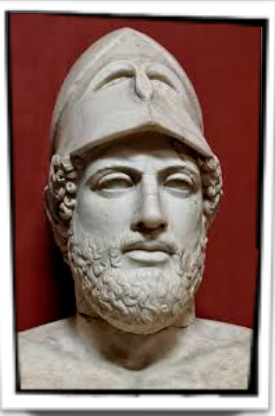
The second form of rule, and the least used, is the rule of a few people. This is called oligarchy. In an oligarchy, a society has decided to share power between two or a few people, so that one person does not gain too much power. Oligarchies typically do not last a long time, because the lure of having absolute power is too strong, especially when there are disagreements between the rulers sharing power. The most famous example of an oligarchy is the Spartans of Greece. The Spartans had two kings who shared power and tasks. When one king would go off to battle, the second king would stay behind to run the city. Very few civilizations have successfully made oligarchy work.



## Rule of the Masses

The third form of rule is the rule of the people: democracy. In a democracy, the citizens, or legal residents of the city/state, make the laws and decisions. In a democracy, there are greater freedoms and privileges for the citizens, or legal residents. Democracies also tend to go to war less frequently than other government types. On the downside, democracies are slow moving in their decision making, getting gridlocked over tough decisions. Democracies also struggle from the ignorance of the masses. The quality of decisions comes from the quality of education of the people. The better educated, the better decisions. The less educated, the poorer the decisions.

There are two main forms of democracy:



**Direct Democracy.** In a direct democracy, every citizen has a say. Every citizen votes on every law and has a say in every decision. The example of a direct democracy is in Athens Greece. There had been a series of tyrants who had been highly corrupt. The citizens decided that they would get rid of the tyrant and share power amongst everyone. The famous statesman Pericles said about Athenian democracy:

*Our constitution (or set of laws) does not copy the laws of neighbouring states; we are rather a pattern to others than imitators ourselves. Its administration favours the many instead of the few; this is why it is called a democracy. If we look to the laws, they afford equal justice to all in their private differences; if no social standing, advancement in public life falls to reputation for capacity, class considerations not being allowed to interfere with merit; nor again does poverty bar the way, if a man is able to serve the state, he is not hindered by the obscurity of his condition. The freedom which we enjoy in our government extends also to our ordinary life.*

**Representative Democracy (Republic):** In a representative democracy, the people do not make the laws directly. The people elect someone to represent them in the law making process. Every certain number of years, the representatives compete in an election for the right to have the power to make the laws. If a representative does a good job, they get reelected frequently. If they do a bad job, someone else gets elected in their place. The ancient example is the Roman Republic. Like Athens, early Rome had suffered from corrupt tyrants. The aristocracy (rich people) decided to overthrow the tyrant and share power amongst themselves. The Romans developed a government based on the rule of law, that every person had to obey the rules on the Twelve Tablets. This was the constitution, or set of laws, upon which the government was founded and the society was run. The representatives of the rich voted in the Senate. Those representing the poor met in the Tribune. Every year, two Censors were chosen to be head of the government.

## No One Rules

When no one is in charge, there is chaos. The name for this chaos is anarchy. Very few times in history does a region descend into anarchy. If they do, it is for a short period of time. This is because there has never been a shortage of people with military forces who desire power. As the saying goes, "the seat of power is rarely empty."

Gov't Type	Source of Power?	Strengths	Weaknesses	Historical Example
One Man				
Multi-Men				
Masses				
No One				