

Aristocracy

Aristocracy refers to a government form in which a small, elite ruling class — the aristocrats — have power over those in lower socioeconomic strata. Members of the aristocracy are usually chosen based on their education, upbringing, and genetic or family history.

Aristocracy is derived from the Latin terms *aristokratía* meaning the rule of the best. As its etymology suggests, the concept of aristocracy first appeared in ancient Greece, and it referred to the rule by the best-qualified citizens. Aristocracy was a favorable form of governance compared to monarchy. It was only in the later centuries (during Middle Ages) that aristocracy began to be known as a rule by a privileged group – the aristocratic class.

In earlier times, it was believed that moral and intellectual superiority gets passed down from through family lines. This is why the power was vested in one class of people; the leadership qualities and other morals were supposed to be inherited by those in the noble families. Therefore, they were considered to be fit to rule.

Oligarchy

Oligarchy literally means rule of a few. It is a type of government where power is held by a small number of people. These people are usually more powerful and wealthy than the rest of the population. They might be distinguished by royalty, wealth, education, corporate, religious, or military control.

Aristotle said that “oligarchy is when men of property have the government in their hands... wherever men rule by reason of their wealth, whether they be few or many, that is an oligarchy” Oligarchy has always been associated with tyranny and oppression.

ARISTOCRACY VERSUS OLIGARCHY	
Aristocracy is derived from <i>aristokratía</i> meaning the rule of the best	Oligarchy is derived from <i>oligarkhia</i> meaning rule of few
Refers to a power structure where the power is held by the nobility	Refers to a power structure where the power is held by a small group of people
The authority and power to rule may pass from family	Inheritance is not a necessary condition
Aristocracy has been contrasted favorably with monarchy	Oligarchy is associated with tyranny and oppression