

# Unit 1 Text 2; Distribution of Power

Read and Mark the following, then save in your Notebook when Completed.

## Geographic Distribution of Power (CG1a):

Nations generally form around certain places where people develop a common culture, beliefs, languages, and economy. People become interdependent on each other and seek to create governments which protect these shared practices. These governments are granted **sovereignty**, the power and authority to make rules that others must obey. There are generally three ways that this sovereignty can be distributed.

A **unitary government** can be described as a centralized government. In a unitary government, all the powers are held by one, single, central agency. The central government can create local units; however, the local units only have those powers that the central government gives to them. Most of the governments in the world are unitary. The students must not confuse a unitary government with a dictatorship. Although a unitary government has powers concentrated in the central government, other powers can be given to local units. The best example of a unitary government is Great Britain. A single central organization, Parliament, holds all the government's power, but local governments are given some powers to relieve some of the burdens from Parliament and make local decision-making more efficient.

A **federal government** is one in which the powers of government are divided between a central, or national, government and several lower levels of government. Federal governments have a division of powers. The United States is the best example of a federal government. The central, or national, government has certain powers, and the 50 states have other powers. The United States Constitution outlines the division of powers. Furthermore, the states give certain powers to local governments. Other countries with a federal structure of government include: Australia, Mexico, Canada, Germany, India, and Switzerland. In the United States, the terms national government and federal government are used interchangeably.

A **confederate government** is an alliance of independent states. The central government, or confederate government, only handles matters that the independent states assign to it. A confederate government is usually formed for the purposes of national defense and trade, and these are typically the only powers assigned to it. The best example of a confederate government is the Confederate states during the Civil War where only certain powers were given to the national government. The government under the Articles of Confederation which could not tax or enforce its laws in its own courts. Finally, the European Union (EU) is somewhat a confederacy as some powers were given to the EU government that the individual nations could not interfere with. The individual member states (or countries) retain their own identity, laws, etc. The member countries only coordinate on issues such as defense and trade.

## Participation of Power (CG1b):

An **authoritarian** form of government, often referred to as a dictatorship where one or a few people hold all the power. Dictatorships can be organized as an **autocracy**, a government in which one person holds unlimited political power, or an **oligarchy**, a government in which the power is held by a small, often self-appointed elite. ALL dictatorships are authoritarian.

Autocracies and oligarchies are often led by the military leaders. By using military force, authoritarian governments can wield their strength to gain complete control over the citizens. In an authoritarian government, the people have no rights. Often, the government determines their occupations, where they live, how resources are rationed, and what goods and services are made available to citizens.

The most well-known examples of dictatorships are: Nazi Germany (1933–1945), Fascist Italy (1922–1943), and North Korea (present day). If the citizens are given the opportunity to vote in elections, the votes are closely controlled and often offer only one candidate or one political party.

In a **democracy**, supreme power rests with the people. The government is conducted only with the consent of the people. In a democratic form of government, citizens participate in elections and choose who will represent them.

### **Different Types of Democracy (CG1c):**

A **direct democracy** is where the will of the people is translated into public policy directly through mass meetings where citizens gather and make decisions regarding policy. Obviously, this can only work in smaller communities. Direct democracy does not exist at the national level in any countries around the world today.

A **representative democracy** has representatives chosen through elections. A small group is chosen to represent the overall will of the people. This is the type of democracy we have in the United States. The best examples at the national level are Senators and House of Representatives members. These representatives are responsible for carrying out the day-to-day functions of government, such as making laws and focusing on issues that are important to their constituents. At regularly scheduled elections, the people can express their approval or disapproval of their representatives by voting for them or against them. They govern with the consent of the governed.

A **republic** has sovereign power held by those who are eligible to vote, while political power is exercised by the representatives chosen by the citizens.

### **Role of the Executive in Democracy (CG1d):**

In a **presidential government**, the executive branch and legislative branch powers are separate and independent from one another and are co-equal. The legislative branch is directly elected by the people, while the executive is indirectly by the people through the electoral college system. The executive branch includes the president who is the chief executive, the vice president, and the cabinet. The president is elected by the people. The United States is the best example of a presidential government. The executive is elected every four years for a maximum of 2 terms.

In a **parliamentary government**, the executive and legislative are one. The legislature is chosen by the people while the executive is chosen by the legislature. The executive is made up of the prime minister and his or her cabinet. The prime minister and cabinet members are chosen from the members of the parliament. The prime minister is chosen from the majority party in Parliament. The executive and cabinet remain in power as long as their policies maintain the support of the majority of the members of Parliament. If an important matter arises and Parliament votes down a policy put forth by the prime minister and cabinet, then the prime minister and cabinet must resign. This is called a vote of no confidence. Majority of governmental systems in the world today are parliamentary.