

Federal & Unitary States

Political Science

Where authority sits between the centre and the regions.

Characteristics and drivers.

Federal systems

Constitutionally divided authority

Regional units with protected powers

Usually a second chamber for regions

Constitutional court resolves disputes

Common in large or diverse states

Unitary systems

Central government holds authority

Local powers delegated by statute

Can be highly decentralised in practice

Simpler lines of accountability

Educational reference. Decentralisation and federalism are distinct: a unitary state can be more decentralised than a federal one.