

## Department of Political Science

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### Unitary State and salient features of the state

The Unitary State: i.e. state with a single government possessing all the powers in which the local governments depend and operate in accordance with the will of the central government. There is a single legislature, single executive and a single judiciary for the whole state. The UK, France, Belgium and China are Unitary States.

In a Unitary State, the central government commonly delegates authority to subnational units and channels policy decisions down to them for implementation. A majority of nation-states are unitary systems.

#### Characteristics of Unitary Government

The following are the features, attributes, and characteristics of a unitary state or government :

- 1. Centralization of Powers:** In a unitary system, all powers are centralized in the hands of the central government and that centre is the reservoir of all state powers. In this system, there are no provincial governments and the constitution empowers the central government to legislate, execute and adjudicate with full might. There is no other institution to share governmental powers with the central government has full powers to rule without any external pressure and runs the state administration with confidence without any fear and terror. On the other hand, the rulers exercise their powers in an absolute way without any check. Centralization of powers itself an administrative problem. Although in many unitary states, there is a local government system arrangement but powers are delegated to these units with strict central control or supervision.
- 2. Single and Simple Government:** A unitary government is very simple system. With the exception of Britain, there are neither provincial assemblies and executives nor the upper chambers at the center. There is a single central government at the center. There is a Unicameral Legislature popularly elected. The central legislature is there to legislate, executive to executive to execute and the judiciary to adjudicate without any share. Their expenses are less and the state is run with a unified command. Upper chambers are usually expensive and weak states cannot afford these expenses. So, it is a simple and understandable system. The ordinary citizens easily, understand its structure and powers.
- 3. Unitary of laws:** Another characteristic of a unitary government government is that the laws of the unitary system, unlike in a federation, are uniform because laws are made only by a single central government for the whole state. Laws made by the centre are equally enforced in the rest of the state without any territorial distinction while in a federation, the nature of the law varies from province to province. So, uniformity of laws in the unitary set up is according to the principles of justice and nature of human beings. In a federation or federal system, sometime, sharp contrasts are seen in the laws of the same nature, which complicates the situation.

- 4. No Distribution of Powers:** Constitutions of the federal form of the state distribute powers between the centre and the provinces. However, in a unitary system, there is no list of distribution of powers in the constitution. All powers belong to the central government. In this system the government is not in the business of powers distribution. This shifts government attention on development because government is free of this headache.
- 5. Flexible Constitutions:** The constitutions of the unitary states are ever flexible in nature. A rigid constitution is required only in federation in order to establish firm and safe relations between the centre and the federating units. The constitution of a unitary system has an advantage that it may be changed according to the needs of time and changing circumstances. A constitution is a document necessary to run a state according to the changing orientations. Peoples desires change with the passage of time and constitutions are amended accordingly. Its flexibility paves way for its progressiveness. Constitutions of the unitary systems are evolutionary and may face any immediate situation.
- 6. Potential for Despotism:** It is one of the important characteristics of this system that it may become despotic when the rulers are not faithful and patriotic. All powers are in the control of the centre and there are no checks upon the exercise of these unlimited powers. It could become absolute because it lacks an internal check system.
- 7. Responsibility:** This system is arguably more responsible than federations. It is an important feature of this form of state that responsibility is fixed in the defined institutions. A central legislation, executive for implementation and judiciary for adjudication. These institutions are accountable for their constitutional responsibilities and therefore they try their best to remain within the circle of the law of the land.