

Chapter 1: Principles of Government

Section 2

Lecture Notes



AMERICAN
GOVERNMENT

PEARSON

► Objectives

1. Classify governments according to three sets of characteristics.
2. Define systems of government based on who can participate.
3. Identify different ways that power can be distributed, geographically, within a state.
4. Describe a government by the distribution of power between the executive and legislative branch.

▶ Key Terms

- **autocracy:** government in which a single person holds all political power
- **oligarchy:** government in which a small, usually self-appointed group has the sole power to rule
- **unitary government:** a government in which all power belongs to one central agency
- **federal government:** a government in which power is divided between one central and several local governments

▶ Key Terms, cont.

- **division of powers:** the split of power between central and local governments
- **confederation:** an alliance of independent states
- **presidential government:** a government with separate executive and legislative branches
- **parliamentary government:** a government in which the executive branch is part of the legislative branch and subject to its control

► Introduction

- What are some forms of government in the world today?
 - Democracies and dictatorships are classified according to who can participate in government.
 - Unitary, federal, and confederation-style governments are classified based on how power is divided geographically.
 - Presidential and parliamentary governments are defined by the relationship between the executive and legislative branches.

▶ Direct Democracy

- In a direct or **pure democracy**, the people pass laws by discussing and voting on them in meetings, such as town meetings.
- This system works only in small communities.



▶ Indirect Democracy

- In an indirect or **representative democracy**, the people elect agents who make and carry out the laws.
- These representatives rule with the consent of the governed and can be removed by the people at election time.



▶ Example Democracies

- The United Kingdom is a **constitutional monarchy**.
- Most power lies with the Parliament, which is elected by the people.
- The queen is the head of state, while the head of government is the Prime Minister, who is the head of the leading party in Parliament.



▶ Example Democracies, cont.

- The United States is a **constitution-based federal republic**.
- The President and members of Congress are chosen by the people.
- The President is both Chief of State and Head of Government.



▶ Dictatorships

- Checkpoint: What is the difference between an oligarchy and an autocracy?
 - In an **autocracy**, one person holds total political power, while in an **oligarchy** a small elite group shares political power.
 - Both are forms of dictatorships, holding absolute and unchallenged authority over the people, who have no say in government.

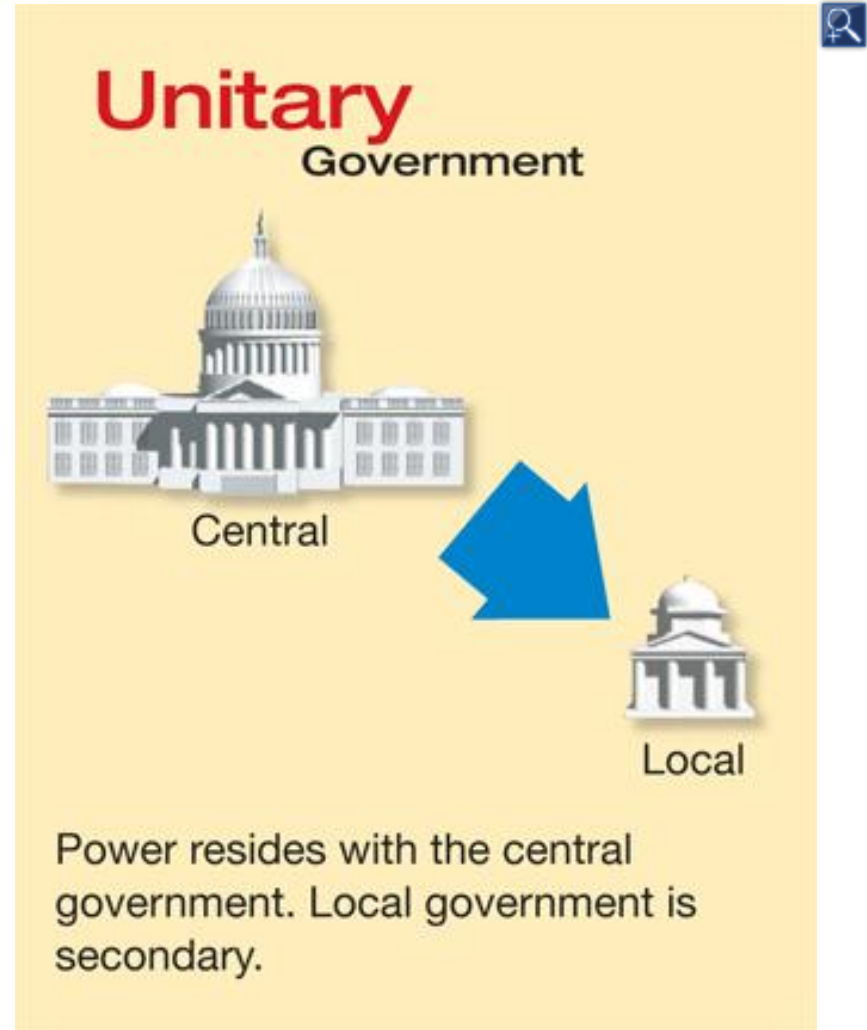
▶ Example Dictatorships

- Some dictatorships are like that of China, where people can vote only for candidates from one political party and the legislature does whatever the dictatorship says.
- Other dictatorships are like the one in Myanmar, where the military rules and there are no elections.



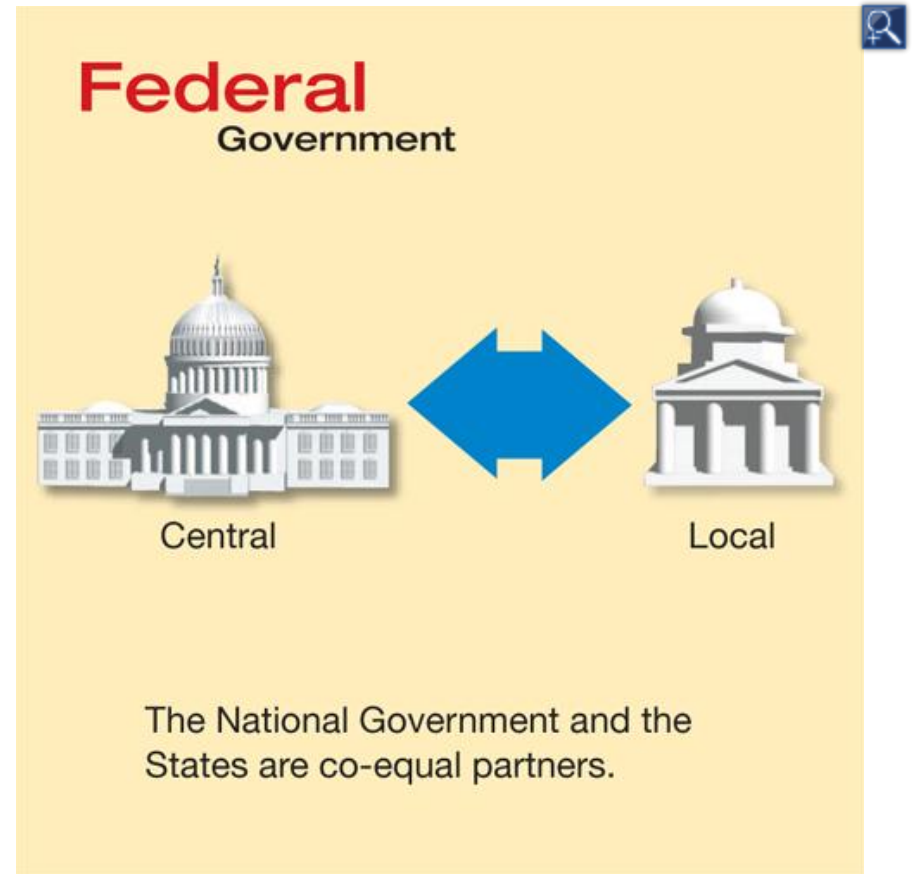
▶ Unitary Government

- In a unitary model, all power belongs to the central government, which may grant some powers to local governments.
- The powers of the central government may be limited or unlimited.
- Most governments in the world are unitary in form.



▶ Federal Government

- In the federal model, power is divided between a central government and several local governments, usually according to a constitution.
- The U.S. and some 25 other states have federal forms of government.



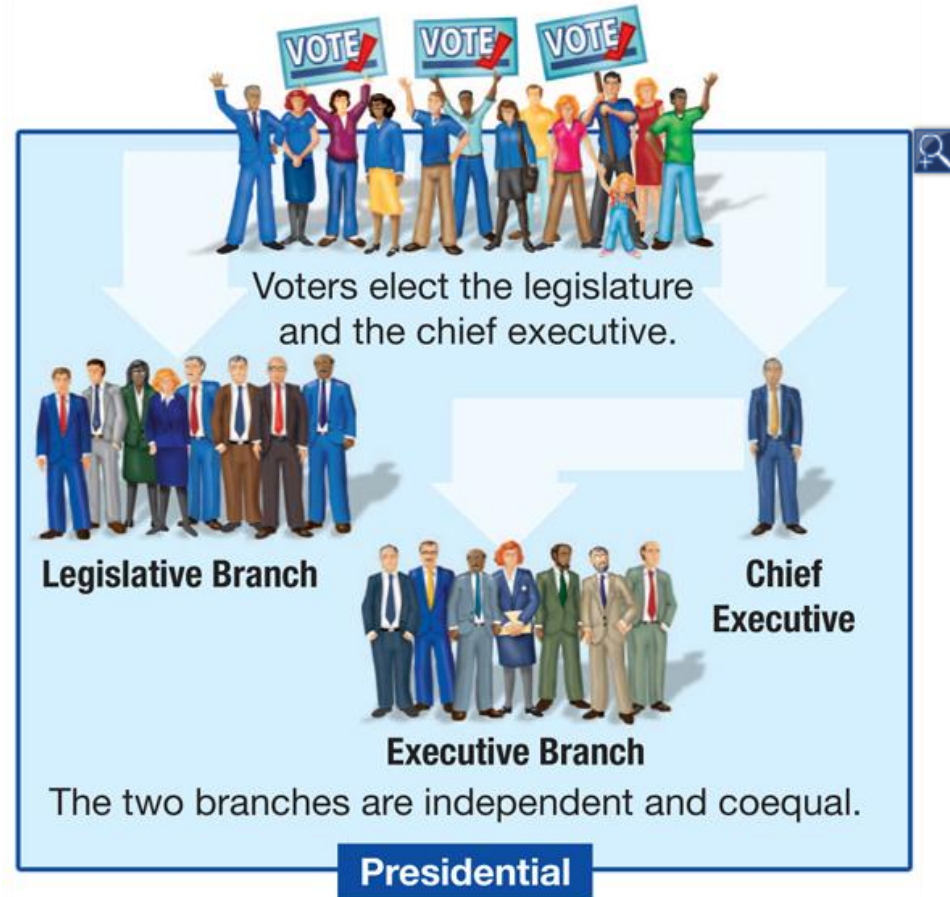
► Confederate Government

- A confederation is an alliance of independent governments that grant limited powers, usually involving defense or foreign affairs, to a central government.
- The European Union is similar to a confederation.



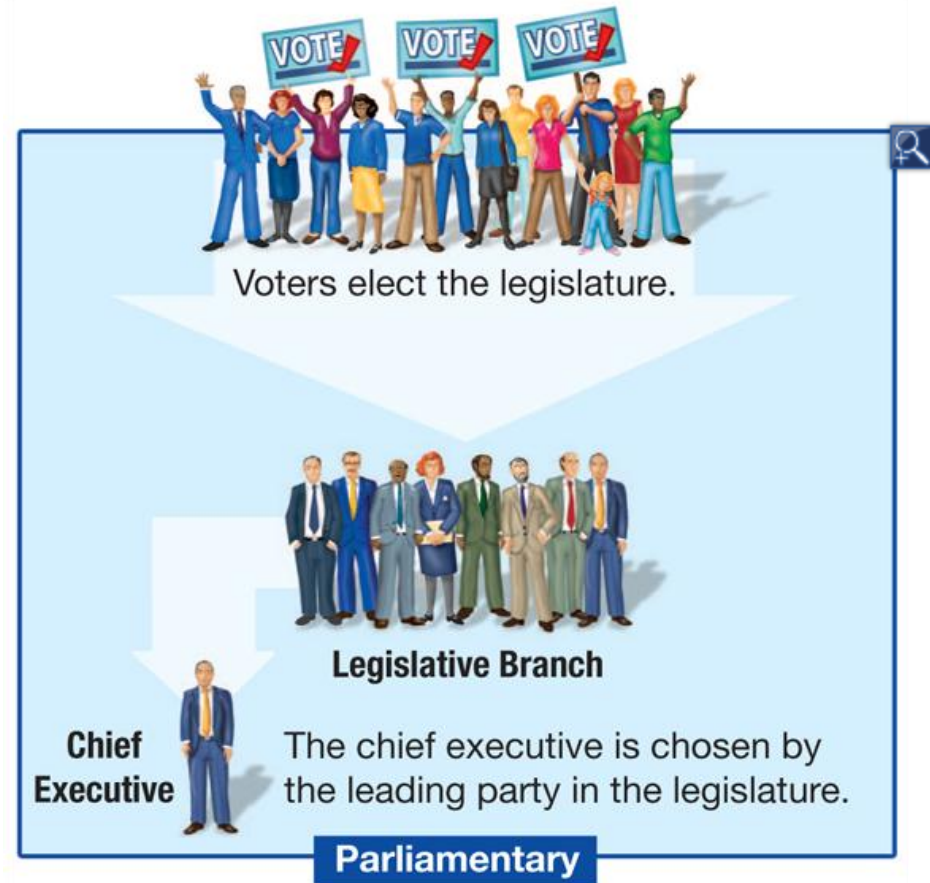
▶ Presidential Government

- A presidential government divides executive and legislative power between two branches.
- The details of this separation of powers are spelled out in a constitution.



▶ Parliamentary Government

- In a parliamentary government, the legislature chooses the executive, which is part of the legislature and under its control.
- A majority of world governments use the parliamentary system, which lacks some checks and balances but promotes cooperation between the executive and legislative branches.



▶ Parliamentary Government, cont.

- The prime minister is the head of the leading party in Parliament and chooses cabinet members from the Parliament.
- If the Parliament loses confidence in the Prime Minister and cabinet, elections are held to form a new government.



▶ Review

- Now that you have learned about some of the forms of government in the world today, go back and answer the Chapter Essential Question.
 - Is government necessary?