

# Different Democracies

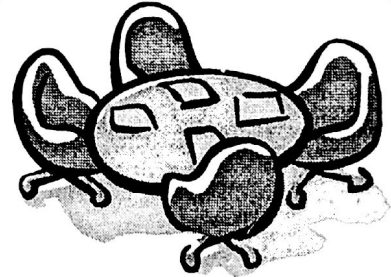
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All democracies are governments "by the people" and give citizens the right to vote. But not all democratic governments are organized the same way. The main difference is where the power sits. Some keep all the power in one place, while others spread it out among states. Our Constitution could have been very different. What if the Founders took another direction? To find out, read each section below and decide whether the characteristics in each list are strengths (+) or weaknesses (-).

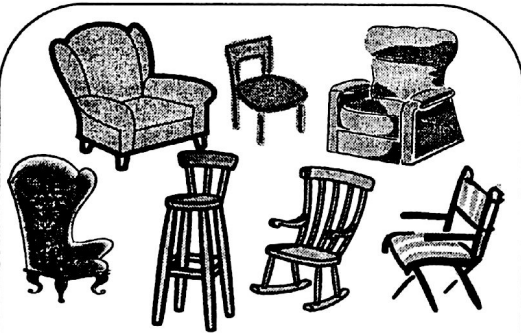
## Federal: Set of Chairs

A *federal* form of government splits power between independent states and a central government. The power rests in both places, and each gets its authority from a governing document, like the U.S. Constitution. Independent branches inside the central government may also share power.

- There is national unity, but local governments can act as needed
- Citizens have more opportunities to be heard
- Services can be duplicated by different levels of government
- Disputes occur between national power and states' rights



*The states and central government must work together and balance each other out, like a set of chairs around the table. Examples: The United States, Australia*



## Confederal: Many Different Chairs

The *confederal* form of government is an association of independent states. The central government gets its authority from the independent states. Usually the states give the central government very little power. Power rests in each individual state, whose representatives meet to address the needs of the group.

- Keeps the power of government at the local level
- States cooperate without losing their independence
- Central government may be too weak to effectively help the group
- Laws may differ from state to state; no uniformity

*A confederation of states is like a bunch of different chairs grouped together. They hold power independently but work collectively. Examples: The European Union, The Confederate States of America during the Civil War*

## Unitary: One Big Chair

In a *unitary* form of government, all the power rests in a central government. The country may be divided into states or other sub-units, but they have no power of their own. For example, England depends on its Parliament, a legislative body, to create and enforce the laws in the country. The leader of the nation, the Prime Minister, is a member of the Parliament and does not have any more power than its members.

- Uniform laws, policies, and enforcement across the country
- Little conflict between state and national governments
- Government may be slow to meet local problems
- Difficult to meet all the needs of all the citizens



*A unitary government is like one really big chair, with all the power of the government sitting in one place. Examples: England, France*