

James Danziger, *Understanding the Political World*,
9th ed., 2009, NY: Pearson Longman, pp. 182-184.

AREAL DISTRIBUTION OF POWER

With the exception of small political systems serving only a few thousand citizens, most political systems have found it desirable or necessary to create governmental structures at several levels. The *areal distribution of power* describes the allocation of power and functions across these levels of government. National political systems, in particular, can be classified into three major forms: (1) unitary states, (2) federations, and (3) confederations.

Unitary State

In a **unitary state**, a central government holds all legitimate power. While the central government has indivisible sovereignty, it can delegate power or functional responsibilities to territorial units, which have such names as departments, regions, or prefectures. These peripheral governments serve only at the convenience of the central government, which can revoke their power or functions at any time. More than 70 percent of the current countries are unitary states. Examples include China, France, Japan, the United Kingdom, and most Latin American and Asian political systems.

Why are most contemporary states unitary? Its major advantage is the clear, hierarchical authority. While there might be a conflict between the central and the peripheral governments, the center's superior constitutional power is clear, and center-periphery stalemates are uncommon. In addition, because all citizens are loyal to the governmental authority embodied in the national government, citizens tend to identify with the country as a whole, rather than with regional authorities.

Federation

A **federation** has a constitutional division of power and functions between a central government and the set of regional governments, which have such names as states, provinces, or cantons. In contrast to a unitary state, there is an explicit sharing of

power among levels of government in a federation, and no level has legal power to dominate any other level in all policy domains. The essence of a federation is coordination, not hierarchy.

There are five major rationales for a federation:

1. *Large size.* Many states become federations to distribute governmental power where there is a huge area to be governed. Fewer than 25 states are federations today, but this group includes nearly half the land area of the world. Most of the largest states are federations, including Brazil, Canada, India, Mexico, Nigeria, Russia, and the United States. During the constitutional debate in the United States, Thomas Jefferson observed, "Our country is too large to have all its affairs directed by a single government."
2. *The prior existence of strong states.* A federation can be an acceptable compromise when strong peripheral governments create a central government. In the formation of the United States, for example, the already strong state governments were unwilling to give up the bulk of their power to a central government, as in a unitary state. Rather, they agreed to delegate certain functions to the new central government while retaining all other "residual" powers for themselves.
3. *The attempt to create unity or accommodate diversity.* Chapter 5 described the serious problems of conflict between states and nations, especially in the newer states. Federations appear to bond diverse nations into a unified state while still recognizing the different nations' diversity and desire for power in the regional governments. The peripheral governments represent major ethnic, linguistic, religious, or other nation-based characteristics of regions. India is a federation with 28 states, most of which are related to linguistic-ethnic dominance in the area and a few of which are related to religious dominance.
4. *The desire to concentrate power and resources.* In some instances, a federation is created to combine several states into a stronger political system. In the effort to create Arab unity and to expand the political and economic power of the state, Egypt has several times attempted to forge federations with its neighbors Syria, Yemen, Iraq, and Jordan. Federations of strong states are often short-lived because the prior states are unwilling to sacrifice sufficient power and resources to a potent central government.
5. *The desire to disperse political power.* In contrast to the preceding rationale, a federation can be established to prevent the overconcentration of power in the central government. After the trauma of Hitler, West Germans formed a federation to prevent the emergence of another overly powerful central government. The bulk of legislative power was granted to the central government, but most power to administer and adjudicate the laws is held by the *Länder* (regional) governments.

Confederation

A **confederation** is an association in which states delegate some power to a supranational central government but retain primary power. It is a loose grouping of states in which each state's membership, participation, and compliance to the central government

are conditional, depending on the state's perception of its own national interest. Confederations are usually created when states decide that the performance of certain functions is enhanced by structured cooperation with other states. To facilitate such cooperation, the states establish permanent supranational machinery. The United Arab Emirates is a confederation of ministates, and the United Nations is a confederal structure containing more than 190 member states. Confederations can emphasize economic cooperation, such as the European Union (EU), or military cooperation, such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

Although confederations can serve many useful functions for member states, their activities and even their very survival are always contingent on the members' continuing support. A member state will often refuse to comply with confederation policies that conflict directly with the state's definition of its own national interest. Disagreements among the members can necessitate negotiation and compromise, as in the periodic adjustments within the EU regarding such issues as farm subsidies to member states and a common monetary policy. A confederation can wither if the supragovernment is ineffective, as in the case of the Articles of Confederation in colonial America, or if members refuse to support its directives, as in the League of Nations after World War I.

Table 7.3 indicates some of the major advantages and shortcomings of each approach to the areal distribution of power. While each has relative advantages under certain conditions, none is without considerable drawbacks, and none can ensure the effective functioning or even the survival of a political system. The general trend toward the centralization of political power within states has meant that the distinctions between unitary states and federations are less clear than in the past and that confederations have become particularly fragile.

任德厚, 2008, 《政治學》(增訂八版) pp. 100-101

國協

Commonwealth 一詞，在國家 State 一詞普遍化之前，曾被用以指涉今日所稱的國家，或層次較低的政治社群（如美國之州）。至十九世紀 State 成為指涉國家的普通名詞，Commonwealth 應用之機率乃大為降低。今日它一般用以描述某種國家之間的結合，也就是所謂國協。

首先將國家間之聚合稱為國協者，為不列顛國協 British Commonwealth（不列顛一語現已取消）。此一國協以英王為名譽元首，涵括了英國及曾為英國殖民地而自願加入之其他國家。它除每年定期舉行政府首長會議外，並無其他正式的共同權利義務規定。

當然，英王另也是相當部份其他成員國家（如澳洲、加拿大、紐西蘭，及諸多西印度群島之小國）的國家元首。有少數國家（如紐西蘭及馬來西亞）的憲法繼續容許某些案件上訴至英國之國會上院。同時，英國與其他成員國，或其他成員國之間，也可能訂有頗多雙邊及多邊協定，進行各種合作。另有部份成員國體制上承認「國協國籍」，即對其他成員國之國民有某些較一般外國人為優之待遇。但凡此種種，都不是國協成員國的普遍特徵。

再一國協，為法國第五共和主導的國協，然其正式名稱並非國協，而是「法蘭西共同體」French Community。法蘭西共同體同樣是法國殖民時代結束的替代結構，其規定較為明確，而法國之領導地位也更優勢。此一共同體規定明確，因為第五共和憲法有專章規範。

法國之領導地位更優勢，除第五共和總統為共同體總統，且非虛位外，法國與其前殖民地另維持著諸多法律及政經軍事關係。事實上，此一共同體的成員國多為較落後的法語系非洲小國，而法國出兵為其平亂之紀錄頗為可觀。

除前述兩個案例外，一九九〇年代以來另有一「獨立國協」之存在。此一國協係前蘇聯解體後，由大部份原加盟共和國與俄羅斯聯邦合組而成，而後者之總統則為國協主席。

由於此等國家之對俄態度及外交走勢未盡相同，故俄羅斯的相對地位也各具特色。最清楚的是它對中亞各共和國的領導作用，因此等小國本即較為落後，且有軍力不足的問題，故俄羅斯在此地區仍維持了一定駐軍。

Relative Strengths and Weaknesses of Areal Distributions of Power

Form of Areal Distribution	Strengths	Weaknesses
Unitary state	Clear authority Decisive control No stalemates between center and periphery	Hyperconcentration of power Weak representation of diversity and minorities
Federation	Representation of diversity Checks on center's power Creates unity	Duplication and overlap of power Conflicts over ultimate power Sluggishness; compromises
Confederation	Facilitates cooperation Power retained by subunits	Conditional compliance Instability Limited power