

What is Federalism?

Chapter 14: Federalism · Topic 1

Key Concept

In a federal system, both the central (or national) government and regional (state) governments have independent authority over certain matters, as defined by the constitution.

Federalism differs from a unitary system, where all power rests with the central government, which can delegate powers to local units but retains ultimate control.

Key features of federalism include a written constitution, an independent judiciary to resolve disputes between levels of government, and dual government (national and regional).

Countries like the United States, India, and Canada follow federal systems, using this structure to manage large populations, diverse regions, and different local needs effectively.

Quick Revision Notes

- Federalism divides power between central and regional governments.
- Both levels have independent authority over defined matters.
- This differs from a unitary system with centralised power.
- In a unitary system, the centre retains ultimate control.
- Federalism has a written constitution.
- An independent judiciary resolves disputes between levels.
- Federalism involves dual government structures.
- The US, India and Canada are examples of federal systems.

Practice Questions

- 1 Define federalism in your own words.
- 2 Compare federal and unitary systems of government.
- 3 Research a federal country besides India.
- 4 Discuss why federalism suits large, diverse countries.
- 5 Explain the role of the judiciary in a federal system.
- 6 Create a diagram comparing federal and unitary government structures.