

Semi-presidential system in france essay sample



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The semi-presidential system (referred to as Semi-presidentialism) is a system of government in which a president and a prime minister are both active participants in the day-to-day administration of the state. It differs from a parliamentary republic in that it has a popularly elected head of state who is more than a purely ceremonial figurehead, and from the presidential system in that the cabinet, although named by the president, is responsible to the legislature, which may force the cabinet to resign through a motion of no confidence. (<http://en.wikipedia.org>)

Efficiency of the semi-presidential system

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The two countries that are most famous for using the Semi-Presidential system are Russia and France. France's semi-Presidential system was enacted in 1958, when a threat of civil war broke out over Algeria. French leaders invited General de Gaulle to set up what is now called the "Fifth Republic." After the fall of the Soviet Union, Russia was in need of setting up a new government. Beginning in 1990 and lasting till 1993 the Russian Government went through a transition period, where they eventually formed a government that is similar to the French "Fifth Republic." Both of these systems have advantages and disadvantages, overall they have proven effective and are finally providing stability to countries that are in desperate need for long lasting efficient governments. A main reason for the success of the Semi-Presidential system in France is France's heterogeneous population. France's population is currently around 59 million, of this 59 million France has more than 3.6 million foreigners who come mostly from

North Africa. " In addition 1. 8 million French citizens are foreign born"

(Textbook, Almond p. 223). A stable form of government is not a concept

The fact that France has several political parties leads to their unique style of voting. All of the candidates are placed on the first ballot. The French citizens then go to the polls and choose their favorite candidate. The two candidates who receive the top most votes then move on the second round. In the second round the voters head back to the polls vote for one of the two finalists. The person with the highest number of votes in the second round wins the election. This duel round system has several positive effects. First it allows more parties to compete and gain votes. One reason for the United States being only a two party country is because people do not want to "waste their vote" on a third candidate who has no real chance in winning. The U. S. model occasionally forces voters to choose from the " lesser of the two evils." The fact that there is a second round enables the France voter to pick a smaller candidate and then if his or her candidate loses in the first round they are able to choose the " lesser of the two evils" in the second round. This style also guarantees that the President will have a majority of the vote, which makes him appear to be more popular to the public.

Because there is only two candidates to choose from in the final round the minimum percentage of votes that the winning candidate can receive is 50. 1 percent which is always a majority. A system like the United States who does not use this second round style often elects a President with less than 50 percent of the popular vote, which reflects poorly on his support. The most important advantage to the second round election is it increases voter turnout. In the 1995 presidential election 78 percent of the eligible voters

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turnout to vote in the first round and 79.5 percent came to the polls in the second round. This number is considerably higher than that in the United States, which usually is around 50 percent in presidential elections. France does lose voters in smaller and local elections but the numbers do remain significantly higher than that in the United States.

The Constitutional Court is comprised of 19 members who are nominated by the President. The check on the President is that the Federation Council must approve the entire nominated member. The Constitutional Court was set up in 1993; it has had several constitutional issues to deal with so far. "They have handled issues dealing with the relationship between the two chambers of parliament and the delineation of the powers between central and regional governments" (Textbook p. 387).

France's Legislature is made up of two houses the National Assembly and the Senate. The people elect both of these branches, and who also serve five-year terms. The instability in the past has led to strict rules that the Parliament must follow. Any deviation from these rules and the Parliament is likely to be dissolved. Unlike some other political systems the French Parliament is not in control of proceedings in both houses and the government can "require priority for bills it wishes to promote" (Textbook