

# Has the prime minister got too much power?

[People](#)



The power of the Prime Minister largely comes from the royal prerogative, where what the monarch said was law. The prime minister is said to be first among equals, which means to describe the Prime Ministers position is largely greater to other ministers of state. However over the last hundred years, this has been less accurate description of the role and influence of the Prime Minister. First among equals implies an equal status among the ministers and that he is simply the 'first' and represents the ministers and therefore the government and the country. However, the Prime Minister in reality is far more powerful than what he looks to be.

The Prime Minister can hire anyone that is a UK citizen to become part of the cabinet through appointing someone as a peer in the House of Lords.

Although he picks solely from the House of Lords and Commons, he can appoint anyone who is a peer to then join the cabinet. There is one case, where a former MP, Peter Mandelson, recently joined the cabinet as Secretary of State for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform for a third time in 2008 despite not being an MP or a peer. This power certainly erodes the idea of 'first among equals'. However, it must be noted that cabinet could have taken this decision as a whole, though it is unlikely. Further the Prime Minister decides the policy of the cabinet and thus the government, the party and the country. Such power, it is argued, is too much for one person to comprehend and bear.

The Prime Minister as the leader of his political party is subject to the parties support and his ability to whip his majority in the House of Commons to pass his policies and legislation into law. However, the Prime Minister's reliance on the strong party whip system can sometimes be more of a weakness than

strength. If his largely loyal party and Members of Parliament vote with his 95% of the time, then they may vote differently on the most important issues that matter to them. If the Prime Minister is always creating a party political vote on legislation going through Parliament, then the occasions when he may need to whip on most may not necessarily be as secure as it would be otherwise, he may be forced to rely on opposition support, an embarrassing political situation that he would be in.

One example is the rebellion of over 120 Labour MP's on the plan to partially privatise Royal Mail. However, the Prime Minister can in some cases overcome rebellions by giving concessions to the aggrieved parties i. e. those who rebelled. One example of this was the row over the 'ten pence' tax rule, a commitment brought in after Labour's success in the 1997 General Election to help poorer wage earners pay taxes, which came to the fore after Prime Minister, Gordon Browns reversed this policy commitment despite it being outlined in Labour's manifesto.

The 'Strong Party Whip System' however, doesn't necessarily exist in the key decisive policies and legislative proposals presented to Parliament. Indeed, many comments have been made of Tony Blair's proposals of 90-day detention without trial defeat, his first in the House of Commons as Prime Minister; saw a huge blow to his power and ability to rule as Prime Minister. Especially considering when Labour passed every policy and legislation it proposed into law. After the defeat of the 90 day detention without trial legislation in 2005, not only did policies start to become harder to pass into the law system, the actual position of Tony Blair as an actual Prime Minister was called into question. Thus, the Prime Minister is not as powerful as he <https://assignbuster.com/has-the-prime-minister-got-too-much-power/>

first appeared - as it can be said that once a Prime Minister has overstepped his power, his ability to lead as Prime Minister becomes substantially limited. This would imply that the Prime Minister is restrained in what he can actually do, and therefore is not 'too powerful' at all.

On the other hand, many would argue that the point of 'overstepping the line' of being powerful is a lot further than other political leaders, especially across the continent, such as the United States where the people are strongly opposed to any sort of detention without trial and the President is restrained by the Constitution. The fact that the point at which the Prime Minister oversteps the moral boundaries is harder to cross than other world leaders is why many want to fragment the power of the PM to institutions like the Cabinet, Parliament and the European Union. However, I would argue that this devolution of power should go to lower institutions such as Borough Councils and Parliament in every aspect except income tax, legislation national law and national security.

A greater likelihood of having your views heard has been demonstrated to show an increase in participation, not just in politics, but decision making as a general. Thus, the Prime Minister is too powerful and he must have a fragmentation of his power. Arguably, however, this would be a threat to the leadership of a country. This implied in a modern day world, where the businesses in the UK are global, and interconnected, needed national coordination, and ruling. This on the other hand shows that the Prime Minister should not garment his power, as it is essential to the country to retain is competitive feature. However, like the President in US, there are examples which highlight the fact that a leader doesn't necessarily have to

<https://assignbuster.com/has-the-prime-minister-got-too-much-power/>

be overly powerful to ensure the prosperity of a nation. Therefore, the Prime Minister is indeed, too powerful.