

Evaluation of political systems: a presidential democracy is more likely to produ...

[Politics](#), [President](#)



Introduction

All over the world, the past two decades has led to changes in various nation's economic powers, political systems and technological advancements. Globalization has resulted from international connections' deepening and the global terrorist threats have emerged. All these changes have made the traditional concepts and assumptions in relation to politics to be challenged, with the social and economic developments in various nations all over the world making it necessary to adopt political systems that accelerate the developments (O'Neil, P. 2006).

In this paper, the United States, which has the presidential democracy system of governance, will be compared to India's parliamentary democracy. The paper will further show how a presidential democracy is most likely to produce a strong and an effective government than a parliamentary democracy. The United States of America, which has a presidential democracy as its political system, can be said to display an effective government that has made it the world's nation with the most powerful economy. The past developments and rapid industrialization in the United States has contributed to its success, with great support from a strong and an effective system of governance. A presidential democracy refers to a system of governance whereby both the executive and the legislature exist separately, with the president being elected by the majority.

A parliamentary democracy system of governance on the other hand, has the executive branch of government dependent on the legislature usually through a vote of confidence. Though the presidential and parliamentary

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democracy systems exist in different countries all over the world, a presidential democracy is most likely to produce a strong and an effective government than a parliamentary democracy system of governance. To compare the two systems, the United States, which has the presidential democracy system, and India, which has a parliamentary democracy, will be looked at.

Discussion

In the United States, the creation of the Office of the President of the United States resulted from the copying of the separate spheres of the executive and legislature in the United States constitution. In any given presidential democracy, certain features can be identified which apply to almost all systems of governance with this system. One major feature of a presidential democracy is that the president is elected through the national elections, (Arend, L. 1992). The winner is determined by acquiring the majority votes. For instance, in the United States, the president though not elected directly is considered to be popularly elected because he/she is elected by an electoral college (Campbell, J. 2000). The president when elected is accorded by this system of governance a fixed term in the office, with elections being scheduled after the presidential term expires. The president's power allows him/her to direct the cabinet members. In addition, the military and executive branch employees can be influenced by the presidential powers.

In a parliamentary democracy like in India, there is a differentiation between the head of state and the head of government (Kapila, S. 2006). While the

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head of government is the Prime minister, the head of the state is the President. India's system of government applies the West Minister Model where the parliament is elected through the "first past the post" electoral system where the system allows the voters to vote for a given candidate instead of a party list. India's central government was established by the Constitution of India and the government is the governing authority of 28 states Federal Union plus 7 union territories. This has made it acquire the name, Republic of India(Pylee, M. V. 2004).

In a presidential democracy system, the separation of powers into the executive and the legislature contributes greatly to the creation of a strong and effective government through the supervision of the two structures. Since the presidency and the legislature are two parallel structures, the arrangements prevent abuses or misconducts in the governing system because both structures can supervise each other. This acts as a great advantage to the government because misconduct or abuse of the government office by the leaders can be easily discovered and appropriate actions taken against them. For a government to be strong and effective, good leadership or governance is very vital in providing the necessary environment for responsible leadership (Arend, L. 1992). A nation that promotes good leadership and discourages actions that may undermine how effective a government functions has the responsibility to monitor government officials or agents to ensure duties are performed well and according to the expectations of the people. For instance, in a presidential democracy like the one in the United States, government officials who show

irresponsible leadership behavior usually face legal actions against them. This is further complimented by the fact that, the system offers a legislator from a president's party a good position to criticize leaders even from his own party where necessary without risking losing his/her party nomination or expulsion from the party.

Compared to the parliamentary system, the presidential system encourages checks on government officials without the fear of being victimized if one does so. However, in a parliamentary democracy system, members of a party observe strict party disciplines making it a bit difficult for one to criticize the executive or policies of his/her own party. Such criticism may lead to the loss of nomination in the party or sometimes even outright expulsion from the party. The consequences of criticism even when the legislators deem it necessary may discourage them to raise their concerns even when it is important to do so. This may in turn compromise the strength of a government because the corrections may fail to be made where and when necessary.

Another factor that makes a presidential democracy better in creating a strong and an effective government is its ability to maintain the government upright even if legislation proposed by the cabinet is not voted for. In the United States, the legislative powers of the Federal government to a Congress are divided into two, a Senate and a House of Representatives (Grodzins, M. 1979). The Senate has two members from each state with senators being directly elected to represent all the states equally. The two separate groups are able to check each other, which reduces the danger of

passing of laws hurriedly or carelessly by the Congress because the two groups have to approve every law that is proposed before it is made a law . It is also important to note that, the Federal states in the US have made it possible to distribute power or authority to the people through the states representation. This avoids complete domination of power by the some individuals in the top office, which makes it possible to make good decisions through the integration of ideas and views from different leaders who represent the states The presence of the two houses in the US (Senate and House of Representatives) allows each house to check each other, which in turn encourages a strong government resulting because such measures promote good leadership through the screening by both groups (Sobel, S et al. 1999). The executive actions that may undermine an effective government can easily be nullified by a negative vote in the senate. In addition, a misconduct of federal officials leads to the opening of charges by the House (Case of Impeachment) while the Senate's power allows trial of impeachment cases. If an official is found guilty, he/she is removed from the public office. Through such actions, a presidential democracy promotes a strong and effective government where only the honest and responsible leaders are given the mandate to conduct government functions or duties.

However, such criticisms or checks may be difficult in a parliamentary system of governance (unicameral). Like earlier stated, a parliamentary system enforces the party discipline more strictly and lack of separation of power makes it hard for a parliamentary back bencher to stop a decision that has already been made by a cabinet or the Prime minister if the

parliamentarian is convinced its not a good decision. In a parliamentary democracy, when an important legislation is voted down, it is seen as a vote of no confidence. This situation may cause the falling of a government, which then will demand new elections to be held. The parliamentary backbenchers become less willing to endure such consequences where the may government fall, which then discourages them to vote down legislation that has been proposed by the cabinet though it may not work well for the creation of a strong and an effective government.

For instance, India's parliamentary system has fused the executive powers with the legislative powers. The parliament is Supreme because it is an elected body and has both the nominal executive (President of India) and the real executive (Prime Minister of India and Cabinet). The real executive has the powerful hand when it comes to making decisions that relate to the policy issues. Both the Prime minister and the Council of members have a responsibility towards the Lok Sabha (Kapila, S. 2006). A vote of no confidence that is passed against the government means that all the ministers who work under the Prime minister are required to resign because the Prime minister and the council of members are responsible for any failure in the government. Many parliamentarians are not ready to cause such situations by their criticism to the government officials, which may undermine the creation of a strong, and an effective government. The parliamentary members may fail to criticize the government's officials misconduct if the consequences of such a criticism may pose a threat of the whole government dismissal.

A presidential democracy is more likely to form a strong and effective government than a parliamentary system due to the fact that, a president elected by the people is more democratic and presents accurately the people's policy preferences. The president acquires direct mandate from the people/citizens whose decisions are crucial in creation of an effective governing system. A prime minister who is the real executive in a parliamentary system is chosen by few individuals of the country's legislature which may not necessarily present the majority of people preference.

In the United States, a president is popularly elected by the people indirectly, but through an electoral college (Campbell, J. 2000). Through the national elections, the people usually express confidence in the candidate of their choice. The people elect a candidate who they believe will address their national issues to ensure a strong and effective government. The free elections allow the citizens to confer powers upon the president, which in turn make the leaders/president to govern with the citizens' consent. The leaders become very responsible for any actions that they undertake during their term in the government, greatly contributed by the respect they give to the limits placed on them by the electorate. The president and other government officials tend to be more accountable in a presidential system than in parliamentary system (Arend, L. 1992). Accountability is considered very vital in ensuring a strong and effective government through responsible leadership. For instance, in the US, the president has the responsibility to

ensure the government functions are well done because he/she has directed manmade to do so.

On the other hand, a parliamentary system may reduce responsibility and accountability of its leaders in the government. In India, the head of government (Prime minister) is not directly elected by the people but by the legislature under the influence of the party ([www. hinduonnet. com/af/india60/stories/2007081550140400. htm](http://www.hinduonnet.com/af/india60/stories/2007081550140400.htm)). This makes the prime minister look more like a party leader rather than a government head. Lack of direct election by the citizens may further contribute to low accountability by the Prime minister to the government's good performance, which may lead to lack of a highly effective government.

The parliamentary democracy system of governance in many states is unstable which sometimes makes effective governance almost impossible, which occurs when the parliamentary systems are faced by challenges that make the government unstable. For a government to be strong and effective, it is necessary for the country to be politically stable (Office of the Federal Register. 2007). Presence of unstable coalitions demands by the minority parties, threats of no-confidence votes and actual votes of no confidence create an atmosphere of tension and inequality in certain groups of people or citizens. These factors in one way or another undermine the formation of an effective government in future. Furthermore, parliamentary instability may arise from the type of political culture in a given state or highly polarized electorates. Where party-based voting has the majority of the electorate basing their preferences on ethnic background rather than

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genuine political platforms, the parliamentary system may fail to provide a strong and an effective government.

Parliamentary systems may therefore offer less stability than the presidential systems. Stability in the government provides a favorable environment for government functions to take place within the given time and in an effective manner. For instance, in India, some people especially the youth have expressed their dissatisfaction with the government functions. The government discussions and debates have been surrounded by disruptions, confrontations and other alternatives that are non-democratic. The confrontational politics in India have led to religious, linguistic and even caste divisions in the society, with the political power being polarized around the language, religion and the caste identities (Satu. L, July1998). This has shown existing social inequalities in the Indian society, which is a reflection of the political system. Instability that arises from such situations threatens the creation of an effective system of governance because the parliament's failure to function effectively makes the public lose their trust with the parliament. The parliament is considered to be the fountainhead of the citizens' desires and the aspirations and failure of the government may as well cause its collapse.

In a parliamentary system, a prime minister may call elections anytime he decides to, and may further orchestrate a vote of no confidence to trigger an election if he fails to get legislative items passed. This kind of opportunism in a parliamentary system poses the threat of instability in nations that practice it and eventually undermine its strength.

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A presidential system on the other hand, can survive emergencies much better than the parliamentary systems. A country that has a presidential democratic system can be able to handle enormous stress in its system, because the president has a fixed term of governing compared to the parliamentary rotating premierships. A fixed presidential term acts as a 'check' to the executive powers because elections can only be held at a certain stipulated time (Mitchell, R. 1995). The executive in a presidential system is usually forced to work within the confines of a given term without altering the term limit to suit one's needs. This enhances stability in the government, which encourages the government officials to work within the given time to provide good governance to the people. In the United States, the presidential term is 5 years (minimum) which allows stability of the system until the elections are held again (Introduction to the US system. 2000. A publication of the US Department of State). This has promoted good governance in the US even in the presence of many political confrontations.

Finally, the presidential democratic system offers great opportunities for quick and decisive responses to situations that may emerge suddenly. The president in a presidential democratic system of government is less constrained in making major decisions, compared to the parliamentary system. A presidential system does not always require the approval of the legislature to take action against emerging situations. A prime minister within a parliamentary system on the other hand will require the legislature support before taking any action, regardless of how urgent of it may be to address the situation.

Conclusion

Based on the above-mentioned reasons, a presidential democracy is most likely to form a strong and an effective government than a parliamentary democracy. Though a parliamentary democracy also has its merits over a presidential democracy, it does not present the best political environment for an effective government. All over the world, different nations adopt the two systems with the aim of promoting good governance, but the presidential system has proven to be better than the parliamentary democracy in forming a strong government. The social and economic developments continue to put pressure on the various states to make the necessary changes in their system to adapt to these changes. In their endeavors to have a strong and an effective government, the different nations are attempting to make changes that solve problems that have risen due to their system of governance. However, it has proven to be a tough task which will need a lot of hard work and commitment to succeed in forming a very strong and an effective government that will serve their citizens much better.

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