

# The united states and britain democracies comparison essay

[Countries](#), [United States](#)



Democracy is a form of governance where people engage in free and fair elections coming up with a leader. The people vest the supreme power on the leader(s) they choose. The pillars of democracy include sovereignty of the people, majority rule, equality before law, minority rights, constitutional limits of the government, and guarantee of basic human rights among others. Democracies differ from one nation to another due to differences in constitutions of the nations in question. The constitutions aim at providing nations with the type of governance that best suit their needs (Alexis, 2000, p. 7). Democratic systems differ in the mode of election of the head of the government as well as the power vested on the leaders by the constitution. This paper details the democracies represented by the United States and Britain with reference to the legislative and executive structures and processes in the two nations.

These nations exhibit differences in their forms of governance. The United States uses a presidential system of governance whereby, the president is not only the head of state, but also the head of the government. A national election process leads to the election of the president. Nevertheless, this form of democracy is not the case with the parliamentary system practiced in Britain. The leader of the party with the majority of members in the parliament becomes the prime minister and the head of government while the Queen is the head of state (Blackstone, 1765, p. 12). The prime minister retains his/her power if s/he does not lose the support of the other members of the party. In a parliamentary system, members of the cabinet are part of the parliament. Owing to this, both the legislature and executives of the government are the same in governance.

Parliamentary system does not require the formation of committees during the making of laws as well as policies; it relies on professional advice. On the other hand, in a presidential system, the executive and the legislature are two different entities in governance. However, they share certain powers. For instance, the president can veto laws passed by the Congress. In the same way, public officials appointed by the president must win the approval of the Congress before assuming their roles (Kopstein & Mark, 2006, p. 120). In addition, members of the cabinet in a presidential system are not members of the Congress, which is equivalent of the parliament in a parliamentary system. The president ceases to be the leader of the government and state once his/her term ends.

As aforementioned, the governance differences amongst different democracies result from constitutional differences. For instance, the separation of the legislature and the executive in the presidential system of the United States resulted in a change of constitution. James Madison, one of the people that participated in drawing of the American constitution in 1789, played a major role in the separation of the legislature and executive. He argued that merging the two was accumulation of powers and would be dangerous in the governance of the United States. He also advocated for the merging of the head of state and the head of the government in the office of the president.

The parliamentary system, effective in Britain, began after the signing of the Treaty of Union in England in 1707. The first prime minister in Britain, Sir Robert Walpole, played a major role in enhancing the success of the

parliamentary system (Maddicot, 2010, p. 925). The Queen summons the leader of the political party that has won the greatest number of seats in an election to the Buckingham palace because, the Queen, who is the head of state, has to involve the majority leader in forming the government.

Nevertheless, each of these systems has its strengths and weaknesses.

The parliamentary system has several demerits. In case the party that chose the prime minister collapses, the government also collapses. Therefore, the stability of the government is subject to the strength of the leading political party; parliamentary system may lead to the formation of governments that are in office for a relatively short period. The government may also find itself under the influence of extremist parties that give conditions to support the governing party/coalition. For instance, one of the parties involved in the leading party/coalition can make certain special demands from the government and threaten to quit if the government does not meet its demands. Leaving the coalition/party heralds imminent collapse of the government and this may strain governance intensely.

The prime minister lacks absolute authority since s/he is neither party leader nor leader of the majority in the nation. This lack of absolute authority is partly because the prime minister is only the government leader but not the leader of the state. The government lacks formal institutional checks of the programs and activities of the government due to merging of the legislative and executive bodies of the government. As a result, the party that constitutes the majority in the parliament can enact anti-democratic programs in the system due to lack of proper systems to control its actions.

However, the parliamentary system has its advantages. Distinct minorities, who are members of the leading party, participate in the political processes in the government. Moreover, the system encourages flexibility as well as responsiveness of the government in various governance matters.

The presidential system, practiced in the United States, has a number of advantages. The president, being the head of the state and the state has absolute power derived from his/her direct election to the post. The fact that the legislature and the executive bodies of the government are well-established institutions is advantageous to the presidential system. Each of them is capable of keeping checks as well as balancing the other ensuring that each acts according to people's expectations. The presidential system prevents dominance of the majority in the nation. It enhances decentralization of the government besides allowing the development of unique methods for dealing with social, political, and economic problems.

It ensures that the majority of the people in a nation select the leader of the state and government. As a result, the government is in a better position to address the problems facing the majority in the nation. Nevertheless, the American democratic system also has its weaknesses. Germination of corrupt governments may occur due to re-election of corrupt individuals into the government. Re-election of inadequate leaders may occur due to the vast influence of an individual on citizens who are also the electorate. This could affect the social, political, and economic development of the nation. It may also lead to unhealthy competition and contention between presidential aspirants.

The president may not be able to enact a program due to lack of enough votes in the Congress. In such cases, the president may be inadequate in implementing programs to help in the development of the nation. The president also lacks the authority to impose punishment on parties that do not cooperate in the governing system unlike in the parliamentary system. Political scientists describe presidential power as power to persuade but not power to command because the president has to act according to the will of the majority in the nation. This system may also promote inequality of states leading to poor distribution of a country's resources. Though the separation of the legislative and the executive institutions in the American democratic system has its weaknesses, it plays a major role in safeguarding the people from potential abuse from the government.

Though democracy may take different forms, it has shown substantial resilience over a long period as shown in the US and Britain democracies. It has demonstrated that when citizens make informed decisions especially in choosing their leaders, they are able to overcome severe social and economic hardships. The parliamentary system's decision-making process may be erroneous because it entirely relies on the opinion of the members of the leading party/coalition who form the majority in the parliament. The presidential system is least likely to make biased policies since the legislative and the executive play a pivotal role in checking and balancing each other's activities. Irrespective of the type of democracy that different nations embrace, democracy enhances the involvement of people in governance. It depends on the commitment and honesty of the people in

building their nation. Since both systems have merits as well as demerits, the success of a system entirely depends on the will of the citizens.

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