

Advantages of presidential systems



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One of the advantages of a presidential system is that the head of state is usually elected through a direct mandate. In terms of democracy, this makes the president's authority more legitimate as he is elected directly by the people as oppose to being appointed indirectly. Another advantage of a presidential system is the stability it brings as presidents are usually elected to fixed terms while a prime minister's government can fall at anytime. An example of this is in Canada; where in a minority government the leader of the opposition, Michael Ignatieff, could bring down Stephen Harper's government and has threatened to do so several times. This is in contrast to President Obama's tenure which is secure till the elections of 2012.

Additionally, presidential system allow for the separation of powers as the legislature is a completely different structure and institution. This allows a system of checks and balances to be created, allowing one to monitor the other. Speed and decisiveness can be seen as a positive characteristic of a presidential system, as presidents usually have stronger constitutional powers allowing them to spearhead reform and enact change swiftly.

Conversely, one advantage of a parliamentary system is that it's faster and easier to pass legislation. This is because the executive branch is part of the legislative branch and is dependent upon the direct or indirect support of it as it usually comprised of members of the legislature. This can be seen in the Canadian system of government where the prime minister and his cabinet is also Member of Parliament. This segues into the advantage that parliamentary systems usually have a higher propensity for having unified governments, as minority governments are the minority. This adds to the government's ability to pass legislation more quickly, as it is rare for a

majority government to have their own legislation defeated, as parliamentary system usually have greater party discipline. Moreover, the lack of a head of state's veto power also allows legislation to pass more swiftly. Another advantage of a parliamentary system is that power is more evenly diverged. Constitutionally, the prime minister rarely has such high importance of a president. An example of this is how parliamentary systems allow MPs to directly question the prime minister and his government. Also, lower individual importance on the prime minister position can be seen through elections tendencies as there is a higher focus on political party ideas than on the actual person. Lastly, the advantage of the government technically being able to dissolve at any time allows the government to be more accountable and viable. This allows parliament to replace a government or a prime minister if he or she has been lackluster or detrimental to the country. This allows for practicable governments to continue governing while ineffective ones can be disposed of.

Disadvantages to a presidential system include tendencies towards authoritarianism. Because of the overarching power given to one person, presidential systems could quickly transform into authoritarian regimes if circumstances permit. Also the centralization of authority could lead to the president becoming a more influential figure in society and the media. This high priority on the president could lower and undermine civic participation as people might feel they cannot play an active role in lawmaking or place a lower significance on the legislative branches of government relative to the executive. Furthermore, separation of powers is also seen as a disadvantage of the presidential system as it might create gridlock and stalemates within

the government. One example of this could be if the President continues to veto bills that the legislature ratifies, impeding government from passing laws. This can be seen in 1995 when Democrat Bill Clinton was president with a Republican controlled Congress. The government could not get consensus on anything, not even on a budget. Lastly, impediments to leadership change can be seen as another disadvantage as it can be more difficult to remove an unsuitable president from office before her term is concluded, creating a potential situation where an idol or unhelpful president could not be removed and be replaced a better alternative.

On the other hand, disadvantages to a parliamentary system include that the head of government is usually not directly elected. This is because the prime minister is typically elected by the legislature or the party in power, which normally means the party leadership. In addition, another disadvantage in the parliamentary system is that there is no independent body to oppose and veto legislation approved by parliament, and thus a lack of a cohesive checks and balance system. Also, because of the shortage in the separation of powers, parliamentary systems could instill too much power in the executive. This is because MPs usually have to adhere to parliamentary discipline, and cannot vote based on their own judgments or constituencies. Furthermore, as elections in parliamentary systems usually result in a majority government, this could lead to the “tyranny of the majority” resulting in the minority parties to be marginalized as they would have little to no input in government legislation. Moreover, parliamentary systems can be seen as inherently unstable, if minority governments are elected and coalition governments are formed as the government can be brought down

at any time. Opponents of the parliamentary system point to Japan's recent instabilities and constant replacing of prime ministers as well as Weimar Germany as examples where unstable coalitions, belligerent minority parties, and constant threats of the government being voted down by opposition parties. Lastly, the parliamentary system lack of a definite election calendar can be mistreated to allow parties to gain political advantages. The governing party can schedule elections with relative freedom, and avoid elections when it is unpopular. Indeed, in a Canadian context, Prime Minister Stephen Harper defeated his own government because polls showed that he had the ability to win a majority at the time. This gives an unfair advantage to ruling parties who can stave off defeat or increase their mandate at the expense of the opposition parties.

The influence of a presidential system on politics can be seen through the stronger role of the president as well as the gridlock that can be experienced when passing legislation. This is opposed to the parliamentary system and how a prime minister usually has a smaller role in politics while parliament is typically quick in passing legislation and avoiding gridlock. First, the president usually becomes a national figure, which represents the government regardless of the effectiveness of legislation. As policies are harder to pinpoint compared to parliamentary systems, a president usually receives all criticism and blame on legislation passed, regardless if the party passed it or not. However in parliamentary systems, the governing party usually receives praise and criticism for legislation passed with not everything being placed upon the prime minister. This segues into the president is the head of state, and performing ceremonial roles as well as

being the commander in chief of the armed forces. He also plays an active role in the government by setting out a government's agenda especially if her party is also in control of the legislature. This differs from parliamentary system as there is a more visible separation of head of state and head of government. An example of this is the Queen in the UK who almost exclusively performs ceremonial roles. The Queen by convention does not veto any legislation passed by the government, as she does not have that legitimacy given through the electorate. This differs from the prime minister who is directly involved in the lawmaking organs of parliament. The president in a presidential system is almost like the center part of a venn-diagram as she possesses the ceremonial part of the head of state while playing active role in the government process like a prime minister. Another influence that a president has on parliament is his role in the checks in balance system. The United States government is must more used to gridlock and stalemates between the levels of government and even between to the two houses as that is how the system is set up to me. This is in contrast where legislation in Canada can be passed rather rapidly especially if the party has a majority government. This presidential system influences the way representatives behave as they