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Introduction

The Russian government is a federal type of government. The Russian federation includes 21 Republics 46 Oblast, 9 Kraj, 1 Autonomous Oblast, 4 Autonomous Okrug and 2 Cities of Federal Significance: Moscow and St. Petersburg. The president and the prime minister share the executive power though the president is the main political figure in government. The legislature on the other hand comprises of the Federal Assembly of Russia. The Federal Assembly of Russia is consists of two chambers. The first chamber is the lower house known as the Duma and the second legislative chamber is the upper house known as the federation council. The judicial arm of the Russian federation government is the ministry of justice that exercises the judicial powers through judicial courts.

The Executive

The election of the President of the Russian federation government is through a popular vote in elections that are held every six years as dictated by the constitutional amendment of 2008. Prior to this, there were elections every four years. This amendment came into effect in 2012 during the presidential elections. The constitution only allows the president to run for two consecutive terms. The president exercises his executive duties based in Kremlin. The president is not the leader of the government according to the constitution: he is the guardian of the constitution and the sovereignty of the citizens of the Russia federation. The duties of the president include the formulation and determination of the national policy of Russia both domestically and abroad. The president is the commander in chief of the

armed forces of Russia and he is responsible for signing of legislative bills into law. The president also has the power to pardon offenders and granting state awards for the Russian federation.

The duties of the federation government lie in the various ministries. These ministries have several respective agencies that answer to them and they all work in tandem to achieve the stipulated national domestic policy projects. The head of this arm of government is the prime minister. The president appoints the prime minister. Once the appointment of the prime minister commences, the Duma, which is the lower house of the legislature, has to vet and confirm him. Unlike the president who bases his operations in Kremlin, the prime minister carries out his duties from the “ White House” in Moscow. The prime minister through the council of ministers is responsible to see the implementation of the state policy. The arm of government led by the prime minister also ensures the rule of law and drafts the budget of the federal government.

The American government on the other hand is a federal democratic government. Just like the Russian government, the United States of America government has three arms: the executive, the legislature and the judiciary. It also has a bicameral legislature just like the federal government of Russia. However, the executive branch of the United States of America government does not have a prime minister.

In the United States of America, the president is the head of the government unlike in the federal Russian government where the prime minister is the head of the government. The election of the president is through popular vote in elections carried out every four years. The president is the

commander in chief of the armed forces of the United States of America. The president also determines the American domestic and foreign policy. The president also has the power to pardon convicted criminals. In addition to this, the president through the consent of the senate can make appointments for judges in the Supreme Court and the federal courts. In the Russian federal government system, the president does not require the consent of the upper house of the legislature to make such appointments. The implementation of government policies is through federal executive departments and the agencies that answer to them. The congress creates the federal executive departments but the president with the advice and consent from the senate appoints their heads. There is 15 federal executive departments which oversight their respective agencies. In addition to this, there are independent agencies that do not answer to any federal executive department. These include the United States Postal Service, NASA, CIA and the Environmental Protection Agency .

The Legislature

As mentioned earlier, the Parliament consists of two chambers hence the term bicameral parliament. These two chambers are the Duma, which is the lower house, and the federal council, which is the upper house. The parliament is responsible for the making of federal legislations, approval of domestic and international agreements and the calling of the nation to war with aggressors. Moscow is the home to both chambers of the federal assembly. The federation council is a provision of the constitution of 1993, which established the federal system of government in Russia after the

collapse of the Soviet Union. The federal council is devoid of political factions to ensure a fair and representative voice in the federal assembly.

Most members of the federal council are not elected. Instead, the representatives come from Russian federal entities where each federal entity contributes two federal council representatives. The federal entity represented nominates one representative while the head of the entity represented appoints one representative. The main special roles of the federal council, upper legislative house are to declare presidential elections in an event it is necessary, impeachment of the elected president through the procedural framework laid down in the constitution and to decide on matters that involve the participation and use of the armed forces of Russia beyond its borders. In addition to these special functions, the federal council works with the Duma to pass bills. The drafts of bills have to pass through the federal council for approval before the president signs them into federal law.

The lower house of the federal legislature is the Duma. The Duma consists of 450 members known as deputies elected through a popular vote. Each Duma term lasts for five years as stipulated in the 2008 amendments. Each deputy is elected from the party lists through equal representation. The term Duma has its roots in the Russian word "dumat" that translates to "to think" in English. The main role of the Duma is to pass bills. The Duma passes all bills in Russia including those proposed by the federal council. If the federal council proposes a bill, it goes to the Duma for passing. The draft of the bill then goes back to the federal council and if it passes the bill, the president signs it into law. In the case the federal council rejects the bill passed by the

Duma, the two legislative houses form a commission appointed by both of them. The commission then helps to resolve the tussle and get to a satisfactory settlement.

On the other side, the United States of America government legislative arm is the United States congress. It comprises of two branches: the senate and the House of Representatives. Unlike the Russian federal government system where members of the federal council are not elected by popular vote, members of both houses of the congress are elected by popular vote. The senate comprises of one hundred members: two representatives from each of the fifty states regardless of the population of these states. The congress consists of 435 voting members and 6 non-voting members. The 435 members are representatives of congressional districts determined by the population of citizens.

Both houses of the congress are involved in the passing of bills or presidents approval. For the president to sign any bill into law, more than two thirds of the members of both houses must pass it. However, the senate, which is the upper house of the congress, has exclusive powers including providing advice and consent to the executive on the appointment to fill various posts.

The Judiciary

The judicial system of the Russian federal government is responsible for the interpretation of the law in Russia. The judicial system consists of three arms. These are the courts of general jurisdiction, constitutional courts and arbitration courts. Courts of general jurisdiction include the civil courts and the military courts. The constitutional courts adjudicate in matters relating to

the constitutionality of the federal laws. Cases involving the conformity of the government agencies to the laws laid down in the constitution are determined by the constitutional courts as they fall in their jurisdiction. The constitutionality of the decrees passed by the presidency is also determined by the constitutional courts.

The resolution of disputes in business, declaring bankruptcy and liquidation of property fall in the jurisdiction of the arbitration courts. The highest arbitration court is the High Court of Arbitration. The appointment of the judges presiding in the constitutional courts, the Supreme Court and the Higher Arbitration Court is by the federal council.

The judicial system in the United States of America comprises of three levels. The first level is the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court is the highest court of the land and the court of last resort in the sense that one cannot appeal the decision of the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court works under discretionary review in that it has the ability to choose which cases to hear and which cases not to hear. The president appoints the judges of the Supreme Court with the advice and consent of the senate. It is mainly involved to determine legal matters involving the constitutionality of various laws passed by the congress and in the cases involving disputes between state governments or between a state government and the federal government.

The second level is the federal appeal courts. The court of appeal is the principal appellate court in the United States of America judicial system. These courts operate under mandatory review in the sense that they cannot choose which cases to hear and which cases not to hear. These courts must

hear all the cases brought before them. The last level is the district federal courts. These courts determine matters of general jurisdiction.

Conclusion

Both the United States of America and Russia have federal democratic governments where the president is elected by popular vote. In addition, both countries have three arms of government: the executive, the legislative and the judiciary. However, there are differences in the core structure of these governments. While, the current federal government system in Russia is a young democracy compared to the United States democratic system, there are countless lessons learnt from the young democracy. The greatest lesson is simplifying the presidency through the introduction of an additional executive office similar to the office of the prime minister in the Russian federal government. This will increase the efficiency of the executive and encourage more accountability.

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