

Example of essay on defining characteristics of the presidential and parliamentar...

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Introduction

The debate on the adequacy and sufficiency of presidential versus parliamentary systems has been raging since the fall of the Soviet Union and its communist ideals. Academicians, scholars, and politicians from diverse parts of the world are deeply stratified by the two democratic systems, with each side professing more benefits than the other. The choice of a democratic system for a nation depends on varying factors such as their culture, history, demographic characteristics, and composition of the population (O'Neil, 2012). While each democratic system has its own merits and demerits, I personally think that the presidential system is better at preserving the constitutional and moving forward the democratic agenda.

The presidential system is characterized by an order whereby the president is both the head of state and head of government (chief executive). In his role as head of government, the president is the chief of the executive arm of government. The executive is an assembly of impersonal individuals who are appointed by the sitting president. In most cases, the members of the executive are professionals from diverse fields and fellow politicians. The members of an executive are mandated with heading government dockets (ministries) such as foreign affairs, health, sports and culture and finance. The president is elected for a definite term of office, usually five years, and is accountable for government activity in that period. The office of the president is separate from the legislature by the constitution (Fukuyama, 2005).

The parliamentary system is mostly practiced in Britain, Europe and most

commonwealth nations. The term parliament is derived from 'parley' which casually means 'talk'. The parliamentary system in Britain is composed of three parts; the House of Commons, House of Lords and the sovereign. In parliamentary systems, the offices of the head of state and head of government are constitutionally separated. The head of government is usually the prime minister, who is elected through a democratic, party process. The head of state is a figurehead, a ceremonial position held by the monarchy; which may be hereditary or constitutional (Fukuyama, 2005). The role of the head of state has been watered down to presiding over state functions, signing bills into law and maintaining the sovereignty of the state. It is important to note that, in a parliamentary system, the chief executive is a part of the legislature. The prime minister, even as the head of government is still a legislator representing a given constituency (O'Neil, 2012).

The law making process

An interesting similarity between the presidential and parliamentary systems is in the law making process. In a presidential system, the president is not involved in the law making policy directly, unless a bill is suggested or forwarded to the legislature by a member of the executive. In a parliamentary system where there is little separation of powers, the president is a member of the legislature and is directly involved in the legislative process. The similarity is that in both parliamentary systems, the chief executive or head of government have veto power. This means that the chief executive can veto acts of parliament and return them to the

legislature for further amendment (O'Neil, 2012). In both systems, a legislative bill has to be signed by the chief executive or receive royal assent from the monarch in order to be passed into law.

The election process

The election of a chief executive in a parliamentary democracy such as the United States follows a peculiar approach known as the Electoral College system. In this approach, the head of government (chief executive) is chosen directly by neither the people nor the legislature. In the Electoral College system, people at the grass roots vote for electors who in turn vote for a presidential candidate of their choice. All the votes in a state go to one candidate, meaning that the president may be elected without achieving majority votes.

In a parliamentary system, the head of government, prime minister, is appointed directly by the people. Most parliamentary republics conduct elections after five years whereby they elect both, members of parliament and the head of government. Elections in parliamentary systems are mainly conducted through parties. However, the term parliamentary system does not imply that many parties in a coalition with each other rule the country. Formation of such coalitions is a product of politics and proportional representation.

Role of the head of government

In both presidential and parliamentary systems, the president and prime minister share a number of duties and responsibilities. The head of government in both cases is solely responsible for the appointment of senior

federal officials such as federal judges, members of the cabinet, foreign ambassadors and directors of governmental agencies (Bates, 1997). In a parliamentary system, however, the power of appointment by the president may be limited by the legislature, which has an oversight role over such appointments. The legislature may reject a presidential appointee and bar them from constitutionally assuming office.

Impeachment and vote of no-confidence

The legislature in parliamentary systems and the congress in presidential systems both have very powerful weapons against the office of the head of government. In a scenario where the president or premier has lost favor among the legislatures, they may pass a vote of no confidence, or impeachment, which effectively dissolves government. While this method of censure is rarely applied in modern day nations, a procedure ensures that the head of government is kept in check with the wishes of the people through their legislative representatives.

Advantages of a presidential system

A presidential system promotes the stability of the executive wing of government. This ensures that government follows through on policies and agendas without the fear of censure. Separation of powers between the executive, judiciary and the legislature allows each wing of government to act as a check and balance over the use or misuse of powers. In choosing an executive, the president is not limited to members of the legislature (Bates, 1997). This means that the president can impersonally choose anyone so long as they are of outstanding competence and show intellectual integrity

that would help in running the country. In a presidential system, the executive is free from politicking and endless bickering, which is commonly associated with the legislature. The office of the president is a source of unity and integration since the office holder is elected out of a national constituency rather than from among the legislatures (Fukuyama, 2005).

Advantages of parliamentary system

The parliamentary system continues to focus on the importance of the legislature in government. The members of parliament are given a special law-making mandate since they are assumed representatives of the people. By discharging its oversight and control responsibility for executive and judiciary, the legislature can foster greater accountability over the actions of government.

Conclusion

The evolution of democratic systems has taken different twists and turns with each sovereign nation at the liberty to choose their own system. The constitution is the dictator of the democratic system to be followed by a republic and this is created with special regard to the needs of the electorate (Bates, 1997). From the above analysis, it is clear that the presidential system is superior in numerous aspects to the old-fashioned parliamentary system. The presidential system allows for complete separation of powers between the arms of government thus ensuring that all officers of state conduct their duties free of encumbrance from other offices. A recent development in the democratic process is the formation of hybrid democratic

systems, which take advantage of the benefits of both presidential and parliamentary systems.

References

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