

# Comparison between roman and american political institutions



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The Roman civilization was one of the most important civilizations occurred in the world. Political system in the Roman period encouraged people's participation and paved the way for democracy. The ancient political structure in the Roman period influenced the future democracies of Europe and other parts of the world. In the modern period, the United States is considered a role model for many democracies across the globe. There are several countries that have emulated the US style of democracy in their political system.

While Roman political institutions were symbols of democracy in the ancient and medieval period, the political institutions in the USA hold significance in the modern period. Both Roman and American political institutions have many things in common. Historical Background “ In 27 BC, Emperor Augustus devised a new form of monarchy by offering more powers to the people” (Abbott, 1963). He laid the foundation of a democratic system of the government that became the basis of the political structure of the country. Augustus maintained the forms of republican government until his death.

He transferred the legislative function of the assemblies to the Senate. His successors followed the political structure established by him and also revised the structure from time to time. Major changes in the political structure of Rome were noticed in the medieval period. The political structure of the United States is vast and constructive. The US has the world's oldest written constitution. “ The US Constitution, which formed the basis for laws and administration of the country, was written in 1787” (King, 1990). There have been many changes in the United States after the Constitution came into force.

However, the basic principles remained unchanged. The Constitution provides the guidelines for the structure and functioning of the political institutions of the country. Political Structure in Rome and America The United States is comprised of 50 different states. The political structure of the United States has the federal government, state governments and local governments. The President is the head of the US political system. The federal government of the United States consists of the President, the US Congress and the federal courts.

The US Congress is the main political institution of the country, which has two chambers called the Senate and the House of Representatives. The Senate has 100 members, while the House of Representative has 435 members. The political institutions of Rome consisted of the Assemblies, Senate, Curia and Forum. The Roman assemblies were integral parts of the political institutions of Rome. The Roman assemblies had both legislative and judicial powers in the Roman Republic. The Senate is the most deliberative body of the roman political system and it had considerable clout in the roman politics.

Roman Assemblies vs American Legislature Unlike the legislatures in the United States, the Roman assemblies used to open the houses directly to the people. The legislatures in the United States and other countries appoint representatives elected by the people. However, Roman assemblies were directly governed by the people. They also possessed important legislative powers such as passing laws and bills. In Roman assemblies, normal citizens did not debate legislation. There were only magistrates who had the power to propose legislation.

The Roman assemblies were not deliberative by nature, while the Senate is deliberative. However, both the houses of the US Congress are deliberative. Of the two chambers of the US Congress, the Senate is more deliberative than the House of Representatives. The House of Representatives in the United States is similar to the Assemblies in Roman political structure. It is a house of people and follows public opinion. Just like the Roman assemblies, the House of Representatives has more proximity to the mass sentiments. However, there is one major difference in both the political institutions.

While members of the Roman assemblies were appointed by the emperor or the rulers, members of the House of Representatives are elected by the people. Each of the 50 states is represented in the House of Representatives proportional to its population. Each member serves a two years term. The Roman Senate vs the US Senate The Senate in Rome was not an elected body. It was consisted of members from the Roman aristocratic classes. Those senators were primarily former magistrates who had severed in important administrative posts in the past. " The Senate held the major powers to preserve Roman knowledge and tradition.

It always took major decision on religious affairs, public policy and foreign affairs. The Roman Senate was known as the " Council of Elders". It had around 300 members. The Senators could be expelled if they were found to have committed an act against the public morals" (Abbott, 1963). Senators in the United States are directly elected by the people in their respective states. Each state sends two members to the Senate. Each senator serves for a six year period. " Elections are held for one-third of the seats of the Senate every second year.

After being elected, a Senator serves until the expiry of his term” (King, 1990). Like the Roman Senate, the US Senate is also known as the “ House of Elders”. The US Senate has the power to expel any member. Two-thirds majority votes are required to expel a Senator. **Judicial Powers** The Roman assemblies possessed judicial powers. At a later stage, some of the judicial powers were transferred to permanent courts. Although the separation of powers did not exist in the Roman political system, checks and balances were perfectly maintained. In the United States, the judiciary is separated from the legislature.

The Senate or the House of Representatives do not have any authority over the proceeding of the courts. The Supreme Court is the highest judicial body in the United States. While other federal courts are created by the Congress, the Supreme Court has been established by the US Constitution. **Local Governments in the United States and Curia and Forum in the Roman Empire** “ In the ancient times, a curia was considered as a subdivision of the people. It was a meeting place where the tribe discussed its affairs. At a later stage, a curia became a place where local government held office” (Abbott, 1963).

Judicial proceedings and government meetings were held in curia. The Roman Forum was the center for commerce, business and administration. All the community-based activities were held at the forum. The local governments in the United States resemble the Roman curia and forum. Local governments in the United States are referred to the governments at the city, town or village. Local governments have own jurisdiction on the developmental work in their areas although they are accountable to the state and federal governments. **Conclusion**

Both the Roman and American political institutions have great significance in propagating democratic values in the world. Political system in the Roman Empire was the basis for the new political structures in the modern world. The US political system, which is being adopted by many countries in the world, is influenced by the ancient Roman political system to a large extent.

Bibliography: King, A. (1990). *The New American Political System*. American Enterprise Institute. Abbott, Frank Frost. (1963). *A History and Description of Roman Political Institutions*. New York: Biblio & Tannen.