

The british government vs the us government

[Government](#)



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The United States and Britain are two powerful democracies in the world that always tried to uphold the values of democratic system and propagate those values across the globe. In most cases, they share same views and opinions in restoration of peace and democracy in different parts of the world. There are several factors that bring the countries closer. The similarity in the political system of both the countries is one of those factors. Their political systems also differ in many aspects. However, still they share almost the same values and principles.

The government system of these countries are so strong and convincing that many countries including India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and others have adopted their constitution from these countries. The British Government, a Brief Overview Britain has a parliamentary democratic system with a constitutional monarch. Queen is regarded as head of the state. Unlike other constitutions in the world, the British constitution is made up of a combination of laws and practices that are not legally enforceable.

However, they are considered as vital to the functioning of the government.

“ The British government system is divided into four parts: the Monarch, the Executive, the Legislature and the Judiciary. Although Queen is not involved in the day-to-day operation of the government, she is an integral part of all branches of the British government system” (James, 1999: 41). Britain provides a unique example of balance between the monarchy and democracy. Both Queen and the democratic head of the country perform their responsibilities without any conflict. The US Government, an Overview

The political system of the United States gives a strong framework for a federal presidential form of democratic government. There is no monarchy in

the United States. Unlike some other democracies in the world, the President keeps most powers in his hands. The president is both head of state and head of government. He is also the head of a two-party legislative and electoral system. “ The US government system includes the Executive headed by the President, the legislature and the judiciary. Legislative power is vested in the Congress that has two chambers, the Senate and the House of Representatives.

Judiciary is independent of the executive and the legislature and is comprised of the US Supreme Court and lower courts” (Vile, 1999: 31). The judiciary also has the power and authority to resolve the disputes between the executive and legislature. The British Parliament and the US Congress “ The major difference between the government systems of Britain and the United States is the basis on which they are formed. While Britain has the parliamentary form of government, the United States has the presidential form of government” (Lijphart, 1992: 31).

The legislature in Britain is known as the Parliament. It is made up of the House of Commons, the House of Lords and the Queen as constitutional monarch. “ The House of Commons has 651 elected representatives who are called the Members of Parliament. They represent local constituencies. The House of Lords is comprised of 1, 185 members who are selected on hereditary terms, two archbishops and the 24 most senior bishops” (James, 1999: 45). The center of parliamentary power in Britain is the House of Commons. “ The House of Lords has limited powers in the functioning of the government.

Traditionally, it complements the House of Commons and does not indulge in any type of conflict" (James, 1999: 46). The British Parliament uses several procedures to control the executive branch of the government system. When any report is prepared, the House of Commons gets the ultimate power to pass the resolution. If the House rejects any proposal, that becomes tantamount to be a no-confidence against the government. Like the British government system, the US Congress is also bicameral. It is comprised of the House of Representatives and the Senate.

" The House has 435 members who represent the congressional districts. They serve a two-year term. House seats are determined on the basis of population in the respective states. The US Senate has 100 members. Each state sends two senators to the Senate who serve a six-year term. Both Senators and Representatives are elected through direct election" (Vile, 1999: 54). In the British government system, the House of Lords has very limited powers to decide the passage of any bill or proposal. However, this is not the case with the US Senate.

" The Senate's advice and consent is required to confirm the President's nominations to high-level positions in the executive and the judiciary" (Vile, 1999: 52). Voting system in the British political system and the US political system is similar. In Britain, general elections are held every five years to choose MPs. Similarly, in the US, the President and the members of the House of Representatives are elected every two years. Voting is conducted through a secret ballot and the minimum age requirement to participate in voting is 18 in both countries.

Political Parties Political parties in Britain and the United States play a major role in determining the course of the government. The political party system is essential to the smooth functioning of the constitution. Although there are several small parties in Britain, the contest is always between two major political parties, the Conservative Party and the Labor Party. All the general elections have been won by these parties. The smaller parties are mostly represented in local governments.

After every general election, the government is formed by the party that gains majority in the House of Commons. The leader of the winning party is appointed as Prime Minister by the Queen. " The Prime Minister appoints about 100 ministers. Out of them, at least 20 ministers get the rank of cabinet ministers. They take all major policy decisions. Ministers are responsible for government decisions, as they are party to it" (Lijphart, 1992: 46). The opposition party, which gets less number of votes, plays a constructive role to challenge government policies and present an alternative.

The policies are always carried out by government departments that are accountable to the respective ministries. However, these departments are staffed by neutral civil servants who have no association with any political party. They perform the executive functions of the government. The political system of Britain and the US is quite similar. Although they function as multi-party system, only two major parties in both countries hold much importance. The United States has two major political parties, the Republican Party and the Democratic Party that dominate the political spectrum of the country.

“ It is true that the political parties have not been recognized or registered by the law either in Britain or in the United States. However, they are regulated by the constitutions of individual states or counties that organize elections both at local and national level. Despite having multi-party system, both countries have been limited to a bi-party system” (Lijphart, 1992: 48).

Decision Making Group In Britain, the decision-making group is comprised of the Prime Minister and his group of ministers. “ The government of the United Kingdom contains a number of ministries.

Each of them is led by a senior minister who is supported by some junior ministers” (James, 1999: 61). Any major decision taken by the government first goes through the House of Representatives and then goes to the Queen for her approval. “ In the United States, the decision-making group comprises of the President and the Cabinet appointed by him. The Cabinet includes the Secretary of State, Attorney General and secretaries of other federal executive departments” (Vile, 1999: 60). The US has separate state departments.

Each department is headed by a Secretary who directly reports to the President. Once a bill is prepared, it goes through the House of Representatives and the Senate. It becomes law only after both the houses approve it. **Judicial System** The British judicial system is completely different from the American judicial system. Britain does not have a single judicial system. It has separate judicial systems for the member countries. “ England and Wales have one judicial system while Scotland has its own judiciary. Northern Ireland has another judicial system.

The Lord Chancellor, who is the head of the judiciary in England and Wales, appoints judges and magistrates for criminal courts. He plays an active role in the executive, legislature and judiciary” (James, 1999: 71). The US Constitution provides scope for a powerful judiciary. The Supreme Court of the United States is the highest judicial authority in the United States. It is regarded as the guardian of the constitution. The judiciary of the US is completely independent of the executive and the legislature. “ The Justices of the Supreme Court are nominated by the President with the consent of the Senate.

While the Supreme Court is established by the US Constitution, all other federal courts are created by the Congress” (Vile, 1999: 62). The Supreme Court has the authority to hold both original and appellate jurisdiction. Functions of the Government The British government makes strategies with the help of group of ministers, approval of the House of Commons and the final assent from the Queen. However, it is not possible for the government to implement the policies without the help of the government departments. Government departments and their agencies are instrumental in implementing government policy.

They often work with the local authorities, statutory boards and other government-sponsored organizations. The major government departments in Britain include the Ministry of Defense, Department of Social Security, Department of Trade and Industry and Department of Employment. These departments are headed by ministers. However, there are some departments that are headed by permanent officials from Civil Service. “ Many government departments are assisted by advisory councils or

committees. These bodies are generally appointed by the respective ministers" (James, 1999: 79).

Members from the Civil Service are integral part of the government activities. Their responsibilities range from policy formulation to carrying out the day-to-day duties of public administration. The US government carries out its operations through various departments. " Although the President and the US congress formulate strategies, the federal executive departments implement these policies in the country. They work closely with the state governments and the local governments. The federal executive departments are headed by the members of the Cabinet" (Lijphart, 1992: 65).

The main government departments in the United States are the Department of State, Department of Treasury, Department of Defense, Department of Justice, Department of Agriculture, Department of Commerce, Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Education and Department of Homeland Security. Heads of these departments are called as Secretaries. Conclusion The United States and Britain always worked closely to restore peace and democracy in different parts of the world. Sometimes they used force to achieve their objective and received huge criticism for that.

However, their dedication towards democracy, world peace and maintaining the constitutional values cannot be undermined. They always turned against the dictatorship and fascism and promoted democratic principles across the globe. The government systems of the United States and Britain are so popular that many governments have adopted them in their own countries.

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