

Comparing parliamentary systems with presidential



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The Parliamentary system vs. Presidential system is a frequently debated topic, and often the debate is based on which system brings about the most success. Unarguably, the success rate of a system is an adequate way of measuring its right to be implemented. However, 'success' is broken down into many components, and one of the most vital elements of success is stability. The question here is: what makes a stable system? Stability consists of political security, how well public demand is met, the difficulty level of being overthrown, the economic state of the country, and as a source simply put it "a stable political system is one that survives through crises without internal destruction"[1]. These are just a few of the criteria points from a vast array of fundamentals which construct the definition of 'stable'.

In the case of the UK and the US governmental systems, comparing both democracies, it becomes obvious that they share the same values and virtues to a certain extent. Perhaps one of the most stand-out similarities shared amongst the two systems is the responsibility they have for the people. Similarly the citizens ruled under these two different democracies are provided with the same, laws, rules and rights. However, there are several crucial differences between these two liberal democracies which make them so distinct.

The election process of the two diverse governmental systems is one of the key differences which make them incomparable to each other. While within a presidential system the voters vote directly for the president, within the parliamentary system such as in Britain, the prime minister is elected indirectly; constituents essentially vote for a representative, a member of

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parliament to represent them in parliament; the leader of the majority party which wins becomes the prime minister. This is seen to be undemocratic in comparison to the election process of presidential systems which is seen to be more direct as it is directly voicing the voters' opinions on who they want to lead the country.

However, there are many advantages to a parliamentary system in comparison to the presidential system. For example, with the parliamentary system of government, it is fairly easy and more rapid to pass legislation through. However, there are other factors which can play a role in the power of these systems, for example if a party has a majority in parliament it will become easier to pass legislation through. In the case of the UK, this was the situation with Labour in 1997 under Tony Blair, " Tony Blair's New Labour had gained a staggering 179-seat overall majority in the Commons as the Conservatives were tossed aside by the voters." [2] The ' Sweet and Maxwell' research shows that " In total Tony Blair's administration was the most prolific, introducing a total of 26, 849 new laws over his entire premiership." This argues that, majority leadership within parliament is a factor which leads to legislation passed through much faster. So, " A government with a secure majority can ensure its legislation passes..." [3] this supports the claim that there are other factors which play a role into guaranteeing that legislation passes through, such as the majority in parliament or other elements which include an emergency or unseen events such as an economic crisis. An example of this is the " Northern Ireland Act 1972, which took only seven hours and eleven minutes to reverse the effects of a court decision that undermined the powers of the armed forces in Northern

Ireland.”[4]Additionally, within a parliamentary system, the public is being represented while passing laws; as the House of Commons is a body which consists of representatives elected by constituents. If it is the case that, the House of Commons defy their constituents and try to pass a law through which is not in the interest of their constituents, they will get hassled by the media and pressure groups that have an immense influence on parliament. This is another factor and a very important one as it verifies that the parliamentary system is stable as it is a struggle to pass legislation through if it is not in the interest of their constituents. RSPA is an example of a pressure group which influenced legislation; “ The Animal Welfare Act 2006 came about as a result of campaigning by animal welfare groups such as the RSPCA”[5].

Conversely, within a presidential system which has been adopted by countries such as USA, the elaborate system of checks and balances within the presidential system makes it very challenging to pass legislation through as it often leads to gridlock. This is due to different parties controlling different branches within the presidential system, as it could be the case that legislation is controlled by one party and the presidency is controlled by the other. The paper, ‘ Divided government and the Legislative productivity of Congress’ states that, “ Divided government is thought to lead to gridlock, paralysis, and legislative slumps.”[6]This supports the claim that the presidential system is unstable as it leads to negative outcomes such as gridlock and paralysis where nothing gets solved making it an unstable system due to the fact that it is a struggle to pass legislation even if it is in the benefit of the people.

On the other hand, the checks and balances within a presidential system also have its gains as, “ Each branch of the government can check, or control, some parts of what the other branches do. This creates a balance of power in which no one person or group can become too powerful.”[7]However in the case of a parliamentary system, the easiness of passing legislation through can also mean that a government is unstable as, “ legislation made in haste can result in problems. For example, terrorists were able to avoid having their photographs and DNA taken because of faulty (hasty) drafting of legislation”[8]

Nevertheless, even though a presidential system proves to be stable as it prevents a single branch becoming excessively powerful, this can also have negative impacts as it is considered as a flaw, “ separation of power helps restrain the centralization and abuse of power, but with the loss of efficiency and the fragmentation of responsibility.”[9]Going back to the initial question, this expresses that the presidential system is unreliable and unstable as there would be confusion to who would be held liable if anything does occur.

Furthermore, within a parliamentary system it is very easy to get rid of an unsuitable prime minister as this can be easily done through a vote of no confidence. This argues that a parliamentary democracy is fairer and stable for the reason that it is very easy to get rid of a prime minister who is corrupt and does not rule a country as he or she promised to do. This is the case with the Thai Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra as according to the Telegraph Newspaper, “ The no-confidence vote, due on Wednesday, has been called by the opposition Democrat Party. They accuse Ms Yingluck and her ruling Pheu Thai party of ongoing corruption and are questioning her <https://assignbuster.com/comparing-parliamentary-systems-with-presidential/>

links to her brother, exiled former Thai premier Thaksin Shinawatra.”[10]So within the parliamentary system you can stop the ruling of an unsuitable prime minister, whereas with the presidential system it is very difficult to get rid of the president as he or she has a fixed term of office and the only way to get rid of him/her is through impeachment however “ In almost all countries presidential impeachment is difficult”[11]it’s a very tough process and it is much more difficult to get rid of an unsuitable president than it is to get rid of an unsuitable prime minister.

Perhaps it is safe to say that semi-presidentialism is a more stable governmental system rather than the two discussed throughout this essay as it is a combination of both systems. Also, “ Semi-presidentialism is an increasingly popular form of constitutional government.”[12]If more and more countries are adjusting themselves to this particular system, it is fair to say that this might be a more stable system than the presidential or parliamentary systems.

Though, in the book, ‘ Parliamentary versus Presidential Government’ the author quotes, “ Parliamentarism is the most widely adopted system of government...”[13]This supports the claim that, Parliamentarism must be very popular if it is the most widely adopted system of government, if it is that widespread it must have good features to it which make it so popular. So, when reaching a conclusion regarding which system is more stable, taking into account all the advantages and disadvantages, I believe it is justifiable to say that the parliamentary system can be considered as more stable than the presidential system. However, it all depends on what the country considers as a stable government. As some may argue that both of <https://assignbuster.com/comparing-parliamentary-systems-with-presidential/>

these systems have become unstable as sovereignty is lost. In the case with Britain and its parliamentary system, the European system overlaps the parliamentary system and can enforce its own laws onto Britain. However, in theory Britain could always withdraw from the EU. Nonetheless, the UN and the power it has, undermines both systems. Therefore, it really depends on a country itself, and what it considers as a stable system.