

Difference in the Prime Minister and President

In the UK there is a parliamentary system, where government governs in and through parliament. The party that has a majority of seats in the legislature forms the executive arm of government, and hence there is a 'fusion of powers', as the executive is drawn from parliament. In contrast, in the Presidential system, the legislature and head of the executive are both elected separately, and there is a clear separation of powers.

In comparing the executive, it is important to bear in mind that in the UK, many have labelled the system of government as an 'elective dictatorship'. This is because strong prime ministers with a large majority tend to dominate parliament. For example, after a full seven years before Blair lost a major vote in the House of Commons. The government can control parliament through a variety of mechanisms how they can dominate the Commons and thus find it easy to pass their proposed legislation. They can dominate the commons through party loyalty, whips, patronage. Halisham has described the UK system of parliamentary government as an 'elective dictatorship'.

The parliament due to such a strong link with the Prime Minister and his party means that he experiences loyalty when he proposed legislation. It is easy for the prime minister to get his proposed legislation passed due to the party loyalty, whips, patronage.

Whip System-is used by the Prime Minister to maintain a party loyalty. British MP's are faced with the threat of losing career prospect within government, temporary suspension, and hostility from colleagues and even an ultimate sanction of expulsion from the party. As a result, the whip is a vital tool for the PM. The PM's power of patronage (ability to appoint/dismiss ministers). Members of parliament usually vote along party lines because they know that their careers depend to a large extent on their loyalty to the government and ultimately the Prime Minister. Hence forth, the Prime Minister usually finds proposed legislation passed with ease if they have a strong majority in the House of Commons. The only opposition they may find is from the House of Lords whom can delay a bill for one year. In most cases, parliament will vote along party lines, and the House of Lords can only delay a bill for one year.

President cannot be removed by congress except through impeachment. A president can govern despite strong political opposition, such as Bill Clinton whom successfully ran a second term. However, in the UK, the Prime Minister constantly relies on support from Parliament. Internal splits within the same party can have very damaging effects on a Prime Minister. He or she can be removed through a vote of 'no confidence', which last happened with Callaghan's government in 1974, and took a long time for the Labour government to recover from this.

By contrast, the whip system in the US is not as strong. The reason why party discipline is undermined, is due to the fact congressmen has additional pressures. They are more concerned with the 'folks back home' rather than voting along party lines. This is true especially of the HOR where there are elections every two years. Furthermore, the candidate-centred nature of elections and diverse nature of the USA means Congressmen may not owe their position in Congress to the party platform.

Hence forth, although the British Parliament is sovereign, this is only in theory as the sovereign of the Parliament becomes the sovereignty of the government. The fact that the PM maintains such power over Parliament means he holds a position of dominance and has little opposition in passing his proposed legislation. The Prime minister can even pass controversial legislation without much

opposition from Parliament (controversial poll tax forced through in 1988).

The same cannot be said for the President whom faces a lot of opposition from Congress, especially if the President is of a different party to the majority house in Congress. For example, Bill Clinton and Congress gridlocked over budget in 1995 and the government had to be shut down.

The fact that the US is federalist means that the Presidents power is indeed limited and he has limited control in the affairs of other states. However, in the UK, the government is more centralised. Having said this, devolution has led to more power distributed to individual regions. However, it is important to bear in mind that devolved powers can be taken back.

In foreign affairs the President is said to have a lot more power than the UK prime minister, due to the fact he is leader of the armed forces, and the fact that he has the power to make 'executive agreements'. If congress refused to ratify a treaty, a President can get around this by making executive agreements with a leader of foreign country. This agreement has the same status in international law as a treaty. Bill Clinton made 209 treaties as President but over 2000 executive agreements. Having said this, the president's power in foreign affairs has declined ever since the War Powers Act of 1973. As a commander in chief the president can impose the US's authority on weaker nations, by deploying Armed forces to countries that are weaker e.g. (Afghanistan). In addition, the President has the power to order nuclear weapons to be used on enemies, such as Truman's decision to drop the Atomic bomb in 1945.

The prime minister is also subject to less scrutiny than the President. This is due to the fact there is strong party discipline which hinders scrutiny. Although the Prime minister can be scrutinised through question time, which is used to seek out flaws in government policy. It can be effective, such as when Minister Beverly Hughes resigned following questions on the administration of immigration controls. However, it is often criticised as a noisy, theatrical spectacle and used for the opposition party to 'score points'. Also the Prime Minister can evade answering certain questions. Having said this, scrutiny of the government in the US is much more effective due to the fact the standing committees are much more powerful and the fact that Congress can investigate the work of the CIA and intelligence services. The fact that he is more extensively scrutinized than the Prime Minister means that his power limits his power.

Conclusion-Domestic Policy PM more powerful Foreign Policy President is

Prime Minister: Can also hold elections when they see fit, and hence forth this can be done to their advantage i.e a PM may hold an election at the time the economy is doing well, and hence forth may win with greater ease.