

The comparison of the US President and the British Prime Minister appears from the onset, to provide some interesting differences since the President holds the position of Head of State as well as Head of Government. The Prime Minister, it would appear, has more influence in domestic, legislature and to an extent, executive branch. The US President, on the other hand, appears to have the position of supremacy in domestic politics, chief legislator and dominates his executive. He does not hold the same position of power in domestic affairs as the Prime Minister, but his position of strength appears to be in the realm of foreign and international matters, in which he faces little challenge from Congress.

It would appear that both offices hold different powers. The British Prime Minister, as shown by past examples, usually holds substantial power over the party from which their power starts from. The absence of a clear separation of powers in the British system gives the British Prime Minister the position of, head of the majority party in parliament. Due to such a strong link between the Prime Minister and his party he can often expect loyalty as a matter of course when forwarding legislation.

The President can not though, as no direct link exists between he and his party colleagues in Congress, a situation created by the 'separation of powers', a primary intention of the Founding Fathers when writing the Constitution to prevent executive dominance.

The Prime Minister also has, at his disposal, a powerful Whip system to maintain party loyalty. MPs are faced with the threat of losing career prospects, temporary suspension, the enmity of their colleagues, failure to be selected by their constituency party, and the ultimate sanction of expulsion from the party. Such weapons make the Whips a vital tool to the Prime Minister in maintaining party loyalty.

The power, which each office holds over the passage of legislation, is of great significance in determining which office holds the most power as a whole. Parliament may be sovereign but when considered thoroughly, this is only a theory. This view tends to show that the British Prime Minister, who usually maintains the support of a parliamentary majority, holds a position of dominance over the passage of legislation. The American system though, due to the 'Separation of Powers' between the Executive and legislative branches, provides a limit to Presidential power over the passage of legislation. The majority, which the Prime Minister can usually rely on, both because of the election system and the use of the Whips is in effect a guarantee of legislative success, especially true with the current Blair government which holds a massive majority in parliament, so much so that even legislation which faces much opposition from within can pass with ease.

The governing party's majority, the existence of whipped voting and the application of the guillotine allows the Prime Minister to effect control the work of such committees. The standing committees of Congress, in contrast, are not under the control of the President and have a much wider range of powers when considering legislation, and are themselves key policy initiative areas, acting as an alternative to Executive dominance of the legislative program.

Another formal power, which the President possesses, is that of veto. This, though subject to overturn by the 2/3 majority of both Houses, is a very effective power in legislating. Clinton, for example, used 17 vetoes between 1993 and 97 with great

success, having none overturned. The power of the pocket veto has also become an effective weapon of the president in controlling legislation, since it can not be overturned and needs not be explained, and can be used a bargaining counter with Congress to ensure success for Presidential legislation.

The extensive use of such powers in Foreign Affairs have been a significant element of the Presidency in recent years, as Executive Agreements have been used instead of Treaties so that Senate's approval is not required. They have also been used to send troops abroad, an example being the Grenada and Panama situations of the 1980's, when the Constitution was successfully sidestepped.

The Prime Minister cannot expect to hold so much influence. The Prime Minister does not have the ability to use Executive powers in this area either, and he does not hold the position of Head of State.

The President faces much more intense scrutiny from both Standing and Select Committees since they have a wider remit to evidence due to their extensive finance and freedom of information laws, added to this is the apparent lack of government secrecy on a scale such as that displayed in Britain. The investigations carried out by such bodies often gain public attention and mass media coverage, prominent examples being the Watergate Committee of 1974 which had mass following and demonstrated the power of such committees. Due to the direct link between the Prime Minister and the legislature, it may appear that he would face much more intense scrutiny than the President, as he has to face the Commons in debates and at Question Time. It would appear that the President is more extensively scrutinized than the Prime Minister, and thus his power is greatly limited in order to provide accountable government for the United States. The lesser degree of government secrecy and the 'separation of powers' provides a more suitable form of scrutiny.

In theory, the British Prime Minister is merely regarded as the 'first among equals' within the cabinet, and is usually expected to meet with cabinet. The President though, is not obliged to meet with his cabinet or consult them on policy, as cabinet is not a formal unit within the constitution. There is no collective decision making, and the President holds the power of supreme decision maker when consulting cabinet and may ignore the views of his cabinet, a policy favoured by Presidents such as Kennedy and Bush, who formalized meetings and paid little attention to the views of their cabinets.

In Britain there exists the image of collective decision making, which is supposed to help in stable government and collective decision making. The American President may, use alternative sources of information apart from his cabinet, such as the EXOP. This gives the President a vital alternative source which can only help increase his power as it provides vital information and analysis. Thatcher, in particular, greatly increased her power within the executive by increasing the power of the Prime Minister's Office and successfully using the Cabinet Secretariat as a further means of centralising power. Blair too has followed up on such a policy to adapt both executive branches to his advantage, to keep his cabinet in check, and to use it successfully in media relations.

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The prime minister can choose when to call a general election within the 5 year period, whereas the President cannot do this it must be held on the 1st Tuesday of the 1st full week in November of there 4th year. There are no limits to their terms in office the UK where as in the U.S Eisenhower imposed a two term limit to the presidency. This is seen as a great power for the prime minister to have as they get to choose when conditions, such as the economy and public opinion polls, are right for them to be re-elected to the position.