

# Comparative Politics

**COURSE CODE: B23PS03DC**

Undergraduate Programme in Political Science

Discipline Core Course

Self Learning Material



**SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY**

The State University for Education, Training and Research in Blended Format, Kerala

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**Comparative Politics**  
Course Code: B23PS03DC  
Semester - III

**Discipline Core Course  
Undergraduate Programme in  
Political Science  
Self Learning Material  
(With Model Question Paper Sets)**



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## COMPARATIVE POLITICS

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Semester- III

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Undergraduate Programme in  
Political Science

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# MESSAGE FROM VICE CHANCELLOR

Dear learner,

I extend my heartfelt greetings and profound enthusiasm as I warmly welcome you to Sreenarayananaguru Open University. Established in September 2020 as a state-led endeavour to promote higher education through open and distance learning modes, our institution was shaped by the guiding principle that access and quality are the cornerstones of equity. We have firmly resolved to uphold the highest standards of education, setting the benchmark and charting the course.

The courses offered by the Sreenarayananaguru Open University aim to strike a quality balance, ensuring students are equipped for both personal growth and professional excellence. The University embraces the widely acclaimed "blended format," a practical framework that harmoniously integrates Self-Learning Materials, Classroom Counseling, and Virtual modes, fostering a dynamic and enriching experience for both learners and instructors.

The University aims to offer you an engaging and thought-provoking educational journey. The UG programme in Political Science offers a comprehensive study of political processes and structures. It balances theory and practice, providing essential analytical tools. The curriculum follows a chronological progression of political thought and examines various systems and international relations. Designed for aspiring civil servants and future policymakers, it also develops critical thinking skills. The course prepares learners for careers in public service, diplomacy, and political consultancy. The Self-Learning Material has been meticulously crafted, incorporating relevant examples to facilitate better comprehension.

Rest assured, the university's student support services will be at your disposal throughout your academic journey, readily available to address any concerns or grievances you may encounter. We encourage you to reach out to us freely regarding any matter about your academic programme. It is our sincere wish that you achieve the utmost success.



Regards,  
Dr. Jagathy Raj V. P.

01-07-2025

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**BLOCK**

# Introduction to Comparative Politics



# Meaning, Nature and Scope of Comparative Politics

## UNIT

### Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this Unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ understand the meaning and definitions of comparative politics
- ◆ analyse the nature and significance of comparative politics
- ◆ explore the scope of comparative politics
- ◆ familiarise with fundamental concepts in comparative politics

### Prerequisites

Ananya, a curious student, often wondered how countries are run and why leaders make certain decisions. As she began studying comparative politics, she first tried to understand the basics of political life. She soon realised that politics is not just about elections or laws—it's about how power works and how it shapes people's lives.

She learned that power isn't always about control or force. It can also come from influence, acceptance, and the ability to guide important decisions. Ananya saw that political systems are not limited to governments alone. They include many players—leaders, citizens, civil society, and interest groups—all playing important roles.

She also noticed how some governments gain support through public agreement, while others use force to stay in control. This made her think more deeply about what makes power legitimate. Along the way, she found two ways to study politics: one that focuses on ideals, and another that looks at real-world facts and actions.

Ananya chose the second approach, understanding that comparative politics studies how politics actually works in different countries. With this knowledge, she felt ready to explore how power is shared, how institutions are built, and how societies shape their political lives.

# Keywords

Comparative Politics, Political Power, Authority, Political Systems, State and Non-state Actors, Political Process

## Discussion

### 1.1.1 Introduction

Comparative Politics stands as one of the three key branches of Political Science, alongside Political Theory and International Relations. Although scholars have long examined governments and political systems, it was only in the modern era that Comparative Politics began to take shape as a distinct area of study. Since its emergence, the field has expanded significantly, both in scope and in the way researchers approach it. The modern foundation of Comparative Politics began to form in the late 19th century. During the 20th century, especially in the post-war period, scholars based in American universities played a central role in shaping its direction. Their work introduced new research methods and brought fresh perspectives to the study of political institutions, behaviour, and systems across nations.

American academic influence reached its peak during the 1970s, when many of the dominant frameworks and theories in Comparative Politics emerged from the United States. Although that dominance declined in the decades that followed, the contributions of U.S. scholars continued to guide much of the global discourse. By the end of the 20th century, the field had grown beyond its earlier boundaries and adopted a more international character. Today, scholars from across the world contribute to Comparative Politics, but the foundational role played by American academia still holds a lasting impact. Today,

scholars use Comparative Politics to study political regimes, public policy, political culture, and institutional performance across regions. They ask key questions: Why do some democracies survive while others fail? How do history, economy, and social structure influence political outcomes? What explains the success or failure of similar policies in different contexts?

### 1.1.2 Meaning

According to M. G. Smith, 'Comparative politics is the study of the forms of political organisations, their properties, correlations, variations and modes of change.'

According to Roy C. Macridis and Robert Ward, 'Government is not the sole concern of students of comparative politics.' Comparative politics, no doubt, has to be concerned with the government structure but at the same time it has to take note of the following:

- ◆ Society, historical heritage and geographical and resource endowments
- ◆ Its social and economic organisations
- ◆ Its ideologies and value systems
- ◆ Its political style
- ◆ Its parties, interests, and leadership structure



According to Michael Curtis, 'Comparative politics is concerned with significant regularities, similarities and differences in the working of political institutions and political behaviour.'

According to E. A. Freeman, 'Comparative politics is a comparative analysis of the various forms of government and diverse political institutions.'

These definitions lay the groundwork for understanding comparative government in its modern form. The field not only compares formal institutions and structures of governance but also examines the practical workings behind them. It goes further by exploring how social, cultural, and economic factors—often outside official political frameworks—shape political behaviour. This approach blends the study of political machinery with an analysis of the less visible forces that influence how politics actually unfolds in different societies.

### 1.1.3 Nature of Comparative Politics

Comparative Politics focuses on examining and drawing insights from the functioning of political systems across varied social and cultural contexts. In doing so, it considers the full spectrum of political life, which includes three key dimensions: political activity, the processes through which politics unfolds, and the dynamics of political power. By looking at these interconnected aspects, the field aims to understand how different societies organise, exercise, and respond to political authority.

Political activity centres on how individuals and groups engage in resolving conflicts and competing for power. At its core, this process involves the authoritative distribution of values within a society. In other words, it examines how decisions are made and enforced in ways that reflect

collective priorities. Politics, in this sense, becomes inseparable from the concept of power. This field of study explores both state institutions and non-state actors that influence how political processes function. Non-governmental bodies, civil society groups, media, and other informal channels play a vital role by supplying information and shaping public sentiment. Political institutions respond to these inputs, converting them into binding decisions and policies. Therefore, politics is not just about government structures—it's about understanding who holds power, how they use it, and how society negotiates competing interests. At its heart, it reflects both a contest for control and a mechanism for settling disputes through the exercise of legitimate authority.

Contemporary comparative politics has taken a significant turn from its earlier descriptive traditions and now reflects a more dynamic and multifaceted approach. One of its key features is its emphasis on analytical research. Instead of simply describing political institutions, scholars now focus on critically examining how these institutions function in practice. Empirical analysis allows researchers to explore the actual workings of governments, shedding light on both structure and performance. Another defining aspect is its commitment to objective inquiry. As a branch of the social sciences, comparative politics relies on verifiable evidence. It aims to study political processes as they unfold in various social and cultural settings, drawing conclusions that can be supported through observation and data. The field also pays close attention to the deeper layers of political life. It explores individuals, groups, institutions, systems, and the environments in which they operate. Rather than remaining focused only on formal structures, it investigates how political actions take shape within specific contexts, capturing the real dynamics at play.

Importantly, the scope of comparative politics has broadened to include both developed and developing countries. Earlier studies largely centred on Western democracies, but in recent decades, scholars have turned their attention to political systems in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Thinkers like David Easton and Sidney Verba have underscored the importance of understanding political behaviour in emerging states, arguing that these societies offer valuable insights into how politics adapts and evolves. In short, contemporary comparative politics has moved away from narrow, tradition-bound frameworks. It now approaches the study of politics with greater realism, flexibility, and global awareness, providing tools to understand and compare political systems across vastly different settings.

#### 1.1.4 Scope of Comparative Politics

Politics is a continuous and ever-changing part of human life. It exists everywhere and at all times, mainly through the act of making decisions to address challenges or conflicts in society. This process comes from a specific kind of human behaviour—interactions that involve questions of power, authority, and public decision-making. Different political thinkers have offered various ways to understand this behaviour, depending on their own perspectives and approaches. Michael Oakeshott describes political activity as something people do when they come together in a civil society to discuss how their community is organised. They reflect on current arrangements, suggest changes, try to convince others, and take steps to make those changes happen. David Easton defines politics as the process through which societies make decisions about what values are most important and how those values are distributed—what he calls “the authoritative allocation of values.” Similarly, Harold Lasswell and Robert Dahl focus on

politics as a way of exercising power, while Jean Blondel sees it mainly as the act of making decisions.

Among these views, Oakeshott offers a particularly powerful image of what political life feels like. He compares it to sailing on a vast sea with no fixed destination, no solid ground, and no guaranteed safety. There is no starting point or final goal—just the constant task of staying balanced and afloat. The sea, in this metaphor, is both supportive and dangerous. Politics, then, is not about reaching a perfect system but about managing change and maintaining stability in an unpredictable world. In comparative politics, the term ‘politics’ usually refers to three aspects: *political activity, political process, and political power*. Political activity involves the efforts people make to create and resolve conflicts, especially in the context of competing interests and the pursuit of power. These conflicts arise when there is a gap between the values desired by the people and the values held or imposed by those in authority.

Governments play a key role in managing these conflicts. They rely on established systems to reduce everyday tensions and sometimes introduce additional measures in emergencies to prevent conflicts from escalating. Since politics is essentially about making authoritative decisions regarding values in society, some level of disagreement is natural. When conflicts become intense, the government must act to solve them using all available means—its main responsibility being to protect the unity of the political system. If the situation reaches a point where secession or civil war occurs, politics, in its usual sense, breaks down. In such cases, it’s no longer a matter of shared decision-making but of opposing groups enforcing their own values separately. This doesn’t mean political activity stops during civil wars or revolutions. Instead, such moments reflect the peak of political tension. The main goal of political



action, therefore, is to prevent society from reaching such extremes and to maintain a functioning system where conflicts can be resolved through political means.

*Political activity* begins when a conflict or dilemma arises—when two or more people have competing interests and seek decisions that favour their own views. The moment someone in a group or community demands a common rule or policy, a political situation is created. Even choosing to reject that demand still involves making a decision, and that itself becomes a political act. Tensions grow when members of the group support completely different policies. This leads to a clash of interests. Such conflicts can be resolved in two ways: either through peaceful means like discussion, persuasion, compromise, and negotiation, or through force and coercion. In peaceful cases, both sides may give up part of their demands to find a solution they can accept. In the case of force, one group's will may overpower the other. Peaceful resolution leads to what can be called '*spontaneous unanimity*'—agreement reached freely. When force is used, we see an '*imposed consensus*'—agreement that is enforced. In either case, political activity ends when the conflict is resolved. In this sense, political activity begins and ends with the presence or absence of conflict.

*Political process* is an extension of political activity. It includes not only the formal institutions of the state but also the many groups and organisations that influence decision-making. These non-state actors, like associations and interest groups, also deal with internal conflicts and power struggles, much like governments do. These groups try to influence government decisions to protect or promote their own interests. This creates ongoing interaction—both among the groups themselves and between the groups and the government. As political thinker Finer pointed out, a private group increases its chances of success if it can gain the support

of the government. Once this competition happens within the state's framework, it becomes a public matter. Groups either try to get the government to adopt and enforce their views or aim to become part of the government themselves. In short, the political process includes all these efforts by private associations to influence, shape, or join the government and take part in policy-making.

Comparative politics looks at all forms of political activity and processes. As a result, it often appears to absorb national governments into a broader network of many smaller 'governments' or groups that exist within society. This makes it necessary to study government not in isolation, but in relation to the various non-state associations that try to influence it and are also affected by it. Jean Blondel explains that government is the system through which values are distributed—and sometimes this involves the use of force. To understand how this works, we need to look at three stages. *First*, how values and demands are expressed and brought to the government's attention. *Second*, how the government processes these demands and turns them into decisions that apply to everyone. *Third*, how these decisions are put into action through the different levels of authority. This entire system works like a dynamic cycle—receiving input from various sources, processing it, and producing responses. In this sense, the government resembles a machine that receives signals from its environment and transforms them into actions and outcomes.

Finally, the scope of comparative politics includes the subject of '*political power*'. Different thinkers have explained it in different ways. Carl J. Friedrich calls power a kind of human relationship. R.H. Tawney sees it as the ability of a person or a group to influence how others behave. Harold Lasswell focuses on decision-making and says that power is about being part of the process where decisions are made—especially

those that affect how others act. In this way, politics becomes a specific use of power, where individuals or groups try to shape the actions of others to match their own interests. Simply put, power means the various outside influences that can guide or direct a person's behaviour in a particular way.

The study of politics now looks closely at the structure of political systems. To understand politics well, we need to identify the ruling groups—both those in power and those outside it—and see how they influence things. Politics mainly happens within groups, but it also involves individuals and the wider society. Authority is closely tied to power: in democracies, leaders base their authority on broad agreement, while in totalitarian systems, rulers use force to maintain control

and create a false sense of legitimacy. This leads to an important idea in comparative politics: when agreement is weak, force becomes stronger, and when agreement is strong, force is less needed. Because of these key ideas, 'politics' in comparative politics has a unique meaning. It is looked at without moral judgement and focuses on real, observable actions. Instead of just studying the state and government, it studies how power is used in practice. As Curtis explains, politics is an organised struggle over power, involving choices between competing values, ideas, people, interests, and demands. The study of politics looks at how power is gained, used, and controlled; why it is used; how decisions are made; what influences those decisions; and the context in which they happen.

## Recap

- ◆ Comparative Politics focuses on the study of political systems by analysing similarities and differences across countries.
- ◆ It moves beyond the traditional study of government and includes the examination of power, authority, institutions, and political behaviour.
- ◆ The subject adopts an empirical approach, emphasising observation and evidence rather than normative judgments.
- ◆ Comparative Politics examines both formal political structures like legislatures and executives, and informal ones like political parties and interest groups.
- ◆ The scope of the field includes political culture, political development, policy-making processes, and citizen participation.
- ◆ Power and authority are central concepts, where power refers to the ability to influence and authority implies legitimate power.
- ◆ Scholars distinguish between democratic and authoritarian regimes by how they use consensus or coercion to maintain control.
- ◆ The field involves both macro-level studies (like types of political systems) and micro-level analyses (like individual political behaviour).
- ◆ Comparative methods help understand how political systems function, adapt, and respond to global and internal challenges.

## Objective Questions

1. What does comparative politics primarily study?
2. Power is best described as the ability to?
3. Authority is considered legitimate power when it is based on?
4. Which approach does comparative politics emphasise?
5. Political process includes interactions between state and?
6. Coercion involves the use of?
7. Who are part of the ruling class?
8. Consensus weakens when coercion is?
9. Politics involves disputes about?
10. Empirical study focuses on?

## Answers

1. Political systems
2. Influence
3. Consensus
4. Empirical
5. Non-state actors
6. Force
7. Elites
8. Strong
9. Power
10. Observable facts

## Assignments

1. Explain the meaning and significance of comparative politics in the study of political science.
2. Discuss the nature of political power and authority in different political systems.
3. Analyse the scope of comparative politics in the study of political science.
4. Evaluate the relationship between consensus and coercion in maintaining political order.
5. Explore the empirical approach in comparative politics and its advantages over normative theories.

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## Suggested Reading

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# Evolution and Growth of Comparative Politics

## UNIT

### Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ understand the historical development of comparative politics
- ◆ analyse the shift from the study of formal institutions across diverse societies
- ◆ evaluate the impact of world events on the expansion of comparative political inquiry
- ◆ explore the contribution of major scholars in the discipline of comparative politics

### Prerequisites

Long ago, in ancient Athens, scholars like Aristotle began asking powerful questions about how societies govern themselves. He compared different forms of government and set the stage for what we now call comparative politics. For centuries, political thinkers continued this journey, focusing mainly on Western models—parliaments, courts, and constitutions. But the world did not stand still. When the two World Wars shook global politics and new nations emerged from colonial rule in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, the field had to evolve. Scholars started to see politics not just in official documents or legal systems but in real social struggles, cultural traditions, and power dynamics. They explored how ordinary people lived under different political systems and how global forces shaped local governance. Imagine yourself walking through this rich historical path. Bring along your basic understanding of political systems and theories—it will help you connect past ideas with present realities.



# Keywords

Comparative Method, Third World Politics, Political Legitimacy, Historical Analysis, Political Institutions, Cybernetics

## Discussion

### 1.2.1 Introduction

The previous unit discussed the meaning, nature and scope of the discipline of Comparative Politics in detail. Now, it is pertinent to see the evolution of Comparative Politics as a separate discipline distinct from the parent discipline of Political Science. Comparative politics became especially important in the 1950s, when several leading American political scholars tried to reshape the study of politics. They moved away from just studying foreign governments and instead focused on comparing entire political systems. This marked a shift from looking only at government structures to understanding how different political systems actually work. As a result, the field evolved from what was once called the study of “foreign governments” into what is now known as “comparative political systems.” The development of this discipline can be seen in three broad phases: an early stage that was basic and lacked depth, a more structured and refined middle stage, and a present stage that continues to become more advanced and inclusive in interpreting and the comparative analysis.

### 1.2.2 Phases of Evolution

In the early phase of political studies, thinkers like Aristotle, Machiavelli, de Tocqueville, Bryce, Ostrogorski, and Weber played a key role. They used the comparative method mainly to understand how different political systems worked. Their goal was to observe and compare existing and past political systems to find patterns and key

forces that shaped political development. They collected political data and, through selection and comparison, tried to identify common types and trends. John Stuart Mill explained that this method could take different forms, with the most effective being the ‘method of difference’. This involved comparing two political systems that were alike in every way except one, to identify the impact of that one differing factor. Lord James Bryce also supported this method, calling it scientific. He believed it was scientific because it helped draw general conclusions by linking similar causes to similar outcomes. He stressed the importance of identifying unique factors in each country that might affect results. These early efforts helped build a strong base for the modern study of comparative politics.

In the second stage of comparative politics, thinkers like Samuel H. Beer, M. Haas, Bernard Ulam, and Roy C. Macridis introduced a more thoughtful and systematic way of comparing political systems. Unlike earlier writers who used comparison mainly to understand how governments worked, these scholars approached it with a clear purpose—to make their analysis more accurate and useful. They studied political institutions more deeply and realistically, treating them as parts of broader political systems rather than just structures of government. This phase is called the ‘sophisticated’ phase because of the careful methods these scholars used. They focused on various approaches, such as area-based studies, functional and institutional comparisons, and problem-centred analysis. They also addressed key

challenges in research, like how to define concepts clearly, how to create common categories for comparison, how to deal with cultural differences, and how to ensure the data they used was reliable. Their work marked a turning point in comparative politics by making it a more structured and scientific field of study, rooted in real-world observations and thoughtful methods.

The final stage in the evolution of comparative politics shows a high level of refinement, shaped by the work of scholars like David Easton, Gabriel Almond, James Coleman, Karl Deutsch, G.B. Powell, Harold Lasswell, Robert Dahl, Edward Shils, Harry Eckstein, David Apter, Lucian Pye, Sidney Verba, Myron Weiner, and others. These thinkers helped deepen the field by using sets of related concepts to compare political systems more effectively. Each scholar introduced a unique framework or language to explain political behaviour and systems. Easton, for example, used terms such as inputs, outputs, demands, supports, feedback, and environment to describe how political systems function. Almond focused on input and output functions as a way to study all political systems in a comparable manner. Karl Deutsch applied ideas from cybernetics, introducing terms like autonomy, memory, feedback, and information flow to political analysis. These different approaches aimed to create models that could be applied across countries, regardless of their size, development level, or historical context. This phase is known for its advanced and systematic methods, moving beyond earlier, more descriptive studies to offer detailed and generalisable insights into how political systems work around the world.

In its most recent development, the field of comparative politics has taken on several defining characteristics that distinguish it from earlier approaches. Modern comparative politics emphasises both analysis and empirical investigation. Scholars now rely

on observation and real-world data rather than just theoretical assumptions. This shift has broadened the field and clarified many earlier confusions in political studies. Carl J. Friedrich and Harry Eckstein noted that political science in the late 19th century, under the influence of early positivism, moved away from evaluating what governments ought to be and focused more on describing how they actually function. For instance, the term “democracy” evolved from representing a perfect ideal to accommodating a range of real-world political systems, even if they deviated from that ideal.

Contemporary comparative politics doesn't limit itself to official institutions like legislatures or executives. Instead, it examines the full political system, including informal practices and social behaviour. By looking at patterns of political behaviour and the underlying social forces, scholars gain a more complete picture of how power is exercised. Using the concept of the “political system,” researchers consider both inputs (like public demands or interest group activity) and outputs (such as policies or laws). As Blondel observed, while legal structures are important for stability, understanding how governments function requires attention to both formal rules and the social processes behind them.

A major expansion in comparative politics is the inclusion of developing nations in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. The field no longer focuses only on Western democracies but studies all types of governments. This shift arose partly from the need to understand the political challenges in newly independent states, many of which were navigating unstable democratic systems. Scholars realised that these countries offered real-life testing grounds for political theories and could help refine models for stable governance. As Wood pointed out, political scientists saw these emerging states as laboratories for examining how political



systems respond to pressure and change, and how democracy could be supported in fragile environments.

Comparative politics has become increasingly interdisciplinary. It draws heavily from sociology, psychology, economics, anthropology, and even biology. For example, the systems approach—particularly the structural-functional and input-output models—originated in biology but was adapted by scholars like David Easton, Robert Merton, and Talcott Parsons. As a result, the study of politics now overlaps with political sociology and political psychology. Topics such as political development, modernisation, leadership, and socialisation reflect this blend. Scholars recognise that understanding political behaviour often requires insight into values, identity, and cultural change.

Lastly, modern comparative politics leans towards empirical analysis and away from normative theory. The aim is to understand politics as it exists, not as it should be. Moral or ethical judgements play a minimal role, and the emphasis is on studying how political systems actually function. Thinkers like Leo Strauss, who insisted on including values in political theory, stand apart from this trend. Though terms like ‘values’ are still used—for instance, in David Easton’s definition of politics as the “authoritative allocation of values”—they are understood in a practical, not ethical, sense. Values in this context refer to the importance assigned to resources or decisions by those in power. Thus, political science becomes the study of how authorities distribute and assign significance to various societal goods.

### 1.2.3 Development of the Discipline

During the mid-20th century, leading scholars like Harold Lasswell and Gabriel Almond played a key role in shaping comparative politics as a distinct field. They aimed to separate it from Political

Theory, International Relations, and Area Studies. Unlike Political Theory, which mainly deals with abstract ideas, comparative politics combines theory with practical research. It involves classifying political systems, identifying patterns, building hypotheses, and testing them with real-world data. Scholars explained that theory and comparative research are closely linked—research often starts with a theory, tests it in various political settings, and then refines it based on the findings. This method helped develop important concepts such as party systems, federalism, and parliamentary structures. Through this ongoing process, comparative politics became a more dynamic and evidence-based area of study.

Comparative politics has long faced overlapping concerns with International Relations, mainly because both fields explore global political dynamics. The overlap becomes clear when comparative politics examines countries within the broader framework of the global capitalist order. Thinkers like A.G. Frank and Immanuel Wallerstein developed influential approaches such as Dependency Theory and Underdevelopment Theory through this lens. However, key differences remain. Comparative politics focuses primarily on political structures and processes within countries, whereas International Relations delves into how countries interact with one another—such as diplomacy, conflict, and alliances. Similarly, Area Studies emerged during World War II when governments urgently needed in-depth understanding of specific regions critical to wartime strategy. This led to interdisciplinary teams of social scientists who closely examined a region’s history, society, economy, and culture to inform policy decisions. While comparative politics also investigates regions in detail, it goes beyond immediate concerns. It uses analytical frameworks to interpret long-term political trends and underlying patterns.

The shift from studying comparative government to focusing on comparative politics happened mainly due to two key developments after World War II. First, political science as a subject began to change from within. Second, the scope of study widened to include newly independent countries that emerged after decolonisation. By the late 1950s, political science was influenced by the *Behavioural Revolution*. There was a growing interest in making the subject more scientific and interdisciplinary. Scholars began to focus more on how people actually behaved in politics rather than just the rules written in constitutions. This required collecting large amounts of data from different countries. Apart from collecting data, researchers also developed clear concepts, models, and hypotheses. At the same time, the rise of new nations in Asia, Africa, and Latin America introduced new challenges. These societies were very different from those in the West, so scholars started studying topics like development and modernisation to explain the political and social differences between rich and poor countries.

In comparative politics, two key approaches became popular: the *systems approach* and *structural-functional analysis*. The *systems approach* came from biology and physical sciences, where the human body or a machine is seen as a system made up of smaller parts or sub-systems. These parts have their own roles but are closely connected. Similarly, human society is made up of systems—such as political and economic—that perform specific functions. As societies develop, they move from simple to complex forms. People's roles become more specialised, and separate systems emerge with clearer purposes and boundaries. A society becomes more modern as its systems grow more organised. The political system, in this view, is expected to carry out policies that help development.

The structural-functional approach, taken from sociology, added to this by focusing on common patterns across different societies. It claimed that all political systems, no matter their development level, have similar basic structures and functions. These can be studied and compared to understand how societies work and how they try to stay balanced while moving from tradition to modernity.

The creation of many new nations after decolonisation encouraged scholars to develop broader methods to study politics across different societies. Using approaches like systems analysis and structural-functionalism, they believed that all political systems—no matter their history, economy, or culture—could be studied using the same tools. This led to an important debate: Should the same ideas used to study European governments—such as multi-party systems, federalism, and parliamentary or presidential models—also be used to understand the politics of newly independent countries? These concepts had come from long-term observations of Western governments. Scholars like Lucian Pye argued that non-Western countries had their own unique political processes shaped by different histories and cultures. Although some recognition was given to cultural differences, most scholars continued to use Western ideas of political development and modernisation, as suggested by thinkers like James Coleman, Gabriel Almond, and Lucian Pye. On the other hand, Leftist thinkers developed ideas like Underdevelopment and Dependency to explain how developing countries differed from the West. Overall, this period focused on building large, general theories to compare political systems globally.

From the beginning, broad approaches in comparative politics faced strong criticism. Scholars argued they were too focused on Western experiences, overly simplistic, and aimed too high. Comparing political systems on such a large scale turned out to



be very difficult. This led to a shift toward more culturally aware studies and mid-level theories that focused on specific issues rather than grand generalisations. Many researchers grew dissatisfied with their earlier work. Even Gabriel Almond, a leading figure, wrote in the *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* that comparative politics seemed more like a ‘movement’ than a proper sub-field of political science. Though during the late 1970s, the field had slowed down, comparative politics became broader and deeper, with more refined theories and a wider range of case studies, aiming to better connect ideas through strong theoretical foundations.

#### 1.2.4 Comparative Government and Comparative Politics

The modern study of comparative government and politics has been greatly enriched by recent scholars who have widened its scope to include a larger number of countries, especially those in Africa, Asia, and Latin America—often referred to as the developing world. These scholars have followed the advice of Lord James Bryce, who urged that the real workings of government in various forms should be closely examined. They have also built upon the views of James T. Shotwell, who noted the lack of a clear reason for selecting certain countries for comparison and the absence of a proper framework to explain their similarities and differences. The new wave of scholars has not only taken this observation seriously but has also worked to correct it by offering broader and more systematic studies of political systems across the world.

While the terms ‘comparative politics’ and ‘comparative government’ are often used interchangeably, they differ in scope. Comparative government mainly studies political systems by focusing on their institutions and how they function.

Comparative politics goes further, including everything in comparative government but also looking at politics beyond formal state structures. This means it doesn’t just study the legislature, executive, judiciary, or even political parties and pressure groups linked to the state. It also examines topics usually found in economics, sociology, psychology, and anthropology—but from a political angle. As Sidney Verba explains, the study should move beyond simple descriptions to deeper theoretical questions, focus on political processes as well as institutions, and include not only Western countries but also emerging nations in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

Machael Curtis explains the difference between comparative politics and comparative government clearly. Comparative politics studies important patterns, similarities, and differences in how political institutions work and how people behave politically. To understand these, it uses hypotheses, tests ideas, collects data, and applies research methods like sampling and communication studies. However, Curtis stresses that this is not about finding absolute certainty or strict predictability, nor does it reject knowledge that isn’t scientific. The categories and systems used are always temporary and never final. Politics cannot be reduced to automatic responses; sometimes, the most important political changes come from shifts in public mood that can’t be measured. Chilcote adds that comparative government mainly studies the institutions and functions of nation-states, especially in Europe, focusing on executives, legislatures, judiciaries, and related groups like political parties and pressure groups. Comparative politics, however, covers a broader range of political activities, including governments and also groups not directly tied to national governments, such as tribes, communities, associations, and unions.

In short, the term ‘comparative politics’ is better than ‘comparative government’ because

it covers a wider and more complete range of topics. Blondel points out that 'comparative government' has two parts—horizontal and vertical. When both parts are included, it becomes similar to 'comparative politics.' Vertical comparison studies the state alongside other political groups and associations that influence how the political system works.

Horizontal comparison looks at the state in relation to other national governments. So, Blondel is right to say that comparative government turns into comparative politics when it includes both these views. He defines comparative government as the study of patterns among national governments around the world today.

## Recap

- ◆ Comparative politics evolved from the classical study of government to a broader discipline analysing all political systems.
- ◆ Early scholars like Aristotle laid the foundation by comparing political institutions in ancient states.
- ◆ The traditional approach focused mainly on legal and formal institutions in Western countries.
- ◆ After World War II, the emergence of new states in Asia, Africa, and Latin America broadened the field.
- ◆ Comparative politics started to include informal political practices, cultural factors, and political behaviour.
- ◆ The Cold War and global conflicts further influenced the expansion of the discipline's scope.
- ◆ Scholars like Almond, Pye, Apter, and Huntington contributed to the development of behavioural and modernisation theories.
- ◆ The field shifted towards empirical research and systematic comparisons across different regimes.
- ◆ Third-world countries became central to comparative political studies due to their diverse experiences of development and governance.
- ◆ Today, comparative politics embraces both traditional and modern tools to understand global political realities.

## Objective Questions

1. Who is considered the father of comparative politics?
2. Which war significantly influenced the evolution of comparative politics?
3. What term is used to describe non-industrialised nations studied in comparative politics?
4. Which scholar introduced the concept of political development?
5. What approach focuses on political behaviour rather than institutions?
6. Which continent saw the rise of many new states after World War II?
7. What term did Almond use for his framework in comparative politics?
8. What was the earlier name for the discipline now called comparative politics?
9. Which concept highlights the breakdown of political systems in developing countries?
10. Which method is central to comparing different political systems?

## Answers

1. Aristotle
2. WWII
3. Third World
4. Lucian Pye
5. Behaviouralism
6. Africa
7. Structural-Functionalism
8. Comparative Government
9. Political Decay
10. Comparative

## Assignments

1. Trace the historical development of comparative politics from ancient times to the modern era.
2. Analyse the impact of World War II and decolonisation on the scope of comparative politics.
3. Discuss how the entry of third-world nations into global politics influenced comparative political studies.
4. Evaluate the contributions of key scholars such as Almond, Huntington, and Apter in shaping comparative politics.
5. Compare the traditional and modern approaches in comparative political analysis, with examples.

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# Contemporary Trends in Comparative Politics

## UNIT

### Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ understand the Comparative Method
- ◆ analyse various methodological approaches in political research
- ◆ evaluate the recent trends in Comparative Politics
- ◆ explore the significance of Comparative Politics as an academic discipline

### Prerequisites

Meet Arjun, a student deeply curious about the ways in which nations are governed across the world. With a solid grasp of the core principles of political science, he now finds himself more interested in how governments work in real life and how they affect people's lives. He remembers learning about a method that compares different political systems to see what makes them similar or different.

He is especially curious about how a country's society, economy, and the way its government is set up can shape how it is ruled. Arjun has also started learning about public policy and political economy, where he sees that policies are not just rules but also show what a society cares about and how it plans to grow. With this background, Arjun feels ready to learn more about how today's scholars study politics—what they focus on, the ways they do their research, and how they now pay more attention to what governments actually achieve and how they help their countries move forward.



# Keywords

Comparative Method, Political Economy, Public Policy, Social Cleavages, Institutional Analysis, Democratic vs. Authoritarian Regimes, Case Study Approach

## Discussion

### 1.3.1 The Comparative Method

Scholars hold different views on what the comparative method means and how far it extends. Some, like A.N. Eisenstadt, believe it's not a distinct method but simply a way of focusing on broad comparisons across societies, institutions, or social structures. Others, like Arend Lijphart, argue that it is indeed a proper method—one of the main ways, alongside experimental, statistical, and case study methods, to develop general conclusions in research. Harold Lasswell takes a different stance. He suggests that anyone using a scientific approach is already comparing by nature, so there's no need for a separate comparative method. Gabriel Almond also supports this idea, treating the comparative method as part of scientific reasoning itself. However, most scholars agree that the comparative method is used to find relationships between variables—not to measure them. Measuring comes first; comparing comes after. So, the comparative method focuses on linking and understanding these variables rather than collecting raw data. It's also important to distinguish between a method and a technique. The comparative method is broad and general, not a narrow or technical tool. That's why some prefer to call it a "comparative approach" instead of a strict method, as it's flexible and widely used. In this sense, it functions as a central research strategy rather than just a supporting tool.

The comparative method becomes easier to understand when we look at it alongside the experimental, statistical, and case study

methods. In the experimental method, researchers study the link between two variables in a controlled environment. But since such controlled settings are rarely possible in political science, scholars turn to alternatives. One such alternative is the statistical method. This approach uses mathematical analysis of real-world data to find relationships between variables. To handle the issue of control, researchers often use techniques like partial correlations or cross-tabulations. This means dividing the data into groups—for example, based on age, income, or education—and examining how two variables relate within each group. This method has become a common and widely accepted tool in empirical research, as it follows the same logic as experiments. The comparative method works in a similar way to the statistical method but usually involves fewer cases, making full statistical analysis harder. Although it shares the same reasoning, it cannot fully match the experimental method used in natural sciences. While helpful, the comparative method has its own limits and is not a complete substitute for experimental research.

The weaknesses of the comparative method can be reduced through several practical steps. First, the statistical method should be used wherever possible, especially when studying smaller units. However, when entire political systems are compared, the comparative method becomes necessary. In fact, both methods can work together: comparative analysis can be the first step where broad hypotheses about political

systems are developed, and the statistical method can follow as the second step to test these hypotheses with larger samples. Second, researchers should not give too much weight to negative findings, especially when based on a single exception in a small sample. Instead of seeking universal truths, the aim should be to develop generalisations that apply in most cases. Third, increasing the number of cases strengthens research outcomes. Comparative politics has progressed by developing broader theories—often called '*grand theories*'—through studies that involve many countries or political systems. For instance, structural-functional analysis opened up new paths for comparative studies. Fourth, if increasing the number of cases isn't possible, researchers can include more variables. This allows broader generalisations. Fifth, choosing cases that are similar in most ways—treating those similarities as constants—and different only in the key variables being studied helps identify specific influences. Comparing countries within a region, like Latin America, Scandinavia, or Asia, is one way to apply this approach. However, scholars caution that this method should be seen as a tool for manageability, not a limitation.

Another option is to study regions within a country or at different points in time. This is often easier because such regions usually function under the same political or legal framework. For example, the diverse states within the Indian Union offer a valuable yet underexplored opportunity for comparative research. Finally, scholars suggest focusing on a few key variables instead of many. This makes the study more manageable and often leads to what is called "middle-range theorising," where only parts of political systems are compared. This approach has worked well in anthropology and can be adapted in political science by narrowing the scope of comparison. The case study method is used when a single case is examined in detail. Though it often stands alone, it is also

closely linked to the comparative method. In many cases, a case study becomes part of the comparative approach when an in-depth look at a particular variable is needed before comparing it with similar cases. The scientific standing of the case study method is debated, as science usually aims to make broad generalisations. A single case cannot prove or disprove a general theory. Still, case studies are valuable for forming general ideas and even building theories in political science—especially when multiple case studies focus on similar topics.

Case studies can vary in type. Some are descriptive or interpretative without a theoretical base, while others aim to confirm or challenge existing theories. Each type is useful depending on the research goal. Both the comparative and case study methods have limitations. However, their real value depends on how carefully and effectively they are applied. It is the researcher's task in comparative politics to use these methods in ways that highlight their strengths. Since World War II, many scholars have worked to refine these methods and improve their role in scientific political research.

### 1.3.3 Recent Trends and Significance

After the Second World War, comparative politics went through several important stages of development, with scholars constantly refining their approaches. In the *early phase*, the focus was on the input side of political systems, drawing heavily from political sociology. It was believed that political systems could only be understood in the context of their broader social structures. Political conflicts were seen as a reflection of deeper social divisions—such as class, religion, or ethnicity. This reductionist view, however, was challenged by political thinkers like Samuel Huntington, who argued that politics should be studied as an independent sphere, not merely as a result of social or economic forces. This brought about a *second*



*phase* in comparative politics, which shifted attention towards the institutions of politics—such as political parties, party systems, and forms of government. The focus was on how different types of political systems functioned, especially in distinguishing democratic, authoritarian, and transitional regimes. The key concern moved from promoting democracy to ensuring political order and stability through strong institutions.

In the *third phase*, scholars began to explore the output side of political systems. They asked: what do political systems actually achieve? This shift was driven by a renewed understanding of the central role of the state, across both liberal and critical perspectives. As a result, comparative politics began to merge with the study of public policy and political economy, focusing on what policies political systems create and what outcomes they deliver. This integration led to the emergence of comparative public policy, marking a deeper interest in not just how political systems are structured, but what they do in practice. Those who focus on the input side of political systems often highlight how social divisions influence politics. The core question here is: how much does the social environment shape political structures? Reducing politics entirely to social cleavages is as extreme as claiming that political institutions operate independently of social and economic factors. The real challenge is to find a balance—how can we understand the interaction between social and economic influences and the autonomy of political systems?

In comparative politics, this balance becomes essential when trying to identify key ideas that help us compare political systems across countries. Earlier attempts to divide political systems into traditional, developing, and modern types failed because these categories carried value judgments. As a result, scholars turned to a more useful distinction—between democratic and

authoritarian systems. Even within democratic regimes, there is no full agreement on what specific features define democracy. While the idea of democracy is widely accepted, scholars have pointed out at least two main types: the Westminster model, which relies on majority rule, and the consensus model (or consociational democracy), which focuses on power-sharing and broad agreement. This leaves a much larger group of non-democratic regimes, especially in the Third World, where more than 160 countries still lack a clear classification. There is no agreed system to categorise these regimes. Future research in comparative politics will likely focus more on these non-democratic systems to identify key patterns and differences using a few common dimensions.

Since the mid-1970s, comparative politics has seen an important shift with the rise of studying public policy and political economy. This approach still looks at the outcomes of political systems but moves away from broad theories about political development and modernisation. Instead, it focuses more narrowly on the state's central role in development. The focus has shifted from large-scale analysis to a middle level that looks closely at how problems are identified, agendas are set, decisions are made, and policies are put into action. This change has made comparative politics more practical and problem-solving oriented. While the field still draws from multiple disciplines, it has moved closer to economics and somewhat away from sociology. There is also a renewed interest in ethical and value-based questions, not just scientific methods. This approach has helped reconnect academic political science with the real-world practice of public administration. Public policy helps societies decide how to produce goods and services within the limits of their resources. It asks key questions like: What role should the state have compared to the private sector? And which policies best support development?

By comparing how different states act in this public role, we can understand the proper scope of the state. Public policy, therefore, describes, analyses, and suggests solutions.

Today, politics is often seen as making “public choices” among different policy options, aiming to bring knowledge together to study decision-making and help make societies more democratic. Political economy focuses on how political decisions affect the production and exchange of goods and services. It looks at how leaders manage limited resources through their choices. This approach is especially useful for developing countries, where political decisions shape different paths of development. Leaders

must decide if policies should simply react to, encourage, or actively create social and economic change. In this context, ‘Political Development’ means increasing a state’s ability to meet growing demands and gather the resources needed. Political economy offers the theory, while public policy provides the methods to apply it. This has led to more focused, smaller-scale comparisons, often within single regions or groups of similar regions. Overall, comparative politics has become more fragmented and no longer has one fixed definition. This allows researchers to focus on what is most relevant and practical, rather than trying to explain everything on a global scale as before.

## Recap

- ◆ Comparative politics has transitioned from broad theoretical frameworks to more focused analyses of political institutions and policies.
- ◆ The comparative method involves analysing different political systems to identify patterns and differences.
- ◆ Social cleavages, such as class and ethnicity, significantly influence political dynamics and governance structures.
- ◆ Institutional analysis examines how political institutions shape and are shaped by societal forces.
- ◆ The integration of political economy and public policy has enriched the study of comparative politics.
- ◆ Democratic and authoritarian regimes present distinct challenges and areas of study within comparative politics.
- ◆ Case studies provide in-depth insights into specific political phenomena and are valuable for theory development.
- ◆ Methodological pluralism enhances the robustness of comparative political analyses.
- ◆ Understanding the role of the state is crucial in analysing development processes and policy outcomes.
- ◆ Contemporary comparative politics emphasises the importance of context-specific studies over universal generalisations.

## Objective Questions

1. Who argued that the comparative method is a fundamental scientific approach in political research?
2. Which scholar emphasised the role of political institutions in ensuring order and stability?
3. What method involves analysing a single case in depth to understand broader political phenomena?
4. Which approach focuses on the impact of political decisions on economic outcomes?
5. What term describes divisions in society that influence political behaviour and alignments?
6. Which model of democracy emphasises majority rule and centralised authority?
7. What is the primary focus of public policy analysis in comparative politics?
8. Which method uses statistical tools to analyse political data across multiple cases?
9. What concept refers to the increasing capacity of a political system to meet and induce changing demands?
10. Which scholar critiqued the reductionist view of politics being solely determined by social structures?

## Answers

1. Almond
2. Samuel P. Huntington
3. Case study
4. Political Economy
5. Cleavages
6. Westminster

7. Outcomes
8. Statistical
9. Development
10. Huntington

## Assignments

1. Discuss the evolution of comparative politics from grand theories to contemporary approaches focusing on public policy and political economy.
2. Analyze the strengths and limitations of the comparative method in political research.
3. Evaluate the impact of social cleavages on political systems, providing examples from different countries.
4. Compare and contrast the Westminster and consensus models of democracy.
5. Examine the role of the state in development processes through the lens of political economy.

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# Approaches to the Study of Comparative Politics





# System Analysis

## UNIT

### Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this Unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ understand the concept of political system and its application in comparative political analysis
- ◆ analyse the internal and external factors influencing political systems across different nations
- ◆ evaluate the role of feedback mechanisms, structures, and environments in maintaining political stability
- ◆ explore the key contributions of David Easton to the study of political systems

### Prerequisites

In her second year of graduation in Political Science, Geetha found herself asking deeper questions about how different countries manage their political systems. She had already learned about governments, constitutions, and ideologies, but something still felt missing. Why do some systems remain stable while others collapse? What keeps a political structure working in the face of public demands or crises? While meeting her Professor, he introduced her to the idea of viewing politics as a system—just like a living body that reacts to inputs, makes decisions, and adapts through feedback. Through the works of David Easton and real-world examples, Geetha saw how political systems are shaped by internal factors like institutions and external pressures like public opinion or global events. This fresh approach helped her think more clearly about politics, not as separate events, but as connected processes happening in systems across the world.

## Keywords

Political System, Inputs and Outputs, Feedback Mechanism, System Stability, Environmental Influences, Support and Stress, Para-political Systems

## Discussion

### 2.1.1 Introduction

An approach simply means a way of seeing and explaining something. In political studies, it helps us decide what to look at and how to understand it. This can range from large topics like global politics to smaller issues within a town or region. An approach also shapes how we choose what information to use, how we collect it, and how we examine it to answer certain questions. It sets the rules for what matters in a study—what to include, what to leave out, and what kinds of questions to ask. In short, it helps us stay focused and clear when we try to make sense of political events and ideas. System analysis plays a central role in the study of comparative politics by offering a clear way to examine how different political systems work. This approach sees politics as a system made up of various parts—such as institutions, individuals, and rules—that interact with one another and with their surroundings. This method focuses on how people's needs and support go into the system (as inputs), how governments respond with actions and decisions (as outputs), and how reactions to these decisions (feedback) help shape what happens next. David Easton's work made this approach more widely used, drawing ideas from other subjects like biology and sociology. By using system analysis, we can compare how governments function in different countries, see what keeps them stable, and notice what causes change. It offers a simple and practical way to look at political life, helping us understand both how decisions are made and how they affect people.

### 2.1.2 System Analysis: Inception

Systems analysis in the social sciences began to take shape when prominent American scholars like David Easton, G.A. Almond, and Morton A. Kaplan challenged the old habit of treating each discipline—like economics, politics, psychology, or sociology—as separate and unrelated. They felt that this way of working blocked useful exchanges between subjects and led to people repeating the same kind of work in different areas without learning from one another. These thinkers believed that studying problems in isolation limited the growth of useful knowledge. They suggested that students and researchers could better understand social and political issues if they looked at similar topics across related fields. By doing this, they hoped to bring together different ideas and methods to study problems more clearly and meaningfully. This approach opened the door for a more connected and thoughtful way of looking at society and its many challenges.

A new group of social scientists looked to the work of natural scientists like Ludwig von Bertalanffy, who believed in connecting different fields of science. In the 1930s, Bertalanffy suggested that all branches of science could work together to better understand the world. His ideas gained more attention about twenty years later, especially in the United States. Around this time, several American universities held conferences to explore how researchers could study human behaviour in a more unified and scientific way. A major step came in



1956 when scholars formed the Society for the Advancement of General Systems Research. This group published yearly books that focused on general systems theory and how it could help bring together ideas from different fields. As Young pointed out, it was natural for people involved in this work to look for common ideas that could help organise their research. One key idea that stood out was the concept of “systems,” which became central to their thinking.

### 2.1.3 The System: Meaning

Different thinkers have explained the word “system” in their own way, depending on their field of study. For example, Ludwig von Bertalanffy described a system as a group of parts that affect each other through their actions. Hall and Fagen saw it as a set of things and the links between them, including how they are arranged. Colin Cherry said a system is a whole made up of many connected parts. Morton A. Kaplan added that systems analysis looks at a group of related elements, separate from the outside world, and studies how this group stays together even when outside forces try to disturb it.

David Apter explained the key features of systems in a simpler way:

1. Every system works within certain limits or boundaries, and within those limits, the parts of the system are connected through communication.
2. Each system includes smaller parts, called sub-systems, which interact with each other—for instance, a city relates to a state, and a state connects with the national government.
3. Systems can process information. They receive inputs, learn from them, and then produce some form of output based on what they have taken in.

To put it more simply, a system works by linking the information it takes in with the energy it uses to respond. This process of turning information into action shapes how the system works and grows. This basic idea, known as the general systems model, can be used to understand many different things—from living cells to people and even whole societies. In this model, a system receives energy and information, uses tools to guide its actions, stores past experiences, checks its progress, and then produces results. These results can lead to more energy and new information for the system to use.

Different definitions agree that a system is made up of parts connected in a certain way, working together through some process. But people often disagree on how to use this idea in real-world studies. So, when defining a ‘system’ in social sciences, it’s important to remember a few simple points:

1. A system is not just a random mix of parts. It is made up of elements that depend on each other and can be clearly identified in time and space. These parts can be real physical things or ideas that describe features of those things. Social scientists mostly work with the ideas and concepts, not the physical objects themselves.
2. Systems can be understood in two ways: one where parts match directly across systems (called homological), and another where systems fit together like layers or levels (called interlocking). Even though systems can be different in size or time, they can still share some basic structures and work together.
3. Studying systems helps us connect different fields instead of keeping them separate. The ideas about how systems are similar or fit together help us find common principles

across many kinds of systems. This helps bring different areas of knowledge closer and makes it easier to study complex problems.

4. Systems theory in natural sciences (like physics or biology) is different from the kind used in social sciences. Natural sciences focus on specific systems with their own rules. In social sciences, systems theory tries to find general ideas but also understands that different systems need different explanations. Social scientists often compare systems rather than using one theory for all.
5. When using systems theory in the social sciences, we have to be careful. Social goals and situations aren't fixed like natural objects. So, we should avoid making models too detailed because real social life is always changing. Complex models can be unreliable since small changes might cause very different results. Too much detail can make a model less useful for real social problems.
6. Because of this, social scientists need to find a middle ground. They can borrow ideas from natural sciences but also keep in mind the limits of social science. As Morton Kaplan says, researchers should balance things by comparing systems and focusing on important differences instead of treating all systems the same. If the parts they study really matter in real life, these models can help explain how things work, even if some ideas are simplified.

Advocates of systems analysis argue that many disciplines share common ideas. By organising these ideas into a general theory, each discipline can better understand its problems. This theory provides a broad

framework before conducting detailed research. They oppose rigid separation between disciplines because it limits the exchange of ideas and slows progress. When disciplines focus only on their own details and ignore broader concepts, they may advance individually but miss valuable insights from others. As a result, each discipline often has to build its own theories from the ground up without benefiting from existing knowledge in other fields.

## 2.1.4 General System Theory: The Concept

We have already seen that systems analysis started in biology and was later used by social scientists to study their fields more practically. Because of this, systems analysis has some key ideas that help us understand how it works. These ideas can be grouped into three types: ones that describe and classify systems, ones that explain how systems keep themselves working, and ones that show what causes change in systems.

1. **Describing and classifying systems:** These ideas help us tell different systems apart, like open (democratic) and closed (non-democratic) systems, or living and non-living systems. They also explain how systems are organised with parts and smaller parts inside them. To understand how a system works, we look at how its parts connect and depend on each other. Systems also have boundaries, take in inputs, and produce outputs. Some ideas also explain how systems behave over time.
2. **Keeping systems stable:** This is the main focus of systems theory — how systems stay balanced and continue working. Important ideas here are stability, balance, and how systems keep things steady. Systems

use feedback, like fixing problems or reproducing, to stay healthy. The balance in a system can be shaky, steady, or very stable.

3. **What causes change:** Change happens naturally, but it can either be gentle or disruptive. Gentle change happens when a system adjusts to its surroundings and can be undone or permanent. Gentle changes include learning, growing, and reaching goals. Disruptive changes include breakdowns, crises, stress, and decay, which lead to disorder and problems in the system.

General systems theory includes a wide range of ideas and related statements that together form its core. However, two important points should be kept in mind. First, general systems theory can be seen as a unified and broad collection of ideas, assumptions, and tested findings. These aim to create a common set of high-level principles that apply to key parts of a few broad types of systems and can be useful across many academic fields. At the same time, systems theory can also be approached as a method and a way to think about analysis in a structured way. In this approach, the focus is not mainly on the exact principles or findings of the theory, but rather on how the theory helps organise and examine information. It offers useful ways to identify patterns across different areas (such as similar structures in different systems), helps manage and interpret complex sets of information, and provides tools for sorting and understanding large amounts of data.

## 2.1.5 System Analysis in Comparative Politics

David Easton is one of the key political thinkers who used systems analysis to study politics. His well-known book *A Systems Analysis of Political Life* (1965) was widely appreciated for offering a fresh way to look

at and explain political events. Like natural scientists such as Stephen Toulmin, Easton wanted to build a theory that could explain real political behaviour. He saw political theory as a tool to better understand what happens in actual political life.

Here are the main ideas in Easton's approach:

1. **A Common Framework for All Politics:** Easton wanted to create a single set of ideas that could be used to study all types of political systems—whether national or international, and whether in developed or developing countries. He believed that the same concepts should be used to study politics everywhere.
2. **Focus on Survival of the System:** Easton thought the main goal of political science should be to find out how political systems manage to survive and continue over time.
3. **Beyond Just Stability:** While many focused only on what makes a system stable or unstable, Easton went further. He wanted to know what keeps a political system going in the long run, even when it faces pressure or change.
4. **Theory and Practice Together:** Easton believed both the theoretical and practical sides of politics were important. He disagreed with scholars who focused only on how power works in real life and ignored the deeper conditions that help a system survive.
5. **Politics as Its Own Field:** Easton also disagreed with sociologists who tried to explain politics through social theories. He believed that politics should be studied on its

own terms, as it deals with how power is used to make and carry out decisions.

Easton looked at political systems in two ways—one more abstract and theoretical, and the other more practical and focused on real-life survival. The first helps us understand the basic structure of a political system,

while the second looks at how systems stay together over time, even when facing challenges. In short, Easton's main concern was not just how one system works in a specific situation, but how political systems in general manage to keep going—whether in calm or changing times. His work gave political science a strong and lasting tool for studying how systems function and survive.

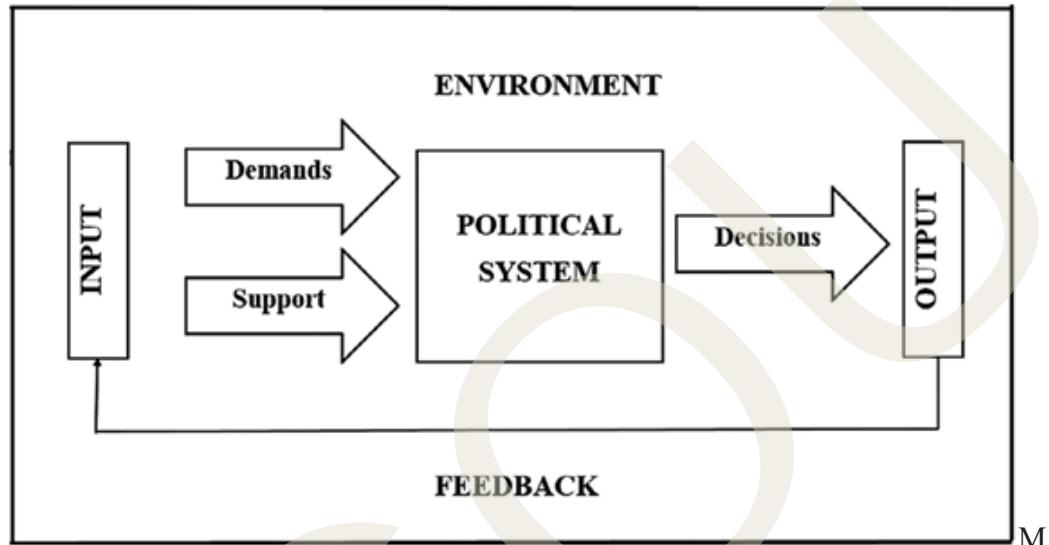


Fig. 2.1.1 The System Analysis Model

## 2.1.6 Contribution of David Easton

David Easton developed a systems approach to understand how political systems function, both in theory and in practice. Through this approach, outlined in several of his writings, he presented a clear and structured way to study politics. The key features of his systems analysis can be explained as follows:

- 1. Definition of Political System and Politics:** Easton viewed a political system as a pattern of actions within society through which decisions are made and resources or values are distributed. He defined politics as the authoritative allocation of values. The term authoritative refers to decisions made by those in positions of power—decisions

that are binding on society. When Easton referred to values, he did not mean ethical principles or belief systems, as some sociologists or political theorists might. Instead, he saw values as things of worth—resources, decisions, or outcomes that are distributed by political authority. In this sense, politics becomes a process through which those in power decide who gets what, when, and how.

- 2. Political System as a Type of Social System:** Easton observed that both natural and social systems share certain characteristics. Like natural systems, political systems have the ability to adapt and respond to disruptions. They are not static but have mechanisms that help them adjust and maintain continuity

even during challenges. Political systems can detect problems, make corrections, and reorganise their structures to ensure survival.

- 3. Feedback and Change:** One important element in Easton's model is the feedback mechanism. Feedback allows a political system to receive information about the effects of its past decisions and to make changes accordingly. This ongoing exchange ensures that the system can continue to function, even when its environment changes significantly. A system fails only when it can no longer respond to such challenges—usually due to extreme circumstances like war or natural disaster.
- 4. Open Nature of Political Systems:** According to Easton, political systems are open to influence from their surroundings. These surroundings—or environments—include social, economic, biological, and psychological factors. The political system interacts with these environments, and this interaction affects how decisions are made. The boundaries of the political system are not strictly physical; they are also shaped by how different activities relate to one another.
- 5. Internal and External Pressures:** Easton identified two kinds of environmental influences—those that come from within the society (intra-societal) and those from outside it (extra-societal). Internal factors could include disputes among political leaders over legislation, while external ones might be economic crises, wars, or natural events. Both types influence how political decisions are made and how values are distributed.
- 6. Stresses Faced by the Political System:** Political systems constantly face pressures, which Easton called stresses. These come in two main forms: demand stress and support stress. Demand stress occurs when the system cannot handle the number or intensity of demands made on it. This may lead to overload and inefficiency. Support stress happens when people within the system start to withdraw their trust or cooperation. This might result from leadership conflicts, institutional breakdowns, or loss of public confidence.
- 7. Inputs and Outputs:** Easton explained that every political system works through a cycle of inputs and outputs. Inputs include demands and support from the public or political groups. Outputs are the decisions and actions taken by authorities in response. If the inputs and outputs are in balance, the system is said to be in a steady state. Sometimes, demands may come not just from the public but also from within the political leadership itself. These are called withininputs.
- 8. Critical Range and System Stability:** A political system functions within a critical range, which means there is a limit to how much pressure it can absorb while still remaining stable. If demands exceed the system's capacity to respond effectively, or if outputs fail to satisfy those demands, the system risks instability or collapse.
- 9. Structural Foundations of the System:** The survival of any political system depends on certain foundational structures. These include formal institutions like electoral systems and political

parties, as well as informal elements such as public attitudes and shared beliefs. These provide necessary support and help the system deal with challenges.

**10. Objects of Support:** Easton identified three key areas that people support within a political system: the political community, the regime, and the authorities. The political community refers to the group of people united by a willingness to work together on common political issues. This community can remain even if regimes or leaders change. The regime is the set of rules and norms—both written and unwritten—that define how government is organised. The authorities are those individuals in power who are responsible for making binding decisions and converting public demands into policy.

**11. Sub-Systems and Para-Political Systems:** Within a political system, there are smaller parts or sub-systems that help with decision-making. These include various interest groups, associations, and organisations that influence policy even if they are not part of the formal political structure. Easton called these para-political systems.

In short, Easton's idea of a political system is deeply influenced by his use of systems theory. He treated political life as a process where inputs (such as demands and support) are converted into outputs (such as policies and decisions). As both a political scientist and, later, a political sociologist, Easton gave politics an independent place within the broader social structure. For him, a political

system is essentially a set of interactions, shaped by authority that distributes resources and decisions across society.

### 2.1.7 Criticism

Systems analysis in political science began with ideas from natural sciences and later drew from fields like anthropology and sociology. Thinkers like Emile Durkheim, Robert K. Merton, and Talcott Parsons shaped its foundation, and David Easton played a key role in applying it to politics. However, this approach has faced criticism for being too broad and abstract. Critics like Professor Young have pointed out that the idea of finding similar patterns across different systems (isomorphism) doesn't always work in practice. Easton's model, though organised, often shifts between theory and reality, making it hard to apply to actual political situations. His definition of a political system is so wide that it sometimes becomes unclear whether he is referring to real political behaviour or just theoretical ideas. Another major concern is that Easton's model doesn't focus enough on individual agency. People are treated as parts of the system rather than as active decision-makers. His theory avoids explaining why individuals act as they do and instead looks at how their actions affect the system as a whole. Because of this, Easton ends up stuck between traditional institutional studies and newer behavioural approaches, leaving his theory without much practical use. While the systems approach helps in organising political concepts, it struggles to explain how power works or how people form political opinions. Still, scholars like Paul F. Kress and Spiro suggest that thinking of politics as a system may help us ask better questions in the future, even if the theory has not yet fully delivered on its promise.

## Recap

- ◆ David Easton defined politics as the authoritative allocation of values within a society.
- ◆ A political system works like a living system, adapting to challenges while maintaining stability.
- ◆ Inputs like demands and support enter the system and are converted into policy outputs.
- ◆ Feedback mechanisms help the system adjust and improve its responses.
- ◆ Political systems are open and influenced by both internal and external environments.
- ◆ Stress occurs when the system cannot meet demands or loses public support.
- ◆ System breakdown can happen if stress exceeds the system's capacity to adapt.
- ◆ Structures like elections, parties, and norms support the functioning of the political system.
- ◆ Support is directed toward the political community, regime, and authorities.
- ◆ Para-political systems play an indirect but important role in political decision-making.

## Objective Questions

1. Who developed the concept of political system as a system of inputs and outputs?
2. What term did Easton use for accepted decisions in a political system?
3. What type of system is influenced by its environment?
4. What helps a political system correct its course?
5. What happens when a system fails to respond to demands?
6. What are inputs in a political system?
7. What are outputs in a political system?
8. What is support stress caused by?

9. What are structures that sustain a political system called?
10. What are systems indirectly involved in politics called?

## Answers

1. Easton
2. Authoritative
3. Open
4. Feedback
5. Breakdown
6. Demands
7. Policies
8. Disagreement
9. Institutions
10. Para-political

## Assignments

1. Explain Easton's concept of political system with suitable examples.
2. Analyse the role of feedback mechanisms in maintaining political system stability.
3. Evaluate the impact of environmental influences on political systems in two different countries.
4. Discuss the significance of support and stress in the functioning of political systems.
5. Compare the role of para-political systems in democratic and non-democratic regimes.

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# Structural-Functional Analysis

## UNIT

### Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

- ♦ understand the core concepts of structural-functionalism and its application in political science and international relations
- ♦ analyse the contributions of major thinkers like David Easton, Gabriel Almond, and Morton A. Kaplan to the structural-functional approach
- ♦ evaluate the strengths and limitations of structural-functional analysis in explaining political and international systems
- ♦ explore the relevance and adaptation of structural-functional frameworks in contemporary political and global contexts

### Prerequisites

Rahul grew up in a small town where he watched local leaders, police officers, and community elders solve problems in their own ways. As he entered university to study Political Science, he carried with him many questions: Why do some institutions work better than others? Why do political systems break down in some countries but stay stable in others? In his third semester, he came across a course unit titled Structural Functional Analysis. His curiosity deepened when he learned that this approach doesn't just list political institutions—it studies how each one contributes to the stability, survival, and evolution of the entire system. Through the works of Gabriel Almond and Morton Kaplan, Rahul began to see political systems like living organisms—each part doing a job to keep the whole functioning.

# Keywords

Political System, Structural Functionalism, Input-Output Model, Equilibrium, Stability, Feedback, Decision-making

## Discussion

### 2.2.1 Introduction

Structural-functionalism comes from systems analysis and helps us understand which political parts carry out important roles in a political system. It is also used as a way to study how politics works. One important idea here is that the “political system” is always linked to the wider society. It is not just about how decisions are made, but also about what purpose those decisions serve in social life. Scholars who follow this approach believe that every society needs a political system to survive and grow. A political system is seen as necessary because it performs the job of making decisions that are accepted as valid by the people. For a society to stay together and work properly, it also needs systems like the economy, the law, and shared values. In this larger setup, the political system is the part that helps society choose goals and make decisions for the future. This role, often described as helping society reach its goals, is one of the basic needs of any social group.

### 2.2.2 Basic Assumptions of Structural Functional Analysis

To understand what structural-functional analysis means, we need to look at some of its basic ideas or assumptions. They are as follows:

1. This approach sees society as a system where every part has a role to play. These parts work together to keep the system steady. As Hempel explains, functional analysis tries

to understand repeated actions or patterns in people or groups by showing how they help the group or society continue and stay stable. So, it looks at how certain ways of acting or social institutions help the system keep running smoothly.

2. If we think of society as a whole system, its parts are linked and affect each other. The system usually aims to stay stable, and it has ways of fixing problems when they come up. When change happens, it usually does so slowly, step by step, rather than through sudden or major shifts.
3. Behind the structure of society, there are common goals and values that most people follow. This shared understanding, called value agreement or consensus, helps the system continue to work properly—even if people don't always realise they are following it.

### 2.2.4 Basic Concepts of Structural Functional Analysis

As the term suggests, structural-functional analysis is based on two main ideas—structures and functions. To understand this clearly, we need to look at these two ideas separately:

#### Structure:

In this approach, structures are the organised parts within a system that carry out certain tasks. While functions are about

what these tasks lead to, structures are the setups that perform them. One function can be handled by more than one structure, and one structure can perform several functions. For example, a political party is a structure within a political system. It carries out tasks like passing on public demands to the government, helping people understand political issues, and encouraging citizens to take part in politics. Because of these roles, the party helps keep the system active and steady. However, other groups like pressure groups or government bodies can also perform these tasks. In some countries, these roles are carried out even without political parties.

### Function:

The idea of function focuses on three questions: What are the main roles that need to be done in a system? Who or what performs them? And under what conditions are they done? According to Young, functions are about what happens as a result of actions, though they might also be seen as goals or steps depending on the view. Merton explains more clearly that functions are the effects that help a system adjust and continue, while dysfunctions are the effects that create problems or slow down that process.

Functionalism takes ideas from how living organisms work. It sees society or politics as something that can grow, learn, and respond to change—just like a living being. David E. Apter supports this view. He says that, like individuals, societies can learn, solve problems, and stay together using shared beliefs, symbols, and language. So, functionalism starts by looking at how a system works and stays together. It is not just a method to list parts but a way to understand what keeps the whole system running. This approach is well-known in sociology and is strongly linked to the idea of a system. It is about studying parts of society or politics as elements of a bigger pattern of behaviour and

belief. Functionalist thinkers focus more on how a pattern helps keep the system going, rather than how it began in the first place.

## 2.2.5 Functional Analysis Framework

In Comparative Politics, the word *functionalism* is used in different ways, and there is no single method that stands out as the functionalist approach in the same way we talk about legal or institutional approaches. As sociologist Robert Merton pointed out, there has always been confusion about what *function means*. Sometimes one word is used to mean several things, and sometimes the same idea is described using different words. Merton described several meanings of *function*. In everyday use, it can mean a formal event or ceremony. In another sense, it means someone's job or work—what they do to earn a living. It can also mean the duties linked to a person's role or position in society, like someone in public office. In mathematics, it means a value that depends on another value. In sociology and anthropology, it refers to the role something plays in keeping a group or society going.

Political Science started using the functionalist method more recently. Before we look at what it has added to the field, we need to understand the different types of functionalist thinking. Two main forms are discussed in political studies: *eclectic functionalism* and *empirical functionalism*. *Eclectic functionalism* means looking at what purpose something serves as part of a wider study. A political scientist using this method might also consider the history, structure, or beliefs related to the topic. In this view, function is just one part of the analysis—not more or less important than other aspects. Many scholars use this kind of thinking when they study what different political institutions do, like how a legislature or court system works. So in this broad sense,



many political scientists could be called functionalists. Political Science started using the functionalist method more recently. Before we look at what it has added to the field, we need to understand the different types of functionalist thinking. Two main forms are discussed in political studies: *eclectic functionalism* and *empirical functionalism*. *Eclectic functionalism* means looking at what purpose something serves as part of a wider study. A political scientist using this method might also consider the history, structure, or beliefs related to the topic. In this view, *function* is just one part of the analysis—not more or less important than other aspects. Many scholars use this kind of thinking when they study what different political institutions do, like how a legislature or court system works. So in this broad sense, many political scientists could be called functionalists. *Empirical functionalism* is more focused. It sees society as a system where different parts have specific roles. These roles help keep the system working. This approach asks what political actions or institutions actually do to meet the needs or demands of people in the system. Merton said some functions are clear and intended (*manifest functions*), while others are hidden or unintended (*latent functions*). This method is often used in sociology but also fits well in comparative politics.

The most developed form is *structural-functionalism*. This approach is more systematic. It works with three main ideas. First, it studies the political system as a whole. Second, it assumes certain basic functions must be carried out to keep the system stable. Third, it looks at how the parts of the system rely on each other to keep everything running smoothly. This approach goes beyond the other two by trying to build a full theory of how a political system works. In short, structural-functionalism builds on the earlier types. Instead of treating function as just one part of the picture or focusing

only on a small area, it aims to understand the system as a whole. It looks for the key roles a system must perform and identifies which institutions carry out those roles. This makes structural-functionalism an approach that tries to explain what a system needs to survive and how it meets those needs.

## 2.2.6 Contributions of David Easton

By the mid-1960s, functionalism brought a big change to how social sciences studied society. It became a popular way to study and explain political systems. Many experts believed it was the best method to develop theories in comparative politics. Some American political scientists used structural-functionalism, a method that looks at the purpose of political events as part of a larger system. But function is just one part of a full political analysis, not the only thing to focus on. Different scholars describe this approach in different ways. What makes structural-functionalism stand out is its focus on social structures, processes, mechanisms, and functions. These ideas are important in the theories it develops.

It was David Easton who used this approach in a very systematic manner in its application to political analysis. He described the political system as working through demands and support from the people (*inputs*) and decisions made by leaders (*outputs*), connected by *feedback*. Easton said the political system faces problems when these parts don't work well together. The system needs continuous demands and support to function. But too many demands without enough ability to respond will overload the system and stop it from working. Support is important, but if people lose trust or the system can't meet their needs, the system might fail. Easton's main concern is keeping the political system stable. He tried to clearly separate the political system from other systems, but this is not easy. Some critics say Easton didn't solve this problem well. If he

defines the political system one way, his view seems weak; if he chooses another way, he must explain clearly what “political” means. He chose the second option, so defining “political” is very important in his work. Another issue is that, like Parsons, Easton focuses more on building abstract ideas than on explaining real politics. This makes his theory very abstract, hard to understand, and difficult to test with real examples. His idea of the political system is mostly theoretical and doesn’t connect well to actual political events. The political system he describes mainly exists as a concept, and the closest real example is a national government. Because of these problems, Easton’s framework falls short of his goal to create a useful and broad theory of political systems.

## 2.2.7 Contributions of Gabriel Almond

Apter, like other structural-functional thinkers, tries to understand what helps a government work well. But among all such efforts, Gabriel A. Almond’s contribution stands out. Like Talcott Parsons and David Easton, Almond also looks for a theory that explains how politics works. But he focuses more on how political systems move from old, traditional forms to newer, modern ones. He believes his theory explains this shift clearly, and could even be used to create statistical or mathematical models in the future. Almond starts with a few key goals. *First*, he wants to explain how political systems change over time, especially how they move from traditional to modern forms. For this, he supports the idea of political development, which links changes in political systems with changes in society—mainly the shift from farming-based economies to industrial ones. *Second*, Almond works on grouping different political systems into types. He believes some systems work better than others in certain situations. For example, modern systems can handle political tasks

more effectively than traditional ones. This difference gives us a way to compare systems and understand which are more efficient.

To build this framework, Almond makes a few basic assumptions. He believes political change usually follows a path of development, which includes three stages—*traditional*, *transitional*, and *modern*. As a structural-functionalist, he studies how traditional political systems in developing countries compare with modern ones in Western countries. He begins by looking at the key functions that Western political systems perform, and then studies how these same functions are handled in other places, even if done differently. Almond believes that to understand how non-Western societies are modernising, we must first understand how modern Western systems work today. He also sees political systems as made up of actions and roles that people take on. These systems don’t exist in isolation—they are influenced by what happens around them and beyond their borders.

For Almond, a political system works as a complete unit that both affects and is affected by its surroundings. What keeps it together is the presence of recognised and accepted authority, which allows it to be studied as a whole. He identifies four main features that all political systems share:

- ◆ Every system has its own structures—some carry out many tasks, others fewer.
- ◆ All systems, no matter how different, perform the same basic political functions.
- ◆ The structures within a system usually perform more than one function.
- ◆ Every political system has its own culture, which usually includes both traditional and modern elements.



With this understanding, Almond shifts attention from formal government bodies to the actual places and ways in which political work gets done. His approach focuses on the processes that help keep a political system steady and functioning. Critics argue that Almond, like Easton, was too focused on building an all-purpose political theory. In reality, they say, he created a model or a

way to group and compare political data. Whether this model is useful depends on whether real-world evidence supports his ideas. Almond's work combines thoughts from other major thinkers—like Weber's idea of the state, Easton's focus on political authority, and Parsons' view of politics as part of the larger social system.

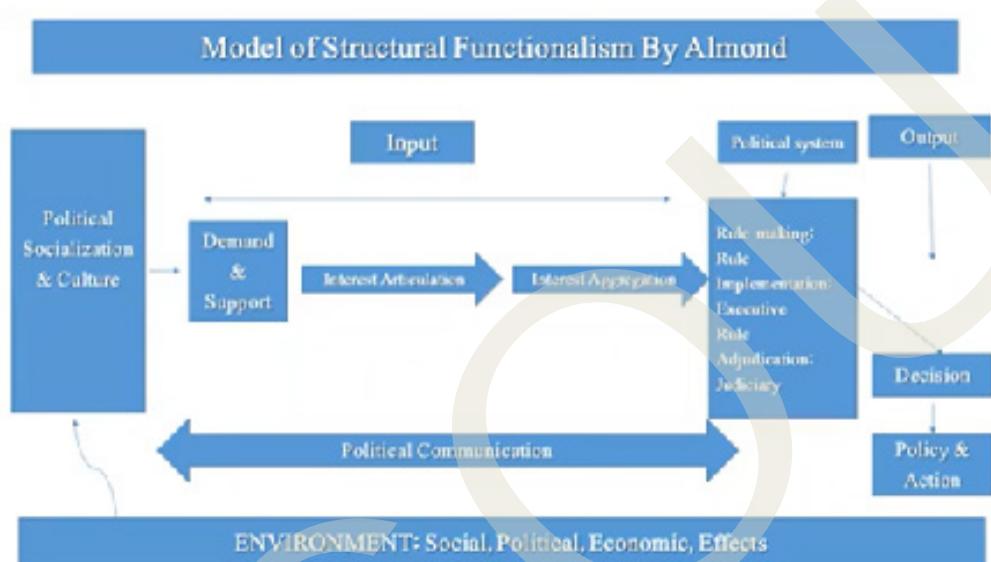


Fig. 2.2.1 Model of Structural Functionalism by Almond

## 2.2.9 Contributions of Morton A. Kaplan

Morton A. Kaplan made an important contribution to the study of international relations by using ideas from systems theory. In simple terms, he saw a system as a group of related elements that work together and can be understood as one unit, separate from what is around it. He applied this idea to world politics. Kaplan explained that a system has parts that are connected to each other and also to the outside world. These connections show regular patterns of behaviour. The condition of a system at any moment is called its *state*, which just means the current values of all its parts. When these values change, that is called an *output*. Changes in the outside world that affect the system are called *inputs*. Some inputs bring major changes to the system. Kaplan

called these *step-level functions*. They can change how the system works or even its basic structure. According to Kaplan, systems can also be linked to one another. In these cases, the output of one system becomes the input of another. If the connection works in both directions, the systems can influence each other, which is known as *feedback*. He also talked about two important conditions in any system: *equilibrium* and *stability*. A system is in *equilibrium* when its parts stay within certain limits for some time. It is stable if it can stay within those limits even when small changes happen. Some systems are even stronger—they can adapt to changes by adjusting themselves or by trying to change their surroundings. Kaplan called these *ultra-stable systems*.

He gave three main ideas about how systems respond to change:

- ◆ A system in equilibrium will stay that way unless something from outside affects it. If there's no outside disturbance, it stays stable. If small disturbances exist but don't cause much change, the system is locally stable.
- ◆ If a strong disturbance happens, a locally stable system may either shift to a new balance or break down. If it can adjust and keep working, it is ultra-stable.
- ◆ If a change happens and the system doesn't return to how it was before, then the system itself has changed.

Though Kaplan developed this model for studying international politics, it can also be useful in comparing different political systems. He focused on how political systems manage decisions and respond to challenges. In his view, politics is about making important choices, setting goals, or changing the basic rules of the system.

### 2.2.10 Criticism

The structural-functional approach has been quite popular in political studies, but it also faces several strong criticisms. One major issue is that it focuses too much on keeping political systems stable rather than looking at how they change. It mainly studies how different parts of a system work together to maintain order, but often ignores the pressures and problems that lead to change. Even when ideas like dysfunction are added,

critics say the approach still leans too much towards maintaining the current system. Because of this, it's often seen as supporting the status quo instead of encouraging progress or reform. Scholars like Gouldner argue that the approach is more interested in keeping things running smoothly than in questioning what needs to be improved or transformed. Another criticism is that it doesn't work well in studying countries that are still developing. Many tools and ideas used by functionalists come from Western societies, which have different social and political realities compared to countries in Asia or Africa. In these regions, challenges like poverty, conflict, and weak national unity don't fit neatly into the smooth-functioning models proposed by functionalists. There are also problems in how the theory explains things. For example, some functionalists assume that every part of a political system must have a purpose just because it exists—but this doesn't explain how or why those parts developed. Scholars like Meehan and others have pointed out that some versions of this theory force reality to fit the model, rather than building theories based on actual facts. The approach also tends to ignore conflict and power struggles, which are a real part of political life. While it can help organise information and offer useful categories, the structural-functional method often falls short in messy, real-world situations—especially in societies that don't look like modern Western democracies.

## Recap

- ◆ Structural-functional analysis views society and politics as systems made of interdependent parts.
- ◆ David Easton introduced the concept of the political system as a set of interactions abstracted from society.

- ◆ Easton's input-output model highlights how demands and supports are processed to produce decisions and policies.
- ◆ Almond focused on functions within the system, such as political recruitment and interest articulation.
- ◆ Kaplan adapted systems theory from engineering to explain international politics.
- ◆ Kaplan described system behaviour through variables, states, inputs, and outputs.
- ◆ Step-level functions in Kaplan's model can cause major structural changes.
- ◆ Equilibrium and stability are crucial in understanding how systems maintain or adapt.
- ◆ Feedback helps systems self-correct and maintain functionality.
- ◆ Structural-functionalism helps analyse both national and international political systems.

## Objective Questions

1. Who introduced the input-output model in political systems?
2. What does Almond's model focus on in a political system?
3. What term did Kaplan use for major changes in a system?
4. Which model explains the processing of demands into decisions?
5. What is feedback in system theory?
6. Who applied systems theory to world politics?
7. What term defines the state where a system resists change?
8. What are changes from the environment to a system called?
9. What does ultra-stable system mean?
10. What is the condition when a system returns to balance after disruption?

## Answers

1. Easton
2. Functions
3. Step-level
4. Input-output
5. Correction
6. Kaplan
7. Stability
8. Inputs
9. Adaptability
10. Equilibrium

## Assignments

1. Discuss the key features of the structural-functional approach in political analysis.
2. Compare and contrast the views of Easton and Almond on political systems.
3. Explain Kaplan's contribution to the application of system theory in international relations.
4. Analyse the concept of equilibrium and stability in the context of political systems.
5. Assess the relevance of structural-functional analysis in today's global political scenario.

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# Input-Output Analysis

## UNIT

### Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

- ♦ understand the theoretical framework of input - output analysis
- ♦ analyse the key concepts of the input - output analysis
- ♦ evaluate the strengths and limitations of the approach
- ♦ explore the criticisms of input - output analysis

### Prerequisites

Riya and Arjun, two political science students, had already learned about how governments work and how people interact with them. In their previous classes, they came across thinkers like David Easton and Gabriel Almond, who spoke about political systems as if they were machines—taking in inputs like public demands and giving out decisions as outputs. Riya found these ideas fascinating, while Arjun had questions. “Do these models explain protests or sudden political changes?” he asked. Their professor smiled and said, “You’ll understand more in the next course.” Now, as they begin learning about input-output analysis in comparative politics, Riya and Arjun can connect their earlier knowledge with real-world political situations. They now realise how this model explains the flow of support and demands in a system and why it sometimes fails, especially in countries with unstable politics. This model now helps them understand how politics really works.

### Keywords

Political system, Input-output analysis, Feedback mechanism, Political stability, Systems theory



# Discussion

## 2.3.1 Introduction

As explained in the last two chapters, systems analysis has given rise to two major approaches: structural-functional and input-output analysis. The structural-functional approach looks at political systems by focusing on their parts (or structures) and what each part does (its functions). A structure refers to any group or body that takes action and influences others, while a function is the work it performs and how it affects the world outside it. In contrast, the input-output approach offers a way to collect, arrange, and make sense of information. A political system can be seen as a set of actions where different parts work together to keep the system running. Each part has its own role, helping the system continue over time. At the same time, the system also works by taking in demands or support (called inputs), turning them into actions or decisions (called outputs), and sending them back into society. This forms a repeating cycle that helps the system stay active and adjust to changes.

The input-output approach goes beyond just looking at the roles and duties of each part. It focuses on how the system moves through different stages—from receiving inputs to making outputs—and how each stage faces its own problems. But every stage also has ways to handle these problems and keep things stable. This model sees the political system as made up of people, roles, and groups that interact with each other. It also takes into account the attitudes and behaviours that shape these actions. Inputs can come from outside or inside the system. These are processed through political actions, and the results affect the outside world. These results can then lead to new reactions or changes, which come back into the system

as feedback.

## 2.3.2 Features of Input-Output Approach

To better understand the input-output approach, it is necessary to look at some of its main features:

1. The political system is seen as the central unit of analysis. The focus is on how the system works internally and how it relates to other systems around it.
2. There is a difference between a real system and an abstract system. The real system includes actual people and treats them as its basic parts. The abstract or analytic system focuses on certain aspects of human behaviour and studies how they function within a broader social setting.
3. This approach views political systems as open and capable of adjusting. It gives special attention to how the system responds to and exchanges with its environment.
4. Thinkers like Easton and Almond have stressed the importance of understanding how political systems survive over time. They examine what causes pressure or disturbance in a system and how it tries to manage these problems to keep itself stable.
5. While this approach does not deny that change happens, it usually sees change as slow, peaceful, and steady—something that the system can handle without losing its core structure.

6. Oran Young sums up this idea by explaining that the political system is a process that takes in inputs, produces outputs, and brings about changes in its surroundings. These changes can lead to feedback that influences the system again. The model gives us tools to study how systems adapt and adjust their goals. However, it mostly focuses on smaller changes that improve the system's function. It does not pay much attention to major shifts, such as revolutions or the creation of completely new political systems. While the model can explain certain developments like growth, it does not explore deeper changes in the system's basic nature.

### 2.3.3 Contribution of David Easton

David Easton was one of the first political scientists to offer a structured framework for studying politics through the systems approach. Unlike earlier scholars who borrowed concepts from other disciplines like sociology or anthropology, Easton placed the political system itself at the centre of analysis. He viewed politics as a set of activities through which society makes authoritative decisions about who gets what, when, and how. He described the political system as a collection of actions that function within and respond to the larger social environment while making decisions that are binding on society.

Easton developed what is known as the input-output model, which explains how a political system operates. This model includes three main parts: **demands**, **supports**, and **feedback**.

#### 1. Demands

Easton defined a demand as a request or expectation from individuals or groups

that those in power should take action on certain issues. People make demands on the political system to serve their needs or interests. When these demands grow in number or become too difficult to manage, the system experiences what Easton called **overload**. This overload can come from too many demands (volume stress) or from the complexity of the demands (content stress). The political system must then process these demands. This is called the **conversion process**, where some demands are accepted and turned into decisions (outputs), while others are ignored or delayed. To manage this, the system uses four types of control mechanisms:

1. *Structural mechanisms*, which filter demands through institutions like political parties and legislatures.
2. *Cultural mechanisms*, based on public beliefs and values, which guide how demands are expressed.
3. *Communication mechanisms*, which help keep both the public and the decision-makers informed.
4. *Reduction mechanisms* which simplify and combine demands into manageable issues for decision-making.

#### 2. Supports

Support refers to actions or attitudes that help maintain the political system. After demands are accounted for, the remaining inputs from the environment are considered supports. Support can be visible, like voting or obeying laws, or invisible, like trust in the system or belief in its fairness. If the system fails to meet expectations, support can decline, leading to what Easton called support stress. To respond, the system might need to adjust its structures, such as changing how representatives are chosen or how political parties function. It may

also try to build broader, long-term support by promoting unity and a shared sense of belonging among the people.

### 3. Feedback

Feedback refers to the way the system learns how well its decisions (outputs) are received by society. Decisions made by leaders affect the community, and in return, the reactions of the people generate new inputs into the system. This creates a continuous cycle. Easton emphasised that leaders need information about how their decisions are working. Without this feedback, they cannot respond effectively. The feedback process includes making decisions, observing how people respond, receiving information about that response, and then making new decisions based on what was learned. This cycle helps the system stay stable and adjust to changes.

### Input-Output Cycle

Easton's model shows how the political system works within its environment. Demands and supports enter the system as **inputs**, and decisions and actions come out as **outputs**. These outputs may be firm, enforceable decisions or softer responses with less authority. Outputs should not be confused with outcomes, which refer to the longer-term effects of decisions. Easton's approach provides a way to understand political life as a system that receives pressures from its environment and must respond to them to survive. The flow of inputs, conversion into outputs, and feedback allows the political system to adapt and maintain itself over time. For this to work, leaders must stay informed and take action to keep the level of support needed to hold the system together.

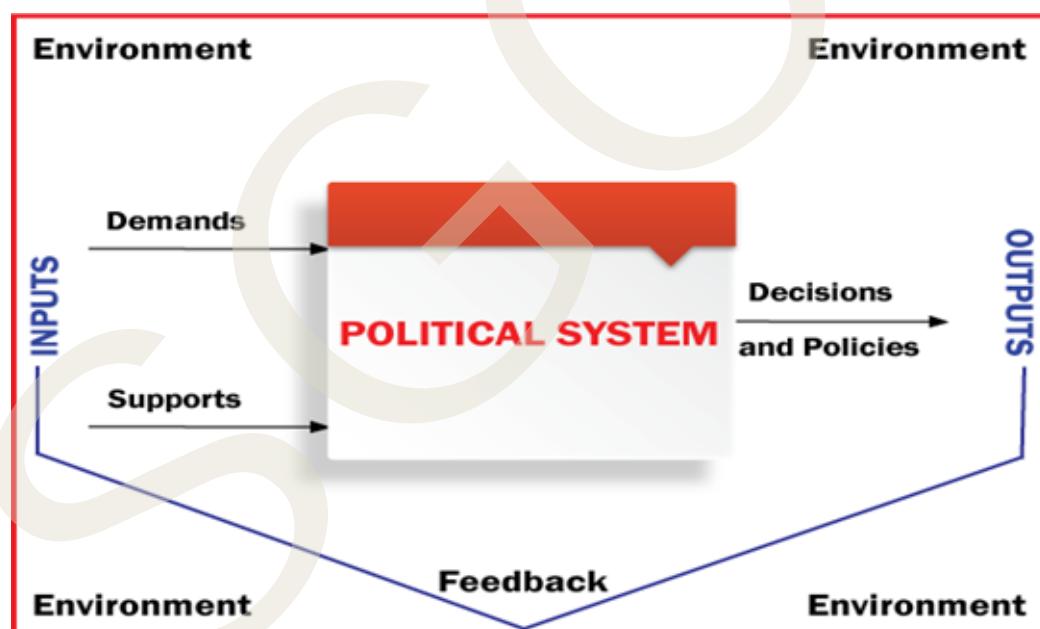


Fig. 2.3.1 Model of Input - Output Analysis

#### 2.3.4 Contribution of Gabriel Almond

Gabriel Almond's method of systems analysis is considered more practical and useful for studying comparative politics than David Easton's model. While Easton aimed to understand the general condition

of political science as a field, Almond focused more specifically on the workings of political systems across different societies. Almond introduced a framework based on seven variables, which he divided into input and output functions. He explained that input functions are mostly carried out by individuals, groups, and institutions in

society, while output functions are handled by the government. Although Almond described both input and output functions, he gave more importance to the input side. He referred to the output functions—such as the roles of the legislature, executive, and judiciary—as rule-making, rule-application, and rule-adjudication. These terms shift attention from the names of institutions to the tasks they perform, which helps in comparing different systems that may use different names for similar roles.

### Input Functions

Almond outlined four input functions:

1. *Political socialisation and recruitment*: This refers to the way individuals learn about politics and become part of the political process. It helps form people's attitudes and beliefs about their political system and includes how leaders and participants are brought into political roles.
2. *Interest articulation*: This function involves how different groups express their needs or demands to the political system. These groups may be formal (like trade unions), informal (such as community groups), or spontaneous (like protest movements). Their structure and role often depend on how politically developed the society is.
3. *Interest aggregation*: This refers to how political parties and other organisations combine various interests into broader goals and policies. Almond discussed how party systems differ in how they are organised (such as single-party or multi-party systems) and in how they operate (whether pragmatic, ideological, or traditional).
4. *Political communication*: This involves the ways through which political information flows within a society. Strong communication channels allow better coordination and understanding between the public and political institutions.

### Output Functions

Almond described three output functions:

1. *Rule-making*: Creating laws and policies.
2. *Rule-application*: Carrying out and enforcing rules.
3. *Rule-adjudication*: Settling disputes and interpreting laws.
4. These functions match the traditional roles of legislature, executive, and judiciary, but Almond used more general terms to apply them across different systems. Almond called his approach comprehensive because it includes both formal and informal parts of political life. His analysis covers not just official institutions like parliaments or courts, but also less formal areas such as family networks, ethnic groups, and protest movements. He viewed the political system as a part of the broader social system and believed that methods from other fields—such as sociology and anthropology—can help explain how political systems work.

### 2.3.6 Key Concepts in Input-Output Approach

The input-output analysis in political science is based on four important ideas that help us understand how a political system functions. These are inputs, outputs, feedback, and capabilities. Though each of these has been discussed at various points,

it is useful to clearly define them to better understand the overall approach.

## 1. Inputs

Inputs refer to the demands and support that enter the political system. Demands are typically made by individuals and groups within society who fulfil various roles in the system. These demands can pertain to numerous areas, such as:

- ◆ The need for goods and services, like better wages, education, healthcare, roads, or public transport.
- ◆ Rules to manage public behaviour, including safety laws, market regulations, and health standards.
- ◆ The right to take part in the political process, including voting, contesting elections, forming political groups, or approaching government officials.
- ◆ The need for clear information or public communication, such as government policies, national values, or ceremonial messages during important events.

Demands can come not just from the general public, but also from political leaders—such as ministers, lawmakers, and judges—or even from outside the country in the form of international pressure, threats, or aid. Along with demands, inputs also include support for the political system. As David Easton explains, demands alone are not enough for a system to function. It also needs support in the form of:

- ◆ *Material contributions like taxes or public services.*
- ◆ *Obedience to laws and official rules.*
- ◆ *Active participation, such as voting or joining political discussions.*
- ◆ *Respect for public institutions and leaders.*

A political system needs a proper balance between demands and support. If demands grow too strong and support becomes weak, the system's stability may be at risk. Almond points out that for a political system to handle demands effectively, it must receive support from society and those within the system. In general, demands shape the strength the system needs to function.

## 2. Outputs

Outputs are the results produced by the political system in response to the demands it aims to address, while support provides the foundation for it. These usually take the form of official decisions or actions that distribute resources or enforce rules. There are four main kinds of outputs:

- ◆ *Collection of resources, such as taxes or public service duties.*
- ◆ *Regulation of public behaviour through laws and policies.*
- ◆ *Distribution of goods, services, benefits, and recognition.*
- ◆ *Symbolic actions, like issuing policy statements or holding public ceremonies to express values.*

These outputs not only address demands but also help maintain public support for the system. According to Easton, outputs are often overlooked in theory, but they are central to understanding how a political system maintains support and legitimacy.

## 3. Feedback

Feedback is the process through which information about the results of decisions (outputs) returns to the political system and influences future actions. This helps the system adjust and continue functioning. Feedback allows the system to learn whether its actions are meeting the goals or if changes are needed. It serves two purposes:

- ◆ *To correct errors (negative feedback).*
- ◆ *To change or redirect goals (goal-changing feedback).*

Feedback works best when the system can receive information about its progress, respond to it through changes, reduce internal imbalances, and move toward its intended objectives. Feedback helps regulate the system, but it can sometimes face problems like delays or inaccuracies.

#### 4. Capabilities

The concept of capability refers to how well a political system can handle inputs and respond effectively. A system should be able to:

- ◆ *Gather resources from society.*
- ◆ *Control or guide the behaviour of individuals and groups.*
- ◆ *Distribute goods and services fairly.*

In addition, it should have the ability to use symbols to strengthen public loyalty and respond properly to both domestic and international challenges. These four elements—*inputs, outputs, feedback, and capabilities*—are essential for understanding how a political system works, survives, and adapts. This approach moves beyond simple discussions of stability and focuses on how political systems deal with pressure, adjust their behaviour, and aim to change in a peaceful and steady way. As Easton explains, the goal is not just to maintain order but also to study how systems can change while continuing to function.

#### 2.3.7 Criticism

The input-output approach in political science, closely tied to systems analysis, has been widely criticised for several reasons. One major issue is its reliance on ideas borrowed from other disciplines, especially the natural sciences. When these concepts are

applied to political studies, they often lose their original meaning, causing confusion. For instance, while Talcott Parsons talks about systems, Almond emphasises functions without clearly identifying the system they belong to. Easton focuses so heavily on inputs and outputs that his view of political systems becomes too narrow, and important topics like power and influence are often ignored. As a result, the approach tends to be too abstract and fails to reflect how people actually behave in political settings. Another problem is that the model struggles to explain many political activities involving ordinary people, especially in developing countries. It overlooks events like elections, protests, and strikes—what Myron Weiner calls the “politics of scarcity.” The model often concentrates on elites and politically relevant actors, leaving out the general public and giving a limited view of political life.

The use of feedback in this model is also seen as problematic. William Ross Ashby argues that feedback works well only in simple systems. In complex systems with many interacting parts, feedback alone cannot provide a clear understanding, and studying parts in isolation becomes unhelpful. The whole system must be examined together. Finally, critics say the input-output approach puts too much emphasis on stability and order, much like structural-functionalism. It focuses more on how systems adapt and survive than on how they break down or undergo major changes. As Young observes, the model does not deal with political collapse or sudden shifts, and even Easton admits he is more concerned with system maintenance than with breakdowns.

Because of these reasons, the input-output approach is often seen as too focused on maintaining existing systems, not open to change, and not fully grounded in real political conditions, especially in poorer and less stable societies. It tries to apply a model developed

in the context of advanced countries to very different situations. However, one possible strength of the approach is that it has not yet been widely tested through practical research. Some scholars believe that it offers a

basic framework that helps organise political systems in a way that allows for general comparisons. Since it works at a broader level, it avoids being limited to any one type of political system or cultural setting.

## Recap

1. Input-output analysis is rooted in systems theory and focuses on how demands and supports are processed by political systems.
2. David Easton introduced this model to explain the stability and functioning of political systems.
3. The model often borrows concepts from natural sciences, which can cause distortion when applied to political studies.
4. Critics argue that this model abstracts too much from real political behaviour.
5. The approach fails to fully incorporate mass political actions such as protests or strikes.
6. It tends to focus on elites and disregards the political behaviour of the general public.
7. William Ross Ashby questioned the usefulness of feedback in highly complex systems.
8. The model is seen as having a status quo bias, focusing more on persistence than change.
9. The approach does not adequately address political breakdowns or crises.
10. The input-output model provides a detailed comparative framework for political systems.

## Objective Questions

1. Who developed the concept of input-output analysis in politics?
2. What is the primary focus of the input-output model?
3. Which sociologist is associated with the theory of systems?
4. Who referred to protest actions as the ‘politics of scarcity’?

5. What concept did William Ross Ashby critique in complex systems?
6. What does the model largely ignore in developing countries?
7. What kind of political systems was the model originally designed for?
8. What is often missing in input-output analysis in terms of political action?
9. Which approach does the input-output model share similarities with?
10. What kind of bias is the model accused of?

## Answers

1. David Easton
2. Stability
3. Talcott Parsons
4. Myron Weiner
5. Feedback
6. Mass
7. Western
8. Protest
9. Structural-functionalism
10. Conservative

## Assignments

1. Discuss the theoretical foundations of the input-output model in comparative politics.
2. Critically examine the limitations of input-output analysis in the context of developing countries.
3. Compare and contrast input-output analysis with structural-functionalism.

4. Explain the role of feedback in systems theory and assess its effectiveness in political analysis.
5. Evaluate the criticism that input-output analysis supports the status quo and ignores political change.

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**BLOCK**

# Constitutionalism





# Constitutionalism in U.S.A

## UNIT

### Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this Unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ understand the foundational principles of American constitutionalism
- ◆ analyse the evolution of the US Constitution
- ◆ evaluate the historical progress of the US Constitution since inception
- ◆ explore the important features of the US Constitution

### Prerequisites

One day, Arjun approached his professor with a question that had been on his mind. “Sir,” he asked, “how did the American Constitution become such an important model for democracy, and how does it still work today?” The professor smiled, recognising the genuine interest. He invited Arjun to sit and began explaining how the Constitution, written over two centuries ago, was more than just a document—it was a living framework for how power is used and limited in the United States. As they spoke, Arjun learned how the Constitution separates powers among branches of government, protects individual rights through the Bill of Rights, and allows for change through amendments. The professor also spoke about modern challenges like national security, presidential authority, and judicial review. Arjun realised that the strength of the U.S. Constitution lies in its ability to guide a nation through changing times while holding firm to its core principles.

### Keywords

Constitutionalism, Executive Power, National Security, Judicial Review, Separation of Powers, Constitutional Amendments

# Discussion

## 3.1.1 Introduction to Constitutionalism

Constitutionalism is a modern political idea that supports the rule of law over the rule of individuals. It believes that government should function within legal limits and follow established rules. This idea supports democracy, national self-governance, and limited powers for those in authority. It is often linked with the idea of distributing power across various institutions to avoid its misuse. As Carl Friedrich noted, dividing power helps keep government actions in check. To understand constitutionalism, we need to study how these limits are created and how they continue to work in practice. It is a set of rules that promotes fairness and holds governments accountable. At its core, constitutionalism means that a state must have a constitution that controls the use of power, protects people's rights, and guides the functioning of government.

To fully understand constitutionalism, we must begin by defining what a constitution is and what it means to have a constitutional government. A constitution is a set of basic rules that define the powers of the government, the rights of the people, and how the two relate to each other. It is the foundation of a political system where law gives shape to institutions and outlines their responsibilities and authority. According to K.C. Wheare, the term 'constitution' is used in two main ways. First, it describes the entire system of rules that organise and control government activities. These rules may include formal legal rules enforced by courts, and informal rules such as traditions, customs, or accepted practices. While courts may not enforce these informal rules, they still guide how government works in practice. Most countries follow a mix of legal and

customary rules, and this mix forms what we commonly call the constitution.

Some constitutions are written documents created by a group or assembly at a certain point in time. Others develop gradually through legal changes and social practices. For example, the British constitution is not found in a single document. It has grown over time through laws, court decisions, customs, and shared understandings. Bolingbroke described it as a system of rules and institutions based on reason, which the people agree to follow. While the constitution provides the basic structure of government, a constitutional government is one where power is exercised within clear limits. Wheare argued that constitutional government means more than simply having a written document. It means that government must follow rules, and not act based on personal choice. It means government must follow legal limits, not just the wishes of those in charge.

Based on this, we can say that a constitutional government is one where legal limits are in place. These limits may differ from one country to another. Some countries have stronger checks; others have weaker ones. But all must have some level of restraint to be considered constitutional. A state becomes unconstitutional only if there are no rules at all to control its actions. Friedrich pointed out that this is mostly a theoretical idea because even the most restrictive governments have some form of basic rules or structures. Friedrich also explained that constitutionalism is not an either-or condition. It is more accurate to say that governments lie on a scale—from strong legal control to very weak control. Blondel made a similar point when he argued that it is too simple to divide governments into 'constitutional' and 'non-constitutional.' Just as we cannot divide all governments



neatly into ‘democratic’ or ‘authoritarian,’ we should see constitutionalism as something that exists in degrees.

In this sense, constitutionalism aims for a system where government power is controlled. It supports a lawful and responsible system of rule. The real test of constitutionalism lies in how a constitution works in real life—how laws are applied, and whether customs and traditions help support or weaken the legal framework. Often, these unwritten practices play an important role in maintaining limits on power. Taking all this into account, we can say that most governments in the world today are constitutional to some extent. However, this does not apply to governments that ignore legal limits or use the constitution only to support their own power. In such cases—often found in authoritarian or totalitarian states—the constitution may exist only in name. That is why true constitutional government is most likely to exist in democratic societies, where the law is respected and power is controlled through legal rules.

### 3.1.2 Historical Background of Constitutionalism in the USA

Constitutionalism means that the powers of the government must be controlled by laws set out in a constitution. The United States offers one of the earliest and most widely studied examples of this kind of system. The U.S. Constitution, written in 1787, created a structure of government that has influenced many other countries. This constitution sets clear limits on government power and protects the rights of individuals. It has continued to function through major events like the Civil War, economic struggles, global wars, and social change.

#### 1. Colonial Foundations (1600–1763)

American constitutionalism began with British legal and political traditions. Early

settlers brought with them ideas about limited government, rule of law, and the importance of written charters. Colonial governments, formed under these charters, allowed local assemblies to make laws. These bodies gave colonists early experience in self-government and strengthened their belief in legal limits on political power. Over time, the colonies developed stable political structures rooted in these principles.

#### 2. Move toward Independence (1763–1776)

After the Seven Years’ War, Britain tried to exercise more control over its American colonies. New taxes and trade rules, like the Stamp Act and the Townshend Acts, led to protests. Colonists believed they should not be taxed without having a voice in Parliament. This disagreement sparked a wider debate about political authority and individual rights. Local assemblies, pamphlets, and meetings pushed back against British policies. By 1775, conflict had begun, and many colonists started to support full independence.

#### 3. Ideas from the Enlightenment

The American approach to constitutional government was shaped by European thinkers. John Locke argued that people have natural rights and that governments must protect them. Montesquieu suggested dividing government powers to avoid abuse. American leaders also read British political writers who supported liberty and representative government. These ideas helped Americans build a system where the power of government was defined and limited by a written constitution.

#### 4. Declaration of Independence (1776)

The Declaration of Independence marked a break from British rule. It stated that all people are born with certain rights and that governments must protect those rights. If a government fails to do so, people have the

right to change it. While not a constitution, the Declaration clearly explained the values behind the American political system. It shaped later thinking about law, government, and justice.

### 5. State Constitutions (1776–1787)

After declaring independence, the former colonies created their own state constitutions. These documents put into practice many of the ideas discussed during the revolution. Most states set up separate branches of government and included written protections for individual rights. These efforts allowed Americans to experiment with different models of government. They also helped identify problems, such as the risk of too much power in the hands of one group, which influenced the later drafting of the U.S. Constitution.

### 6. Articles of Confederation (1781–1789)

The Articles of Confederation created the first national government. Under this system, most power remained with the states. The national government could not raise taxes directly, regulate trade effectively, or enforce laws. These weaknesses made it hard to respond to economic and political problems. Events like Shays' Rebellion showed that the country needed a stronger, more stable government.

### 7. Constitutional Convention (1787)

In 1787, representatives from the states met in Philadelphia to address the problems with the Articles of Confederation. Instead of revising the old system, they decided to create a new constitution. The delegates included experienced leaders like George Washington and James Madison. They discussed how to divide power among branches of government and between the national and state levels. The final document created a federal system with clear rules for how the government

would function and how it would be held accountable.

### 8. Ratification and Public Debate (1787–1788)

After the Constitution was drafted, it needed approval from the states. This led to a public debate. Supporters of the new Constitution, called Federalists, argued that it would make the government more effective and united. They wrote essays—known as *The Federalist Papers*—to explain their ideas. Opponents, known as Anti-Federalists, feared the new government might become too powerful. They wanted stronger protections for individual rights. To gain broader support, the Federalists promised to add a Bill of Rights. This helped secure ratification, and the Constitution came into effect in 1789.

## 3.1.3 Important Features of American Constitutionalism

The U.S. Constitution sets the basic rules for how the federal government works. It explains what each part of the government can do and how they must share power. The Constitution is designed to prevent any one part of the government from becoming too strong. It aims to protect people's freedom by making sure power is used responsibly and fairly.

The United States has a written constitution that acts as the foundation of its government and laws. It clearly explains how the government is set up, how power is shared, and what rights the people have. This document helps guide how the country is run and keeps the government's powers in check. The Constitution begins with the Preamble, which explains why it was written. It starts with the words "We the People," showing that the power of the government comes from the citizens. The Preamble talks about the main goals of the Constitution, such as bringing fairness, keeping peace,



protecting the country, improving the well-being of all, and securing freedom for the future.

Following the Preamble, there are seven Articles in the Constitution:

- ◆ Article I sets up the Legislative Branch. It gives Congress the power to make laws and explains how the House of Representatives and the Senate work.
- ◆ Article II sets up the Executive Branch, which is led by the President. It describes the President's duties, like carrying out laws, leading the military, and handling relations with other countries.
- ◆ Article III creates the Judicial Branch, including the Supreme Court. This part explains the courts' job in interpreting laws and ensuring justice.
- ◆ Article IV discusses the states' roles and how they should work together.
- ◆ Article V explains how the Constitution can be changed or amended.
- ◆ Article VI says that the Constitution is the highest law of the country and that all officials must respect it.
- ◆ Article VII tells how the Constitution was to be approved by the states.

Besides these Articles, the Constitution has 27 Amendments. These are changes or additions made after the original document was written. The first ten are called the *Bill of Rights*. They were added in 1791 to protect key freedoms like speech, religion, and fair trials. Other amendments brought major changes, such as ending slavery, giving women the right to vote, and setting rules for how leaders are chosen. Having a written constitution means everyone—from leaders to regular citizens—can clearly see how

the country should work. It also protects people's rights and makes sure no part of the government becomes too powerful.

One of the most important ideas in the Constitution is the separation of power among three branches of government: the legislative, executive, and judicial. Each branch has its own job and works independently. This idea was influenced by the writings of Montesquieu, who believed that dividing power would keep freedom safe. James Madison also supported this idea, warning that giving all power to one group would be dangerous. To avoid this, the Constitution makes sure that people cannot hold positions in more than one branch at the same time.

Article I of the Constitution creates Congress, which is the branch that makes laws. Congress is made up of two parts: the House of Representatives and the Senate. Together, they pass laws, manage government money, and approve changes to the Constitution. Congress also oversees trade, supports the military, sets immigration rules, and creates lower courts. It checks the power of the President by approving appointments, signing off on treaties, and removing officials if needed. The House represents the people and is elected every two years. The Senate gives equal voice to each state and has longer terms to provide stability.

Article II gives the President the job of carrying out the laws. The President leads the government, manages federal agencies, and chooses important officials. As head of the military, the President also handles defence and emergency situations. In foreign matters, the President makes treaties, appoints ambassadors, and represents the country in global affairs. The President also signs or rejects bills passed by Congress and can suggest new policies. Presidents are chosen through the Electoral College and can serve up to two four-year terms.

Article III sets up the federal court system. The courts make sure laws follow the Constitution and settle disagreements between people, states, or the government. They hear cases about federal crimes, constitutional rights, and issues involving other countries. The Supreme Court is the highest court, followed by courts of appeals and district courts. Even though the Constitution does not clearly mention it, courts have the power to cancel laws or actions that go against the Constitution. This was confirmed in the 1803 case *Marbury v. Madison*.

To prevent any one branch from becoming too powerful, the Constitution sets up a system where each branch can limit the others. Congress can reject appointments, block spending, and remove officials. It can also pass laws even if the President disagrees. The President can stop laws from taking effect by vetoing them and can influence how laws are carried out. The courts can cancel laws or actions that break the Constitution. This system keeps the government balanced and accountable. Each branch has ways to keep itself in check. In Congress, both the House and Senate must agree before a law can pass. Committees review laws and help make sure all voices are heard. In the executive branch, responsibility is shared among the President, the Cabinet, and other officials. Inspectors general watch over how agencies work. In the courts, judges follow clear rules, and higher courts can review decisions made by lower courts.

The U.S. government also divides power between the national government and the states. This system, called federalism, helps balance unity and local control. James Madison explained that sharing power this way helps stop it from being abused. The federal government takes care of national issues like defence, immigration, and interstate trade. States handle local matters

like education, policing, and local services. Both levels can collect taxes and support economic development. According to Article VI, federal law is stronger than state law if they conflict. This is known as the Supremacy Clause. Sometimes Congress clearly says that federal law replaces state law—this is called express preemption. Other times, if a federal law covers everything in a certain area, states cannot pass their own laws about it—this is implied preemption. Conflict preemption happens when it's impossible to follow both federal and state law at the same time. While states have their own powers, they cannot make treaties, print money, or tax imports. At the same time, the federal government must also respect state powers and people's rights.

The U.S. Constitution was written to keep power limited and fair. By dividing government into three parts and sharing power between national and state governments, it creates a balanced system. Each branch has its own role but must also respect the limits set by the Constitution. This setup has helped the country grow and change while protecting freedom and democracy.

### 3.1.4 The Bill of Rights

The Bill of Rights, made up of the first ten amendments to the U.S. Constitution, was added in 1791 to protect personal freedoms. When the Constitution was first written, many people, especially the Anti-Federalists, worried that the new national government might become too strong and take away individual rights. They wanted a clear list of protections. Federalists believed it wasn't necessary, thinking the Constitution already limited government power. They also feared that listing some rights might make people think those were the only ones that existed. In the end, to settle the debate and win support for the Constitution, leaders agreed to add these amendments. The Bill of Rights was the result of that



agreement. *The First Amendment* is one of the most important. It protects the right to follow any religion or no religion at all, to speak freely, to publish opinions, to meet in groups, and to ask the government to make changes. It also ensures the government doesn't set up an official religion or stop people from practising their own beliefs. Amendments Four through Eight focus on fairness in legal cases. They protect people from unfair searches, guarantee a fair trial, ensure the right to a jury, and ban cruel punishments. These rights are meant to ensure that people are treated fairly when they face the legal system. Other amendments also protect important freedoms. *The Second Amendment* gives people the right to own weapons. *The Third Amendment* stops the government from forcing people to house soldiers in their homes during peace. *The Ninth Amendment* says that people have other rights too, even if they're not written in the Constitution. The *Tenth Amendment* says that any powers not given to the national government belong to the states or the people. Together, these ten amendments protect basic rights and help keep the government from becoming too powerful. They are a key part of how the U.S. system works and how it respects individual freedom.

### 3.1.5 The Practice of Constitutionalism in the USA

The United States follows a system where the government must work according to a written Constitution. This system ensures that the powers of the government are limited and that the rights of people are protected. The Constitution acts as the foundation for how the country is governed and sets clear rules for how laws are made, how leaders are chosen, and what rights people have. Several important practices show how the Constitution is followed in everyday government actions.

#### 1. Rule of Law

In the U.S., the law applies equally to everyone. No person, including government officials, is above the law. This idea is called the rule of law. The Constitution is the highest law in the country, and all other laws must follow it. If a law or action goes against the Constitution, it can be challenged in court. This helps ensure that government leaders do not misuse their powers and that citizens' rights are protected at all times.

#### 2. Judicial Review

One of the most important powers in the U.S. legal system is judicial review. This means that courts, especially the Supreme Court, can review laws or actions of the government to see if they agree with the Constitution. If they do not, the courts can strike them down. This power was first used in the famous 1803 case *Marbury v. Madison*. Since then, judicial review has helped ensure that the government follows the rules set by the Constitution.

#### 3. Independent Judiciary

The judicial branch in the U.S. is separate from the legislative and executive branches. This means judges can make decisions without being controlled by politicians. Federal judges are appointed for life, which helps them stay neutral and fair. They do not have to worry about losing their job for making an unpopular decision. This independence is important for protecting people's rights and making sure the courts stay fair and honest.

#### 4. Amendment Process

Although the Constitution is a strong and lasting document, it includes a process to make changes when necessary. This process helps the country adjust to new challenges and changes in society. However, it is not easy to change the Constitution. To add

an amendment, two-thirds of both houses of Congress must agree, or two-thirds of the states must ask for it. After that, three-fourths of the states must approve it. This long process ensures that only serious and widely supported changes are made. Some major amendments, like ending slavery and giving women the right to vote, were added through this process.

### 3.1.6 Constitutional Amendments in the USA

The U.S. Constitution was made to last, but the people who wrote it knew that times would change. So, they created a way to make changes, called amendments. This process allows the Constitution to grow and adapt when needed, but it also makes sure changes aren't made too quickly or easily. There are two ways to suggest changes to the Constitution:

Most of the time, both the House of Representatives and the Senate must agree by a two-thirds vote on a change. Then, the proposed change goes to the states, where three-fourths of the state lawmakers have to approve it.

If two-thirds of the states ask for it, a special convention can be held to suggest changes. This method has never been used. But any changes proposed this way still need approval from three-fourths of the states. This process makes sure that changes have wide support before becoming part of the Constitution.

Since the Constitution began, there have been 27 changes. Each one shows how the country has grown and responded to new ideas and challenges. After the Civil War in the year 1865, three major amendments were passed to address slavery and civil rights:

- ◆ *The 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment (1865)* officially ended slavery and forced labour, except as punishment for a crime.

- ◆ *The 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment (1868)* granted citizenship to anyone born or naturalised in the U.S. It also required states to treat all people equally under the law and follow fair legal procedures.

- ◆ *The 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment (1870)* stated that no one could be denied the right to vote based on race, colour, or past status as a slave. This amendment aimed to protect voting rights for Black men, although full enforcement took much longer.

During the early 20th century, Americans began demanding more accountability from the government and more rights for ordinary people. This period, known as the Progressive Era, brought important constitutional changes:

- ◆ *The 16<sup>th</sup> Amendment (1913)* gave the federal government the authority to collect income taxes. This created a steady source of funding for national programmes.
- ◆ *The 17<sup>th</sup> Amendment (1913)* changed how U.S. Senators were chosen. Instead of being picked by state legislatures, they would now be elected directly by the people.
- ◆ *The 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment (1920)* gave women the right to vote, after years of campaigning by women's rights activists. It was a major step forward for gender equality in the political system.

In recent decades, Americans have changed how they think about democracy and leadership, and this is clear in the amendments they passed. In 1951, they passed the *22<sup>nd</sup> Amendment*, which limits the president to two terms in office. This change came after Franklin D. Roosevelt won four elections, and many people believed that no president should stay in power for too long. In 1971, they passed the *26<sup>th</sup> Amendment*,

lowering the voting age from 21 to 18. Young people argued that if they were old enough to fight in wars, they should also have the right to vote.

### 3.1.7 Judicial Review and Constitutional Interpretation

In the United States, the courts play an important role in making sure that government actions and laws follow the Constitution. This power is known as judicial review. It means that the courts, especially the Supreme Court, can check if a law or government action goes against the Constitution. If it does, the court can say that the law is invalid. Judicial review started with the case of *Marbury v. Madison* in 1803. In this case, the Supreme Court, led by Chief Justice John Marshall, decided that a part of a law passed by Congress was not in line with the Constitution. This was the first time the Court said that a law could be struck down for being unconstitutional. It showed that the Constitution is the highest law in the country and that all government actions must follow it. This case gave the Supreme Court the responsibility to protect the Constitution and act as a balance against the other branches of government.

Over the years, judges have used different ways to understand and apply the Constitution. One common method is *originalism*. This approach tries to understand

the Constitution based on what the words meant when it was first written and accepted. Judges who follow originalism often look at history to figure out what the writers of the Constitution intended. They believe that the meaning should stay the same as it was at the time of writing. Justice Antonin Scalia was one of the most well-known supporters of this view. Another method is the *living Constitution* approach. Judges who use this method believe that the Constitution can change in meaning as society changes. They think that the Constitution should be read in a way that fits the problems and needs of the present day. This way of thinking is often used in cases about civil rights or new technologies that the original writers could not have imagined.

A third method is *textualism*. Judges who use textualism focus mainly on the actual words in the Constitution. They try to understand the ordinary meaning of the words when they were written and avoid using outside materials like debates or personal opinions of the writers. Textualism aims to apply the Constitution in a straightforward way based on what is written. In short, judicial review helps the courts make sure that laws respect the Constitution. Through different ways of interpretation, judges try to apply the Constitution fairly and clearly while keeping its principles alive in today's world.

## Recap

- ◆ The U.S. Constitution is a single, written document that clearly outlines the structure, powers, and functions of government.
- ◆ The Constitution holds the highest legal authority, and all laws and actions must align with it.
- ◆ The first ten amendments protect individual liberties such as freedom of speech, religion, and the right to a fair trial.

- ◆ Courts, especially the Supreme Court, can review laws and government actions to ensure they comply with the Constitution.
- ◆ The Constitution allows formal changes through a specific, structured process involving both Congress and the states.
- ◆ The government derives its authority from the people, emphasising democracy and citizen participation.
- ◆ The Bill of Rights ensures the fundamental rights of citizens.
- ◆ The provision for Judicial Review makes the Legislature and the Executive under judicial scrutiny.
- ◆ The provision for Checks and Balances ensures the working of Separation of Powers.
- ◆ Division of Powers between the Centre and the Units makes the political system an effective Federation.

## Objective Questions

1. What is the supreme law of the United States?
2. Which principle divides government power among three branches?
3. What part of the Constitution protects individual freedoms?
4. What process allows the Constitution to be changed formally?
5. Which body has the final authority on interpreting the Constitution?
6. What principle ensures government gets power from the people?
7. What system gives each branch power to limit the others?
8. What type of constitution does the United States have?
9. What system divides power between the federal and state governments?
10. Who appoints federal judges in the United States?

## Answers

1. Constitution
2. Separation
3. Bill of Rights
4. Amendment
5. Supreme Court
6. Sovereignty
7. Checks and Balances
8. Written
9. Federalism
10. President

## Assignments

1. Discuss the importance of the separation of powers in the American constitutional framework.
2. Examine the role of the Bill of Rights in protecting individual liberties.
3. Analyse the concept of federalism in the U.S. Constitution.
4. Evaluate the role of the judiciary in upholding constitutional values in the United States.
5. Explore how the American amendment process reflects both stability and adaptability in constitutional governance.

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# UNIT

## Constitutionalism in UK

### Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ understand the historical evolution and core ideas behind constitutionalism in the United Kingdom
- ◆ analyse how Parliament, the monarchy, and the judiciary shaped the UK's political structure
- ◆ evaluate key moments like the Glorious Revolution, the Bill of Rights, and the rise of the Cabinet system
- ◆ explore how devolution and recent political changes have affected how the UK is governed today

### Prerequisites

Picture a group of students gathered in a classroom, actively debating whether a country can function well without a single written document to guide its rules. This question leads them into the world of the British Constitution—one that works without being written down in one place. These students already understand basic political ideas like the state, government, and democracy. They know how public institutions work, how laws are passed, and what rights people have. With that background, they are ready to explore how the UK built its system over many years. They are curious to see how Parliament became more powerful, how kings and queens gradually lost control, and how people helped shape a government that balances old traditions with new changes. More than just memorising facts, they are now beginning to ask important questions—like how rules not written in one document can still hold a nation together.

## Keywords

Constitutionalism, Parliamentary Supremacy, Monarchy, Devolution, Glorious Revolution, Cabinet System, Bill of Rights

## Discussion

### 3.2.1 Introduction

The English Constitution has grown slowly over many centuries. It was not made all at once or based on a single idea. Instead, it changed bit by bit as the country went through different events like wars, conquests, and reforms. But even during these times of trouble, the link between the past and the present was never fully broken. People in England never started from scratch to create a brand-new constitution. They built on what already existed, making small improvements and adjustments over time. As Freeman points out, every step in the development of the English Constitution came from working with what was already there—not by bringing in completely new ideas. This has helped keep a sense of continuity in English political life, where each generation has added to what came before, rather than throwing it away.

### 3.2.2 Evolution of the Constitution in Britain

The English Constitution did not come into existence all at once. It grew slowly over centuries, shaped by events and changes in leadership. Different periods in history helped to build the institutions and practices we now see in the British system of government. Each phase added something new or changed something old, creating a continuous process of growth. We can understand this journey better by dividing it into six periods. They are the Anglo-Saxon Period, the Norman Period, the Angevin or Plantagenet Period, the Tudor Period, the Stuart Period, and

the Hanover Period. This long and steady process shaped the English Constitution into what it is today—a system based on history, balance, and gradual reform.

#### 3.2.2.1 Anglo-Saxon Period

The early growth of English political institutions began during the time of the Saxon settlement. Around the fifth century, the Saxons came to England, moved the native Celtic people westward, and slowly took over most of the land. Their rule continued until 1066, when William of Normandy invaded and established Norman control. One major development during the Saxon period was the rise of kingship. In the beginning, England was not a single kingdom but a group of tribal communities. These were later known as the seven kingdoms—East Anglia, Mercia, Northumbria, Kent, Sussex, Essex, and Wessex. Over time, Wessex became stronger and, by the ninth century, managed to bring the others under its control. This marked the beginning of a single ruler for all of England. As historian Ogg pointed out, monarchy in Britain developed naturally and was not brought in from outside.

Still, the king's power was not absolute. His position depended a lot on his personal ability. He did not always become king just because he was the eldest son. Although kingship usually stayed within one family, the final decision was made by a council called the Witenagemot. If they did not approve of the eldest son, they could choose someone else, even from outside the royal line. So, the Saxon kingship was both hereditary and based on selection. The Witan, or



Witenagemot, was a council made up of important people in the kingdom—both from the church and the royal court. There was no fixed number of members, and the king invited those he trusted or considered wise. Still, certain people like bishops, royal officers, and local leaders were usually always included. The Witan didn't meet in one set place since England didn't have a national capital then. Wherever they met, the king led the discussions and decided what matters would be taken up.

The council didn't follow a strict rulebook. It mostly did what the king asked, but it had a say in key matters like approving new laws, giving advice on war, handling taxes, and making treaties. It also helped in choosing top officials and acted with the king as the highest court in the land. Even though it wasn't elected by the public, people still saw it as representing their voice. Most importantly, it could remove a king who misused power and choose a new one—even someone outside the royal family. This kept the king's authority in check and encouraged the idea that rulers should act with advice, not alone. The Witan is seen as an early form of today's Parliament and the Cabinet.

Another major development during the Anglo-Saxon period was *local self-government*. Most people lived in small villages and worked in farming. Each village managed its own affairs and had meetings to make local decisions. A group of villages formed what was called a '*hundred*,' which usually included about a hundred families or fighters. Each hundred had its own meeting, led by a local official called the *hundred-man*, who could be chosen by the people or appointed by the local landowner. These local gatherings helped people take part in decision-making close to home and became an important part of English political life.

The *shire* was a larger area made up of several hundreds. It had its own local meeting, called the *shire mote*. In the beginning, any free man who wanted to join could attend, but over time only the big landowners, important church leaders, and village officials took part. This meeting was held twice a year and mostly dealt with legal matters, though it sometimes handled other local affairs too. The king appointed an officer called the *alderman* to lead the shire. Over the years, the shire became what we now call the county. What was important about local government during the Saxon times was not just the names of places or titles of officials. It was the way people got used to managing their own local affairs. This habit became a strong part of British life. As Dr. Munro said, for more than a thousand years, the people of England have been choosing someone to speak for them—whether in villages, towns, or Parliament. Thus, the two main institutions of British Government developed during the Anglo-Saxon period were the *Kingship* and the practice of *local self-government*.

### 3.2.2.2 Norman Period

The Norman Conquest of 1066 brought major changes to how England was ruled. Before this, the Saxon kings had limited power, often depending on the support of nobles. But William, the Duke of Normandy, believed in strong central rule and worked quickly to make the king the highest authority in the land. His first move was to take land away from the powerful Saxon lords and give it to his own loyal followers. These new landowners were expected to stay faithful to the king above all else. This gave feudalism a more organised and political shape than it had before.

William also took control of the Church. He claimed the right to choose bishops, showing that the king—not the Pope—had the final say in religious matters in England.

Another important change was the spread of royal justice. Instead of relying only on local customs, William sent royal judges across the country to hear cases. This helped create more consistency in how laws were applied and led to the beginnings of common law. In everyday matters, William made sure the king's will was carried out by giving more authority to sheriffs. These local officials answered directly to the king. They kept peace in the counties, enforced decisions, and collected taxes. Through all these efforts, William made the monarchy much stronger than it had ever been. This shift in power from local lords to the king didn't just bring order—it also helped build the foundations for the democratic institutions that would develop later in English history.

Under Norman rule, the old Saxon Witan slowly changed into what was called the Great Council or *Magnum Concilium*. Like the Witan, it included royal officials, church leaders, and important landowners—men the king personally invited. There were no elections or fixed rules about who could join; it was entirely up to the king. The Great Council carried out many of the same duties as the Witan. It advised the king on major decisions, helped manage the affairs of the kingdom, took part in making or changing laws, and acted as the highest court. But in practice, it had less influence than the Witan had earlier. This was mainly because Norman kings were much stronger and more in control than the Saxon rulers before them. As a result, while the council still existed and functioned, real power was increasingly in the hands of the king.

The *Magnum Concilium*, or Great Council, met only three times a year. To manage the day-to-day running of the government when the Great Council was not in session, a smaller group called the *Curia Regis* or Little Council was formed. This smaller body included the king's close officials—like

the chamberlain, chancellor, constable, steward, and others—who stayed with him and advised him regularly. The *Curia Regis* handled many of the same duties as the Great Council, and there was no strict rule about which group should deal with what. The king could consult either group or sometimes no one at all. However, larger matters like law, taxes, and public decisions were usually brought to the Great Council. Over time, the habit of kings seeking advice from leading figures became more regular and important. This practice slowly turned into a key part of the English system of government. The full meetings of the Great Council eventually led to the development of Parliament, while the smaller council gave rise to important institutions like the Privy Council, the Cabinet, the Treasury, and the High Court of Justice. Much of how the British government works today has roots in this early system of councils and royal advisers.

### 3.2.2.3 The Angevin or Plantagenet Period

When Henry II came to power, he worked hard to bring order back to the kingdom after the troubled years under King Stephen (1135–1154). He had a strong sense of justice and a practical approach to ruling. One of his main efforts was to fix and improve the workings of the government and courts. He took clear steps to reorganise the royal court, the *Curia Regis*, by separating its administrative and judicial duties. This led to two main groups—one that gave advice and helped with daily governance, which later became known as the *Privy Council*, and another that handled legal cases, which grew into the *Exchequer* and the *High Court of Justice*. Through these changes, Henry laid the foundation for a more organised and lasting system of administration and justice.

At the same time, the Great Council, known as the *Magnum Concilium*, was



slowly changing. Henry II began calling it together more often and started discussing important matters with it. As more issues were brought to the council, its size began to grow. A major step in this direction happened in 1213 when King John sent orders to local sheriffs, asking them to send four respected knights from each county to attend a meeting at Oxford. However, John's purpose wasn't to give people a say—it was to make it harder for them to resist the new taxes he planned to collect. King John was known for being harsh and unfair, and over time, he lost the trust of many of his supporters. In response to his actions, a group of powerful barons came together and forced him to accept a document called the *Magna Carta* on June 15, 1215. They made it clear that if he refused, there would be civil war. With no real option left, John agreed, and the royal seal was placed on the Charter to make it official.

The Magna Carta stated that the king couldn't make certain decisions on his own—especially when it came to taxes. He had to get the agreement of the General Council. It also said that the great barons should be called by name and the knights should be invited through their local sheriffs. While the Charter mainly protected the interests of the barons, it came to be seen later as a key step in the history of people's rights. More importantly, it showed that the king's power had limits and couldn't be used in an unfair or unchecked way. This marked an important moment in the move towards a monarchy where the king had to share power and follow agreed rules. In 1254, King Henry III asked each county to send two knights to a meeting that was called a Parliament. But tensions were rising between the king and the barons, especially over new taxes. They couldn't agree, and soon the quarrel turned into open fighting. The king was defeated, and Simon de Montfort, who led the barons, took control of the government.

The following years saw an important moment in 1265 when Montfort called another Parliament. This time, he invited not just bishops, barons, and county knights, but also two people from each of twenty-one towns that supported him. Montfort probably didn't do this out of a belief in giving people more say in government—he was looking for support. Still, by bringing in townspeople alongside nobles and church leaders, he took a step that would later help shape the House of Commons. The meeting he organised was the closest England had come so far to a gathering that included voices from different parts of society. Although Simon de Montfort had started the practice of inviting town representatives to Parliament, King Henry III later dropped this idea. For the next thirty years, Parliaments were still held, but they included only nobles and clergy, with no one representing the towns.

Things changed in 1295 when King Edward I brought back Montfort's earlier idea. He called a large gathering that included barons, church leaders, county knights, and also representatives from the towns. The main purpose was to get approval for new taxes. This meeting had a total of 572 members—172 from the counties, a few from the towns, and the rest were barons and other important figures. Because this Parliament brought together different groups from across the country, including common people through their local representatives, it became known as the '*Model Parliament*.' It set a pattern for how future Parliaments would be formed and marked a step toward broader involvement in government.

When the Model Parliament was called, everyone met in one place, but the king asked them to vote on taxes in three separate groups. He spoke to the clergy as one group, the barons and knights as another, and the townsmen as a third. Each group was expected to listen to his request for money and give their agreement separately. At that

point, it looked like Parliament might develop into three separate chambers. However, this way of doing things didn't last. Over time, the clergy and the nobles started meeting together as one group. As a result, instead of three groups, Parliament gradually took on a two-group system. One group later became known as the *House of Lords*, and the other became the *House of Commons*. By the end of the 14th century, this two-house or bicameral system had become a regular part of how Parliament worked in England.

Thus, during the Plantagenet period, Parliament's power grew significantly. In 1341, Parliament made King Edward I agree to some important rules. First, the king could not collect any taxes without Parliament's permission. Second, Parliament was allowed to appoint someone to check the royal accounts. Third, ministers had to be chosen by Parliament. Lastly, before each session, ministers had to step down and answer any complaints against them. Parliament also gained the power to remove a king. For example, in 1327, Edward II was forced to give up the throne. This showed how much influence Parliament was starting to have. It's important to remember that in the fourteenth century, Parliament was not mainly responsible for making laws. The king made laws with the approval of the nobles and church leaders. The common people did not have much say back then. Their job was mostly to bring forward requests and agree to the taxes the king wanted. It was only later that ordinary people started to have a real role in making laws.

#### 3.2.2.4 The Tudor Period

The period from 1485 to 1603 is known as the Tudor period. During these years, England's political system continued to grow and change based on what had already been set up by the time Henry VII became king. By then, several important parts of government were already in place. The power of the monarchy was well established.

The Common Law had developed quite far, and the main courts were working actively. Local government through county and town courts had become a regular part of life. Parliament had taken clear shape, made up of two parts—the House of Lords and the House of Commons. The Lords were strong and influential, while the Commons had started to gain recognition and play a growing role in making laws.

Between 1485 and 1603, the government in England became more organised and controlled under the Tudor kings and queens. They gathered more power into their own hands and made the monarchy stronger than before. Henry VIII, for instance, once told members of Parliament that he would hang some of them if they didn't pass certain laws. Queen Elizabeth also used her authority firmly—she even sent two members to jail for pushing ideas she didn't like. Parliament was allowed to function, but it had little real power against the Crown. Elections weren't held regularly, and when they did happen, the sessions were short. If a Parliament agreed with the monarch, it was allowed to last for years. But if it refused to cooperate, it was quickly dissolved. When Parliament didn't pass a law the monarch wanted, the king or queen would simply declare it by royal order.

Although the Tudor monarchs were powerful, Parliament was not without influence during this time. Over the years, the House of Commons slowly grew stronger—not just in numbers, but also in confidence and unity. Towards the later part of the period, Parliament started meeting more often and for longer periods. This gave its members the chance to talk, understand each other better, and work more as a team. Queen Elizabeth, despite her authority, often asked for Parliament's advice and accepted its decisions on many important matters. This shows that Parliament continued to have a role, even under strong royal rule.

### 3.2.2.5 Stuart Period

After Queen Elizabeth died, her cousin James VI of Scotland became King of England in 1603, now called James I. He believed strongly that kings got their power from God and should not be questioned. This caused tension with Parliament, though it did not lead to a complete break during his time. The real trouble began when his son, Charles I, took the throne. He also believed in strong royal powers and often clashed with Parliament. In 1628, he was forced to sign the Petition of Right, which tried to limit the king's authority and protect people's rights. But things didn't improve. The disagreement grew worse and led to a civil war. Charles was captured, put on trial, and eventually executed.

After Charles's death, big changes followed. The monarchy and the House of Lords were both abolished. In 1649, England was officially declared a "Commonwealth" or a republic. A new constitution, called the "Instrument of Government," was introduced, and Oliver Cromwell became Lord Protector. But even Cromwell had problems with Parliament, and the new system didn't last. Most people in England still supported the idea of having a king. Cromwell himself knew this, and after his death in 1658, it became clear that the monarchy would return. The country was already moving in that direction, and it was only a matter of time before the crown was brought back.

After Cromwell's death, the monarchy was brought back when Charles II, the third Stuart ruler, took the throne. Although he had strong royal ambitions, Charles II was smart enough to know where to draw the line. He understood that openly challenging Parliament could cost him his crown. So, he found a middle path—keeping royal power while also respecting Parliament's authority. This helped him stay in power without serious trouble. His brother James

II, who became king after him, didn't show the same caution. James believed he had the right to ignore certain laws and acted without Parliament's consent. He brought back an old religious court that had been shut down earlier and issued a declaration that promised more freedom to Catholics and non-Anglicans. These actions upset many in Parliament and among the public.

Worried about the direction James was taking, Parliament invited William of Orange—who was married to James's daughter Mary—to come to England and protect its freedoms. This led to the *Glorious Revolution of 1688*. James found no real support in the country, fled to France, and that marked the end of the Stuart monarchy's direct rule in England. During the Stuart period, the most important development was how Parliament gained more power while the monarchy still tried to stay strong. G.B. Adams described the Restoration in 1660 as a kind of practical compromise. Since James I became king, people had wondered if the strong monarchy of the past could work together with the growing power of Parliament. The big question was how to share power between the King and the Constitution. This compromise provided the answer.

It was a special kind of compromise. Over the next 150 years, the King kept the appearance of being in charge, but real power shifted to Parliament. The King was still officially the ruler, but he could only use his power with Parliament's agreement. He gave up the right to make important decisions on his own. At first, the King still seemed powerful and kept some privileges, so many didn't notice the change right away. It took over a hundred years for everyone to fully understand this new balance between the King and Parliament. But the foundation for this new way of governing was laid back in 1660. During the Stuart period, as Parliament's power grew, the Privy Council

also changed. It became much larger, sometimes having up to forty members. Instead of just advising the King, the council took on many responsibilities like managing trade, overseeing justice, handling finances, and keeping an eye on most government departments. Because the council got so big, it became difficult to give the King good advice. To fix this, Charles II created a smaller group within the council, called the “Cabal,” made up of his closest advisors to discuss important and private matters. This smaller group eventually became the early form of the Cabinet system we know today.

### 3.2.2.6 Hanover Period

To prevent future clashes between the King and Parliament, Parliament made sure the rules for accepting the Hanover dynasty were clear and firm, with the new rulers agreeing to them. In February 1689, Parliament created and passed a declaration of rights into law, which we now call the Bill of Rights. This document is one of the most important in English history. While it wasn't a full constitution, it acted like one by clearly setting out how the government should work, based on Parliament's understanding at the time. The Bill of Rights summed up the changes brought by the Revolution and the ideas about liberty that had grown during the seventeenth century. It made sure these ideas were written down so no one could ignore or challenge them. The document made it clear that Parliament had the highest authority. It said the King couldn't raise taxes or import duties without Parliament's agreement, that Parliament should meet regularly, and it protected certain individual freedoms from being violated. It also banned past illegal practices and set rules about who could inherit the throne, excluding Catholics and those married to Catholics. In short, the Bill of Rights firmly placed Parliament in charge and marked an important moment in England's constitutional history.

The events of 1688-89 shaped the English Constitution into what it is today. The key ideas of the political system were firmly set and protected from being overturned. Britain became a limited monarchy, with Parliament taking control over the king's powers. Since then, the basic setup of the government has stayed the same, but some important changes have happened, which are given below:

- ◆ Actual powers of the King declined;
- ◆ Cabinet system became stronger;
- ◆ House of Commons became more democratic and stronger than the House of Lords;
- ◆ Party system became prominent.

Since the end of the Stuart era, many changes have taken place. In 1707, Scotland joined England and Wales to form a parliamentary union. Ireland joined this union in 1801, though today only Northern Ireland remains part of it. The Scottish Parliament was brought back in May 1999, with 129 members sworn in, marking a new chapter in Britain's political life. The Parliament officially opened on July 1, 1999. Around the same time, the Welsh Assembly was established in Cardiff, bringing a new style of governance to Britain. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Tony Blair, power was devolved to these regions, reshaping the country and bringing it closer to the governance model followed by other European Union members. This change was called *constitutional modernisation*, not a move toward full independence. Still, one Scottish Member of Parliament made it clear, saying, '*I believe in the sovereignty of the people of Scotland rather than the monarchy.*'

Nationalist parties in Scotland and Wales are likely to become more active and may play a bigger role in shaping Britain's future politics. Some experts in Scotland believed



that giving these regions more control might be enough to reduce the push for full independence. But others felt that the call for complete separation could become a major issue in national elections before long. At the same time, it's important to remember that this was also the period when England was expanding its colonial empire. This growth brought many changes to how the country was governed. However, despite these changes, the basic structure and guiding principles of the British political system stayed the same. The country adapted to new challenges without losing its core values.

### 3.2.2.7 Conclusion

The idea of constitutionalism in the United Kingdom has grown over many centuries. Unlike countries that have a single written constitution, the UK follows a mix of laws, traditions, court decisions, and political practices. Together, these have created a working system that protects both government stability and individual freedoms. Over time, power slowly shifted from the monarchy to Parliament. Events like the signing of the *Magna Carta*, the *Civil War*, the *Glorious Revolution*, and the passing of the *Bill of Rights in 1689* played a major role in this shift. By the end of the 17th century, it became clear that the king or queen could no longer rule

without Parliament's support. From then on, the government needed to answer to elected representatives and stay within the law. As the system developed, the Cabinet became the key decision-making group, the House of Commons became stronger than the House of Lords, and more people were given the right to vote.

Political parties also became part of regular government functioning. In more recent years, powers have been given to Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, allowing them more control over their own affairs. This step has changed how the UK is governed, but the foundation remains steady. Even without a single written constitution, the UK has built a strong and flexible system. It respects the rule of law, expects leaders to be accountable, and values public involvement in decision-making. Though there are ongoing debates—such as those about Scotland's future or changes in the country's place in the world—the core of the UK's constitutional system has remained stable. In short, constitutionalism in the UK has been shaped by history and common sense. It has grown gradually and continues to evolve, but its main values—fairness, balance of power, and democratic participation—still guide the country today.

## Recap

- ◆ The UK doesn't have a single written constitution, but relies on laws, customs, and traditions.
- ◆ Parliament slowly became more powerful, especially after 1688–89.
- ◆ The Glorious Revolution helped limit the power of the King and boosted Parliament.
- ◆ The Bill of Rights (1689) clearly laid out key rules for government and people's freedoms.

- ◆ Charles II's small group of advisers led to what we now call the Cabinet system.
- ◆ The King or Queen now mainly plays a symbolic role, while Parliament handles real power.
- ◆ Devolution gave more power to Scotland and Wales to manage their own affairs.
- ◆ Scotland's Parliament was brought back in 1999, starting a new chapter in its politics.
- ◆ Political groups pushing for Scottish and Welsh independence are becoming more influential.
- ◆ Even with many changes, the UK's main political structure has stayed steady.

## Objective Questions

1. In which year was the Bill of Rights passed?
2. What major event led to the end of James II's rule?
3. Who was invited to rule England in 1688?
4. What system did Charles II's inner group of advisers lead to?
5. When was the Scottish Parliament revived?
6. Which country formed a union with England in 1707?
7. Who was the Prime Minister behind the devolution reform of 1999?
8. What term is used to describe the UK's system of multiple laws and conventions?
9. What is the highest legislative authority in the UK?
10. Which document set limits on the powers of the King and strengthened Parliament?

## Answers

1. 1689
2. Glorious Revolution
3. William of Orange
4. Cabinet
5. 1999
6. Scotland
7. Tony Blair
8. Unwritten
9. Parliament
10. Bill of Rights

## Assignments

1. Discuss the importance of the Glorious Revolution in shaping constitutionalism in the UK.
2. Explain the features and significance of the Bill of Rights (1689).
3. Analyse the impact of the Cabinet system on the UK's political structure.
4. How has devolution influenced governance in Scotland and Wales?
5. Trace the historical decline of monarchical powers in the UK.

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# Constitutionalism in Switzerland

## UNIT

### Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ understand the unique features of the Swiss Constitution, including its principles of direct democracy, plural executive, and federalism
- ◆ analyse the balance of power between the Federal Government and Cantons, and the role of the judiciary within the Swiss political system
- ◆ evaluate the influence of liberal philosophy and historical developments on the evolution of constitutionalism in Switzerland
- ◆ explore the significance of Swiss constitutional mechanisms in maintaining social harmony, political stability, and citizen participation

### Prerequisites

Imagine a small, peaceful country nestled in the heart of Europe, where people value fairness, freedom, and community. Long ago, this country, Switzerland, faced many challenges—war, economic struggles, and social change. Its leaders knew they needed a system that allowed people to have a real say in government while keeping the country united despite its diverse regions called Cantons. So, they built a Constitution that was flexible and strong, giving power to both the federal government and the Cantons, and allowing citizens to participate directly through voting on laws and policies. Over time, this unique system grew, adapting to the needs of the people while protecting their freedoms.

### Keywords

Direct Democracy, Federalism, Cantonal Autonomy, Plural Executive, Judicial Review, Liberal Philosophy, Swiss Constitution

# Discussion

## 3.3.1 Introduction

Switzerland is a small country in the middle of Western Europe, about one-third the size of New York State. It is surrounded by Germany, France, Austria, and Italy. The people live on both sides of a big mountain range and come from different backgrounds. Some are of German, French, or Italian origin, and they speak four different languages. Most people speak German, while others speak French, Italian, or Romansh. In 1938, Romansh was also made a national language. Religion in Switzerland is also mixed. About one-third of the people are Protestants and another third are Catholics. Even with these differences in language, religion, and heritage, the Swiss people have built a strong and united nation. They have followed the path of self-rule for over 700 years, and this has helped them learn how to live together peacefully. The mix of cultures has turned out to be a strength. It has stopped any one group from becoming too proud or separate and has helped people respect each other's beliefs and traditions.

As Zurcher once said, no people in Europe show stronger unity and love for their country than the Swiss. At a time when many countries argue about who belongs based on language or race, Switzerland shows that a country can grow strong even when its people are different. Each group respects the others and doesn't try to take over or interfere. This spirit of mutual respect has shaped Swiss democracy. People value the freedom of their local areas and small states, called cantons. The Swiss Constitution clearly shows their love for direct participation in decision-making and their belief that power should stay with the people. In his book *Modern Democracies*, Bryce praised Switzerland as one of the best examples of how democracy can work. He said that, among all the modern

democratic countries, Switzerland stands out. It is not only one of the oldest democracies but also one that has stayed true to the idea of people directly taking part in government. The country's democratic spirit runs through all its institutions, and its system of direct democracy is something many admire and often refer to as a model.

Another thing that makes Switzerland special is its long history of staying neutral in international conflicts. Even when Europe was going through wars and tensions, Switzerland remained outside those struggles and managed to stay peaceful and stable. Rappard once said that this neutral policy is the main reason the country has kept its independence for so long. But this does not mean that Switzerland is afraid or unwilling to be involved in world matters. Its neutrality doesn't come from weakness or from wanting to shut itself off. In fact, Switzerland has often helped bring countries together during wars, acting as a safe place for communication and diplomacy. Hans Huber explained that this neutral role allows Switzerland to carry out important humanitarian work, especially during times of conflict. This approach has helped the country stay calm and prosperous, and neutrality has become a key part of its identity and foreign policy. Still, on March 3, 2002, the country made a big decision. After years of staying out of international organisations, the Swiss people voted in favour of joining the United Nations. The vote was close, but 54.6% supported joining, while 45.4% were against it. This choice showed that Switzerland was ready to take on more responsibility in global matters while still holding on to its basic values of peace and independence.

## 3.3.2 The Old Confederation

Switzerland came together as a country through a long and steady process that started



in 1291 and was completed by 1848. Before this, the area was made up of small, separate Cantons. These Cantons didn't have a central government and were somewhat under the control of the Austrian Habsburg rulers. In 1291, three Cantons—Uri, Schwyz, and Unterwalden—joined hands to form a Confederation. They wanted to protect their freedom and push back against Austrian control. They managed to stop the Habsburgs from taking over again, which gave hope and courage to the other Cantons. By 1353, five more Cantons had joined the union, making it a group of eight.

As time passed, this bond between the Cantons grew stronger. Eventually, the international community began to see Switzerland as a separate country. This recognition came officially with the Treaty of Westphalia, which accepted Switzerland as an independent state. The old Swiss Confederation, which had started in 1291, could not survive the powerful invasion of revolutionary France. Switzerland lost its independence and became a protectorate under French control. The French set up a centralised system of government, ending the traditional structure where each Canton managed its own affairs. This sudden shift to a single, central authority did not sit well with the Swiss people. They had a long history of local self-rule, and many of them were unhappy and upset with the new system. The centralised rule went against their way of life and their strong belief in local freedom. Seeing the unrest, Napoleon stepped in. In 1803, he introduced the Act of Mediation, which gave the Cantons back their right to self-govern. This move restored the balance and allowed the Swiss to once again manage their local matters, bringing back a sense of normalcy and respect for their traditions.

When Napoleon was defeated, the Helvetic Republic also came to an end. Switzerland went back to being a Confederation, though

with some changes. A new agreement was made between the Cantons, and this was officially accepted by the Congress of Vienna. Although French rule had been forced on the Swiss, it ended up bringing some unexpected benefits. Between 1798 and 1815, many steps were taken that helped shape modern Switzerland. The Act of Mediation had already added six new Cantons to the original thirteen. Then in 1815, three more Cantons were added—these were French-speaking. This brought the number of Cantons to the total we see in Switzerland today. During this time, the country's three-language character was also officially recognised.

Between 1815 and 1848, Switzerland went through a period of conflict between two groups. One wanted the country to become more united with a stronger central government. The other wanted to keep the Cantons as independent as possible. These groups were called the Radicals, who pushed for unity, and the Federalists, who wanted to protect local freedom. The disagreement grew serious in 1847 when seven Catholic Cantons tried to leave and formed their own league called the "Sonderbund." This sparked a short civil war between those wanting to stay united and those wanting to separate. The Radicals won, and after that, a new constitution was written. This constitution became the basic law of Switzerland in 1848, shaping the country's future.

### 3.3.3 The Constitution of 1848

In 1848, a group of fourteen people from the Diet wrote a new Constitution for Switzerland. After the Diet agreed to it, the Constitution was put to a vote, and most Cantons and people said yes. This change turned Switzerland from a loose Confederation into a Federal State. Even though this was a big step, it was also a compromise. The Cantons kept their own powers, but only as long as they didn't go against the Federal Constitution. The new

Constitution set up important features like a two-part Federal Assembly, a shared executive team, and ways for people to directly take part in decisions through referendums and initiatives. It also created a common Swiss citizenship and set up a Federal Court to handle legal matters.

### 3.3.4 The Constitution of 1874

The Constitution of 1848 lasted for only twenty-six years. During that time, calls for a stronger central government grew louder, even though some wanted the Cantons to keep their local rights and privileges. The Radicals, who had support from most people, pushed to remove these special rights and focus on protecting basic freedoms for everyone under a unified government.

Because of this shift, the old Constitution needed to change. The Federal Assembly wrote a new one and asked the people to approve it. Most Swiss citizens agreed, and the new Constitution started on May 29, 1874. This updated Constitution gave more power to the central government. It took control of the railways and gave the federal authorities more say in many areas. The Federal Court also gained more power but ended the separate court systems that the Cantons had maintained before.

### 3.3.5 The Constitution of 1999

The Constitution of 1874 was quite strict, and although people rejected the idea of completely rewriting it, many smaller changes were made—about 150 in total. Most of these changes gave more power to the central government. After so many amendments, it made sense to combine them into one clear document. The Federal Parliament approved this updated Constitution on December 18, 1998. Then, the people voted in favour of it in April 1999. The government officially put it into effect on January 1, 2000. This allowed Switzerland to start the new millennium with

a fresh legal foundation. But even with the update, the basic structure of Switzerland's federal system stayed much the same as it was in 1874.

### 3.3.6 Features of the Swiss Constitution

Switzerland is still called a Confederation made up of twenty full Cantons and six half Cantons. Since 1848, it has followed a Federal Constitution, which was updated in 1874 and then rewritten in 1999 to include all the changes made over time. The country is known as the home of direct legislation and is the only place in the world where people practice direct democracy. As Dr Munro said, "Nothing in the Swiss political system is more instructive to the student of modern democracy."

Following are the salient features of the Swiss Constitution:

#### 3.3.6.1 A Written and Lengthy Constitution

The Swiss Constitution, first written in 1848 and updated many times since, including a significant revision in 1999, is similar to the American Constitution but about twice as long. It has 196 Articles that cover not just important political rules but also everyday issues like fishing, hunting, gambling, lotteries, care for the sick and poor, cattle diseases, and rules for certain jobs. This Constitution tries to find a middle ground between those who want to protect the powers of the Cantons and those who want a strong central government. As Brooks said, it aims to prevent conflicts and keep the country peaceful. Because of this careful balance, the Constitution includes many details and is quite long. The new Swiss Constitution starts with a Preamble and some basic rules which are enshrined in Articles 1 to 6. The organisation and functions of the Legislative, Executive, and Judicial branches



of the federal government are detailed in Articles 143 to 191. It clearly breaks down four traditional pillars of Swiss Constitutional Law, which are as follows:

- ◆ *Democracy*: Articles 136 to 142 explain how people in Switzerland take part in their government, including how they can suggest changes to the Constitution or vote on laws.
- *Rule of Law*: Articles 7 to 36 set out the basic rules that the government must follow and list important fundamental rights that everyone has.
- *Social Welfare*: Article 41 declares that the Constitution sets goals for both the federal and local governments to support the well-being of the people.
- *Federalism*: Articles 42 to 135 explain how the central government and the 26 Cantons and local towns share power and list what the federal government can make laws about.

### 3.3.6.2 Rigid Constitution

The Swiss Constitution is fairly firm in its structure, but not as difficult to change as the American Constitution. Still, the process to make changes is somewhat complex. There are two main ways to amend it. There are two main ways to change the Swiss Constitution:

1. *Referendum*: If both Houses of the Swiss Parliament agree that the Constitution should be changed—either fully or just a part—they prepare a proposal and ask the people and the Cantons to vote on it. If most citizens and most Cantons agree, the change is made. But if only one House supports the idea and the other does not, the proposal goes straight to the people to check if they think a change is needed. If the majority agrees, new elections are held. The

newly elected Parliament then works on the change and sends it again to the people and the Cantons. If both give their approval, the change becomes part of the Constitution.

2. *Constitutional Initiative*: Citizens themselves can take the lead. If 100,000 people sign a petition asking for a change in the Constitution, it must be taken seriously. First, the people vote on whether a change is needed at all. If the majority says yes, fresh elections are held, and the new Parliament prepares the revised Constitution. After that, it goes to the people and the Cantons for a final vote. If both approve, the new version comes into force.

In Switzerland, people can suggest changes to the Constitution even without drafting the exact wording. This is called an '*unformulated initiative*'. When at least 100,000 citizens support such an idea, it is sent to the Federal Assembly. If the Assembly agrees, it prepares the necessary changes and puts the proposal to a vote. If most citizens and Cantons approve, the change becomes law. However, if the Assembly does not agree with the idea, it is still sent directly to the people. If a majority of the voters support it, the Assembly must then prepare a draft that reflects the original idea. This new version is again put to a public vote. If it is approved by both the people and the Cantons, the Constitution is amended. When a constitutional amendment is proposed in a clear and complete form, it is called a '*formulated initiative*', wherein the Federal Assembly first reviews it. If both Houses of Parliament agree, the proposal is sent to the people and the Cantons for a final vote. If the majority of voters and the majority of Cantons support it, the amendment becomes part of the Constitution.

However, if the Federal Assembly disagrees with the proposal, it can put forward an alternative version—a counter-proposal. In that case, both the original and the counter-proposal go to the people and the Cantons for voting. But here's the catch: if both proposals are approved, or if one is approved by the people and the other by the Cantons, then neither takes effect. For any change to be accepted, it must receive a majority from both the voters and the Cantons in the same direction. The detailed process for changing the Swiss Constitution shows how firm and well-protected it is. Since 1874, people have only tried twice to completely rewrite it, and both times, the changes were rejected. But there have been many smaller changes, mostly giving more power to the central government. As Rappard said, "It is easier for the Swiss people to amend their fundamental law than their ordinary statutes against the will of a hostile Parliament."

### 3.3.6.3 Republican Constitution

Switzerland is one of the oldest republics in Europe. Its Constitution, last updated in 1999, ensures that both the national government and the governments of the Cantons follow a republican and democratic system. Each Canton must guarantee that its people can take part in political decisions in a truly democratic way. The writers of the Constitution wanted to break away from the control of aristocrats, merchants, and religious authorities who had held power for centuries. They removed these old privileges and made sure that all citizens were treated equally under the law. In Switzerland, every citizen has a say in how the government works. All political positions are filled through elections. This idea of republicanism is at the heart of Swiss democracy.

### 3.3.6.4 Federal Form of Government

Switzerland may still be called a Confederation, but in reality, it works like

a true Federation. This is clear from the Preamble of the Swiss Constitution, which speaks on behalf of both the Swiss people and the Cantons. It explains that the country was brought together to strengthen unity, protect its freedom, and promote peace and welfare. The Constitution was adopted to build national solidarity, not just to form a loose alliance of regions. Power is shared between the central government and the Cantons in a way that's similar to how it works in the United States. The federal government handles matters like national defence, foreign relations, and overall internal order. The Cantons have their own powers, but there are a few conditions: they must have a republican form of government, their rules must not go against the federal Constitution, and any changes to their own Constitutions must be approved by a vote of their people. This system ensures that both the country as a whole and its smaller regions work together within a united framework.

Over time, especially since 1874, the Swiss Federal Government has taken on more responsibilities. This shift happened mostly because of major events like wars, economic hardships, the need for more public services, and changes brought by new technology in transport and industry. These kinds of changes have affected many countries with federal systems, and Switzerland was also influenced. Some people, like André, have warned that if this centralisation continues, the Cantons might lose their real power and end up just following orders from the central government. But in practice, this hasn't fully happened. The Cantons still play an active role. They keep the powers that are not directly given to the federal government. Their local courts apply federal laws, and their officials help carry out central duties within their own areas.

Also, the Cantons still have a strong say in how the country is run. No changes can be made to the Constitution without their



approval. Article 3 of the Constitution makes it clear that the Cantons remain independent in all matters unless the Constitution specifically says otherwise. This keeps the balance between national unity and local freedom. The Swiss Constitution gives a lot of importance to the Cantons. It protects their right to govern themselves, their land, and the rights of their people. The Cantons are also allowed to make agreements with other countries, but only on public or economic matters, and as long as these agreements don't go against the interests of the Swiss Confederation or other Cantons.

All communication between the Cantons and the national government must go through the Federal Council. One unique feature of the Swiss system is that the Cantons can keep small military forces. In most other countries with a federal setup, defence is entirely handled by the central government. In Switzerland, however, while the Cantons have their own forces, the Federal Government takes full control of them during emergencies. Their training and discipline are also decided by federal law. If there's a serious dispute between Cantons or any rebellion—though very rare in Switzerland—the Federal Council has the power to take strong actions. Even with such federal control in certain areas, the Cantons still enjoy a lot of freedom in managing their own affairs. As Zurcher rightly said, the Cantons are and will remain an essential part of Switzerland's political system.

The Swiss federal system is shaped in a way that keeps law-making centralised but allows the Cantons to manage things on their own. This balance makes the system stronger and helps protect the freedom of the Cantons. While the central government has taken on more responsibilities over time, the Cantons have also become more active in their own areas. Most Swiss citizens strongly support the independence of their Cantons, and they are quick to notice if the central government

tries to interfere too much. Although the Cantons have sometimes lost a bit of their control, they still play a key role in the Swiss Confederation. The Constitution clearly recognises their importance by involving them in national decisions and giving them a say in how changes to the Constitution are made. As R. C. Brooks once said, the system is a compromise between those who want more power for the Cantons and those who support a stronger central government. It aims to avoid internal conflicts and maintain peace within the country.

Over the years, the Cantons have accepted some level of central authority. Being small, they understand the need to work together for the country's unity. The central government has not used force or pressure to gain more power. Instead, it has taken a thoughtful and cooperative approach. Carl J. Friedrich rightly observed that no single Canton is big enough to dominate the rest, and political divisions are not as sharp at the Cantonal level. The central government has shown restraint, which has helped keep the Swiss federal system stable and fair.

### **3.3.6.5 Democratic Character of the Swiss Government**

Democracy and Switzerland are almost synonymous. In the words of Bryce, "*Among the modern democracies which are true democracies, Switzerland has the highest claim to be studied. It is the oldest, for it contains communities in which popular government dates farther back than it does anywhere else in the world, and it has pushed democratic doctrines farther and worked them out more consistently than any other European state.*"

The Swiss Constitution is based on important ideas like the people having the ultimate power, fairness under the law, equal rights for all citizens, and the right for every adult to vote. This is seen in how people elect

their representatives to both national and local governments, and through tools like referendums and initiatives that let citizens have a direct say in decisions. The leaders are chosen by the people too, showing the republican nature of the system. In some cantons, all adult citizens meet in gatherings called *Landsgemeinde* where they can speak, make laws, and elect officials. Swiss officials don't act like distant bureaucrats, unlike in many other countries. Carl J. Friedrich said the Swiss government responds to its people better than almost any other place, except Sweden. This means real democracy works well in Switzerland. It is even unique because it practices direct democracy, where citizens are closely involved in decision-making. Zurcher pointed out that Switzerland and democracy have become almost the same thing. However, this full democracy only came after 1971 when Swiss women were finally given the right to vote. Before that, only men could vote, but after a change in the Constitution, women's voices were included. Now, Switzerland truly allows all adults to participate in its democracy.

### 3.3.6.6 Liberalism

The ideas of freedom and equality from the 19th-century liberal movement had a strong effect on the people who wrote the Swiss Constitution. These values can still be seen clearly in the rights it protects. People in Switzerland enjoy freedom of speech, belief, the press, and assembly. They also have the right to petition the government, access free and compulsory education, and do business freely. Everyone is treated equally before the law. These are all signs of how committed Switzerland has been to individual rights. As André once noted, Swiss democracy brings together the key features of freedom within a carefully balanced system. Over time, however, the government has had to take a more active role in economic matters. This shift has softened some of the original liberal tone of the Constitution.

Still, as Zurcher points out, the basic spirit of freedom and limited government remains strong. The Swiss system has stayed true to its liberal roots while adapting to new social and economic needs.

### 3.3.6.7 Swiss Constitution and Citizens' Rights

The Swiss Constitution of 1874 did not have a separate section called a Bill of Rights like we see in some other countries such as India or the former USSR. But this doesn't mean the rights of Swiss citizens were ignored. These rights were included, just spread out across different parts of the Constitution. Today, they are grouped together more clearly under Title 2, in Articles 7 to 40. These rights include equality before the law, freedom to move and live anywhere in the country, freedom of speech, the right to form associations, and the right to petition the government. All Swiss citizens aged 18 and above can vote. However, there are some limits. For example, free speech must respect moral standards, and religious freedom doesn't allow anyone to skip civic duties. Also, starting new religious orders is not allowed. People can form groups or unions, but they must not harm the interests of the country. Every child has the right to free basic education in public schools, and adults have the right to marry. These rights also come with responsibilities. Citizens are expected to use their freedoms wisely and contribute to the good of society.

The Swiss Constitution gives real meaning to the rights it guarantees. These are not just words on paper. Citizens are protected by the right to habeas corpus, and their freedoms are watched over by the Federal Supreme Court—the top court in the country. If any law or government action threatens these rights, the Federal Tribunal steps in to stop it. Government bodies are expected not just to respect these rights but also to help make sure they are followed in daily life. As Hans

Huber clearly said, these rights act as strong protections. They help minority groups—whether based on language, religion, or politics—feel safe from unfair treatment by the majority. They also make sure that every person has a space of their own, where their basic dignity and freedom are upheld.

### 3.3.6.8 Plural Executive

In Switzerland, the executive power is held by the Federal Council, which is made up of seven members. These members are chosen by the Federal Assembly and serve for four years. Unlike countries like the United States or the United Kingdom, where one person—the President or the Monarch—leads the government, Switzerland shares this role among the seven members. One member is picked each year to be the President of the Council, but this person isn't more powerful than the others. They are simply “first among equals” and mostly handle ceremonial duties, like representing the country on special occasions. The Swiss executive works as a team, taking care of running the government while also filling the role of a head of state. This way of sharing power shows how much Switzerland values equality and cooperation in its politics.

### 3.3.6.9 Secondary Position of Judiciary

In Switzerland, the courts don't have as much power as they do in countries like the United States or India. The highest court, called the Federal Tribunal, can only review laws made by the cantons, not the laws passed by the national parliament. The Constitution clearly says that courts must follow the laws passed by the Federal Assembly, so federal laws can't be challenged in court. Judges are chosen by the Federal Assembly, which means the judiciary doesn't have full independence. This way of selecting judges shows that the courts have a lower standing compared to other branches of government. Also, the Federal Tribunal is the only national

court, and it doesn't lead a larger network of courts like in the U.S. or India. Overall, the judiciary in Switzerland plays a smaller and less central role in the country's political system.

### 3.3.6.10 Bicameral Legislature

Switzerland's legislature has two parts. The Council of States is the smaller chamber, with forty-six members, and it represents all the cantons equally, much like the U.S. Senate does for the states. The larger chamber, called the National Council, has two hundred members and represents the people. Both chambers have the same powers and work side by side. Unlike many countries where the two chambers have different roles, in Switzerland, they share equal responsibilities, making their system quite unique.

*In the words of C.P. Strong: “Swiss legislature like Swiss executive is unique. It is the only legislature in the world, the functions of whose Upper House are in no way differentiated from the lower.”*

### 3.3.6.11 Dynamic Constitution

The Swiss Constitution is flexible and changes with the times to meet the needs of its people. For example, during the two World Wars, some freedoms like speech and forming groups were limited because Switzerland wanted to stay neutral. The government acted to protect this neutrality and stepped in whenever citizens' independence was at risk. The introduction of labour laws in 1877, 1908, and 1920 shows how the state responded to social needs. Later, when the economic crisis hit in 1930, the government took action to help the country recover from hard times and uncertainty. To sum up, the Swiss Constitution is truly one of a kind. Its system of direct democracy is admired worldwide. The way it shares executive power among several people, mixing the best parts of parliamentary and presidential systems without their problems, is impressive.

It also follows a middle path, combining liberal ideas while avoiding the extremes of capitalism and strict socialism. Dr. Munro explained that Switzerland's success comes from many things: its small and compact

size, natural resources, the smart and patriotic nature of its people, a fairly equal spread of wealth, and strong traditions that have lasted through time.

## Recap

- ◆ The Swiss Constitution blends direct democracy with federalism to give citizens a strong voice in governance.
- ◆ The Federal Council, a group of seven members, shares executive power instead of a single leader.
- ◆ Cantons enjoy significant autonomy but cooperate under the federal system for national unity.
- ◆ The Swiss Federal Tribunal has limited powers and cannot overturn federal laws.
- ◆ Direct democracy tools like referendums and initiatives allow Swiss citizens to influence laws directly.
- ◆ The Constitution reflects liberal ideas such as freedom of speech, equality before the law, and free education.
- ◆ Swiss governance balances central authority with respect for local traditions and diversity.
- ◆ The Constitution has adapted over time, including extending voting rights to women in 1971.
- ◆ The judiciary is less powerful compared to countries like the U.S. and India but plays a role in protecting canton laws.
- ◆ The Swiss system avoids extremes of capitalism and socialism by blending liberal values with social welfare.

## Objective Questions

1. What is the structure of the Swiss executive?
2. Which body elects the members of the Federal Council?
3. What is the term length for a member of the Swiss Federal Council?
4. What principle allows Swiss citizens to vote directly on laws?



5. When were women granted voting rights in Switzerland?
6. How many members are there in the Swiss Federal Council?
7. What is the term used for the Swiss regional units?
8. Which chamber represents the Cantons equally in the legislature?
9. What philosophy influenced the Swiss Constitution?
10. What type of laws can the Swiss Federal Tribunal declare unconstitutional?

## Answers

1. Collective
2. Assembly
3. Four years
4. Referendum
5. 1971
6. Seven
7. Cantons
8. Council of States
9. Liberalism
10. Cantonal

## Assignments

1. Discuss the unique features of the Swiss plural executive and how it differs from presidential or parliamentary systems.
2. Explain the role and limits of the Swiss Federal Tribunal in judicial review.
3. Analyse the balance between federal authority and cantonal autonomy in Switzerland.

4. Evaluate the impact of direct democracy on Swiss political stability.
5. Explore how the Swiss Constitution reflects liberal philosophy while addressing social and economic needs.

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**BLOCK**

# **Federal and Unitary Systems**



# Federal System in USA

## UNIT

### Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this Unit, the learner will be able to:

- ♦ understand the core principles of federalism as embedded in the United States Constitution
- ♦ analyse the structure and functioning of the separation of powers and the system of checks and balances
- ♦ evaluate the effectiveness and limitations of American federalism in balancing state and central authority
- ♦ explore the historical evolution and contemporary relevance of the U.S. federal structure in governance and policy-making

### Prerequisites

One day, during a class discussion, someone asked, “Can a country run well without a single written constitution?” That sparked curiosity about different political systems around the world. This curiosity brings them to the next step—understanding how the U.S. federal system works. By now, learners know how constitutional governments function and are ready to explore how power is divided and balanced in the U.S. model. With this foundation, learners will be able to understand the workings, strengths, and limitations of the American federal system in a clearer and more engaging way.

### Keywords

Federalism, Separation of Powers, Checks and Balances, American Constitution, Presidential Veto, Supreme Court, Ratification



# Discussion

## 4.1.1 Introduction

When the United States was first formed, it had only thirteen States. Now, it has grown to fifty. In the beginning, these thirteen States were independent and had full control over their own affairs. But they decided to come together and form a Union by handing over some of their powers to a central government. Still, they gave up only what was absolutely necessary and kept most of their powers with themselves. That's why the federal government can do only what is clearly written in the Constitution, while everything else remains with the States. This gives the States a lot of freedom to make their own laws and decisions. Woodrow Wilson once said that if we look at the major laws passed in Britain during the 1800s, only a few—like the Corn Laws and the law that ended slavery—would have been allowed under the powers of the U.S. Congress. The American Constitution clearly lists three things: what Congress is allowed to do, what it is not allowed to do, and what the States are not allowed to do.

## 4.1.2 Concept of Division of Powers

The U.S. Constitution, in Article I, Section 8, gives Congress a list of eighteen clear powers. These include the power to collect taxes and duties, manage trade with other countries and between different States, and set rules for people who want to become citizens. Congress is also responsible for taking care of the country's defence and general well-being. It can decide how money is made and how weights and measures are set. It can encourage progress in science and useful inventions. Congress is allowed to set up courts that are lower than the Supreme Court, declare war when needed, and build and support the army. Along with all this,

it can also make any law that helps carry out these powers effectively.

The U.S. Constitution not only gives powers to the central government and the states but also sets clear limits on what they can do. Article I, Section 9 says that the federal government cannot take away a person's right to ask a court to review their arrest, cannot make laws that punish people for something that wasn't a crime when they did it, cannot give titles like "duke" or "lord," and cannot pass laws that interfere with religious freedom or limit free speech and the press. Similarly, the states are not allowed to make deals or treaties with other countries, print their own money, or keep their own armies. The Tenth Amendment makes it clear that if a power isn't given to the central government or taken away from the states, it belongs to the people. These powers usually protect basic rights that no government should touch. In this way, the Constitution makes sure that the people remain at the heart of the country's democracy.

In the U.S. system, the Constitution clearly says that any powers not given to the central government and not denied to the states belong to the states. This setup means the central government can only act in areas that are clearly listed, which naturally keeps its role limited. Thus, the Fathers of the Constitution created a dual system of government where both the federal and state governments exist side by side. The federal government looks after certain matters, while the states handle everything else. Both work on their own, without stepping into each other's space. If there's ever a need to change how these powers are shared, it has to be done by changing the Constitution.

### 4.1.3 The Status of States in the American Federal System

The people who wrote the U.S. Constitution wanted the States to remain stronger than the central government. So, the powers that were not clearly given to the Centre were kept with the States. When the Union was formed, the States gave up only some of their powers. The Tenth Amendment clearly states that the States still hold many powers that are not listed in the Constitution. The original thirteen States were fully independent before they came together to form the United States. They agreed to give up some of their independence to create one nation, but they still kept the right to handle many matters on their own.

At the same time, the States are not allowed to leave the Union. The Constitution doesn't directly say this, but history made it clear. When the southern States tried to break away, it led to a civil war. They lost, and this showed everyone that the Union cannot be broken. Later, in the *Texas v. White* case in 1869, the Supreme Court confirmed this by calling the United States "*an indestructible Union made up of indestructible States*." In the United States, all States are treated equally by law, no matter how large or small they are, or how many people live in them. The federal government has the same duties and responsibilities toward every State. One clear example of this fairness is in the Senate, where every State gets the same number of seats. The Constitution clearly states that this rule of equal representation cannot be changed, even through an amendment.

### 4.1.4 Federal Guarantees of the States

To keep the States strong and safe within the federal system, the Constitution gives some clear responsibilities to the central government. It must respect the borders of each State, make sure every State follows a

republican form of government, and protect them if there's an invasion or trouble within the State. It's useful to take a moment to understand what these promises mean and why they are important.

1. *Respect for Territorial Integrity*: The federal government must respect the land and borders of each State. A State can't be made to give up any part of its area unless it agrees to it. This means a new State can only be formed out of an existing one if the State's own legislature says yes. Without their approval, no changes can be made to their boundaries.
2. *Guarantee of a Republican Form of Government*: The federal government promises that every State will have a Republican form of government. But the Constitution doesn't clearly say what "Republican" means, so people have taken it to mean different things over time. The Supreme Court has stayed away from deciding on this because it sees the matter as more political than legal. So, it's usually the President or Congress who give their own meaning to the term when needed.
3. *Protection against Invasion and Civil Commotion*: The Constitution says that the federal government must protect every State from foreign attacks and, if asked by the State, from serious trouble within. If there's an invasion, the federal government can act immediately without waiting for the State to ask. This power comes from its role in defending the country. But when there's unrest inside a State, like a violent protest or uprising, the federal government usually steps in only if the State government asks for help, if federal laws are being broken, or if national

property is in danger. The President has the final say in whether to send help. For example, in 1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt sent troops to stop a strike at an aircraft factory in California, even though the State didn't ask for it.

4. *Obligation of States towards Federal Government:* States also have some duties toward the federal government. One of their main responsibilities is to conduct elections for federal posts, since the Constitution doesn't set up a separate system for that. Each State holds its own elections to choose members of the Electoral College, following the rules made by its legislature. Senators are elected directly by the people in each State, and members of the House of Representatives are usually elected from separate areas within the State. States also have a role in changing the Constitution. They can suggest changes and must take part in approving any amendment before it becomes law.

#### 4.1.5 Growth of Federal Authority

The Constitution was first written in a way that gave limited powers to the central government. But over the years, the power of the federal government has grown a lot. This happened for many reasons. Court rulings added to its authority, changes were made through amendments, and both Congress and the President passed new laws and rules. In times of emergency, the central government also took on more control. At times, strong and popular Presidents helped increase federal power through their leadership and actions.

Some of the factors responsible for the increase in federal powers are as follows:

- ◆ The Supreme Court has helped the federal government grow stronger, sometimes reducing the powers of the States. One way it did this was by introducing the idea of *Implied Powers*. Chief Justice Marshall explained that the Constitution not only gives the federal government certain clearly written powers but also includes other powers that are needed to carry out those main ones. Over time, this idea has been used in many situations. For example, the Constitution says the federal government can manage trade with other countries and between States. Using this, Congress took charge of things like transport and communication. Also, the power to look after public welfare allowed Congress to create social support laws, such as those for old age pensions. Another example is how the power to collect taxes helped Congress set up and control the central bank. In this way, the federal government gained more authority than what was first written in the Constitution.
- ◆ Over time, some constitutional amendments have made the federal government stronger. The Fifteenth Amendment gave the Supreme Court the power to check State laws, especially those that could affect people's right to vote. The Sixteenth Amendment allowed Congress to collect taxes on all kinds of income. Before this, the original Constitution didn't let the central government collect direct taxes. These changes helped the Centre take on bigger roles in areas like protecting rights and handling the country's finances.
- ◆ Over the years, Congress has made many laws that increased its powers. In the same way, Presidents have used their authority to issue orders and take decisions that gave more strength to the federal government.

Some Presidents like Washington, Lincoln, Roosevelt, and Wilson acted with strong control, even when the Constitution didn't clearly allow it. For example, Lincoln went to war with the southern states over the issue of *slavery*. Later, Roosevelt's New Deal gave the Centre more control over areas that were earlier handled by the States. These steps slowly made the central government more powerful than it was in the beginning.

- ◆ As the United States began to engage more with other countries and global trade grew, the federal government had to take on more duties. Handling international matters and business across borders became important, and these couldn't be managed by individual States. This helped the central government slowly expand its role and take charge of areas that were once mostly left to the States.
- ◆ In recent years, the United States' leadership role among Western countries has led to more power being placed with the federal government. During difficult times—like the *Great Depression*, world wars, the Cold War with the former USSR, and the global financial crisis of 2009—people naturally looked to the central government for help. In such situations, whether the problems were at home or connected to other countries, Americans expected the national government to step in and handle things. This trust in federal action has made the Centre stronger over time.
- ◆ The Federal Government gives financial help to State Governments and even to local bodies through grants-in-aid. These grants form a big part of a state's income—about fourteen percent of their total budget. So, it's only natural that the Centre checks how this money is used

and reviews the plans it supports. To make sure the money is used properly, the Federal Government usually sets a few conditions.

*First*, the State must spend the money only on the purpose for which it was given. *Second*, the State also needs to put in some money of its own for the same work. *Third*, the State must set up the right offices and staff to carry out the project. *Finally*, by accepting the money, the State also agrees to follow national rules and allow inspections, audits, and reviews by the Centre. If the State fails to meet the required standards, the federal government can stop the grant. This clearly shows that with financial support comes some level of federal control. As White put it, "*Where there is money, there is power.*" When the money is this important, it can even blur the limits set by the Constitution between the powers of the Centre and the States.

- ◆ Over time, many organisations have been formed where both the states and the federal government come together to discuss and coordinate. These groups help the states work with the Centre to create common policies that are more or less the same across the country. The Federal Government usually guides these efforts to ensure everyone is moving in the same direction.

Over the years, the powers of the Federal Government in the United States have grown a lot. Some, like Rosec Drummond, even claimed that true federalism in the country no longer exists—saying it's as impossible to bring it back as it is to put a baked apple pie back on a tree. But that's an overstatement. It's true that the old, strict version of federalism has faded, but it hasn't disappeared completely. What we see today is a more cooperative form of federalism. The central government now offers guidance and keeps an eye on things, but it hasn't

taken away the independence or energy of the states. States still handle many important responsibilities and remain key players in the system. As Griffith put it well, the states are still full of life. Just as national concerns once pushed the Supreme Court to support more federal action, similar concerns have helped the states take on a wider role too.

In the United States, state governments still hold important powers and carry out many key responsibilities. They manage the police, courts, education, and local governments, providing essential services to the people. Over time, both the national and state governments have become more active. As Munro noted, there has been a general growth in the work done by government at all levels—local, state, and national. Even though the federal government has gained more control in some areas, the states continue to play a central role in the country's political life. It would not be right to say that federalism has disappeared in the U.S. Instead, it has changed with the times. As Schwartz said, while states in America face growing federal influence, they still enjoy more freedom in decision-making than local governments in countries like the United Kingdom, where national approval is often required for even small changes.

#### 4.1.6 Amendment of the Constitution

One of the core features of a federal system is having a Constitution that cannot be changed easily. The United States follows this idea strictly. Article 5 of the Constitution lays down a tough and detailed process to make any amendments. It allows two ways to make changes, both of which are designed to ensure that any update has wide support and is not taken lightly. This helps protect the basic structure of the government and keeps a balance between national and state powers. To change the U.S. Constitution, there are two main ways, and both require a lot of agreement

from across the country. One way is through Congress. If two-thirds of the members in both the House of Representatives and the Senate support a change, the amendment is then sent to the states. For it to become part of the Constitution, three-fourths of the states must agree. This agreement can happen either through a vote in each state's legislature or by holding special meetings called conventions. Congress decides which method the states should use. The other way starts with the states. If two-thirds of the state legislatures ask for it, Congress must call a national convention. This convention can suggest changes to the Constitution. For these changes to take effect, three-fourths of the states still need to approve them, either through their legislatures or special conventions.

Again, Congress chooses how that approval will take place. This system ensures that any change to the Constitution gets broad support from both national and state governments. Almost all of the twenty-six amendments to the U.S. Constitution were proposed by Congress and approved by the state legislatures. There was just one exception—the Twenty-First Amendment, which ended prohibition. Unlike the others, it was ratified by special conventions held in the states, not by the legislatures. Even though the U.S. Constitution is known for being strict and hard to change, the American people have managed to update it when needed. For example, between 1913 and 1933, six important changes were made. Professor Munro once said that the Constitution is a living document. Its rules are strict because the people who wrote it wanted to avoid hasty or careless changes. William Harvard noted that, apart from the Twenty-Second Amendment, all the others helped make the government more democratic. These changes supported the idea that power should rest with the people. So, even though some say the Constitution is too rigid, it has adapted

well to the changing needs of the country. As Zink rightly said, the official process for making changes is tough, but over time, easier ways have been found to keep the system working and up to date.

#### **4.1.7 Concept of Separation of Powers**

The American Constitution is well known for clearly separating the powers of government. It divides responsibilities among three branches: Congress makes the laws, the President carries them out, and the Supreme Court interprets them. This division is more clearly drawn than in many other countries. For example, in India, even though the Parliament is in charge of making laws, the President is also a part of it, which means the executive is involved in lawmaking. In the UK, Parliament holds all power, and the executive must follow its lead. But in the United States, each branch works on its own without depending on the others. The people who wrote the American Constitution were influenced by Montesquieu's idea that powers should be separated to avoid misuse. So, they designed the system in a way that keeps each branch independent. The President is elected for a fixed term and does not need to answer to Congress. Congress cannot be dismissed by the President. Judges in the Supreme Court are appointed for life and cannot be removed easily—they can only be impeached through a difficult process. As political thinker Finer said, the U.S. Constitution was thoughtfully created to follow the idea of keeping government powers separate. Even today, it remains the strongest example of this principle in action.

#### **4.1.8 Concept of Checks and Balances**

The U.S. Constitution tries to keep the three branches of government—legislative, executive, and judicial—separate from each other. But it doesn't cut them off completely.

To protect people's freedom, the system was designed in a way that each branch can keep an eye on the others. The writers of the Constitution believed that if one branch had full control without any limits, it could misuse its power. So, they built in a system of checks and balances to avoid that. As Professor Ogg noted, one of the most unique things about the American system—whether at the national, state, or even local level—is this balance between keeping powers separate and making sure they can control each other when needed.

Take the Senate, for example. Although the President chooses people for top government positions, the Senate has to agree before those people can start the job. The same rule applies to treaties with other countries. The President can sign a treaty, but it only becomes official if the Senate approves it. A famous example was in 1919, when the Senate refused to accept the Treaty of Versailles, even though President Woodrow Wilson had signed it. The Senate also has the power to put the President or other high officials, including judges, on trial through impeachment. So, while each branch has its own job, they are all connected in a way that no single part can take complete control. This helps keep the government fair and balanced.

The U.S. President, in turn, has the power to check Congress by either approving or rejecting the laws it passes. Every bill that becomes law must first go to the President. If he doesn't agree with it, he can send it back using what's called a veto. Although Congress can still make the bill a law by passing it again with a two-thirds vote in both Houses, that's hard to achieve. So, most vetoed bills don't survive. The President also has a special kind of veto called a *pocket veto*. If Congress sends him a bill in the last ten days of its session and he simply does nothing—doesn't sign or reject it—the bill quietly dies when the session ends. To make



Congress take him seriously, the President can also call a special session if needed. Since members don't get travel or daily allowances during such sessions, they're often more willing to cooperate with the President to avoid the inconvenience.

Apart from these powers, the President can also issue executive orders, which have the force of law. These are used to manage government operations without needing Congress's approval. Because of this, many believe that even though the President isn't part of the legislature, he plays a strong role in shaping laws. At the same time, both the President and Congress influence the judiciary. The President picks judges for the Supreme Court, but those choices must be approved by the Senate. Congress also decides their pay, though it can't reduce it while they're in office. The judiciary, however, is not without power. It checks both the President and Congress through *judicial review*. This means the courts can cancel laws or executive orders if they don't match the Constitution. This power has grown over time, giving the courts a major role in shaping how the U.S. government works. The Supreme Court, in particular, helps keep all branches of government within their limits and ensures that everything stays in line with the Constitution.

The U.S. Constitution is based on two ideas that work closely together—*keeping the powers of government separate and making sure each branch can check the other*. These ideas run through the entire American system of government, from the national level down to the local level. The people who wrote the Constitution wanted to make sure that no one part of the government could take over or misuse power. Dr. Finer pointed out that while not every goal of the Constitution's writers was fully reached, they did manage to clearly separate the powers. This helped prevent any one group from becoming too powerful, which is especially important today

when governments are expected to take care of so many things. Professor Beard added that this idea of dividing powers isn't just something written in theory—it actually shapes how the government works every day, in real practice.

The idea behind checks and balances in the American system was to keep any one branch of government from becoming too powerful. But in reality, this system has sometimes made things harder instead of easier. For example, the President's power to reject laws—called a veto—has often been used too much, not always for the country's good. The Senate, too, has blocked the President's decisions, especially when it comes to making agreements with other countries. This becomes a bigger problem when the President and the majority in Congress belong to different political parties. When that happens, cooperation often breaks down. President Reagan, a Republican, and President Clinton, a Democrat, both struggled because they faced strong opposition in Congress. On the other hand, President George W. Bush had fewer problems since Congress mostly supported him, even when he made difficult decisions like going to war with Iraq. President Obama also had a smoother time in the beginning because both the House and the Senate had a Democratic majority.

Sometimes, even the Supreme Court has gone beyond its main job. Instead of just checking if laws follow the Constitution, it has acted like a law-making body. A clear example was when the Court struck down key parts of President Roosevelt's New Deal, which was meant to help the country during the Great Depression. Because of all this, some experts feel that the checks and balances system, instead of keeping things fair and balanced, has often created more confusion and delay. It shows that the system, though created with good intentions, doesn't always work as smoothly as hoped.

## Recap

- ◆ The U.S. Constitution establishes a federal system dividing powers between the national and state governments.
- ◆ Legislative powers are vested in Congress, executive powers in the President, and judicial powers in the Supreme Court.
- ◆ Each branch of government operates independently to ensure no single branch dominates the system.
- ◆ The Senate has the power to approve or reject high-level appointments and international treaties.
- ◆ The President can veto Congressional bills, though Congress may override the veto with a two-thirds majority.
- ◆ The judiciary has the power of judicial review, allowing it to strike down unconstitutional laws and executive orders.
- ◆ Constitutional amendments require rigorous processes involving both Congress and the states.
- ◆ Checks and balances were introduced to avoid misuse of power by any branch of government.
- ◆ The system has often faced gridlock when different parties control Congress and the Presidency.
- ◆ Despite its rigidity, the U.S. Constitution has evolved to accommodate changes over time.

## Objective Questions

1. Which branch of government is responsible for making laws in the USA?
2. What is the term for the President's power to reject a bill?
3. How many houses make up the U.S. Congress?
4. What power allows the Supreme Court to declare laws unconstitutional?
5. What is required to override a presidential veto?
6. Who approves the President's high-level appointments?
7. What type of majority is needed in both houses to propose a constitutional amendment?

8. Which amendment repealed the Eighteenth Amendment?
9. What is the term for a rejection of a bill by doing nothing for ten days while Congress is not in session?
10. Which philosopher influenced the separation of powers in the U.S. Constitution?

## Answers

1. Congress
2. Veto
3. Two
4. Judicial Review
5. Two-thirds
6. Senate
7. Two-thirds
8. Twenty-first
9. Pocket Veto
10. Montesquieu

## Assignments

1. Explain the structure and significance of the separation of powers in the U.S. Constitution.
2. Discuss the role of the Senate in checking executive powers with relevant examples.
3. Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the checks and balances system in the American context.
4. Analyse the amendment process of the U.S. Constitution and its impact on governance.
5. Compare and contrast the federal structures of the United States and India.

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## Suggested Reading

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# Unitary System in UK

## UNIT

### Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ understand the structure and functioning of the Unitary System of Government in the United Kingdom
- ◆ analyse the relationship between central and local governments within the UK's unitary framework
- ◆ evaluate the impact of central supervision and financial control on the autonomy of local authorities
- ◆ explore the historical evolution, current challenges, and recent reforms in the UK's unitary system

### Prerequisites

Let us recall a classroom where students once discussed how different countries are governed. Their curiosity was sparked by the question: "What happens when a single central government makes most of the decisions for the whole country?" From this, they explored the idea of a unitary government. These students had already studied key political terms like democracy, state, constitution, and governance. They knew how governments are formed, how laws are passed, and how public services reach people. This background helped them understand how a centralised structure operates compared to federal systems. Now, as they step into the study of the UK's Unitary System, they are ready to see how central departments interact with local bodies, how responsibilities are divided, and how financial control shapes decision-making.

### Keywords

Unitary Government, Local Authorities, Central Control, Ministry of Health, Borough Council, Grants-in-aid, Local Self-Government

# Discussion

## 4.2.1 Introduction

The British Constitution follows a unitary system, not a federal one. In a federal setup, powers are clearly divided between the central government and state or regional governments. This division is usually made by a written constitution, and neither level of government can change it on their own. A good example is the United States, where some powers belong to the national government and others are given to the individual states. In the United Kingdom, things work differently. All the main powers of government are held by the central authority in London. Local governments or regional bodies only have the powers that the central government chooses to give them. These powers are not fixed—they can be changed, taken back, or even removed completely whenever the central government decides to do so. Because the centre controls everything and can make decisions for the whole country, the British system is unitary not just in structure but also in how it works in everyday life.

## 4.2.2 Unitary System: The Concept in Detail

In a unitary system, the main power to make laws and take important decisions stays with one central government. It does not divide authority between the centre and different regions the way a federal system does. Local governments may exist, but they work under the direction of the national government. Their powers are not permanent. The central government can give them more power, reduce it, or even take it away. Countries like the United Kingdom, France, and Japan follow this kind of system, where most decisions are taken at the national level. The United Kingdom is a good example of a

unitary state, even though it has given some powers to its regions. At the centre of its political system is Parliament, which has the full authority to make laws. No other body can stop or reverse what Parliament decides. This is known as *parliamentary sovereignty*. Although the UK has a King or Queen, they do not actually run the government. The real work is done by the elected leaders, especially the Prime Minister and Cabinet. *Scotland*, *Wales*, and *Northern Ireland* have their own regional governments today, but these were set up by Parliament. Their powers come from laws made by the UK Parliament, and those powers can be changed at any time.

The way powers are shared in the UK shows that the centre remains in full control. *Parliament* is responsible for national matters such as defence, foreign affairs, and taxes. *The Prime Minister* and the *Cabinet* carry out these decisions and manage the country. Local councils look after things like schools, public transport, and waste collection. But they do so within the limits set by the central government. They can't make laws on their own. Regional governments like those in Scotland and Wales can make rules in certain areas, but their authority is not guaranteed by a constitution. It depends on what Parliament allows. In the late 1990s, the UK began a process called *devolution*. This meant that some powers were given to regional governments so that decisions could be made closer to the people. Scotland got its own Parliament, Wales got the Senedd, and Northern Ireland got its Assembly. But each region received different powers. Scotland, for example, can make laws in more areas than Wales can. Northern Ireland has a similar level of power, but its government has sometimes been suspended due to political problems. This unequal sharing of power is called *asymmetrical devolution*. It shows



that the UK does not treat all its regions in the same way. Even with devolution, the UK remains a unitary state because Parliament can still change or take back these powers.

### 4.2.3 Unitary System and Local Government in the UK

Democracy means a government run by the people, but people don't learn how to take part in it all at once. They usually begin by getting involved in their own local areas. It's at the local level—towns, villages, and neighbourhoods—that people first learn what it means to make decisions together, solve problems, and take responsibility. If we don't know how to work with our neighbours to manage local issues, it becomes much harder to take part in running a whole country. The French thinker Alexis de Tocqueville once said that local gatherings of citizens are the real strength of a free country. He compared local meetings to basic schools—not because they're simple, but because they make the idea of freedom real and understandable for everyone. These small, everyday experiences teach people how to use their rights and take care of them. A country can set up democratic institutions, but without active and lively local governments, the true spirit of freedom doesn't grow. That's why local government is often called the first school of democracy.

Local government is not just where people learn how democracy works—it also helps take some of the pressure off the central government. In today's world, the responsibilities of the state have grown a lot. It no longer deals only with protecting the country or keeping law and order. It also has to look after people's welfare, health, education, housing, and many other needs. The state is expected not just to control and protect but also to support and improve the lives of its people. Because of all these growing duties, it's not possible for the central government to manage everything on its own.

That's why it makes sense to share power and responsibilities with local governments. When power is spread out, work gets done more efficiently. Local bodies can respond to people's problems faster and understand their needs better. This kind of system helps the government run more smoothly and keeps it closer to the people it serves.

### 4.2.4 History of Local Government in England

Local government in England didn't develop from a fixed plan or grand design. Instead, it slowly took shape over a long period of time, growing and changing based on the needs of the time. In the early Anglo-Saxon days, the country was divided into areas like shires, hundreds, townships, and boroughs. These places mostly ran their own affairs because the central king's power was weak and there wasn't much control from above. Things began to change after the Norman Conquest. The shires became counties, hundreds faded away, and most townships turned into feudal estates. Boroughs became towns with special rights given by the king. A new unit called the parish also appeared, slowly replacing the old township as the main unit of local life. The Norman kings brought these local bodies under tighter control, linking them more closely to the central government.

By this time, counties, boroughs, and parishes had become the key parts of local administration, and they stayed that way through the Tudor, Stuart, and Hanoverian periods. Not many big changes happened for hundreds of years. Sometimes the central government was more involved, and sometimes less. Counties were run by Justices of the Peace, chosen by the king. Boroughs were managed by local groups called corporations. Parishes, which started as church areas, eventually took care of local matters like helping the poor or keeping roads in order. Even when kings ruled without

calling Parliament for long periods—as they did during the Tudor and Stuart times—local governments kept working. Local elections still took place, and people in towns and villages stayed involved in public life. Although some parts of local democracy were weakened during these years, the basic spirit of local self-rule never fully disappeared. From Norman times to the 1700s, local government in England kept going, shaped by tradition and by the people who quietly kept it alive.

In the early 1800s, England began to look very different because of the Industrial Revolution. Factories were set up, and many towns quickly grew into busy industrial centres. These new areas needed proper roads, clean surroundings, and better safety measures. But the old local government system, which had worked for smaller, rural communities, was no longer enough. It couldn't handle the needs of these fast-growing towns. To respond to the growing problems, Parliament set up new local bodies. But instead of replacing the old ones, these new authorities were just added to the existing ones. This created a confusing mix of offices and responsibilities. Many different people were in charge of different things in the same area, often without any clear system. This period saw the rise of all kinds of local officials—Justices of the Peace, overseers, guardians of the poor, vestry members, church wardens, mayors, councillors, and many others.

People were also taxed in many different ways—there were separate taxes for schools, sanitation, poor relief, and town services. Ordinary taxpayers found it hard to keep track of all this. At one point, there were said to be more than 27,000 local bodies across England and around eighteen different types of taxes. The whole system had become so messy and confusing that even officials couldn't fully understand it. This clearly showed the need for change and better organisation in local

government. When the House of Commons began to open up through reforms in 1832, it became harder to ignore the need for change in local government. As more people began to demand fairness and representation at the national level, the pressure to bring similar reforms to local bodies also grew. Though the changes did not happen all at once, the push for reform had clearly begun. A key step was taken in 1835 when Parliament passed the Municipal Corporations Act. This law gave a clear structure for how boroughs should be run—much of which is still followed today.

The Act brought 178 boroughs under its scope and made a big difference in how they functioned. It introduced a single, uniform system for running these towns and got rid of old customs, special rights, and local rules that no longer made sense. Power, which had earlier rested with a few wealthy individuals or small groups, was now shared more widely through elections. This shift allowed ordinary citizens to have a say in how their towns were governed. At the same time, the Act made it clear what local bodies were allowed to do and gave the central government in London more authority to supervise them. This marked the beginning of a more fair and organised local government system in England. After the Municipal Corporations Act of 1835, no major law was passed to improve local government for many years. While towns and boroughs were reformed, counties were left behind. County government stayed in the hands of the wealthy and followed old-fashioned ways. It wasn't until the Local Government Act of 1888 that real change came. This law reshaped how counties were run by moving power from the Justices of the Peace—who were mostly upper-class—to newly created county councils that were elected by the people.

From that point on, every county and county borough had its own elected council to handle local matters. This marked an

important step towards democracy at the local level. Decisions were no longer made only by a privileged few but by people chosen through public elections. With this change, democratic values finally reached the counties, bringing more fairness and public involvement into local government across England. In 1894, the District and Parish Councils Act brought another big change to local government in England. It got rid of many confusing and overlapping districts and replaced them with well-defined local areas. Under this law, every county was divided into rural and urban districts, and these districts were further divided into parishes. Each parish was now given its own council, which took over the basic civil duties that were once managed by local church vestries. At the same time, district councils—whether in rural or urban areas—were put in charge of everyday needs like sanitation, roads, and other local services. This made local governance simpler, more organised, and more connected to the daily lives of ordinary people.

The laws passed in 1888 and 1894 were turning points for local government in England. They handed over local matters to councils chosen by the people and helped clean up a system that had become messy with too many overlapping bodies. These reforms slowly reduced the number of separate local authorities, making the whole setup easier to manage. In 1929, another important law was passed. It allowed smaller local districts to be merged or removed and made way for local councils to receive funds from the national government to support their work. Later, in 1933, a new law brought together all the different powers and duties of local authorities under one single law. This step cleared up the confusion that had built over the years and helped give local government a stronger and more stable structure. Even so, as Jackson pointed out, local government in England is not easy to define in a strict

way. He believed that it always relates to smaller areas, not the entire country, and for that reason, it must remain under the control of the national government. He also said that local government means doing certain public duties and that there must be recognised local authorities with the power to carry them out.

## 4.2.5 Local Areas in England

After the changes brought together in the Local Government Act of 1933, local administration in England became more organised and clear. There are now five main types of local areas: *counties*, *boroughs*, *urban districts*, *rural districts*, and *parishes*. The country is first split into counties. Each county is then divided into urban and rural districts, depending on the type of area and how people live there. Rural districts are broken down further into smaller parts called parishes. A borough is a town or area that has been given special status through a charter, allowing it to manage its own local matters. London, because of its unique size and needs, has its own separate system of local government.

### 4.2.5.1 The County

The county is the biggest area in England's local government system. There are two kinds of counties—historic and administrative. There are fifty-two historic counties and sixty-two administrative ones. The historic counties go back a long way, to the time when England was divided into shires. These old counties are still used for some purposes, like organising parliamentary elections and court-related work. In each historic county, there are *Justices of the Peace* (JPs), a *Lord Lieutenant*, and a *Sheriff*. Both the Sheriff and the Lord Lieutenant are chosen by the Crown. The Sheriff is in charge of managing elections to Parliament in the county. The Lord Lieutenant once led the county's local military force but now mainly keeps

records and suggests names for JP positions to the Lord Chancellor. While these historic counties are important in tradition, they don't run local services. They don't have councils or handle day-to-day local administration.

Administrative counties are the real centres of local self-government in England. They were created by a law passed in 1888. In some places, their boundaries match the old historic counties, but in others, they are different. Inside many of these administrative counties, there are towns or areas that are officially recognised and treated as separate legal bodies. This means they can take part in legal matters, like going to court or being taken to court, in their own name. These areas manage their own local affairs and help deliver public services to the people living there.

Each administrative county is run by a County Council, which includes a chairman, aldermen, and councillors. The councillors are elected by the people, one from each area, and they serve for three years. Anyone who can vote in a parliamentary election can also vote in these local council elections. The number of councillors in a county depends on how many people live there. After the election, the councillors choose a group of aldermen—about one-third of their total—from among themselves or from outside. If a councillor becomes an alderman, a new election is held to fill that seat. The chairman of the county is then chosen by both the aldermen and councillors together. They can pick one of their own or someone from outside. The County Council handles a wide range of responsibilities that affect everyday life in the area. It sets local policies, makes rules for the county, and keeps track of how rural district councils are doing their work. The Council also prepares and approves the county's budget, looks after public buildings, and runs special homes for people in need, such as children in reform centres or those needing mental health support. It works to

keep rivers and streams clean and safe, gives out certain types of licences (though not for alcohol), and manages both primary and secondary schools.

Other important tasks include helping those in poverty, appointing staff to carry out its work, making sure weights and measures used in trade are correct, stopping the spread of diseases among animals, building houses, checking that housing rules are followed, and making sure bridges and roads are properly built and maintained. The Council meets four times a year, though extra meetings can be held if something urgent comes up. Much of the actual work is done by committees that focus on areas like education, health, finance, and pensions for older people. The county also has a number of full-time staff—such as the clerk, treasurer, health officer, and surveyor—who are hired by the Council based on their qualifications and skills, not political connections.

#### 4.2.5.2 The Borough

A borough is simply a town that receives official recognition through a royal charter. When a town or district—whether rural or urban—wants this status, it must send a request to the King. The request is reviewed by a committee from the Privy Council, which then carries out an inquiry to see if the request is reasonable. If they find it suitable, they publish a draft charter in the *London Gazette*. This draft stays open for public response for one month. If no one objects—either from the local authority or from at least five per cent of the property owners or taxpayers in the area—the government finalises the borough by issuing an Order-in-Council. This document also sets the borders of the new borough. But if objections are raised, the town can only become a borough if a new law is passed in Parliament.

The Borough Council looks after the administration of a borough, which is usually

a town with its own charter. It works much like the County Council and is made up of councillors, aldermen, and a mayor. The councillors are elected directly by the people and serve for three years. Every year, a third of them step down, and fresh elections are held to fill those seats. From among themselves or from eligible people outside, the councillors pick one-third to become aldermen. Aldermen serve for six years, and again, one-third of them retire every two years. The councillors and aldermen together choose a mayor, whose term lasts one year. The mayor chairs council meetings and represents the borough at official functions. But the mayor doesn't have the power to appoint or remove staff or block council decisions. The position also doesn't come with a salary, so the role is usually taken up by someone who can afford to work without pay and has time to spare.

The Borough Council or the Government of the Borough runs the everyday affairs of the borough. It looks after everything from making local rules to collecting taxes and preparing the annual budget. It also manages local services like roads, sanitation, and public health. If the council needs extra funds, it can borrow money—but only after getting permission from the central government. The council meets regularly—sometimes once a month, sometimes more often, depending on the work. Most of the matters discussed in the meetings are first looked at by smaller groups called committees. These committees study the issues in detail and give suggestions, which the full council usually follows. A group of trained staff carries out the daily work. The council appoints the senior officials, while the heads of departments select their junior staff. Together, they make sure the borough's services run smoothly and people's needs are taken care of.

When a town grows big enough to have 75,000 people, it can ask the Ministry of Health to make it a county borough. This

new status means the town will no longer be under the control of the county it belongs to—it will gain most of the powers and responsibilities of a county. The way it works and is structured stays mostly the same, but it now has more freedom to manage its own affairs. Not all towns decide to become county boroughs, but many have over time. In 1888, there were 61 county boroughs. Today, there are 83. Birmingham is the biggest, with over a million people. Canterbury is the smallest, with just 28,000. Apart from municipal and county boroughs, there are also parliamentary boroughs. These are just voting areas used to elect members to the House of Commons. They don't have any administrative role and are not part of the local government system.

#### 4.2.5.3 The Districts

Rural districts are the parts of a county where the population is spread out and mostly lives in villages or small towns. These areas don't have the same crowded conditions or special needs as urban districts. Still, they need a basic system to manage local matters like sanitation, housing, road upkeep, and health services. Each rural district has its own District Council, which includes representatives from the parishes within the area. Like urban district councils, there are no aldermen. The council members choose one among them to act as chairman. This setup helps people in the countryside have a say in how their communities are run and ensures that even smaller places are properly managed. Rural districts in England and Wales are formed by grouping together old village parishes. There are 638 such districts. Each one is managed by a District Council made up of elected members and a chairman. Councillors serve for three years, with one-third of them stepping down each year. The chairman has some legal authority, similar to that of a magistrate. The Council is in charge of basic services like clean water, sanitation, and health care in the area. It

can collect local taxes, form committees for different duties, and appoint full-time staff to handle daily work. However, as England has become more urban and less dependent on farming life, the role and importance of these rural districts have reduced over time.

#### 4.2.5.4 Parish

A parish is the smallest part of the local government system in England and is part of a rural district. If a parish has fewer than 300 people, local decisions are made in a public meeting where anyone listed on the parliamentary register can attend and participate. In parishes with more than 300 people, a Parish Council is formed. This council has between five and fifteen members who are elected for a term of three years. The Parish Council or the public meeting doesn't handle big responsibilities. Their work is mainly local and simple. They appoint people to manage local primary schools and select a clerk, treasurer, and other staff needed for basic duties. They also take care of things like small public works, playgrounds, and libraries. Sometimes, bigger authorities allow them to manage water supply, village lighting, and repairs of footpaths in the area.

#### 4.2.6 The Government of London

The way London is run is quite different from how other cities in England are managed. Just like New Delhi has a different system than Mumbai or Kolkata, London's local administration follows its own setup. For easier management, London is usually divided into three parts — the *City of London*, the *County of London*, and the wider area known as *Metropolitan London*.

##### *City of London*

At the centre of London lies a small area known as the City of London. It's about one square mile in size and is mostly a financial and business zone. Though small, it has a very old and unique system of self-governance.

The City is run by a group called the Corporation, which includes a Mayor and three main bodies — the Court of Aldermen, the Court of Common Council, and the Court of Common Hall. The real administrative work is done by the Court of Common Council. This group includes 206 councillors, 26 aldermen, and one Lord Mayor. People living in the city elect the councillors and aldermen. The area is divided into 26 wards, and each ward elects a few councillors based on its size. Councillors serve for one year, while aldermen are elected for life. The most senior alderman becomes the Lord Mayor. Together with the Lord Mayor, the aldermen form the Court of Aldermen. The Court of Common Hall, made up of freemen and city officials, only meets for special duties like elections. Most of the city's services — like road work, sanitation, health, and electricity — are looked after by the Common Council through its committees and full-time staff.

##### *County of London*

The County of London covers a much larger area — more than 100 square miles — and includes 28 smaller boroughs. Each borough has its own council that takes care of local issues, though the bigger decisions are still made by the county-level authority. This main body is the London County Council. It works much like county councils in other parts of England. The council is made up of 124 elected councillors and 20 aldermen. People vote for the councillors every three years. The councillors then choose the aldermen, who serve for six years. A chairman is selected every year to lead the Council. The council handles broader issues across the county and works in coordination with the borough councils. The London County Council is responsible for a wide range of services that affect the everyday life of people in the city. It looks after big tasks like managing the main sewer system, handling waste, providing fire safety, and maintaining

tunnels, ferries, and bridges. It also takes care of major road developments that benefit the whole city and sets rules to keep the public healthy and safe. The Council runs tram services and has led many housing projects—tearing down overcrowded and unhealthy living spaces and building new homes for workers. It also looks after large public parks and helps create spaces for people to relax and enjoy leisure activities. In education, the Council manages schools at all levels, from basic to technical training. To get all this work done, the Council forms different committees. These committees focus on specific tasks and rely on full-time staff who handle the day-to-day running of services.

### ***Metropolitan London***

Metropolitan London is made up of twenty-eight boroughs that surround the old City of London. These boroughs are not all the same size—some are big, some small—and they function in ways that are somewhere between a regular borough and an urban district. Each of these boroughs is managed by a Borough Council. This council includes councillors, aldermen, and a mayor. Local people who are registered voters choose the councillors, who serve for three years. From among themselves, the councillors pick a few to serve as aldermen for six years, with half of them stepping down every three years. The mayor is chosen in the same way as in other towns. The Borough Council takes care of local services like building and maintaining streets, keeping the streets clean and well-lit, and managing smaller sewer systems. It also sees to public health, builds homes for workers, and carries out other basic duties. Although the council has the power to run many local affairs, it still works under the guidance of higher authorities to make sure everything is done properly.

### **4.2.7 Central Control over Local Government in England**

In England, there is not just one central office that looks after all local bodies. Instead, several government departments are involved. These include the Ministry of Health, Home Department, Board of Education, Ministry of Transport, Board of Trade, and the Electricity Commissioners. Each of them looks after different responsibilities. The Ministry of Health has a wide role. It handles issues like water supply, sanitation, and public health, and it also approves the borrowing of money by local councils. The Home Department manages police matters. The Board of Education guides local authorities on schooling. The Ministry of Transport takes care of things like tramways, ferries, docks, and harbours. The Board of Trade is concerned with using water for power, and the Electricity Commissioners oversee electricity supply and lighting. Since many departments are involved, local bodies often have to deal with more than one at a time. Sometimes, this leads to confusion because the exact roles of each department are not always clearly marked out. Even so, among all of them, the Ministry of Health usually has the most influence.

The Central Government keeps an eye on how local bodies work by using a few simple methods. *First*, all the powers that local governments have come from Parliament. So, if needed, Parliament can change these powers—either by giving more or taking some away. *Second*, if a local authority does something it is not supposed to, the courts can step in. The courts can cancel that action and even fine the local body if necessary. *Third*, government departments can send out instructions to local bodies. For example, some jobs or decisions made by local councils need approval from these higher departments. *Fourth*, when a new local body is set up, the Central Government

issues a charter for it. This charter clearly mentions what the body can and cannot do. *Lastly*, the Central Government can stop giving funds if a local body is not doing its work properly. In extreme situations, it can even take over the management of that local body. These steps are taken to make sure local governments function fairly and responsibly.

Hence, we can broadly group local government systems into *three types*, based on how much control the central government has over them. The first type is found in the *United States*. Here, local bodies mostly work on their own. They have a lot of freedom and are not closely watched by the central government. The second type exists in countries like *France*. In this system, local bodies have to follow strict rules set by the central government. Even if some powers are given to them, they still work under strong central control. The third type is followed in *England*. It lies somewhere between the other two. Local bodies in England have some independence, but they also have to follow certain rules and directions from the central government when needed.

In England, local authorities get their powers from laws passed by Parliament. These powers are clearly laid out and limited. If a local body does something it is not allowed to do, the central government can step in. It can ask the courts to make the authority carry out its legal duties or cancel any rules that break the law. But this does not mean the central government constantly interferes. As long as local authorities stay within their legal boundaries, they are mostly left to manage things on their own. They do not need central approval for their budgets or decisions. They are expected to simply do their jobs properly and meet a basic level of good service. Over time, the central government has gradually increased its hold over local authorities. This shift did not follow a clear plan or theory. Instead, the

control came in bits and pieces, depending on the need at the time. There is no single department overseeing everything related to local bodies. Different government departments look after different areas, which often makes the system feel disorganised and hard to follow.

For instance, the Ministry of Health is in charge of vaccination, clean water, sanitation, and support for the poor. It also checks how local bodies manage their funds and decides whether they can borrow money. The Home Office looks after the police and ensures that local authorities meet the required standards before giving them financial help from national funds. The Board of Education keeps an eye on schools that receive support from the government, including elementary, secondary, and technical schools. The Ministry of Transport oversees roads, tramways, harbours, and docks. Because these responsibilities are spread out across so many departments, local officials often face confusion. They are not always sure which department to approach for approvals or guidance, and that makes their work more difficult.

Over time, the British Government has taken more control over local bodies, mainly by giving them financial help with conditions attached. When the government offers money, it clearly states how it should be spent. Once a local body accepts the grant, it must follow those rules and allow the central government to check if the money is being used properly. This kind of financial support has slowly turned into a way to make sure all local authorities follow the same national standards. As people often say, “whoever pays decides the terms.” This increasing control has reduced the independence of local governments in England—even though the idea of local self-government first took root there.



#### 4.2.8 Conclusion

Years ago, English people took pride in managing their own local affairs. But now that interest has faded. Many feel that the local government system needs an update. In 1945, the British Parliament set up a commission to suggest changes. The commission recommended cutting down the number of units or local bodies from six to just three: county, county borough, and county district. However, these ideas were never put into action, and the commission was later shut down. In conclusion, the system of government in the UK shows a classic example of a unitary form of government. The

central government does not directly control how local bodies function. Instead, it steps in to offer advice, carry out inspections, set some rules, and give or deny approval when needed. If a local authority struggles or falls short, it is not replaced or shut down. The central government helps by offering support and encouraging better standards. Its role is more like that of an experienced guide or partner rather than a commanding boss. It helps local bodies do their job better without getting in the way. If the local authorities choose not to follow the advice given, the responsibility lies with them—not with the central government. The centre offers help but does not force decisions.

### Recap

- ◆ The UK follows a unitary system where power is concentrated in the central government.
- ◆ Local authorities derive powers from Acts of Parliament.
- ◆ Local bodies operate independently within the limits of the powers given to them.
- ◆ Central government supervises through departments like the Ministry of Health and Home Office.
- ◆ Financial grants from the centre often come with conditions, increasing central influence.
- ◆ Local councils in England include boroughs, counties, and parishes.
- ◆ The City of London has a unique local governance model with elected aldermen and a Lord Mayor.
- ◆ The London County Council handles major civic functions including health, housing, and education.
- ◆ Multiple central departments supervise different aspects of local governance.
- ◆ Although central control has increased, local bodies still maintain a significant degree of autonomy.

## Objective Questions

1. What type of government system does the United Kingdom follow?
2. What is the smallest unit in the local government hierarchy in England?
3. What is the title given to the head of the City of London Corporation?
4. Which council has authority over metropolitan-level services like sewerage and fire protection in London?
5. What is the typical term of office for a rural district councillor in England?
6. What is the elected body that governs a rural parish with more than 300 people?
7. Which government body oversees local matters like water supply and sanitation across England?
8. What legal term is used when a local authority acts beyond its given powers?
9. Which department of the central government manages the police administration?
10. What form of financial aid strengthens central control over local bodies?

## Answers

1. Unitary
2. Parish
3. Lord Mayor
4. London County Council
5. Three
6. Parish Council
7. Ministry of Health
8. Ultra vires
9. Home Office
10. Grant-in-aid



## Assignments

1. Discuss the nature and features of the Unitary System of Government in the UK.
2. Examine the structure and functioning of local authorities under the UK's centralised framework.
3. Critically evaluate the impact of grants-in-aid on local autonomy in the UK.
4. Trace the historical evolution of local governance in London.
5. Compare the English type of local government with the American and Continental models.

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## Quasi-Federal in Canada

# UNIT

### Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ understand the foundational principles of Canada's federal structure
- ◆ analyse the distinctive features that make Canadian federalism unique
- ◆ evaluate the practical functioning of Canadian federalism in contrast to the USA
- ◆ explore the evolution of the balance of power between the central government and the provinces in Canada

### Prerequisites

In a lively undergraduate classroom, students once held a group discussion on how different countries manage their governments. One student brought up the United States and its clear-cut federal system, where states enjoy strong, independent powers. Another student asked, "Does every federal country work like that?" That question sparked curiosity, and the teacher introduced them to Canada—a country that calls itself federal but doesn't follow the typical pattern. As the class explored further, they saw that in Canada, the central government started off with more control, and the provinces had limited say. Over time, however, the provinces gained more power and independence. This shift made students wonder: Is Canada truly federal, or something in between? To understand Canada's system better, they needed to know the basics—what federalism means, how power is shared, and how constitutions can shape a country's political structure.

# Keywords

Federalism, Confederation, Residuary Powers, Lieutenant Governor, Senate, Provincial Autonomy, Quasi-Federalism

## Discussion

### 4.3.1 Introduction

When the Canadian Constitution was created through the British North America Act of 1867, the leaders chose a federal system not because they followed a fixed theory, but because it made sense for their situation. Canada had scattered settlements and people from different backgrounds, especially English and French communities. A single, central government had already been tried under the Union Act of 1840, but it didn't work well. The leaders saw that only a federal arrangement could hold the country together and give fair representation to its different regions and cultures. They were also aware of the dangers of too much provincial freedom, especially after seeing what happened during the American Civil War. So, they came up with a model that kept the provinces involved in local matters but gave the central government real strength to hold the country together. Sir John Macdonald clearly stated that the national government should have the main powers, while the provinces would look after clearly defined local issues. This way, they hoped to keep the country united while also respecting local needs.

### 4.3.2 Federal Aspects of the Canadian Federation

Professor Kennedy explains that Canada's federal system is built on the idea that both the central and provincial governments have real, independent powers. He points out four important features of Canada's federal system:

- ◆ The Dominion Parliament is not a delegation from the Imperial Parliament or from the provinces. It has full and complete powers within its own jurisdiction.
- ◆ The provincial legislatures are not a delegation from the British Parliament.
- ◆ The provincial Parliaments are not a delegation from the Imperial Parliament.
- ◆ The provinces remain independent and autonomous.

This setup shows that Canada is truly a federation. Both the central and provincial governments have clearly defined roles, and each has full control in its own area. Neither is above the other—they work side by side, each responsible for its own set of duties.

Canada has a written Constitution, just like many other countries with a federal system. It divides responsibilities into four divisions. *First*, some subjects are meant only for the central government. These include defence, managing money, running the postal service, banking, trade, criminal laws, and things like patents and copyrights. There are 29 subjects in this list. *Second*, the provinces have their own set of responsibilities—16 subjects. These include property matters, civil rights, education, hospitals, jails, and local public works. *Third*, a few areas like agriculture and immigration are shared by both the central and provincial governments. But if there's ever a disagreement, the central government's law will apply. *Fourth*, education mostly



comes under the provinces, but with some conditions to protect minority communities. Apart from these, any powers not clearly mentioned—called residuary powers—belong to the central government. This is different from the United States, where such powers go to the states. It shows that Canada has given more strength to its central government. Overall, Canada didn't follow one fixed model while dividing powers. It built a system that suited its own situation and needs.

### 4.3.3 Centralising Features (Unitary bias)

The makers of the Canadian Constitution didn't strictly stick to the traditional idea of federalism. Instead, they gave more power to the central government. This is clear when we look at how the system works in practice. To begin with, any powers not clearly listed for the provinces automatically go to the central government. This gives the Centre an upper hand. Also, the Lieutenant Governors of the provinces are appointed and removed by the central government. In the U.S., governors are elected by the people, and in Australia, they represent the Crown. But in Canada, they are seen as representatives of the federal government. Another strong central feature is that the Governor General, based on advice from federal ministers, can cancel a provincial law within a year of receiving it. In countries like India and the U.S., only the courts can do this—not the central government.

The Senate also shows this central control. Senators in Canada are appointed for life by the Governor General and not elected by the people. In the U.S., senators are elected and represent their states equally, often speaking up for their state's interests. Canadian senators don't play that kind of role. The powers given to the provinces are mostly local, such as managing hospitals or jails. Important areas like criminal law,

marriage, and divorce—which are under state control in the U.S.—are handled by the central government in Canada. Even top judicial appointments in the provinces are made by the Centre. Provinces also rely heavily on financial help from the central government to run their projects. This dependence gives the Centre more control over provincial affairs.

All these points show that Canada's federal system leans more toward central control than equal partnership. The idea of two levels of government working as equals is not fully followed here. As Dawson put it, the provinces often seem more like large municipalities with limited power. Charles Tupper once remarked that local governments were kept in place because there were no municipal bodies to take their place. This suggests that the goal was to keep the provinces under the central government's direction, not as equal partners. It's true that Canada's federal system has many unitary features, but that doesn't take away from its federal character. Professor Wheare also agrees with this view. He says that although central powers are strong, the basic idea of federalism is still present. Still, he finds it hard to say whether Canada should be called a federal country with some unitary parts or a unitary country with some federal parts. So, he chooses to call it a "quasi-federal" system.

Even with this mixed structure, Canada works like a federal country in practice. The provinces have a lot of freedom in running their own affairs. They make laws and take decisions on many important matters. Lieutenant Governors no longer simply follow the central government's instructions, and it's now rare for the federal government to reject provincial laws. The Constitution Act of 1982 made things even clearer. It says that if a change to the Constitution affects the provinces, it cannot happen without their agreement. In fact, the Constitution itself was

only brought fully under Canadian control after decades of talks and support from most provinces. It took more than fifty years of federal-provincial meetings to make this happen. The new Constitution also includes the idea of equalisation, which helps poorer provinces by giving them more federal funds. This has helped provinces manage their needs better. At the same time, not all Canadians seem deeply concerned about national unity. A recent public vote on constitutional changes was rejected, showing that many people may not be strongly committed to keeping the country together.

Kennedy once said that Canada is truly a federation, where the central and provincial governments are not dependent on each other. He believed the provinces were not just local bodies and that both levels of government had their own powers, working side by side within the limits set by the Constitution. At one time, these words felt accurate and reassuring. But today, they seem less real. The central government's stronger role and growing regional differences have made that balance harder to see in practice. Still, despite these challenges, the idea of Canada breaking apart as a federation doesn't seem like a real possibility at this point. At one time, his words sounded accurate and gave people confidence. But today, they carry less weight. The central government plays a stronger role, and regional differences have grown, making that balance harder to notice in real life.

#### **4.3.4 Points of Comparison with American Federation**

Canada and the United States may have formed their federations in similar ways, but there are some clear and important differences between them. In the U.S., the Constitution clearly lists what powers the central government has and leaves everything else to the states. In Canada, powers are divided into three groups—those given only

to the central government, those given only to the provinces, and those that both can handle. But if anything is left out as *Residuary Powers*, it automatically goes to the central government, not the provinces. In the U.S., people in each state elect their Governor directly. In Canada, the Governor General appoints the Provincial Governors, based on advice from the Dominion Government. Another major difference is that in Canada, the Governor General can reject a law passed by a province within a year. The U.S. President does not have this kind of control over state laws.

The structure of the Senate also shows a sharp contrast. In the U.S., every state sends the same number of elected Senators, and the Senate plays a strong role in national politics. In Canada, though the Senate members are appointed, their number varies by province and is nominated by the Governor-General. If the American Senate is the strongest second chamber, the Canadian Senate is the weakest second chamber. The American Supreme Court plays a very active part in government decisions and is often seen as a third branch alongside the two houses of Congress. The Canadian Supreme Court, though important, does not play such a strong role. The American states have more freedom and control over their own matters. In Canada, the central government holds more authority. So, while Canada is a federation, it leans more toward a system where the centre has greater influence.

In the United States, the federation began with a strong focus on state rights. But over the years, the central government has steadily gained more power. In contrast, Canada started out with most of the authority in the hands of the central government. Yet today, Canadian provinces have more say in their own matters than U.S. states do. Even though the Canadian federal government had the legal power to control more, it has mostly chosen to respect and follow the spirit of

shared rule. Professor Wheare pointed out that if the central government ever tried to push the provinces aside and act too much like a single, central authority, it would not be able to survive for long.

## Recap

- ◆ Canada adopted a federal system due to its large geography and cultural diversity.
- ◆ The British North America Act of 1867 established a strong central government.
- ◆ Canada's federal structure includes three divisions of power—federal, provincial, and concurrent.
- ◆ Residuary powers in Canada lie with the Centre, unlike in the USA.
- ◆ Provincial governments in Canada have grown more autonomous over time.
- ◆ The Canadian Senate is appointed and weaker than its American counterpart.
- ◆ The central government can disallow provincial laws, a power rarely used today.
- ◆ The Provincial Governors are appointed by the central government but are now largely independent.
- ◆ The Constitution Act of 1982 strengthened provincial powers through consent-based amendments.
- ◆ Canada today reflects a quasi-federal model—federal in form, with unitary tendencies in practice.

## Objective Questions

1. In which year was the British North America Act enacted?
2. Who appoints the Provincial Governors in Canada?
3. What chamber in Canada is considered the weakest second chamber?
4. In Canada, which government provides financial grants to provinces?
5. Where do residuary powers rest in Canada?
6. Which act patriated the Canadian Constitution?

7. What term best describes Canada's federal structure?
8. Who described Canada's structure as a "quasi-federal constitution"?
9. Canadian Senators are elected by?
10. What is the Canadian equivalent to state governors in the USA?

## Answers

1. 1867
2. Governor General
3. Senate
4. Dominion
5. Centre
6. Constitution Act, 1982
7. Quasi-federal
8. Prof. K.C. Wheare
9. Nomination
10. Provincial Governor

## Assignments

1. Discuss the historical reasons for adopting a federal structure in Canada.
2. Explain the unitary features of the Canadian federation with examples.
3. Compare and contrast the powers of Canadian provinces and U.S. states.
4. Evaluate the relevance of the term "quasi-federal" in describing Canada's government.
5. Analyse the impact of the Constitution Act, 1982 on the federal structure of Canada.

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**BLOCK**

# Party System





## Two Party Systems in USA

# UNIT

### Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this Unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ understand the historical evolution and structure of the party system in the United States
- ◆ analyse the roles and differences between the Democratic and Republican parties in both national and local politics
- ◆ evaluate the strengths and limitations of the two-party system in terms of governance and representation
- ◆ explore the impact of regional, ideological, and socio-economic factors on party support and electoral success in the United States

### Prerequisites

During a class discussion on democracy, one student raised a curious question: “Why do some countries have many political parties while others only have two?” This question sparked a deeper interest among the students to understand how political systems work. They had already studied the basics of political science—how governments function, how elections are held, and why representation matters. As they explored further, they came across the political setup of the United States. They were surprised to learn that despite having no mention of political parties in its Constitution, the U.S. has been largely dominated by two main parties. They read about George Washington’s concern over factions and how political groups had started forming even before the Constitution was officially in place. With this background knowledge, the students were now ready to explore the American party system more closely—how it grew, how it operates today, and how it compares with other systems like that of the United Kingdom.

# Keywords

Two-party system, Democratic Party, Republican Party, Caucus, Party convention, Electoral politics, Localism

## Discussion

### 5.1.1 Introduction

Political parties are a basic part of any democratic government. They help keep democracy running by giving people a clear choice and guiding the direction of policies and leadership. Without political parties, the idea of people having power through elections wouldn't mean much. Even though parties often face criticism, they are necessary for elections to happen and for governments to work. As MacIver once pointed out, without parties, there would be no proper way to hold elections or form governments. In the United States, political parties play an especially important role. The country holds many elections, and they happen quite often. The President and Vice-President are elected every four years. Every two years, voters choose members of the House of Representatives and one-third of the Senate. States also hold their own elections—Governors and Lieutenant-Governors are elected every two or four years depending on the state. There are also elections for state legislatures, local councils, and other public offices. Because of this constant cycle of elections, political parties are deeply involved in how the system works and how leaders are chosen.

### 5.1.2 Growth of American Parties

Political parties in America started forming even before the Constitution came into effect. At that time, local groups in towns, counties, and states were already meeting and deciding who should run for different positions. When the Constitution was sent

to the states for approval, the supporters of the new plan—called Federalists—began trying to get their preferred candidates elected to the state conventions. They were competing with the Anti-Federalists, who didn't agree with the proposed Constitution. So, political campaigning had already begun even before the new government officially started. During the Philadelphia Convention, the delegates didn't all see eye to eye. Some, like Alexander Hamilton, wanted a strong central government, while others, like Thomas Jefferson, believed that states should have more power. Even though these early divisions looked like the beginning of party politics, President George Washington tried to keep the country united. To avoid creating political camps, he brought both Hamilton and Jefferson into his Cabinet, hoping they could work together for the good of the new nation.

Thomas Jefferson left his position during Washington's second term as President. By then, political differences had started growing stronger, and Washington was clearly unhappy about it. In his farewell speech, he spoke openly about the dangers of political parties. He said that while parties might sometimes be useful in keeping a check on those in power—especially in monarchies—they were risky in a country like the United States, where leaders are chosen by the people. He warned that the spirit of party could become like a fire that, if not controlled, might end up burning everything down instead of providing warmth. Even though Washington gave this warning, he was still seen by many as the leader of the



Federalist Party. This shows that he wasn't against people coming together to support certain views or candidates. What he truly feared was the rise of a bitter and stubborn party spirit that could damage the unity of the nation. Sadly, his warning was not taken seriously. Once he stepped away from public life and returned to Mount Vernon, the hidden tensions of his time became more visible, and political divisions only grew deeper.

When John Adams became President, he couldn't stop the growing divide between the Federalists and Anti-Federalists. In fact, his ongoing disagreements with Alexander Hamilton made things worse for the Federalist Party. This internal conflict weakened their position and led to their defeat in the 1800 presidential election. Thomas Jefferson won and became President, marking a clear shift—political parties had now firmly taken root in the country. People's support for the two leaders came from different walks of life. Farmers and rural folks mostly stood behind Jefferson, while Adams was supported by businessmen, traders, and industrial groups. The Federalists, under Adams, focused on building a strong central government and looked after the interests of the rich and powerful. In contrast, Jefferson and his followers were seen as champions of farmers and settlers. The Federalists believed that order and structure were most important, while the Anti-Federalists gave more importance to freedom and the basic rights of individuals.

The Federalist Party kept losing support, and by the 1820 election, they didn't even put forward a candidate. The Anti-Federalists, now called Republicans, were in full control. With no real support left, the Federalist Party quietly disappeared. But soon, even the Republicans began to break into smaller groups. Leaders like Henry Clay, John C. Calhoun, William Crawford, Andrew Jackson, DeWitt Clinton, and John Quincy Adams each had their own group of

followers. Instead of party-based politics, personal loyalty to individual leaders became more common during this time. In the 1824 presidential election, no one won enough votes to become President outright, so the House of Representatives had to decide. They chose John Quincy Adams. After that, two main leaders stood out—Adams and Andrew Jackson. The smaller groups that had formed earlier now gathered around these two. Jackson's group came to be known as the Democratic-Republicans, while Adams' group became the National Republicans, who later became known as the Whigs.

In the 1828 election, two main parties competed—the Democratic-Republicans and the National Republicans. Andrew Jackson, the Democratic-Republican candidate, won the election. He was a strong and decisive President, known for his bold actions. Many saw his policies as a fresh start for the country. During his time, party divisions became clearer, and he was re-elected in 1832. The Democrats stayed in power and also won the 1836 election. In 1834, some people who were unhappy with Jackson's leadership joined with the National Republicans to form a new party called the Whigs. They won the 1840 election, but the President they elected died soon after taking office. The Democrats came back to power in 1844, but the Whigs won again in 1848. Then, in 1852, the Democrats returned to office and remained in control until 1860. The 1860 presidential election in the United States focused mainly on the issue of slavery. The Republican Party, formed from the old Whig Party, clearly opposed slavery. Their candidate, Abraham Lincoln, won the election and became the first Republican President. His win upset the southern states, and one by one, they started leaving the Union. This led to the Civil War. Lincoln led the country through the war, which ended with the Union's victory and the end of slavery. After that, the Republican Party stayed in power for the next 24 years.

The Democrats returned briefly in 1884 but lost the next two elections. They won again in 1892 but were out of office soon after. In 1912, Woodrow Wilson brought the Democrats back into power. Two years later, World War I began. Wilson was re-elected in 1916, partly because he kept America out of the war. But soon after, the U.S. joined the fight. After the war, Wilson helped write the Treaty of Versailles, which included a plan for a League of Nations. However, the U.S. Senate rejected the treaty, and this became a big issue in the 1920 election. The Republicans, who didn't support joining the League, won the 1920 election with Warren Harding. After Harding died, Calvin Coolidge became President and continued the Republican leadership until 1932. Then, during the Great Depression, Franklin D. Roosevelt, a Democrat, was elected. He stayed in office until his death in 1945, winning four terms—the most any U.S. President has served. His strong leadership helped rebuild the economy and gave a new life to the Democratic Party. After Roosevelt's death, his Vice President, Harry Truman, became President and later won the 1948 election on his own.

Truman faced growing tensions around the world and took a strong stand against communism, marking the beginning of the Cold War. In 1952, the Republicans returned to power with Dwight D. Eisenhower, who served two terms. In 1960, Democrat John F. Kennedy won the presidency. The Democrats remained in power until 1968, when Republican Richard Nixon was elected. The Democrats came back in 1976 with Jimmy Carter, but he lost to Republican Ronald Reagan in 1980. Reagan served two terms, and in 1988, George H. W. Bush, another Republican, became President. The Democrats returned in 1992 with Bill Clinton, who stayed in office until 2000. The 2000 election was one of the most disputed in American history. Republican George W.

Bush, son of George H. W. Bush, won after a close result in Florida and a U.S. Supreme Court decision. Many believed that if all the votes had been counted, Democrat Al Gore might have won. Still, Bush was re-elected in 2004 and served until 2009.

On January 20, 2009, Democrat Barack Obama became the 44th President of the United States. He made history as the first African American to hold the office and was elected with strong support from across the country. He was also one of the youngest Presidents in U.S. history. In the last 15 years, control of the U.S. Congress has gone back and forth between the two major parties. In the 1994 elections, the Republican Party won big, taking control of both the House of Representatives and the Senate. In the Senate, they gained eight seats, ending up with 52, while the Democrats were reduced to 48. Before the election, Democrats had held 56 seats and Republicans 44. In the House of Representatives, Republicans jumped from 178 seats to 230, while Democrats dropped from 256 to 204. There was also one Independent. The shift was seen as a strong message from voters. White House Chief of Staff Leon Panetta admitted they were disappointed, saying it showed people wanted a change in how Washington worked.

In the 2000 elections, Republicans still held a slim majority in the House with 221 seats. By 2002, they increased that to 229, while Democrats had 205 and one seat went to an Independent. The Senate was evenly split for a while, but in May 2001, Republican Senator James Jeffords left his party and began supporting the Democrats. That gave the Democrats control for a time. Later, Republicans regained some ground, holding 51 seats to the Democrats' 48, with one Independent. President George W. Bush often faced opposition from the Senate when pushing important bills. Eventually, Democrats took the majority in both the House and Senate. In the House,



they held 257 seats, while Republicans were down to 178. In the Senate, Democrats had 57, Republicans had 41. One Republican switched sides, and two Independents supported the Democrats, bringing their total to 59. One Senate seat from Minnesota remained undecided, awaiting a ruling from the state's Supreme Court as of January 20, 2009.

The earlier paragraphs explained how political parties have developed in the United States over time. It's clear that two main parties have always shared power. Every U.S. President has come from one of these two. While smaller parties have also contested elections and brought in new ideas, none have been able to win the presidency. As people often say, third parties in the U.S. bring fresh thinking but not real power. Today, the Democratic and Republican parties are the two main political forces. The Democratic Party started during George Washington's time, guided by Thomas Jefferson. Over the years, it was known by different names like Anti-Federalist, Republican, Democratic-Republican, and finally, Democratic. The party has gone through many ups and downs but has always managed to stay active and relevant. The Republican Party came later and is seen as the successor of the Federalist Party, which was led by Alexander Hamilton. It also changed names a few times—starting as Federalist, then National Republican, then Whig, and finally became the Republican Party we know today.

### 5.1.3 Minor Parties

In addition to the two main political parties, a few smaller ones have also appeared in American politics from time to time. Some of these include the Prohibition Party, the Socialist Party, and the Communist Party. The Prohibition Party held its first national convention in 1872. Its main focus was to stop the making, selling, and bringing in of alcoholic drinks. Until 1920, the party

worked hard to get laws passed to ban alcohol. Once the Eighteenth Amendment was added to the Constitution, the party spent the next twelve years trying to make sure it was properly enforced. But in 1933, when the amendment was repealed, the party lost its purpose and soon faded into the background. The Socialist Party was formed in the early 1900s when two earlier groups—the Socialist Labour Party and the Socialist Democratic Party—joined together. It gained some support, especially in cities. The party was well-organised and had a clear set of goals. It wanted the government to take control of things like railways, telephones, and telegraphs. It also pushed for public ownership of mines, forests, and other natural resources. The party believed that industries should be run for the benefit of all people, not just private owners. It also supported creating more jobs for the unemployed and expanding social security benefits. Politically, the party wanted big changes too. It called for getting rid of the Senate, ending the courts' power to cancel laws, choosing federal judges through elections, and letting people directly suggest and vote on laws across the country.

The Communist Party is known for holding the most extreme left-wing views in American politics. It follows the ideas of Marx and is well-organised, but it hasn't been able to grow much because most Americans have been strongly opposed to Communism. Over time, many other political parties and groups have come and gone in the United States. These include names like America's Party, American Conservative Party, American Liberty Party, Green Party, Libertarian Party, Constitution Party, Labour Party, Natural Law Party, and several others. While some of them had specific goals or gained attention for a short while, none of them could build strong public support or last very long. In the end, only two parties—the Democrats and the Republicans—have continued to

shape American politics in a meaningful way. They are the ones who have held power and taken turns leading the country.

### 5.1.4 Party Organisation

A political party must be effectively organised for effective operation. As an army, it must have discipline. The Democratic and Republican parties in America are unlike British political parties, which have been organised in a quite different way. They are discussed as follows:

#### 5.1.4.1 Loose structure

In the United States, both the Democratic and Republican parties are loosely connected groups rather than tightly controlled organisations. Each party tries to appeal to all kinds of people with different opinions and backgrounds. Because of this broad approach, the differences between the two parties are not always clear, and they are not as closely knit as parties in countries like Britain. As the parties are not strongly unified, strict party discipline doesn't exist. Voters often support candidates from the other party without changing their party identity. Even in Congress, members of one party sometimes vote along with the other side. This kind of cross-voting doesn't lead to serious consequences because losing a vote in Congress doesn't cause the government to collapse like it might in a parliamentary system. Also, the leadership at the national level has very little control over state or local party units. National committees don't give orders to state committees, and state committees don't control city or county branches. As noted by Ogg and Ray, there's no real chain of command in either direction, and the parts of the party work mostly on their own.

#### 5.1.4.2 The National Committee

At the top of the party setup is the National Committee. In the Democratic Party, this

committee includes one man and one woman from each state and territory. How they are chosen can vary—some are picked by state delegations at the national convention, while others are selected by state conventions, party committees, or through direct voting. So, there's no single way followed across all states. Since every state sends two members, the committee usually has just over a hundred people. The National Committee may seem powerful, but in reality, most of its work is tied to the presidential election and happens mainly in the six months leading up to it. The committee first decides when and where to hold the party's national convention. It sends out notices for selecting delegates and handles all the basic preparations. Then, it puts together the campaign plan and sets up smaller groups to manage different tasks. These include preparing leaflets, finding speakers, raising money, organising volunteers, and making sure people turn out to vote on election day. After the election, the committee's role mostly winds down until the next time the country votes for president.

The Chairman of the National Committee plays a big role during the presidential election. Though officially elected by the Committee, he is usually chosen by the party's presidential candidate. Sometimes, this choice is made without even asking the Committee's opinion. The Chairman doesn't always have to be a Committee member. Often, he is someone who helped the candidate win the party's nomination. His job is important because he plans how the party will fight the election. He decides where the campaign money should go, what areas need more attention, and how to deal with the other side's weak spots. His planning and leadership can make a big difference in whether the party wins or loses. If the party wins the election, the Chairman gets a strong voice in choosing who gets government posts. He may even be rewarded

with a top position himself—sometimes even a seat in the President’s Cabinet. Each national party committee has smaller teams to handle different jobs. The most important of these is the Executive Committee. Other committees include the Finance Committee, the Publicity Committee, the Speaker’s Bureau, and the Organisation Committee. In addition, there are many other small groups that take care of various tasks. All of them work under the direct control of the party’s national Chairman. At the national level, two officers play key roles—the Secretary and the Treasurer. The Secretary looks after the party’s main office and manages all the letters and communication. The Treasurer is in charge of raising money, which is essential for running election campaigns. Both work closely with the Chairman to make sure everything runs smoothly.

#### **5.1.4.3 Congressional Campaign Committee**

Each major party in the U.S. sets up special committees to focus on winning seats in Congress. These are separate from the main National Committee, which focuses on the presidential election. For the Senate, there is a Senatorial Campaign Committee made up of seven members chosen by the party’s senators for a term of two years. For the House of Representatives, the Congressional Campaign Committee has one member from each state, also picked for two years by the party’s House members. These committees mostly become active during election season. Their main job is to help the party keep its existing seats in Congress and win new ones. They study how current members have voted, assess the chances of winning in different regions, and plan election strategies. Most of their funding comes from the National Committee.

#### **5.1.4.4 State Central Committee**

Each political party in a U.S. state has a basic structure that includes a State Central

Committee and a Chairman. The members of this committee are usually chosen by party supporters, either directly through votes or indirectly through smaller local bodies, depending on the rules in each state. Most of these members are local party workers or leaders. The job of the State Central Committee is to keep the party active throughout the state. It looks after things like registering voters who support the party and helps manage political rewards such as appointments to positions. When state elections approach, the Committee plans the campaign—deciding on dates and locations for conventions and figuring out how to raise money. During the election period, the Committee acts like the party’s planning team. It arranges speeches by key leaders, raises funds, prints campaign material, and spreads the party’s message. The Chairman is the official head of the party in the state. Sometimes the Chairman is a strong leader, but often just a formal figure while others handle the main tasks. The Committee also includes a Secretary, who usually gets paid and manages office work, and a Treasurer, who handles the party’s money. The Chairman is elected by the Committee itself.

#### **5.1.4.5 County Committee**

In the United States, almost every county has a County Committee set up by one or both of the major political parties. These committees help bring together the work of smaller local party groups, handle important decisions related to county affairs, and stay in touch with the party’s leadership at the state level. Each County Committee has a Chairman. If the party happens to be in control of local government bodies, this Chairman often gains more influence by helping make appointments or decisions. Between the state and local levels, there are also many district-level party organisations. These are based in different types of districts like state senate, state assembly, congressional, or judicial

districts. Their role and importance vary from one state to another, depending on how party structures are set up in each place.

#### **5.1.4.6 Local Organisation**

In the United States, the structure of political parties starts at the grassroots with the precinct, which is the smallest unit. A precinct covers a small area based on how many people live and vote there—usually between 100 to 500 voters. The precinct chairman is a key link between the party and the people. This person stays in touch with voters, listens to their problems, offers help, and encourages them to support the party during elections. In cities, precincts are grouped into wards. A Ward Committee handles the work across precincts and takes care of political issues in that area. Above this is the City Committee, which supervises the work of both ward and precinct committees and handles city-wide matters. In rural areas, instead of city committees, there are village or township committees. These groups guide local party work in rural precincts and look after political issues in villages or small towns. Altogether, the party system looks like a big pyramid. At the top is the national party leader, and at the bottom are thousands of local party workers in precincts who keep the connection with voters strong.

#### **5.1.4.7 Direct Primary**

In the United States, direct primaries are now a central part of the political process. Earlier, party candidates for elections were chosen in small, closed meetings known as caucuses. Local party leaders would gather privately and decide who should run for different positions. These meetings were not the same everywhere; each state had its own way of doing it. At the state and national levels, candidates were often chosen by party members in the legislature. They met together, discussed names, and selected who would represent the party in

upcoming elections. Over time, this system was replaced by the more open and public method of direct primaries, giving voters a greater say in who gets to contest elections.

The caucus system, which was once used to choose candidates for elections, began to lose public support over time. People felt it was unfair and gave too much power to a small group of party leaders. It was often seen as secretive, influenced by political deals, and controlled by a few strong figures, known as party bosses. Because of this, many called it “King Caucus,” showing their anger at how closed and undemocratic the process had become. This frustration led to a shift toward the party convention system in the early 1800s, where more people could take part in selecting candidates. The caucus system was once a common way to choose party candidates in the United States, but over time, people grew unhappy with it. Many felt it was unfair because only a few party leaders made the decisions behind closed doors. It was often accused of being dishonest and controlled by powerful political figures. Because of this, critics called it “King Caucus,” showing their belief that it gave too much control to a few people.

This growing dissatisfaction led to a new method—the party convention system—around the early 1800s. The idea was to make the process more open and give more people a chance to be involved in choosing candidates. While conventions did allow for broader participation in theory, they too began to fall under the control of party bosses over time. As a result, people started losing trust in conventions as well. This led to the rise of the direct primary system in the early 20th century. Today, all U.S. states use direct primaries either fully or alongside conventions. In a direct primary, candidates gather signatures from voters to get on the ballot, and party members vote directly for the candidates they support. Most states use a “closed” system, where



only registered party members can vote in their party's primary. A few states follow an "open" system where any registered voter can vote in any party's primary. For presidential elections, primaries help choose delegates who attend the national convention and formally pick the party's nominee.

The direct primary was brought in to make the candidate selection process more open and democratic. The idea was to give regular party members—not just party leaders—the right to choose who would represent their party in elections. To support this change, state governments passed laws to ensure the primary process was fair and free from cheating. At first, this system seemed to reduce some of the corruption seen under earlier methods like caucuses and conventions. But over time, experienced politicians found new ways to control things. The goal of choosing the best candidates wasn't always met. Many primaries became contests where influence, money, and pressure played a big role. Running in a primary also became expensive. Candidates had to spend a lot on advertisements and campaigns just to make sure people turned out to vote. Voter interest was often low, and without costly efforts, many wouldn't participate at all. Even though the system was designed to limit the power of political bosses, their influence hasn't disappeared. As one observer noted, while the direct primary may sound like the voice of the people, it's often guided behind the scenes by political insiders. So, despite good intentions, the system hasn't always brought honest or capable people into politics.

### 5.1.5 Democratic vs. Republican

When we look at how the two main American political parties have treated India, we can see that the Republicans have generally shown more support and concern than the Democrats. While the Democrats have made promises, they often didn't follow

through. President John F. Kennedy gave India some hope, but when China attacked our borders, the United States did not step in to help. Later, in 1978, even though President Jimmy Carter seemed friendly towards India, he didn't support Prime Minister Morarji Desai's views on India's nuclear policy. President Bill Clinton also remained distant from India until 1998. His government strongly criticised India after it conducted nuclear tests. Although Clinton's visit to India in 2000 improved the mood, many felt it came too late to build meaningful trust.

When we look at the relationship between India and the two major US political parties, it becomes clear that Republican presidents have usually shown more support for India than the Democrats. Leaders like Eisenhower, Reagan, and George W. Bush made real efforts to strengthen ties with India. Reagan helped clear the way on nuclear issues and opened doors for trade, especially in advanced technology. George W. Bush worked hard to push the Indo-US nuclear deal through both Houses of the US Congress before his term ended. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh even called him the friendliest US President India had worked with. Still, not all Republican leaders were supportive. Richard Nixon, during the 1971 war with Pakistan, threatened India by sending the US Seventh Fleet. George H. W. Bush also tried to stop India's nuclear programme. These mixed responses show that while both parties have had ups and downs in their approach, the Republicans have mostly been more favourable towards India.

### 5.1.6 Peculiar Characteristics of the American Party System

We have already discussed how political parties in the United States came into being, how they are organised, and what goals they aim to achieve. Now, let us take a simple look at what makes the American party system

different from others, especially when we compare it with the system followed in England.

### 5.1.6.1 Extra Constitutional Growth

Political parties in the United States, like in Britain, were not created by any formal law or written rule. They gradually took shape through practice and public life. The men who wrote the U.S. Constitution were actually against the idea of political parties. They feared that such groups would divide the country. James Madison, during the Philadelphia Convention, tried to design a government system that would avoid political divisions. George Washington also disliked party politics. In his farewell speech, he warned people about how parties could harm the nation. Despite these concerns, political groups started forming even before the Constitution was approved. In towns, counties, and states, local leaders worked to support certain candidates and influence public opinion. At the Philadelphia Convention itself, two main groups—Federalists and Anti-Federalists—already disagreed on major issues. When Washington stepped down as President, these divisions became more obvious. Political parties then started playing a bigger role and began actively taking part in presidential elections. Political parties in the United States have been officially recognised through various laws passed by both Congress and state governments. These laws set rules about how parties manage their membership, organise their work, and handle money. However, political parties are still voluntary groups. They mostly run themselves and don't form a part of the government. Even though their work has a big impact on how the federal and state governments function, they are not considered official parts of the government system.

### 5.1.6.2 A two-party system

The United States, like Britain, mainly follows a two-party system. Over the years, Americans have consistently supported two major political parties. Many smaller parties have appeared—such as the Anti-Masons, Free Soil Party, Greenbackers, Populists, and the Progressives led by Theodore Roosevelt and Senator La Follette—but they didn't last long. The Socialist Party has been around since 1900, but its influence is mostly limited to New York City. The Communist Party began in 1920, and a few labour-oriented groups still exist. However, none of these smaller parties have ever seriously challenged the dominance of the two main parties in national elections. Occasionally, candidates from these minor parties have gained enough votes to impact the results, but they haven't been able to stay strong or independent for long. Rather than winning power, their role has mostly been to raise new ideas. In fact, the major parties have adopted many policies originally introduced by these third parties. So, while people involved in third-party movements rarely win elections, their ideas have helped shape the direction of American politics. There are several reasons why the two-party system remains strong in the United States. To begin with, Americans—like the British—generally prefer practical solutions over rigid ideologies, and they are usually willing to compromise. Unlike countries where religion or caste shape politics, such divisions are not deeply rooted in American political life. Also, the foundations of the current party system were laid during colonial times and continued after independence.

The way elections are run in the U.S. also supports the two-party model. The Electoral College and the system of electing one representative per district tend to favour larger parties. If no presidential candidate wins enough electoral votes, the decision goes to the House of Representatives, where each state gets just one vote. This setup



makes it hard for smaller parties to compete. In Congress too, since each area elects only one person, it's difficult for a third party to break through. Another reason is that the two main parties often take over the ideas and policies first raised by smaller parties. Over time, many proposals made by left-leaning or reformist groups have been adopted by either the Democrats or Republicans. As some political experts note, many of the issues that end up in major party platforms originally came from these minor parties. Looking at all of this, political scholar Howard R. Penniman observed that the U.S. is unusual. Most countries don't have such a stable two-party setup. In America, the Republican and Democratic parties haven't split into strict liberal or conservative wings, nor have they broken into many smaller parties like in Europe or India.

#### **5.1.6.3 No fundamental ideological differences**

In the United States, the two major political parties—Democratic and Republican—do not differ much in their core beliefs. Unlike in Britain, where the Labour and Conservative parties stand for different ideas and social classes, American parties are not built around strong ideological divides. In Britain, the Conservatives generally support the interests of the rich and follow a capitalist path, while the Labour Party represents working people and promotes policies for equality and social welfare. In contrast, Democrats and Republicans in the U.S. often talk about issues in different ways, but their actual policies are not too far apart. Over time, the sharp differences have faded. Some scholars have even joked that America has only one party with two names—Republican and Democratic. Both parties include a mix of conservatives and liberals. While people often say Democrats support the poor and Republicans back the rich, the truth is that both parties have supporters

from different economic backgrounds. Earlier, there were also regional patterns in support—Republicans were stronger in the North, and Democrats in the South—but those lines have also blurred. Now, both parties compete across the country. The real difference lies more in their approach than in deep ideological beliefs.

In the United States, both the Democratic and Republican parties support the same broad ideas. They believe in capitalism, a free market with some government control, and in making sure people have basic services like healthcare, pensions, and jobs. They also aim to protect farmland and support industries. Thinkers like Schattschneider have noted that both parties reflect a shared American belief: government and business should work together. While Republicans usually talk more about letting the market run freely, they still support democratic values. Democrats are more open to government action, but they also believe in private business and don't want to replace it. When it comes to international matters, both parties support helping poorer countries, working with the United Nations, and building strong ties with other nations in the Western world. In the past, there were sharper differences—like Republicans wanting high tariffs and Democrats wanting low ones—but those lines have faded. Now, the real difference often depends on which party is in power and which one is not.

#### **5.1.6.4 Geographical and Traditional Differences**

While American political parties may not differ much in their core beliefs, there are still some old patterns that shape how people choose sides. Many Americans stick with a party because it's part of their family tradition—something their parents or grandparents supported—or because they live in a region where that party has always been popular. Republicans usually have

stronger support among business owners and those connected to industry. Democrats, on the other hand, often draw their strength from farmers and rural communities. They also tend to have more backing from the poorer sections of society. So, even though the policies of both parties can seem quite similar, these long-standing social and regional ties still influence party loyalty in the U.S.

#### **5.1.6.5 Localism**

In the United States, political parties are built from the ground up, with local organisations forming the foundation. These local units focus mainly on local matters, and even those elected to state or national positions often prioritise the concerns of their own communities over broader national issues. Because the issues vary so widely across regions, it's hard for candidates of the same party to take strong, unified positions on national topics. What works as a winning message in one state might lead to a loss in another. For example, a Democrat in Georgia may not be able to speak about civil rights in the same way a Democrat in Connecticut can, without risking their chances in future elections. This strong focus on local concerns makes American parties less effective when it comes to governing the country as a whole. In contrast, British political parties, especially the one in power, operate on clear principles and expect their elected members to follow a common policy agenda. In the U.S., however, parties mainly function as tools to win elections and secure government positions. They often lack unity and fail to push for national goals, making them more election-focused than governance-driven.

#### **5.1.7 Conclusion**

The American party system has always seemed confusing to outsiders. Even though political parties are not mentioned in the

Constitution, they have become a big part of how the country is governed. In 1950, a group from the American Science Association studied the system and pointed out several problems. They said the parties often lacked discipline, made promises they didn't keep, and didn't show strong leadership. They also felt that the way the national conventions worked was not very practical or fair, and that they didn't truly represent the people. The committee suggested that the parties should be more organised and take more responsibility. Over the years, some things have changed. Campaign rules have improved, government funding has helped candidates, television has changed how people connect with politics, and many voters no longer blindly follow one party. Still, the loose two-party system continues to be a key part of American democracy, even with its flaws.

In the U.S. elections of 1996, 1998, 2000, and 2002, the Republican Party managed to hold on to its majority in the House of Representatives. This was the first time in eight years they had such a strong and steady grip. In the Senate, they had the upper hand from 1994 until 2000. But after the 2000 elections, the Senate was split right down the middle, with each party holding 50 seats. Later, the political tide turned in favour of the Democrats. They gained control of both the House and the Senate. A historic moment followed when the country elected its 44th President, the first African American President in the history of the USA, Mr Barack Hussein Obama, who won clearly against his Republican rival. With Democrats leading in both houses of Congress, the new President had an easier path to pass laws. However, when it came to international treaties—which need a two-thirds vote in the Senate—he still had to work with Republicans to get enough support.

## Recap

- ◆ The United States has a two-party system dominated by the Democratic and Republican parties.
- ◆ Political parties in the U.S. grew without constitutional recognition.
- ◆ Early party nominations were done through caucuses, later replaced by conventions and primaries.
- ◆ The party structure is pyramid-shaped, with the national chairman at the top and local precinct workers at the bottom.
- ◆ Party organisations in the U.S. focus more on elections than on policy enforcement.
- ◆ Local party units mainly deal with local issues and often take different stands based on regional needs.
- ◆ Republicans have generally been more favourable to India compared to Democrats.
- ◆ Minor parties in the U.S. rarely succeed in national elections but influence major party policies.
- ◆ Unlike the UK, the U.S. party system lacks strong ideological distinctions between the major parties.
- ◆ Reforms and changing media dynamics have influenced the role and functioning of political parties over time.

## Objective Questions

1. Which two parties dominate the U.S. political system?
2. What method replaced the caucus system for nominating candidates?
3. Who warned against the dangers of political factions?
4. What is the basic unit of party organisation in the U.S.?
5. Which U.S. President is considered more favourable towards India by Indian leaders?
6. What is a ward committee responsible for?
7. What kind of system does the U.S. follow with its two main parties?

8. What is one major difference between U.S. and U.K. party systems?
9. What kind of recognition do U.S. parties lack in the Constitution?
10. Which region was historically weak for the Republicans?

## Answers

1. Democratic-Republican
2. Convention
3. Washington
4. Precinct
5. Bush
6. Coordination
7. Two-party
8. Ideological
9. Constitutional
10. South

## Assignments

1. Discuss the historical evolution of the American party system and the role of caucuses and conventions.
2. Compare and contrast the U.S. party system with that of the United Kingdom.
3. Examine the influence of regional factors on party positions within the Democratic Party.
4. Assess the role of minor parties in shaping the political discourse in the U.S.
5. Critically evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the American two-party system in ensuring democratic representation.

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## Multi-Party System in France

# UNIT

### Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ understand the historical evolution and structure of the French party system under the Fifth Republic
- ◆ analyse the roles and ideologies of major political parties such as the Socialist Party, Gaullists, and the Communist Party
- ◆ evaluate the impact of party dynamics on presidential and legislative elections in France
- ◆ explore the challenges of party organisation, leadership transitions, and coalition politics in the French context

### Prerequisites

Imagine a group of students sitting in a classroom after a discussion on different types of governments. Their curiosity grows when they come across a political system like France's, where the President holds real power but political parties still shape much of the governance. As they flip through history, they find how General De Gaulle returned to power in 1958 and how his strong leadership style changed the nature of party politics in France. They begin to connect how different parties such as the Socialist Party, the Gaullists, and the Communist Party competed over the years for space and influence. The students realise that understanding the French party system is not just about knowing party names. It is about tracing their roots, understanding their voters, the leaders who shaped them, and the changes they went through. With this background, they feel ready to dive deeper into the party system in France.

# Keywords

Gaullists, Socialist Party, Fifth Republic, Political Coalition, Presidential System, Party Structure, French Elections

## Discussion

### 5.2.1 Introduction

One special thing about the French Constitution is that it clearly talks about political parties. It allows people to form parties freely and lets them function as long as they follow the basic values of national unity and democracy. This is different from countries like the United States and India, where political parties have grown over the years but are not directly mentioned in the Constitution.

### 5.2.2 Main Features of the French Party System

The French party system has a number of features which may be described as follows:

#### 5.2.2.1 Multiplicity of Parties

One of the most visible features of the French party system is that it has many parties. This has been true for a long time—from the days of the Third Republic to the present Fifth Republic. In national elections, there are usually around a dozen to twenty parties that play an active role across the country. Apart from these, there are also smaller groups—some local, some short-lived, and some formed around a particular leader or issue. In the National Assembly, it's common to find nine to fifteen party groups, and some of them have smaller partner groups or support from outside organisations. This kind of variety is quite different from what we see in countries like the UK and the US. There, many parties may exist, but only two main ones really matter. In the UK, it's the Conservative and Labour parties, while in the US, it's the Republicans and Democrats.

There are many reasons why so many political parties exist in France, and one of the main ones is the *French temperament*, or the way French people think and behave. Compared to people in countries like England or the United States, the French often approach politics with strong personal beliefs. They tend to focus more on ideas than on practical results. They also value their independence and prefer to stick to their own views rather than follow someone else's lead. When people don't agree with a party, they often leave and form a new one instead of adjusting their views to fit in. This habit of forming new groups comes from the French nature—their strong sense of individuality and their way of thinking things through in detail. A Spanish writer once said that in England or America, politics is like a match between two big teams, where people usually follow the party's decisions. But in France, politics is more like a fight where people rarely unite and often ignore party rules.

Another reason why France has so many political parties is its history of frequent political changes. Over the years, the country went through many ups and downs. In 1791, the monarchy was removed and a republic was started. Then, in 1799, Napoleon took charge and later became Emperor in 1804. He was removed in 1814, and the monarchy came back. But that too didn't last long—it was overthrown again in 1830. The monarchy returned once more, only to be removed again in 1848. In 1852, Napoleon III brought back the monarchy, but it was finally ended in 1870 when the republic was restored. These

constant changes created many different groups—some who supported the monarchy and others who wanted a republic. Because of this, the French people never really agreed on one political direction. Even after strong leaders like De Gaulle tried to bring unity, differences and divisions among people continued.

Another reason why France has so many political parties is the wide mix of people across the country. The French differ in their habits, ways of thinking, and lifestyles depending on where they live. People in the northwest are not like those in the east or southwest. The southeast is known for being more emotional, while the northeast is calmer. Some groups like the Normans and Basques have their own strong identities. Even in terms of land and money, there are big differences. In some places, large estates still exist, while in others, small farmers own the land. People in big factory towns are often quick to react and demand change, while those in quiet villages prefer to stick to their old ways. One writer, Bryce, said that France is like a land shaped by recent eruptions—full of cracks and signs of past trouble. The strong feelings from past revolutions still exist. Workers still feel angry toward the rich, and fights over religion still divide people. Because of all these differences in mood and thinking, many political groups take shape. For many French people, it's normal to leave one group and join another if they feel their views no longer fit.

Finally, as Soltan explains, having many political parties is almost bound to happen in a country where people don't agree on even the basic issues. In France, people from all parts of society have a say in politics. Education is common and people are encouraged to think for themselves. This strong sense of individualism leads to a wide range of political ideas and opinions. Because everyone wants to stick to their own views, it becomes hard to agree on many matters. This

makes party unity weak and party discipline even harder to maintain. One clear result of this is that French governments often don't last long. It's tough to bring so many different groups together and make them work as a team. The political scene is almost always tense and restless. Parties keep changing, and arguments between leaders are common. This constant movement makes it hard for the government to stay steady and focused.

### **5.2.2.2 Diversity in Organisation and Policies**

Another key feature of the French party system is how different the parties are—not just in what they believe, but also in how they are organised. Some parties are strongly against Parliament and even support extreme ideas like fascism. Others believe in socialism and support the idea of working through Parliament. Some parties follow clear political ideas and values, while others don't seem to have any fixed beliefs or plans. For example, radicalism in France is often seen more as a way of thinking than a clear political stand. French conservatism, on the other hand, is made up of many groups with different interests, and they don't always agree with one another. Party organisation also varies a lot. Left-wing parties are usually better organised and more disciplined. Right-wing parties often change and don't have strong unity. Some parties, like the Radical Party, have regular meetings and discuss their plans through local branches and congresses. But many others exist only inside the National Assembly and have no proper set-up outside it. Even the Radical Party, though organised, never had strong public support or a united group in Parliament. Overall, France doesn't have any party that works in the same way as the two main parties in Britain.

### **5.2.2.3 Fluidity**

Another clear feature of the French party system is how often parties change. New

parties are formed, and old ones disappear, sometimes within a very short period. After World War II, many new parties emerged, while others faded away. Some groups are created just for elections and vanish after a few meetings in the Assembly. Many of these parties exist only inside Parliament and have no real support among the people. At the same time, there are groups that are active in society but never manage to win seats in the Assembly. Big national problems often cause splits in parties or give rise to new ones. For example, during the early years of the Fifth Republic, the Algerian crisis divided many existing parties and led to the creation of new ones. Almost every party at the time—except the Communists—had a breakaway group. These splits were usually temporary and caused by the crisis itself. Once the issue was settled, most of the smaller groups either disappeared or rejoined their original parties. As Dorothy Pickles rightly said, French parties often come and go in surprising numbers and sometimes within a very short time.

While France often struggles with too many parties, unclear policies, and frequent changes, one steady feature is that the main political ideas have remained the same over time. Despite the rise and fall of many parties, six key political beliefs—*Conservative, Radical, Socialist, Communist, Catholic, and Gaullist*—have stayed strong. Since World War II, most French voters have supported one of these. This shows that while party names and groups may come and go, the core ideas that shape French politics don't change much. In recent years, there has been a slow move toward fewer parties. Different groups have started working together, and coalitions are becoming more common. Even after De Gaulle left, the Gaullist Party stayed united, which shows growing stability. These changes suggest that, in time, France might shift from a system with many parties to one with just three or four main ones.

#### 5.2.2.4 Constitutional Recognition of the Parties

The French Constitution clearly supports the role of political parties. Article 4 states that parties and political groups help people use their right to vote. It also says that anyone is free to form a party and take part in political activities. However, all parties must follow the basic values of national unity and democracy.

#### 5.2.2.5 Adherence to Personality Cult

A special feature of the French party system is that many parties are built around strong and popular leaders. People often support a party because they admire its leader. These leaders help hold the party together, and party members usually stay united out of loyalty to them. During the Fourth Republic, too many parties led to unstable governments. Ministers were replaced so often that people joked they were changed as often as shirts. To fix this, the Fifth Republic brought in a semi-presidential system. This system reduced the power of Parliament and the Cabinet, which also meant that political parties lost some of their earlier influence. Their role became more limited, mostly to making laws and taking part in debates. Even with these changes, political parties in France still face frequent shifts and changes, which keep the system somewhat unstable.

### 5.2.3 Main Political Parties in France

Some of the main French political parties are the following:

#### 5.2.3.1 The Radicals

The Radical Republican and Socialist Radical Party was started in 1901 and is the oldest political party in France. After the war, many people saw it as part of the old, failed political system. Still, it played a big role during the Third and Fourth

Republics. The party made promises that tried to please everyone but didn't commit to anything specific. It garnered support mainly from small farmers, shopkeepers, rural doctors, school teachers, and lawyers. The party was loosely organised and often teamed up with smaller groups to form a coalition called the RGR, which was never clearly defined. At its peak, it had around two million members, but today that number has dropped to about 10,000. Over time, disagreements within the party led to its breakup. Some members joined the Gaullists, others moved to Left-wing or Centrist groups. A few formed an alliance with the Federation of the Democratic and Socialist Left, while others joined the Democratic Centre. Now, only around 25 members are in Parliament under the Federation's name. The Radical Party, once strong, has now almost disappeared.

### 5.2.3.2 The Convention of Republican Institutions

When the Fifth Republic began, a number of 'political clubs' started forming in France. These were groups made up of students, thinkers, and leaders from student and professional circles. They openly questioned the government's actions and criticised the way the country's institutions were working. Most of these clubs strongly opposed General de Gaulle and his policies. Six of these clubs, from different parts of the country, decided to come together. In 1964, they formed a united group called the *Convention des Institutions Républicaines*. Their main aim was to bring together the non-Communist Left to stand up to de Gaulle. At their first meeting, the Convention decided to try and influence Left-leaning parties. Young members of the group worked hard to create a strong alliance between the Radicals, Socialists, PSU, liberal Catholics, and Communists. They played an important part in helping the Left choose a joint candidate for the

presidential election and pushed for the formation of a broader political group. Later, the Convention joined the Federation of the Democratic and Socialist Left. Still, their overall strength and impact in politics remained small.

### 5.2.3.3 Parties of the Right

After World War II, two groups in France clearly stood against the Republic and wanted to replace it with a more authoritarian government. One of these was the Poujadist Movement. The Poujadists appeared in 1954. Their support mainly came from small shopkeepers, local business owners, farmers, and a few minor political leaders. At first, they worked as a pressure group called the Union for the Defence of Merchants and Artisans. Their main demand was to reduce taxes on small businesses. But soon, the group turned into a political party called the Union and French Fraternity. The movement wanted big changes. It called for removing Parliament, bringing back the old system of Estates General, and putting the leaders of the Fourth Republic on trial. Their leader, Pierre Poujade, quickly built up support and set up branches across the country. His popular slogan was "Throw out the rascals," which captured the anger of many ordinary people. In the 1956 election, the party won 25 seats in the National Assembly. However, when General de Gaulle returned to power in 1958, the movement quickly lost support and faded away.

### 5.2.3.4 The Activists

The Activists were a group that strongly opposed the French Republic. They were made up of army officers involved in the Algerian war, French settlers living in Algeria, and some secret extremist groups in France. These people formed an organisation called the OAS (Organisation of the Secret Army). The OAS believed in using violence to stop Algeria from becoming independent. They

carried out bombings, targeted killings, and even tried to assassinate General de Gaulle. Their goal was to keep Algeria under French control at any cost. In 1961, the French government acted firmly. The top leaders of the OAS, including two generals, were arrested. With their leadership gone, the group quickly fell apart, and the OAS was brought to an end.

### *1. The Communist Party*

The French Communist Party was formed in 1920 and became one of the strongest political forces in the country for many years. From the end of World War II until the early 1960s, it regularly got more votes than any other party, except for a brief time in 1946. By the late 1970s, it was still winning over 21% of the vote and often did better than the Socialist Party. The French Communist Party was deeply influenced by the ideas of Soviet Russia. Its members followed the teachings of Marx and Lenin, and the party was built on the strict, disciplined model of the Bolsheviks. It was openly against American influence and wanted to reshape France's political and economic system to resemble that of the Soviet Union. The French Communist Party mainly depends on support from the working class. It has close ties with the CGT, one of the oldest and strongest trade unions in France. Over time, the party also attracted many left-leaning thinkers, especially from literary and cultural fields. Though its influence had been shrinking, the party surprised many by winning twenty seats in the June 1997 elections.

### *2. The Socialist Party*

The Socialist Party of France was formed in 1905 and eventually became the largest political group in the country. It first came to power in 1936 under the leadership of Léon Blum, who remained an important figure until his death in 1946. During the time of the Fourth Republic, the party had a tough

time balancing its position. It had to compete with the Communist Party for support from the working class, and at the same time, it had to either support or join coalition governments. While the Communists stayed in opposition, the Socialists were caught between cooperation and rivalry. The Socialist Party in France is organised in a simple and democratic way. At the local level, it begins with small groups called Sections, which are set up in towns and rural areas. These local Sections come together to form a Federation in each province. Each Federation holds a meeting called the Federal Congress, where members from the local groups take part. Representatives from all the provincial congresses then gather at the National Congress, which is held once a year. This national meeting decides the party's plans and elects the National Council and an Executive Committee. These two bodies manage the party's work between congresses. The Executive Committee takes care of spreading the party's message, working with elected members, and ensuring decisions are followed. The National Council mainly handles tasks related to elections, such as selecting who will represent the party in upcoming votes. The Socialist Party in France has mostly been supported by workers. It has also attracted civil servants, teachers, and small farmers. But it hasn't managed to bring many women into its fold, and young people don't seem very drawn to it either. The party is active mainly in big cities, while in the countryside, its presence is quite weak.

### *3. Mouvement Républicain Populaire (MRP)*

The Popular Republican Movement (MRP) was born during World War II as a response to the German occupation and the Vichy government. It started as part of the Resistance and was shaped by Catholic values and Christian democratic ideas. The party's main goal was to rebuild France's political life with a focus on moral

and spiritual principles. It believed in the importance of human dignity, family life, and the responsibility of parents—especially in educating their children. The party saw this as a family's right, not the State's. It also supported people's right to form associations freely and believed in peace, though it considered war justifiable if Christian values were in danger.

#### 4. *The Union for the New Republic (UNR)*

After being given special powers in June 1958, General De Gaulle took control of France by ruling through decrees. During this time, political parties became inactive. They only returned to action for the parliamentary elections held in November 1958. Just before these elections, a new party was formed—the UNR (Union for the New Republic). It was created by bringing together four different Gaullist groups: the Social Republicans, the Union for French Renewal, the Republican Convention, and the Workers' Committee. The UNR supported economic growth through planning, wanted Algeria to choose its future freely, aimed to keep France politically stable, and believed

in keeping France strong and independent in world affairs. The UDR is not like the earlier RFP and does not follow a fascist style of organisation. The party's basic unit works at the level of a parliamentary constituency, where its main job is to select a candidate and support them during elections. The UDR mainly operates at the national level and is active in many big and mid-sized cities. However, it does not have much support in rural areas and has not built a strong base among the general public in the countryside.

#### 5.2.4 Conclusion

Over the years, the party system in France under the Fifth Republic has become more orderly than it was before, when it was loose and hard to define. Though it is still a multi-party system with many small groups and alliances, three main parties—the Communist Party, the Socialist Party, and the Gaullists—have remained central to French politics. While party organisations often face ups and downs, the broader political ideas in the country have stayed steady. Even now, many political parties in France are not fully developed. They often lack clear structure, firm goals, and well-defined plans.

## Recap

- ◆ The Fifth French Republic brought more stability to the country's political system.
- ◆ Major political parties include the Socialist Party, Communist Party, and Gaullists.
- ◆ The Socialist Party has traditionally attracted workers, civil servants, and urban voters.
- ◆ The Gaullists supported a strong presidential system and were organised around De Gaulle's leadership.
- ◆ The Popular Republican Movement promoted Christian democratic values.

- ◆ The party system shifted from fragmented groups to more structured coalitions.
- ◆ Presidential elections significantly influence party alliances and public support.
- ◆ The Socialist Party experienced both rise and decline across different elections.
- ◆ Centrist parties often struggled to hold ground due to a lack of consistent leadership.
- ◆ Despite multiple parties, long-term political ideas in France have shown continuity.

## Objective Questions

1. When did General De Gaulle return to power under the Fifth Republic?
2. What does the Socialist Party primarily advocate?
3. Who led the Gaullist movement in its early days?
4. Which party promotes Christian democratic ideals?
5. In what year was the Maastricht Treaty referendum held?
6. Who defeated Ségolène Royal in the 2007 presidential election?
7. What is the basic organisational unit of the UDR?
8. Which political party was formed in response to World War II?
9. What system does the French Fifth Republic follow?
10. What percentage of votes did the Socialist Party receive in the 1992 Maastricht referendum?

## Answers

1. 1958
2. Welfare
3. De Gaulle

4. MRP
5. 1992
6. Sarkozy
7. Constituency
8. MRP
9. Semi-presidential
10. 50.5%

## Assignments

1. Discuss the evolution of the French party system from the Fourth Republic to the Fifth Republic.
2. Evaluate the impact of General De Gaulle's leadership on party politics in France.
3. Compare and contrast the structure and ideology of the Socialist Party and the Gaullists.
4. How did the Maastricht Treaty referendum reflect party divisions in France?
5. Assess the role of centrist parties in shaping coalition politics in contemporary France.

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# One-Party System in China

## UNIT

### Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ understand the structure and functioning of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)
- ◆ analyse the hierarchical setup of the CCP and its affiliated organisations
- ◆ evaluate the significance of minor parties and mass organisations in China
- ◆ explore the evolution and current realities of China's one-party system

### Prerequisites

In a classroom where students discussed different forms of government, one question kept coming up: *How does a country function without opposition parties?* This led to a curious look into China's political system. Students had already explored democracies, elections, and constitutions in earlier lessons. Now, they were introduced to a system where a single party—the Chinese Communist Party—controls every aspect of governance. The teacher shared how youth organisations, trade unions, and even minor parties operate under the shadow of the CCP. Students imagined how policies were made, how leaders were chosen, and how people participated in such a system. They learned that China's model was not just about one party holding power, but about that power shaping every part of society—from schools to farms to art and literature. This set the stage for a deeper study into China's one-party system, encouraging students to question, compare, and reflect on the meaning of representation and control.



# Keywords

Chinese Communist Party (CCP), Politburo, Central Committee, Youth League, Mass Organisations, Cultural Revolution, One-Party Rule

## Discussion

### 5.3.1 Introduction

Back in 1956–57, Chang Po-Chin, a leader of the China Democratic League and Minister of Communications in Peking, described China as a country where 500 million people were controlled by one powerful leader and a small group of strict followers. Today, the number of people has grown to over a billion. The leader, once seen as perfect and above all, did not live forever. After his death in September 1976, China moved away from one-man rule and brought in a system where decisions were made by a group of leaders instead. The Communist Party of China (CPC) has been in full control of the country since 1949. It is the only party that holds real power, and its presence is seen in every part of public life—whether it's the government, schools, workplaces, or even villages. The party was started in 1921 and came to power after years of struggle. Since then, it has shaped how the country is run. There are a few smaller parties in China, but they all follow the lead of the Communist Party. To understand how the Chinese Party System works, it's important to understand this party first.

### 5.3.2 Emergence of the Communist Party

The Communist Party of China began in 1921 with just thirteen members and faced many struggles in its early years. Weak leadership and internal issues slowed its growth, and by 1935, it was close to collapse. At this critical point, Mao Zedong rose to prominence and helped steer the

party forward. The war with Japan gave the party a chance to grow stronger. By the end of World War II, its membership had reached over a million. Efforts to form a joint government with the Kuomintang (KMT) failed, leading to the People's Liberation War from 1945 to 1949. During this period, the party's support grew rapidly, reaching more than 4.5 million members. By 1961, it had over 17 million members. At the Tenth Party Congress held in August 1973, the number had increased to 28 million. By December 1998, party membership rose to 61 million, and it has continued to grow since then.

Anyone who is eighteen or older can apply to become a member of the Communist Party of China. But becoming a member isn't instant—there's a period of probation. During this time, the person has to prove they are serious and committed. Party members are expected to stay united, follow the party's rules and decisions, and always work for the good of the people. They must be careful and alert to anything that could harm the party. They are also expected to keep party and state matters private and be honest and loyal in everything they do. Mao Tse-tung remained the most powerful leader in China until he passed away in September 1976. He had complete control, and while some may have quietly disagreed with him, no one openly challenged his authority. Mao was the main voice of Marxism and Leninism in China. He shaped the party's ideas, organised its work, and explained communist principles in a way that fit China's conditions. The Chinese people respectfully called his ideas "Maoism." His views were different from

those followed in the Soviet Union, and both countries later claimed to be the true followers of Marxism. This led to a split among communist nations. Years later, in November 2007, Hu Jintao, who had once led the Communist Youth League, became the General Secretary of the Communist Party at its 17th National Congress in Beijing. Before him, Jiang Zemin had held the position and was widely respected for his leadership.

### 5.3.3 Democratic Centralism in the Party

One of the most important ideas in the Communist Party is something called democratic centralism. This means that while members can take part in discussions and vote to choose their leaders, once a decision is made, everyone is expected to follow it. In simple terms, it combines shared decision-making with strong central control. You can see this in a few ways. Leaders at every level are elected—like how the National Party Congress chooses the Central Committee, and local congresses elect local committees. These leaders must report back to the members who chose them and explain what they've been doing. Also, all party leaders are expected to listen to the opinions and concerns of local members and party workers so that they stay in touch with what's happening on the ground.

In practice, the Communist Party gives more importance to central control than to democracy. This is clear in how things work inside the party. *First*, lower-level party units are expected to regularly report their activities to higher levels and must ask for guidance on matters that require bigger decisions. *Second*, they are required to follow the instructions of the higher-level leadership without question. *Third*, decisions made by the top leadership are binding on all lower bodies. Even if lower groups make decisions, those can be changed or overruled by higher levels. While the party talks about

giving space for discussion and elections, real power stays with the top leaders. So, the idea of democratic centralism mostly works as a way to keep full control while still looking democratic on the surface.

### 5.3.4 Organisation of the Party

#### 1. National Party Congress

The National Party Congress is the highest body in the Communist Party of China. It is chosen every five years by the local party branches. In theory, it should meet once a year, but in reality, these meetings don't happen that often. For example, the ninth Congress was held in 1969, eleven years after the one before it. The tenth and eleventh Congresses were held in 1973 and 1977. The fourteenth Congress took place in October 1992 and was attended by over 2,000 delegates. At the fifteenth Congress in September 1997, a new Central Committee was elected with 193 full members and 151 alternate members. New politburos were also chosen during this session. The functions of the National Party Congress are: (i) to determine the party's policy; (ii) to revise the party's constitution; (iii) to hear and examine the reports of the central committee and other central organs; and (iv) to elect the central committee.

#### 2. The Central Committee

The National Party Congress doesn't meet often, but when it does, it elects the Central Committee. This Committee takes on important responsibilities. It sets up different key bodies within the Party and represents the Communist Party in its dealings with other political groups, people's organisations, and social groups. It also oversees the People's Liberation Army through control of the General Political Department. The Central Committee chooses top leaders of the Party, including the Chairman, Vice-Chairman, General Secretary, Politburo,

and the Secretariat. Although the 1969 Party Constitution didn't clearly give it the power to elect the Secretariat and General Secretary, the newer Constitution allows it to hear opinions from both Party members and the general public.

Back in 1956, the Central Committee had 97 full members and 73 alternate members. In 1958, the number of alternates increased to 96, while the full members remained the same. It was reorganised during the Eleventh Party Congress in August 1977 to include regular members and 32 alternates. By September 1997, its size had grown significantly—193 full members and 151 alternates. Because the group is so large, much of its work is handled by smaller teams. The Central Committee mainly approves the decisions already made by the Politburo and its Standing Committee. It mainly focuses on carrying out policies rather than making them. In practice, it acts as the permanent working arm of the National Party Congress, managing Party activities between sessions. Under it, different departments take care of key areas like education, organisation, international ties, propaganda, and cooperation with other social groups.

### 3. *Politburo*

Earlier, the Party's Constitution stated that the Politburo and its Standing Committee would be elected by the Central Committee and would carry out their responsibilities between sessions. They also had the job of calling Central Committee meetings every two years. These groups used to oversee the work of the Secretariat as well. The updated Constitution keeps this basic structure but does not clearly state how often the Politburo should hold Central Committee meetings. It also no longer mentions the Secretariat at all. In the beginning, the Politburo had only thirteen members. By 1956, this number increased to seventeen full members and two alternates. That year, the Party also

created a smaller group called the Standing Committee. It worked like the Politburo's core team and included the Party Chairman (Mao), four Vice-Chairmen, and the General Secretary. In 1958, the Politburo grew again to twenty full members and six alternates. In 1966, more military leaders were added, bringing back some of the strength it had earlier. The 14th Party Congress in 1992 raised the number of Politburo members to twenty, up from seventeen in 1987. The Standing Committee also grew from five to seven members. In 1997, the 15th National Congress set the Politburo's size at twenty-one full members and one alternate. At the 16th Congress, eight members, including the General Secretary, were changed.

During the Cultural Revolution, the size and influence of the Politburo declined. But after the Ninth Party Congress, it slowly started to regain its role. Today, the Politburo is one of the most powerful bodies in the Communist Party of China. In practice, much of its power is exercised by a smaller group called the Standing Committee, which has seven top leaders. This group is often seen as the real centre of decision-making. The structure of the Party works in layers: the Central Committee acts for the Party Congress, the Politburo acts for the Central Committee, and the Standing Committee carries out the work of the Politburo. At the top of this setup is the General Secretary, who holds the most authority—an office that was once known as the Chairman.

### 4. *Control Commission*

It consists of seventeen regular members and four alternates. It maintains party discipline. It has its control committees at all levels of party organisations to ensure party discipline.

### 5. *Secretariat*

The 1956 Party Constitution stated the Secretariat would have ten full members

and seven alternates. By September 1997, the Fifteenth National Congress fixed the number at seven. However, during the Cultural Revolution, many of its members were removed as part of a major purge. After the Party was brought back to normal functioning, the Secretariat slowly regained its importance. The Secretariat takes care of the Central Committee's daily tasks. It works under the Politburo and its Standing Committee and helps carry out their decisions. It passes on instructions to different departments and committees under the Central Committee. Although it does not make major policies, it has a strong role because it deals with the daily running of the Party. During the Cultural Revolution, it lost its influence for a while as it was seen as opposing Mao's leadership.

## 6. Local Party Organisation

The Communist Party of China is organised in a step-by-step structure, starting from the top and going down to the local level. Just below the central leadership are the party units in provinces, autonomous regions, and large cities that report directly to the central government. These units follow the same basic structure as the central organisation. Next come the party organisations in counties and smaller cities. According to the present Constitution, local party congresses choose their own committees and are supposed to meet once every three years, though they can meet earlier or later if needed. At the lowest level are *party cells*. These are formed in *schools, factories, farms, offices*, and even *army units*. Each cell generally has about twenty members, and every party member must belong to a cell. When there are more members, a committee can be formed to manage the group. These cells play a key role in keeping the party active and connected to everyday life. They carry out the decisions made by higher authorities, spread party messages, encourage learning, recruit new members, and ensure members follow party

rules. They also guide the work of local organisations and help ensure that state decisions are followed properly. A major responsibility of these cells is to help party members and others understand and apply Marxist-Leninist ideas and Mao Zedong's teachings in practical ways.

### 5.3.5 Youth Organisations

Chinese leaders have always believed that children and young people should grow up with a strong understanding of Mao's ideas. To make this possible, they set up three groups for different age levels. *The Young Pioneers* is for school-going children. As they grow older, they can join the *New Youth Organs*, and later, the *Young Communist League*. These groups help guide the younger generation in learning the values and goals of the Communist Party. Through these organisations, children are taught from an early age to stay loyal to the party and play an active role in building the nation.

#### 5.3.5.1 Young Communist League (YCL)

The Young Communist League (YCL) began as the Socialist Youth League in 1920, even before the Communist Party of China was officially formed. In May 1957, it was renamed the Young Communist League. Though it functions independently, it follows a clear chain of command from the national level down to local branches. At every level, YCL committees are answerable both to the party at their level and to the higher YCL committee above them. The YCL plays an important role in bringing the ideas and values of the Communist Party to young people. It works actively in *schools, colleges*, and *youth groups* to spread party messages and build loyalty among the youth. It helps with party campaigns and encourages young members to take the right approach toward the party's work. Anyone aged 15 to 25 can join. Those who show leadership and commitment in the YCL often move on to



become full members of the Communist Party. In 1949, there were around 500,000 members. By 1959, membership had grown to 25 million, and another 8.5 million joined by 1965. But this rapid growth also caused a drop in political discipline. During the Cultural Revolution, the YCL was linked to leaders who opposed Mao, and this led to its decline. By mid-1966, it had stopped working, as the Red Guards gained more focus. However, the 1969 party constitution once again recognised the importance of the YCL and called for its revival under party guidance.

### 5.3.5.2 Young Pioneers

The Young Pioneers are guided by the Young Communist League and are not set up as a separate organisation. This group is *meant for school children between the ages of nine and fifteen*. By 1962, their membership had reached about fifty million, with around 35 to 40 percent of primary school children taking part. Their main purpose is to help children learn the values and ideas of the Communist Party from a young age. These children are encouraged to follow party principles and are often prepared to later join the Young Communist League. The Cultural Revolution disrupted their activities, just as it did with many other organisations. Still, groups like the Young Pioneers have always been used by the party to shape the thinking of the younger generation and help bring them into the party's way of life.

### 5.3.5.3 New Youth Organs

In May 1965, the Cultural Committee of the Young Communist League (YCL) spoke about starting new groups called Children's Leagues and Juvenile Leagues. However, it wasn't clear whether these groups were meant to support or replace the YCL and the Young Pioneers. Later, during the Cultural Revolution, names like the *League of Red Children* and *Little Red Soldiers* emerged.

These seemed to be youth groups formed to match the political mood of that time. But beyond the mention of their names, there wasn't much information about what they actually did. Since then, nothing significant has been said about them, and their role or existence has remained mostly unknown.

## 5.3.6 Mass Organisations

Apart from the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and its youth wings, there are several other large organisations that operate across the country. These include the *All-China Federation of Trade Unions, the All-China Federation of Cooperatives, the All-China Federation of Democratic Women, the All-China Federation of Democratic Youth, and the All-China Federation of Literary and Art Critics*. There are also a few religious and social bodies like the National Committee of Christian Churches that promote ideas such as self-governance. Although these groups include many people who are not committed party members, the CCP makes sure it stays in control by placing trusted members in important roles. These organisations play a major role in helping the party. As one observer noted, they help the CCP appear as if it has wide public support. They spread the party's messages, take part in its campaigns, and represent the country in international meetings and events. These organisations also act as training grounds for future party members and help the party stay connected with everyday people. Most citizens in China are part of at least one such group, all of which are shaped and run under the party's direction.

## 5.3.7 Minor Parties

China has a few smaller political parties that are officially part of its coalition government, but they do not work independently. In 1949, there were eleven such parties. By 1962, only eight remained. These included groups like the *Kuomintang Revolutionary*

*Committee, the China Democratic League, the Democratic National Construction Association, and others. Most of their members were former Kuomintang officials, professionals, and businessmen who did not support Chiang Kai-shek. Unlike the Soviet Union, which allowed only one party, China kept these smaller parties. However, they follow the leadership of the Communist Party completely. In a May Day message in 1950, these parties clearly stated that they supported the Communist Party and Chairman Mao without any conditions. Again in 1960, they promised to follow socialism and obey the Party's direction. These minor parties do not have real power. They exist mostly in name and act as supporters of the Communist Party. Important government roles are always held by Communist Party members. So, although it may be called a coalition government, in reality, it is a one-party rule with no real sharing of authority.*

### 5.3.8 Conclusion

China's political system is built around the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), which holds firm control over all major institutions. Although there are youth groups, social organisations, and a few smaller political parties, they mostly follow the Party's lead. These groups are used to spread the Party's ideas, carry out its plans, and create an image of broad support among the people. But in reality, the CCP holds all the decision-making power. The smaller parties do not function independently—they exist more as supporters of the ruling party than as real alternatives. Every level of the political structure, from local party units to the top leadership, is set up to keep the CCP in charge. The system leaves little room for open political debate or competition. This makes it clear that China follows a one-party model, where control is concentrated at the top and shared power is more of a label than a reality.

## Recap

- ◆ China's political system is dominated by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), with no space for political opposition.
- ◆ All major institutions are under the control of the CCP, including government, military, education, and media.
- ◆ The CCP is organised hierarchically, from the National Congress at the top to local party cells at the grassroots.
- ◆ The Central Committee acts as a bridge between the National Congress and the Politburo.
- ◆ The Politburo and its Standing Committee are the key decision-making bodies in the CCP.
- ◆ The Secretariat handles day-to-day coordination of party affairs and policy implementation.
- ◆ Youth organisations like the Young Communist League and Young Pioneers train and influence future party members.
- ◆ Mass organisations exist to support the CCP's goals and policies but lack independent identity.

- ◆ Minor parties do exist in name but function under CCP leadership without genuine autonomy.
- ◆ The one-party system has led to centralised control, political stability, and economic planning, but at the cost of political freedom and pluralism.

## Objective Questions

1. What is the ruling party in China?
2. What is the main decision-making body in the CCP?
3. What organisation coordinates daily activities of the CCP?
4. Which organisation recruits and trains youth for future party roles?
5. What is the CCP's mass campaign unit at the local level called?
6. When was the Young Communist League revived after the Cultural Revolution?
7. What is the smallest unit of the party structure?
8. Who led the CCP during the 16th National Congress?
9. What body ratifies the decisions of the Politburo?
10. Which Chinese document outlines the party structure and principles?

## Answers

1. CCP
2. Politburo
3. Secretariat
4. YCL
5. Cell
6. 1969
7. Cell
8. Jiang Zemin

9. Central Committee

10. Constitution

## Assignments

1. Explain the role and structure of the Chinese Communist Party in China's political system.
2. Discuss how youth organisations in China are used to strengthen the one-party system.
3. Evaluate the functioning and relevance of minor political parties in China.
4. How does the CCP maintain control over mass organisations and social groups?
5. Compare the Chinese one-party system with a multi-party democracy in terms of political freedom and public participation.

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# Parliamentary and Presidential System and Institutional Relationships





# UNIT

## Parliamentary System in UK

### Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this Unit, the learner will be able to:

- ♦ understand the historical evolution and structure of the British parliamentary system
- ♦ analyse the distribution of legislative, financial, and executive powers within the British Parliament
- ♦ evaluate the impact of key reforms on the functioning of the UK Parliament
- ♦ explore the contemporary relevance of the British parliamentary model in modern governance

### Prerequisites

Before learning about how the British Parliament works, students should understand basic concepts like democracy, a constitution, and the roles of the legislature, executive, and judiciary. Imagine a group of students once asking if a country can run without a single written constitution. Their search brought them to the United Kingdom, where long-standing customs, traditions, and practices guide the government. As they learned more, they came across important turning points in history like the Magna Carta, the Glorious Revolution, and major Acts of Parliament. These events showed them that the UK Parliament was shaped by centuries of change, conflict, and reform. They began to see that Parliament is not just about laws—it reflects the country's political journey.

### Keywords

House of Commons, House of Lords, Parliamentary Sovereignty, Parliament Acts, Constitutional Conventions, Executive Accountability, British Constitution

# Discussion

## 6.1.1 Introduction

The British Parliament is known as the mother of modern legislatures. Its example has shaped the development of parliamentary systems in many countries around the world. It stands today as one of the oldest and most respected law-making bodies. The growth of Parliament was not quick or planned. It took many years of struggle, changes, and demands from the people. Starting with the year 1215, when King John signed the Magna Carta, Parliament slowly pushed for more control over money, laws, and administration. A major change came in 1688, when Parliament became stronger than the monarchy. Later, the Reform Act of 1832 opened the way for ordinary people to have a say in choosing their leaders. From then until 1928, new laws were passed to give the right to vote to more men and women. At first, only a few had this right, but by 1928, almost every adult aged twenty-one could vote. Today, the age is eighteen. These steps made Parliament truly democratic and gave people a real voice in government.

## 6.1.2 Sovereignty of Parliament

When we look at how the British Parliament grew, one thing becomes clear—it slowly became stronger than the king and took charge of running the country. By the eighteenth century, Parliament had become the main centre of power. Three key moments in history show this change. The first was in 1648, when Parliament decided to put King Charles I on trial. He was found guilty and executed in 1649. After that, Parliament passed a law to end the monarchy and declared that England would be a Commonwealth, meaning it would be run without a king. Some years later, in 1660, Parliament agreed to bring back the monarchy by placing Charles II on the throne,

but only if he worked alongside Parliament. These actions—removing a king, ending the monarchy, starting a republic, and then bringing back a king under conditions—show that Parliament had taken charge. It could now decide the direction of the country and was clearly the most powerful body in the land.

The second big step in the rise of Parliament's power came with the Glorious Revolution in 1688. King James II was removed because he would not work with Parliament. It was Parliament that then invited William and Mary to take the throne. In 1701, Parliament passed the Act of Settlement. This law decided who would be the next ruler and made it clear that the king or queen had to follow certain rules set by Parliament. It showed that the monarch could no longer rule freely without the support of Parliament. The third important moment came in 1785 when William Pitt the Younger became Prime Minister. From then on, the king could no longer pick or remove ministers on his own. The system of Cabinet government took shape, where ministers had to be chosen based on support in Parliament. This change meant that real power had moved into the hands of elected leaders, and Parliament became the centre of decision-making in Britain.

These three turning points in history show that the British Parliament holds complete power over the country's affairs. It controls how money is raised and spent, how laws are made, and how the government works. It can change or cancel any agreement, law, or document. It has the power to remove any government official from office and even cancel the effect of a court's decision. Parliament can change the Constitution in any way it wants. It can create any tax, end long-standing customs, and change basic



legal rules. Well-known thinkers have pointed this out clearly. Sir Edward Coke said Parliament's power is so great that no person or issue can limit it. Blackstone believed that Parliament has full authority to make, approve, and explain all kinds of laws. A.R. Marriot called it the strongest and most unusual institution in the world, with unmatched power and a long history. De Tocqueville noted that it can act both as a law-making body and as one that rewrites the Constitution. De Lolme said Parliament can do anything except change a man into a woman or a woman into a man. Laski, with a touch of humour, replied that even this could be done—though Parliament would first have to accept that it had lost its senses.

### 6.1.3 Dicey's Interpretation

Dicey clearly explained what the idea of parliamentary sovereignty means. He believed it is the most important feature of Britain's political system. In simple terms, it means that Parliament has the full right to make any law and cancel any law. No person or organisation has the legal power to challenge or ignore what Parliament decides. Dicey pointed out a few main ideas to support this. *First*, Parliament can pass any kind of law it chooses. *Second*, it can cancel any law it has made before. *Third*, no court or authority in England can reject a law made by Parliament. *Fourth*, there is no real difference between important constitutional laws and regular laws—Parliament treats them the same. And *finally*, the power of Parliament is not limited to Britain alone; it covers all parts of the country ruled by the Crown.

To put it simply, the British Parliament can make any law it wants. Once a law is passed by Parliament, it is considered valid and must be followed. Courts in Britain do not have the power to say that a law made by Parliament goes against the Constitution. If a new law changes something in the Constitution, then the Constitution is seen

as changed in that area. No one can claim that a law passed by Parliament goes beyond its powers. Even if it changes past traditions or arrangements, it still remains law. Courts must apply whatever Parliament has decided. The only way to cancel such a law is to pass a new law through Parliament. Unlike in the United States, where courts can strike down laws, Britain follows the principle that whatever Parliament says is final until it decides otherwise. Dicey gave clear examples to show this. The Act of Settlement of 1701 changed who could become king or queen and blocked certain people from the throne. The Septennial Act of 1716 allowed Parliament to stay in power for seven years instead of three, which meant it gave itself more time in office. In 1936, Parliament passed the Abdication Act and made it clear that the King could not marry without its approval. Through the Indemnity Acts, Parliament even made certain actions legal that were illegal when they happened. These examples show how strong Parliament's power is. It can make, change, or cancel any law without needing approval from any other body.

### 6.1.4 The House of Commons (HOC)

The Parliament of the UK is *bicameral* in nature. That means it has two houses, namely the *House of Commons* and the *House of Lords*. The House of Commons has been called the most remarkable public body in the world. Its long past, rich traditions, active spirit, and strong link to the life of the British people make it truly special. It has served as a model for many other parliaments across the globe. Of the two Houses in the British Parliament, the House of Commons is clearly the more powerful one. As Spencer Walpole pointed out, when a Minister turns to Parliament for support, it is really the Commons he turns to. When the Queen dissolves Parliament, it is the Commons that is dissolved. In fact, a new Parliament simply means a new House of

Commons. That is why we begin our study of the British Parliament with this House. Once we understand how the Commons works, it becomes easier to understand the role and position of the second chamber—the House of Lords.

#### 6.1.4.1 Organisation

The House of Commons has always been chosen by the people. In the early days, it mostly included representatives of landowners, traders, and members of local guilds. This setup stayed more or less the same until a little over a hundred years ago. Then, during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, voting rights were gradually given to more and more people. Slowly, the House of Commons turned into a truly people's chamber. The number of voters grew, and they came from all parts of society. Instead of speaking for certain jobs or groups, members of Parliament began to represent people from different parts of the country. The number of members in the House of Commons is adjusted after every ten-year census. In 1974, the number went up from 630 to 635, and in 1983 it became 650. Until the 1992 elections, the House had 650 members—523 from England, 38 from Wales, 72 from Scotland, and 17 from Northern Ireland. In the April 1992 elections, the number increased to 651. It rose to 659 members in the 1997 and 2001 elections, but came down to 645 in the 2005 elections. Members are elected from single-member constituencies, each based on a specific area. On average, about 75,000 people vote in each constituency. These areas are based on counties or boroughs and do not cross their boundaries. Each one has its own name, such as Bradford Borough or Portsmouth Central Division. The boundaries are checked and adjusted before every general election, so the number of constituencies always matches the number of seats in the House.

All citizens aged eighteen and above can vote, unless they are disqualified. This includes people who are not mentally fit, those serving jail sentences, bankrupt individuals, or non-citizens. Anyone who is a British citizen and has reached the age of twenty-one can stand for election, unless barred by law. Those who cannot contest include priests from certain churches, members of the nobility in England, Scotland, and Wales, people with government contracts, and those holding official posts under the Crown. In simple terms, every adult British citizen can vote at eighteen and stand for election at twenty-one, as long as they are not legally disqualified. They are also free to contest from any part of the country. Election campaigns in the UK are short and to the point. They usually last about two weeks. After the royal announcement to form a new Parliament, candidates file their nominations on the eighth day. Voting is held across the country on the same day—nine days after nominations close—and is completed in one day. There are also clear rules about how much money a candidate can spend. For example, in county areas, the spending limit used to be £450 plus two pence per voter. In borough areas, it was one and a half pence per voter. These limits can change, but all spending must go through an approved election agent. After the election, candidates must submit a full account of their expenses, properly signed and verified.

#### 6.1.4.2 Tenure of the House

The House of Commons is elected for a term of five years, unless the King decides to dissolve it earlier. In special situations like war or national crisis, its term can be extended. For example, the Parliament elected in 1910 continued until 1916, and the one chosen in 1935 lasted until 1945. There is an old rule from 1623 that says a member of the House of Commons cannot simply resign. This is based on the belief that serving in Parliament is a duty, not a

personal choice. Still, there is a traditional way for a member to step down. The member applies for a small government position that has no real work attached to it. The two most commonly used for this purpose are the *Steward of the Chiltern Hundreds* and the *Steward of the Manor of Northstead*. Once a member is given one of these posts, they are no longer allowed to sit in Parliament, because it is considered a paid job under the Crown. This automatically creates a vacancy. After that, the member gives up the post as well. Though the whole process may seem like a formality, it is the accepted way for someone to leave the House of Commons.

#### 6.1.4.3 Committees in the House of Commons

Democracy has changed the way laws are made. In a non-democratic country, laws are simply the orders of those in power, made without asking the people. But in a democracy, laws are meant to reflect what the people want. These laws are passed by their elected representatives in Parliament. As governments began to take more responsibility for public welfare, the number of laws increased. To manage this growing work and make things more efficient, Parliaments began using committees. These smaller groups help handle the early stages of law-making and save time for the full House. This system is now common across the world, and the British House of Commons also follows it. In the Commons, there are five main types of committees: (i) the *Committee of the Whole House*, (ii) *Select Committees on public bills*, (iii) *Sessional Committees on public bills*, (iv) *Standing Committees on public bills*, and (v) *Committees on private bills*.

In the British Parliament, the committee system works in a straightforward way. Committees are not small expert groups with full powers to accept or reject laws on their own. Any bill sent to a committee must

still return to the full House of Commons for final approval. Parliament keeps full control over law-making and does not hand over this power to committees. These committees mainly help with the details and make the process smoother, but they don't take big decisions on their own. Members of these committees keep changing, and the committees themselves do not have a fixed nature or permanent role. The standing committees do not hold public hearings or collect outside information. Because of this, committees do not take away any power from the full House of Commons. They simply work under its guidance and help it function more smoothly.

#### 6.1.4.4 Powers and Functions of the House of Commons

The House of Commons is the most powerful part of the British Government. It plays the main role in making laws, handling public money, and keeping an eye on how the government works. Since 1911, it has had the final say in passing laws, even though the House of Lords still takes part in the process. In practice, when people talk about Parliament, they usually mean the House of Commons. There's a saying that when a Minister turns to Parliament, he turns to the Commons—and when the Queen dissolves Parliament, she dissolves the Commons. This shows how central and important the Commons has become. For most people, Parliament and the House of Commons are seen as the same thing because the real power lies there.

The main functions and powers of the House of Commons may be explained as follows:

##### 1. Legislative Functions

The United Kingdom has a single system of government, with one law-making body, one executive, and one set of courts for the entire country. In this setup, the House of

Commons, which represents the people, has strong powers to make laws. As we've already seen, the idea of parliamentary sovereignty means that there is no law the Commons cannot pass. In earlier times, it shared this law-making power equally with the House of Lords. But the Parliament Acts of 1911 and 1949 reduced the Lords' role and made the Commons clearly more powerful. Today, the final decision on nearly every new law rests with the House of Commons. Even though laws are formally passed by the King, the Lords, and the Commons together, the real power lies with the Commons. The Lords can only delay non-money bills for one year, and the King no longer refuses approval. This means that the Commons not only starts the process of law-making but also decides how it ends. Its role in shaping laws is now central and commanding.

## 2. *Financial Powers*

The House of Commons has strong control over the country's money. This power played a big role in helping it become the leading part of the British Parliament. As per the 1911 Act, all money-related bills must start in the House of Commons. The House of Lords cannot make changes to these bills and can only delay them for up to one month. If the Lords do not pass the bill within that time, the Commons sends it to the King, and once he agrees, it becomes law. So, when it comes to money matters, the House of Commons has full control. The Commons also approves the government's budget. Members discuss how money should be spent and where it should come from. The House of Lords has no power to reject or change the budget. In simple terms, the government cannot raise taxes or spend money unless the House of Commons agrees. Nothing can move forward financially without its final approval.

## 3. *Control over the Executive*

A major role of the House of Commons is to keep the government in check. Since

Britain follows a parliamentary system, the government stays in power only if it has the support of the elected members in the Commons. The Prime Minister and other ministers must step down if they lose the confidence of the House. This means the Commons has a clear duty to watch over what the government does and speak up if there are serious disagreements. It does this in two simple ways: by asking questions and getting information about what the government is doing, and by openly criticising or challenging decisions when needed. This helps ensure that those in power stay answerable to the people. Members of the House of Commons can question government ministers directly, and the ministers must respond. For this, one hour is set aside at the start of each sitting on four days a week. This is called "Question Hour." The purpose is to bring the actions of the government out into the open. Today, thousands of questions are asked in each session, and this part of the day is seen as one of the most active and important. It helps keep the daily work of the government in check. One British writer said there's no better way to stop poor governance or to shine a light on what the government is doing—or not doing—than by asking questions. Since ministers know they can be questioned at any time, they stay alert, try to do their work properly, and be ready to explain their decisions. As Lowell pointed out, this keeps the government sharp and helps avoid the growth of an uncaring or careless system—something Britain has mostly managed to avoid.

The House of Commons doesn't just make laws—it also works as a space for open debate. One of the key jobs of the opposition is to question and challenge what the government is doing. A major chance to do this comes when the House discusses the reply to the King's (or Queen's) Speech. During this debate, the opposition can point out problems in the government's plans and

force ministers to defend their actions and explain their policies. Sometimes, a member may bring a motion of censure, usually aimed at a specific minister. But since ministers are part of a team, criticising one is seen as criticising the whole government. In more serious cases, the House can also be asked to vote on a motion of no confidence in the government. This is a strong step but is allowed when needed. Through these debates and motions, the House of Commons keeps a close watch on the executive. This kind of control is very important today because government departments now affect almost every part of people's lives. As Finer once said, these departments are like big machines that need outside pressure to keep working properly—and the Commons plays that role.

### 6.1.5 The House of Lords

The House of Lords is the oldest second chamber in the world. It has existed in some form for over a thousand years. It started from the Great Council, which followed the earlier Saxon Witan—an early group of advisers to the king. In 1295, King Edward I brought together his Model Parliament, where people from different groups sat together in one large meeting. Later, they split into three groups—nobles, clergy, and commons. Over time, the higher clergy began working closely with the nobles, and they eventually formed one body. This group came to be known as the House of Lords.

#### 6.1.5.1 Composition of the House of Lords

The House of Lords doesn't have a fixed number of members. In the past, its members were grouped into seven types. These included:

1. *Princes from the royal family,*
2. *Hereditary peers who inherited their titles,*

3. *Peers chosen to represent Scotland,*
4. *Peers chosen to represent Ireland,*
5. *Senior judges known as Lords of Appeal,*
6. *Religious leaders called Lords Spiritual, and*
7. *Life peers who were given titles for their service and did not pass them on to their children.*

#### 6.1.5.2 The Latest Composition

Based on news reports, members of the House of Lords can be grouped into four types. *First*, there are about 746 peers, and most of them—around 616—have been appointed for life. *Second*, 92 are hereditary peers who have their seats through family titles. *Third*, 26 are bishops and archbishops from the Church, and *lastly*, there are 12 senior judges known as Law Lords. Until the year 2000, life peers were usually appointed during the Queen's New Year or Birthday Honours. But now, with the creation of the House of Lords Appointment Commission, such appointments can happen at different times during the year. It's also interesting to note that, since 1971, Lords who attend sessions have received a small daily allowance—£8.82 back then. The Law Lords, however, received a regular salary because of their judicial duties.

#### 6.1.5.3 Lord Chancellor

The Lord Chancellor is the presiding officer of the House of Lords. He sat on a large seat called the *woolsack* or *diwan* and was also part of the Cabinet. The Queen appointed him on the advice of the Prime Minister, and he stayed in the role as long as the Prime Minister allowed. But his powers in the House were quite limited. Unlike the Speaker in the House of Commons, he couldn't decide who would speak or maintain order during

debates. If more than one member stood up to speak, the House itself decided who could go ahead. He didn't have the usual authority to manage discipline either. Members didn't even address him directly—they spoke to the House using the words *My Lords*. The Lord Chancellor also didn't have a casting vote, though he could speak and vote like any other member. Overall, his job was more formal than functional. It's worth noting that this position no longer exists. From July 4, 2006, the role of *Lord Chancellor* was removed through a legal change, and the *Lord Chief Justice* took over the responsibilities.

#### ***Functions of the Lord Chancellor (now Lord Chief Justice)***

The Lord Chancellor is also the Chairman of the Judicial Committee and the legal adviser to the Crown. As such, he enjoys the following powers:

- i. The judges of the High Courts are appointed by the Crown on his recommendation.
- ii. He appoints the judges of the County Courts and also has the responsibility for the appointment of Justices of the Peace.
- iii. He can remove the judges of the County Courts and Justices of the Peace.
- iv. He holds the great seal of the Realm which he affixes on behalf of the Crown on all agreements, declarations and treaties.
- v. He presides over the House when it sits as the highest Court of Appeal.
- vi. He is the Chairman of the Council.
- vii. He controls and supervises the organisation of the judiciary under the Act of 1925.

viii. He presides over the joint session of the Parliament in the House of Lords when the ruling monarch presents his/her address.

#### **6.1.5.4 Committee System**

The House of Lords uses a committee system that works in much the same way as the one in the House of Commons. Along with the full House sitting as a committee called the *Committee of the Whole House*, there is regular use of *Select* and *Sessional Committees*. At the start of each session, a *Standing Committee* is formed to review and revise the wording of bills. Every bill that passes through the Committee of the Whole is usually sent to this committee, unless the House decides otherwise. Among the sessional committees, some of the most important are the *Committee of Privileges*, which deals with questions of members' rights; the *Appeal Committee*, which handles legal appeals; the *Standing Orders Committee*, which looks at procedure; and the *Committee of Selection*, which helps decide who serves on other committees.

#### **6.1.5.5 Powers and Functions of the House of Lords**

Before the Parliament Act of 1911, the House of Lords held equal powers with the House of Commons. Both had the same say in making laws. A bill could begin in either House, and it had to be approved by both in the exact same form before becoming law. When it came to financial matters, there was a long-standing understanding that money bills would start in the Commons, but the Lords still had the right to reject or suggest changes. The House of Lords also had an important role in legal matters. It acted as the highest court of appeal for the whole United Kingdom. It could even try its own members if they didn't want to go through regular courts. It also had the authority to handle impeachment cases brought by the

Commons against top government officials. But today, the Lords no longer exercise these powers, as both trials of peers and impeachments have faded out of use.

### 6.1.6 Conclusion

The British parliamentary system is one of the oldest working examples of democracy. Over many centuries, it has grown from a council of nobles advising the king to a fully elected and representative system. Today, Parliament is the highest authority in the country. The House of Commons, made up of elected members, holds real power. It makes laws, manages the country's money, and keeps the government in check.

With reforms like the Parliament Acts of 1911 and 1949, the Commons became more powerful than the House of Lords. While the Lords once had equal authority, their main job now is to review and suggest changes to laws. The British system is also known for its strong traditions—such as the monarch's ceremonial role, the Speaker's leadership, and the structured way debates are held. Committees, the presence of an active opposition, and the rule that ministers must answer to Parliament all help the system work well. Even without a single written constitution, the system has stayed strong and flexible. It continues to guide other democracies by showing how to balance old traditions with the need for change.

## Recap

- ◆ The British Parliament is made up of the House of Commons, the House of Lords, and the Monarch.
- ◆ The House of Commons holds real power in legislation, finance, and government control.
- ◆ The House of Lords now plays a revising and reviewing role in law-making.
- ◆ Parliament Acts of 1911 and 1949 reduced the powers of the Lords significantly.
- ◆ The British parliamentary system evolved over centuries from royal councils to representative democracy.
- ◆ The Parliament is sovereign and can make or unmake any law.
- ◆ The Prime Minister and Council of Ministers are accountable to the Commons.
- ◆ Money bills must start in the House of Commons and cannot be delayed by the Lords beyond one month.
- ◆ The British Parliament follows strong traditions, including ceremonial roles and structured debates.
- ◆ The committee system helps in managing the detailed work of legislation efficiently.

## Objective Questions

1. Which House in the UK Parliament holds more power today?
2. In which year was the first Parliament Act passed?
3. What is the minimum age to vote in UK elections?
4. What is the name of the symbolic seat of the Lord Chancellor?
5. Which House is responsible for initiating money bills?
6. Which Act allowed Parliament to extend its own term?
7. How long is the normal term of the House of Commons?
8. Who presides over the House of Lords?
9. What term describes the highest law-making authority in Britain?
10. Which document in 1215 limited the king's power?

## Answers

1. Commons
2. 1911
3. Eighteen
4. Woolsack
5. Commons
6. Septennial
7. Five
8. Lord Chancellor
9. Sovereignty
10. Magna Carta

## Assignments

1. Trace the historical development of the British Parliament from the Magna Carta to the Parliament Act of 1949.
2. Explain the present structure and functioning of the House of Commons.
3. Discuss the powers and limitations of the House of Lords in the current parliamentary setup.
4. Examine the role of the opposition and the committee system in the British Parliament.
5. Evaluate the relevance of the British parliamentary system as a model for democratic governance in other countries.

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## Presidential system in USA

# UNIT

### Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ understand the powers and responsibilities of the American President
- ◆ analyse the structure and functioning of the Presidential Cabinet system
- ◆ evaluate the role of the President in lawmaking, budgeting, and national leadership
- ◆ explore the unique features and evolution of the US Presidential system

### Prerequisites

During a lively classroom session, a group of political science students who had already studied democracy, federalism, and separation of powers began discussing how different countries are governed. One student asked, “If India has a Prime Minister running the government, who does that in the United States?” Their teacher explained that, in the US, the President is both the head of the state and the government—a single powerful figure who leads the country. This sparked the students’ curiosity. They started reading about leaders like Abraham Lincoln, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Barack Obama, and were surprised to learn how these Presidents made important decisions, spoke directly to the public, and responded to national crises without being part of the legislature. The students realised that the US President is far more than a symbolic figure. This unit takes them deeper into understanding how the American Presidential system actually works and how it differs from systems like India’s.

### Keywords

Executive Orders, Veto Power, Cabinet System, Separation of Powers, Emergency Powers, Impeachment



# Discussion

## 6.2.1 Introduction

In the United States, the Constitution gives almost all executive powers to one person—the President. His powers are so wide and strong that many have called him the most powerful leader in the world. The American President works under a system known as the presidential form of government. This is different from the parliamentary system found in many other countries. For example, in India, the President is more of a formal head of state and must follow the advice of the Council of Ministers, which is responsible to the Parliament. But in the U.S., the President and his Cabinet are not answerable to the legislature. The President leads the executive branch fully and is not required to act on the advice of others. He chooses his own Cabinet, which mainly serves as a group of personal advisers. This team is sometimes called the President's Family because of how closely they work with him. In this system, the President clearly takes the lead. Writers like Ogg and Henry have described him as holding more power than any other leader in a democracy.

## 6.2.2 Reasons for Presidential Supremacy

There are many reasons why the President of the United States holds such a strong and central position. To begin with, the Constitution clearly states that all executive powers belong to him. There's no confusion about this. Also, while the President is officially elected through the Electoral College, people across the country directly vote for him, which gives him a deep connection with the public and strong support. In many countries, presidents are mostly symbolic heads, while real power lies with the Prime Minister. But in the United States, the President is both the head of the

state and the government. He leads the nation, takes important decisions, and represents the country both at home and abroad. His role is full of responsibility and authority. As Laski pointed out, there is no other position in the world that matches his exactly. He is not just like a king or just like a prime minister—he is a mix of both, yet something different altogether.

## 6.2.3 Election Procedure

The U.S. Constitution states that the President should be elected indirectly. This is done through a group called the Electoral College. It has the same number of members as the total in both houses of Congress, which adds up to 535. Each state gets a number of electors based on how many members it has in the House of Representatives, plus two more for its two Senators. So, bigger states have more electors, while smaller states have fewer. Every state decides how to choose its electors. In the early years, state legislatures picked them. But today, people in each state vote to choose these electors during the presidential election. After they are chosen, the electors meet in their own states and cast their votes for the President on a fixed date. In 1977, President Jimmy Carter suggested changing this system. He wanted the President to be elected directly by the people, and he proposed removing the Electoral College altogether. But his idea didn't get much support, so the system stayed the same.

In the United States, the process of electing the President follows a fixed schedule. Every leap year, on the Tuesday after the first Monday in November, people vote to choose electors for their state. These electors then gather in their state capitals on the first Monday after the second Wednesday in December to cast their votes for President.

After voting, each state sends the results to the Senate. On January 6, both houses of Congress come together to count the votes. The candidate who gets more than half of the total votes is declared the winner. This means the person must get a full majority, not just more votes than the others. The new President takes office on January 20. If no one gets the needed majority, the decision moves to the House of Representatives. The House then picks the President from the top three candidates. In this vote, every state gets one vote, no matter its size. If the House still can't decide by March 4, the Vice President takes over as President. This whole process is clearly laid out in the Constitution. As Alexander Hamilton once said, this system helps make sure the office goes to someone truly capable and qualified to lead the country.

#### 6.2.4 Direct Election in Practice

The U.S. Constitution sets up an indirect way to elect the President. But over the years, the process has started to feel more direct. This change happened mainly because political parties in America became stronger and more organised. Long before the election, the main parties hold large *National Conventions* where they choose their candidates for President. According to the Constitution, the election was meant to happen in three steps: *picking the electors*, the *electors voting*, and then *counting the votes in Congress*. But with time, two more steps became part of the process—the *nomination of candidates* and the *public voting for electors*. These extra steps brought people closer to the heart of the election. So, while the system is still called indirect, in reality, the people play a direct and active role in choosing the President. A brief explanation of these steps will portray a clear picture of the presidential election in the USA.

##### 6.2.4.1 Presidential Nomination

The U.S. Constitution never planned for political parties to nominate presidential candidates, so it doesn't say anything about how this should be done. Still, over time, parties began doing it on their own. Before the official party conventions are held, there is a lot of quiet preparation. Each party's national committee decides when and where to hold its convention and makes all the necessary plans. These announcements usually come out early in the year—around January or February—and the conventions are held during the summer. In the time between the announcement and the convention, each state chooses people called delegates, along with backup members known as alternates, in case someone can't attend. When the time comes, the main parties—Democrats and Republicans—bring together large crowds of delegates from across the country. These conventions are huge and busy. Smaller parties like the socialist or prohibition parties also hold conventions, but theirs are much smaller and simpler.

##### 6.2.4.2 The Nomination of Electors

After the party conventions, the next step is to choose the electors who will vote for the President. Each state goes through this step in its own way, based on local laws or party rules. These electors are usually trusted party members—people who have worked hard for the party or are known leaders. Each political party in a state prepares its own list of electors, one for each possible vote the state holds in the Electoral College. These names are then put forward so that voters can choose between them during the main election. Though voters see the names of presidential candidates on the ballot, they are actually voting for the electors pledged to support those candidates.

##### 6.2.4.3 Election of the Electors

The presidential campaign in the United States is full of noise, passion, and public



attention. But when it comes to the actual voting for electors, the process is much quieter. Each state decides its own polling hours. Any citizen who is eighteen or older, unless legally disqualified, has the right to vote. While people technically vote for electors, they are really choosing which presidential candidate they want. The electors are just the ones who will vote on the people's behalf. Every state gets a number of electors equal to its total members in the Senate and the House of Representatives. Voters don't choose electors one by one—they vote for a group tied to a political party. The party that gets the most votes in a state wins all the electors from that state. There are 535 electors in total. To win the presidency, a candidate must get at least 269 electoral votes. One problem with this system is that someone can become President by winning the electoral votes, even if they don't get the highest number of votes from the people across the country.

#### **6.2.4.4 Election of the President by the Electors**

Even though the electors' vote doesn't usually bring any surprises, the step is still followed as part of the process. By law, all the presidential electors meet in their state capitals on the second Wednesday of December. On that day, they cast their official votes for both the President and the Vice President. It's a routine step now, but it remains an important part of the election process.

#### **6.2.4.5 Transmitting and Counting of Votes**

After the electors cast their votes, the ballots are counted, and the results are written down on official papers. These are sealed and sent to Washington, where they are opened in front of members of Congress. The President of the Senate then counts the votes and announces who has won. By this

time, the result is usually already known. If no candidate gets the required number of votes, the decision is made by the House of Representatives. The House picks the President from the top three candidates, and each state gets one vote, no matter how large or small it is. This method has been used three times in history. If there's no clear winner for Vice President, the Senate makes the choice. The Senators vote as individuals, and they choose between the two candidates with the highest votes. This has happened only once so far. Commenting on the electoral system, James MacGregor says, "*It is unfair, inaccurate, uncertain and undemocratic.*"

#### ***The Defects of the System***

The U.S. presidential election system has some clear drawbacks. If a candidate loses a state, even by just a few votes, they get nothing from that state—no electoral votes at all. This means the winning candidate's total can look much bigger than the actual number of people who voted for them. Another issue is that electors are not always legally required to vote for the candidate who won in their state, even though people expect them to. Also, if no candidate gets a clear majority of electoral votes, the decision goes to the House of Representatives. There, each state gets only one vote, no matter how large or small its population is. This can lead to results that don't fully reflect the will of the people.

#### **6.2.5 Inauguration of the New President**

The new President of the United States takes office on January 20. This date was set after the 20th Amendment was passed in 1933. Before that, the President used to be sworn in on March 4, which meant waiting almost four months after the election. People felt this delay was too long, especially since the outgoing President still had full powers during that time and could make big decisions

if something urgent happened. Now, with a shorter wait, the new President can step in sooner. On the day of the swearing-in, the President takes the oath of office, which is given by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court.

### 6.2.6 Qualifications

The Constitution provides that a candidate for the Presidency must fulfil the following conditions:

- ◆ He must be a natural born citizen of the United States.
- ◆ He must not be less than thirty-five years of age.
- ◆ He must have lived in the USA for not less than fourteen years.

### 6.2.7 Emoluments

When the office of the U.S. President was first set up, the yearly pay was \$25,000. Over time, this amount has been increased. Today, the President gets a yearly salary of \$400,000, which is taxable. In addition, there's a yearly travel allowance of \$10,000 that is tax-free. Once the President takes office, this pay cannot be reduced during the term. Along with the salary, the President also gets several other benefits. He lives in the White House, has a full team of staff, office space, and access to a private train car, an airplane, a yacht, and a country home at Camp David. After retirement, the President continues to receive a good pension and other lifelong benefits.

### 6.2.8 Tenure and Re-eligibility

The President of the United States is elected for a term of four years. In the early days, there was no rule about how many times a person could be re-elected. George Washington, the first President, was elected twice but chose not to run a third time. His example became a tradition, and

for many years, no President stayed in office for more than two terms. This unwritten rule was followed until the time of Franklin D. Roosevelt, who was elected four times—twice during World War II, in 1940 and 1944. To make sure no President stayed in power for too long, a new rule was added through the 22nd Amendment in 1951 and ratified in 1952. It says that no one can be President for more than ten years. Normally, this means two terms of four years each. But if a Vice-President becomes President and serves less than two years of the previous term, they can still be elected twice. If they serve more than two years, they can only run once more. This rule is different from what we see in India, where a President can be re-elected any number of times, though in practice, no one has gone beyond two terms.

### 6.2.9 The Succession

The original U.S. Constitution didn't clearly say what should happen if both the President and the Vice-President die, resign, or are removed from office. To fill this gap, a law passed in 1947 laid out the order in which others would take over. First in line after the Vice-President is the Speaker of the House, followed by the President Pro Tempore of the Senate, then the Secretary of State, and after that, the rest of the Cabinet in a set order. Later, the 25th Amendment was added in 1967 to deal with situations where the President is still in office but unable to do his job. It says that the President can write a letter saying he cannot carry out his duties, and the Vice-President will take over until he recovers. The Vice-President can also step in if he and most Cabinet members agree that the President is not able to lead and send a message to Congress to make it official.

### 6.2.10 Removal of the President

The President of the United States can be removed from office before the term ends

through a process called impeachment. It starts in the House of Representatives, which brings formal charges if the President is accused of serious wrongdoing. If the House agrees, the case is sent to the Senate. There, the Senate holds a trial, and the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court leads the session. To remove the President, two-thirds of the Senators present must vote in favour. If the President is found guilty, they are removed from office and may also be banned from holding any future government position. That is the maximum punishment under impeachment. Impeachment is not a simple or common process. In U.S. history, it has rarely been used. In 1868, President Andrew Johnson was impeached, but the Senate didn't reach the required votes to remove him. President Richard Nixon resigned in 1974 before the process was completed. In 1998, President Bill Clinton was impeached by the House on charges of lying under oath and obstructing justice. But the Senate did not find him guilty, so he stayed in office.

### 6.2.11 Powers of the President

People often say that no one in a democracy has held as much power as the President of the United States. Lord Bryce called it “the greatest office in the world,” and Hawkins described the President as the most powerful leader in the world. Unlike the King or Queen of England or the President of India—who have mostly formal roles—the U.S. President holds real authority and takes key decisions. While the Constitution originally gave the President limited powers as the head of the executive branch, the role has grown much stronger over time. The people who wrote the Constitution could not have imagined how powerful this office would become. Today, the President is not just a leader who enforces laws—he also plays a big role in shaping them.

His powers come from many different sources, which can be briefly explained below:

1. *Constitution:* The Constitution itself gives the President certain powers and responsibilities. These include key roles in running the government, handling foreign affairs, and leading the military.
2. *Decisions of the Supreme Court:* The Supreme Court has helped expand the President's authority in areas where the Constitution is not clear. For example, while the Constitution explains how federal officials are appointed, it doesn't say how they can be removed. The Court gave this power to the President. It also allowed the President to end a war, even though the Constitution only gives Congress the power to declare one.
3. *Statutes of Congress:* The President also gains powers through laws passed by Congress. These laws often give a general framework, and the President fills in the details through orders and decisions. Sometimes, Congress gives the President special authority to act more freely. For instance, in 1933, Congress allowed the President to change the gold value of the dollar to help deal with the economic crisis.
4. *Convention and Usage:* Over time, customs and political habits have also made the President more powerful. For example, a practice known as Senatorial Courtesy gives the President more say in appointments. Since the President is also the leader of his party, he plays an important role in shaping its policies. He can influence laws by using tools like the threat of a veto or speaking directly to the people through radio or television. This has made him an important figure in the law-making process.

5. *Emergency*: Finally, the President's powers grow significantly during emergencies. In times of war or national crisis, like the two World Wars, the President is given wide powers to take fast and strong action. These moments show just how central the President becomes in leading the country during difficult times.

### 6.2.12 Powers of the President

The President of America enjoys extensive executive, legislative, financial, and judicial powers which may be discussed as follows:

#### 6.2.12.1 Executive Powers

The President's most important role is being the head of the executive branch. As Ogg and Ray put it, no matter what else he does—whether leading his party, shaping laws, or speaking for the country—the President is, above all, the one who runs the government. He carries out this responsibility in a number of ways, which are described below:

##### 1. *As Chief Administrator*

The President is the head of the entire federal administration, and all government actions are carried out in his name. He makes sure that all federal laws and international agreements are followed across the country. It's also his job to see that court decisions are respected and that the Constitution and national laws are properly enforced. The President is responsible for protecting the country's laws, its Constitution, and its property—and he can even use the armed forces when necessary. To carry out these duties, he is supported by a huge team of government employees who work in various departments, offices, and agencies. As their leader, the President must guide and manage this large system. He also ensures that law and order are maintained across the nation.

The Constitution gives him the duty to make sure each state has a republican form of government and is protected from foreign attacks or serious unrest. Normally, the President helps a state facing internal trouble only if the state legislature or Governor asks. But if the issue threatens federal laws, government property, or interstate trade, he can act on his own. For instance, in 1957, President Eisenhower sent troops to Arkansas to enforce a court order on school desegregation. In 1962, President Kennedy took similar action in Mississippi. Later, President George W. Bush sent troops to Iraq in search of hidden weapons and oversaw the capture of Saddam Hussein.

##### 2. *As Commander-in-Chief*

The President of the United States is in charge of the country's armed forces. This role comes with the big responsibility of keeping the nation safe. He appoints senior military leaders with the Senate's approval and can also remove them. While Congress has the official power to declare war, in practice, the President can bring the country into military conflict through his decisions. For example, President Truman sent troops to Korea without Congress's approval. President Wilson sent American soldiers to Russia in 1918, even though the two countries were not officially at war. And during World War II, U.S. ships were already fighting German submarines before Congress formally declared war. In wartime, the President's role becomes even stronger. During World War II, President Roosevelt was given nearly full control to lead the war. In 1964, Congress gave President Johnson wide powers in Vietnam. Later, President Nixon sent troops into Cambodia, and Congress had no choice but to accept it. But tensions grew, and to regain control, Congress passed the War Powers Act in 1973. This law said the President could only send troops if the U.S. or its forces were attacked. It was meant to stop Presidents

from starting wars without Congress. Still, as Commander-in-Chief, the President decides where troops go, where ships are sent, and when forces are called in. President George W. Bush used this power to send troops to Afghanistan to help set up a democratic government. He also ordered the invasion of Iraq to remove Saddam Hussein, claiming he had hidden weapons—something that later turned out to be untrue.

### *3. As Exponent of Foreign Relations*

The President of the United States plays a leading role in how the country deals with the rest of the world. He speaks for the nation in foreign matters and sets the direction of its international policies. With the Senate's approval, he appoints ambassadors and receives foreign representatives in the U.S. The President also negotiates treaties with other countries. However, for a treaty to become official, it must be approved by two-thirds of the Senate. This rule limits the President's freedom when the Senate is controlled by a party that disagrees with him. A clear example is President Wilson, whose efforts to join the League of Nations failed due to opposition in the Senate. Despite this, the President still holds a strong position in shaping foreign policy. Since he leads the discussions and drafts the agreements, the Senate usually sees the final version only after the work is done. At that point, rejecting it becomes politically difficult. Sometimes, the President even reaches out to the public to win support and pressure the Senate to approve. President Carter did this in 1979 when he signed a nuclear arms treaty with Soviet leader Brezhnev. His televised speech to Congress helped get the treaty approved. In more recent times, President George W. Bush moved ahead with military action in Afghanistan and Iraq before fully discussing it with Congress, convincing them afterward.

The President also has another tool called the "executive agreement." These are deals

made directly with leaders of other countries that don't need Senate approval. They are not formal treaties but are still important. One example is the understanding between President Roosevelt and the Emperor of Japan about limiting immigration. Another is the Atlantic Charter, a shared declaration during World War II. In 1969 alone, the President signed over 200 executive agreements. The Vietnam War officially ended with such an agreement, which avoided the Senate altogether. President Bush also worked hard to get the Indo-U.S. Civil Nuclear Deal through Congress, which became a major step in strengthening U.S.-India ties. Sometimes Congress gives the President power to make deals on his own. For example, the Reciprocal Trade Act of 1934 let him sign trade agreements and adjust tariffs without asking the Senate each time. This power was later extended in 1945.

The President also decides whether to formally recognise a foreign government. This decision can shape diplomatic ties. In 1933, President Roosevelt recognised the Soviet Union. On the other hand, the U.S. refused to recognise Communist China until 1972, due to the decisions of earlier Presidents like Truman and Eisenhower. More recently, the U.S. recognised new governments in Afghanistan and Iraq after military actions there. Presidents also use quiet diplomacy when needed. During World War II, President Roosevelt had secret meetings with foreign leaders, including the British Prime Minister. Some of the outcomes were made public, while others were kept secret. This kind of quiet diplomacy continues today, such as in U.S.-Pakistan relations, especially in efforts to counter terrorism. All these examples show how much control the President has over foreign relations. Historian Ferguson summed it up well by saying that, just as the President leads in military matters, he also leads in foreign policy. From George Washington's early call for neutrality to

the Monroe Doctrine, and from Wilson and Roosevelt guiding the country through world wars to recent Presidents managing modern conflicts and alliances, the President has always shaped the way America connects with the world. Even the Supreme Court has said that these powers are “delicate, complete, and belong solely to the President.”

#### 4. Appointments

The President of the United States has the power to appoint a large number of people to federal jobs. This authority gives him a strong hold over the administration because he can place trusted individuals in important roles who will carry out his policies. These federal jobs fall into two groups: ‘Superior Services’ and ‘Inferior Services’. The President appoints people to the Superior Services with the Senate’s approval, while he can appoint those in the Inferior Services on his own, following civil service rules. There are over 100,000 officers in the superior category, and most of them serve for four years, which matches the President’s term in office. In many cases, the Senate simply agrees to the President’s choices—especially for Cabinet members, ambassadors, and military leaders. But in some cases, the Senate may reject a nomination. For example, the Senate turned down President Coolidge’s choice for Attorney General in 1925 and rejected President George H.W. Bush’s nominee for Defence Secretary in 1989. However, when the President’s party holds a majority in the Senate, getting approvals becomes easier. President Barack Obama, for instance, had no trouble getting his Cabinet approved since the Senate was dominated by his own party.

Obama’s key appointments included Hillary Clinton as Secretary of State, Tim Geithner as Treasury Secretary, and Robert Gates as Defence Secretary. He also brought in Sanjay Gupta as Surgeon General and Gary Locke as Commerce Secretary. Later, two

Indian Americans were also given important posts: Aneesh Chopra became the country’s first Chief Technology Officer, and Rajiv Shah was appointed to a senior role in the Agriculture Department. There is also a tradition called ‘Senatorial Courtesy’. When a local appointment is made, the Senate usually approves it if the senator from that state, who belongs to the President’s party, supports the choice. The President can also make temporary appointments when the Senate is not in session. These appointments last until the Senate meets again. Even if the Senate objects later, the appointment remains valid until the session ends. Sometimes, the President even reappoints the same person after the session, regardless of the earlier rejection.

#### 5. Power of Removal

The U.S. Constitution says that civil officers can be removed from office if they are found guilty of serious offences like treason, bribery, or other major crimes. But it doesn’t explain how such officers can be removed for being unfit for the job or when it’s in the public interest. This has raised questions—if the Senate’s approval is needed to appoint someone, shouldn’t it also be needed to remove them? In 1867, Congress passed the *Tenure of Office Act* to stop President Andrew Johnson from removing certain officials without Senate approval. The law said these officials had to stay in office until their replacements were confirmed by the Senate. This law was later repealed and is now seen as unconstitutional. In 1876, Congress tried again—this time saying that some postmasters could only be removed with the Senate’s permission. President Woodrow Wilson challenged this by removing a postmaster without consulting the Senate. The case went to the Supreme Court, which supported the President’s action. Since then, the President alone has had the power to remove such officials. However, judges, members of certain boards, and officers hired

through the civil service system cannot be removed unless they break service rules. Over time, the President's responsibilities have grown a lot. Today, the President not only manages the federal administration but also sets directions for various departments, outlines policies, and issues executive orders to make sure the government runs smoothly.

### 6.2.12.2 Legislative Powers

The U.S. Constitution follows the idea of keeping the President and Congress in separate roles. Because of this, the President does not have the power to call, pause, or end the meetings of Congress. He cannot introduce a bill or attend the sessions of either House. Unlike the Prime Minister in countries like Britain or India, the American President is not a member of the legislature and cannot take part in its discussions. This means the President does not have direct control over law-making. Congress is the main body that makes laws. While the President can suggest or ask for certain laws to be made, he cannot force Congress to agree. If Congress passes a law that the President does not support, he still has the duty to carry it out. Even though this was the system laid out in the Constitution, things have changed over time. In practice, the President now plays a much larger part in shaping laws. He is often seen as the most important figure in pushing forward new policies and decisions. As Dr. Finer pointed out, the Constitution did not limit the President to just enforcing laws—it gave him space to influence how laws are made. Another scholar has rightly said that it would not be correct to say the President has no role in making laws.

Some of his legislative powers may be summed up as follows:

#### 1. *Veto Powers*

After a bill is passed by both Houses of Congress, it is sent to the President. The President has three choices. First, he

can approve the bill by signing it, and it becomes law. Second, he can simply keep the bill without signing it. If ten days pass and Congress is still in session, the bill automatically becomes law. But if Congress ends its session during those ten days, the bill does not become law. This is called a pocket veto. In this case, the President does not need to take any action or give reasons, and Congress cannot bring the bill back. The third option is to reject the bill and return it to Congress, possibly with some suggestions for changes. If Congress really wants the bill to pass, it can send it back again with a two-thirds vote in both Houses. At that point, the President has to accept it. However, getting that much support is hard, so most vetoed bills never become law. Even just the possibility of a veto can stop a bill from being introduced.

The pocket veto is very powerful, especially during the final days of a Congressional session. At that time, Congress usually tries to finish passing many bills. If the President disagrees with any of them, he can quietly stop them just by doing nothing. Since he doesn't need to explain or return the bill, this veto is final. Presidents have used this pocket veto more than 700 times. Originally, the veto was meant as a check on Congress to prevent poor lawmaking. But over time, Presidents have used it to guide lawmaking and shape policy. For example, President Cleveland used it 413 times, Franklin Roosevelt used it 635 times, and President Truman used it 250 times. Others, like Reagan, used it less frequently. Some scholars believe the veto gives the President so much say in lawmaking that he acts almost like a third branch of Congress. While this view might be a bit strong, it's true that the veto gives the President strong influence over what laws get passed. Still, if both Houses of Congress come together with a two-thirds vote, they can override the veto. But that doesn't happen very easily or

very often. So, while the veto isn't unlimited, it remains a powerful tool in the hands of the President.

## 2. *Messages*

The President can suggest new laws or important policies to Congress through messages. These can be read out or sent as written documents. Since they come from the highest elected leader, they carry a lot of importance and are usually taken seriously. These messages draw national attention and are widely discussed. Many important laws have started this way. One famous example is the Monroe Doctrine, shared by President Monroe through a message to Congress. Sometimes, such messages are also aimed at other countries. For instance, before the U.S. joined World War I, President Wilson sent messages to make America's position clear to Europe. President Roosevelt did something similar during World War II. President Eisenhower sent over 225 separate requests for laws to Congress through his messages. Later, President Nixon preferred sending shorter, focused messages instead of one long report. As Munro said, while the President speaks for the country on foreign issues, he still needs Congress to turn those views into law. So, it makes sense for the President to share his views and proposals through messages sent directly to the national legislature.

## 3. *Special Sessions*

The President has the power to call Congress for a special session when needed. This was more common in the past. For example, in 1913, President Wilson called special sessions to pass important laws. But now, after changes brought in by the Twentieth Amendment, Congress meets more regularly, so special sessions are less necessary. Still, when such a session is called, it affects the members financially. They don't get travel or daily allowances

during these meetings. Since living costs in the U.S. are quite high, most members would rather avoid these extra sessions. They prefer the President not to use this power too frequently, as it puts pressure on their personal expenses.

## 4. *Patronage*

The President of the United States has a lot of power when it comes to appointing people to government jobs. Because of this, many senators and representatives try to stay on good terms with the President, hoping to get jobs or favours for their supporters. Over time, Presidents have used this power as a way to get their own laws passed—by offering positions in exchange for support. As Munro once said, the President can quietly suggest that those who don't cooperate might be overlooked when government roles are being handed out. Still, Congress isn't powerless in this situation. Senators can push back through something called "Senatorial Courtesy." It may sound polite, but it's actually a strong form of resistance. If a senator doesn't support someone the President wants to appoint in their state, they can block the nomination. This practice lets them stand their ground and show that they won't be pressured by the promise of favours or appointments.

## 5. *Appeal to Public Opinion*

The President of the United States is not just the head of the government but also the voice and face of the nation. People across the country listen carefully when the President speaks. If Congress stands against him, he has a powerful option — to speak directly to the people. This can help shape public opinion and pressure lawmakers to support his plans. Presidents have used newspapers, radio, and television to reach people in their homes. Franklin D. Roosevelt spoke to Americans through his "fireside chats" on the radio, helping them feel informed and

reassured during tough times. Eisenhower welcomed media coverage to explain his views. Kennedy used television to connect with the public. George W. Bush relied on media to gain support during the Iraq war. When Barack Obama became President, the country was going through a serious economic crisis. He knew that to move the country forward, he had to win the trust and support of the people. In his first speech as President, he gave a strong message of hope. He said the country must get back on its feet and face challenges together. He reminded people that success is not guaranteed — it must be earned through hard work and unity.

## 6. *Informal Conference*

The President usually talks through important legislative plans with party leaders during casual meetings over tea or dinner. When the President's party holds a majority in Congress, things generally move more smoothly. But even when that's not the case, especially in matters related to foreign policy, the President may sit down with leaders from other parties to find common ground. For example, President Eisenhower regularly invited Democratic leaders to share their views. As Johnson rightly pointed out, a skilled President who understands how Congress works can get many important issues sorted out through these simple, informal chats. These quiet conversations behind closed doors often help in building support and getting things done.

## 7. *Delegated Legislation*

The President of the United States doesn't just rely on Congress to make laws. He can also bring in rules and decisions on his own through what are called executive orders. These are official directions issued by the President to help carry out laws passed by Congress. In many cases, Congress only lays down the basic outline of a law, and the President fills in the practical details

through these orders. They have the same effect as a law and are part of what is known as delegated legislation. Over the years, this power has grown. For example, President Franklin D. Roosevelt used this authority more than most—before 1944, he issued 3,703 executive orders, while Congress passed 4,553 laws in that same period. This shows how active a President can be in shaping policy directly. Still, the President can't completely control Congress. As political thinker Laski once said, the President is rarely in full command of Congress, except during emergencies. He needs to know when to guide it, when to work with it, and when it's better to take action alone.

### 6.2.12.3 **Financial Powers**

Although the Constitution gives Congress the main role in managing the country's finances, in day-to-day practice, it is the President who plays the leading role. The budget is prepared under the President's direct supervision by the Bureau of Budget. After that, it is sent to Congress. Technically, Congress can make changes to it, but that doesn't happen much. Most members of Congress find the financial details too complex, so the budget usually gets passed without many changes. This makes the President the key person managing the financial affairs of the government. When Barack Obama became President on January 20, 2009, the country was facing a serious economic crisis. In his first speech as President, he talked about how the economy had been weakened by selfish decisions, carelessness, and a failure to prepare for the future. He acknowledged the fear and uncertainty felt across the nation but encouraged people to believe in America's strength. He said it was time to make bold decisions, revive the country's spirit, and rebuild prosperity through unity, hard work, and hope. His message reflected a deep desire to help the country move forward.

#### 6.2.12.4 Judicial Powers

The President of the United States has the power to forgive people found guilty of federal crimes. This includes giving a full pardon, delaying punishment (reprieve), or offering general forgiveness through amnesty. However, this power does not apply to cases of impeachment or crimes under state law. The President also nominates judges to the Supreme Court, but these appointments need the approval of the Senate. Through this, the President has some say in shaping the judiciary.

#### *Party Leader*

As the head of his political party, the President plays a key role in leading and guiding its direction. The White House gives him a strong voice, and when he speaks, the entire country listens. His words have the power to influence lawmakers, especially those from his own party, to support his ideas. While he leads his party, the President is also expected to act for the good of the whole nation. In times of crisis, people look to him for direction. So, while his political role is important, he must also rise above party interests and work for the country as a whole during his time in office.

#### 6.2.13 Position of American President

From the time of George Washington to George W. Bush, the role of the U.S. President has stood out as one of the most powerful in the world. Unlike the Indian President or the British monarch, whose roles are mostly ceremonial, the American President has real decision-making authority. That's why Sir Henry Maine once said, "The American President rules but does not reign." When the U.S. Constitution was written, its creators took many of the powers once held by the British King and handed them to the President. But they were careful to

place limits where they thought power could be misused. This helped shape a strong but balanced presidency. As President Woodrow Wilson pointed out, the whole nation elects the President, and in many ways, he becomes the voice of the country. If the public trusts him, he can influence national decisions in ways few others can. He doesn't just represent one region—he stands for the entire country. His presence is also important at key public events and ceremonies. If we compare him to the British King or even a Prime Minister, we can see that the American President is something different altogether. As Laski said, he is not quite like a king and not exactly like a prime minister either. The job has its own shape and character. At the same time, much of the President's strength comes not just from official powers but also from personal leadership. He is both the nation's chief representative and the head of his political party. This gives him influence—if he chooses to use it wisely and has the right qualities to lead. As Wilson once said, the presidency has looked different at different times, depending on who held the office and what challenges the country faced.

#### 6.2.14 Comparison of American President with other Heads of State

##### 1. President and British King

The King of the United Kingdom and the President of the United States both hold high positions in their countries. They are the heads of state, lead their nations' armed forces, welcome foreign guests, receive ambassadors, host official events, and give public speeches. On the surface, their daily roles may seem quite similar. But the real difference lies in how their governments are set up. The King works within a parliamentary system. His duties are mostly formal and symbolic. He does not actually run the government. In contrast,

the President of the United States is part of a presidential system. He is not just the head of state but also leads the government. This gives him real power to make decisions, lead the administration, and shape national policies. As Professor Laski explained, while the President also performs formal duties, these are just one part of his role. Unlike the Queen, the President holds real authority and plays an active part in governing the country.

## 2. Comparison with the Indian President

The Presidents of the United States and India may both hold the title of head of state, but their roles are very different in practice. The American President is both the head of state and the head of government. He is elected directly by the people (through the Electoral College) and holds real authority in running the country. In contrast, the Indian President is a ceremonial head. Though the Constitution gives him wide powers on paper, these are exercised only on the advice of the Prime Minister and the Council of Ministers. The American President runs the administration, makes decisions independently, and is not answerable to the legislature. In India, the President is part of Parliament and must act according to the Cabinet's advice. While both Presidents can be removed through impeachment, the process differs. In India, either House of Parliament can initiate the process. In the U.S., the House of Representatives brings charges, and the Senate conducts the trial.

When it comes to emergency powers, the Indian President appears stronger. He can declare emergencies, take control of state governments, and even reduce the salaries of officials and judges. But these actions are based on Cabinet advice. In the U.S., such sweeping powers are not granted to the President. However, the American President has a stronger veto, including a "pocket veto" that allows him to silently

block bills. The Indian President's veto can be overridden more easily, and he does not have a pocket veto. Another difference is in how the Cabinets function. In the U.S., Cabinet members are not part of the legislature and are answerable only to the President. He can appoint or remove them at will. In India, ministers must be members of Parliament and are collectively responsible to it. This gives the Indian Cabinet more authority in practice.

Even though the Indian President is called the head of the executive, all decisions are made by the Cabinet. The 42nd Constitutional Amendment made it mandatory for the President to act on the Cabinet's advice, leaving little room for independent action. In times of national crisis, while the President may formally declare an emergency, the actual decisions come from the Prime Minister. In the United States, the President sets the tone for national policies, commands the military directly, and can influence Congress with strong leadership. Still, he is not above checks. A Congress that disagrees with him can limit his actions, and the threat of impeachment is always present. As someone once said, the American President is like a giant, but one who stands on shaky ground. On the other hand, the Indian President is more like a symbol of unity and continuity—a respected figure, but without real power. The real authority rests with the Prime Minister and the Cabinet, who run the government and are answerable to the people through Parliament.

## 6.2.15 The American Cabinet

The U.S. Constitution does not mention a Cabinet to help the President with his work. But over time, the government created different departments, each led by a Secretary. These Secretaries became the President's main advisers, and together they are called the President's Cabinet. When

a new President takes office, he chooses his Cabinet—usually people who have supported him politically. These Cabinet members are not part of Congress and do not report to it. Their main job is to help the President run the government and carry out his decisions. The Senate must approve their appointments, but in most cases, it agrees without much resistance. Cabinet members stay in their roles as long as the President wants them, usually for the full term, unless the President replaces them earlier. There are generally around twelve main departments, and each one focuses on a key area like defence, education, or health.

### ***Position of the Cabinet***

In the United States, the President is free to choose his Cabinet, but in doing so, he usually keeps a few practical things in mind. Most Cabinet members come from the President's own political party. While picking them, he tries to keep a balance—making sure different regions, groups, and opinions are represented. Experience, loyalty, and trust also matter, because these individuals work closely with him. The American Cabinet works very differently from what we see in India or the UK. In those countries, the Cabinet has real authority and shares responsibility for the government's actions. Ministers there are directly answerable to the legislature. But in the U.S., the Cabinet has no such standing. Its members don't have to answer to Congress, nor do they shape government policy as a group. They are

simply advisers chosen by the President, and they serve only as long as he wants them to.

Cabinet meetings in the U.S. are quite informal. They usually happen once a week. The President decides what gets discussed, and there are no official records or voting. What he says goes. In contrast, in India or the UK, Cabinet decisions are made together, and detailed minutes are kept. Cabinet members in the U.S. don't sit in Congress, though they may be asked to appear before it. They don't function as a team and aren't expected to agree on everything. In the end, it's the President's decision that counts. As one scholar put it, the Cabinet's voice is really just the President's voice. In many cases, Presidents have leaned more on informal advisers than on their official Cabinet. For example, Wilson relied heavily on Colonel House, while Roosevelt took advice from a group known as his Brain Trust. So, the Cabinet in the U.S. is more like the President's personal team—he leads it fully. Some Presidents have treated their Secretaries more like assistants than partners. One even referred to them as second lieutenants who simply carry out orders. As another observer put it, the Cabinet cannot move unless the President gives the signal. In short, the U.S. Cabinet doesn't carry independent power. Its strength depends completely on the President's choice and leadership. As Laski said, it's one of the least effective institutions in American government—not a path to lasting political power, but just a short stop in a person's public career.



## Recap

- ◆ The US President is both the head of state and government, unlike India's ceremonial President.
- ◆ The Constitution grants real and effective powers to the American President.
- ◆ The President cannot dissolve Congress or sit in it, but he influences it through messages and vetoes.
- ◆ The power of veto, including the Pocket Veto, is a strong legislative tool in the hands of the President.
- ◆ The Cabinet in the US serves as advisers and not a policymaking body like in parliamentary systems.
- ◆ Cabinet members are not answerable to Congress and serve entirely at the President's will.
- ◆ The President uses executive orders to frame rules under broader laws passed by Congress.
- ◆ The American President has immense informal power through media influence and public support.
- ◆ The President plays a key role in the budget process and financial management.
- ◆ Despite extensive powers, the President is restrained by checks from Congress, courts, and public opinion.

## Objective Questions

1. Who is the real executive head in the USA?
2. What power allows the US President to block a bill without signature when Congress is not in session?
3. What is the role of the American Cabinet?
4. What amendment reduced the gap between regular sessions of Congress?
5. What is the Senate's role in Cabinet appointments?
6. How long is a US Presidential term?
7. Who introduced fireside chats to influence public opinion?

8. What institution drafts the federal budget under the President?
9. What type of veto requires a two-thirds majority in Congress to override?
10. Who holds the final authority in departmental decisions in the USA?

## Answers

1. President
2. Pocket Veto
3. Advisory
4. Twentieth
5. Consent
6. Four years
7. Roosevelt
8. Budget Bureau
9. Regular Veto
10. President

## Assignments

1. Compare the roles of the American President and the Indian President with suitable examples.
2. Explain the significance of the veto power and its various forms in the US Presidential system.
3. Discuss the features and limitations of the US Presidential Cabinet system.
4. Evaluate the role of the President as a legislative leader through messages and executive orders.
5. Examine how the US President influences public opinion during times of crisis.

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## Suggested Reading

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# UNIT

## Switzerland (Neither Parliamentary nor Presidential)

### Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ understand the structure and functioning of the Swiss Federal Council
- ◆ analyse the similarities and differences between the Swiss executive and the parliamentary and presidential systems
- ◆ evaluate the effectiveness of the Swiss executive in ensuring political stability
- ◆ explore the role of Swiss traditions and neutrality in shaping its unique executive system

### Prerequisites

After learning about how countries like Britain and the United States are governed, a group of curious students began to wonder—are there other ways a government can work? They had studied the British system with its powerful Prime Minister and the American system led by a strong President. But both systems had their challenges. One day, their teacher introduced them to Switzerland, a small country with a very different approach. In Switzerland, no single person holds all the power. Instead, seven leaders work together, share duties equally, and focus more on serving the people than on party politics. The students were surprised to learn that Switzerland doesn't follow the usual models. They were eager to know how this system works and why it has been so successful.

### Keywords

Federal Council, Non-partisan Executive, Collective Leadership, Swiss Constitution, Referendum, Neutrality, Direct Democracy



# Discussion

## 6.3.1 Introduction

Among all of Switzerland's political institutions, the executive branch is truly one of a kind. It does not follow the typical model found in most countries. C.F. Strong once pointed out that no other system of executive power deserves our attention as much as Switzerland's. When the Swiss Constitution was created in 1848 and later revised in 1874, its writers managed something that had challenged many before them—especially in France. They found a way to bring together the good parts of both parliamentary and non-parliamentary systems while leaving out many of their weaknesses. As Codding rightly said, the most special feature of this small country is its Federal Council, the body that runs the Swiss executive.

## 6.3.2 Peculiarities of Swiss Council

Some of the peculiarities of the Swiss executive are important to mention as they establish its uniqueness. The following are its peculiarities:

### 1. A Plural Executive

In countries like the UK, USA, and France, the executive power is given to one person—a president or a prime minister. But Switzerland follows a different path. Here, the top executive authority is not with one leader but with a group called the Federal Council. This council has seven members, and all of them have equal powers. No single member stands above the rest like a head of state elsewhere. As Huber said, Switzerland has always followed this group-based way of running the government, and it's the only system they have used. Bryce also pointed out that, in Switzerland, power is given to

a council, not to an individual. When the Swiss Constitution was written, its makers believed that the American model of a strong president did not fit Swiss thinking. They felt that putting so much power in one person's hands could lead to dictatorship. The idea of a shared executive was not new—it matched the old practices of the Cantons. As Mason noted, the Swiss people prefer to be governed by councils and are not comfortable giving too much power to any one person.

### 2. Lengthy Tenure

A key feature of the Swiss Federal Executive is the long service of its Councillors, which brings stability to the system. Though they are elected for four years by both Houses of the Federal Assembly, most of them continue in office for much longer. One reason is that the Swiss people see no sense in removing a good and capable leader just because their term ends. As Professor Dicey once said, the Swiss Federal Council is like a company's board of directors—members stay on and do their work sincerely unless there's a serious reason to replace them. Another reason is the small number of people to choose from. Councillors are usually picked from the Federal Assembly, which itself is not very large. Also, the Constitution allows only one member from each Canton, and in practice, places like Zurich, Vaud, and Bern are usually represented. This limits the options even more.

The non-party nature of the Council also helps. Since they do not work as party representatives, they are seen as neutral and dependable, which adds to their long service. Besides, the job doesn't come with a high salary or fancy benefits. Even the head of the Council gets just a small extra allowance for official expenses. There's a popular story of a Councillor who was asked why he travelled

in third class. He replied, “Because there is no fourth.” This shows the simple and modest way in which Swiss leaders live. They don’t seek show or status like their counterparts in some other countries. Because of all these reasons, many Councillors stay in office for more than ten years. Some have served for decades—Giuseppe Motta for twenty-nine years, Naeff for twenty-seven, Welti for twenty-five, and Dr. Philippe Etter for twenty-three years.

### 3. Non-Partisan

One of the most important reasons for the stability of the Swiss Federal Council is its non-partisan nature. Although its members come from different political parties, they do not act based on party lines. As Bryce said, the Federal Council is not formed to serve any political party, nor does it decide the government’s policy. It works independently, though each member may still carry some party background. In most party-based governments like in the UK, the executive comes from the party that holds a majority in the legislature. This brings political unity. In countries with many parties like France, the executive is formed through coalitions where leaders from different parties come together. In both cases, political loyalty helps a person stay in office. Switzerland follows another way. Here, Councillors are chosen not because of their political strength but because of their ability to handle administrative work. The Swiss people do not look for powerful speakers or clever political minds. As Bryce pointed out, qualities like common sense, calm thinking, and skill in administration matter most when selecting a Councillor.

The Federal Council does not make or control national policies. Its main work is to manage government tasks and give advice to the Federal Assembly when needed. It doesn’t try to act like a political body. Instead, it works more like a team that takes care of the country’s everyday affairs under the

direction of the legislature. Because of this role, Councillors don’t stick strongly to their party views. They work together as a group of administrators, putting the country’s interests first. This spirit of teamwork and cooperation gives them public trust. As Lowell noted, their strength comes from the confidence people have in their fairness. Anything that supports this non-political image only makes their position stronger. Bryce was right when he said that in no other free country does the executive stay so far away from party politics as it does in Switzerland.

### 4. Peculiar Position of the Chairman

The Chairman of the Swiss Federal Council holds a very simple and modest position. Each year, one of the seven Councillors is chosen by the Federal Assembly to serve as Chairman for just one year. This role goes around in turns, so every Councillor gets a chance. The person holding this position is called the President of the Swiss Confederation, but it’s only a formal title. He is not above the others and goes back to being a regular Councillor after a year. The President does not have any special powers. He leads the Council meetings and casts the deciding vote if there’s a tie. He also performs some ceremonial duties, like presiding over official events and welcoming foreign leaders. These are formal tasks that need one person to represent the country. Like the other Councillors, he heads a department and takes part in regular government work.

By law, he has a few extra responsibilities, such as looking after the Federal Chancellery and stepping in during emergencies if the Council allows it. But even then, nothing he does becomes final without the Council’s approval. As Dr. Munro said, he is more like the face of the country on ceremonial occasions and a coordinator who keeps track of the work going on in different departments. He is not like a Prime Minister. His powers are the same as the other six members.

Compared to leaders in other countries, his position is quite humble. The British Prime Minister plays a key role in shaping the government, and the American President holds strong executive powers, including the ability to reject laws. In Switzerland, the President does not have such control. As William Rappard said, the role doesn't carry national importance, special privileges, or much influence. The President doesn't get a grand house or an official car. He only receives a small extra allowance to cover ceremonial expenses. Their pay is also quite modest when compared to leaders in countries like the UK, USA, France, or India. John Brown once remarked that most Swiss citizens may not even remember who their current President is, though they usually know a few names from the Federal Council. Lowell described him simply as the head of a working group who stays informed and handles formal duties. Rappard summed it up well: the office has no special power or privilege—it is just a part of a team that runs the country together.

### *5. Neither Parliamentary nor Presidential*

The Swiss executive does not follow the usual models seen in other countries. It is neither like the parliamentary system, where the executive depends on the support of the legislature, nor like the presidential system, where the executive works fully on its own. Instead, Switzerland has created its own way of running the executive. It avoids the common problems found in both systems and takes the good parts from each. As Bryce explained, the Swiss Federal Council is not like the British Cabinet because it does not lead the legislature and cannot be removed by it. At the same time, it is not fully separate from the legislature like the American President. It works closely with the legislature while staying independent in its daily tasks.

### *6. Not a Parliamentary Executive*

It's not right to call the Swiss Federal Council a parliamentary executive. A proper parliamentary system has some key features—like having two heads (one symbolic, one real), the executive being answerable to the legislature, unity in the ruling party, and leadership under a Prime Minister. Britain's Cabinet system is a clear example of this model. Switzerland does things differently. Once someone is elected to the Federal Council, they step down from parliament. They still attend sessions and join debates but cannot vote. They also cannot be removed through a no-confidence vote, which is a common way to hold governments accountable in parliamentary systems. Since Councillors come from different political parties, there's no single party leading the Council. They are chosen for their ability to run the administration well—not for their political background. It's not unusual to see them disagreeing with each other in parliament. The idea that all members stand or fall together, as in a typical Cabinet, doesn't apply here. Removing one Councillor does not affect the rest. There is no rule that holds them all responsible as a group. If a proposal brought forward by a Councillor fails in parliament, it doesn't lead to resignation. They simply accept the decision and move on. Their position doesn't depend on winning every vote or defending party pride.

The Chairman of the Federal Council is also very different from a Prime Minister. In the UK, the Prime Minister leads the Cabinet, makes key decisions, and has the power to appoint or remove ministers. In Switzerland, the Chairman is just one among seven equals. He chairs meetings and represents the country during formal events, but he cannot hire or fire anyone in the Council. He doesn't lead the Council in the way a Prime Minister leads a Cabinet. As Lowell said, he is mainly there to keep

track of what others are doing and perform public duties. In fact, no single member of the Council, including the Chairman, can be clearly called the head of state—unlike in the UK, where the King holds that role. So, the Swiss Federal Council doesn't follow the rules of a Cabinet-style government. The only thing it shares with such a system is that Councillors attend and speak in parliament. In all other ways, it follows its own simple, steady way of running things—focused on shared responsibility, not party politics.

### 7. *Not a Presidential Executive*

The Swiss executive shares a few features with the American presidential system. Like the U.S. President, the Swiss Federal Council cannot be removed by the legislature, and it does not have the power to dissolve it either. Once elected, members of the Federal Council leave the legislature, which gives a sense of separation. But beyond these basic similarities, the two systems are quite different. In the U.S., the President and his Cabinet form a separate branch of government, staying apart from Congress. In Switzerland, the Federal Council is not a separate branch. Councillors take part in parliamentary discussions, even though they cannot vote. This goes against the American idea of keeping the executive and legislature completely apart. Also, in Switzerland, no single person leads the executive like the U.S. President. The Chairman of the Swiss Council is just one of seven equals. He holds the position for a year, handles formal duties, and does not have the power to appoint or remove other Councillors. The U.S. President, by contrast, selects his Cabinet and leads both the government and the country.

The way they are chosen is different too. The U.S. President is elected by an electoral college. The Swiss Federal Council is elected by the legislature. While the U.S. President works mostly on his own, with only some checks from Congress, the

Swiss Federal Council works closely with the legislature and is directly answerable to it. Another major difference is the veto power. The American President can reject laws passed by Congress. But in Switzerland, the Council has no such power. Instead, the Swiss people themselves can accept or reject laws through referendums. So, while the Swiss executive may look a bit like the U.S. system at first, it actually works very differently. The Federal Council works hand in hand with the legislature, which is why it is sometimes called the “Executive Committee of the Swiss Parliament.” As Bryce said, it is not independent from the legislature like the U.S. executive. In the end, the Swiss executive is neither fully presidential nor fully parliamentary. It takes the good parts of both systems. Like in a presidential setup, it offers stability and long-term policy continuity. Like a parliamentary system, it works closely with the legislature. Its non-partisan nature gives it another strength—it focuses on running the country, not on party politics. That's what makes it truly unique. As C.F. Strong said, the Swiss executive stands apart from all others in the world.

### 6.3.3 Peculiar Relations between the Federal Council and Federal Assembly

What makes the Swiss executive truly different is how it works with the Federal Assembly. It doesn't stand completely apart from the legislature like in the United States, where powers are clearly separated. At the same time, it isn't closely tied to the legislature like in the United Kingdom, where cabinet ministers are also members of Parliament and stay in office only as long as they have the support of the House of Commons. In Switzerland, a balanced approach is followed. Members of the Federal Council cannot be part of either House of the Federal Assembly. If someone is a member of the legislature when elected

to the Council, they must give up their seat. Though Councillors attend sessions and take part in discussions, they do not have the right to vote. They also cannot be removed by a vote of no confidence. If the Assembly rejects a bill from the Council or changes it heavily, the Councillors don't treat it as a blow to their authority. They don't insist on defending their proposals just to save face. Instead, they accept the decision and continue their duties. As Dr. Munro rightly said, when Councillors are overruled, they don't resign or argue—they simply carry on, respecting the choice of the legislature and focusing on their work.

### 6.3.4 Peculiar Relations between the Federal Council and Federal Assembly

One of the most interesting things about the Swiss executive is how it works with the Federal Assembly. It doesn't follow the American system, where the executive is fully separate from the legislature. Nor is it like the British system, where ministers are part of Parliament and must step down if they lose its support. Instead, Switzerland has found a balance between the two. Members of the Federal Council cannot stay in Parliament after being elected. If they are already part of either House, they must resign their seat. While they do attend sessions and take part in debates, they cannot vote. They also cannot be removed through a no-confidence motion. If the Assembly rejects a bill from the Council or makes many changes to it, the Council doesn't take it as a blow to its authority. Councillors don't resign or argue. They accept the Assembly's decision and continue their work. As Dr. Munro once said, when Councillors lose a vote, they simply accept it without fuss and carry on with their duties.

In many ways, the Assembly treats the Council like a group of skilled officials

responsible for drafting and carrying out laws. The Council cannot act on major matters like foreign affairs, defence, or administration without the Assembly's approval or later confirmation. In emergencies, the Assembly can give the Council full powers to handle the situation. The Council is also required to send regular reports to the Assembly and respond if any special report is requested. As Professor Dicey put it, the Council follows the direction of the Assembly much like a good manager follows the instructions of an employer. Still, the Council is not just a silent worker. While it may seem like it only follows the Assembly's lead, in reality, it plays a bigger role. As Bryce noted, the Council has just as much influence as the British Cabinet and even more than some French ones. It doesn't only carry out instructions—it also helps shape decisions.

The Councillors are chosen for their knowledge and ability, not for party loyalty. Today's laws are more complex, and the Assembly often looks to the Council for guidance. The Council helps prepare laws, gives suggestions, and provides a steady hand in running the country. Over time, the Council's role has grown stronger. Proportional representation brought many parties into the Assembly, making it harder to take quick decisions. This gave more space for the Council to lead. During the World Wars and the economic crisis of the 1930s, the Assembly gave the Council full powers to handle the emergencies. Those powers were never fully taken back. As André observed, the Council slowly became more powerful. It is no longer just following the Assembly's orders—it now plays a central role in leading the country. It may be answerable to the Assembly on paper, but in real life, it has become one of the strongest parts of the Swiss government.

### 6.3.5 Organisation and Functions of the Council

The Swiss Federal Council has seven members, chosen by the Federal Assembly in a joint meeting of both Houses for a four-year term. Although the Constitution doesn't say they must come from the Assembly, in practice they usually do. As soon as someone is elected to the Council, they give up their seat in the Assembly. The law also states that only one Councillor can be elected from each Canton. By tradition, the Cantons of Zurich, Berne, and Vaud always have a seat. The Council also reflects the country's three main language groups—four seats go to the German-speaking regions, two to the French-speaking areas, and one to the Italian-speaking part.

There were two efforts to let the people directly elect the Councillors, but both failed in referendums. Swiss voters were not in favour of this idea. They felt that direct elections might lead to more political divisions, limit the Council's broad outlook, and make public life more chaotic. Each year, one Councillor becomes the Chairman and another becomes the Vice-Chairman. The Chairman doesn't serve two years in a row, and usually the Vice-Chairman becomes the next Chairman. There is also a tradition of rotating these roles among the Councillors in order of seniority. This way, everyone gets a chance to lead while keeping the balance of the team intact.

### 6.3.6 Functions of the Federal Council

The functions of the Federal Council can be enumerated under four heads: legislative, executive, financial, and judicial.

#### 1. Legislative Functions

Even though members of the Swiss Federal Council leave the legislature after

being elected, they still play an active role in making laws. Their contribution is practical and steady. They help draft new laws, either on their own or when asked by the Federal Assembly, and then guide these proposals through both Houses. Although they can't vote, they take part in debates and answer questions during discussions. Councillors also attend committee meetings where new bills are closely examined. Thanks to their experience and clear thinking, their suggestions carry weight, and in many cases, they help shape the final version of a law. When a private member introduces a bill, it is first sent to the relevant Councillor for review and comments. In fact, most bills are looked at by a Councillor before being discussed in the legislature. But unlike in the UK, where a government might resign if a bill is rejected, Swiss Councillors do not treat defeat as a crisis. If a proposal they bring forward is voted down, they accept it and move on. As Dr. Munro once said, a Swiss Councillor is like a lawyer or an architect—someone whose advice is usually trusted, but who doesn't walk away from the job just because the client chooses a different plan.

#### 2. Financial Functions

The Swiss Federal Council takes care of the country's finances in a very direct and practical way. It prepares the yearly budget and presents it to the Federal Assembly for approval. Once the budget is passed, the Council makes sure the money is collected and spent as planned. It keeps track of all spending to see that it follows what the Assembly agreed to. The Council also looks after national services like the railways and other government-run projects, making sure they are managed properly and run smoothly.

#### 3. Executive Functions

The Swiss Federal Council holds the top executive authority in the country and

is responsible for running the government smoothly. It puts into action the laws passed by the Federal Assembly and looks after Switzerland's relations with other countries. It also works to maintain peace, safety, and order within the country. The Council appoints federal officers, except for a few who are chosen directly by the Federal Assembly. It manages everyday government affairs, follows court decisions, and settles disagreements between Cantons. It also makes sure that Cantons follow their own constitutions and keeps an eye on their actions to ensure they follow federal laws. If Cantons make agreements with each other or with other countries, the Council checks and approves them if needed. It also looks after the country's safety and makes sure Switzerland stays neutral and independent. In an emergency, the Council can call in the army, but if the number of soldiers goes beyond 2,000 or they are kept on duty for more than three weeks, the Federal Assembly must be called into session. The Council controls the army and oversees its different departments. It also reviews Cantonal laws and monitors those parts of their administration that fall under its supervision. At every session, the Council gives the Federal Assembly a report on its work, both within the country and internationally. It also prepares special reports when asked.

#### 4. *Emergency Powers*

The Federal Council has also taken on important responsibilities during emergencies. In the world wars of 1914 and 1939, the Federal Assembly gave the Council special powers to deal with the situation. For a time, it became the main lawmaking body and referendums were put on hold. As Codding rightly said, this was one of the strongest sets of powers ever given to a democratic government in a country that wasn't directly fighting in the war.

#### 5. *Judicial Functions*

The Federal Council also has some roles that are similar to those of a court, though many of these were reduced in 1914. Since Switzerland does not have separate administrative courts, certain cases—especially those involving the actions of federal officials—are brought to the Council. It also hears appeals in issues like school discrimination, trade agreements, military taxes, customs, and election matters in the Cantons. Over the years, the Council's powers have steadily grown. Lowell once said that the Council could be seen as the main driving force and steady hand of the Swiss government. While the Constitution says the Council is answerable to the Federal Assembly, in real practice, the Council holds more weight. Laws proposed by the Council are rarely rejected. Members of the Assembly often wonder—when the final say will go to the people through a referendum—why they should take the risk of rejecting a proposal from the Council. This mindset has allowed the Council to become more influential. The Council has become the centre of attention in the country's political system. It acts as both a guide and an executive arm of the government. The long, stable terms of the Councillors and the fact that they cannot be removed by a vote of no confidence have added to their importance. Today, the Federal Council is seen as a source of leadership and a steady force for the whole political system.

### 6.3.7 The Civil Service in Switzerland

Even though the central government in Switzerland has taken on more responsibilities over time, the number of federal employees remains small. This is because most national laws are carried out by local authorities. Federal staff mainly work in areas like postal services, railways, and a few specialised

departments. Their numbers did go up during the two world wars, but overall, the civil service is still limited in size. Most federal employees are appointed and, if needed, removed by the Federal Council, except for a few selected by the Federal Assembly. Senior roles are usually given for an initial term of three years, but many of these officials stay on much longer and become permanent. Hiring and removal are not based on political reasons. Since the pay in government jobs is low, only a few Swiss choose this career path. For lower positions, selections are made through exams. Railway workers are hired by the federal railway department. Federal employees are not allowed to contest elections to the national parliament, and the same rule applies to cantonal workers in their own regions. Still, they are free to campaign and take part in political activities. Interestingly, this has not caused any serious problems, as politics in Switzerland is handled in a calm and practical manner.

### 6.3.8 The Federal Secretariat (Chancellery)

The Federal Chancellery was set up in 1931 and is headed by the Chancellor. The Federal Assembly elects the Chancellor for a term of four years, but in reality, most Chancellors stay in office until they retire. The Chancellery works under the direction of the Swiss President, with overall control resting with the Federal Assembly. The Chancellor looks after records, translations, and shorthand reports. He is in charge of organising federal elections, referendums, and initiatives, and also signs federal laws

to make them official. Besides these duties, the Chancellor acts as the main secretary to the Federal Council and also serves as the clerk during meetings of both Houses and their joint sessions. He is also considered the head of the country's civil service.

### 6.3.9 Conclusion

The Swiss Federal Executive is a unique system that shows how leadership can work without power being concentrated in one person. Instead of having a single head like a president or prime minister, Switzerland is led by a group of seven councillors who share responsibility equally. This group, called the Federal Council, is elected by the Federal Assembly and includes members from different parties. But once elected, they leave party politics behind and work together as a team of administrators. Their long years in office and steady leadership have helped build a sense of trust and consistency in the system. The Council works closely with the legislature, but it is not dependent on it for survival. The President of the Council, who serves for just one year, mainly carries out ceremonial duties and doesn't hold more power than the others. This shows Switzerland's belief in modesty and shared responsibility. The people also have a direct say in government decisions through referendums and initiatives. Over time, the Federal Council has become more than just an executive body—it now stands as a steady and respected part of Swiss democracy. It shows how a balanced and cooperative approach can serve the public well.

## Recap

- ◆ The Swiss Federal Council is a seven-member collective executive body.
- ◆ Each councillor has equal power, and decisions are taken jointly.
- ◆ The President of the Swiss Confederation serves for only one year with ceremonial functions.
- ◆ The Federal Council is elected by the Federal Assembly but is not dependent on it for survival.
- ◆ Councillors resign from the legislature upon election and serve as administrators, not politicians.
- ◆ There is no Prime Minister; leadership is shared equally among councillors.
- ◆ The Council cannot be removed by a vote of no confidence.
- ◆ Swiss executive members participate in parliamentary discussions without voting rights.
- ◆ The people have direct influence through referendums and initiatives.
- ◆ The Swiss system combines the stability of a presidential system with the accountability of a parliamentary system.

## Objective Questions

1. What is the total number of members in the Swiss Federal Council?
2. Which body is responsible for electing the Federal Council?
3. How long is the term of office for each Swiss Federal Councillor?
4. What key feature ensures the non-partisan character of the Swiss Federal Council?
5. Who presides over the Swiss Federal Council as a ceremonial head?
6. What democratic tool allows Swiss citizens to approve or reject laws?
7. Which branch of government do Federal Councillors resign from upon election?
8. What type of leadership model does the Swiss Federal Council represent?
9. In which area does the Federal Chancellery primarily assist the Council?
10. What system best describes the Swiss executive—Parliamentary, Presidential, or Collective?

## Answers

1. Seven
2. Parliament
3. Four
4. Collegiality
5. President
6. Referendum
7. Legislature
8. Collective
9. Administration
10. Collective

## Assignments

1. Discuss how the Swiss executive avoids the drawbacks of both parliamentary and presidential systems.
2. Describe the role of the Federal President in Switzerland.
3. Explain the importance of non-partisanship in the functioning of the Federal Council.
4. Compare the Swiss Federal Council with the Cabinet system of the UK.
5. Examine the impact of referendums and initiatives on Swiss executive functioning.

## Reference

1. Johari, J. C. (2022). *Comparative Politics*. New Delhi: Sterling Publishers.
2. Avasthi, A. P. (2021). *Comparative Government and Politics*. Agra: Lakshmi Narain Agarwal.
3. Kapoor, A. C. (2018). *Select Constitutions*. New Delhi: S. Chand & Company.

## Suggested Reading

1. Basu, D. D. (2020). *Comparative Constitutional Law*. LexisNexis.
2. Arora, B. (2017). *Political Institutions and Processes*. New Delhi: University of Delhi Publication Division.
3. Ray, A., & Bhattacharya, R. (2015). *Comparative Politics: Institutions and Processes*. PHI Learning.

## **MODEL QUESTION PAPER SETS**





# SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

## MODEL QUESTION PAPER SET - I

QP CODE: .....

Reg. No: .....

Name: .....

### THIRD SEMESTER - BA POLITICAL SCIENCE EXAMINATION

#### DISCIPLINE CORE COURSE

#### **B23PSO3DC-COMPARATIVE POLITICS**

(CBCS - UG)

Time: 3 Hours

Max Marks: 70

#### **Section A - Objective Type Questions**

**Answer any 10 questions. Each question carries 1 mark**

**(10 X 1=10 marks)**

1. Who is regarded as the father of modern comparative politics?
2. Which political system is described as 'quasi-federal'?
3. The concept of "power elite" is associated with which scholar?
4. Which country follows a one-party system?
5. In which year was the U.S. Constitution adopted?
6. Which analysis views political systems as structures with specific functions?
7. What is the name of the Swiss executive body?
8. The term "constitutional monarchy" best describes which system?
9. Almond and Powell are known for developing which approach?
10. Which system separates powers strictly between organs?
11. Which two major parties dominate the U.S. political landscape?
12. Which system emphasizes the supremacy of Parliament?
13. What is the basic unit of analysis in the structural-functional approach?
14. France is an example of which type of party system?
15. Who developed the Input-Output model in political science?

## Section B- Very Short Answer Questions

**Answer any 10 questions. Each question carries 2 marks**

**(10X2=20 marks)**

16. Define comparative politics.
17. Mention two key features of the U.K. constitution.
18. State any two features of the Swiss Federal Council.
19. What do you mean by system analysis?
20. Differentiate between a federal and unitary state.
21. What is constitutionalism?
22. Mention two features of the U.S. presidential system.
23. Define a multi-party system.
24. Write two characteristics of the Chinese political system.
25. What is meant by checks and balances?
26. Name two thinkers associated with the evolution of comparative politics.
27. Mention two contemporary trends in comparative politics.
28. What is quasi-federalism?
29. Write any two features of parliamentary government.
30. Mention two organs of government studied under structural-functionalism.

## Section C- Short Answer Questions

**Answer any 5 questions. Each question carries 4 marks**

**(5X4=20 marks)**

31. Explain the meaning and scope of comparative politics.
32. Discuss the basic features of the Canadian federal system.
33. Describe the concept of constitutionalism in the U.K.
34. Compare the executive-legislative relationship in parliamentary and presidential systems.
35. Outline the main arguments of structural-functional analysis.
36. Describe the evolution of comparative politics as a discipline.
37. Discuss the characteristics of the party system in France.

38. Explain how the Swiss political system is unique.
39. Describe key features of input-output analysis.
40. Compare the two-party and one-party systems.

#### **Section D - Long Answer/Essay Questions**

**Answer any 2 questions. Each question carries 10 marks.**

**(2X10=20 marks)**

41. Evaluate the relevance of contemporary trends in comparative politics.
42. Compare and contrast the federal systems of the USA and Canada.
43. Analyse the one-party system of China and its implications for governance.
44. Critically examine the institutional relationships in the U.S. presidential system.



## SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

### MODEL QUESTION PAPER SET - II

QP CODE: .....

Reg. No: .....

Name: .....

### THIRD SEMESTER - BA POLITICAL SCIENCE EXAMINATION

#### DISCIPLINE CORE COURSE

#### **B23PSO3DC-COMPARATIVE POLITICS**

(CBCS - UG)

Time: 3 Hours

Max Marks: 70

#### **Section A - Objective Type Questions**

**Answer any 10 questions. Each question carries 1 mark**

**(10 X 1=10 marks)**

1. Which country uses a directorial system of governance?
2. Who introduced the structural-functional approach in political science?
3. What does the term “constitutionalism” imply?
4. Which political system is marked by separation of powers?
5. Who coined the term “political system”?
6. Which two parties dominate politics in the UK?
7. Which model emphasizes input, conversion, and output processes?
8. The French Fifth Republic was established in which year?
9. The Canadian federal system is described as what kind of federalism?
10. What is meant by the supremacy of the Constitution?
11. Which body is the apex of the Chinese Communist Party?
12. Who elects the U.S. President?
13. What is the term for a system where the executive is part of the legislature?
14. Switzerland practices which type of democracy at large?
15. Which country is considered an example of a rigid constitution?



## Section B- Very Short Answer Questions

**Answer any 10 questions. Each question carries 2 marks**

**(10X2=20 marks)**

16. Define constitutionalism in brief.
17. What is the significance of comparative method in political science?
18. Write two features of the U.S. Congress.
19. Mention two differences between parliamentary and presidential systems.
20. Name any two Swiss cantons.
21. What is meant by political input?
22. Write two merits of the two-party system.
23. Mention any two basic features of the French party system.
24. What is meant by unitary system?
25. List two stages in the growth of comparative politics.
26. Write a short note on constitutional monarchy.
27. State two features of the British cabinet system.
28. Mention two basic units studied in system analysis.
29. Define quasi-federalism with an example.
30. What is a one-party dominant system?

## Section C- Short Answer Questions

**Answer any 5 questions. Each question carries 4 marks**

**(5X4=20 marks)**

31. Discuss the nature and characteristics of constitutionalism in the U.S.A.
32. Explain the evolution of constitutionalism in Switzerland.
33. Highlight the importance of system analysis in comparative politics.
34. Differentiate between the federal system of the U.S.A. and the unitary system of the U.K.
35. Examine the role of the Communist Party in Chinese politics.
36. Explain the role of judiciary in the U.S. federal system.
37. What are the features of Switzerland's political system?

38. Discuss the concept of input-output analysis with examples.
39. What are the major characteristics of the multi-party system in France?
40. Explain the parliamentary system of the United Kingdom.

#### **Section D - Long Answer/Essay Questions**

**Answer any 2 questions. Each question carries 10 marks.**

**(2X10=20 marks)**

41. Examine the strengths and weaknesses of the structural-functional approach.
42. Discuss the nature of federalism in the U.S.A. and the role of the judiciary.
43. Analyse the comparative features of two-party, multi-party, and one-party systems.
44. Evaluate the significance of input-output analysis in the study of comparative politics.



## സർവ്വകലാശാലാഗീതം

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# Comparative Politics

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