

## Opinion Article

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# Compare and Contrast USA and Canada Democratic Governments

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Received Date: February 21, 2023

Published Date: March 14, 2023

## Introduction

In this paper, we consider the pros and cons of both the American and Canadian systems of government. The United States is a Democratic Republic whereas Canada is a Parliamentary Democracy. We make use of the powerful AT Math to see what is necessary for an optimally functioning government.

In the Canadian system, the Monarch of the United Kingdom is the figure head of the Canadian Parliamentary Democracy. A monarch is figure head and not necessary for Canadians to

govern themselves. Canadians do not get to cast a vote for the Prime minister. The PM is simply the leader of the party which garnered the most seats in Parliament. The Prime minister must be bilingual. He must be fluent enough in English and French to carry on a televised debate. This excludes many good candidates for the prime minister role. There is an abundance of Prime ministers from Quebec because the French must learn English like the rest of the world. These are two weaknesses in the Canadian parliamentary system.

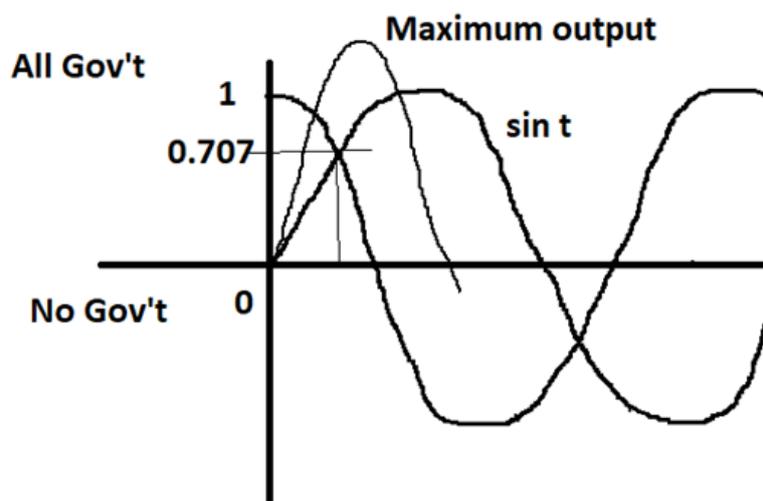


Figure 1: Maximum Output for a Binary Party Government System

One US Ambassador to Canada commented that the most powerful man in the world is the Canadian PM. He leads the parliament; chooses Senators (who are currently not elected by the people); and heads the party that runs the government. One Prime minister, such as Pierre Elliott Trudeau was in office for 17 years. He made Canada largely what it is today: a multicultural society and a disgruntled Quebec. Too much power in the hands of one man for that long is dangerous to democracy. The PM also appoints the Supreme Court Justices from each region of the country. The Prime minister controls all three levels of government without checks and balances (Figure 1).

For a two-party system, to make optimum plans and policy, we need consensus within parties and between parties. Mathematically, we have:

$$\begin{aligned} & [1/\sqrt{2} + 1/\sqrt{2}] \times [1/\sqrt{2} \cdot 1/\sqrt{2}] \\ & = \sqrt{2} \times 1/2 \\ & = 1/\sqrt{2} \\ & = 0.707 \\ & = \sin \theta = \cos \theta \quad \theta = 45^\circ \end{aligned}$$

Therefore, Laws and policies should be made by consensus within parties and between parties for optimum output. This justifies the two-party system, where every law and policy is either a "YES" vote or a "NO" vote.

With the advent of the Internet, more referendums could be conducted. However, I think most Canadians would rather the paid Members of Parliament represent them in a vote. It would be a burden for Canadians to research every political debate.

The Senate of the Canada is not elected by the people. Senators are appointed for life by the PM and are unaccountable. They just rubber stamp Laws passed by the parliament. It is therefore ineffective. There was a movement 3 decades ago to have what was called a triple "E" Senate- equal; elected; and effective. Ultimately no changes were made to the Senate. The Senate was designed to be a mechanism to protect the smaller provinces from the bigger ones. In that role, the Senate has failed dramatically. There is a great discrepancy between the Maritime provinces and Ontario for example. One solution put forward that was rejected by the sentiment of the people was to regionalize Canada into 5 or 6 regions. That has yet to gain enough momentum to become a reality.

Quebec is recognized as a distinct nation within Canada. The rest of Canada adopted the Canadian Constitution in 1982 along with a Bill of Rights. Quebec failed to endorse the Constitution and remains outside despite attempts such as the Meech Lake Accord (Brian Mulroney) to bring Quebec into the fold. Quebec narrowly voted to remain a part of Canada in a separation referendum. (Lucien Bouchard; Jacques Parizeau) Some argue that the two-party system should be abolished, or at least that there should be more than just two parties. Canada has 3 National parties (Liberals; Conservatives; Socialist Party) and 1 regional party (Quebec Bloc). The US has 2 parties (Republicans and Democrats) and currently 2 independents in Congress.

The government of the United States has advantages over its Canadian counterpart. The first is that Voters get to cast a ballot for their leader -the President. Canadians do not get that opportunity. Canadians must vote for a party and the MP in their riding. Canadians might like a certain Prime Minister, but not like the MP in their riding, or vice versa. It is a weakness in the Canadian system. We the people is a phrase often repeated from the outset of the US Constitution. Canadians did not have a constitution up until 1982. They had no Bill of Rights. They do now, but there is a weasel clause called the "Notwithstanding Clause" that allows provinces to back out of inherent rights that the people should have. In fact, Canadians really do not have inherent rights. This is another weakness of the Canadian system.

The US system has what is familiarly called "checks and balances" built into their system of government. There are three branches of government including the Legislative (Congress and Senate); the Judiciary; and the Executive. For a Bill to become Law it must pass the elected Congress, the Senate and the veto power of the President. The Judiciary has the role of determining whether a Law is legal and the exact meaning of the legislation. This way governmental powers are distributed. *Power corrupts; Absolute power corrupts absolutely.*

In the Canadian system, there is practically only the House of Commons made up of Members of Parliament. Like the United States, parties really determine what laws will be put forward. The Canadian Senate is unelected; it is appointed by the Prime minister. The Judiciary does play a similar role in overseeing the legality of certain legislation. Ultimately, the Monarch must cause ascent of a bill of legislation. It is a formality.

The Senate in Canada does not play as important a role in the law-making process. It is really a rubber stamp rather than a House of second thought. The Senators are distributed across regions of the country. There is not the protection built into the Canadian system. Majorities therefore oppress the minorities. In the last election two provinces had only 1 representative in the governing party. Ontario and Quebec dominate the Canadian economy with regions like the Maritimes left out. There is no protection for minorities in the Canadian system of government.

The US system of government has its drawbacks as well. First, in the US system, because of the Checks and Balances, the system in a crisis sometimes moves too slow. This was the case in the Great Depression when Franklin Roosevelt considered taking monarchical powers.

Second, Wars in the US are waged by US Presidents but require funding from the Congress. The US Congress holds the purse strings in the US government. Sometimes they will vote to try to limit a President's war powers.

Third, it seems that Americans are forced to be political animals or mentally check out of the process. They have elections every two years, presidents every four years, and Senators every six years. This is just too much politics for some. In Canada, there are fewer elections. But there is no limit on how many terms a Prime minister can hold. The US President can only run twice. Campaigning begins

just after a defeated party loses its power.

A system of government is superior if, to pass legislation, there must consensus within and between both parties. Each party may have more leftist leaning members and more right leaning members; they are required to be on board with legislation to get their votes to pass the legislation. It is assumed that every issue is binary. This may not be entirely true. Every question asked of government to answer is yes or no to proposed legislation. A drawback is that MP's and congressmen vote with their party rather than their conscience or whom they represent. They are accountable to their party, not their constituents.

Finally, there is the problem that plague democratic governments; this is lobbying. Billions of dollars are spent each year on lobbying and is especially pronounced in the United State. For example, the gun lobby prevents legislation from limiting access to firearms. The result is that there are many mass shootings in the Us unlike anywhere else in the world.

The Canadian Federal system of government does not really work. As a Canadian, I could not grow up to be the Prime minister

because I am not bilingual. To make matters worse, I live in the only bilingual province in Canada, New Brunswick, so I could not be premier either. I think that is why I pay attention to American politics more so than Canadian. Five of the last 7 PM's (excluding Kim Campbell who wasn't elected) have been from Quebec. That is not fair. Its past time for Quebec to separate and take New Brunswick with it.

Can these systems be improved upon? Probably, but I do not know how. America seems to have the better system, but Canada is the better country to live in. Winston Churchill asserted that, *Democracy is the worst form of government except for all the others.*

### **Acknowledgment**

None.

### **Conflict of Interest**

No conflict of interest.