

People's Democratic Republic of Algeria
Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research
Hamma Lakhdar University of El-Oued
Faculty of Arts and Languages
Department of Arts and English Language



Political Party Systems in Britain and America: Comparative Study

**Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
Master's Degree in Literature and Civilization**

Submitted by:

Ibtissam Guerricha

Meriem Bellabaci

Supervised by:

Mr. Tarek Semmari

Board of Examiners:

Dr Naoua Mohammed

President

University of El-Oued

Mr Semmari Tarek

Supervisor

University of El-Oued

Dr Saoud Ammar

Examiner

University of El-Oued

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Dedication

We would like to dedicate this work to the tender hearts, to our dearest mothers who provide us with all the needed moral support to fulfil the work and to the corner stones of our life, our fathers.

Special dedication goes to our small families: our husbands and our children.

We also dedicate this work to our dearest sisters and brothers.

Finally, to all the people whom we loved, and who helped us.

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The most remarkable achievement at this stage of our lives is the accomplishment of our master dissertation.

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At the end, we would admit that every error is our full responsibility.

Abstract

The concept of the party system emerges from comparative political science in which scholars examine party system in the United States and use it to study others. This dissertation is intended to investigate within the above framework political parties and party system in Britain and America, and to explore the similarities and the differences between them. This would be very helpful for students of political sciences and anyone who is interested in the topic. The study is a qualitative research based on the historical analytical method through which historical events and facts of the two sides of the equation are depicted. The findings prompt a re-thinking of the United Kingdom party system. They also illustrate to a larger degree that the United Kingdom does have a two party system that it is not pronounced as its counterpart in America. The reason behind this lays on the First Past the Post voting system. However, the disgruntlement of the British calls for more representative voting system which if it was applied, things would be different. In America, despite the steady two- party system, the overlap between the two major political parties may lead eventually to one-party system.

Keywords: First Past the Post, one- party system, party system, political parties, proportional voting system, two- party system,

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

BNP	British National Party
DUP	Democrats Unionist Party
DUV	Democrats Unionist Voice
EU	European Union
Lib Dems	Liberal Democrats
GOP	Grand Old Party
MP	Member of Parliament
SDLP	Scottish Democratic and Labour Party
SDP	Social Democratic Party
SLD	Social and Liberal Democrats
SMDP	Single member district plurality
UK	United Kingdom
UKIP	United Kingdom Independent Party
US	United States
USA	United States of America

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General Introduction

1. Background of the Study

Because modern countries are mass states, they cannot be governed by all people, instead they have representatives. Among the various methods of representation that work as a mediator between the people and their governments are political parties which become an indispensable part of governments and democracies all over the world.

The way those parties interact results in party systems. There are many classifications for party systems. In fact, every country has different a party system type even though in some cases it looks the same. This political form differs from each other in some countries such as the UK and the USA which can be recognised as a two-party system states.

2. Statement of the Problem

Despite the fact that many people think that Britain and America share the same political party system, they in fact meet in some features and differ in others.

3. Research Questions

The study endeavours to find answers to the following key questions:

1. To what extent are the political party systems in the UK and US similar or different?
2. How does the political party system operate in the UK and US?

Research Hypotheses

It is assumed that:

1. The incorporation of Party system in the UK will enforce democracy in the country.
2. If the US policy concentrated on a two party system, the country can shift to a one-party rule.

3. If party system in UK has changed over time, the country enjoyed different systems in its long history.

4. Aims of the Study

On the ground of what is stated above, the aim of the current study is to spotlight on the political parties in the UK and USA, their historical functions, and the philosophies behind them. In addition, it attempts to compare and contrast party systems in both countries to each other via reviewing and analysing the existing literature associated with the issue at hands.

4. Research Methodology

The method used to conduct this research is the historical and descriptive-analytical. In this respect, it is considered qualitative where the necessary data relevant to the research theme are gathered via reviewing reliable books, articles and analysing official websites. The study ends up with reshaping the data gathered from different sources through description and analysis to generate the common and distinctive features between the UK and the USA party systems.

5. Significance of the Study

The significance of the study stems from several points of different angles. It is purely comparative political and historical study shedding light on two outstanding democracies focusing on parties and party interaction in both countries. Secondly, the data gathered from this study can be used in further research by researchers in the field of politics as it provides rich and reliable information about parties and party system in the UK and the USA.

6. Structure of the Study

The present work comprises three chapters. The first one tackles the issue of political parties and party system in the UK. The pivotal focus in this chapter is to explore the development of parties in Britain including the devolved regions and how they interact and alternate power in Westminster. First, it focuses on the historical development of parties out of

fractions in Britain. Then, it spots light on the parties represented in the House of Commons and the devolved institutions. Finally, it examines the party systems in the UK. Chapter two is dedicated to the origin of parties in the US and the classic American two-party system. The third chapter is devoted to analyse and to identify the main distinguishing and common features of each party system model.

CHAPTER ONE

Political Parties and Party System in Britain

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Introduction

The United Kingdom consists of four countries currently under the rule of Queen Elizabeth II. These are England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. They form together a constitutional monarchy and a parliamentary sovereignty. The Prime Minister, currently Boris Johnson is the Head of government. Under this constitutional framework, the central UK government, the regional governments of Scotland and Wales, the executive of Northern Ireland, exercise their respective executive powers.

In former time, the Monarch possessed a great deal of political power, but this has now been eroded. It is undertaken by the Prime Minister and other members of government. This shift was due mainly to the emergence of political parties which has made the British political party system one of the most established democratic systems in the world.

1.1. The Development of Political Parties in Britain

Despite the fact that the roots of the British Parliament can be traced back to the period between the eighth and eleventh centuries AD when the Saxon Monarchs established the principle that the advice should be sought from the assembly of the wise (Bentley, Dobson, Grant & Robert, 2006), it took more than four centuries before the concept of "political parties" gave a new dimension to political life in Britain. At the beginning, the parliament was made up of prominent king's advisors, nobles and clergy, invited by the King to discuss issues of interest to the country, but after the English Civil War and the parliamentary upheavals, English political parties began to take shape.

It was the debate about whether or not the brother of Charles II, Duke of York James II, should be allowed to succeed to the throne that divided members of Parliament into two factions. Those who wanted to exclude James II on the ground that he was a Roman Catholic were known as Whigs and others who were not prepared to exclude the king were labelled

Tories. These two terms have been used as dishonorable description for those people. The word "Whig" was used to describe horse thieves in Scotland, and was later associated with lack of religious commitment whereas the word "Tory", in Irish, means a Catholic bandit.

Neither of them actually were political parties in the modern sense with central organisations. They were instead loose alliances of likeminded aristocrats and gentry. Very broadly, the Whigs were a rationalist, progressive grouping led by a powerful faction among the aristocracy while the Tories were reactionary country gentlemen opposed the legacy of changes embodied in the Glorious Revolution. The Tory ethos has been summed up with the phrase: god, King, and country. The passage of the Great Reform Act of 1832 led to the extension of the franchise process and to the birth of modern political parties.

The Great Reform Act expanded the participation in election to the middle classes and rebalanced constituencies. Another requirement of the Act was that voters must be registered. To ensure that the registration process was carried out efficiently, the parties saw the need for some central control over the activities of the group of local supporters. The Tories, therefore, established the Carlton Club as the headquarters in 1832 and the Whigs established the Reform Club as their headquarters in 1836. These led the parties to establish the links between politicians and voters via central organisation which are typical of modern party.

In 1834, Robert Peel transitioned the term Tories to Conservative as an official party name and re-interpreted the key elements of the old Tory tradition, effectively modernising the party under the banner support for social reform and free trade. However, the establishment of its infrastructure was rewarded to the effort of Benjamin Disraeli and Lord Stanley. In 1859, an alliance between the Whigs, the middle-class liberals and the Peelites became to be known as the Liberal Party. Under the leadership of William Ewart Gladstone, the party developed into a modern political party with a mass membership and a nationwide extra-parliamentary organisation.

After a further franchise reform in 1867, Britain shifted from political parties that developed from elites in the parliament to parties with mass membership organised at national and local levels (Garnett & Lynch, 2010). During the 19th century, some progress had also been made towards free and fair elections which broaden the electorate so that 28% of adults could vote. After the contribution of women as a working force instead of men who participated in war, they were rewarded by given the right to vote to those over the age of 30. Later, the Equal Franchise Bill of 1928 at last gave women the vote on the same term as men.

1.2. Westminster Model of Party Representation

The Westminster Model is highly unusual and distinctive since the powers are separated in most democratic countries. However, in the parliamentary system like the British model, there is no separation of powers between the executive and the legislature. The chief executive i.e. the prime minister is not only an opposition to the legislature, s/he is actually a creation of it. Besides, there are two legislative arms but the upper house is unelected with little power in comparison to the lower house that have the real control.

In UK parliament, there are 650 seats most of them represent political parties. After a general election, the party with the largest MPs number have a majority, at least 326 forms the government. The second party is considered the official opposition. MPs who do not belong to political parties are called Independents. The house of Lords has the same pattern of party representation but with a slight difference: Peers do not represent constituencies and many of them have no party identification.

1.3. Major/ Mainstream Parties in the House of Common

The following information is based on the outcomes of the most recent General Election of 2019.

1.3.1. The Conservative Party

Its official name is the Conservative and Unionist Party and also known colloquially as the Tories. It is the United Kingdom's centre- right political party. Tory Party, or simply the Conservatives became highly successful in the 19th and 20th centuries. It is said that the 20th century was the conservative century as their leaders governed for almost 60 years including Winston Churchill and Margaret Thatcher. In this General Election, the party holds a majority with 364 MPs and forms the government.

1.3.1.1. Conservatism and the Conservative Party

The conservative ideology is usually credited to the Irish- born politician Edmund Burke (1729-97) in his book *Reflection on the Revolution in France* which was published in 1790. Garnett and Lynch (2010) claimed that Burkean conservatism is best described as a form of skepticism of the ability of human to act rationally and the belief that the power should be entrusted to the ruling elite minority.

In their analysis of the conservative party, Whiteley and his colleagues (1994) suggested that there are three distinct ideological tendencies within the conservative party: firstly, traditional conservatism that is derived from the values and attitudes traditionally held by the land-owning aristocracy such as: stressing patriotism authority, opposing social and political changes like the emancipation of women, legalisation of abortion and easier divorce.

Another brand is one nation conservatism which was first introduced by Benjamin Disraeli to widen support for the Tory. He was very centrist and viewed society as an organic system. He argued, “despite class differences, the interests uniting the British people were of far greater significance than those dividing them” (Bentley et al., 2006, p. 28). The last one called liberal or libertarian conservatism which mostly encourages both free trade and limited government monopoly. It has made an important impact on British politics since the mid-1970s

mainly when Margaret Thatcher became the leader of the party in 1975. Those who subscribe to this stand are often said to belong to the 'New Right'.

1.3.2. The Labour Party

The Labour Party has been the official opposition in the UK since 1910. Today, it sits in the centre-left of political spectrum. It has around 580,000 members and currently has 202 seats in the House of Commons. It is the main party in the current Welsh government and the third- largest party in the Scottish Parliament. Since April 2020, the party has been led by Sir Keir Starmer.

1.3.2.1. The Historical Development of the Labour Party and its Ideology

By the end of the 19th century, a number of socialist groups representing the working class such as the Independent Labour Party, the Social Democratic Federation and the Fabian Society united to form the Labour Representation Committee. The latter changed its name to be the Labour Party in 1906. Gradually, it has dominated the political scene and substituted the Liberal Party as the most powerful left party in UK.

The main socialist party in Britain is the Labour Party. As an ideology, it had its roots to the changes in the British society that was brought about by the Industrial Revolution which did not just result in the adaptation of existing ideologies such as liberalism and conservatism but they also led to the emergence of socialism as an alternative way of organising society. According to Bentley et al. (2006):

At the heart of socialism is the belief that people should join together and work collectively. Socialists have two main aims: the promotion of greater equality by means of redistribution of resources from the wealthy

to the rest; and the organisation of society through rational planning rather than by relying on market forces. (p. 36)

The Labour party has many different factions of thought, in fact more factions than the Conservative Party. The first one is Revolutionary socialism that had its roots in the works of Marx and Engels whose supporters believe that class conflict will inevitably result in the revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist system. The second tendency is Reformist socialists who embrace peaceful and gradual social reforms. They split in two groups: the Democratic Socialists and the Social Democrats. The latter are more willing to accept capitalism and are quite centrist economically such as the former Prime ministers Tony Blair and Gordon Brow. However, the former are highly anti-capitalists and they would like to nationalise most industry.

1.3.3. The Scottish National Party (SNP)

The Scottish National Party (SNP) is currently the biggest party in Scotland holding 47 seats of the 59 Scottish constituencies in the Westminster parliament and also forms the Scottish government as the largest single party but without an overall majority. It is a progressive, left-of-centre party with an internationalist outlook. In UK terms, it is the third biggest block in the Commons after the Conservatives and the Labours in terms of elected representatives and party membership, coming a head of the Liberals for the first time in 2015 General Election in terms of seats. In terms of popular vote, it is in the fifth place behind both the UKIP and LibDems. The reason for this discrepancy is due to the election system. The present Leader of the SNP is Nicola Sturgeon who was in power in 2014.

1.3.3.1. History of the Scottish National Party

The SNP was founded in 1934 when two small nationalists parties, the National Party of Scotland and the Scottish Party, merged. Its aim is an independent Scotland. At present, there are two distinct viewpoints within the SNP. Whilst the right wing which has generally

maintained control of the party stresses traditional value and nostalgic nationalism, the left wing has pressed the case for a socialist Scotland as an independent country within the EU. Following the 1997 general election, the party temporarily suspended its demand for an independent Scotland and supported the yes- yes campaign in the referendum which held in September 1997.

1.3.4. The Liberal Democrats

The Liberal Democrats currently have 11MPs in the Commons. It also has 91 members in the House of Lords, 5 members of the Scottish Parliament, 1 member of the Welsh assembly has 2 directly elected mayors. The party was part of a conservative- liberal Democrats coalition between 2010 and 2015. The coalition damaged the party's electoral prospects and it suffered large losses at the 2015 General Election. Ed Davey was recently elected as the new leader of Lib Dems, after Jo Swinson resigned following losing her seat in the 2019 UK General Election.

1.3.4.1. Origin and Party Ideology

The Liberal Democrats emerged in March 1988 when the Liberal Party formally united with the Social Democratic Party (SDP) to form a new party. At first, it was known as the Social and Liberal Democrats (SLD) but, after a ballot of the members in October 1989, Liberal Democrats was adapted as the common name for the party. Although the party is, therefore, the youngest of the three main parties, its roots reach back way beyond 1988. Whilst the SDP was formed after the split in the Labour Party in 1981, the foundation of the Liberal Party is generally dated to June 1859 from an existing parliamentary group – the Whigs.

“The political root of modern liberalism ideology that the party rely on lie in the 17th century with the writing of John Locke. He argued that people have natural rights which are the right of life, liberty, and property that cannot be removed except by the agreements of the people themselves” (Bentley et al., 2006, p.25). However “its economic roots went back to views of

Adam Smith who criticised the governmental protection of the economy against competition. Instead, he claimed that prosperity depended in allowing people to trade in free market'' (Bentley et al., 2006, p.25).

Liberalism has taken three forms: first, classical liberalism which focused on the individual's needs and became enormously influential in British politics in 19th century. Second, progressive liberalism that found their way in the political mainstream in the early part of the 20th century and came to be influential in the first three decades after the World War II. It focused on the needs of the individual caused by unemployment, sickness, and low income. Third, neo-liberalism has emerged as a new and distinctive type of liberalism by the election of Margaret Thatcher. Heywood (1994) claimed that ''it supported an extreme form of individualism which leaves little room for public services and the provision of social welfare'' (p. 320).

1.4. Minor Parties in the House of Commons

Minor parties are political parties with less members than the major parties. Throughout the 20th century, new parties have been set up in the hope that they would attract sufficient support to break the mould of British politics. But, apart from the Labour Party, no party has managed to achieve nationwide success. Minor parties do have some significance especially if the government only has a small overall majority in the parliament as between 1992 and 1997.

1.4.1. The Green Party

The British Green Party began life in 1973 as an environmental pressure group whose main policy area is the environment. In 1985, the party changed its name from the Ecology Party to the Green Party and thus come into line with environmental parties

internationally. In 1990, The Party split with its Scottish and Northern Irish branches to become the Green Party of England and Wales.

In 2019, the official website of the Green Party announced after the last general election:

it has won 60% more votes at the 2019 general election than in 2017, with more than 850,000 voters backing their policies for a radical Green New Deal. The party's vote share increase of 64.6 % – from 525,665 votes to 864,743 – was the largest increase of any party. Caroline Lucas has been re-elected as MP for Brighton Pavilion for a third time, receiving a majority of 33,151 votes – a majority of 57.2%, up 4.9% . (“Green party piles on more votes”, para. 9)

1.4.2. The Alliance Party of Northern Ireland

The Alliance Party of Northern Ireland was reborn in 1970 from the New Ulster Movement. it is a non-sectarian unionist party that gains votes from the middle-class people in both religious factions in the country. Its chief objective is to treat successfully the dissection in Northern Irish community to build a shared society, free from menacing, segregation and violence, where everybody is secure and is able to do their part and treated equally with recognition. This ideology enables the party to become the third political party in Northern Ireland under the leadership of Naomi Long.

1.5. Political Parties in the Devolved Parliament and Assemblies

“Devolution is the process of devolving power from the centre to the sub-national units. It is reversible and subordinate to the UK parliament” (Leeks, Sear & Gay, 2003, p. 3). The devolution settlement was implemented by Blair government in 1997 as a result of the rising

of nationalism in Ireland together with the Celtic fringes of Scotland and Wales. These events led Westminster to turn from a centralised unitary state that had no elected regional assemblies or its sub-national government was weak to regionalised unitary state which had directly- elected assemblies enjoying legislative powers or significant autonomy from the centre.

1.5.1. Party Representation in the Scottish Parliament

The Scottish Parliament was first held in 1999 but it started to function in 2000. It has 129 members who were elected following a version of the Additional Members system. The last election took place on May 6th while the campaign started before on March 25th. The winner was the SNP that formed its fourth government with 64 seats. The second place was retained to the conservatives with 31 seats. The Labour placed the third with only 22 seats. The Greens won 8 seats whereas the Liberal Democrats won only 4 seats.

1.5.2. Party Representation in the Senedd Cymru/ Welsh Assembly

There have been six elections to the devolved parliament of Wales since its establishment by the Government of Wales Act in 1998. The last election was held on Thursday 6 May 2021. The Labours used to win the majority of votes and seats and always formed the government, either as a minority or in coalition. In 2021 election, in spite it won the highest number of seats, it fell short of an overall majority. This made the Welsh Labour seek Plaid Cymru coalition which was announced on 22 November 2021. This coalition had a long-term benefit for the people of Wales such as Extending free school meals to all primary school children, Expanding free childcare to all two-year-olds...

1.5.3. Party Representation in the Northern Ireland Assembly

Between 1972, when direct rule from Britain imposed on Northern Ireland, and 1992, none of the three main traditional political parties fielded any candidates in Northern Ireland. In

the general election of 1992 and 1997, however, the Conservative Party did put up candidates though none was elected. Since 1972, therefore, the people of Northern Ireland have elected MPs, in terms of the UK as a whole, are minor parties.

The main political parties in Northern Ireland are divided into two main groupings, unionists and nationalists. The unionist and the loyalist parties attract almost exclusively Protestant support and have as their central cause the maintenance of Northern Ireland's position within the UK. They also believe in the legitimacy of Northern Ireland as a distinct political, economic and cultural entity such as the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), the Ulster Unionist Party and the Democratic Unionist Voice (DUV). The unionists, mainly, the UUP was closely associated with the Conservative Party. However; nationalist and republican parties gain support from Catholics. The term is generally used to describe those that support peaceful assertions of Irish identity like Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) and Sinn Féin whose members were refused access to Parliament because they refused to take the Oath of loyalty.

There are 90 Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) in Northern Ireland. They are elected every five years using a system of Proportional Representation (PR) known as The Single Transferable Vote system. The last election was held on March 2nd 2017. The election marked a significant gains for the nationalist parties for the first time since Ireland's partition in 1921.

1.6. UK Party System

Despite the stereotype that the UK party system is a two party system, it has in fact changed over time.

1.6.1. Party System and Party Systems' Classification

Party system may be defined as the conduct of government based on the number of political parties within the system. According to Sartori (1976) it is precisely the system of

interaction resulting from inter-party competition. That is the system in question bears on the relatedness of parties to each other.

There are many classifications of party system. The most widely accepted criteria for classification is the number of parties vying to gain power. This led to four different systems:

- In one dominant party system, only one party dominates and there is practically no political competition between parties.
- Two-party system means that two parties primarily dominate the political competition, while other smaller parties only play a subordinate role. A faction of this type is two-and-half party system in which third parties winning enough seats have a significant impact on the governing system.
- A variant of this situation is a two- and- a- half – party system, in which third parties regularly win sufficient representation to have a potential effect on the overall outcome.
- In multi- party systems, there might be more than two parties have an effect on the political competition (Hofmeiter & Grabow, 2011, p. 18).

1.6.2. What Sort of Party System is UK?

UK party system can be recognised as all the four above mentioned party system' s classifications. Having surveyed the historical development of British political parties between 1689 and 1989, Ingle (1992) concludes:

Our historical survey indicates that the British political system has been dominated on and off, over the past 300 years , by two parties , but it also shows the nature of this domination and of the parties themselves to have been subject to constant and considerable change.

The pattern of party politics, moreover, has changed just as

dramatically, with long spells of dominance by one party and with parties constantly breaking up and regrouping. (p. 320)

This passage shows how important perspective is in considering whether or not Britain has a two-party system. If someone is living through a period in which two parties have been alternating in power for the previous 30 years, then it appears that Britain has a two-party system. On the other hand, if someone is living through a long period of government by a single party, it appears that a dominant-party system has replaced the old two-party system. Similarly, if someone chooses to examine the party system in Britain between 1945 and 1979, that will probably lead them to different conclusions from someone who looks at trends over the last 150 years.

1.6.2.1. UK as a Dominant- Party System

It is argued that the UK has a dominant-party system even if the life-cycle for the dominant parties has been relatively short. After the First World War, the Conservatives have been in government either alone or as a dominant member of a coalition for two-thirds of the 20th century, making the latter a Conservative century. According to Statista website, since 1918, there have been 28 general elections in the UK, with the Conservative Party winning the highest share of vote in 19 elections.

Moreover, from 1979 to 1992, the party won four general elections in a row. Garnett and Lynch (2007) considered that, “in a genuine two-party system, the leading opposition group should have a reasonable expectation of winning power at the next election. By contrast, the Conservatives were easily re-elected in 1983 and in 1987, and despite problems over the poll tax and the deposition of Thatcher they still managed to win in 1992” (p. 319).

However, the Labour's victories in 1997, 2001 and 2005 and was an evidence that these results have been produced by unfamiliar circumstances, rather than established and

persisting model of party competition. In addition, under the 'Westminster model', uninterrupted governments whether Conservatives or Labours have exhibited some features of what called an 'elective dictatorship'. The governing party is tempted to ignore the opposition party in parliament and fail to notice the key dissimilarity between rule in the benefit of a party, and administration in the concern of the nation as a whole.

1.6.2.2. UK as a Two- Party System

The idea that Britain has a two- party system had in fact its root in the study of Robert Mckenzie (1955). In his study, he spent 595 out of 597 pages discussing the Conservative and Labour parties and dismissing the Liberal party and the minor parties. He suggested that they were all but irrelevant to the British party system.

In the two- party system described by Mckenzie and his followers, the two main parties in election for an absolute majority of seats. Whilst one party forms the government, the role of the other is to form an opposition which exposes government policy to scrutiny and develops its own policies. The opposition party works on the assumption that it will take over the reins of government at the next election and, more often than not, that is what happens. This has been the case scenario in Britain since the 18th Century through the post-war era.

In terms of electoral success, Britain has customarily been classified as a two-party state since there are only two parties which are large enough to form the government, Conservatives and Labour. From 1924 onwards, all UK governments have either been led by Labour or Conservative parties. This is mainly due to the electoral system of First Past the Post. This system tend to eliminate smaller parties which although they may get a substantial percentage of the vote, get less representation and build up the representation of the politicians who are the least like them.

1.6.2.3. UK as a Two- and- a- Half –Party System

Some politicians argue that Britain turns to have a two- and- a- half –party system. Garnett and Lynch (2007) assumed that The Lib Dems or the SNP are likely to play a decisive role in any future contest where the two main parties will run each other close. This means that third parties are still able to make very significant gains and enough power to play king maker in the events when neither of the major parties hold a majority.

1.6.2.4. UK as a Multi- Party System

A further point needs to be examined- namely that Britain is or is becoming a multi-party system. We all know that the main battle is between Conservative and Labour. Besides, historically speaking, all votes were for Labour or the Conservatives, for example they collectively received 96.8% of the votes in 1951, 89.4% of the vote in 1970. However, there has been a period where this changed: (2005- 67.6%), (2010- 65.1%) , (2015- 67.3%). This led political scientists to suggest the UK had become a multi-party system.

Another evidence that UK is turning to be a multi- party system is the steady growth in electoral support for other parties since 1997 such as the Lib Dems and nationalist parties in Scotland and Wales and the challenge made recently by issue parties in the form of the Green Party, UKIP and the Brexit party. Parties from Northern Ireland became more significant with the rise of the DUP who propped up the Tory government 2019-19 and Sinn Fein who do not take their seats.

Only the disproportional effects of the Westminster electoral system have prevented the votes of so- called other parties being reflected in a large number of seats. First Past The Post, a widely used voting system in which the candidate with the most votes wins that constituency seat, is used in general elections in UK. It is accused to damage the chances of the

Lib Dems and has a similar impact on the Greens and the UKIP. It has however helped the SNP whose vote is geographically concentrated.

In five general elections (1983-2001), those parties have gained an average of some 25% of vote and around 40 seats as opposed to the 160- 170 they would have got under a pure proportional system. In 2005, the figures reached new highs of over 30% and over 80 seats. But this third force in the Commons is diverse to affect policy. In 2015- 56 with 1.45 million votes, Lib Dems won 8 seats with 2.42 million votes, Greens 1 seat with 1.11 million votes and UKIP 1 seat with 3.88 million votes. In 2019, SNP 48 seats with 1.24 million votes, Lib Dems 11 seats with 3.7 million votes, Greens 1 seat with 0.87 million and BRITISH party 0 seats with 0.64 million votes.

1.6.3. Party System in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland

Devolution, decentralisation autonomy and the electoral system reshape parties and party systems in the devolved regions. They have in fact different model of party representation in comparison to the Westminster model that is governed by the two prominent parties in UK, the Conservative and the Labour parties. Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland tend to have a multi-party system in which at least four parties are members in the local legislature bodies. In Scotland, the Scottish National Party is in charge of the Scottish government. The Welsh government is a labour led coalition. The Northern Ireland is a power sharing executive of the Democratic Unionist Party and Sinn Féin.

Conclusion

Despite the fact that the UK has many political parties, there are only three with national popularity besides the nationalist parties in the devolved areas. The UK party system is more likely a two-party system because of many reasons: first, the Conservatives and the Labour party have been enjoying political dominance over the years with the period from 1945 to 1970

being characterised by a classic two-party system. Furthermore, the two-party system has been in place parallel to the existence of other third parties such as the Liberal Democrats and the nationalists, which are at a political disadvantage because they lack enough resources and candidates who can make a national political impact.

However, the period from 1970 to date has been marked by the emergence of strong support for third parties against the two main parties. Therefore, despite that the third parties have failed to replace the two-party system with a multi-party system, the parties have made a significant impact in British politics in terms of encouraging proportional representation of most political parties in some political jurisdictions in the UK. However, the first-past-the-post electoral system is still intact and in full support of the two-party system, and thus more needs to be done in terms of encouraging electoral reforms to counter or replace the two-party system in the UK.

Considerations about the above ideas led Dearlove and Saunders (1991) to suggest a typical British party system that gather almost the different forms of party system classification:

Britain can be characterised as a two-party system (in the commons);
as a multi-party system (in the country); and a dominant-party
system (in the corridors of power) because the electoral system and
multi-party politics have together enabled the Conservatives to
monopolise the control of the country at large. (p. 55)

CHAPTER TWO

Political Parties and Party System in America

Chapter Two: political parties and party system in America

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Introduction

Political parties are universal and essential feature of western democratic systems, and the U.S.A. is one of them. Although the Founding Fathers of the American constitution took a dim view of political parties, the two-party system came to emerge in which two major parties are highly competitive with one another and taken together win almost all the votes and offices in elections. However, American parties differ significantly from those in Europe since they have been in further decline over recent decades.

This chapter is divided into two parts. The former is devoted to state the history and the reasons behind the emergence of the political parties in the U.S.A. and their functions while the latter is an attempt to explain the meaning of two-party system in the United States and the development of the major parties' ideologies. Furthermore, it provides the features that make the American party system significant.

2.1. The First Political Parties in America: History and Origins

According to yourdictionary online (2022), the political party is “A group of people with similar political goals and opinions”. In general, political parties emerge when two or more groups of people have opposing views of government and both want to gain power. For this reason, the Founding Fathers of the American constitution took a dim view of the political parties. In the Articles of Confederation 9 and 10, Alexander Hamilton and James Madison wrote, respectively, about the danger of the political parties (Sandy, 2007). They viewed them as a divisive at a time when the country's greatest need was unity. Despite this view, the major two political parties in the United States today were found (the Democratic and the Republican Party).

2.1.1. The Emergence of the First Party System

“ It is a model of American politics used in history and political science to periodize the political party system that existed in the United States between roughly 1792 and 1824” (Chambers, 1972, p. 130). It is characterized by the struggle of the two major parties in order to win control of the presidency, congress, and the states: the Federalist and the Democratic-Republican Party.

To understand how and why the first political parties emerged in the United States, we need to go back to Washington's presidency (1789-1797) whose cabinet composed of people who have different opinions. The two most outspoken members of Washington's cabinet were Thomas Jefferson (his secretary of the state) and Alexander Hamilton (his secretary of the treasury).

(Sandy, 2007). Jefferson and Hamilton disagreed in almost everything and their debates led to the foundation of the first two political parties' ideologies that have become prominent forces in American politics.

In his farewell address, Washington warned the country against 'the spirit of faction' that had arisen. He went on to say:

Partisanship serves always to distract the public councils and enfeeble the public administration. It agitates the community with ill-founded jealousies and false alarms; Kindles the animosity of one part against another; foments occasional riots and Insurrection. It opens the door to foreign influence and corruption, which finds a facilitated access to the government itself through channels of party passions.

(Hofstadter, n.d., p. 120)

This means that Washington warned that political parties would lead to division and fighting among the people as it could lead, therefore, to foreign influence in the government, and another forms of corruption since people would use government power to satisfy their own desires, while neglecting the legitimate interest of other citizens. Despite Washington's warning, the beginning of the two-party system in the United States of America emerged from the debates within his own cabinet.

The political conflicts between Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson came, originally, from the American's economic interests. The economic activity in the South consisted mainly of agriculture, while that of Northeast was geared to shipping, banking and commerce.

The Federal party, which led by Alexander Hamilton, was made up of businessmen and merchants. Those who supported Hamilton were called Federalists, this name had first been used to describe the proponents of the constitution of 1787 (McKeever & Davies, 2006). The Federalists wanted a strong central government .Thus, they supported the growth of businesses and advocated for a protective tariff .This protected American industry by making foreign imports more expensive than American-made goods. Finally, they supported alliances with Great Britain and their policies tended to support the wealthy. The Federalists founded most of their support in the Northern states.

In opposition, there was another view about what America should look like and it was most associated with Tomas Jefferson, Hamilton's enemy from Washington's cabinet. He is considered the founder of the Anti-Federalist party which consisted of farmers and planters. The Anti-Federalists took the name Democratic Republicans because they saw themselves as the guardians of the American republic .Then, they became known as Jeffersonian Republicans because they increasingly gathered around Jeffersonian's presidential efforts. Jefferson considered Hamilton's policies as a promoter of the interests of the rich at the expense of the 'common man'. The Democratic Republicans were on favour of strong state government over

national government. Because of this, they supported state banks over national banks. Furthermore, they advocated free trade with Europe and an alliance with France which supported them in their revolution. Their policies tended to support agriculture and the 'Every Man'. As a result, most of the Republicans' support came from the southern states.

By 1796, every state was approximately controlled by the two major parties. Their policies were geared towards gaining votes rather than national politics. The Federalists initially had the upper hand in early party competition after they had supported their candidate John Adams to become the second American president at the expense of the Republicans' candidate Thomas Jefferson in the election of 1796. The Federalist Party was dominant until 1800. During this period, the Federal Party was presented by George Washington and John Adams as presidents of the United States of America respectively. Although George Washington did not join any party, he was generally considered as a Federalist.

For the election of 1800, the Republicans, on one hand, supported Jefferson, who drew up a party platform designed not merely to ensure his own election to the presidency, but also to produce a Republican majority in congress. The Federalists, on the other hand, supported John Adams for a second presidential term. Finally, the election ended and Jefferson became the third president of the United States of America. This election marked the end of the Federalist Party and the dominance of the Republican Party with Jefferson's two term administration, James Madison's two terms and James Monroe's two terms.

2.1.2. The Division of the Democratic-Republicans and the Birth of the Democratic Party

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Democratic-Republicans became the only game in town after they had won the presidential election for seven consecutive terms. The Federalists, in turn, solely faded, eventually dissolving. Because of this, four political candidates within the party competed for the presidential election of 1824: Quincy Adams, Henry Clay, William Crawford and Andrew Jackson. John Quincy Adams won the presidency in spite of

Andrew Jackson's winning the popular vote. This caused a strong political division within the party, which eventually led to the split of the party into two: the Democrats, which have continued to the present day, under the leadership of Andrew Jackson and the National Republicans, which then became the Whig party.

2.1.3. The Issue of Slavery and the Birth of the Republican Party

During the 1850s, slavery issue came to fore and divided the country along geopolitical lines. Southern Democrats gradually became the pro-slavery party while northern Democrats, on the other hand, argued that this issue should be settled on a local level and through popular referendum. Anti-slavery sentiment found its expression in a number of third parties, such as the Liberty party, the Free Soil party, and the American party or 'Know Nothing party'. However, it was the Republican Party, founded in 1854, which was able to combine anti-slavery with other policies and have become a competitor to the Democratic Party. This new Republican Party had recently been formed by a group of Whigs, Democrats and other politicians who had broken free from their respective parties in order to form a party based on anti-slavery platform. As has been pointed out, “In its origin, the Republican party, like all the other dominant major parties (Jeffersonians, Jacksonians and New Deal Democrats), was anything a party of the left, not of the right” (Mc Sweeney & Zvesper, 1991, p. 250).

Despite the fact that both parties, the Democratic and the Republican, differ from issue to issue, those core beliefs would set the foundation for the Democratic and the Republican parties we know today.

2.2. The Reasons of the Emergence of the Political Parties in the U.S.A.

Between the reasons that stand behind the emergence of the political parties, we come to choose the following:

- The American people were divided by their own economic interest into Southern on favour of agriculture and Northern on favour of shipping, banking and commerce. These opposing and competing poles quickly risen as political conflicts.
- The political philosophy and foreign affairs that divided the Americans into those (Federalists) who wanted America to be firmly affiliated with Great Britain. And, in the other hand, others (Republicans) who supported the French as they participated in the American Revolution.
- The need to organise for competitive election. The aim of the Republican Party was a congressional opposition to a Federalist presidency, but quickly transformed to gain presidency itself. This required not merely organisation in congress, but also in the country at large.
- The separation of powers in the United States made the rise of the political parties a necessity. Political parties work as a network which produce coalitions between the powers to hold the political system together. (McKeever & Davies, 2006)

2.3. Functions of the Political Parties in the USA

- Recruit candidates.
- Nominate candidates
- Get out the votes.
- Facilitate electoral choice
- Influence national government.

2.4. The Two-Party System and the Two Major Parties in the U.S.A.

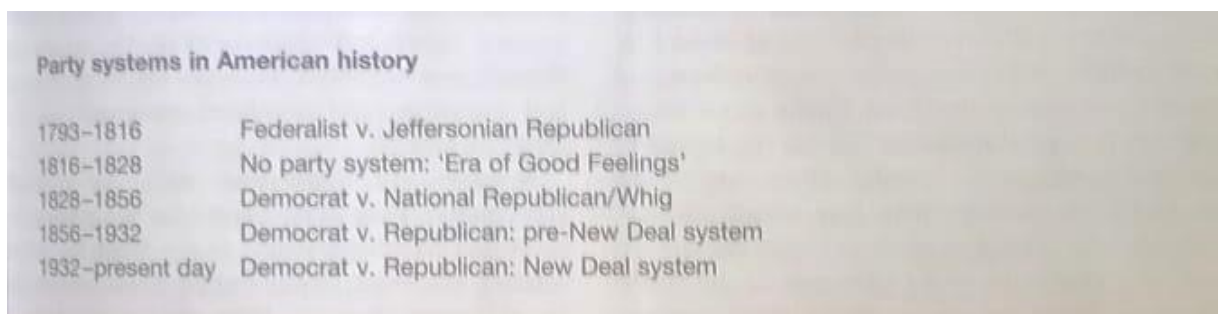
The United States is a majoritarian two-party system in which two parties are dominant in all three levels of government. The Republican and the Democratic Parties have

dominated the political scene since the 1850s. Many small parties, often generally termed "third parties" or "minor parties", have come and gone, sometimes winning small offices at the state and local levels, but the success of these parties is still insignificant.

2.4.1. The Development of the Two-Party System in the U.S.A

According to McKeever and Davies (2006), the development of the two-party system in the United States is divided into five eras as shown in figure 2.1 below.

Figure 2.1. *The Development of American Party System*



Party systems in American history	
1793–1816	Federalist v. Jeffersonian Republican
1816–1828	No party system: 'Era of Good Feelings'
1828–1856	Democrat v. National Republican/Whig
1856–1932	Democrat v. Republican: pre-New Deal system
1932–present day	Democrat v. Republican: New Deal system

Note. Adapted from (McKeever, R & Davies, Ph, 2006. *Politics USA*)

2.4.1.1. The First Two-Party System Era (1793 – 1816)

It witnessed a competition between the Federalist Party which was in favour of the ratification of the constitution and the Democratic Republican Party -often called the Anti-Federalist or the Jeffersonian Republican Party- that opposed the ratification. This era witnessed the dominance of the Federalist Party from 1793 until 1800. After the presidential election of 1800, the Jeffersonian Republicans dominated the political scene in the United States and the Federalists came to their end since they refused the war of 1812. Then, an "Era of Good Feelings" topped the political scene to declare the end of the first party system in the U.S.A.

2.4.1.2. The Era of Good Feelings (1816-1828)

Dooley (2004) stated, “The phrase "Era of Good Feelings" was coined by Benjamin Russell in the Boston Federalist newspaper Columbia Centinel on July 12, 1817, following

Monroe's visit to Boston, Massachusetts, as part of his good-will tour of the United States'' (p. 298). This means that the 'Era of Good Feelings' was accompanied with James Monroe's presidency. It signalled the American concentration on their affairs after they had won the war of 1812. It is also marked by the growth of isolationism and economic prosperity.

2.4.1.3. The Second Party System Era (1828-1856)

According to Holt (1992), the Democratic and the Whig parties represented the two poles of the two-party system at this era. The former was under the leadership of Andrew Jackson while Henry Clay led the latter. During this era, the Democrats succeeded in building the first mass, popular party in the United States. Their opponents 'The Whigs' struggled to put together a party which could capture the presidency and they succeeded in electing two presidents: William Harrison and Zachary Tylor.

2.4.1.4. The Pre-New Deal System Era (1856-1932)

This era was characterized by the dominance of the Republican Party at the expense of the Democratic Party. It is also called the Progressive era (McKeever & Davies, 2006). As the need for the reform of industrial urban society became so great that both Republicans and Democrats moved to adopt progressive policies. Each party succeeded in capturing the presidency with progressive nominee –Theodore Roosevelt (Republican) and Woodrow Wilson (Democrat). In the 1920s, both parties reverted to conservatism, but they had not become radicalised in the process to convince the electorate that third party was unnecessary. Thus, their conservatism enabled them to marginalise radical and third party movements. So, during this era capitalism and constitutional democracy were preserved at the expense of socialism or of authoritarianism.

2.4.1.5. The New Deal System Era (1932- present day)

The New Deal system represents approximately the current form of the political party system in the United States of America, where there are two main parties, the Republican Party and the Democratic Party. This period is characterised by the fact that the Republican Party began to lose the support of the American people after the great depression of October, 1929. This paved the way for the Democratic Party to gain control over the political field under its president Franklin D. Roosevelt whose pragmatic philosophy led to the realignment of the voting blocs and interest groups around the Democrats. Unlike the ideologue Hoover, he attempted to solve the main problem of the economic crisis. Using his 'New Deal' strategy, he aimed at helping the underdog in order to strength banking, manufacturing and landowning interests as well.

It was due to Roosevelt's 'New Deal' that the Democratic Party discovered a new recipe for electoral success. The fact that the American political parties have never been based on ideology helped his pragmatic policy to emerge. i.e. party coalitions were based on the rule that the enemy of my enemy is my friend. Thus, the secret of a successful governing party coalition, then, is the ability of rewarding one element of the party without causing too much offence to another. Because of this strategy, most black voters from the GOP switched to the Democratic Party which became known as the party of civil rights.

The ideological parameters of the two major parties has became clear. Liberalism has been associated with the Democrats whilst the Republicans positioned themselves more towards conservatives.

2.4.2. The Characteristics of the Two Party System in America

The American two-party system has a special characteristics that distinguishes it from any other party system in the world.

2.4.2.1. Differences between the Major Parties

The American political party system is dominated by two major parties which are the Democratic and the Republican Parties and the existence of third parties does not affect their future and their effectiveness. Almond, Powell, Dalton and storm (2006) noted that “The split between the two major parties is sharp and meaningful; for example there was a vast gap between the views of Democratic and Republican voters on the President Bush's job performance, on Iraq War, and on many policy issues” (p. 735). He refers these ideological differences to the fact that Democrats has moved more towards the left whereas the Republicans have become increasingly conservative.

2.4.2.2. Flexible Partisan Policy

This feature means that the American people can participate in any party or leave it as there is no expenses for participating in a particular party; party membership is as simple as the act of registering for a party in order to vote in the election. It also represents that voters pay more attention to the candidates rather than their parties.

2.4.2.3. Decentralized Government

It means that, unlike other political parties in the world, the American parties do not have an organization that allows the leaders to impose their point of view on party members. Almond et al. (2006) explained that the two-party system in the United States is decentralized since the organization of the parties at the national, state, and local levels does not have enough power over the organizations at the other levels. In addition, each level of most of the parties have an executive and a legislative organization, and neither has any power over the other.

2.4.2.4. A Special Presidential Campaigns

The greatest prize or goal that can be obtained in the United States is to win the office of the presidency. Election campaigns depends on donations from the people and from

businessmen because it costs a lot of money, which other small existing parties cannot afford and therefore it has almost no role.

2.4.3. The Two-Party System and the Winner-Take-All Rule

In an important sense, the American presidential election is not just one single election, but rather fifty-one separate elections in the states and the district of Columbia. Thus, what determines victory is not the percentage of votes, it is rather the plurality of votes .i.e. the high percentage of votes. In the U.S, the competition between the major parties' candidates to get plurality of votes leads to the failure of the third parties in elections. Therefore, the voters of these parties tend to give their votes to the candidate that has a better chance of winning, as it is shown in figure 2.2 below. This rule is somehow complicated, but it keeps the American two-party system more effective.

Figure 2.2. *How the Two-Party System Perpetuates Itself*



Note. Adapted from (www.brainkrt.com)

2.5. Major Parties: General Policy and Political Values

Because of the nature of its electoral system, the United States of America has two major competitive parties which are the Democratic and the Republican parties. Each party has specific policies and general values.

2.5.1. The Democratic Party

The Democratic Party is the oldest political party in the United States. It is represented by the logo of the donkey. Democrats hold left-wing. Hence, they believe on stronger government which has a more progressive approach to help the citizens of the United States. The Democratic Party is typically more liberal in the views concerning the rights of the citizens. Economically, Democrats push for progressive taxation on rich citizens. The party prioritizes community and social responsibility. Overall, Democrats believe that government should play a role in alleviating poverty and social injustice.

2.5.2. The Republican Party

The Republican Party is one of the major parties in the United States' two-party system. It is also referred to as the GOP. This abbreviation stands for Grand Old Party. The Republicans represent themselves by the elephant logo. The party emphasises the right-wing. That is, they respect traditions and believe in more limited and less controlling government. They take a more conservative approach to most rights of the citizens. Furthermore, they advocate that social policies should be based on individual race and justice. The Republicans' economic ideas are centred on free markets.

2.6. Minor Parties

The United States also has many minor or third parties. The largest of which (on the basis of support for their presidential candidates in the 2016 election) are the Libertarian, Green, and Constitution parties.

2.6.1. The Libertarian Party

The Libertarian Party is the largest third party in the United States with over than 600,000 registered voters across all 50 states. The party gained some local offices. In 2020, the party was represented in Congress by Justin Amash. In terms of political believe, the

Libertarians are thought to be economically conservative and socially liberal. They believe that the government should not regulate the economy, but instead they are in favour of free market. They support free trade and free movement to all foreign countries. The Libertarians also advocate private schools and healthcare rather than popular ones.

2.6.2. The Green Party

The Green Party is the fourth largest political party. It has first been formed as a third party since 1984. According to its official website, the Green Party first gain popularity during the presidential election of Ralph Nader in 2000. The Greens hold left leaning ideas in most of the issues. The party defends four pillars which are peace, ecology, social justice and democracy. The Greens also call for highly progressive taxation. Additionally, they focus on things that make the good life such as healthcare, relationships, environment...

2.6.3. The Constitution Party

The Constitution Party is the fifth largest national conservative political party in the United States. It was found by Howard Phillips in 1988. It stands upon three pillars: integrity, liberty and prosperity. The Constitutionals advocate that taxes are unconstitutional. They do not support the governmental control over the economy. Instead, they believe in free markets. They also improve the policies that protect civil rights.

Conclusion

The United States quickly developed a two-party system despite the framers of the constitution thought of its harm to the political process. This was because parties performed useful tasks, such as recruiting and nominating candidates, organising elections and coordinating the government within and between Congress and the presidency. However, since the United States is heterogeneous, parties have been based as much on coalitions of interest as they have

been on ideology. Inasmuch as Elections in America are candidate-centred, rather than party-centred.

CHAPTER THREE

British and American Political Party System:

Common and Distinctive Features

Chapter Three: British and American Political Party System:

Common and Distinctive Features

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Introduction

As the primogenitors of modern democracy, the UK and the US political party systems are a strikingly unique models for many democracies. They both adapt the two- party system model, but they in fact share some common features and differ in others. This variation reflect differences in demographics, economic, development, political histories and electoral systems.

3.1. The UK Party System vs. the U.S Party System

Two-party system democracies can be either parliamentary or presidential as in the UK and the US respectively. The UK has a majority government and unwritten constitution. There is also no systems of checks and balances. The only thing that prevents party members from corruption is a long tradition of respect for rights and the power of the monarchy. The United States of America on the other hand is structurally inefficient. The president depends on the legislature and both have to agree to pass laws. As it is further explained by Fesnic (2008):

British two-partyism is very different from the American two-partyism. The institutional context is crucial for how a two-party system actually works and for its effects on policymaking. The key distinction here is between America's presidential system and Britain's parliamentary system. Although the logic of a two-party system is inherently majoritarian, the existence of separation of powers opens the door for divided government. This can mitigate the winner-takes-all effect of the two-party system when, as it is often the case in the United States, one party is in control of Congress and the other party controls the White House. The British parliamentary system, with its fusion of legislative and executive powers, prevents such an occurrence. In a parliamentary regime, a two-party system means that the party that has a majority in the legislature is also forming the government. Such single-party

governments have a higher life expectancy than multiparty governments.

(p. 200)

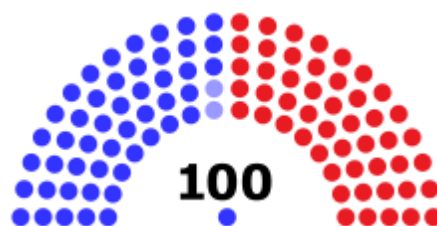
3.2. The Manifestation of the Two-Party System in UK and US' Governments

The UK is close to a two party system as it is the case in most countries of the world outside the United States but it is not similar to the level of two party dominance that the US has. To see how extreme the US two- party system is, we are going to first compare the national level (US Senate+ Congress vs. the British House of Commons) then the large sub- national bodies of both countries, those being the state legislatures against the major lower level elected bodies in the UK; the Scottish Parliament, the Welsh Assembly, the Northern Ireland Assembly, and the London Assembly which actually covers more people than any of the others.

3.2.1. At the National Level

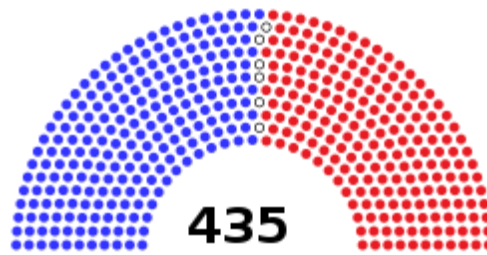
At the national level, the US has 100 Senators and 435 representatives. In the Senate, there are a grand total of two representatives that claim to be neither Republicans nor Democrats (and one of those has run to become the Democratic Party candidate for President and come second both the past two cycles). In Congress out of 435 seats, there is one person who was elected as a Republican and now represents the Libertarian Party. So, between the 535 seats that is grand total of the three people they are not part of the two main parties. Roughly 99.5% of seats at the national level are held either Republican or Democrats.

Figure 3.1. Senate Political Groups, November3,2020



Note. (Adapted from Wikipedia)

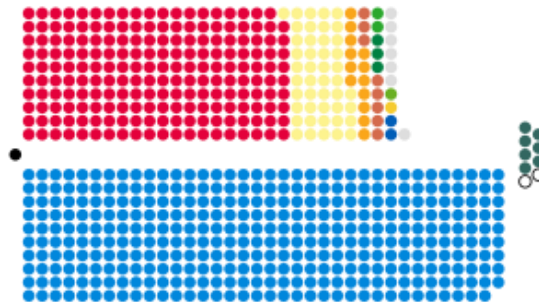
Figure 3.2. House of Representatives Political Groups, November 3, 2020



Note. (Adapted from Wikipedia)

Meanwhile, the UK House of Commons, which thanks to First Past the Post/ Winner Takes All system is as close to two-party as most other countries get, has 650 seats. Of those seats the Speaker is traditionally neutral. There are 364 Tory MPs, 202 Labour MPs, and over 80 others. The two big parties dominate- but do not drive out everyone else.

Figure 3.3. House Of Commons Political Groups, May 9, 2021



Note. (Adapted from Wikipedia)

3.2.2. At the Sub-national Level

The US State Legislatures are every bit as dominated by the two parties. Among the 50 states, out of almost 2000 upper chamber members there are three independents and two progressives- and everyone else is either a member of the Republican Party or Democratic Party. Out of almost 5500 lower chamber members, there are 20 independents, 7 progressives, and one member each for the Independence Party and the Reform Party. Roughly 99.5% of seats at a

state level are held by either Republicans or Democrats. All the state governors are members of the Republican Party or of the Democratic Party.

Meanwhile in Britain, we created the various sub- UK assemblies at the end of the 20th century:

- The London Assembly has never in its history had a majority of the representatives from one party or fewer than four parties.
- The Welsh Parliament has 60 members and has almost always been Labour-dominated. But Labour has never had more than half the members and the Tories are fighting for third. There have also never been fewer than four parties represented at any one time.
- The Scottish Parliament has 129 members, with the labour party and the Scottish National Party fighting for first and there have never been fewer than five parties represented.
- The Northern Ireland Assembly has never had fewer than 7 parties represented and no party has ever won as much as the third of the seats at any election.

Of course, unlike the First Past the Post Westminster election, those all have some form of proportional representation.

3.3. UK Political Parties vs. USA Political Parties

The UK political parties are much more structured and exist independently of elected office holders in a way that US political parties do not. It seems that, in the UK, people vote for parties much more than in the US, where at least a third of voters have no party affiliation. In many US states, the ballots are not permitted to identify a candidate's party affiliation.

3.3.1. Organisation of Political Parties

In Britain, political parties are organised as hierarchies, a top-down national organisation, with national leader and national organisation at the top holding the power to supervise the activities of local and regional party organisation. So, parties have more regular

congresses, and centralised party organisations in issue party programmes (also known as platforms or manifestos). According to Fesnic (1992),

British parties are centralized and disciplined, and representatives from the same party tend to vote as a bloc. Those who follow the party line enhance their chances for being rewarded in the future with a better position in the government, and party dissidence is rare. (P. 220)

In sharp contrast, the American Democratic and Republican parties are organised, as Samuel Eldersveld description, as "stratarchies". i.e. decentralised and are more bottom- up. That is, their organisations at the national, state, and local levels have little power, legal or extralegal, over the organisations at the other levels. According to Foster and Muste (1992) “ The United States has always had weak parties with “a less programmatic basis and fewer formal membership processes than the parties of other western countries’”. In the issue of formulating policy programmes, the party's policy positions are formalised by the national party conventions held at each presidential election, by adopting a party platform and by selecting a list of candidates. Besides, In the US, the party is more in the nature of supporting staff for elected office holders. By contrast, in the UK, the heads of political parties are always influential politicians even if they are not in parliament.

3.3.2. Patterns of Competition and Cooperation among Parties

Although the two poles of the majoritarian two- party system in The United States and Britain are highly competitive to gain office, they trust each other in the political system. That is why it is called consensual two-party system.

3.4. The Electoral System

Both Britain and USA use single-member district plurality (SMDP) election system, it is often called " First Past the Post". That is to say that the country is divided by the legislative

election rules into many election districts and in each district, the candidate who has the majority of votes –a plurality- wins the election in the district since the candidate needs only to win the election not the majority of votes.

3.4.1. Suffrage in both Countries

Suffrage in the United States, as in UK, has gradually widened over time. It was first restricted to white men. Then, it included Africans. In 1920, women could vote for the first time in US. 18 years adults had the right to vote in 1970. In Britain, less than 5% of British adults had the right to vote before the 19th century. This situation gradually changed after the three Reform Acts of 1832, 1867 and 1884 were passed broadening the electorate. So that, by 1900, 28% of adults could vote. After the First World War, all men over 21 and women over 30 were given the right to vote. Since 1928, the voting age of men and women has been the same. Later, the voting age was lowered to 18 in 1969.

Figure 3.4. Suffragists in the US



Note. (Adapted from Wikipedia)

3.4.2. Nominating Candidates

In the United States, candidates are selected directly through primary elections. But primaries are unusually open form of candidate selection. In Britain, candidates are chosen by party officials through single-member district, either locally or nationally.

3.4.3. Fundraising Campaign

Political parties seem to be responsible for funding campaigns in the UK, whereas US candidates are largely responsible for their own fundraising. US politicians are allowed to donate to each other's campaigns, and this means that members of Congress who are good fundraisers but outside the leadership structure are able to have influence over other members by contributing to re-election campaigns.

3.5. British Campaign vs. American Campaign

In USA, parties play a secondary role in organising campaigns which are basically candidate- centred and candidate- controlled. The process of the American campaign in using technology affected the organisation of the British campaign in order to gain voters' support. Campaigns are short in duration in the UK. Voters are asked to choose among a party candidates in the basis of their manifestos which are advertised during the process.

3.6. The Position of Third Parties in the both Systems

In UK, third parties such as the Lib Dems and the SNP play a crucial role when the government does not have an overall majority. The nationalists in the Celtic fringe have as well a significant function in the election if proportional version of the voting system would be applied. The electoral system in the United States inhibited the role of third parties. Although, apparently, they stand as the major parties ' protest voices. In fact, they indirectly support them to win the elections through coalitions. That is third parties voters tend to give their votes to those candidates who share the same ideology and have more chances of winning.

3.7. Two-Party System: Advantages and Disadvantages

There are both advantages and disadvantages of a two-party system in the UK and in the US. Among the tremendous positive aspects of this system is that it places restrictions on the amount of extremism that enters the government. It also encourages the government to offer majority representation. In addition, it speeds up the governing process for the government. It provides as well a clear majority in almost every election and encourage centrism... Meanwhile, there are plenty of demerits such as, it eliminate the ideas of having 100% representation of personal ideas. Furthermore, it limits the number of ideas that can be introduced to the electorate. Besides, it creates a system of exclusiveness...

3.8. The Future of the Two-party System in the UK and the U.S.A

The end of the 20th century has noticed a reduction in the support of the two mainstream parties in Britain. This turnout led to the loosing of majority in 2010 which could be considered as a dilemma for the Conservatives and the Labours.

From the origin of the two-party system in the late 17th century down today, the American experience has shown that democratic institutions function best when there are only two major political parties as Will Roger once committed," there are only two parties –the 'ins' and the 'outs'. The 'ins' devote much of their energy to staying in, while the 'outs' naturally concentrate on getting in.". The aim of getting majority obliges the parties to modify their diverse and conflicting claims. The question now arises whether the kind of ideologically committed party could alter permanently the American two-party system. The answer may be of two options: the American two-party system can remain steady as it can change.

It has been noted that parties which changed their ways soon make their way back to the main road after unfavourable results. the Democratic Party in the election of 1896 and the decline of the GOP are good examples. Over years it has been accepted in American politics that

differences between parties should be as few and as small as possible. However, others argue that lack of clearly defined choices in the alternatives will result eventually in a one-party system.

Conclusion

As a conclusion, in spite of the fact that the UK and the USA are two- party system countries, they function differently. By a quick count, members in House of Representatives split between two parties: the Democrats and the Republicans. The house of Commons in the UK has twelve political parties represented and seven independent members. However, The British have alternated between Conservative and Labour governments for a century. It was in fact in 1922 that the last time the Liberal party was the official opposition. The party still exists, but it is far outnumbered in the House by the separatist the Scottish National Party. That is why the UK actually offers voters the opportunity to vote for a party that represents their views. By contrast, the voters in the US have just the chance to choose between the major two parties, the Republicans and the Democrats.

General Conclusion

The present dissertation attempted to compare the political party system in Britain and the United States and to highlight the common and distinctive features of both systems. Owing to their recognition as providing a vital link between the government and the governed, political parties are an indispensable part of the democracies. There are various party systems that bring together the political parties or promote one party and shape the regime of the government. One of them is the two-party system, in which two major parties are highly competitive with one another and taken together win almost all the voters and offices in the election. The two-party system plays a major role in politics and governments of various democracies but no two party systems are exactly alike. This is the case in UK and the USA.

In this regard, we shed light on the points that gather and distinct the British and the American two-party systems via reviewing the related literature. The first chapter traced the party system in Britain and the historical development of its political parties, whereas the second chapter presented the political party system in the USA, and the history of its major parties. The last chapter provided analytical comparison and interpretations of the collected data in the previous chapters. The latter, allowed us to answer the questions and confirm the hypotheses

For the purpose of conducting such research, two questions are asked. The first question inquired on the extent of similarities and differences between the political party systems in Britain and the United States. The second one examined the operation of these systems in both countries. Following the previously stated questions, we formulated two hypotheses. The former stated that Britain and the US have two-party system. The latter advocated that, recently, UK tended be two- and- half-party system, while the US remains two-party system. To test our hypotheses, we sought to compare the data gathered in the first and the second chapters using the historical and descriptive-analytical methods.

The findings of the research revealed that although Britain and America have two-party system, they are not exactly the same in performance. This is due to the fact that the UK political system is parliamentary, whereas that of the USA is presidential. Thus, the British political parties are centred contrary to their counterpart in the US. In addition, the American political parties are weaker because of the great size and diversity of the nation. Besides, election in Britain is party-centred, but it is candidate-centred in the USA.

So, the study revealed that the political party systems in Britain and the United States meet in some points as they differ in others in regard to their structure and performance. The common features are:

- Both Britain and the United States are majoritarian two-party system.
- The two party system in the two countries is effective due to the past-to-the-post or the winner take all electoral system.
- The development of the franchise through history gave birth and popularity to the political parties and, therefore, the party system.

The distinctive features between the two systems are:

- The organization of the political parties in Britain is centralized while it is decentralized in the U.S.A.
- Britain has different electoral systems at the local level in comparison with America.
- Concerning the duration and the frequency of the election, it is longer and more frequent in the U.S.A than in Britain.
- The fundraising campaign depends on donation in the United States while it is the candidates' responsibility in Britain.

- The American political parties are in decline in comparable with their counterparts in Britain. This owing to the decrease of partisan realignment.

The results also removed the veil on the future of the political party system in both, the UK and the USA. The British's tended to be two-and-a half party system and the Americas is likely either to remain two-party system or it may change. The first is due to the steady growth of nationalist parties in UK, while the change of the second, which may become one party system, is resulted from the overlap between the American two major parties (the Democratic and the Republican).

The findings in this study may be helpful to challenge researchers to take closer look at how the same form of political party system can be performed differently with a hope that it fills some gaps and reveals others for further investigations.

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Appendices

Appendix A: الملخص باللغة العربية

ملخص

ينبثق مفهوم النظام الحزبي من العلوم السياسية المقارنة التي تناول فيها الباحثون النظام الحزبي في الولايات المتحدة واستخدموه لدراسة الأنظمة الأخرى. تهدف هذه المذكرة إلى دراسة شكل الأحزاب السياسية والنظام الحزبي في بريطانيا والولايات المتحدة الأمريكية، واستكشاف أوجه التشابه والاختلاف بينهما، وهو ما قد يكون مفيداً لطلاب العلوم السياسية وأي شخص مهتم بالموضوع. الدراسة عبارة عن بحث نوعي يعتمد على المنهج التحليلي التاريخي والذي تم من خلال التطرق للأحداث والحقائق التاريخية لطرفي الدراسة المقارنة. النتائج المتوصل إليها قد تدفع إلى إعادة التفكير في نظام الحزب في المملكة المتحدة. كما أنها توضح بدرجة أكبر أن المملكة المتحدة لديها نظام ثنائي الحزب ولكن لا يتم التعبير عنه كنظيره في أمريكا. والسبب وراء ذلك يكمن في نظام التصويت المعتمد في الانتخابات العامة " نظام التصويت الفائز يأخذ الكل". لذلك، فإن البريطانيين يطالبون بنظام تصويت أكثر تمثيلية والذي إذا تم تطبيقه، فستكون الأمور مختلفة. في أمريكا، على الرغم من نظام الحزبين الثابت، قد يؤدي التداخل بين الحزبين السياسيين الرئيسيين في النهاية إلى نظام الحزب الواحد .

الكلمات المفتاحية: الأحزاب السياسية، نظام الحزب، نظام الحزب الواحد، نظام الحزبين، نظام التصويت الفائز يأخذ الكل، نظام التصويت النسبي.