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Comparative Countries: United States and United Kingdom

This paper will compare the United States of America (US) and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (UK). Specifically, this paper will compare the founding ideology, institution type, whether they have a constitution, and regime type of both nations.

This paper will begin by comparing the founding ideologies of both nations, starting with the US. The founding ideology of the US is liberalism (Tierney). Specifically, the ideas of freedom, self-determination, democracy, and rule of law (Tierney). While the founding ideology of the UK is conservatism because the UK’s founding has always been based on its monarchy (Oram, “United Kingdom Monarchs (1603 - present)”).

Secondly, this paper will compare the institution types of the US and UK. The institution type of the US is federal because, as seen in *Our Government* by The White House, “Under the Tenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, all powers not granted to the Federal Government are reserved for the States and the people.” While the UK has an institution type of unitary; however, it is not wholly unitary as the central government has allowed for a more local government in various regions allowing for differing laws in these regions (Spicker).

Next, this paper will discuss the constitutions or lack thereof in both nations. The US clearly has a constitution, this can be seen in *The Constitution of the United States: A Transcription* by the National Archives and Records Administration. The UK, however, does not have a constitution; instead, the UK has various laws that collectively are known as the British Constitution (UK Parliament, “Constitution”).

Finally, this paper will discuss the regime type of both the US and UK. To do this, this paper will discuss the elections, political parties, and governmental systems of both the US and UK. Although, it will be mentioned here that both the US and UK are democracies because they have free and fair elections, this point will be further discussed below.

The election system of the US is free and fair, and the most recent election is arguably freer and fairer than those of the past two decades as there was a higher voter turnout for this most recent general election (Fabina). The electoral system the US uses is a first past the post system based on electoral college votes by the states, with most states determining how to distribute their electoral college votes using a winner takes all system (Fabina). The only states which do not use this system are Maine and Nebraska which use a pseudo-proportional representation system based on each congressional district and an additional two votes for the state-wide popular vote winner (Fabina). The UK also has a free and fair election system with protections for political and civil rights (Freedom House, “United Kingdom”). The UK has its citizens vote for members of parliament (MP) during its elections (UK Parliament, “How MPs are elected”). The UK elections for the MPs are conducted with a first-past-the-post system (UK Parliament, “Voting systems in the UK”).

There are many political parties in both the US and UK. The US has 225 parties, with 102 of those parties being part of either the two major parties, the Democratic Party, or the Republican Party (Ballotpedia, “List of political parties in the United States”). The UK also has a multitude of parties, the parties which were able to win elections and hold seats in the UK’s House of Commons after the 2019 election can be seen at *Political parties in Parliament* by the UK Parliament. Of the parties that were able to win elections and hold seats, the most major include the Labour, Conservative and Liberal Democrat parties (UK Parliament, “How MPs are elected”).

The governmental systems of the US and UK are vastly different, despite both these nations being democracies. The US has a presidential system where a single person, the president, is both the head of state and the head of government (The White House, “The Executive Branch”). The UK, however, has a parliamentary system where the people vote for MPs and the head of government, who will be the leader of the party with the most seats, is appointed by the monarch (gov.uk, “Prime Minister”; UK Parliament, “General Elections”). The head of state of the UK is the monarch of the UK (Oram, The Queen and Government).

In conclusion, the comparison of the US and the UK can be summarized as so. The US is a democratic, constitutional, federalist nation founded on liberalism. While the UK is a democratic, unitary, nation founded on conservatism with no formal constitution, but rather a collection of laws known as the British Constitution.

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