

Introduction to Political Science

Democratic Theory and Political Systems Quiz – Answer Key

1. **(C) Thomas Hobbes.** In *Leviathan* (1651), Hobbes argued individuals surrender freedoms to a sovereign authority in exchange for security—the social contract.
2. **(B) The legislature.** In parliamentary systems (UK, Canada, Germany), the prime minister and cabinet are drawn from and accountable to parliament. They govern with legislative confidence.
3. **(B) Montesquieu.** In *The Spirit of the Laws* (1748), Montesquieu argued liberty is protected by separating legislative, executive, and judicial powers.
4. **(B) Distribution of power among multiple competing interest groups.** Pluralists (Robert Dahl) argue democracy functions through bargaining among diverse organized interests rather than unified elite rule.
5. **(C) First-past-the-post (plurality).** Duverger’s Law: single-member plurality systems tend toward two parties because votes for third parties are “wasted,” encouraging strategic voting.
6. **True.** Federalism (US, Germany, India) constitutionally divides authority between levels of government, each with defined powers. This contrasts with unitary systems where central government holds sovereignty.
7. **False.** Many authoritarian regimes hold elections (Russia, Iran, Singapore) but manipulate them through restrictions on opposition, media control, or fraud. These are “competitive authoritarian” or “hybrid” regimes.
8. **True.** Mill and Tocqueville warned that unchecked majorities could violate individual rights. Constitutional democracies include counter-majoritarian protections (rights, judicial review).
9. **Presidential System (USA, Brazil):**
 - Executive elected separately from legislature
 - Fixed terms; president cannot be removed by legislative vote (except impeachment)
 - Strict separation of powers

Advantages: Stability, clear accountability, checks and balances prevent concentration of power.

Disadvantages: Gridlock when executive and legislature disagree; difficult to remove incompetent leaders; winner-take-all can exclude minorities.

Parliamentary System (UK, Germany, India):

- Executive (PM/cabinet) drawn from legislature
- Government requires parliamentary confidence; can be removed by vote of no confidence
- Fusion of powers

Advantages: Flexibility to change leadership; unified government enables decisive action; coalition-building includes diverse voices.

Disadvantages: Less stable governments (frequent elections possible); fewer checks on majority; weaker separation of powers.

Conclusion: Neither is inherently superior; effectiveness depends on political culture, party systems, and institutional design.

10. Essential features of liberal democracy:

- Free, fair, competitive elections with universal suffrage
- Rule of law—government bound by legal constraints
- Protection of individual rights and civil liberties
- Separation of powers and institutional checks
- Independent judiciary
- Free press and civil society

Tension—majority rule vs. minority rights: Democracy means popular sovereignty, but unchecked majorities can oppress minorities. Historical examples: segregation, persecution of religious minorities, discrimination against LGBTQ+ individuals.

Protective mechanisms:

(1) *Constitutional rights:* Enumerate protections (speech, religion, due process) beyond majority repeal.

(2) *Judicial review:* Courts invalidate laws violating constitutional rights (Marbury v. Madison).

(3) *Supermajority requirements:* Constitutional amendments require more than simple majorities.

(4) *Federal structures:* Dispersing power protects local/regional minorities.

(5) *Electoral design:* Proportional representation ensures minority voices in legislature.

Conclusion: Liberal democracy requires balancing majoritarianism with constraints protecting individual dignity and minority rights.