



Comparative Analysis of Indian and US Presidents

For Prelims: [General Election](#), [Election Commission](#), [Political Parties](#), [Secret Ballots](#), [Electoral College](#), [President](#), [Vice President](#), [Lok Sabha](#), [Rajya Sabha](#), [State Legislative Assemblies](#), [Proposers](#), [Seconders](#), [Veto](#), [Emergency](#), [Council of Ministers](#), [Impeachment](#).

For Mains: Similarities and differences in Indian and US presidential elections.

[Source: IE](#)

Why in News?

The **United States** is all set to elect the country's next President in its **2024 general election**, with voting through the **Electoral College** scheduled for **5th November, 2024**.

- This election drew attention to the **similarities and differences** in the **powers and roles** of the Presidents of the US and India..

What is the Electoral College System in the US?

- **About:** It is the system used in US presidential elections to **formally elect the president and vice president**.
 - The citizens cast their votes not directly for the president, but for a **group of electors** chosen by each candidate's political party in each state.
 - These electors then **convene to formally cast their votes for president and vice president** in a process known as the Electoral College.
- **Emergence:** It was a **settlement** in the US Constitution, balancing between a **direct popular vote and selection by Congress** for electing the president.
 - It served as a safeguard to prevent the president from appealing directly to the masses and to check executive power through an **intermediary body**.
- **Composition:** It has **538 electors** in total. A candidate needs a majority of **270 electoral votes** to win the presidency.
- **Impact of Electoral College:** A candidate who **wins the national popular vote may still lose the presidency** if electors vote against the citizens' choice in the Electoral College.
 - This has occurred five times in US history, including in the **2000 and 2016** elections, where the winner of the popular vote lost the Electoral College.

How is the Indian Presidential Election Different from the US Presidential Election?

- **Electoral College Composition:** The President is elected through an **electoral college system** made up of:
 - **Elected Members of Parliament (MPs):** This includes all elected members from both Houses of Parliament, namely the [Lok Sabha](#) (House of the People) and the [Rajya Sabha](#)

(Council of States).

- **Elected Members of Legislative Assemblies (MLAs):** This includes elected members from the [Legislative Assemblies](#) of all States and Union Territories of **Delhi and Puducherry**.
- **Nomination Process:** A candidate must file a nomination along with a signed list of **50 proposers** and **50 seconders**.
 - These proposers and seconders must be drawn from the electoral college members.
- **Voting Process:** In the presidential election Voters from the electoral college **do not vote for a party candidate** but instead write the names of candidates on the ballot paper in **order of preference**.
 - This system allows voters to **express their preferences** rather than a single choice.
- **Vote Value Calculation:** The voting system assigns different values to votes cast by MPs and MLAs:
 - **Value of an MP's vote:** Each MP, whether from the Lok Sabha or the Rajya Sabha, has a **fixed vote value of 700**.
 - **Value of an MLA's vote:** The value of each MLAs vote is determined by **dividing the population of the State by the number of MLAs** in its legislative Assembly, and the quotient achieved is **further divided by 1000**. E.g., Uttar Pradesh has the highest vote value for each MLA at 208 while **Arunachal Pradesh** has the lowest at **8**.
- **Winning Quota:** The candidate needs to secure **50% of the total votes cast + 1** to win. This differs from general elections where a simple majority is sufficient.

Note: Vote value **reduced from 708 to 700** due to the absence of a legislative assembly in Jammu and Kashmir.

Related Constitutional Provisions for India's President

- **Article 54:** Election of President
- **Article 55:** Manner of election of President.
- **Article 56:** Term of office of President
- **Article 57:** Eligibility for re-election.
- **Article 58:** Qualifications for election as President

How Indian and US Presidents are Similar in Functioning?

- **Head of State:** Both serve as the **ceremonial head** of state, representing the nation at official functions and diplomatic events.
- **Election Process:** Both are **elected** to serve in their respective roles, though the methods of election differ (**indirect in India, direct in the US**).
- **Veto Power:** Both have the authority to **veto legislation** passed by their respective legislative bodies.
- **Emergency Powers:** Both can declare a **state of emergency** and assume special powers, although the nature and extent of these powers vary.
- **Diplomatic Role:** Both presidents have the power to **negotiate treaties** and represent their countries in **international relations**.
- **Ceremonial Duties:** Both perform various **ceremonial duties**, including the inauguration of new laws, the granting of honours, and the **hosting of foreign dignitaries**.

How Indian and US Presidents Differ in Functioning?

Aspect	Indian President	US President
Powers	Limited executive powers , primarily serving a ceremonial role with real power in the Prime Minister .	Significant executive authority, serving as both head of state and government , leading the executive branch.

Functioning	Acts on the advice of the <u>Council of Ministers</u> ; decisions made collectively with the Prime Minister.	Autonomy to make executive decisions , appoint officials, and issue executive orders independently.
Election Process	Elected by an Electoral College of members from Parliament and State Legislative Assemblies .	Elected through a direct election system where citizens vote for electors who then vote for the president.
Term Duration	Serves a term of five years , eligible for reelection any number of times.	Serves a four-year term , may be re-elected for one additional term (totaling eight years).
Impeachment	Can be impeached for violating the Constitution , requiring a two-thirds majority in both Houses of Parliament	The President can be impeached for conviction of treason, bribery, or other high crimes or misdemeanour. " Impeachment is initiated by the House of Representatives, followed by a Senate trial.
Executive Authority	Exercises powers mainly on the advice of the Prime Minister and cabinet , with limited independent authority.	Has the authority to act independently , appoint federal officials, and direct the executive branch without Congress approval.
Privileges	Has certain privileges regarding immunity from legal proceedings for actions in official capacity.	Enjoys broader privileges, including executive privilege to withhold information from Congress and courts.
Immunity	Immune from legal proceedings for official actions but can be sued for personal actions.	Immune from civil suits for actions taken while in office but can face criminal charges for illegal activities .
Political Affiliation	Typically affiliated with a political party but expected to act impartially in office .	Elected based on party affiliation , representing a specific political party , and engages in partisan politics.

Conclusion

- The electoral systems of the U.S. and India exhibit **significant differences in composition, nomination processes, vote value calculations, and winning criteria**. While the US relies on the Electoral College, India's method emphasises representation through its **MPs and MLAs, showcasing unique approaches** to electing the nation's leader.

President of India

Who is a President?

- **About:** Head of the Indian State and the first citizen of India
- **Election:** Elected by an electoral college consisting of MPs of both Houses of Parliament and MLAs of the states and Delhi and Puducherry. (but not the nominated members of Rajya Sabha, Lok Sabha and Assemblies and members of Councils)
- **Constitutional Provisions:** Article 54 - 62

What Powers does President Enjoy?

Legislative Powers:

- Power to dissolve the Lok Sabha
- Gives final assent to pass a bill
- Promulgate ordinances when the Parliament is not in session
- Power to summon both the Houses of Parliament to meet in a joint sitting

Appointing Power:

- Appoints the Prime Minister, CJI and other judges of Supreme Court, Governor of the state, Ambassadors to other countries, Attorney General etc.

Military Powers:

- Commander in chief of all the Indian armed forces.
- Appoints the Chiefs of the Army, Navy and Air Force

- Power to declare war or conclude peace with any country on the advice of a council of ministers headed by the PM.

- Treaties with other countries are signed under his/her name

Pardoning Power (Article 72):

- May grant pardons if the punishment of the crime is an offence against union law, granted by the military court or the punishment is that of death

Emergency Powers:

- Can declare three types of emergencies: nation, state and financial, under Articles 352, 356 & 360
- Can rule individual states or the whole nation at times of emergency

Important Articles of Indian Constitution

- **Article 52:** The President of India
- **Article 53:** The executive power of the President
- **Article 72:** Powers of the president to grant pardons etc. and to suspend, remit or commute sentences in certain cases
- **Article 74:** Council of Ministers to aid and advise the President
- **Article 85:** Sessions of parliaments, prorogations and dissolution
- **Article 111:** Assent to bills passed by the parliaments
- **Article 112:** Union Budget (Annual Financial Statement)
- **Article 123:** Power of President to promulgate ordinances
- **Article 143:** Power of President to consult the Supreme Court

FORMER PRESIDENTS



Dr. Rajendra Prasad
(1950-1962)



Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan
(1962-1967)



Dr. Zakir Hussain
(1967-1969)



Shri Varahagiri Venkatala Giri
(1969-1974)



Dr. Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed
(1974-1977)



Shri K. R. Narayanan
(1997-2002)



Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma
(1992-1997)



Shri B. Venkटरामан
(1987-1992)



Giani Zail Singh
(1982-1987)



Shri Neelam Sanjiva Reddy
(1977-1982)



Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam
(2002-2007)



Smt. Pratibha Devisingh Patil
(2007-2012)



Shri Pranab Mukherjee
(2012-2017)



Shri Ram Nath Kovind
(2017-2022)



Droupadi Murmu
(2022-Present)

INTERESTING FACTS

- **Rajendra Prasad** was the first President of India. He is also the only President to have served two consecutive terms.
- **Zakir Hussain** was the third President of India, and the first Muslim President. He was the shortest serving President of India (less than 2 years).
- So far two Presidents, **Dr. Zakir Hussain** and **Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed** (Fifth President), have died during their term of office.
- When President **Dr. Zakir Hussain** died in May, 1969, the then Vice-President, **V.V. Giri** was acting as the President.
- Soon after **V.V. Giri** resigned to contest the election of the President. Then the **Chief Justice of India, M. Hidayatullah** worked as the officiating President from 20 July, 1969 to 24 August, 1969.



Drishti Mains Question:

Discuss the differences in the electoral systems of the U.S. and India for presidential elections.

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Questions

Prelims

Q. With reference to the election of the President of India, consider the following statements: (2018)

1. The value of the vote of each MLA varies from State to State.
2. The value of the vote of MPs of the Lok Sabha is more than the value of the vote of MPs of the Rajya Sabha.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Ans: (a)

Q. Consider the following statements in respect of election to the President of India:

1. The members nominated to either House of the Parliament or the Legislative Assemblies of the States are eligible to be included in the electoral college.
2. Higher the number of elected Assembly seats, higher is the value of vote of each MLA of that state.
3. The value of vote of each MLA of Madhya Pradesh is greater than that of Kerala.
4. The value of vote of each MLA of Puducherry is higher than that of Arunachal Pradesh because the ratio of total population to total number of elective seats in Puducherry is greater as compared to Arunachal Pradesh.

How many of the above statements are correct?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) Only three
- (d) Only four

Ans: (a)

Mains

Q. India and the USA are two large democracies. Examine the basic tenets on which the two political systems are based. (2018)

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