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Q13

Indian and USA are two large democracies. Examine the basic tenets on which the two political systems are based. (15).

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2018 · GS II · 15 marks · Governance and Policy

Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

Core demand of the question

- Indian and USA are two large democracies. Examine the basic tenets on which the two political systems are based

Revision summary

India is a parliamentary democracy with collective responsibility to the Lok Sabha.

The United States is a presidential system with separation of powers and checks and balances.

India is a strong-Centre Union; the USA is a dual federation with residual State power and equal Senate votes.

Both have written constitutions and judicial review; **India** adds basic structure and Directive Principles.

Elections, rights and federalism are shared tenets worked through different institutions.

Introduction

India and the United States are large, written-constitution democracies with federal maps, regular elections, and independent courts. Their basic tenets still differ: **India** fused the executive with a parliamentary majority; the United States separated a separately elected President from Congress. One is a Westminster-style Union of States; the other is a presidential federation of States that were originally sovereign.

Body**Executive and legislature**

- **India's basic tenet is parliamentary government:** the President is a constitutional head; the Prime Minister and Council of Ministers are collectively responsible to the Lok Sabha (**Articles 74 and 75**).
- **The United States' basic tenet is a presidential executive:** the President is Head of State and government, elected independently of Congress, and Cabinet members do not sit in the legislature.
- **India** can change the government by a floor test without a general election; the United States removes a President only by impeachment or election, which is stability of tenure against fusion of powers.
- Law-making in **India** is led by the ministry that commands the House; in the United States, legislation needs House, Senate and often a Presidential signature, which is designed gridlock as

a check.

Federal tenet

- Both are federal in the sense of two levels of government and a written division of powers.
- **India's tenet is a strong-Centre or "quasi-federal" Union:** a long Union List, residuary power with the Union, single Constitution, single citizenship, All-India Services, and **Article 356**.
- **The United States' tenet is dual federalism in origin:** residual powers with the States (**Tenth Amendment**), equal Senate representation of States, dual citizenship, and no Union power to dismiss a State government.
- **India's** Rajya Sabha is not a council of equal States; population weights the Lok Sabha. The U.S. Senate is the federal bargain of equal States.

Rights, courts and the written text

- Both rest on a supreme written Constitution and judicial review. **Marbury v. Madison** is the U.S. starting point; Kesavananda Bharati's basic structure is **India's** added lock on the amending power.
- **India's** Part III is a justiciable bill of rights with reasonable restrictions written into several articles; the U.S. Bill of Rights is a set of negative restraints, later applied to States through incorporation.
- **India's judiciary is integrated:** one hierarchy up to the Supreme Court. The United States keeps dual court systems, federal and State.
- **India** has Directive Principles and a longer social-economic script; the U.S. text is shorter and leaves welfare mainly to statute and politics.

People, parties and elections

- Both use first-past-the-post for the popular lower House; the U.S. President is chosen through an Electoral College, not a national popular-vote majority as a constitutional rule.
- **India** has a constitutional **Election Commission (Article 324)** and a multi-party system with anti-defection law (**Tenth Schedule**).
- The United States has a durable two-party system, primaries, and no equivalent anti-defection schedule; party switching is political, not a disqualification code.
- **India** is a republic with a parliamentary cabinet; the United States is a republic with separation of powers, checks and balances, and a stronger taste for divided government.

Emergency, amendment and political culture

- **India** writes emergency and President's Rule into the Constitution; the U.S. text has no **Article 356** analogue.
- Amendment in **India** can be by Parliament alone for many articles, or with half the States for federal provisions (**Article 368**). U.S. Article V is far more rigid.
- Both tenets include civilian control of the military, a free press as practice, and federal diversity in a continental society - **India** through linguistic States and a Union list; the United States through State police power and a national commerce clause.

Flow diagram

Two large democracies -> India parliamentary Union
Two large democracies -> USA presidential federation
India parliamentary Union -> Collective responsibility Art 75
USA presidential federation -> Separated President and Congress
India parliamentary Union -> Strong Centre Article 356
USA presidential federation -> Equal Senate Tenth Amendment

Conclusion

The two large democracies share a written Constitution, federalism, elections and judicial review. **India's** basic tenets are parliamentary responsibility, a strong Centre, an integrated judiciary and an amendable social Constitution. The United States' basic tenets are separation of powers, a separately elected President, dual federalism with equal Senate States, and a rigid rights text. The family resemblance is democracy; the working grammar is not the same.

Facts & figures

Articles 74 and 75

Council of Ministers to aid and advise the President; collective responsibility to the Lok Sabha.

U.S. separation of powers

Article I Congress, Article II President, Article III judiciary; Cabinet not drawn from the legislature.

Tenth Amendment (U.S.)

Powers not delegated to the United States are reserved to the States or the people.

Article 356 (India)

President's Rule in a State; no analogue in the U.S. Constitution.

Basic structure / Marbury

India limits amendment through Kesavananda; the U.S. entrenched judicial review from **Marbury v. Madison (1803)**.