

Separated Powers over Parliament

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After many decades of being subject to the tyrannical rule of Great Britain's Parliament and King George III, the United States became an independent nation as a result of the American Revolution. When crafting a new government, America's founders deliberately chose a system of separated powers over a parliamentary system. This decision reflects their deep rooted fear and mistrust of concentrated power and the importance that they placed on protecting individual liberties.

The British Parliament was the legislative body in Great Britain responsible for making laws in America; it was crucial in the governing of the early American colonies. It enacted laws that affected trade, taxation, and all other colonial affairs. When dealing with other matters in the empire, however, England would often treat the American colonies with salutary neglect, allowing colonial governments more independence within their boundaries. This policy was reversed after the 7 Years' War ended in 1763, enraging colonists who protested due to increased English control. The British solidified their power under the Declaratory Act of 1766 which said that Parliament had the authority to legislate for the colonies in all cases whatsoever. Parliament used the mercantilist economic system which negatively affected the American colonies. The policies that parliament enforced on the colonies, such as the Navigation Acts, restricted colonists from trading with other countries, and ensured that America would be both a source of raw materials and a market for British goods.

There was a series of oppressive acts passed by England between 1763-1775 that frustrated American colonists. After the Seven Years' War ended in 1763, Britain imposed taxes on the colonies, such as the Stamp Act of 1765, which forced the colonies to pay taxes on works

such as newspapers, magazines, and even playing cards to pay for the debts that Britain incurred from the war. The Townshend Acts included taxes on various imported goods like tea, as well as paper, paint, lead, and glass. The Quartering Act of 1763 forced the American colonists to provide housing, food, and supplies to British soldiers. The Intolerable Acts were passed in 1774, which were designed to punish the “rebellious” colony of Massachusetts Bay. These acts only further solidified the power that Britain had over the colonies and eventually led to the American Revolution.

These unjust laws and taxes also fueled a deep hatred toward the parliamentary system because it was inherently flawed, and allowed for decisions to be made on behalf of the citizens without their consent or representation in government. The tyranny that came easily within the parliamentary system reinforced the founders’ belief in a government structure that would secure the liberties of its citizens. The first government created by the United States was a direct response to the oppressive government system experienced by colonists before the American Revolution. The Articles of Confederation worked by separating the power between the federal government and state governments and was the first attempt at establishing a unified government of the states. Although the Articles were weak and gave too much power to the states, it was successful in bringing the states together in the Revolution. The Articles were also the first taste of a representative government that allowed all of the colonies to work together and not suffer under the rule of one entity.

The weaknesses of the Articles led to the creation of the U.S. Constitution in 1787 which established a stronger federal government to solve many of the nation's problems, including debt and national defense. It also gave the federal government the ability to enforce laws uniformly across the states. The Constitution also included the separation of powers, giving each of the

three branches distinct functions and the ability to check one another and stop one branch from becoming more powerful than the others. The founders' design of the Constitution showed their preference for a system where power was divided between three branches rather than concentrated in the legislative body, as it was in the parliamentary system.

Every choice the founders made in forming the government of the United States was deliberate in protecting the citizens from the many weaknesses of the parliamentary system that they experienced, such as tyranny and under-representation, as well as protecting their individual liberties. These choices were heavily influenced by the treatment of Americans as British colonists, but remain an essential part of our government today. By moving away from a parliamentary system, the United States created a government by the people and for the people.

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