**The UK Prime Minister has greater power than the US President. Discuss.**

The UK Prime Minister and the US President’s powers differ from one another to a moderate extent. The Prime Minister is elected through the popularity of their party; If one political party has a majority in the Commons, then the leader of that party will be appointed Prime Minister and act as the chairman/woman of the Cabinet. Legally, each Secretary of State within the Cabinet are equal. The President, elected separately from Congress, is its political head. He/she is advised and assisted by a Cabinet, but all Executive power is his/hers and they are in no way their equals. Therefore, on the surface it seems as though the US President has greater power than the UK Prime Minister. However, in regards to their role in the legislative process, their ability to implement legislation and their ability to be a national leader, the UK Prime Minister can be seen to have greater power than the US President for several reasons.

The leader's role in the legislative process is extremely decisive in understanding which executive holds the greatest power. The President, as the most high profile single politician in the US, is able to set the tone for the legislative programme. They will be expected to suggest Bills and to have an opinion on those that he/she hasn’t suggested. The President is able to use press conferences, election campaigns and set piece public speeches to announce major policies and priorities. The most important of these is the annual State of The Union Address, which President Obama used to announce the introduction of Obama-Care among other things. Additionally, the President is able to write Bills through the office of legislative affairs and also has significant veto powers. A President will find a member of Congress and a Senator willing to table to the Bill. However, there is no guarantee that Congress will pass a Bill in the form that the President would like as members of both chambers have their own political agendas. In regard to the Affordable Care Act, President Obama achieved health care reform, but it did not include provision for the Federal Government, which was part of his original plan. Lack of Presidential control over Congress significantly limits the President’s power in the legislative process; as a result, the expression ‘persuader-in-chief’ has been used to describe the President. In the UK, the executive has a very significant role in the legislative process. Much like the President, they are able to voice their proposed agendas through speeches such as the annual State Opening of Parliament where these are outlined by HM the Queen. Government Bills are presented by and in the name of, the Secretary of State in charge of that Department and they are responsible for steering it through the legislative process. The Cabinet is also responsible for timetabling Parliamentary business; power over timetabling is both a positive and negative power as it allows the Crown to decide what Parliament should do but it also allows the Crown to decide what Parliament should not do. For example, throughout the period 1979-1997, a majority of Scottish MPs favoured devolution, but the Crown was able to prevent any relevant Bill from being legislated on. In addition, the crown’s ability to write Bills ‘in house’ and then present them to Parliament means that it will write precisely what it wants, which can limit legislation in order to most benefit either the Crown or the UK Parliament as a whole. As the crown leads the majority in the House of Commons and can use the Ponsonby Convention and Parliament Act to govern relations with the House of Lords, it can reasonably expect to have any Government Bill passed. Since 1992, only eight legislative votes have been lost by the Crown and no complete Government Bill has fallen. Therefore, it is evident that the Prime Minister has significantly more power than the President in regards to their role in the legislative process. Although it appears as though the President has superior power, as he is able to influence the legislative agenda, the President is not able to decide the outcome of the process. On the other hand, the role of the Prime Minister in the legislative process allows legislative supremacy of the crown as they are able to ensure their Bills will be passed through Parliament. The difference between the two executive’s ability to implement legislation comes down to the different nature of the two Executives. The Cabinet is a collective decision making body, while the US President is an island in his decision making. Although technically the US President has more power individually, it is arguable that the supportive nature of the UK Parliament towards the Prime Minister reinforces his power to implement legislation and participate effectively in the decision making process.

Furthermore, it is evident that the UK Prime Minister has significantly more power than the US President in regards to their ability to implement legislation and policies. The President is responsible for implementing Acts of Congress and his own policies. In this, he is assisted by the rest of the Presidency in the Executive branch, all of whom work for him. Each of the 15 Departments, 60 Agencies and staff of some three million civil servants in the Presidency work to implement Presidential decisions, within the limits of Congressional laws. It would appear that the President has every tool he would require to effectively implement legislation and policies. However, such a huge and diverse organisation is very difficult to coordinate and manage. Realistically, a President can only set out broad themes and select on areas on which to prioritise. This explains Obama’s prioritisation of health care reform and economic recovery, while President Bush prioritised defence and national security, and education reform. The President is also limited in his power to coordinate government business. The machinery of the Presidency is so vast that there is no conceivable way the President can know every worker and policy in detail. The President has to rely on their subordinates to make decisions for them; all they can do is ratify them. This is one reason why the convention of Senatorial Courtesy came into being. Therefore, although the President is the figurehead of the US Government, much of the work concerning the implementation of policy and the coordination of government business is completed by his staff without any significant from the President themselves. In the UK, the Crown is organised into a number of functional departments including the Home Office, the Foreign and Commonwealth office, the Department of Work and Pensions and the HM Treasury. Each of these is headed by a Secretary of State who is individually responsible to Parliament for the implementation of legislation and policies within their own department. As such, they must answer questions during the Convention of Individual Ministerial Responsibility. This effectively extends beyond Parliament, as the media will expect the Minister to answer for their department’s work. Part of this convention outlines that a Secretary of State should resign if their department has caused or overseen a significant policy or administrative failure. For example, Ron Davies, the Secretary of State for Wales resigned after controversy surrounding his private life. However, there have been instances where MPs have been able to avoid resigning. There was pressure on Theresa May at the time of the riots in summer 2011, but she remained in post until 2015, and became PM. On a day to day basis, the Crown is able to implement legislation and policies as it sees fit, but it is limited by the need to cooperate with professional interests and local government. Generally, it is best to work cooperatively with professionals, as they are held in some regard by the public and, even if they weren’t, the Crown would be unable to implement anything without them; the importance of Doctors and other professionals within the NHS is illustrated by this.

Lastly, the power held by the US President and the UK Prime Minister differ in regards to their ability to provide national leadership. The US President is a Head of State. This means that he/she is not only the head of the executive branch of government, but is also the head of the entire nation. The Head of State has the responsibility to conduct foreign and military affairs. Presidents sign treaties, meet foreign dignitaries, make official overseas visits in which they represent the nation and command the US Armed Forces. To the outside world, the President is America. Secondly, a Head of State must lead national ceremonies and lead the response to crises. President Bush led the National Prayer Service after 9/11, which was met positively by the American people. However, the perceived failure of Federal agencies to respond to Hurricane Katrina in 2005 led to direct criticism of President Bush. The President’s extremely public and central role as the figurehead of the US government makes it easy for he/she to be blamed in times of crises. For example, President Bush had to respond to 9/11 and put enormous resources into finding Osama Bin Laden. It was only Obama’s good fortune which led him to be in office when Bin Laden was captured. It would be fair to say that the President’s power as a overall political leader is limited by the amount of responsibility he holds surrounding events that are outwith his control, such as natural disasters. In the UK, however, the Prime Minister does not have to act as the Head of State as this position is filled by HM the Queen. Therefore, the executive does not have to represent the UK at cultural or ceremonial occasions. The Prime Minister is only expected to advise the Queen on the ceremonial parts of her job. For example, the Prime Minister writes the Queen’s speech, but she delivers it in Parliament and therefore, to the outside world, is the Head of State. However, the Prime Minister is expected to provide national leadership in the sense of crisis management when the Head of State cannot do so. When Princess Diana died, both HM the Queen and Prince Charles on holiday in Balmoral, it fell to the Prime Minister to address the press and public in London. Therefore, it is evident that the President has a significantly more important role in national leadership than the Prime Minister. As the President is seen as the Head of State, he has responsibility that the Prime Minister does not have to deal with. This lack of cultural responsibility allows the Prime Minister to focus his efforts on the legislative process, whereas the President is expected to act as a public figure at cultural and ceremonial events. Therefore, although the President has significant power in national leadership, he lacks power in more important fields such as the legislative process.

In conclusion, it would be fair to say that the Prime Minister has greater power than the President in the most important aspects of being a political leader. The Prime Minister has far more power over legislation as he is the majority party leader, resulting in his Bills and policies being supported through Parliament. In terms of implementing legislation and policy, the difference comes down to the different nature of the two Executives. The Cabinet is a collective decision making body, while the US President is an island in his decision making. Arguably, the supportive nature of the UK Parliament towards the Prime Minister reinforces his power to implement legislation and participate effectively in the decision making process. Therefore, the UK Prime Minister has greater power than the US President as his power lies in the most important areas of being a political leader.