Chapter Five Short Answer (Answers Below)

1. Compare and contrast the separation of powers with federalism, in terms of divided sovereignty.

2. Explain why the combination of weak parties and a two-party system leads to bipartisan brokerage politics.

3. Explain the difference between oppositional and consensual behaviour in a party system, and the factors that contribute to these differences.

4. Compare and contrast the Westminster and Madisonian systems.

5. Explain how the concentration of power in the hands of a monarch contributed to the separation of powers.

Answers

1. In the separation of powers, sovereignty is divided by function (making, enforcing, and interpreting law). In federalism, sovereignty is divided in terms of jurisdiction or area of authority. In both cases, there is a potential for different components to exercise a degree of constraint, and these constraints can produce levels of conflict that interfere with the operation of the system. In both cases, there can exist a range of effective implementations for the system of division. In federalism, the degree of decentralization and the form that intergovernmental politics takes are particularly important to the function of the overall system.
2. Two-party systems are characteristic of majoritarian electoral systems, which tend to encourage the formation of a small number of large parties able to contest for the majority of seats. While the ruling party may have a majority of seats, however, its weak ability to discipline its members means it cannot rely on that majority to pass legislation; some of its own party representatives may vote against it. As such, it often has to seek support from members on the opposite side (i.e., the opposition). Although the system formally has two sides (it is bipartisan), the weak affiliation of members on both sides encourages constant negotiation (brokerage) between the government and individual legislative members.
3. Oppositional behaviour describes circumstances in which parties have inherent incentives to conflict. This is most typical of majoritarian electoral systems, with a small number of parties and strong party discipline. Under such circumstances, the government is able to control its members to produce a legislative majority. It has no need to negotiate with the opposition and, in fact, is rewarded for distinguishing itself from them. Equally, since the opposition is seeking to replace the government, it is in the opposition’s interests to attack the government’s policies and actions, regardless of their impartial value. Consensual behaviour is more characteristic of multi-party systems (which tend to be produced by proportional electoral systems). In these systems, the large number of parties means it is relatively unlikely that any one has a majority, which in turn means there are built-in incentives for co-operation between potential coalition members.
4. In the Madisonian system, the three core functions of the state (legislative, executive, judicial) are separated. This allows each of the different parts of government to act as checks on the authority of the other two. The executive is unified (head of government and state are the same), and sovereignty is subject to constitutional limits. In the Westminster model, a small group within the legislature controls the executive, but to do so, they must maintain the support of a majority within the legislature (the principle of responsible government). The executive is divided between the formal head of state and the head of government, and sovereignty is subject to parliamentary limits (i.e., parliament is supreme).
5. With the rise of absolute monarchy, the power of the state was at least nominally in the hands of one person. This concentration of power occurred concurrently, however, with the beginnings of the expansion of the modern state. In other words, not only was power concentrated in a smaller set of hands, there was also more power for those hands to hold. This led to a situation in which although monarchs claimed to be absolute, in practice, power was divided up among a series of subordinate ministries, actors, and courts. With the shift from monarch to democracy, the tendency to divide power functionally was retained, with the relationship between each of these functional branches determined by the system in question (Westminster and Madisonian).