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# Differences

Currently much of the news is devoted to the recent resignation of Prime Minister Abe and speculation as to who will succeed him as head of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). Currently, three have announced their candidacy: Yoshihide Suga, Shigeru Ishiba, and Fumio Kishida. Each candidate is supported by a different faction within the LDP. The candidate reportedly favored to win the support of LDP Diet members is Suga as he has the apparent backing of several of the most powerful factions. The LDP being the largest political party in the Diet, whoever it chooses for its party head will be elected as the next prime minister.

This political process, selection of the head of state being chosen by legislators in the parliament, is a major difference between the political system in Japan and the USA. In Japan the head of the government is not chosen by the people, but by their elected representatives. In the United States the people are able to vote for whom they wish to be President.

There are three distinct branches of government in America: the Executive, the Legislature, and the Court. The Executive Branch consists of the President and his Cabinet, the Legislature is Congress, and the Court is the Supreme Court. Basically, Congress creates laws, the President follows the laws to lead the country, and the Supreme Court determines whether laws are appropriate or not. Citizens elect representatives for both houses of Congress, the House of Representatives and the Senate; they also elect the President. Members of the Supreme Court are appointed by the President.

In Japan the Prime Minister is similar to the Executive, but he is a member of the legislature, Diet, and not a separate branch of government. This type of democracy is similar to that of the United Kingdom, a constitutional monarchy. Japan is also a constitutional monarchy, so I assume that was why the Japanese political system was modeled on that of the UK. Traditionally the monarch was the titular head of state, similar to the Executive in America, and the Prime Minister was the main advisor to the monarch. Over time, monarchs became less powerful and more symbolic, so prime ministers have become the main heads of state.

If the political system in Japan were to change and become similar to that of America in which the Executive is elected by the general citizens, I wonder if it would affect the political parties, and especially the factions within them. Perhaps more efforts would be made to listen to the people and pursue policies sought by the majority of the citizens. Now it seems that political factions within the ruling party use political issues primarily for maneuvering within the party to gain more power and political control.

Still, despite the differences between the US and Japan, it seems that voters are able to affect political outcomes by voting for those parties which have the most appeal. Although the LDP has been the main ruling party for much of the postwar era, there have been times when it has lost its majority and been replaced by an opposition party.