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Avinash Kumar



Avinash Kumar has completed his Ph.D. in International Investment Law from the Dept. of Law & Governance, Central University of South Bihar. His research work is on "International Investment Agreement and State's right to regulate Foreign Investment." He qualified UGC-NET and has been selected for the prestigious ICSSR Doctoral Fellowship. He is an alumnus of the Faculty of Law, University of Delhi. Formerly he has been elected as Students Union President of Law Centre-1, University of Delhi. Moreover, he completed his LL.M. from the University of Delhi (2014-16), dissertation on "Cross-border Merger & Acquisition"; LL.B. from the University of Delhi (2011-14), and B.A. (Hons.) from Maharaja Agrasen College, University of Delhi. He has also obtained P.G. Diploma in IPR from the Indian Society of International Law, New Delhi. He has qualified UGC – NET examination and has been awarded ICSSR – Doctoral Fellowship. He has published six-plus articles and presented 9 plus papers in national and international seminars/conferences. He participated in several workshops on research methodology and teaching and learning.

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COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF JUDICIAL APPOINTMENTS: A STUDY WITH REFERENCE TO THE USA, UK, AUSTRALIA, SOUTH AFRICA, CANADA AND INDIA

AUTHORED BY - S. RAMANA SUBRAMANIAN,
B.Com. LL.B (Hons), School of Excellence in Law,
The Tamil Nadu Dr. Ambedkar Law University

Abstract:

Judicial appointments are an important building blocks of the integrity, independence, and effectiveness of the judiciary across jurisdictions. This paper comparatively analyses the judicial appointment systems of the USA, UK, Australia, South Africa, Canada and India, taking into account their respective frameworks, processes, and institutional structures. The comparative study explores and elaborates on transparency, meritocracy, political influence, diversity, and accountability and how these vary in common law jurisdictions. This is a research study that critically examines, from the nomination process by the US Presidential government, through to the Judicial Appointments Commission of the United Kingdom, how the system affects the quality and independence of the judiciary. Special focus was on India's emerging appointment mechanism, especially on the collegium system, which has led to debates on reform and greater transparency in the process. Drawing lessons from each of the jurisdictions, this study does suggest key reforms in improving judicial appointments in India, and advocates a model which both facilitates the maintenance of independence with accountability, would promote diversity and minimize interference by the executives.

***Keywords:** Judicial Appointments, Transparency, Judicial Independence, Diversity in Judiciary and Comparative Analysis*

Introduction:

The appointment process of judges is most central in sustaining the independence, integrity, and effectiveness of any country's judiciary. Mechanisms are really varied among nations, obviously considering such differences as created by their legal traditions, constitutional

frameworks, and political environments, through which appointments for judges are made. Methods of judicial appointment have of recent gained so much heated debate across jurisdictions, especially on transparency, meritocracy, and influence of political will. The comparison analysis of this paper deals with the judicial appointment processes of five major democracies, namely the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, South Africa, Canada and India. Each of these countries presents a style of its very own, with different flavours of historical content, legal system, and governance. In the United States, the political appointment one is part of the system because nominees to the judiciary receive confirmation from the Senate but, in the United Kingdom, this use of an independent Judicial Appointments Commission is more prevalent. Australia tends towards a hybrid model, fused federal and state systems, with merit. South Africa, after the overhaul of the constitution post-apartheid, brought the concept of a Judicial Service Commission which recommends diversity with transparency. India, a hegemony democracy, has always followed the Collegium system, both through evolution as well as public scrutiny, as its secrecy has been its severe setback. This comparative study attempts to evaluate relative strengths and weaknesses of these models in particular areas concerning judicial independence, accountability, and public confidence in the role of public trust. The paper also provides scope to discuss an evolving discourse on reforms that would enhance openness and merit-based selection, an area of shared concern in the jurisdictions of study. How the study develops this analysis stems from highlighting how different democracies balance the competing demands of politics, the law, and societal expectations in the selection of their judiciary

Judicial Appointments in the United States of America:

Judicial appointment is one aspect that makes up the legal and political jurisprudence system in the United States of America. The Constitution governs it. As further stated **in Article II, Section 2, "The President shall nominate, and by and with the Advice and Consent of the Senate, shall appoint. Judges of the Supreme Court."** This structure creates co-decision making within the executive and legislative frameworks within the pursuit of upholding judicial independence, as well accountability.

Nomination Process

The process of choosing a nominee by the President to fill a position in the judicial administration presents various roles, including sitting on the Supreme Court, federal appellate courts, and district courts. Judges are usually singled out based on legal qualifications,

experience in other judicial committees, alignment of views with them, and recommendation from either legal advisors or senators or interest groups. The presidents should consider their potential to influence major issues in law and their ability to build support through varied political factions. Once the President has selected a nominee, they forward the nomination to the Senate. No feature of the confirmation process is more critical than that of the Senate Judiciary Committee. The committee conducts very extensive hearings to which senators will interrogate a nominee concerning his or her judicial philosophy, the nominee's interpretations of the Constitution, and the nominee's positions on such important legal questions as abortion, capital punishment, or affirmative action. This aspect of the process is crucial for determining whether the nominee possesses the necessary credentials and ideological outlook and, in fact, for gauging public sentiment. During the process of hearing, the committee can also get statements from witnesses, such as legal practitioners, advocates and members of the public who present other perspectives in relation to the nominee. After the hearings are finished, the committee decides whether to approve or forward the nominee to the full Senate for review.

Full Senate Vote

The nomination subsequently moves on to a final vote by the full Senate, and confirmation through a simple majority is all that is required for such a vote. In the case of Supreme Court nominees, such votes can potentially be very divisive, given that great political and ideological differences are reflected in most cases. Confirmation battles involving these nominees have become more intense in recent years; nowadays, strong opponents will scrutinize them to the extent that the entire process becomes a source of contention in national political discourse.

Political Dynamics and Impact

In and of itself, the judicial appointment process in the USA is inevitably political, for it all too often becomes entangled with broader partisan dynamics. Ideological composition at the judiciary can have immense implications for major legal issues, including civil rights, healthcare, reproductive rights, and regulation regarding environmental behaviour. It follows that nominations to the Supreme Court can often become high-stakes contests shaping the legal landscape for decades.

Reflecting the interplay of legal qualifications, political strategy, and public opinion, the process of judicial appointment has traditionally been a complex matter in the United States. With the requirement that the nomination must first come from the President and then be

confirmed by the Senate, the procedure exists to strike a balance between an independent judiciary and democratic accountability. The influence of such a process is not only on the composition of the judiciary but also cuts across to the other political aspects, as demonstrated in the importance of judicial appointments within American governance.

States Judicial Appointments

Judicial appointments considerably vary across the states. It altogether depends on the legal and political contexts of each state. The states may employ merit-based selections or appointments by the executive or popular elections. The list below outlines some of the most significant approaches used by different states:

Missouri (Merit Plan): The Merit Plan is a combination of both elective and executive appointment methods. A nominating board consisting of the Chief Justice, attorneys, and laypersons present the board with three persons for each judicial vacancy, from which the Governor will then choose to fill an initial one-year term, after which the judge must run in retention election. If retained, the judge will serve through a full term, which typically is 12 years.

California (California Plan): The Governor will nominate candidates for the judicial offices, which shall have to be approved by a committee of three: the Chief Justice, the Presiding Officer, and the Attorney General. The nominee then serves for a provisional term of one year, upon which is subsequently subjected to a non-partisan election for a full term of 12 years.

Texas: Texas employs partisan elections in the process of selecting judges. In this state, candidates run on party platforms. The main outcome of this is that there is increased accountability towards the voters but at the same time increases political influence and campaign finance.

Florida: In Florida, both gubernatorial appointments combined with merit selection is used. The process for Appellate Judges works as follows: the governor appoints the judge after the Judicial Nominating Commission furnishes the list of candidates to the Governor. After completing their term, the judge must seek retention elections.

New Jersey: The Governor of New Jersey appoints judges with the advice and consent of the state Senate. Judges serve an initial seven-year term and may be reappointed for life if they receive favourable recommendations from a Judicial Advisory Panel.

Virginia: In Virginia, judges are appointed by appointment by the General Assembly-the state legislature. This also usually requires a majority vote of both the House of Delegates and the Senate, and thus there is much political involvement in selecting judges.

Minnesota: Minnesota utilizes a hybrid system in which the Governor appoints judges from a list submitted by a judicial nominating commission. After initial tenure, judges have to seek re-election in nonpartisan elections for their continued tenure

Judicial Appointments in Australia

Australia's judicial appointment is transparently made based on merit, and it enhances the independence of the judiciary. It is based on the constitutional provisions, legislative frameworks, and rules that are established with an aim to increase public confidence in the rule of law.

The **Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act, 1900** mainly outlines the framework for judicial appointments under **Chapter III. Section 71** grants the judicial power of the Commonwealth, stating that it is to be conferred on the High Court and other federal courts. **Section 72** relates to the process of selection. It states that the Governor-General in Council shall appoint the judges of the High Court and other federal courts. It also requires that the judges continue until they resign, retire, or are removed for misbehaviour or incapacity. This provision aims to protect judicial independence in the sense that it does not make the task of removal of judges 'easy' and further rules it out for politically unsound reasoning. The **Judiciary Act 1903** sets out an important chapter within the constitutional framework through the jurisdiction and organization of federal courts. Additional provisions concerning the appointment and tenure of judges provide robustness to the structure established in the Constitution. The **Federal Court of Australia Act 1976** established the Federal Court of Australia. Specific provisions existed under this court about the appointment and the duties of judges. This Act also underscored the principle that appointments should be qualified and experience relevant to the judicial function.

Procedure for Appointment in Federal Courts:

The procedure for appointment of federal courts is characterized by the following steps: Vacancies of the Federal Court, Family Court, and Federal Magistrate Court can only be identified after retirement and resignation have been made. Newspaper and Attorney-General's website advertisements advise on the selection criteria and qualifications for the positions. Such advertisement will inform of the judiciary positions available and promote openness and public awareness.

The Attorney-General distributes letters of nomination to the heads of courts, tribunals, and other institutions seeking nominations of some deserving candidates. This process would ensure that there is a more representative pool of applicants and taps the expertise of seasoned legal practitioners. The shortlisted candidates are presented before an Advisory Panel for scrutiny. Legal experts and representatives from most of the legal sectors will be present on the panel. In the process, the shortlisted candidates are interviewed. After conducting the interviews, the panel submits a report recommending candidates that are most fit. Thus, the input from this unbiased assessment is crucial to maintain the sense of credibility over the appointment process.

The name, as recommended by the Advisory Panel, is submitted to the Prime Minister and Cabinet for approval. This increases the level of scrutiny to which the appointment process is subjected and ensures that bureaucratic influence is ruled out.

Appointment to the High Courts:

With the approval of the Cabinet, the Governor-General formally appoints the candidate. This would be the final step and forms the final lodgement in regard to the appointment and the confirmation of the candidate's appointment as a judge.

The process is a bit different in the High Court of Australia because it's the court of the highest order. The Attorney-General consults with diverse stakeholders in preparing nominations for judges in the High Court, who are:

The State Attorneys-General: To get nominations from the different jurisdictions.

Chief Justice of the High Court: To ensure that the nominated people have the adequate qualifications and experience.

Other Justices of the High Court: To benefit from their knowledge of the ideal candidates for the positions.

State and Territory Chief Justices: To provide a comprehensive list of likely nominees.

The Attorney-General submits these names for approval to the Cabinet after gathering these suggestions. Once approved by the Cabinet, the Attorney-General submits these suggestions to the Governor-General. The Governor-General makes all the appointments. This way, all appointments are made from those who are most capable and also respected by others in the profession.

The process of appointment in Australia is firmly grounded in constitutional law, the statutory provisions, as well as guidelines dictated by the Attorney-General. Such a multifaceted framework is well-crafted to ensure appointments are made in a transparent manner, and on merit, as an attempt to uphold the integrity and independence of the judiciary. Further, the incorporation of legal bodies and the fact that consultation with practicing legal experts is expected to add more accountability and strength to the judicial system, followed by higher public trust in the administration of justice.

Judicial Appointments in South Africa:

The judicial appointments of South Africa are structured by a constitutional system that is established for independence and impartiality in the judiciary. This process has been structured to provide merit, transparency, and public confidence in the legal system.

Chapter VIII of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 outlines appointment of Judges. **Section 174** insists that the President appoint judges based on advice from the Judicial Service Commission (JSC). This provision therefore focuses on appointment to ensure such persons have all the qualifications, experience, and suitability for the position. **Judicial Service Commission Act, 1994** puts in place the Judicial Service Commission that participates in the appointment process. It spells out the composition, functions, as well as procedures of the Judicial Service Commission, thereby making the appointments relate to ones that are transparently and fairly conducted. The JSC has members of legal practitioners, judges, and representatives of those sectors who teach legal education among others. This diversity ensures that one gets a very wide perspective in selection.

Role of the Judicial Service Commission

Appointments of judges to the higher judiciary is especially within the responsibility of the JSC. There are members who come from the political sphere and others from judicial backgrounds. Thus, it is diverse and balanced in nature. The main role of this commission, however, is to advise the President on the nomination, where the President is obliged to agree on those recommended. Furthermore, the President needs to take his consultation with the Chief Justice and even the political leaders before making any appointments in constitutional courts. Moreover, the recommendations of the JSC are final and binding, which cements its role in the appointment process.

Vacancies usually occur when judges retire, resign, or are removed from service. The JSC points out these vacancies and starts on the traineeship of appointments. The JSC advertises the vacancies publicly and invites applicants from eligible candidates. This is a critical step in making the process public and thus considering various applicants. The JSC evaluates all the applications and creates a shortlist of the ones fit for the role, considering them from the point of view of qualifications, experience, and suitability for the judicial post. In some instances, interviewing is conducted to establish the suitability of the candidates. The JSC thereafter forwards some of the short-listed applicants to the President for consideration after evaluating the individuals. The JSC upon making any determination about the applicants, usually does so by the consensus so that "all sides of the argument have been canvassed."

The president makes a final appointment based on the recommendations of the JSC. This two-tier mechanism, comprising both the JSC and the President, balances political imperatives against judicial independence. For some of the high-ranking judicial appointments, including the Chief Justice and the Deputy Chief Justice, their appointments are subject to parliamentary confirmation. It adds an extra layer of accountability and transparency in the appointments process. Therefore, it basically ensures that the South African Constitution acknowledges judicial independence accompanied by accountability, and judges must then be able to do their work without being threatened or intimidated politically. The appointment process is made to reflect these values which are a judiciary impartial and competent.

South African judicial appointments are clearly defined and constitutional with transparent merit-based processes that ensure the full spectrum of expertise and perspectives in the legal field. This will only make the public have hope in the judiciary. Such a system underlines the autonomy of an independent judiciary, an essential cornerstone of democracy, and a rule of law in South Africa.

Judicial Appointments in the UK:

Judicial appointments in the UK are governed by a framework of laws which will ensure that the judiciary does not become entangled in partisan or political dependence. Hence, there is separation in all aspects between politics and the rule of law. In point of fact, the process differs between England and Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland, as these diverge from the legal system of the UK. While the UK constitution does not have one source related to appointments in courts, it is mainly based on several statutes, conventions, and principles through common law. A long-standing principle of the UK constitution is judicial independence.

Judicial Appointments Commission (JAC)

The JAC, as defined in **Tribunals, Courts and Enforcement Act 2007**, is responsible for candidate shortlisting for the judicial position in England and Wales. In other words, it oversees to ensure that the process is merit-based and brings in some degree of transparency. The appointment process went through a drastic change in 2005 after the UK Supreme Court took over as the highest court of the land instead of the House of Lords. This power of appointing judges was taken away from the Lord Chancellor and given to the Judicial Appointments Commission comprising barristers, judges, laypeople, solicitors, and magistrates. The residual power is there with the Lord Chancellor, which he exercises on the merit of the candidate but emphasis is given to including various kinds of qualifications and background to enhance selections on merit.

The process of Appointment in England and Wales

It begins once there is a vacancy, either when a judge retires, resigns, or a new judicial post is opened up. The JAC advertises the vacancy and invites all interested qualified persons to apply. This forms one very important task to be accomplished by the JAC so as not to mislead people but by doing so to ensure a diverse pool of applicants. Applicants who meet the qualifying criteria are allowed to submit an application that is then subjected to scrutiny by the JAC. The Commission conducts an assessment, which can be in the form of interviews and assessments of the legal knowledge and experience. Eligible applicants are presented through a list by the JAC after the assessment. The Lord Chancellor acts as the appointing authority. However, they are not able to act against the decision by the JAC. The selected judges are then approved and declared. This is done to avoid political influence over the appointment procedure so that the independence of the judiciary can be retained.

Procedure in Scotland

The process in Scotland is governed by various rules Scottish Judicial Appointments Board provides recommendation of judicial appointments in Scotland. As in the JAC, there must be merit in selection. The board seeks inputs from the Lord President of the Court of Session before making any recommendations to make sure the views of the judiciary find its representation. In Scotland, the First Minister of Scotland appoints judges as recommended by the board.

Judicial Appointments in Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland, the Judicial Appointments Advisory Committee (JAAC) recommends judicial appointments in an effort that is transparent and merit-based. As is with Scotland, the committee consults the Lord Chief Justice before recommending. The decisions over appointments are taken by the Northern Ireland's Minister of Justice according to the recommendations by JAAC

Judicial appointments in the United Kingdom promote independence, transparency, and meritocracy. Finally, independent bodies for the appointment of judges based on qualifications and abilities- The Judicial Appointments Commission set up in England and Wales and its equivalents in Scotland and Northern Ireland-independently select judges free from any influence of politics. This framework enhances both the legitimacy of the judiciary as well as the public's trust in the law.

Appointment of Judges in Canada:

The process, which governs the appointment of judges to the judiciary in Canada, is guided by a mixture of constitutional provisions and a merit selection meant to ensure judicial independence. Supreme Court Act, S.C. 1875, c. 11, An appointment of judges to the Supreme Court of Canada is governed by the Supreme Court Act, which mandates that the Prime Minister advises the Governor General on suitable candidates for appointment.

The process for the appointment of judges is different but, in general, is based on the same principles as used by the respective Provincial Court Acts. The advisory committees used by the Canadian government comprise members of the legal profession in addition to representatives from other sectors. They assess the candidates according to merit, qualification, and experience to ensure there is a balanced cross-section of candidates. Public consultations will be conducted with diversity in search for advice from different stakeholders, as well as promising improved transparency and inclusivity Benchers would be evaluated based on their legal competency, professional competence, and respect for the rule of law. In this rigorous process, qualified judges who are missing that spark of difference and representation can be identified. Canada also focuses much on the diversification of the bench in its courts. Toward this end, the diversity of Canadian society is focused on to enable the courts to appropriately represent the people.

The Canadian judicial appointment process is characterized by transparency, accountability, and commitment to diversity. By incorporating advisory committees and involving public consultation, Canada fosters public confidence in the judiciary, which safeguards the principles of judicial independence. This model, therefore, remains a valuable reference for countries as they go about reforming their judicial appointment processes.

Judicial Appointments in India

A) Supreme Court:

Judicial appointments in India are statutorily provided for under Articles 124 to 147 of the Indian Constitution. **Article 124 (2)** states: *"Every Judge of the Supreme Court shall be appointed by the President by warrant under his hand and seal after consultation with such of the judges of the Supreme Court and High Courts in the States as the President may deem necessary for the purpose and shall hold office until he attains the age of sixty-five years."* The President appoints the Chief Justice of India and other judges of the Supreme Court, consulting the Chief Justice of India and such of the other judges as he may deem necessary. The role of the Chief Justice of India to recommend candidates for appointment in the Supreme Court. The CJI considers the seniority, merit, and integrity of any potential candidate prior to recommending such names to the President. The collegium of appointment is composed of the CJI and the four seniormost judges of the Supreme Court, which examines and discusses the potential candidate prior to forwarding recommendations to the President. The President makes appointments of judges based on the recommendations received from the collegium. The process is designed to ensure judicial independence by avoiding political interference.

B) High Courts:

The President of India shall, under **Article 216**, appoint the Chief Justice and other judges of High Courts. *"Every High Court shall consist of a Chief Justice and such other judges as the President may from time to time deem necessary to appoint."* Appointments are made by consulting the CJI as well as the Governor of the respective state. In the appointment of the Supreme Court judges, the Chief Justice of the concerned High Court is also consulted. Similar to the Supreme Court, a similar collegium system operates for the appointment of High Court judges. It involves the Chief Justice of the High Court along with senior judges making recommendations to the Supreme Court collegium. The Governor forwards it to the President of India, and he takes views of the Governor of the state concerned. He may take views, but the decision is the President.

The Union Ministry of Law and Justice acts as a facilitating agency while processing the recommendations, so the appointments fall within the constitutional and legal framework. A procedure of judicial appointments which emerged from three landmark judgments of the Supreme Court. In *S.P. Gupta v. Union of India (First Judge Case)* the Supreme Court held that the word "consultation" employed under Articles 124 and 217 did not connote the meaning of "concurrence." The judgment held that the ultimate power lay with the hands of the executive to provide appointments to the judiciary. Under the judgment, CJI and other judges were only constitutional functionaries having powers only of consultation. In *Supreme Court Advocates-on-Record Association v. Union of India (Second Judges Case)* The Second Judges Case overruled the First Judge Case and held that "consultation" must mean "concurrence." The Court underlined that the judiciary is more eligible to appoint judges and formed a mechanism that guarantees the supremacy of the CJI in appointing judges. Proposals for appointments must be made by the CJI after consulting two senior-most judges, and such proposals ought generally to be accepted by the executive. *In Re: Presidential Reference (Third Judges Case)* the Supreme Court enlarged the collegium to four members including judges for appointments. It categorically reiterated that if the collegium decides that majority do not approve the proposed appointment, the CJI shall not pursue further. For High Courts, the process shall start with the Chief Justice of High Courts, seeking an opinion from two senior-most judges. In case of disagreement, the view of the CJI should prevail.

National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC) Act, 2014

The NJAC was established by the **99th Constitutional Amendment Act in 2014** to introduce more transparency and accountability into judicial appointments. It sought answers to some of the criticisms of the collegium system. However, the NJAC was declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in its judgment dated October 16, 2015, in *Supreme Court Advocates-on-Record Association v. Union of India (Fourth Judge Case)*, on grounds that it was averse to the independence of the judiciary. The collegium system, though welcomed by judicial independence advocates but glaringly criticized for lack of balance between the two arms of power-the judiciary and the legislature-was reaffirmed. Justice Chelameshwar raised very pertinent questions in his dissent on the difference between the "basic structure" and the "basic feature" of the Constitution. No constitutional functionary, he argued, including even the President or the CJI, should have absolute power over judicial appointments. Such a dissent highlights the need for checks and balances in the judicial appointment process. It holds out dangers of untrammelled judicial power.

Judicial appointments in India represent complex interplays between the judiciary and the executive. From the collegium to NJAC and the judgments pronounced by the Supreme Court, tensions are seen as a struggle concerning judicial independence, accountability, and correct sources of authority. Primacy has been reaffirmed with the judiciary in the appointment of judges, but debates continue concerning transparency and effectiveness and allude to a continuous need for reform in vindicating democratic principles within the judiciary.

Tabular Comparison of Judicial Appointments:

Country	Governing Laws	Appointment Authority	Selection Process	Diversity Initiatives	Transparency Measures
Indian	Constitution of India, Articles 124-147	President of India	Collegium system involving CJI and senior judges	Ongoing discussions about diversity representation	Collegium meetings not publicly accessible
USA	U.S. Constitution, Article II, Section 2	President with Senate confirmation	Nominations by the President; Senate hearings	Varied by state; federal courts aim for diversity	Public hearings for nominees in Senate
UK	Constitutional conventions; Supreme Court of the United Kingdom Act 2005	Lord Chancellor and Prime Minister	Judicial Appointments Commission evaluates candidates	Focus on diversity and inclusion initiatives	Public consultations for appointments
Canada	Supreme Court Act (S.C. 1875, c. 11)	Prime Minister with Governor General	Advisory committees assess candidates	Strong emphasis on reflecting multiculturalism	Public consultations and advisory committee reports
Australia	Judiciary Act 1903; various state laws	Governor-General on advice of the	Federal Judicial Commission	Initiatives to improve representation	Selection criteria and outcomes are

		Prime Minister	evaluates candidates	of women and minorities	made public
South Africa	Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996	President of South Africa	Judicial Service Commission evaluates candidates	Strong focus on transformation and diversity	Public hearings for shortlisted candidates

Conclusion:

Countries exhibit a pattern of judicial appointments very different from one another. It can be on strict judicial independence, accountancy, and strength in representation. The Indian case focuses on merit-based appointments while garnering criticism for the issues of lack of transparency and diversity. Advisory committees and public consultation to increase transparency and inclusiveness characterise procedures in Canada and Australia. By contrast, the U.S. and U.K. Politically, these systems are integrally linked and representative of the specific forms of rule within each system. The most important best practices present in the exemplary systems listed above seem to suggest a very effective approach through transparency, periodic reviews, and mechanisms towards diversity-creating processes that could improve India's judicial appointment processes. This learning from abroad could help India strive towards the creation of a more effective, accountable, and representative judiciary ensuring the principles of justice and equality.

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