Two of the largest countries in the world, Canada and the United States, share the longest international border, 5,525 miles (8,891 km) and the world’s largest waterfall, the Niagara Falls. In neither country is the capital city the largest city. In the case of Canada, its capital, Ottawa, has a population of over 800,000, nearly 2 million fewer than Toronto, its largest city. In the USA, Washington D.C., the capital, has a population of a paltry 623,323 compared with New York’s 8.4 million.

While both countries are democracies, their style of government is different. Canada has a parliamentary system similar to the British model. The USA, on the other hand, has a presidential system. Both countries have English as their main language. However, both English and French are official languages in Canada, used by 56.9% and 21.3% respectively, and in the USA, Spanish is used increasingly; it is now the primary language for 38.3 million Americans, about 12% of the population. This is a result of a surge in the Hispanic population.

Although they are such close neighbours, Canadians and Americans don’t always share the same interests, especially in sports. For Americans, football (American football not ‘soccer’!), baseball and basketball are foremost in the popularity stakes, whereas for Canadians, ice hockey is the predominant winter sport, and lacrosse its oldest, and indeed official, summer sport.

It would be difficult to quantify whether Canada and the U.S., two of the largest and closest countries in the world, have more similarities or differences. However, recently *The Economist* magazine ranked Canada as the third most democratic nation worldwide, ahead of all the other countries in North and South America.