

## PRESIDENTIAL AND PARLIAMENTARY FORM OF GOVERNMENT:

### A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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### ABSTRACT

*The evolution of human society has been a witness to varied governmental structures that have shaped their existence from anarchical States to democratic States. Today, after immemorial epochs of political restructuring humankind consenting to harmonious existence has adopted a democratic form of government as their 'to-go' governmental structure. With the continuous passage of time, people-centric governments have survived the dawn of the new age. Today, the government is characterized not just as an organization is accountable for administration of the State but as an entity that is transparent and accountable for the welfare of the people and the State collectively. In a contemporary government, features such as being democratic, socialist, republic, and secular are being sought; which are found under both presidential and parliamentary forms of government. However, these two governments share a common basis of democracy but are considerably distinct in their structure, power distribution, and functioning. In a presidential system, the executive is typically led by a president, is separate from the legislative branch. The president is elected independently of the legislature and serves as both the head of state and government. This system often provides for a strong and fixed executive with a fixed term in office, ensuring stability but potentially leading to gridlock if the executive and legislature are controlled by different parties. In contrast, a parliamentary system integrates the executive with the legislative branch. The head of government, often a prime minister, is usually the leader of the majority party in the legislature. This system promotes a closer connection between the executive and the legislature, allowing for smoother lawmaking but potentially leading to instability if the ruling party loses majority support.*

**Keywords:** Government, Democracy, Parliament, Presidential, Parliamentarian

## Introduction

As a part of a collective acceptance, people being scattered have adhered to the formation of organized groups for their uniform survival. This approach has made them achieve varied objectives of a welfare state i.e., economic, and financial security, unemployment, accidents, poverty, and sickness.<sup>1</sup> As humans transitioned from being invaders to socially amicable beings. States too gradually saw a graphical alteration from being, “Territory Invading States” to “Welfare Oriented States.” These modern States had an unbiased dictum supportive of the unvarying development of Individuals, Families, and states. Countries developed governments to ensure lawmaking, decision-making, implementing legislation, and maintaining a balance of power among different branches. The primary duties of a government are to protect sovereignty, address economic and social issues, and maintain internal and external peace.

Moreover, its accountability interlinks with securing fundamental needs for its citizens such as livelihood and health. Therefore, for harmonious living, an organized structure is vital. For instance, controlled resource allocation is sought so that every individual gets access equally. Therefore, showcased traits possessed by a compatible government are being progressive with developmental goals at its center, being directional in its approach, and being decisive in formulating and implementing welfare policies for its people residing in its territory.<sup>2</sup>

Therefore, accountability and answerability for a government have become the most cherished virtues of all times. But devising this, “System of Government” was not achieved over a night’s span, i.e., varied forms of governments originated and had to undergo the churn of time under a constant hammering of domestic and international political milieu. It is witnessed over the world, over various periods of time that many forms of government unfortunately did not see the day dawn.

## Governing People: Forms of Government

A country is often seen as being ruled by a group of people, systematic arrangements of people, and has over the period come to be known as a government. Mostly, governments which have existed at some point of time or the other are monarchies, oligarchies, and democracies. With a timespan of more than 2000 years, the concept of government ruling the masses has been shaped from simpler to more complex forms of ruling.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, while classifying governments, it is imperative to consider its ever-evolving characteristics.

### ❖ Monarchy

Historically, monarchy was the only structured tool for governance. In the past, a ruling family held the title of ruler, passing it down through generations until they were overthrown by another monarch.

<sup>1</sup> Welfare State, M. Weir, International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences, 2001,

<sup>2</sup> What is Government, From: <https://ceodelhi.gov.in/eLearningv2/admin/EnglishPDF/Chapter-3-What-is-Government.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Types of Government around the World, Date: 22<sup>nd</sup> November, 2022, From: <https://blog.finology.in/constitutional-developments/types-of-government>

Over time, the concept of monarchy has evolved from being centered on a single person or a small group to a system where power is decentralized between a ceremonial monarch and a constitutionally appointed government.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, it is classified as an Absolute Monarchy and a Constitutional Monarchy. In the former form of government, there is a single monarch or a group of people belonging to a common family, ruling over ages.

Moreover, in most cases it is hereditary. In the latter form of government, the absolute power of the monarch is diluted and is distributed amongst the monarch and a constitutionally formed government. Therefore, under absolute monarchy power is centralized and concentrated, and in the case of constitutional monarchy, the power is decentralized and diluted. For instance, *Vatican City runs under a monarchical setup wherein the pope, is the sovereign i.e., the supreme authority. Contrariwise, in the United Kingdom (UK) there is the existence of a constitutional monarchy, wherein Charles III is the active monarch, but major governmental control is possessed by the Parliament.*<sup>5</sup>

#### ❖ Autocracy

It is a form of government that finds its roots in Monarchy. In this type of government, a single ruler has absolute control and decision-making power. In an autocratic structure, the people living have “no say,” in formulation or implementation of a nation’s laws. Therefore, an autocrat is unaccountable with unlimited power devoid of any system of checks and balances.<sup>6</sup>

In an autocratic government, zero tolerance is observed with respect to dissent and objections and hence, it is often linked to a totalitarian regime of governance.<sup>7</sup> For instance, *Russia was an oligarchic state. Initially, the Russians had autocracy, and later, even after an entire phase of dictatorship; the Russian Soviet Union, too adopted the principles of autocratic setup.*<sup>8</sup> However, many autocratic regimes have been often sought as a temporary boon in times of political unrest, as it is responsible for the emergence of new leaders restoring law and order.

#### ❖ Dictatorship

Under a dictatorship, an absolute power of governance is possessed by one person or one ruling entity. Unlike, monarchy or any other individual-centric form of government, rulership is acquired and not inherited by adhering to violent and stricter measures. A dictator is also not accountable and is not bound by constitutional limitations. Dictatorship possesses features of authoritarian and totalitarian government

<sup>4</sup> British Monarchist League, Constitutional Monarchy, From: <http://www.monarchist.org.uk/constitutional-monarchy.html>

<sup>5</sup> Diksha Munjal, What will be the powers of Britain’s new Monarch, King Charles III? Date: 9<sup>th</sup> September, 2022, From: <https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/explained-what-powers-will-britains-new-monarch-king-charles-iii-have/article65871099.ece>

<sup>6</sup> Autocracy, Encyclopedic Entry, From: <https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/autocracy/>

<sup>7</sup> Roberto Fao, Civil Society and Democracy in Post-Authoritarian and Post-Totalitarian Regimes, From: <https://api.repository.cam.ac.uk/server/api/core/bitstreams/1a9d7053-ab8f-4ffb-9e8a-82f7be99bc06/content>

<sup>8</sup> Types of Government Around the World, Date: 22<sup>nd</sup> November, 2022, From: <https://blog.finology.in/constitutional-developments/types-of-government>

and exercises control through military power.<sup>9</sup>

#### ❖ Aristocracy

The origination of this form of governance was based on rule by a small elite ruling class called the Aristocrats, who influenced the weaker and lower socio-economic class. The basis of being chosen was education, upbringing, and genetic or family history.<sup>10</sup> According to the viewpoint of Aristotle, “it was the rule by the most eligible members of the society.” It was prevalent in *Britain, Germany, and Russia*.

#### ❖ Oligarchy

Being like Monarchy, under Oligarchy power is concentrated with few people or families, who are the most influential and wealthy elites. Under the oligarchic regime, the deciding feature for becoming a ruler is not “birth in a royal family” but “birth in a wealthy family.”<sup>11</sup>

#### ❖ Communism

Under Communism, a single party rules over the people following the authoritarian principles of governance. Moreover, nations/states following the communist approach prioritize public ownership over private ownership. Therefore, for effective governance resource allocation such as labour, capital goods, and natural resources<sup>12</sup> and its control is concentrated with the ruling government. *For instance, China is based on the principles of Communism.*

#### ❖ Theocracy

A government which is based on the ideals of “rule by the divine” i.e., rule by divinity, God, or religion. It finds its origin in the Greek 17<sup>th</sup> century and means, “theo” i.e., God, and “cracy” i.e., government.<sup>13</sup> For instance, Iran follows a theocratic government where its constitution is based on Islamic law.

#### ❖ Socialism

In a government based on Socialism; cooperation amongst the citizens is encouraged. Therefore, control and flow of means of production and goods and services is with citizens, whereas, only the management is with the government.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, it is a system of governance under which every individual has equality of share of production and resources. Therefore, under a socialist government, it can be deduced that equality among individuals creates a secure milieu for a nation’s development.<sup>15</sup>

#### ❖ Republicanism

<sup>9</sup> Dictatorship, <https://followmyvote.com/dictatorship/>

<sup>10</sup> Robert Longley, What is Aristocracy? Definition and Example, Date: 11<sup>th</sup> February, 2021, From: <https://www.thoughtco.com/aristocracy-definition-and-examples-5111953>

<sup>11</sup> Oligarchy, Encyclopedic Entry, From: <https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/oligarchy/>

<sup>12</sup> Will Kenton, Socialism: History, Theory and Analysis, Date: 1<sup>st</sup> July, 2023, From: <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/s/socialism.asp>

<sup>13</sup> Form of Government: Theocracy, From: <https://southern.libguides.com/governmentforms/theocracy#:~:text=Theocracy%20is%20defined%20as%20%22government,Sudan%2C%20Iran%2C%20and%20Afghanistan.>

<sup>14</sup> Will Kenton, Socialism: History, Theory and Analysis, Date: 1<sup>st</sup> July, 2023, From: <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/s/socialism.asp>

<sup>15</sup> What is Socialism, The Economic Times, Date: 29<sup>th</sup> July, 2023, From: <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/definition/socialism>

A republic form of government consists of power held by the people or the representatives they elect.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, it means the power is concentrated on the people. By and large, the most prominent power exercisable in a republican government is alterations in the ruling government by voting. It is often confused with democracy but it differs from it, in the former representative government rules according to the charter or constitution but in the latter, it is ruled according to the will of the people.<sup>17</sup> *For instance: Being in line with the principles of federalism, democracy Germany has features of a constitutional republic.*

#### ❖ Democracy

Being the most popular form of government, democracy is followed in most of the modern nations. Democracy originates from “demos” i.e., people, and “cracy” i.e., government. Therefore, a government is formed by the people, wherein people choose their representatives and form a government. However, democracy is classified into *Direct and Representative*. In the former, representatives are voted by the people, whereas, in the latter people directly vote on policy initiatives.

However, the most prevalent forms of democratic government are *Parliamentary Democratic Government and Presidential Democratic Government*. In the former, the party having the majority in the parliament forms the ruling government. Other minority parties form the opposition party and serve as the challenging party on various occasions. It originated in Britain and was further implemented in different colonies it ruled.<sup>18</sup> In the latter, the executive independently exercises its control over the legislature.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, the executive being the head of the government (*de facto*) and State head (*de jure*) is different than the legislative wing of the government. Further, it could be established that under a presidential government; low accountability is associated with the legislature.<sup>20</sup>

#### Most Promising & Prevalent of All: Parliamentary and Presidential Government Regime

The most recent development in forms of governance is the democratic form, where power resides with the people. In a democracy, citizens elect representatives and actively participate in government formation. Consequently, it is accurate to say that, under democracy, power cannot be withheld from the people, the majority. Moreover, being dependent on the nation’s social, and economic milieu democracy evolved and branched into a *Parliamentary and Presidential Democratic Government*.

#### Parliamentary Government Regime

Since ancient times, civilizations have developed councils or assemblies led by elders, which gradually evolved into modern parliamentary systems. Early examples include the reign of Alfonso IX of

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/republic>

<sup>17</sup> John C. Aldieri, From: <https://www.cga.ct.gov/asafcrconnecticut/tmy/0128/John%20C%20Aldieri.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> History & Society, Parliamentary System Government, From: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/parliamentary-system>

<sup>19</sup> [https://www.jncpasighat.edu.in/file/ppt/pol/presidential\\_form\\_government.pdf](https://www.jncpasighat.edu.in/file/ppt/pol/presidential_form_government.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> Difference between Presidential and Parliamentary Form of Government, From: <https://byjus.com/free-ias-prep/presidential-and-parliamentary-form-of-government/>

Leon, the Dutch Revolt in the 16th century, and the establishment of parliaments in the UK and Sweden during the 18th century. Democratic government is often termed "government by talk," with the central institution being the Parliament, derived from the word "Parliament," meaning formal consultation. The UK pioneered parliamentary democracy, with its structure of King, Lords, and Commons influencing colonies. In this system, a political party with a majority forms the ruling government, and its leader, such as a Prime Minister, appoints a Cabinet. Opposition parties question the government, and if no majority is achieved, a coalition government may form. A Prime Minister and Cabinet can be removed by a 'No-Confidence Motion' if they fail to perform their constitutional duties.

#### ❖ Features of Parliamentary Government

1. *Dual Executive:* Inspired by the UK system, India's Parliament includes the Lok Sabha (Lower House), Rajya Sabha (Upper House), and the President (de-jure Head) and Prime Minister (de-facto Head).
2. *Formation of Government:* After elections, the Prime Minister is chosen, appoints the Cabinet, and the President formally approves it.
3. *Collective Responsibility:* Ministers must work together and share accountability. Disagreements may lead to resignation or removal, with the Prime Minister linking the Government and the President.
4. *Uncertain Tenure:* The Cabinet's term is not fixed and can be influenced by the dissolution of Parliament or no-confidence motions, leading to potential instability.
5. *Bicameralism:* Most parliamentary systems, including India, have two houses at both central and state levels (Parliament and State Assemblies).
6. *Majority and Coalition:* Ideally, a single party with a common ideology forms the government, but coalitions can form if no single party has a majority.

#### ❖ Why a Parliamentary Government

1. The Legislative and the Executive of the government formed by the majority political party experiences smooth and undisturbed communication and cooperation.
2. Accountability about government conduct becomes a pivotal feature under the 'Parliamentary System' of government.
3. In a Parliamentary regime, a Minister's Council is vested with the executive power. By this, a system of 'Checks and Balances' is developed which supervises the authoritarian tendencies of the executive.<sup>21</sup>
4. 'Parliamentary Government,' imbibes wide range of representation of people as they are represented by ministers elected by them. Therefore, enveloping the entire ethnicities, regional groups, and geographical regions of the nation.

#### ❖ Why not a Parliamentary Government

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<sup>21</sup> Sweta, Parliamentary Form of Government: Meaning, History, Merits & Demerits, Date: 7<sup>th</sup> July, 2023, From: <https://www.studyiq.com/articles/parliamentary-form-of-government/>

1. *Accountability Issues:* Lack of power division and dominance by one party can hinder legislative and executive accountability, with anti-defection laws restricting independent voting.
2. *Legislative Inadequacy:* Legislators may lack the expertise to enact laws that meet societal needs, leading to a centralized power approach.
3. *Majority Rule:* Only popular parties retain power, making coalition governments unstable and often prioritizing authority over public welfare.
4. *Expertise Deficiency:* The executive is often composed of party members rather than experts, leading to inefficiencies in government departments.
5. *Delayed Decisions:* Long-term decisions on laws, amendments, and policies are often postponed, hampering national growth.
6. *Party Over Nation:* Parliamentarians may prioritize party interests over national interests, weakening democratic principles.
7. *Administrative Dominance:* The administrative wing often guides ministers without accountability to the legislative branch.

### **Presidential Government Regime**

The Presidential Government Regime, with roots in medieval England, France, and Scotland, features a President as both head of state and government, independent of the legislature. This "single executive system" involves direct or indirect election by voters, with the President unaccountable to the legislature, except in cases like impeachment. Unlike parliamentary systems, the government leader is not appointed by the legislature. Some nations, like France and Poland, have adopted hybrid systems combining elements of both presidential and parliamentary systems.

#### **❖ Features of the Presidential Government**

1. Executive power is vested in the President, the head of state.
2. Power is distributed among the Legislature, Executive, and Judiciary, ensuring no accountability of the executive to the legislature, and maintaining a system of checks and balances.
3. The President holds supreme authority, concentrating power under his office.
4. Clear separation of powers makes the distribution of authority between the Executive and Legislature more transparent.
5. The Executive is independent of the Legislature, with no vote of no-confidence allowed, and the President and secretaries are not legislative members, hence unaccountable to it.

#### **❖ Why a Presidential Government**

1. Fixed presidential tenure ensures stable and effective administration.
2. Concentrated power at the presidential level prevents branches from becoming authoritarian, safeguarding citizen welfare.

3. Decision-making is streamlined as the President is both head of state and government.
4. Presidential appointments are often free from personal or professional bias.

#### ❖ **Why not a Presidential Government**

1. Fixed tenure and concentrated power risk turning the President into a dictator.
2. Independence of the Executive and Legislature can lead to governmental deadlock.
3. Constitutional rigidity may hinder adaptability to changing conditions.
4. Lack of coordination between branches reduces the likelihood of effective legislation.

#### **Comparative Analysis & Conclusion**

In a "Parliamentary Government," all authority lies with the Parliament, as seen in India. Conversely, a "Presidential Government" concentrates power within the executive branch, independent of the legislature, as in the United States. In a Presidential system, the President, chosen by popular vote, serves as both the head of state and government, often making the more popular candidate more likely to win. In contrast, in a Parliamentary system, the Prime Minister, usually the senior-most member of Parliament, is the government leader, while the President is a titular head (de jure) with no active political role.

Parliamentary Government ensures that the executive is accountable to the legislature, whereas in a Presidential system, the executive operates independently. This separation in a Presidential system can lead to greater autonomy but also increases the risk of autocratic tendencies, as the President can dissolve the legislature. In contrast, the Parliamentary system fosters closer links between the legislative, executive, and judicial branches, promoting checks and balances.

In conclusion, while the Presidential Government may appear less aligned with democratic principles due to its potential for autocratic rule, this instability often arises from extra-constitutional actions by the executive rather than flaws in the system itself. However, the Parliamentary Government, with its inherent checks and balances and interconnected governance, tends to be a more stable and preferable choice.