PROSPECTS OF THE PRESIDENTIAL AND THE SEMI-PRESIDENTIAL SYSTEMS IN THE CONTEXT OF NEPAL

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ABSTRACT

Nepal's current parliamentary system has suffered repeated executive-legislative crises, unstable coalitions, and eroding public trust. This paper reviews whether adopting a presidential or semi-presidential model could improve stability and governance. Drawing on comparative theory and international experience, it examines how these systems organise executive power and how they might suit Nepal's federal, multiethnic context. Presidential systems feature an independently elected executive separate from the legislature. In contrast, semi-presidential regimes blend a popular president with a prime minister who is accountable to parliament. Executive powers are divided in various ways, often benefiting the president under certain designs. The analysis finds that a presidential model can offer clear leadership and fixed-term stability but risks authoritarian drift unless strong checks exist. A semi-presidential model can combine stability with legislative accountability if its constitutional design is clear, but unclear dual roles can generate conflict. In Nepal's context, careful institutional safeguards would be needed. The study concludes that systemic change alone cannot cure fundamental political culture issues; long-term success would depend on broad reforms to parties, institutions, and civic culture. Findings are intended to inform Nepali policymakers by synthesising theory and global lessons for deliberating possible governance reforms.

Keywords: *presidential system, semi-presidential system, political stability, executive-legislative relations, constitutional design, Nepal*

INTRODUCTION

Since abolishing its monarchy, Nepal has sought stable democratic governance through a federal parliamentary system. The 2015 Constitution established a secular, inclusive republic with a parliament selecting the executive. However, in practice, the government has changed frequently under this arrangement. No administration has completed its full term since 2015, and coalition breakups are common (Thapa, 2025). This volatility has disrupted policy continuity and undermined public trust in government. In response to these problems, some Nepali analysts have begun advocating alternatives such as a U.S.-style presidential system or a hybrid semi-presidential system (Khaitu, 2024; Topçuoglu, 2025).

In a presidential system, executive power is vested in a president directly elected by the people, independent of the legislature (Linz, 1990; Cheibub, 2007). The executive does not owe its tenure to parliamentary confidence, and the legislature and executive operate as separate branches (Shugart & Carey, 1992). By contrast, a semi-presidential system involves both a president and a prime minister sharing executive authority, with the prime minister typically accountable to parliament (Constitutional Transitions, 2014; Elgie, 1999). Elgie (1999) notes that semi-presidential regimes

feature a "dual executive" arrangement that can take various forms, potentially tilting power toward the president under some designs. Internationally, the United States exemplifies a presidential regime, while France and Sri Lanka exemplify semi-presidential regimes with differing power balances.

Whether Nepal would benefit from either system is fundamentally an empirical question, not just a theoretical one. Proponents argue that a president with a fixed mandate could govern more stably and directly (Cheibub, 2007; McManus & Ozkan, 2018). Conversely, semi-presidential arrangements could theoretically unify strong leadership with parliamentary oversight, preserving checks and balances (Constitutional Transitions, 2014). But such systems' outcomes depend on national history, institutional capacity, and political culture (Lijphart, 2012). For example, Linz (1990) warned that in weakly institutionalised settings, presidential and semi-presidential systems can lead to executive-legislative deadlocks or power grabs. In Nepal's case, ongoing parliamentary gridlock and coalition instability signal that reform may be desirable (Thapa, 2025). However, changing the system without broad institutional reform could simply reintroduce old problems in a new guise.

This study undertakes a comprehensive analysis of Nepal's governance challenges and the potential effects of introducing presidential or semi-presidential models. It critically examines the domestic experience and international comparisons to assess which system might better deliver stability, accountability, and inclusiveness in Nepal. In so doing, it aims to inform Nepali debate by bridging academic theory and practical evidence.

Statement of Problem

Nepal's political system is widely seen as unstable and fragmented. The existing parliamentary system has generated frequent changes of government and weak coalition administrations (Thapa, 2025). Observers note that divided party politics and a lack of party discipline impede effective governance (Thapa, 2025). In a parliamentary democracy, the prime minister depends on maintaining a legislative majority; as a result, coalition breakdowns trigger premature elections and executive turnover. Critics argue that this undermines long-term policy planning, dilutes executive accountability, and fosters opportunistic power-sharing rather than substantive governance.

In this context, interest has grown in alternative executive arrangements. A presidential system might provide more stable leadership by fixing the president's term regardless of legislative shifts. A semi-presidential system could allow a directly elected president to provide overall direction while retaining parliamentary checks through a prime minister (Constitutional Transitions, 2014). However, it is uncertain whether either model would uphold democratic values in Nepal's diverse society. Presidentialism may empower a single leader at the expense of inclusivity, while semi-presidentialism could create confusion if roles overlap. There is a lack of rigorous analysis on how such systems would function amid Nepal's ethnic, linguistic, and regional diversity.

To date, discussions of governance reform have often been anecdotal or ideological. Academic clarity on the feasibility and design of presidential or semi-presidential systems in Nepal is lacking. As a result, constitutional and policy debates have not fully considered the trade-offs involved. This study seeks to fill that gap by systematically evaluating the strengths, weaknesses, and contextual fit of presidential and semi-presidential models for Nepal.

Objectives of the Study

The primary objective is to analyse the core institutional features of presidential and

semi-presidential systems and how executive power is structured in each. Specifically, the study will:

1. Explain the theoretical principles and constitutional structures of presidential and semi-presidential regimes.

2. Assess whether and how each model could be adapted to Nepal's political and constitutional context, considering factors like federalism, party system fragmentation, and democratic norms.

3. Draw lessons from international examples – especially other transitional or developing democracies – to guide policy recommendations for Nepal.

By fulfilling these objectives, the study aims to provide Nepali policymakers and scholars with evidence-based perspectives on possible executive system reforms.

Significance of the Study

This research is timely and significant for both scholarly and practical reasons. Nepal is actively grappling with democratic consolidation, and governance inefficiencies in the current system have fueled interest in alternatives (Thapa, 2025). An in-depth, research-based comparison of government forms can clarify the options available. By linking theory to practice, the study will help bridge academic debate and real-world policymaking. It examines how governments in countries with similar histories and structures have fared under different systems, offering Nepali actors a frame of reference (Lijphart, 2012; Cheibub, 2007).

Furthermore, the analysis contributes to Nepal's ongoing institutional development. The 2015 constitution invites adaptation, and future revisions may be considered. This study's findings could inform constitutional revision efforts by outlining the consequences of shifting to presidential or semi-presidential governance. For policymakers, knowing international best practices and cautionary lessons can guide reforms that strengthen institutions rather than undermine them. For scholars, it adds to comparative governance literature by focusing on an understudied context.

In sum, this work aims to inject a measured, empirical approach into Nepal's debate. Rather than relying on rhetoric or partisan claims, it provides a balanced analysis of how alternative systems align with democratic goals like accountability, inclusiveness, and stability (Lijphart, 2012; Constitutional Transitions, 2014). It also highlights institutional reforms that would be needed to make any transition effective. Ultimately, the study seeks to equip Nepali decision-makers with evidence and global perspectives to make informed choices about their country's future governance.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Theoretical Analysis

Academic theory on regime types guides the implications of different systems. Montesquieu's separation of powers suggests that balancing branches is essential for democracy (Lijphart, 2012). In presidential systems, the executive is elected independently, which can yield clear accountability and decision-making. Linz (1990) observed that presidentialism's separate elections give each branch its own democratic legitimacy, potentially reducing the need for coalition bargaining, and can lend stability of tenure. For example, Bagehot (1867/1963) famously contrasted the U.S. presidential "independence" of executive and legislature with the British parliamentary

"fusion." Cheibub (2007) defines presidentialism as a system where fixed presidential terms and independent mandates can produce efficiency in policy implementation.

However, scholars caution that presidential systems carry risks. Linz (1990) coined the "perils of presidentialism," noting that having two independently elected authorities can lead to conflict or deadlock over legitimacy. If party preferences diverge between the president and the legislature, gridlock or competing mandates may ensue (Linz, 1990). Furthermore, Shugart and Carey (1992) note that fixed terms make presidents less accountable between elections, potentially emboldening abuse if institutions are weak. Mainwaring and Shugart (1997) argue that presidentialism's outcomes also depend on party systems: fragmented party systems may fare worse. Overall, presidential government can assure continuity (one leader remains in office), but if checks are insufficient, it may "put insufficient obstacles in the path of a crisis heading for breakdown".

Semi-presidential systems aim to mix features of presidential and parliamentary government. Elgie (1999) describes them as having both a directly elected president and a prime minister responsible to parliament. In such systems, dual executives can share or divide powers in various ways. The NYU Constitutional Transitions project (2014) emphasises that semi-presidentialism is characterised by "a directly elected president who shares executive power with a prime minister and government accountable to an elected legislature". This arrangement can, in theory, combine presidential decisiveness with parliamentary oversight (Constitutional Transitions, 2014). The dual executive offers a form of power sharing: in some designs, the president handles foreign policy and defence, while the prime minister manages domestic affairs (Elgie, 1999).

Nevertheless, semi-presidentialism is complex and context-dependent. If constitutional roles are unclear, the president and prime minister may clash. Elgie (1999) and Constitutional Transitions (2014) note that only clear rules and political maturity can make semi-presidentialism function as intended. For instance, France's experience shows that cohabitation (when the president and PM are from different parties) can cause institutional friction. Kujanen (2024) finds that the semi-presidential "dual executive structure" allows arrangements that may "be potentially more beneficial for the president", indicating that design details can significantly tilt power. In sum, theory suggests a properly configured semi-presidential system could stabilise executive leadership while retaining parliamentary checks. But its success hinges on strong institutions, a rules-based constitution, and a political culture that respects divided authority (Constitutional Transitions, 2014).

For Nepal, these theoretical lessons imply trade-offs. A presidential model offers clear separation and stable tenure for a single leader, which could reduce the chronic turnover Nepal now faces. However, as Linz (1990) warns, in a transitioning democracy, this same clarity can create two competing democratic mandates (the president and the legislature) and rigidity due to fixed terms. Conversely, a semi-presidential model might allow a popularly elected president to unify national leadership, while a parliamentary-approved prime minister provides ongoing accountability. If well designed, semi-presidentialism can "lower the risk that power will become centralised in a single person" by dividing executive authority. But if the president's powers are not clearly limited or the institutional balance is poorly defined, semi-presidentialism can degenerate into executive dominance or dual-gridlock (Constitutional Transitions, 2014).

In summary, both systems have theoretical merits and drawbacks. Presidentialism promises strong, consistent leadership but risks over-concentration and potential authoritarianism without checks (Linz, 1990; Shugart & Carey, 1992). Semi-presidentialism promises a hybrid that can

balance stability and accountability, but its complexity means outcomes vary widely by country (Constitutional Transitions, 2014; Elgie, 1999). Crucially, comparative scholarship stresses that the fit between system design and the country's political context is decisive (Lijphart, 1999; Cheibub, 2007).

Policy Analysis

Nepal's own political journey has been turbulent. The country transitioned from an absolute monarchy through a party-based system (post-1990) and a Maoist insurgency to a federal republic in 2008. The 2015 constitution enshrined federalism, secularism, and inclusiveness. In principle, a parliamentary system was seen as best suited for accommodating Nepal's vast ethnic, linguistic, and regional diversity by requiring multi-party cooperation.

In practice, however, Nepal's parliamentary experiment has been unstable. Since 2015, prime ministers have been unable to rely on cohesive legislative support; governments have fallen due to internal party splits and defections (Thapa, 2025). As a result, policies on development, infrastructure, and social programs suffer discontinuity whenever coalitions realign. Bureaucratic administrators, facing an uncertain tenure of their political masters, often lack direction. Thapa (2025) reports that party factionalism, weak coalitions, and constitutional ambiguities have been major internal drivers of instability in Nepal's recent history. External pressures and corruption have compounded these problems, but the core issue has been a fragmented party system.

Against this backdrop, some have argued that a presidential model could inject stability. A directly elected Nepali president could theoretically provide unified leadership and a clear policy agenda, capable of bridging party lines through a national mandate (Cheibub, 2007). For a geographically and culturally diverse country like Nepal, a strong president might symbolise unity and make decisive national decisions (Kapur, 2016). However, Nepali critics caution that weak institutions and endemic corruption could turn a powerful presidency toward authoritarianism. The lack of a strong institutional framework and vigilant opposition could allow abuses.

By contrast, a semi-presidential model might temper these extremes. If the Nepali president were largely ceremonial or focused on strategic leadership, while a prime minister from the legislature handled daily governance, the dual system could preserve checks and balances. This might mitigate the "winner-takes-all" problem of presidentialism by requiring compromise between the president and parliament. On the other hand, Nepal's history of strong premierships suggests that elevating a president's role could provoke power struggles. The experience of other semi-presidential states – for example, Sri Lanka's repetitive tussles between president and prime minister – warns that unclear divisions can paralyse governance.

Overall, Nepal's social heterogeneity and recent institutional experiments mean that any system change must consider more than abstract design. Federalism links the centre and provinces; social inclusion requires broad representation; a reputation for consensus is fragile. Shifting to presidentialism could centralise decision-making in Kathmandu, risking alienation of provinces. On the other hand, a properly structured semi-presidential model could potentially accommodate diverse coalitions while ensuring executive continuity. The crucial point is that empirical success depends on aligning the chosen system with Nepal's political culture, party structure, and constitutional safeguards (Lijphart, 2012; Constitutional Transitions, 2014).

Policy Analysis

Policy-making outcomes vary under different systems. In Nepal's parliamentarism, frequent government turnover leads to policy discontinuities. Long-term development plans in areas

such as infrastructure, education, or health are often abandoned when administrations change. Empirical analyses of Nepal's recent legislatures note that shifts in ruling coalitions bring sharp reversals or delays in the implementation of major projects (Thapa, 2025). This undermines the constitutional goals of stable, inclusive progress that were intended by the 2015 framework.

In a presidential system, policy-making is theoretically more streamlined. A single-party executive with a fixed term can push through an agenda without constant coalition negotiations. Cheibub (2007) argues that this can produce clarity and efficiency in high-stakes areas like national development or foreign policy. Indeed, research shows that presidential executives often implement large-scale economic and infrastructure programs with fewer legislative obstacles (McManus & Ozkan, 2018). For Nepal, a powerful president could provide focused leadership on development goals, potentially improving implementation speed. However, this assumes strong oversight; without robust institutional checks (an effective judiciary, independent audit agencies, etc.), a president might govern by decree and circumvent democratic accountability (Linz, 1990; Shugart & Carey, 1992).

A semi-presidential system offers an intermediate path in policy terms. It retains a significant presidential figure who can set broad priorities, but entrusts day-to-day administration to a prime minister responsible to parliament. Constitutional Transitions (2014) note that semi-presidentialism can act as a "hedge against… parliamentary chaos" by ensuring decisive leadership when needed, while preserving legislative input. In practice, a Nepal with semi-presidentialism might see the president guiding foreign policy or national vision, while the prime minister manages domestic policy with parliamentary confidence. This could combine the presidential model's stability with the parliamentary model's inclusiveness. Careful design – for example, clearly defining which powers the president may exercise independently – would be needed to prevent confusion.

Finally, socio-demographic factors matter. Nepal is a multi-ethnic democracy with commitments to federalism and inclusion. Any system must support representation. A purely presidential regime with a single-person executive might marginalise minority voices unless power-sharing is institutionalised elsewhere. A parliamentary or semi-presidential regime inherently involves party negotiation, which can be more inclusive (Lijphart, 2012). Thus, analysts emphasise that even if stability is the goal, Nepal must preserve mechanisms for broad participation in policymaking. From this perspective, a semi-presidential system could potentially combine stability with power-sharing, whereas a full presidential system would need strong constitutional checks (Lijphart, 2012; Constitutional Transitions, 2014).

Research Gap

Existing literature on Nepal's governance system has largely been descriptive or journalistic. Few academic studies have systematically evaluated alternative executive models in the Nepali context. Thapa (2025) notes that analyses of Nepal's 2022–24 political turmoil often identify causes (e.g. coalition weakness, corruption), but do not explore structural solutions. Similarly, past scholarship has catalogued Nepal's political changes without comparing them to what might have occurred under different constitutions. In short, there is a lack of empirical, comparative research on presidential versus parliamentary systems in Nepal.

Internationally, comparative politics offers insights but often focuses on long-standing democracies or Latin American cases. There is scant research on new or transitional democracies like Nepal contemplating systemic shifts. In Nepal's policy discourse, proposals for presidentialism or semi-

presidentialism have been advanced, but usually without referencing cross-country evidence or constitutional design literature (Thapa, 2025; Constitutional Transitions, 2014). This study addresses that gap by bringing together theoretical arguments and data from other countries to inform Nepal's debate.

METHODS

This research is qualitative, descriptive, analytical, and comparative. It relies entirely on secondary sources: constitutions, policy documents, academic publications, and news analyses. The study proceeds in several stages. First, it surveys constitutional texts and scholarly literature to outline how presidential and semi-presidential systems function. Second, it examines international case studies and academic analyses to identify successes and failures of these models. Third, it critically evaluates how those lessons apply to Nepal. This design enables careful cross-national comparison and contextual evaluation of institutional performance (Lijphart, 2012; Cheibub, 2007).

Research Design

The research design is qualitative and comparative. It does not gather new statistical data but instead synthesises existing information to build arguments. The analysis is descriptive (explaining how each system operates in theory) and analytical (assessing implications for Nepal). A comparative approach explicitly contrasts Nepal's parliamentary experience with examples of presidentialism and semi-presidentialism abroad. International case material – such as the U.S. (presidential) and France or Sri Lanka (semi-presidential) – is used as reference. The theoretical framework draws on political science literature on regime types (Linz, 1990; Elgie, 1999; Cheibub, 2007). This approach helps ensure that conclusions are grounded both in concepts and in documented practice.

Sampling

The "sample" in this study is not a set of respondents, but rather a collection of informative cases and sources. It includes constitutional frameworks, expert analyses, and media commentary from Nepal and selected comparative countries. For example, statements by Nepali political leaders on institutional change are considered alongside academic studies of presidentialism elsewhere. This broad sampling of secondary material is intended to capture a range of perspectives on governance issues.

Nature and Sources of Information

All information is qualitative. Sources include: Nepal's 2015 Constitution and amendment history; laws and policy documents on governance; scholarly books and articles on executive systems (e.g. Linz, 1990; Cheibub, 2007; Lijphart, 2012); policy reports from think tanks (e.g. Constitutional Transitions, 2014); and relevant journalistic accounts of Nepali politics (Thapa, 2025; Asia Pacific Institute, 2025). International journal articles on democratic institutions (e.g. McManus & Özkan, 2018) inform general claims about stability.

Data Collection Tools

Data was collected through two main methods: literature review and desk research. (1) Literature review: Academic and constitutional sources were studied to establish a theoretical foundation. This included textbooks (Mahajan, 2016; Kapur, 2016), scholarly books (Cheibub, 2007; Elgie, 1999; Shugart & Carey, 1992), and peer-reviewed articles (McManus & Özkan, 2018; Kujanen, 2024). Key concepts and quotations from these works were extracted. (2) Desk research: Comparative information was gathered by reviewing constitutional texts and governance reports

from other countries, as well as analyses by international organisations (e.g. NYU's Constitutional Transitions report). News analyses and policy papers (e.g. Thapa, 2025) provided context on Nepal's recent experience. Cross-country data (such as examples of system changes in Africa or Asia) were also synthesised from open sources.

Analysis and Presentation of Data

The collected information was organised thematically in line with the study's objectives. Key themes (stability of the system, executive power balance, role of parties, policy continuity, etc.) were coded during analysis. For example, passages discussing coalition breakdowns in Nepal were coded under "instability" and "coalition weakness." Comparative features of each system (such as mode of election of the executive, tenure security, and party influence) were also identified across sources.

Thematic analysis was conducted descriptively: facts and arguments were grouped under relevant headings. For instance, all literature on presidential term stability was examined together, and all material on checks and accountability was analysed jointly. The study uses this qualitative synthesis to draw contrasts and highlight implications. Where useful, comparisons drawn in tables in the original data have been translated into narrative form here. The presentation is thus both descriptive (explaining each system) and comparative (assessing suitability in Nepal).

Data Coding and Classification

Document excerpts were classified with codes such as *"system stability"*, *"executive-legislative relations"*, *"party role"*, and *"policy continuity."* This helped focus the analysis on how different systems address these dimensions. For example, information about fixed presidential terms was coded under stability, while observations on party-dominated coalitions were coded under party influence.

Comparative Analysis

A systematic comparison was made between Nepal's current system and alternative models. Case examples from France (semi-presidential) and Sri Lanka (semi-presidential) were used to illustrate theoretical points, as were examples like the United States (presidential). Data on how often governments change, or how policy continuity has fared, was considered alongside constitutional differences. This direct comparison highlights contrasts: for example, the ease of executive dismissal under Nepal's parliamentarism versus the fixed terms of a hypothetical president.

Use of Tables

Although this report is narrative, tabular comparisons were used internally to clarify points. For example, a table comparing *"Power Division," "Stability," "Head of State Election," "Party Role," and "Suitability in Nepal"* across the three systems helped structure the analysis. Similarly, objectives such as examining the strengths of each system were tabulated with key findings. In the rewritten text, these tables have been described in prose form rather than presented visually, to meet the academic style requested.

Delimitation and Quality Standards

Delimitation

This study is delimited to Nepal's post-2015 constitutional context and the broad question of executive structure. It does not analyse electoral systems, local government structures, or in-depth party ideology. Its focus is on comparing national executive models (parliamentary, presidential, semi-presidential) in terms of governance outcomes.

To ensure quality and credibility, the analysis prioritised authoritative sources: constitutional texts, peer-reviewed journals, and expert publications (Lijphart, 2012; Constitutional Transitions, 2014; Thapa, 2025). The theoretical framework is clearly stated, and methods (literature review and comparative analysis) are explicitly described. Claims are supported by citations to relevant literature. Efforts were made to maintain neutrality and acknowledge the limitations of each source. Transparency is maintained by disclosing all major sources and their contexts, avoiding biases or unsubstantiated claims (Thapa, 2025).

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Performance Analysis of Nepal's current Parliamentary Governance System

Under Nepal's parliamentary model, governance has been marked by chronic instability. Since the republic was established, governments have lasted only months on average. Thapa (2025) reports that between 2022 and 2024, no coalition held power through the full term due to infighting and defections. This volatility has seriously impeded policymaking: each cabinet change brings a new set of priorities, and many long-term plans have stalled or been scrapped. A stable policy environment has been elusive, slowing development efforts. Moreover, frequent turnover erodes administrative responsibility – civil servants face changing directives, reducing bureaucratic accountability.

Party politics have dominated Nepal's governance at the expense of policy substance. Coalition partners often negotiate cabinet posts rather than policy compromises. As Thapa (2025) notes, "a divided party system and weak coalition governments are repeatedly listed as major factors responsible for instability". This suggests office-sharing has become a goal in itself. Public trust in institutions has declined amid such dysfunction; scandals and parliamentary brawls have further alienated citizens. In effect, the line between the legislature and the executive has blurred. Instead of Parliament acting as a check on executive power, parties in the coalition often control both branches. This has created confusion over jurisdiction and weakened oversight. In sum, Nepal's parliamentary system has struggled to provide strong, consistent leadership or clear accountability (Lijphart, 2012).

Comparative Analysis

Contrasting Nepal's experience with other systems highlights key trade-offs. A pure presidential system would offer executive stability: a president with a fixed term would generally be able to complete that term unless impeached. This continuity can allow the government to pursue long-range policies without the threat of legislative collapse (Cheibub, 2007). McManus and Ozkan (2018) find that presidential regimes, on average, enjoy faster policy implementation but also bear risks of unchecked authority. Indeed, the danger is that without clear boundaries, a president may concentrate power. Linz (1990) warned that in presidential democracies, the absence of a hierarchical link between branches can lead to authoritarian tendencies if the president circumvents the legislature. In Nepal, adopting a presidential system could thus threaten democratic checks and balances. Even if policies proceed smoothly, questions about the imbalance of power and reduced legislative oversight would arise.

In contrast, a semi-presidential system is often seen as a compromise solution. It has the potential to combine leadership stability with accountability. The president provides national leadership, but the prime minister (dependent on Parliament) handles governance. This can maintain legislative authority and mitigate the risks of excessive executive power. According to Constitutional Transitions (2014), "semi-presidentialism can serve as a hedge against parliamentary chaos" by ensuring that some executive leader can act decisively. Crucially, because the prime minister must

retain parliamentary confidence, power-sharing keeps accountability alive. This theoretically reduces the likelihood of autocratic drift seen in presidential regimes. In Nepal's case, a semi-presidential system might preserve something of the parliamentary tradition (multi-party negotiation and legislative input) while providing a fixed figurehead in the presidency to unify the executive. Empirically, countries like France have used semi-presidentialism to stabilise governance over decades, though with learning through cohabitation challenges (Elgie, 1999). Given Nepal's current plight—marked by executive instability and blurred accountability—a semi-presidential model appears to offer a balanced alternative. It can maintain clear leadership roles (reducing policy confusion) and limit the concentration of power (Constitutional Transitions, 2014).

Practical Possibility of Systemic Transformation in the Context of Nepal

In theory, Nepal's constitution can be amended to change the system of government. A fundamental alteration (to presidentialism or semi-presidentialism) would require a two-thirds majority in Parliament on two occasions, per the constitutional amendment provisions. In practice, however, such a change depends on broad political will and public debate. As of this writing, no major party has initiated a serious legislative effort to adopt presidentialism or semi-presidentialism. Indeed, many political leaders fear losing power under a new system. There has been limited structured discussion at the civic level about the trade-offs of such a transition. Observers note that most Nepali citizens are either unaware of or indifferent to the technical differences between governance systems. Without active public discourse, any shift would lack legitimacy and clarity. Institutional preparations are also lacking. A move to presidentialism would necessitate redesigning electoral laws (e.g. direct election of the president), judicial oversight frameworks, and balancing bodies (ombudspersons, etc.). Similarly, establishing a semi-presidential model would require defining the exact powers of the president versus the prime minister and the process for resolving conflicts. Nepal has not taken these steps. Reports suggest that structural reforms (like adjusting the electoral system or strengthening party rules) have not kept pace with calls for system change. Without clear planning, a systemic overhaul could be counterproductive. Constitutional Transitions (2014) emphasises that shifting systems without corresponding institutional reforms risks "centralising political power in a single executive" or creating an institutional vacuum. In Nepal's case, such an experiment might replicate past crises in new forms. For example, if a presidential system were adopted but checks remain weak, the country could see a president dismissing parliament at will or governing by decree. Likewise, an ill-defined semi-presidential system might simply replace one type of conflict with another if parties continue to fracture.

Nevertheless, some analysts argue that over the long run, a carefully instituted semi-presidential system might aid Nepal's democratic consolidation. By providing a stable presidential figure and a parliament-based prime minister, it could rebuild policy consistency and public trust (Constitutional Transitions, 2014). It might also gradually encourage parties to form larger pre-election coalitions, knowing that the president offers continuity while the prime minister must share power. In this way, semi-presidentialism has the potential to deliver executive stability, more effective implementation of policies, and renewed confidence in governance—provided that constitutional design is clear and safeguards are in place.

CONCLUSION

This analysis finds that while Nepal's current parliamentary system has manifested chronic instability and inefficiency, changing the system of government is no panacea. A presidential system could offer stronger, unipolar leadership but at the cost of raising authoritarian dangers

unless a culture of accountability is deeply embedded (Linz, 1990; Shugart & Carey, 1992). A semi-presidential system promises a middle path by blending presidential authority with parliamentary oversight, but its complexity requires a mature political environment (Constitutional Transitions, 2014). In Nepal's case, the historical strength of parliamentarism and the urgency of reform suggest that any shift would need extensive preparation: constitutional reforms, clear power-sharing rules, and public consensus. Without such foundations, introducing presidential or semi-presidential governance might simply transplant existing problems. Therefore, while an alternative executive structure could improve leadership clarity and policy consistency, the ultimate success of such a change would hinge on deep institutional and cultural reforms. The findings underline the need for evidence-based debate in Nepal on governance, drawing on both global experiences and local realities. As Nepal contemplates its constitutional future, this study provides a systematic assessment of options, highlighting that democratic stability ultimately depends on strong institutions and civic maturity, not merely on a different label for the executive.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

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