



The Relevancy of the Presidential System in Nepal

Naresh Bhandari

MPhil- PhD scholar

Central Department of Political Science

Tribhuvan University, Nepal

nareshbhandari035@gmail.com

Received: October 11, 2025

Revised & Accepted: November 27, 2025

Copyright: Author(s) (2025)



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Non Commercial 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/).

Abstract

Background: Nepal's federal parliamentary system, established by the 2015 constitution, has been marred by persistent political instability, frequent government changes, and governance deficits. This has led to widespread public disillusionment and sparked a serious debate, including within recent political movements, on the viability of adopting a presidential system as an alternative.

Objective: This study aims to critically evaluate the shortcomings of Nepal's parliamentary system and analyze the justifications for, and potential of, a presidential system to address issues of political stability, policy effectiveness, and governmental accountability.

Methods: The research employs a qualitative methodology, relying on secondary sources. It conducts a comparative and theoretical analysis of parliamentary and presidential systems, drawing on both international academic literature and national discourse from Nepali scholars and commentators.

Findings: The analysis indicates that the presidential system presents a contextually relevant and potentially viable alternative for Nepal. It is theorized to offer greater political stability and direct executive accountability. However, its successful implementation is contingent upon robust constitutional checks and balances to mitigate risks of authoritarianism and executive-legislative deadlock.

Conclusion: While the presidential system emerges as a compelling alternative to the unstable parliamentary model, its adoption in Nepal would require careful institutional design, including strong balancing mechanisms and strengthened constitutional bodies, to ensure its democratic functioning.



Novelty: This paper provides a timely and comprehensive analysis of the presidential system debate in post-constitution Nepal, synthesizing global theoretical perspectives with specific insights from Nepal's unique socio-political context.

Keywords: Presidential System, Parliamentary System, Political Stability, Governance, Nepal.

Introduction

The Constitution of Nepal (2015), promulgated by the Constituent Assembly, established a federal democratic republican framework and adopted a parliamentary system of governance. In practice, however, the executive has often treated the parliament as an extension of its own authority, resulting in the ineffective implementation of the principle of separation of powers. Unhealthy competition, bargaining, and factionalism among political parties have further distorted the parliamentary system. Although the Constitution includes provisions for inclusiveness and proportional representation, these mechanisms have frequently been misused. Party leaders have not only exercised favoritism by nominating relatives and supporters, thereby committing injustices against targeted communities, but have also negatively impacted leadership development (Dev, 2014).

Inner-party struggle, and divisions have generated widespread public disillusionment and heightened concerns about the vulnerability of Nepal's democracy. Such conditions impede political stability and overall national development. This raises the question of whether these challenges are specific to Nepal's unique circumstances or are shared by other countries that have adopted parliamentary systems (Baral, 2025). The governments after 1990 have not been able to ensure stability. In several past periods, there appears to be a near similarity between governmental instability and the king's intervention (Kumar, 2021). On multiple occasions, the monarchy undermined democratic governance and curtailed citizens' freedoms. Moreover, the concentration of power in the hands of a limited number of leaders within the parliament, government, and other state institutions has further intensified the centralization of authority.

The buying and selling of parliamentarians, political instability, factionalism, and illegitimate agreements constitute major weaknesses of the parliamentary system. These practices have not only undermined the emergence of competent, honest leadership but also encouraged corruption and systemic distortions (Pun, 2020). Governmental instability has adversely affected the country's prosperity, good governance, and policy continuity.

In such complex circumstances, it is natural for discussions to emerge regarding the feasibility and justification of a presidential system in Nepal. This study analyzes the potential, significance, and challenges of the presidential system in light of political instability and the inherent weaknesses of the parliamentary framework. It aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of whether a presidential form of governance could address the systemic shortcomings that have hindered Nepal's political stability and administrative effectiveness.



Objectives and Methodology of the Study

Globally, three major forms of governance—parliamentary, presidential, and semi-presidential—are prevalent. Among these, the parliamentary system has been adopted most widely, whereas only a limited number of countries have implemented the presidential system. Nepal, except during the periods of direct monarchical rule, has also primarily operated under a parliamentary system. However, this system has not succeeded in establishing political stability or good governance in the country and has often functioned as a primary source of political instability and governance inefficiency.

Against this backdrop, the primary objective of this study is to identify the limitations and weaknesses of Nepal's existing parliamentary governance system and to analyze the justification for adopting a presidential system as a potential alternative. This study is based on a qualitative research approach. It has been conducted through the use of secondary sources, including academic journals, books, government and party reports, newspaper articles, and interviews. Drawing upon the study of presidential and parliamentary governance systems in various countries, the research analyzes the potential suitability and justification for the presidential system in the context of Nepal.

Theoretical Background

The presidential system is grounded in John Locke's theory of popular accountability and limited government, as well as Montesquieu's principle of the separation of powers. This theory ensures a balance among the executive, legislative, and judicial branches. The distribution of authority serves as a mechanism to prevent the abuse of power. In *The Spirit of the Laws*, Montesquieu argued that if the leadership of all three branches of the state—the legislature, executive, and judiciary—is concentrated in a single individual, a despotic form of governance would emerge. His theoretical framework has guided constitutional design not only in the United States but also in democracies worldwide (Obrecht, 2016).

Locke, in *Two Treatises of Government*, advocated for the division of power to restrain state authority and to protect individual rights. Influenced by these ideas, the U.S. Constitution established a system that maintains balance among the legislature, executive, and judiciary through checks and balances. James Madison further developed these concepts through the Madisonian Model, analyzing the separation of powers not only as a safeguard against tyranny but also as a foundation for good governance and the formulation of high-quality public policy (Geenens & Schutter, 2022). Theoretically, the executive and legislature are designed to possess equal authority; however, in practice, the executive often assumes a dominant role. This predominance of executive power constitutes a key attraction of the presidential system (Gönder, 2015).

The presidential system may fail if conflicts between the executive and the legislature reach extreme levels. Arend Lijphart classified governance systems into majoritarian and consensual models. Nepal has a long history of practicing consensual governance to address its social diversity and post-conflict conditions. However, some scholars have argued that consensual democracy can violate certain principles of majoritarian democracy. While consensual democracy may compromise the value of majority rule, it still upholds fundamental democratic



principles. In times of crisis or in fragmented societies, cooperation becomes essential. This system ensures stable democracy through the collaboration of elite groups, and its success depends on coordination, cooperation, stability, and awareness of social fragmentation (Lijphart, 1969).

Thus, from a theoretical perspective, the presidential system can provide political stability. Nevertheless, if the necessary coordination between the balance of power and control mechanisms is not maintained, there remains a possibility that the system could drift toward authoritarianism.

Nepal's System of Governance and Its Problems

Based on its political experiences, Nepal has developed a consensual parliamentary system of governance. According to Article 100(4) of the Constitution, a motion of no confidence cannot be presented against the Prime Minister during the first two years in office, and once a motion fails, it cannot be resubmitted for one year. Unlike the provisions of the Westminster model, this arrangement does not grant the Prime Minister the authority to recommend the dissolution of the parliament (Sharma, 2020). Similarly, Khatiwada (2021) has assessed parliamentary democracy as both unnatural and ineffective for Nepal. He concludes that it has failed to ensure political stability and to meet the expectations of the citizenry. According to Khatiwada's analysis, this system is not a governance of genuine majority but has remained confined to seat arithmetic. Coalition politics, bargaining, and conspiracies have created a state of moral decline in both politics and society.

Between 1951 and 1961, ten governments, and between 1990 and 2005, fifteen governments were formed. However, none of these governments succeeded in maintaining political stability. Ultimately, both periods of democratic government collapsed due to royal intervention (Kumar, 2021). In the United Kingdom, the adage that "the parliament can do everything except make a husband of a wife or a wife of a husband" is widely cited. This statement reflects the principle of parliamentary supremacy. According to Dicey, the parliament is the supreme body for law-making and amendment (Adhikari, 2015). When excessive power is concentrated in parliament, the needs and demands of the people are often overlooked. Moreover, the principle of popular sovereignty, often mobilized merely for electoral purposes, has rendered the parliamentary system increasingly irrelevant.

A governance system is not complete in itself. Any system cannot succeed unless a country selects it based on its own specific characteristics. An ineffective governance system cannot achieve successful nation-building. In the context of Nepal, a parliamentary system that can address the country's diversity appears necessary. This system ensures the principle of inclusiveness (Lekhak, 2011). Political scientists consider the parliamentary system to be one of the most widely practiced and effective forms of governance globally. Its strength lies in providing arrangements for inclusive and proportional representation to address diversity. However, in practice, those with access and privilege have mostly been benefiting from this system. The gap between social classes continues to widen. A parliamentary system of governance based on reform and originality will be beneficial for the country (Dev, 2014).



The inability to implement the parliamentary system effectively has resulted in numerous shortcomings. Alongside government instability, distortions such as the buying and selling of parliamentarianism and corruption in electoral processes have largely been influenced by political leadership rather than by the system itself. Therefore, rather than seeking an alternative to the parliamentary system, it is necessary to focus on its reform (Koirala, 2011). According to Mainali (2022), the rapid formation and dissolution of governments has become a defining feature of Nepalese politics. A striking example of this is the fact that within the past thirty-one years, governments have changed twenty-eight times. Such instability has prevented the country's development from achieving its expected pace. Mainali identifies Nepal's electoral system as a primary factor contributing to political instability.

Waves of internal conflict, fragmentation, and division within political parties have led to widespread public disillusionment. These phenomena have been examined in relation to the vitality of democracy. Moreover, they have been analyzed with reference to the country's development and the future of democratic governance (Baral, 2025). Political stability must be ensured not only within the government but across the broader governance system. The perception that instability arises solely from frequent government changes is itself flawed. During the Rana regime and the Panchayat era, governments were relatively stable, yet the country as a whole remained unstable. Therefore, it is inappropriate to attribute systemic failure solely to individual or party-level weaknesses. The foundation of stability must originate from internal reforms within leadership, political parties, and government institutions. Simply seeking alternative governance arrangements cannot resolve these issues (Karki, 2022).

It appears that hereditary politics has emerged in Nepal's parliamentary system. The effects of anarchy and plunder have spread rapidly. In such a context, the parliamentary system appears to be afflicted by multiple problems. Consequently, elected representatives have become embroiled in scandals such as the 'Pajero', 'Gold', 'Baluwatar', and 'Omni' cases. Although claims of power balance are frequently made, in practice all branches of governance appear to operate in collusion (Nepali, 2021).

In line with the objective of reforming the traditional parliamentary system, certain aspects of Nepal's conventional parliamentary framework were amended in the Constitution. However, in practice, the country has reverted to the entrenched, problematic parliamentary politics, and popular movements have not substantially altered its political character. Analysts have observed that the failure of parliamentary democracy in Nepal has fueled the search for alternative democratic structures (Khatriwada, 2021). Although the governance system adopted by Nepal has achieved some tangible outcomes in ensuring inclusive and proportional representation of various social classes, castes, regions, and genders, it has failed to secure the expected stability of government and to advance actions in the public interest. This shortfall has contributed to growing public disillusionment. Consequently, debates have emerged regarding the adoption of a directly elected executive presidential system as a potential alternative form of governance.



The Relevancy of the Presidential System in Nepal

Democracy and the parliamentary system have been understood as synonymous concepts. However, the parliamentary system in practice in Nepal has not been able to fulfill the desire for stable, accountable, and well-governance. Consequently, debates regarding the justification of a presidential system as a potential alternative form of governance have been increasing.

Authoritarianism is not solely a product of the presidential system; under certain circumstances, parliamentary systems can also give rise to it. The dissolution of Nepal's sovereign parliament by the Prime Minister bears witness to this reality. Therefore, in order to control any authoritarian measures taken by a president, the parliament can establish certain constitutional provisions (Vishwakarma, 2025). A primary weakness of the parliamentary system lies in illegitimate political maneuvering to gain power, often accompanied by corruption. A government system that is accountable to the people, rather than to the parliament, is more beneficial for Nepal. It helps in building a government that is responsive to the citizens (Pun, 2020).

According to Gönder (2015), the principal characteristics of a presidential system are stability and a strong executive. Such a system is capable of addressing diverse social identities and reducing the likelihood of coalition governments. Since a president can only be elected with majority support, the system is less prone to distortions arising from coalition politics. As the president is elected directly by the people, they remain accountable to the populace, and the parliament does not have the authority to remove them from office.

In Nepal, the concentration of power in a few leaders over the parliament, government, and other state institutions has resulted in both centralization of authority and political instability. To break this situation, it is necessary to engage in debates regarding a directly elected executive presidential system (Vishwakarma, 2025). Although the parliamentary system does not fully align with Nepal's social and psychological realities, imposing it as the sole model of democracy has generated dissatisfaction (Khatibuda, 2021). In the vote held during the meeting of the Committee on Determining the Form of Governance under the Constituent Assembly, the proposal for a direct executive president received the majority. This indicates an effort to adopt a presidential system as an alternative to the parliamentary framework. Furthermore, this system appears suitable for freeing politics from the control of a few leaders and for ending political instability (Vishwakarma, 2025).

The experience of Turkey demonstrates that under a parliamentary system, government stability relied heavily on the support of the parliament, necessitating frequent votes of confidence, which in turn increased political instability. Procedural manipulation and instability during such confidence votes contributed to Turkey's adoption of a presidential system in 2018 (Gönder, 2015). In a presidential system, the president is elected directly by the people and is therefore directly accountable to them. The essence of democracy lies in establishing a direct relationship with the populace. This directly challenges the argument that the presidential system is inherently undemocratic.

According to the principle of separation of powers, it is said that there may be conflict between the executive and the legislature. This claim is baseless, because the separation of powers



clearly delineates the respective areas of authority of both. Therefore, the presidential system emerges as a potential option for Nepal (Acharya, 2015). Terry M. Moe and Michael Caldwell (1994) argue that both presidential and parliamentary systems contribute to the strengthening of democratic governance. While presidential systems promote stability and policy continuity, parliamentary systems enhance accountability and inclusiveness. Hence, in selecting a system of governance, it is essential to consider the social, cultural, and political diversity of the country.

Overall, Nepal adopted a federal parliamentary system to address the shortcomings of the traditional parliamentary System. However, debates continue regarding whether even this reformed system has lost its efficacy. In the context of managing the crises observed in Nepal's current parliamentary system, a presidential system appears necessary. Nevertheless, to safeguard it from potential risks, it is essential to develop effective mechanisms of balance and control.

Potential Challenges

Political instability in Nepal has been increasing due to the parliamentary system. To address this, some political parties here are debating the need for a directly elected presidential system. However, there is a lack of thorough study on the country's political context, its limitations, problems, and the potential risks that may arise in its implementation. Under this system, there remains a risk of electing the wrong person due to the influence of populism. There are also examples of some countries retreating from the presidential system (Baral, 2025). The rise of Volodymyr Zelensky in Ukraine and the subsequent deterioration of the country can also be cited as a negative aspect of this system. In populist contexts, emotions often replace rational judgment; decisions are influenced by the crowd. Consequently, in such circumstances, there is a risk of an unsuitable individual being elected to the executive presidency, which could potentially jeopardize national sovereignty.

According to Mainwaring (1990), presidential rule in a multi-party system can be detrimental to democratic stability. His study shows that among 25 stable democratic countries, presidential systems succeeded in only four. In the parliamentary system, it is not difficult to change various structures, including the executive, to resolve crises that arise within the system. Due to its lack of flexibility, the presidential system appears to be unsustainable.

Another weakness of presidential systems is the potential for abuse of power and authoritarian rule. This issue has been debated in Turkey. According to Duverger, in countries with immature democratic institutions, presidential systems can be particularly dangerous, as presidents may manipulate public sentiment to exploit their authority. Examples of this can be observed in Latin American and African countries (Gönder, 2015). Similarly, Gönder (2015) argues that the successful implementation of a presidential system requires a well-developed democratic culture and high levels of civic awareness. In the absence of such values, presidential governance carries the risk of evolving into authoritarianism.

According to Fatma Gülsün Özkan and Richard McManus (2018), presidential systems are generally less economically favorable than parliamentary ones. Although recent studies acknowledge certain advantages of the presidential model, they also reveal that, from an



economic perspective, parliamentary systems tend to be more beneficial. Therefore, it is essential to assess the economic implications while selecting a system of governance (McManus & Özkan, 2018). Political scientist Juan Linz argues that both the president and the parliament claim democratic legitimacy, which often results in continuous power struggles between them. Nevertheless, various analyses suggest that the presidential system could still serve as a potential alternative to the parliamentary form.

Since the presidential term is fixed, the parliament lacks the authority to punish or remove a president even if serious mistakes are committed. This rigidity has been a key source of conflict between the executive and the legislature in the United States (Koirala, 2011). Furthermore, the tendency of presidents to appoint close associates to high-level positions weakens the impartiality of the administrative structure. Such political appointments weaken the rule of law (Ackerman, 2017). As a result, citizens' distrust of the state gradually increases.

Every system of governance possesses its own strengths, weaknesses, and challenges. Despite these challenges, countries tend to adopt governance systems based on their historical circumstances and socio-economic and cultural contexts. In Nepal's case, the presidential system is not free from challenges. Therefore, in a country like Nepal—characterized by economic challenges, a multi-party structure, a weak democratic culture, and a fragile bureaucracy—implementing a presidential system requires ensuring accountability and political stability.

Conclusion

The findings of this study show that Nepal's federal parliamentary system has ensured constitutional provisions for inclusive representation. However, this system has not been successful in guaranteeing stable government, policy continuity, and good governance. In this context, a presidential form of government appears to be a potential alternative—both theoretically and practically—for ensuring political stability, policy consistency, and public accountability. Nevertheless, its successful implementation requires clear constitutional provisions that ensure a balance of power and mutual checks between the executive and the legislature.

Similarly, strengthening the Election Commission, the judiciary, and other constitutional bodies, along with promoting effective internal democracy within political parties, is essential. To prevent the abuse of power, the robustness of constitutional safeguards and institutional mechanisms is indispensable; otherwise, there is a risk of authoritarian tendencies emerging within the system. In this regard, Nepal should also consider the ongoing debate on a semi-presidential model. It is necessary to strengthen constitutional and institutional arrangements to minimize potential risks. If such arrangements are ensured, the presidential system could emerge as a suitable alternative despite certain problems and challenges.

Transparency Statement: The author confirms that this study has been conducted with honesty and in full adherence to ethical guidelines.

Data Availability Statement: Author can provide data.

Conflict of Interest: The author declares there is no conflicts of interest.

Authors' Contributions: The author solely conducted all research activities i.e., concept, data collecting, drafting and final review of manuscript.



References

- Acharya, M. (2082 Kartik 26 BS). Rashtrapatiya shasan pranali nai kina? *Setopati*. <https://www.setopati.com/bichar/31424>
- Ackerman, B. (2017). Good-bye, Montesquieu. In S. Rose-Ackerman & P. L. Lindseth (Eds.), *Comparative administrative law* (2nd ed.). Edward Elgar Publishing. Available at Yale University. https://law.yale.edu/sites/default/files/area/conference/compadmin/compadmin16_ackerman_good-bye.pdf
- Baral, L. (2082 Srawan 29). Asthir sarkarka chakr. *Kantipur Khabar*. <https://ekantipur.com/opinion/2025/08/14/cycles-of-unstable-governments-28-54.html>
- Bishwakarma, J. B. (2081 Kartik 30 BS). Karyakari rashtrapatiya pranalibare bahas. *Kantipur Samachar*. <https://ekantipur.com/opinion/2024/11/15/debate-on-executive-presidential-system-19-58.html>
- Dev, R. (2071 Chaitra 23). Naya model ko sansadiya pranali. *Nagarik News*. <https://nagariknews.nagariknetwork.com/opinion/75870-1428358277.html>
- Gönder, H. (2015). Presidential system and its applicability to Turkey. *Journal of Social and Political Studies*, 12(3), 45–62.
- Grewal, M. (2023). Separation of powers in India: Theory and practice. In A. Pandey, G. Dixit, J. Priya, & S. Batar (Eds.), *Contemporary legal research: A multidisciplinary perspective, Volume 1 – Foundations and frontiers of public law* (pp. 242–250). Luminus International Publishers.
- Karki, D. P. (2079 Chaitra 2). Asthirta ko maapdanda. *Gorkhapatra*. <https://gorkhapatraonline.com/news/57559>
- Khatibada, D. (2078 Kartik 14 BS). Barambar asafal saavit sansadiya pranali aba kina naferne? *Onlinekhabar*. <https://www.onlinekhabar.com/2021/10/1032076>
- Khitiwada, S. (2078 Asar 24 BS). Sansadiya byawasthako golchakkar: Sudhriyo sambidhan, sudhriena byabahar. *Onlinekhabar*. <https://www.onlinekhabar.com/2021/07/980377>
- Koirala, S. (2068 Push 11 BS). Sansadiya byawasthako auchitya. *Kantipur Samachar*. <https://ekantipur.com/7/2012/01/03/340644.html>
- Kumar, D. (2078 Chaitra 6 BS). Sanghiya Nepalko rajniti. *Himal Khabar*. <https://www.himalkhabar.com/news/128896>
- Lekhak, R. (2068 Mangsir 1 BS). Sansadiya pranali nai uchit. *Kantipur Samachar*. <https://ekantipur.com/opinion/2011/11/17/338467.html>
- Lijphart, A. (1969). Consociational democracy. *World Politics*, 21(2), 207–225. Cambridge University Press. https://www.sneps.net/t/images/Articles/Lijphart_1969.pdf
- Mainali, S. P. (2079 Magh 2 BS). Rajnaitik asthirta: Kaaran ra prabhav. *Rajdhani Daily*. <https://rajdhanidaily.com/id/75356/>
- Mainwaring, S. (1990). Presidentialism, multipartism, and democracy: The difficult combination. *Comparative Politics*, 23(4), 449–471.



- Moe, T. M., & Caldwell, M. (1994). The institutional foundations of democratic government: A comparison of presidential and parliamentary systems. *Journal of Institutional and Theoretical Economics*, 150(1), 171–195.
- Montesquieu, B. de. (1949). *The spirit of the laws* (T. Nugent, Trans.; F. Neumann, Intro.). Hafner Publishing Company. (Original work published 1748) https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1441&context=hapl_marginalia_all
- Nepali, G. (2078 Mansir 13 BS). Sankatma sansadiya byawastha. *Naya Patrika Daily*. <https://www.nayapatrikadaily.com/news-details/75611/2021-11-29>
- Özkan, F. G., & Manes, R. (2018). Presidential versus parliamentary democracy: Which is better for the economy? *Public Choice*. Advance online publication. <https://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/130442/>
- Pun, G. (2077 Chaitra 26 BS). Aawashyakata karyakari rashtrapatiya pranali ko. *Naya Patrika*. <https://www.nayapatrikadaily.com/news-details/62463/2021-04-08>
- Sharma, R. (2077). Desh anusarka sansadiya pranali. *Setopati*. <https://www.setopati.com/opinion/229403>

Views and opinions expressed in this article are the views and opinions of the author(s), *NPRC Journal of Multidisciplinary Research* shall not be responsible or answerable for any loss, damage or liability etc. caused in relation to/arising out of the use of the content.