

Q Compare and Contrast the Parliamentary and Presidential forms of government

1) Introduction:

Since its creation in 1947, Pakistan has experienced an ongoing struggle to determine the most suitable system of governance for its political, social, and cultural realities. The country has alternated between parliamentary and presidential systems, reflecting both the strengths and weaknesses of each model. This oscillation reveals Pakistan's continuous attempt to balance democracy, stability, and efficiency in governance.

Presidential vs Parliamentary:

There have been many administrative reforms in Pakistan throughout its history and the country has experienced both presidential and parliamentary forms of governments. The country has experienced different kinds of governments throughout history, from democracy to military dictatorships,

to civil martial law by Bhutto.

Understanding of Presidential and Parliamentary Systems.

Many in the country believe that the presidential system is synonymous with dictatorship as it is 'One-Man' rule. The main cause behind this perception is that all four military dictators who ruled Pakistan during various stages preferred the Presidential system and also some leading analysts and media person continued to protect the parliamentary system that has bogged the nation down.

Merits and De-Merits:

1. Nature of Government:

In a Parliamentary System, the government consists of three institutions the executive, the legislative and the judiciary. There's a fusion of power rather than a separation of power.

Whereas, the Presidential System concentrates authority in a single individual.

2. Political Parties:

The notion of ruling party in opposition solely lacks in the Presidential system, instead it has a majority party and a minority party. Moreover, in this form there are only two major political parties. So, the president is free from party influence in his daily administration.

On the other hand, there is a multi-party system in the Parliamentary form and the executive can't be completely free by party affiliation.

3. Heads of the State and Government:

In the Presidential system, the president is both the head of state and the head of the executive branch.

In the Parliamentary System, generally, two people hold these two offices.

4. Electoral System:

In the Presidential form of governance, the president is directly elected by the people.

and he can select his own team of federal ministers from the most competent persons in their respective fields. He is answerable to the voters rather than the legislature.

In a Parliamentary System, people elect only their representatives to the national parliament. These parliamentarians then elect their leader of the house who then forms the government.

5- Term of Office:

In the Presidential form of government, the president has a fixed tenure and elections can not be called unless extraordinary circumstances arise. For example, the presidential office becomes vacant after the president's impeachment or when he is declared unfit to perform his duties.

In a Parliamentary system, people elect only their representatives to the national parliament. These parliamentarians

In Parliamentary form, if the Prime Minister loses the support of

the majority in the legislature, he is forced to resign through a non-confidence motion and a new Prime Minister is elected.

0- Decision Making:

The whole decision-making process in the Presidential system is based on consent and compromise. No law can be passed against the will of the President unless some members 'defect' or change their loyalties.

However, in Parliamentary system, parties and their leaders are very powerful and, in the case of Pakistan, they wield so much power that if a Minister does not toe the party line, he faces the threat of being defeated.

Comparative Analysis of the Two Systems in Pakistan:

1- Nature of Executive Authority:

Pakistan's experience shows that centralised authority often leads to authoritarianism, while collective responsibility sometimes results in inefficiency.

2. Relationship Between Executive and Legislature

In Pakistan, the presidential system minimizes legislative oversight, reducing accountability, but increasing decision-making.

3. Political Stability and Continuity

The Presidential system in Pakistan provided administrative continuity but lacked popular legitimacy.

4. Role of Military

Military influence has thrived under presidential models due to the concentration of power in one office making it easier for the military to interfere in governance.

Lessons From Pakistan's Oscillation Between the Two Systems:

1- Need for Institutional Balance:

Stable governance requires a clear separation and respect for the roles of all state institutions; executive, legislature, and judiciary.

2- Importance of Democratic Continuity:

Frequent constitutional changes weaken democracy. Continuity of the parliamentary system since 2008 has improved political maturity and institutional development.

3- Avoidance of Power Centralization:

Excessive concentration of power, as witnessed under Ayub and Musharraf, leads to authoritarianism and public alienation.

4- Strengthening of Political Parties:

Parliamentary democracy can succeed only when political parties are internally democratic, disciplined, and policy-oriented.

5- Civil-Military Relations:

A balance between civilian supremacy and military influence

It is a historical experience shows that military dominance destabilises constitutional governance.

Conclusion:

Pakistan's constitutional history reflects a continuous quest for a political system that ensures both democratic representation and effective governance. The country's oscillation between parliamentary and presidential models reveals the challenges of balancing authority, accountability, and stability in a diverse federal state. Experience shows that the parliamentary system, despite its imperfections, aligns more closely with Pakistan's social and political realities.