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ALI MARKMAL *

Univeristy of Djelfa, (Algeria)

Email : markmelali@gmail.com



Abstract :

This study examines the structural configuration and functional dynamics of executive authority in parliamentary, presidential, assembly, and semi-presidential systems. Moving beyond descriptive institutional comparison, it analyzes how different executive designs affect regime stability, political accountability, and the balance of powers. The article argues that executive architecture is not merely a constitutional arrangement but a decisive factor in determining patterns of political legitimacy and governmental effectiveness. Through a comparative institutional framework, the study demonstrates that executive dominance or equilibrium depends less on formal constitutional texts and more on the interaction between political legitimacy, party systems, and mechanisms of accountability.

Keywords: *Executive power; institutional design; separation of powers; regime stability; constitutional balance; comparative politics*

1. Introduction: From Institutional Form to Political Function

Comparative constitutional scholarship has long emphasized structural differences between political systems. However, formal typologies alone—parliamentary, presidential, assembly, or semi-presidential—do not sufficiently explain variations in political stability and executive performance. The crucial issue is not merely *how* executive authority is structured, but *how it operates within the broader institutional ecosystem*.

Douglas Verney's structural classification remains influential (Verney, 1959), yet contemporary constitutional analysis must integrate institutional functionality and political practice. Executive authority represents the locus where legitimacy, governance capacity, and democratic accountability converge.

The principle of separation of powers, articulated by Montesquieu (1748/1949), aimed to prevent concentration of authority. Yet modern political systems reveal that separation does not necessarily prevent executive predominance; rather, it redistributes it in different forms.

This article advances the following central argument:

The stability and democratic quality of a political system depend not on the formal classification of the executive, but on the equilibrium between executive legitimacy and mechanisms of accountability.

2. The Parliamentary Executive: Accountability Through Interdependence

The parliamentary model is characterized by a dual executive structure in which symbolic authority is separated from political authority (Abu

Khuzam, 2002). Its defining principle is *mutual dependence* between executive and legislature (Suleiman, 2010).

Analytical Insight

Unlike presidential systems, parliamentary systems do not prioritize institutional separation but rather institutional integration. The executive survives only as long as it retains parliamentary confidence (Awad, 2008). This creates:

- High responsiveness
- Flexible government formation
- Political adaptability

However, this same interdependence may generate instability in fragmented party systems. Thus, parliamentary efficiency depends heavily on party cohesion and majority formation (Boushair, 2000).

Critical Observation

Parliamentary systems theoretically prevent executive authoritarianism through collective responsibility. Yet in dominant-party contexts, they may produce “cabinet dictatorship,” where parliamentary majority shields the executive from meaningful scrutiny.

3. The Presidential Executive: Stability Through Separation

The presidential system institutionalizes strict separation of powers (Awad, 2008). The President derives legitimacy directly from popular election, creating dual democratic legitimacy between executive and legislature (Khalifa, n.d.).

Structural Strength

- Fixed tenure promotes stability.

- Unified executive authority ensures clarity in leadership.
- Direct legitimacy strengthens decisiveness in crisis situations (Matba', 1997).

Structural Risk

However, presidential systems risk institutional deadlock when executive and legislative branches are politically divided. Moreover, absence of political responsibility before parliament reduces immediate accountability mechanisms (Shiha, 1995).

Presidentialism replaces parliamentary flexibility with constitutional rigidity. Stability is guaranteed, but adaptability may be reduced.

4. The Assembly System: Legislative Supremacy and Executive Subordination

The assembly government model fuses powers in a single representative body (Didane, 2010). The executive becomes a delegated administrative organ rather than an autonomous political actor.

Theoretical Foundation

The model reflects Rousseau's doctrine of indivisible sovereignty (Duverger, n.d.), prioritizing legislative supremacy.

Analytical Assessment

While the system maximizes democratic immediacy, it risks:

- Weak executive coordination
- Institutional inefficiency
- Majoritarian dominance

Modern Switzerland represents a moderated form of this model, where collective leadership through the Federal Council introduces stability (Fridani & Waither, n.d.).

The Swiss case suggests that collegial executive design can mitigate concentration of authority without undermining stability.

5. The Semi-Presidential Model: Institutional Dualism and Political Contingency

Semi-presidentialism combines direct presidential legitimacy with parliamentary government accountability (Boushair, 2000).

The French Fifth Republic illustrates how constitutional engineering can strengthen executive authority while preserving parliamentary oversight (French Constitutional Council, 1958).

Institutional Tension

This model generates a dynamic equilibrium that varies depending on political alignment:

- When presidential and parliamentary majorities coincide → presidential predominance.
- During cohabitation → rebalancing toward parliamentary authority.

Thus, semi-presidential systems are politically contingent: their functioning depends less on constitutional text and more on electoral outcomes

6. Comparative Evaluation: Executive Design and Regime Stability

System	Source of Legitimacy	Accountability Mechanism	Stability	Risk
Parliamentary	Indirect via parliament	Vote of no confidence	Moderate–High	Cabinet instability
Presidential	Direct popular election	Impeachment only	High (fixed term)	Deadlock
Assembly	Parliamentary supremacy	Full legislative control	Variable	Executive weakness
Semi-Presidential	Dual legitimacy	Mixed responsibility	Context-dependent	Institutional conflict

Core Finding

Executive effectiveness is determined by three variables:

1. **Source of legitimacy**
2. **Strength of accountability mechanisms**
3. **Party system structure**

No model is inherently superior; institutional performance depends on contextual political conditions.

7. Conclusion: Executive Authority as a Variable of Democratic Quality

Executive authority functions as the pivot of constitutional order. Parliamentary systems prioritize accountability; presidential systems emphasize stability; assembly systems institutionalize legislative supremacy; semi-presidential systems seek balance but remain politically contingent.

The comparative analysis demonstrates that democratic resilience does not arise from institutional form alone, but from the equilibrium between authority and control.

Future research should focus on empirical measurements of executive dominance and its correlation with democratic performance indicators.

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