

Differences Between Parliamentary & Presidential Regimes*

	Parliamentary Government	Presidential Government
History	Usually evolutionary, from assembly challenging monarchs to assembly taking over responsibility for government	No natural evolution like parliamentary development; Founding Fathers made assembly separate part of government by design
Division of Power?	Fusion of executive and legislative branches	Executive and legislative branches separated
After Election	The assembly becomes a parliament, comprising both an executive (government) and assembly	The assembly remains an assembly only; the executive is a separate institution
Nature of Executive	Executive is divided into two parts: A prime minister (or chancellor) as head of government and a monarch (or ceremonial president) as head of state	Executive is not divided: Head of government (president) is also head of state
Executive Selection	Prime minister usually appointed by head of state (symbolic); in actuality, selected from largest party in assembly	President elected by the people for a definite term
Cabinet (or Government) Selection	Prime minister appoints ministers; can be personal choices or outcome of bargaining to form coalition government	President appoints heads of departments; usually personal choices although often with consent of assembly (as in U.S.)
Nature of Cabinet	Cabinet is collective body; since ministers exert great deal of influence (especially in coalition governments), prime minister is just first among equals	President is sole executive decision-maker; heads of executive departments are subordinate; not a cabinet in parliamentary sense
Ministers and the Assembly	Ministers usually members of parliament and typically remain representatives of their districts even after appointed to cabinet - thus accountable to both government and a constituency	Strict separation: Members of assembly not eligible for cabinet positions and members of government can not be part of assembly
Executive Responsibility	Government (cabinet) is politically responsible to assembly; by withholding support, parliament may be able to force government to resign and cause head of state to appoint new government	Executive is responsible to constitution: Presidents must follow constitutional prescriptions
Executive Power Over Assembly?	Head of government may dissolve parliament and can threaten or coerce assembly by using this threat	President cannot dissolve or coerce assembly, thus, has no ability to threaten or coerce assembly
Assembly Power Over Executive?	Parliament as a whole is supreme over its constituent parts (government and assembly), neither of which may dominate the other: Government depends on the support of the parliament but it may also dissolve it. Therefore, neither dominates	Assembly is ultimately supreme over other branches of government; although power is separated, assembly generally has more options (including to impeach a President) than President
Responsible to Electorate?	During elections, ministers stand as representatives of their district, not government; government chosen from elected representatives; thus, government only indirectly responsible to electorate	President elected by popular vote and is usually only person elected by entire citizenry; thus, directly responsible to electorate
Focus of Power in System	Parliament is focus because of fusion of executive and legislative powers in parliament	No focus of power; instead of concentration and unity, division and fragmentation

*Adapted from Douglas Verney, in *Parliamentary vs. Presidential Government* (Arend Lijphart, ed.).