

## PRESIDENTIAL SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT IN INDONESIA: A COMPARATIVE STUDY WITH THE PARLIAMENTARY MODEL

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### Abstract

The government in Indonesia follows a presidential system that provides high executive stability. Elections are used to directly elect the nation's leaders and administration, ensuring consistency in national policy. However, political coalitions between the executive and legislative branches often lead to conflict especially when the two branches come from conflicting political parties. This can bring down the order of government. In contrast, the parliamentary model tends to prioritize harmony because the executive is elected from among the parliament and the two parties are always in line. However, Indonesia has devised a number of mechanisms that can minimize the shortcomings of the presidential model. The government coalition system and the checks and balances mechanism have effectively balanced the relationship between the branches of state. Constitutional provisions and regulations that are responsive to political dynamics also allow the presidential system to continue to adapt to various changes. Thanks to these efforts, the stability of governance in Indonesia has been maintained despite the challenges faced. In general, despite the fundamental differences between presidential and parliamentary systems, Indonesia has been able to effectively implement the presidential system through various adjustments in accordance with its socio-political context.

**Keywords:** System, Presidential Government, Indonesia.

### Introduction

A system of government is the governance used by a country to set policy, organize public administration, and maintain political and social stability. Indonesia, as the world's largest archipelago with great socio-cultural diversity, has adopted a presidential system since proclaiming independence in 1945. (Faragher, 2021). However,

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along with domestic and global political developments, the system has undergone various modifications and sometimes faced significant challenges.

A president is directly elected by the people and possesses executive responsibility in Indonesia's presidential system. With this authority, the president assumes the dual roles of head of state and head of government, with a fixed term of office and extensive powers. (Elliott & Thomas, 2020). This model is considered capable of providing stability because the president has a strong and decisive position in leading state policies. (ELITOK & DEĀIRMENCI, 2023)..

On the other hand, a parliamentary system is a model of government that combines executive and legislative powers by placing the prime minister as the head of government, elected from among members of parliament. (Khan et al., 2022). This system is familiar to Indonesia, especially during the early days of independence and the era of the People's Consultative Assembly government in the 1950s. According to this paradigm, the parliament is essential to both forming the government and supervising and regulating the executive branch (Fasone, 2023).

The way executive power is allocated and divided, as well as how the legislature and executive branch interact, is theoretically the primary distinction between presidential and parliamentary systems. The parliamentary system depicts a more integrated and cooperative connection between the legislative and the executive branch, whereas the presidential system stresses a distinct division between the two institutions. (Susilowati, 2024).

Comparative studies between presidential and parliamentary systems of government in Indonesia are highly relevant to understand the strengths and weaknesses of each system within the prevailing historical, political, and socio-cultural context of Indonesia. As a country that has experienced both, Indonesia provides an interesting example of how local context can influence the implementation and effectiveness of a particular system of government.

Comparative studies of governance systems in Indonesia and other countries have multiple benefits. In addition to being academic material, this analysis can also serve as a guide for policy makers and state apparatus in evaluating and improving existing governance. Learning from various models of government, such as parliamentary systems, can provide new insights to strengthen accountability and executive performance in the country.

The nation's history shows various important phases in the implementation of these two systems. After the proclamation, Indonesia initially implemented a presidential system, which then switched to parliamentary in 1950-1959. This change was aimed at stabilizing the highly dynamic conditions at the time. However, because of President Soekarno's policies, the parliamentary era was short-lived and was soon succeeded by the presidential one. This action was done in light of the political strains and intra-party disputes the administration was facing. (Palonen, 2024).

After Soekarno's resignation and the end of the Old Order, Indonesia entered the New Order under Soeharto. During this period, the presidential system was strengthened with strict control over the legislature and parties. This condition lasted until the 1998 reformation which brought major changes in the political order. (Mitchell & Williamson, 2022).

The reform era marked the return of the spirit of democracy by strengthening presidentialism through decentralization, a more active role for the DPR, and open and transparent elections. However, new challenges emerged as political dynamics continued to move forward, such as issues of corruption, a less responsive bureaucracy, and public concerns about government performance. (Suciyati & Zulkarnain, 2023)..

The study of presidential and parliamentary systems in Indonesia is important to find the right balance in managing an effective and responsive government. This study not only highlights the mechanisms and procedures, but also considers the cultural, societal and economic contexts that influence the implementation of both systems. In addition, understanding the strengths and limitations of each system can support innovations and reforms that meet the needs and expectations of the Indonesian people. Integrating the best principles of both systems may be a solution to improve the quality of governance in Indonesia.

As such, this background provides a comprehensive overview of the importance of a comparative study between the presidential and parliamentary systems in Indonesia.

## **Research Methods**

This research used the literature research approach for its examination. This research strategy uses already published literature to address research problems, spot trends, or gain insight into a specific subject. (Adlini et al., 2022); (Raco, 2018); (Sugiyono, 2010).

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Definition and Concept of Government System**

When the president serves as both the head of state and the head of government, the system is known as a presidential one. Under this system, the people directly elect the president, or they elect it through a special electoral body. The president has substantial executive authority. (Rupar et al., 2024). The president has a fixed term and is separate from the legislature, with full authority to appoint and dismiss cabinet members and make various executive decisions without the need for legislative approval. This system ensures a clear separation of powers between the executive and the legislature, which aims to prevent the accumulation of power in one hand and maintain checks and balances in government. (EKMEKÇİ, 2022).

In a parliamentary system of government, the head of state, such as the president or monarch, and the head of government, usually the prime minister, are maintained apart. The cabinet, which has executive authority, is led by the prime minister. Members of parliament select the prime minister and his cabinet, and under this system, the legislature, or parliament, is the body to whom the executive is answerable. (Makita, 2022). Parliament has the power to dissolve the cabinet through a vote of no confidence. This system promotes close collaboration between the executive and legislature, and allows for flexibility in changing governments without the need to hold new elections. The head of state has a ceremonial role, while day-to-day governing powers are exercised by the prime minister and cabinet. (Rannie et al., 2024)..

In conclusion, there are substantial differences between presidential and parliamentary systems of government in terms of the structure and relationship between the legislative and executive departments. In a presidential system, the president is both the head of state and the head of government for a fixed term and possesses executive authority separate from the legislature. In contrast, the head of state serves a ceremonial role in parliamentary systems, where the head of government is the prime minister, chosen from among parliamentarians and answerable to the legislature. These distinctions have an impact on the balance of power, decision-making procedures, and supervision and balancing systems in government.

### **Evolution of the Government System in Indonesia**

During the old Indonesian government (1945-1966), the government system underwent several transformations in accordance with the political dynamics of the time. Starting from the presidential system that was applied at the beginning of independence, then changing to a parliamentary system in the 1950-1959 period. However, with the Presidential Decree of July 5, 1959 by President Soekarno, Indonesia returned to the presidential system and adopted the 1945 Constitution. During this period, Guided Democracy was implemented which placed the president as the axis of power, with relatively weak legislative and judicial powers, as well as a limited role of political parties controlled by the government. (Rasch, 2020).

During the New Order period (1966-1998) under the leadership of President Soeharto, the system of government remained presidential as stipulated in the 1945 Constitution. However, the practice tended to be authoritarian with strong presidential control over all aspects of government. During this period, President Soeharto utilized various tools, such as Golkar as the dominant party, to consolidate power. Tight control was also exercised over the media, community organizations, and political movements to maintain stability and prevent opposition to the government. (MH, 2022).

During the Reformasi period (1998-present), following the collapse of the New Order, Indonesia continued to use a presidential system of government based on the 1945 Constitution, but with significant changes to strengthen democracy and the

function of the checks and balances. Reformasi included amendments to the 1945 Constitution that decentralized power, strengthened the role of parliament, and gave greater freedom to civil society and the mass media. (Thompson, 2020). In addition, presidential term limits were established to prevent the concentration of power as during the New Order era, as well as to ensure a more democratic and accountable leadership turnover (Fagbadebo, 2020). (Fagbadebo, 2020).

Constitutional changes, particularly through amendments to the 1945 Constitution made during the Reformation period, have had a significant impact on the system of government in Indonesia. One of the main changes was the strengthening of the brakes and accounts between the executive, legislature and judiciary. This amendment limited the presidential term to a maximum of two five-year terms, preventing the concentration of power that had previously occurred during the New Order era. (An, 2023). In addition, the Regional Representative Council (DPD) was established to represent regional interests, making the legislative process more inclusive and democratic. These changes aim to create a government that is more transparent, accountable, and responsive to the needs of the people. (Cheibub et al., 2023)..

Another impact is the decentralization of power through the implementation of broader regional autonomy. This gives local governments greater authority to manage local affairs, which is expected to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of public services and accommodate local diversity. (Nikolenyi, 2023). In addition, judicial reforms were carried out to strengthen the independence of the judiciary, including the establishment of the Constitutional Court, which has the authority to test the constitutionality of laws and defend the constitutional rights of citizens. All of these changes, while still facing challenges on the ground, are designed to strengthen democracy and the rule of law in Indonesia. (Bromo, 2024).

### **Characteristics of the Presidential System of Government**

The presidential system of government differs from the legislative one in a few significant ways. First, in a presidential system, the president is the head of state as well as the head of government. Either a special electoral body or the electorate itself chooses the president. The president's time in office is normally four or five years, but if re-elected, it may be extended in accordance with the constitution. This encourages executive stability since the legislature cannot easily remove the president, unlike in parliamentary systems. (Osadchuk, 2020).

Second, in a presidential system of government, there is a clear separation between the executive and the legislature. The president is not accountable to the legislature and cannot be dissolved by parliament. Conversely, parliament has the authority to make laws but cannot interfere directly in the affairs of the executive. This

creates a system of checks and balances that allows these two institutions of government to oversee and balance each other. (Kokashvili & Shin, 2020).

Third, in a presidential system, the cabinet or ministers are appointed by the president and are directly accountable to the president, not to parliament. However, the ministerial appointment process is generally subject to approval by the legislature in some presidential systems. Government policies are executed by the president and his cabinet without the need for the inherent approval of parliament, providing flexibility and efficiency in executive decision-making. (Shin & Kokashvili, 2020).

Fourth, in this system, the legislature has independent power to draft laws, but final passage usually involves the president who has veto power. Nonetheless, in certain situations, the legislature has the power to overcome such a veto with a certain majority vote (Joseph-Barthélemy, 2020). This kind of interaction, where both institutions oversee and complement each other but also maintain their respective boundaries, is one of the hallmarks of the presidential system of government that aims to prevent authoritarianism and promote democratic and fair governance. (Rozenberg, 2022).

Fifth, in a presidential system of government, legislative and executive elections are held separately. This indicates that the popular vote to elect the president is not always in line with the vote to elect members of parliament. As a result, a situation is often created where the president comes from a political party that is different from the majority in parliament. This can lead to complex political dynamics that require negotiation and compromise to reach agreement and smooth the running of the government (Arabaev et al., 2014). (Arabaev et al., 2021)..

Sixth, the presence of an independent judiciary is another feature of the presidential system of government. The judiciary is tasked with overseeing the implementation of the constitution and laws, as well as adjudicating cases involving the branches of government. The independence of the judiciary aims to ensure that the law is enforced fairly and that there is no excessive political interference that could influence legal decisions. (Ovsepyan, 2022).

The advantage of the presidential system is the executive stability that results from the firm tenure of the president and his cabinet. This provides the opportunity for long-term planning and implementation of programs without being distracted by political dynamics in the legislature. In addition, the system of checks and balances reduces opportunities for excessive and arbitrary power, promoting democratic governance. (Bingöl, 2024).

However, this system also has weaknesses, such as the potential for political deadlock when the president and legislature come from different parties and cannot reach an agreement. This can hamper the policy-making process and its implementation. Therefore, the president's ability to build coalitions and reach consensus with the legislature is crucial in this system. (Gunich, 2022).

With a distinct division of powers between the executive and legislative branches, a presidential system of government is one in which the president functions as both the head of state and the head of government. It provides substantial executive stability because to its fixed term and direct election by the people. The system of checks and balances and the existence of an independent judiciary ensure that each branch of government can monitor and balance each other, preventing excessive concentration of power. However, political deadlock can occur if the president and legislature are unable to work together, creating challenges in policy implementation. Therefore, cooperation, negotiation and compromise between the executive and legislature are necessary for effective and efficient governance.

### **Characteristics of the Parliamentary System of Government**

A parliamentary system of government is one in which the party or coalition of parties holding the majority in parliament forms the executive branch, which takes the shape of a cabinet or government. In a parliamentary system, the head of state and the head of government are typically distinct. (KARAER, 2021). The head of state can be a king or a symbolic president, while the head of government is the prime minister who leads the executive. Parliament has an important role in the selection and appointment of the prime minister and can bring down the cabinet through a vote of confidence or no confidence. (NACAK, 2020).

One of the main characteristics of a parliamentary system is that the executive is accountable to the legislature and can be removed by the legislature. This creates a close relationship between these two branches of government and ensures that the executive remains accountable to parliament. (Popović, 2021). If the cabinet or prime minister no longer has majority support in parliament, they must resign or new elections must be held. This creates a political dynamic that is flexible and responsive to changes in political support (Dios, 2020).

Another characteristic is the symbolic separation between the head of state and the head of government. The head of state in parliamentary systems often has a ceremonial role and is not involved in the day-to-day decision-making of the government. This helps to separate representative and active government functions, while providing symbolic stability and national unity. The head of government, the prime minister, has the actual executive power and is usually the leader of the party or coalition that holds the majority in parliament. (Jadhav, 2023).

Finally, parliamentary systems tend to produce coalition governments as it is rare for one party to gain an absolute majority in parliament. This requires the governing party or coalition to work together and compromise on policy and decision-making. Coalition governments allow for better representation of the wishes of different groups in society, although this can sometimes slow down the decision-making process and

increase the potential for political instability if the coalition is not solid. (Mimica et al., 2023)..

### **Comparative Study of Presidential and Parliamentary Systems of Government**

In terms of operation and the division of power among the organs of government, presidential and parliamentary systems of government are two radically different kinds of political structures (Bowler et al., 2020). Under a presidential system, the president exercises considerable executive authority apart from the legislature and serves as both the head of state and the head of government. In contrast, the head of state in parliamentary systems is typically a symbolic figure, such as a president or monarch, with no real executive authority; instead, the prime minister, who is chosen by parliament, holds that authority. (Bergmann et al., 2023).

One of the main differences between the two systems is the nature of the interaction between the legislature and the executive. In a presidential system, the president is chosen directly by the people to serve a set term of office, usually four or five years. (Jiang and others, 2023). The legislature can only remove the president through the difficult impeachment procedure. On the other hand, in parliamentary systems, the prime minister is chosen by the legislature and is readily dismissed via a vote of no confidence. In a parliamentary system, this increases the accountability of the executive and increases its reliance on the legislative. (Zainul, 2022).

Regarding the allocation of powers, the presidential system prioritizes a more distinct boundary between the legislative and executive branches. The two arms of government operate separately and have distinct authorities and duties. Although the president has wide authority to manage the government on a daily basis, he or she must get legislative approval before passing new laws. Ward (2023). Under contrast, the executive and legislative branches are typically closer under parliamentary systems. Members of parliament typically nominate the prime minister and cabinet, who frequently have the power to enact laws. (Kandel, 2023). (Kandel, 2023).

The presidential system tends to provide executive stability as the president has a fixed term. This allows the government to implement its political program without major disruptions during its tenure. However, it can also mean that if the president is ineffective or unpopular, the country will have to wait until the next election for a change of leadership. On the other hand, parliamentary systems tend to be more flexible. If the prime minister loses majority support in parliament, they can be replaced immediately without having to wait for the next election, which allows for quick adaptation to political changes. (Ginsberg, 2020).

While both systems have their advantages, they also have unique weaknesses. In a presidential system, the strict separation of powers can lead to political deadlock if the executive and legislature are unable to work together. A president may face hostile legislation or even blockades, hampering the decision-making process. (Fajar, 2023). In

contrast, parliamentary systems, although more responsive, can suffer from political instability if there is no strong coalition or if there are frequent no-confidence motions against the ruling government. (Zaznaev & Sidorov, 2020)..

Overall, the choice between presidential and parliamentary systems is often influenced by a country's historical context, political culture and societal preferences. A presidential system may be more suitable for countries that value a strict separation of powers and long-term executive stability. Parliamentary systems, on the other hand, may be more suitable for countries that value greater executive flexibility and accountability to the legislature. These two systems have different ways of achieving political goals and effective governance, and each has unique challenges and opportunities in its implementation.

## **Conclusion**

Conclusions from the implementation of the presidential system of government in the country reveal that the model provides greater executive leadership stability compared to parliamentary forms of government. The presidential system uses direct election by the public to choose the head of state and government who serves for a specific period, this facility promises continuity of policy and certainty of tenure. Contrary to the parliamentary style, the monarch can fall at any time if support in parliament declines, which can invite instability in the political sphere.

However, the presidential system in the country is also tested by various challenges, especially in the relationship between the executive and legislative branches. This model has the potential to create a political deadlock if the president and the majority of the parliament come from different parties without effective communication channels. On the other hand, in a parliamentary style, because the government is formed from the parliament, the tendency is for more harmonious cooperation in the policy-making process.

However, Indonesia has adapted various mechanisms to mitigate the weaknesses of the presidential system, such as implementing coalition government and strengthening the system of checks and balances. In addition, flexibility in the constitution and related regulations also play an important function in maintaining balance between state institutions. Thus, although there are fundamental differences between the presidential and parliamentary models, the presidential system in Indonesia is able to be adapted to the socio-political context in the country so that it can still run effectively.

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