



## Advance Social Science Archive Journal

Available Online: <https://assajournal.com>

Vol.3 No.1, January-March, 2025. Page No. 881-894

Print ISSN: [3006-2497](#) Online ISSN: [3006-2500](#)

Platform & Workflow by: [Open Journal Systems](#)



### THE PARLIAMENTS OF NEPAL AND PAKISTAN: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

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#### ABSTRACT

A parliamentary government is a system where the executive branch is drawn from and accountable to the legislative branch. The head of government, typically a prime minister, executes the decisions of the legislature. This article presents a comparative analysis of the parliamentary governments of Pakistan and Nepal, two South Asian nations with distinct political histories and systems. Through a qualitative research methodology, employing a case study approach and content analysis of constitutional provisions, legislative documents, and expert opinions, this study identifies the similarities and differences between the two parliamentary systems. The results reveal that while both countries have adopted the Westminster model of parliamentary democracy, significant variations exist in the exercise of executive authority, legislative oversight, and judicial independence. The study concludes that despite challenges and limitations, both countries can learn from each other's experiences and adopt best practices to strengthen their parliamentary institutions, promote democratic governance, and ensure the rule of law.

**Keywords:** parliamentary government, legislature, Pakistan, Nepal, judiciary and executive.

#### Introduction:

The legislature represents the constitutional embodiment of societal structure. The governing body of any nation outlines the responsibilities of the administration and

enshrines these duties in the country's constitution. It provides a platform for the public's ambitions in nearly all governmental policy decisions, addresses and mitigates internal challenges and conflicts, and safeguards the fundamental rights of citizens (Oldenburg, 2011).

Numerous nations worldwide have embraced the parliamentary system of governance, wherein the executive is constitutionally accountable to the legislature. Some countries use the term "parliament" specifically for a true parliamentary system, while others apply it to any elected legislative body, such as certain assemblies in Middle Eastern Sheikdoms. In some parliamentary governments, the prime minister is not a member of the legislature, as seen in the Netherlands, whereas in others, they are an elected representative, as is commonly the case in the United Kingdom. Parliament is widely regarded as the cornerstone of democracy (Zaka M. R., 2018). Advocates of parliamentary governance argue that this system is less prone to authoritarian rule compared to presidential systems—a viewpoint strongly emphasized in 1990 by the late Yale political scientist Juan Linz (Mahboob H. U., 2020).

Legislatures are a fundamental pillar of democratic governance, though their influence differs significantly across nations. However, Parliament represents the collective will of the people, safeguards citizens' rights, and serves as the architect of an inclusive constitution. It derives its authority directly from public opinion, reflected through voting and elections, and functions to implement the people's mandate. Parliament ensures an effective participatory democracy and fosters active engagement between the public and their elected officials (Ahmed, 2014).

The legislature is responsible for enacting, amending, and formulating laws to promote meaningful social change among citizens. In most cases, the executive wields significant influence over the legislative process, while legislators, as representatives of the people, shape policies and laws aimed at national well-being. These policymakers carry out their responsibilities with expertise to safeguard national interests. Parliament plays a crucial role in lawmaking and the socio-economic advancement of society (PIPS, 2014). Additionally, parliamentary systems tend to implement more progressive policies compared to other forms of governance. Although Linz's theory has faced criticism, historical evidence suggests that presidential systems heighten the risk of democratic instability, particularly in nations with a legacy of military coups (Ahmed N., 2020).

Among the various parliamentary systems worldwide, one stands out for its effectiveness and stability, embodying a well-balanced fusion of traditions, innovative ideas, principles, conventions, and evolving regulations. It adapts to contemporary realities while remaining rooted in the collective will of the people (Ahmad M., 2017). This is the time-honored British parliamentary system, which has been in operation for

over 700 years and continues to evolve and refine itself. Within this framework, the voices of the electorate, expressed through their chosen representatives in the House of Commons, hold the highest authority (Tushnet & Khosla, 2015). The distinctiveness of British parliamentary democracy, despite its unwritten constitution, lies in its authentic representation of democratic ideals. Under this exemplary model, the executive remains entirely accountable to the legislature, and, by extension, to the people (Khalid M. T., 2018).

This is not the case in a congressional system. Unlike the British parliamentary system, where the prime minister is directly accountable to the legislature, the president is not required to justify or debate their actions before Congress. If the British legislature believes that the executive is not acting in the public's best interest, it has the authority to withdraw its support. For instance, the executive must present their policies before Parliament and be prepared to defend them under rigorous scrutiny, not only from the opposition but also from backbenchers (Kokhar, 2017).

Additionally, all government expenditures require parliamentary approval. If Parliament finds it necessary, it can withhold funding, effectively halting government operations. In such a scenario, the administration would be compelled to resign. If no resolution is reached, the power ultimately returns to the people, who can elect a new set of representatives through the electoral process (Burki, 2010).

### **Objective of study:**

1 To analyze the Parliament work in Nepal and Pakistan and make use of their strengths to enhance parliamentary competency. 2 to examine the Parliaments of both these countries overcome their weaknesses by making use of available resources which make them better than others.

The study of the parliamentary systems of Pakistan and Nepal is most important because it provides insights into their strengths, weaknesses. The findings can inform policy recommendations for improving the parliamentary systems of both countries. Additionally, the study can facilitate regional cooperation and knowledge sharing between Pakistan, Nepal, and other countries in the region, ultimately contributing to the development and stability of both countries.

### **Literature Review**

Khalid M. T. (2018) discussed post-legislative scrutiny as the process of assessing and reviewing laws enacted by Parliament. He elaborates on the rationale and procedure for post-legislative scrutiny, highlighting relevant trends, case studies from selected countries, and opportunities identified through a comparative analysis. His study is particularly relevant to organizations focused on democracy support and parliamentary capacity-building, such as the Westminster Foundation for Democracy

(WFD). While the data provided does not offer a comprehensive view, it contributes partially valuable insights to the research.

Hashmi (2018) explores the concepts of parliamentary sovereignty and democracy, specifically in the context of South Asian institutional frameworks. He examines issues related to legislative supremacy and parliamentary authority, addressing various underlying principles. His article provides an in-depth analysis of different models of parliamentary sovereignty and outlines essential tools that aid in the completion of the proposed research. However, due to its multifaceted nature, the concept remains complex to fully grasp.

Ahmad M. (2017) discusses the role of Parliament in addressing critical issues affecting citizens and implementing necessary legislative amendments. His paper underscores the National Assembly's and Senate's active engagement in governance through resolutions, lawmaking, parliamentary instruments, and committee work. The study is particularly useful in demonstrating the effectiveness of these institutions in shaping policy and governance.

Palonen M. (2016) stated that the parliamentary system originates from the Westminster political framework.

Hussain (2013) examined the concept of deliberative assemblies, legislatures, and representative bodies, which are commonly referred to as parliaments. He explains that these three types share numerous traditions and procedural practices among their members. However, they differ in their approaches to political decision-making and action. While the article offers valuable insights into parliamentary politics, it does not fully meet the requirements of the proposed topic.

Rodger (2013) discussed Parliament's role in enacting, overseeing, and assessing legislation. He emphasized that once laws are passed by Parliament, they gain their intended significance. According to him, the primary function of Parliament is to supervise legislation, as the implementation of laws is a complex process that does not occur automatically.

Abbasi A. A. (2018) highlighted the various factors contributing to weaknesses in democracy and governance. The study also explores the causes of the disconnect between parliamentary institutions and the citizens they serve.

Johnston (2012) introduced the concept of the Modern Democratic State in his book, providing a comprehensive analysis of different government systems. He asserted that Parliament is a fundamental part of the legislative process. While regulatory authority often rests with professionals, Parliament plays a crucial role in debating and refining legislative outcomes.

Whittington & Loon (2011) examined the evolution of the House of Commons over the past 150 years, analyzing changes in traditions, procedures, and the role of its

members. In this book, Bosc & Gagnon discuss the significant parliamentary implications of these developments for constitutional and statutory interpretation.

### **Sources and methodology:**

This article is based on qualitative methods . It's mostly based on secondary sources of research for analysing . Qualitative data is based on non numerical data, such as academic journals, languages, books and news articles . Qualitative data such as non numerical data for analysing and interpretation and one can understand that how individual wants to give meaning to their social realities. Such type of data can be held using diary accounts in depth interviews by using ground theory and thematic analysis. The methodology would include analyzing of historical contexts, political crises, and case studies, along with qualitative content analysis of parliamentary debates. The goal would be to assess the strengths and weaknesses of each system and explore potential reforms for better governance.

### **The parliaments of Nepal and Pakistan**

Since both countries are federations, they have separate levels of government for the whole country and for each province. Both Pakistan and Nepal have constitutionally recognized governments at both levels. Each branch of government in these countries has a clear role to play. The constitution of each country outlines how these branches should work together to help run the country and serve the people.

#### **Executive**

The executive branch serves as a fundamental pillar in the governance structures of both Pakistan and Nepal, playing a pivotal role in enforcing laws, crafting policies, and ensuring the efficient operation of government institutions. Although both nations follow a parliamentary governance system, their executive frameworks, authorities, and interactions with other branches of government differ, influenced by historical, cultural, social, and political dynamics.

Pakistan is a federal parliamentary republic under the Constitution of 1973, which establishes an executive framework comprising both a President and a Prime Minister. The Prime Minister, as the head of government, possesses considerable executive authority and leads the majority party in the National Assembly. They are responsible for appointing ministers and assembling the Cabinet, which collectively determines national policies and strategic decisions. The Prime Minister spearheads policymaking across various domains, including economic planning, healthcare, education, and foreign relations. Additionally, the Prime Minister supervises the executive functions of the government and ensures efficient law enforcement. While the Prime Minister is the nominal leader of the armed forces, the military has historically wielded significant political influence, particularly during military regimes under figures like General Zia-ul-Haq and General Pervez Musharraf (Hussain, 2007).

The President of Pakistan primarily holds a symbolic position but exercises specific constitutional powers, such as nominating the Prime Minister, dissolving the National Assembly under particular conditions, and ratifying legislative bills. However, most presidential actions are carried out based on the recommendations of the Prime Minister or the Cabinet (Constitution of Pakistan, 1973).

In Pakistan, the executive branch is monitored by both the legislature and the judiciary. The National Assembly has the authority to approve budgets, enact laws, and oversee executive accountability through parliamentary procedures. The judiciary, particularly the Supreme Court, ensures that executive actions adhere to constitutional provisions through judicial review. Landmark cases like *Benazir Bhutto v. Federation of Pakistan* (1998) have reinforced constraints on executive power (Shafqat, 2014).

Nepal functions as a federal democratic republic under the Constitution of 2015, wherein executive power is vested in the Prime Minister and the Council of Ministers. Similar to Pakistan, Nepal's President serves a largely ceremonial role, while the Prime Minister holds executive authority. The Prime Minister, elected from the largest party or coalition in the House of Representatives, is responsible for assembling the Council of Ministers, formulating national policies, and executing them with Cabinet support. The Prime Minister shapes the national agenda, guiding policies on national security, foreign relations, and economic progress. Furthermore, the Prime Minister and the Cabinet oversee daily governmental administration, managing ministries and governmental entities. Although the Prime Minister is formally recognized as the Commander-in-Chief of the Nepalese Army, civilian oversight of the military has been a significant achievement since the monarchy's dissolution (Upreti, 2010).

The President of Nepal primarily serves as a national unifying figure and constitutional representative. However, presidential powers such as government formation approval, ordinance issuance, and emergency declarations are exercised based on the Prime Minister's and the Council of Ministers' advice (Constitution of Nepal, 2015).

In Nepal, the executive is held accountable through legislative and judicial checks. The Federal Parliament supervises and influences the executive through its legislative functions. The Prime Minister can be dismissed via a vote of no-confidence in the House of Representatives. The Supreme Court of Nepal functions as a crucial safeguard, ensuring that executive actions conform to constitutional principles and do not infringe on fundamental rights (Khadka, 2015).

### **Legislature**

The legislature is a critical cornerstone of governance, playing a key role in crafting laws, reflecting the will of the people, and ensuring transparency in government operations. In a democratic framework, the legislature, in tandem with the executive and judiciary, is vital to upholding the separation of powers and the rule of law.

A fundamental duty of the legislature is lawmaking. It debates and approves bills on various topics, including civil liberties, economic strategies, education, and national defense. The Parliament or Congress often takes the lead in proposing, modifying, and passing laws, establishing the legal structure within which the nation functions. The legislature also acts as a safeguard against potential overreach by the executive branch. Through tools like questioning, committee inquiries, and budgetary oversight, legislators ensure that the executive adheres to legal standards. This oversight is crucial to prevent corruption, misuse of power, and mismanagement (Shafqat, 2014).

The legislature serves as a voice for the electorate, making sure that the wide range of public concerns and interests are considered and addressed during the legislative process. Legislators, elected by the people, are entrusted with the responsibility of representing the public's views in the creation of policies (Upreti, 2010). Another essential responsibility of the legislature is overseeing government expenditure. It is tasked with examining and approving the national budget, which outlines how resources are distributed across various sectors such as education, defense, and healthcare. This process guarantees that taxpayer money is spent responsibly and transparently (Shafqat, 2014).

A significant function of the legislature is to serve as a check on the executive branch. By reviewing the actions and policies of the executive, the legislature can challenge decisions that may harm public interests or violate legal standards. This supervisory role includes the power to summon ministers for questioning, conduct investigations, and approve or reject government initiatives. In numerous parliamentary systems, the legislature can remove an executive from office through impeachment (in presidential systems) or a vote of no confidence (in parliamentary systems). These mechanisms ensure that the executive remains accountable to both the legislature and, by extension, the public (Constitution of Pakistan, 1973).

The legislature is essential to the effective operation of a democracy. It maintains the separation of powers, a cornerstone of democratic governance. By creating laws, scrutinizing government actions, and representing the public, the legislature protects individual rights and freedoms, promotes political involvement, and supports the rule of law. In democratic societies, the legislature is the most direct representative body of the people. Through regular elections, citizens select their representatives to champion their interests. This creates a system in which the government is answerable to the electorate (Upreti, 2010).

Through its lawmaking and oversight functions, the legislature ensures that the law applies equally to all citizens, including government officials (Shafqat, 2014).

## **Judiciary**

The judiciary functions as a safeguard against the powers of both the legislature and the executive. The Judiciary Act guarantees that every citizen has access to justice, notably by establishing district courts in all regions, which fosters equal opportunities for legal redress (Rathi, R 2013).

In Pakistan, the judicial system plays a crucial role within the governance framework, ensuring legal accountability and maintaining constitutional values. The Judiciary Act in Pakistan is shaped by several legal reforms and the Constitution of Pakistan, 1973, which serves as the foundational legal document guiding the judiciary. While there is no single statute called the "Judiciary Act" in Pakistan, the Constitution of Pakistan, along with subsequent judicial reforms like the Legal Framework Order (LFO) of 2002 and the National Judicial Policy (2009), outlines the judiciary's role in governance. Similar to Nepal, Pakistan's judiciary is structured to operate independently from the executive and legislative branches. The Constitution of Pakistan ensures the autonomy of judges, who are appointed by the President based on recommendations from the Judicial Commission. The judiciary is responsible for reviewing the actions of the legislature and executive through judicial oversight, ensuring that laws and executive decisions align with constitutional provisions. The judiciary plays a vital role in limiting the powers of the executive and legislature, ensuring that no branch of government oversteps its authority. This balance is especially significant in a country like Pakistan, where political tensions can occasionally threaten constitutional stability. Judicial reforms in Pakistan, such as the National Judicial Policy (2009), were introduced to enhance the efficiency of the legal system, accelerate court procedures, and ensure transparency in judicial processes. These reforms aim to make justice available to all citizens, especially marginalized groups (Shah, S. H 2010).

### **Comparative Analysis of the Executive in Pakistan and Nepal**

In both countries, the executive is accountable to the legislature, and its actions are subject to judicial oversight. However, while the Nepalese Army still plays a role, the political influence of the military in Nepal has been significantly reduced since the abolition of the monarchy.

**Political Instability:** Nepal has faced frequent shifts in political leadership, with the position of the Prime Minister often marked by instability and multiple leadership changes within short timeframes. Similarly, political instability is a recurring issue in Pakistan, though the executive has generally been more solidified, with periods of military rule altering the governance structure (Shafqat, 2014).

### **Comparative Analysis of the Legislature in Pakistan and Nepal**

Both Pakistan and Nepal share similarities in their legislative structures, with each having a bicameral legislature that plays a critical role in governance.



### **Pakistan's Legislature**

Pakistan operates under a bicameral system, made up of the National Assembly (the lower house) and the Senate (the upper house). The National Assembly is crucial in the lawmaking process and in overseeing the executive branch. It also plays a key role in approving the national budget. The Senate ensures that the provinces are represented, safeguarding the interests of smaller regions in the country's national decision-making (Constitution of Pakistan, 1973).

### **Nepal's Legislature**

Nepal has a bicameral legislature, comprising the House of Representatives and the National Assembly. The House of Representatives is the lower house, directly elected, and performs a function similar to Pakistan's National Assembly in lawmaking and overseeing the executive. The National Assembly in Nepal, akin to Pakistan's Senate, represents various regions and ensures the inclusion of diverse groups in the legislative process (Upreti, 2010).

Similarities and Differences between the Judiciary in Pakistan and Nepal

### **Comparative Analysis of the judiciary in Pakistan and Nepal**

#### **Similarities:**

Both Pakistan and Nepal have a Supreme Court as the highest judicial authority, vested with the power of judicial review (Khan, 2014; Sharma, 2017). The judiciary in both nations plays a crucial role in confirming the constitutionality of laws and interpreting constitutional provisions (Rehman, 2011; Poudel, 2017).

#### **Differences:**

**Political Influence:** Pakistan's judiciary has been more politically proactive, as demonstrated by the 2017 disqualification of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, whereas Nepal's judiciary tends to be more reserved (Zaidi, 2017). Pakistan's judiciary has experienced military interference, particularly during times of military rule, while Nepal's judiciary, although independent from military control, still contends with political pressures (Khan, 2014; Sharma, 2017). Pakistan shows a greater level of judicial activism, with the judiciary frequently involving itself in governance, while Nepal's judiciary generally adopts a more restrained approach (Rehman, 2011). Pakistan operates under the 1973 Constitution, whereas Nepal's judiciary is governed by the 2015 Constitution, following its transition to a republic (Constitution of Nepal, 2015).

#### **Finding and Results:**

Parliaments serve as key institutions in democratic governance, responsible for representation, lawmaking, and oversight. In Nepal and Pakistan, parliamentary systems have evolved to align with their distinct socio-political landscapes. This article explores the structure and functions of parliaments in both countries, highlights their

strengths, and suggests strategies for improving their effectiveness through mutual learning (Hussain, 2019).

Nepal's Parliament is tasked with enacting legislation, monitoring the executive, and ensuring representation. Lawmakers draft and review laws, hold the government accountable, and promote inclusivity, particularly for marginalized communities, including women and indigenous groups. Nepal's parliamentary system excels in inclusivity by mandating a 33% quota for women and ensuring representation for other underrepresented populations. Its federal system supports decentralization and strengthens local governance. Additionally, accountability mechanisms such as question hours enhance transparency and ministerial responsibility (Constitution of Nepal, 2015; Pokhrel, 2020).

Pakistan's Parliament is responsible for legislating on national issues, overseeing the executive, and balancing provincial interests. Committees play a crucial role in evaluating laws and policies. Public participation is encouraged through live broadcasts of parliamentary sessions, ensuring greater transparency (Khan, 2018).

Despite their strengths, both Nepal and Pakistan face challenges such as limited technical expertise among legislators, political instability, and inadequate institutional resources for research and legislative support. Public awareness and engagement in parliamentary affairs also remain low (Pokhrel, 2020; Hussain, 2019).

### **Strengthening Parliamentary Capacity**

To enhance their effectiveness, lawmakers in Nepal and Pakistan require regular training on governance, policy formulation, and parliamentary procedures. Collaborations with academic institutions and international organizations can provide technical expertise and skill development opportunities (Hussain, 2019).

### **Enhancing Federal-Provincial Coordination**

By taking inspiration from Pakistan's Senate model, Nepal can improve coordination between federal and provincial governments. Joint forums and sessions can help resolve intergovernmental issues and ensure policy consistency (Constitution of Pakistan, 1973).

### **Improving Public Participation**

Both countries can increase transparency and citizen involvement by adopting measures such as live-streaming parliamentary sessions and creating feedback mechanisms. Nepal can draw from Pakistan's live broadcast model to enhance public engagement and government accountability (Khan, 2018).

While Nepal and Pakistan operate within distinct socio-political environments, their parliamentary systems offer valuable lessons that can be adapted to strengthen governance in both nations.

### **Conclusion:**

In summary, both countries' parliamentary systems encounter obstacles such as a lack of technical expertise among legislators, political instability, and inadequate institutional resources for research and legislative support. Additionally, public participation remains low, with many citizens having limited awareness of parliamentary procedures.

Both Pakistan and Nepal have constitutionally established governments at multiple levels, with each branch assigned distinct responsibilities. The constitutions of both nations define how these branches should collaborate to govern effectively and serve the public.

Parliaments are fundamental pillars of democratic governance, responsible for representation, lawmaking, and oversight. In Nepal and Pakistan, parliamentary systems have developed to align with their distinct socio-political contexts. This article explores the structure and functions of parliaments in both countries, highlights their strengths, and proposes strategies to enhance their effectiveness through shared learning.

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