

## **The Role of Parliamentary System on Political Stability**

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### **Abstract**

The structural variances of parliamentary and presidential system has great influence on political certainty, yet the practical effects of these divergent constitutional arrangements within democratic polities have received scant attention. The purpose of this study is to measure and describe the role of parliamentary system on political stability. This paper employs a qualitative research design to test the relationship between a historical measure parliamentary rule and political stability. The study was found that there is a strong relationship between parliamentary system and political stability. To the extent that parliamentary framework influences the quality of governance; this paper argued that parliamentary system offers positive impact over presidential system of democratic rule.

**Keywords:** Parliamentary System, Political Stability, presidential system

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### **Introduction**

The constitutional framework of the parliamentary system has been a major research inquiry in political science since the beginning of the discipline. Starting with Woodrow Wilson and Walter Bagehot, scholars of American and European politics have considered the impact of unified or separated powers on campaigns and elections, on voters, on the party elites, on the public institutions and particularly, on the policymaking process. In recent times, the framework of the executive has emerged as an important examination within the field of comparative politics, a result of the rise of newly formed democratic polities around the world and post-conflicts countries. Thus, many of the same questions that arose originally in comparisons between the United States and the United Kingdom are now being raised in a global context.

This examination has been seen within American and comparative politics and created implicit normative inquiry about: Which system is a superior, parliamentary or presidential system? Which system can leads to political stability? It is difficult to read the literature on parliamentarism and presidentialism without catching a strong scent of these underlying normative concerns (e.g., Haggard, 2001; Sartori, 1994; Lijphart 1992; Mainwaring & Shugart 1997; Skach 2005; Nye, 2011). And it is right that they should be there, for the sensible query facing constitution and policy makers around the world is one of institutional choice. Taking all possible causal effects into account, which system is preferable? We live in an age of constitutional and administrative reform, where core elements of the polity are

subjected to continual criticism and not rare amendment (Reynolds 2002; Sartori 1994). If political science cannot offer direction on this theme then the discipline is, in essence, passing the buck. Moreover, this primary normative question—if answerable—may lead to significant theoretical gains for the discipline. It is not simply a question of necessity.

Certainly, it may be that neither system is better, overall. Possibly, the only momentous difference between these two constitutional molds is that one system (presidentialism), by virtue of greater institutional fragmentation, offers greater resistance to change<sup>1</sup>. There may also be as many differences within as between each constitutional type. Indeed, presidentialism and parliamentarism are unified labels for variegated realities<sup>2</sup>. Alternatively, parliamentarism and presidentialism each may demonstrate varying strengths and weaknesses along different policy dimensions<sup>3</sup>. Or it could be that the performance of the executive is contingent upon socioeconomic, cultural and historical factors that vary from country to country and from period to period. If so, parliamentarism may be more appropriate in some contexts, and presidentialism in others. The modal position among political scientists appears to be that the issue is complicated, and no clear and consistent advantage can be found for either executive

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<sup>1</sup> Tsebelis, George. 2000. "Veto Players in Institutional Analysis." *Governance* 13:4 (October).

<sup>2</sup> Haggard & McCubbins 2001; Mainwaring 1993; Shugart & Carey 1992; Tsebelis 1995

<sup>3</sup> Weaver, R. Kent and Bert A. Rockman (eds). (1993). *Do Institutions Matter? Government Capabilities in the United States and Abroad*. Washington: Brookings Institution

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type. Besides, questions regarding the overall governance impact of these two systems seem well worth affectation. Without taking a broad cut at these themes, it is difficult to answer the question of whether there might be different strengths and weaknesses along different policy lengths or among different countries of the world or across different time-periods, or whether there is in fact some reliable result that holds across dimensions, measures, regions, and eras.

The purpose of this study is to measure and describe the role of parliamentary system on political stability. In particular there are arguments that determine parliamentary system brings political stability and also argue that the instability problem is not a result of the current parliamentary system; instead, it is based on the electoral system and highly fractionalized party structure. Thus, I am going to compare and evaluate arguments whether parliamentary system brings political certainty or not.

Furthermore, the specific objectives of this study are:

1. To explore the role of parliament's legislation on political stability.
2. To describe the impact of the parliament's oversight of the executive and the state organs on political stability.
3. To find out the influence of parliament's representation of the citizens on political stability

This study is being contributing significant knowledge to the field of political science and public administration in general. This study also expected to make easier inaccessible knowledge regarding this matter. It is important for reference to other researchers and other readers as a whole. Also is being expected to recommend significant policy statements in policy makers through its guidance. The study will make advises on parliamentary system reforms as well as how to improve the parliament's oversight mechanism over the executive and the state organs. Such advices could be helpful in making of new policies that can initiate new techniques of parliamentary system reforms.

The methodology of this study was descriptive and conducted through qualitative research design that relates to a more phenomenological and interpretivist paradigm. Qualitative research design is used to look at the problem at different aspects. Also the study it is mostly used on secondary data to save the time and cost as well as allows the researcher to use previous records to make on reviewing and analyzing large number of academic books, government publications, articles, journals, magazines, and reports and other types of information that are concerning of the development of public administration in Somalia associated with my own academic and personal experience on public institutions in Somalia. The analysis of the study was searching for to observe the role of parliamentary system on political stability.

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### **1. THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM**

#### **1.1 What is Parliament?**

Parliamentary Government has been defined as Government by talk or more precisely, control of Government by talk. The word ‘Parle’ is a French word and it means Talk. Parliament is often described as a mere ‘Talking shop’. Though this description is used opprobrious, that is what the word ‘Parliament’ means and largely it describes the actual institutions<sup>4</sup>.

In the history the word parliament was using in the 11th century where the people was using discussion between more than one person. However, the word soon acquired a derivative meaning that of an Assembly of persons in which discussions took place. Contemporaries referred to the meeting at Runnymede as the ‘Parliament’ in which King John gave his charter to the barons. By 1258 ‘Parliament’ had evidently begun to acquire a special meaning. In June of the same year, one of the reforms demanded by the barons at Oxford was three ‘Parliaments’ a year to treat the business of the King and the Kingdom. Therefore, it is clear that the essence of Parliament is discussion and when the word was first applied to the great Councils of

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<sup>4</sup> Prasad Anirudh (1981) Presidential Government or Parliamentary Democracy. Chapter-1

the English Kings it was with a view to emphasize its deliberative function<sup>5</sup>.

In addition, the most countries that have the parliamentary system use the word parliament while in a presidential system countries use legislature. Most countries the chamber or house of parliament is either unicameral or bicameral<sup>6</sup>.

## **1.2 The Origin of Parliament:**

The origin of Parliament may be traced to two ideas and both these ideas are of great antiquity<sup>7</sup>.

1. The first is that the King, always sought the advice of a council of the wisest and the most experienced of his subjects,

2. The second idea is that of representation.

Feeling his way toward an ideal of self-government man has invented various Assembly and Parliament, at many different periods and in many different countries.

The Norman Kings held their courts in different Parliaments of the country and summoned therein the prominent members of the Church, big Landlords and Knights for discussion on national affairs.

They were not the representatives of the people in the sense in which today we understand the word 'representative'. It took eight

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., Chapter-1

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.1

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.2

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centuries to transform Parliament into a governing body resting on the suffrage of all adult persons in the country. Earlier its form was very different from what it is today. In 1295, Edward I summoned the ideal Parliament to which attention of the King was drawn to sanction funds for the public cause and before which problems of the people were placed. The British King was not empowered to impose taxes without the approval of the Parliament<sup>8</sup>.

In a bloodless revolution in 1688, Parliament attained supremacy. But the Parliament was not democratic in character due to its limited franchise. With the passage of time persons of young age were given the right to vote<sup>9</sup>.

### **1.3 The Theory of parliamentary system**

The parliamentary system of government, the executive branch is accountable to the parliament. Some countries in a parliamentary system, the prime minister from parliament such as the UK, while other countries not from parliament like Netherland.

The parliamentary system is a democratic system where the executive branch requires to get legitimacy or confidence from the parliament and accountable to the legislature. In this system there is representative candidates and system of parties. Each party displays the

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.3

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.4



policy programme is going to implement in order to get a vote from the people<sup>10</sup>.

John Locke advocated separation of government powers and also stated that the parliament is responsible for making laws and executive division is liable for implementing and checking whether obeyed or not. Also mentioned that parliaments are representatives of the whole societies or citizens and find out the approval of the majority may either from citizens to vote directly or their representative elected by them means parliaments. He also initiated accountability of the representatives to the citizens and accountability of the government to the parliament<sup>11</sup>.

A system of parties is a necessary part of any system of representation. Granted an organised electorate and a system of national parties, the third characteristic is a cabinet that guides the parliament, and yet at the same time is itself guided by the parliament. The adjustment of the whole machinery of the representative system of government is very fine and delicate.

The problem of human government is problems which can never be solved absolutely. There are certain requisites for this system to be successful. It is said that an ounce of practice is worth a pound of theory. Factionalism or irreconcilable conflict of parties is one of the saddest defects of a parliamentary system, for the party system is

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.5

<sup>11</sup> John Locke. (1690). *Second treatise of the government*, New York City, United States: Barnes & Noble Publishing. p.144, 362, 427.

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perhaps the most difficult of all the elements. The great merit of the parliamentary system is that it provides a constant training ground for the statesmen, with an arena of peaceful competition in which they can test and measure their powers before a watching and judging world.

### **1.4 British Parliamentary System In Other Countries<sup>12</sup>**

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|-----------------------------|----------------|
| <b>(a) Monarchies</b>       | Portugal       |
| <b>(i) Non-Communist</b>    | Sudan          |
| Belgium                     | Sri Lanka      |
| Canada                      |                |
| Denmark                     |                |
| <b>ii) Communist</b>        |                |
| Ghana                       | Czechoslovakia |
| Greece                      |                |
| Jordan                      |                |
| <b>(b) Republics</b>        |                |
| The Federal German Republic |                |
| India                       |                |
| Israel                      |                |
| Italy                       |                |
| Lebanon                     |                |

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid. 6

Pakistan

Lao

Libya

Liechtenstein

Luxembourg

Malaya

Morocco

Netherlands

New Zealand

Norway

Sweden

Thailand

Union of South Africa

United Kingdom

The above list shows the countries who have adopted a Parliamentary form of government either with Monarchies or Republics. The difference is that the monarch like British Crown is hereditary (however in Burma, he is elected) and President in Republics is an elected official. Barring the case of Ceylonian President who was the nominee of the Prime Minister before 1977, Presidents of most of Republics are chosen by both the Houses of Parliament and in fedro-

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parliamentary-democratic countries both the National Legislature and legislatures of the component states participate in the Presidential election. In Monarchical Democracies Crown is permanent whereas in Republican Democracies Presidents have time tenure of five to seven years, having chances of being re-elected once more. In Monarchical Democracies like Britain, the relations between the Crown and Council of Ministers have been left to be evolved by the Conventions, but in others, there has been a constitutional demarcation between the powers of the two. The head of the states in all parliamentary democracies are ceremonial and the points of the personal irresponsibility of the head of the state have been fused in both the monarchical democracies and republican cabinet systems the head of the state's action is valid only if it is countersigned by a Minister who owns the responsibility.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid. 7

## 2. CHIEF CHARACTERISTICS OF PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM

### 2.1 Key Features of Parliamentary System

In the parliamentary system the chief executive of the state (Prime Minister) is not elected directly by the people, but he/she is normally the leader of the majority party in the Parliament. He/ She choose his/her own Cabinet which again, normally should be out of the Parliament only.

The entire Cabinet is accountable to the Parliament and as soon as it loses the confidence of the Parliament, it has to resign from the, office. As against this, in the Presidential system, the chief executive i.e. the President is elected directly by the people for a fixed term and he chooses his/her own ministers (called ‘secretaries’ in the U.S.). Neither the President nor the Secretaries are accountable to the Parliament i.e. Congress<sup>14</sup>.

- ✚ In a Parliamentary system powers are centred in the Parliament, The Legislature takes the responsibility of government.
- ✚ The parliamentary system the executive branch is being divided head of the state e.g. President or Monarch and head of the cabinet or government i.e. Prime Minister. The relationship between the president or monarch and prime minister identified

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid. 8

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by the constitution or flexible conventions Such as UK, India, Ghana, Ethiopia etc.

- ✚ The president or head of the state assigns or appoints the prime minister or the head of the cabinet.
- ✚ Collegiate nature of the executive indicates that a decision making process has been shifted to a collective body.
- ✚ The Ministers are usually from members of the Parliament.
- ✚ There is a mutual dependence between the government and the parliament.
- ✚ There is an indirect relationship between the government and citizens or electorate.
- ✚ In a parliamentary system the most powerful are prime minister while the head of state has ceremonial power.
- ✚ This system does not represent truly the principle of separation of powers. There is no separation of personnel between the executive and the legislature.

### **2.2 Basic Roles/Functions of Parliament**

The main functions of parliament are making laws or legislation, representing the citizens and overseeing the government.

#### **2.2.1 Legislation**

The main function of legislatures is to create new laws and modify the existing law; that is why called legislature or parliament. Moreover, the work of laws of parliaments needs to have skilled

personnel that take part to create and implement laws successfully; increase the performance of the legislatives and enhance the cooperation of parliaments and their representatives, within parliaments and parliaments and the other branches of government such as executive and judiciary<sup>15</sup>.

In a parliamentary system, the laws initiated and prepared by ministries, government agencies or parliamentary committees for particular issues e.g. environment, gender, anti-corruption, national budget etc. Therefore, in the parliament should get sufficient resources and time to handle their jobs effectively and efficiently such as providing skilled employees, consultants, equipment, update technology. In addition, the civil servants who work with the parliaments should keep political neutrality and also parliaments before start work on the specific or particular issue is good to give training to the new member of parliaments on basic functions of the parliament and the particular issue their committee is planning to work on. Furthermore, should be clear mediation channel between line ministers, agencies, and parliamentary committees etc. to work specific issue as a group to save time and resources<sup>16</sup>.

Member of Parliaments have the power to also introduce legislation of their own, through Private Member's bills are indeed public interest policy issues sponsored by an individual member or

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<sup>15</sup> Haas E. (2011), *International Diplomacy*. Vol. 15, p.366

<sup>16</sup> Ellen G. (2009), "Analyzing Politics: An Introduction to Political Science", (4thEdition). Belmont: Wadsworth. Vol. IV, p. 200

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party and not a member of the cabinet. These could either be for a new legislation or seek to amend existing laws. An opposition member of parliament or any other backbencher in parliament should ideally use this instrument as a means or platform of drawing attention to areas of critical public concerns that is either lacking a guiding regulatory framework or neglected by the government.

### **2.2.2 Oversight**

Parliaments have the power to oversee, supervise and control the actions used or spent public money. The constitution gives to the legislature a power to legalize and supervise the revenue and expenditures of public funds during approving of the national budget<sup>17</sup>.

Member of parliaments has the power to debate and approve the national budget and monitor all expenses of public money. In the parliamentary government system there is an annual review of ministerial estimate budgets give to parliaments; and legislatures control over the government's policies and actions which are about how they used their annual budgets. Parliament's role of oversight gives to MPs to ask questions directed especially at Government Ministers on policy issues pertaining to their ministerial responsibilities in service delivery, protection of citizen's right and promotion of their interests. Some of the most widely known and effective instruments in parliament

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<sup>17</sup> Angelo, P. (2008), "Parties: Organization and Power", Cambridge University Press.



by which Members scrutinize government activity is through Questions and Motions, Committee probes and seeking ministerial statements<sup>18</sup>.

Where MPs are not satisfied with Ministers responses to their questions, they are allowed to raise the subject of such a question by moving a motion for the adjournment of the House for brief debate on matters of public/national interest. To be granted the opportunity to raise a matter of national importance, the MP should inform the Speaker in advance. Public petitions: citizens have a right to petition parliament through any of their MPs on any public interest matter that they feel has not been raised or addressed by the government. By raising such issues, the performance of a given Minister/ministry, and indeed, the entire government is thus brought to close focus by the House<sup>19</sup>.

### **2.2.3 Representation**

Representation is one of the core functions of parliaments in the parliamentary system of governments. The main purpose of the parliament's representation is identifying the link between legislatures and the people. In a parliamentary system, the members of parliaments are representing different types of the citizens which based on cities or regions, political ideology etc. The representation is strengthening the ties that connect citizens and their representatives and also allows parliaments to know the needs of their elected bodies and that makes

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<sup>18</sup> Brian, (2007). Legislature's challenges and possible solutions. Copenhagen: Denmark

<sup>19</sup> Nye, J. (2011). Certainty of parties and resolution of conflicts, New York: USA.

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MPs immediately to inform to the government. Also this is an opportunity for the member of parliaments to re-elect the next term.

The parliament's representation in order to be effective may need to make a structural review of parliaments that can allow citizens to bring their basic needs to the parliament such as establishing parliamentary committees that focus on specific issues e.g. disables, women rights etc.

Representation function of parliament gives the opportunity to citizens to attend the sessions of parliament and sometimes allows citizens to present their opinions towards parliament's activities and this makes citizens feel close to the parliament. Some of MPs are taking a special meeting with their citizens that they are representing. Therefore government should give training on parliament's representation function and the government should try to respond as soon as possible the needs of the citizens presented by the member of parliaments<sup>20</sup>.

### **2.3 Parliamentary System Versus Presidential System**

Although there is a non-going debate which is about the government structure whether it is Parliamentary or presidential and its effects on democracy and political stability, in a democratic system the most exercise is parliamentary system and combines executive and

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<sup>20</sup> Ssempembwa, F. (2005), "The Role of Regional Parliaments: Workshop on the Role of Regional Parliament (ECOWAS, EALA, SADC-PF) in Regional Diplomacy efforts in Africa", Nairobi: Fredrick Ebert Foundation

legislative branch of the government, making the government be accountable to the parliament. This system came out in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

In a parliamentary system the head of executive branch should get the vote of confidence from a majority in the parliament and can lose the position of head of government if he/she obtains a vote of no confidence, the executive branch also has the power to dissolve the parliament and hold elections.

In this system the executive branch contains the head of state and head of cabinet or council of ministers, the head of state is president or monarch and has the ceremonial power to announce the prime minister or head of the government. Also the head of government appoints the ministers. In a parliamentary system, the government has a direct relationship with the legislatures and has an indirect relationship with the citizens. Furthermore, in this system there is strong relationship and collaboration between the parliaments and the executive branch. The three key features of parliamentary government system are; the government is liable to the legislature, and parliaments have a power to dissolve the government and also order to appoint new government or cabinet; government appointed by the parliament not by the citizens and similar a member of a parliament can hold two positions at same time as member of parliament and part of the cabinet; the structure of the council of ministers is collective<sup>21</sup>.

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<sup>21</sup> Siaroff, A. (2003). Comparative presidencies: The inadequacy of the presidential, semi-presidential and parliamentary distinction. *European journal of political research*, 42(3), 287-312.

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In a presidential system, the president and the parliament elected separately by the citizens. The citizens have two votes; one time they vote to the legislature and other time they vote to the president; the president and legislature have fixed terms of the public office. The main characteristics of the presidential system are: the president or head of the state is elected by citizens and has fixed time; the executive cannot be made a vote of confidence by the parliament; the head of the state is the chief of the cabinet or government<sup>22</sup>.

The main differences between parliamentary and presidential system are: in a parliamentary system, the parliaments are responsible for nominating the head of the cabinet while in a presidential system, the president is elected by the people and parliament and president have separate powers. Parliamentary government has no fixed time the parliament can eliminate or dissolve any time while the presidential government has fixed time to be in the public office until next election. The structure of parliamentary government is a collative body while the presidential government system has no<sup>23</sup>.

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<sup>22</sup> Sartori, Giovanni. (1994.) *Comparative Constitutional Engineering: An Inquiry into Structures, Incentives and Outcomes*. New York: New York University Press

<sup>23</sup> Lijphart, Arend (ed). (1992). *Parliamentary Versus Presidential Government*. New York: Oxford University Press

## 2.4 The Role of Parliamentary System on Political Stability

The parliamentary system creates political certainty through inclusivity of decision making process of the different types of the society, parliamentary government systems are more stable than presidential governments, can carry on the principals of good governance and promote the stability of the state<sup>24</sup>.

Linz mentioned that the presidential system is fairly rigid than the parliamentary system due to one party that dominates the other parties, not participate the other parties to be part of the new government, this may lead or enhance the instability of the country. Moreover the presidential system can create conflict between parliament and the president which about the control and supervision of the legislative and executive branch, the head of state can argue is directly elected by the citizens that can result in military involvement in difficult situations<sup>25</sup>.

Riggs claimed that prismatic society or developing states are suffering from corruption, nepotism, favouritism, bias etc. Therefore, for these countries will be difficult to use and implement effectively in a presidential system of government it can cause conflicts, civil wars, rebels against the government<sup>26</sup>.

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<sup>24</sup> Linz, J. J. (1990). Presidents vs. Parliaments: The Virtues of Parliamentarism. *Journal of Democracy*, 1(4), 84-91.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.1 Linz (1990)

<sup>26</sup> Riggs (1964). *Administration in Developing Countries*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

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Stepan and Skach (1994)<sup>27</sup>; Lane and Ersson (2000)<sup>28</sup> agreed Linz's results or findings that parliamentary governments are more stable and more productive than governments under a presidential system. Moreover, it is claimed the presidential system is less effective and productive than the parliamentary especially developing countries or prismatic societies.

On another hand, these findings are not agreed by all intellectuals and researchers. Gasiorowski (1997) claimed there are no connections or direct links between the type of government and democratic stability particularly least developing countries<sup>29</sup>. Moreover, Horowitz (1990) disagreed Linz's findings and argued Linz focuses on Latin America states and did not mention the impacts of electoral systems in those countries. In addition, if the system has won two or more parties in the parliament and executive it does not mean single party get all the benefit and it cannot cause conflict between the branches of the government and it may promote control and balance of the government branches<sup>30</sup>.

Also in a presidential system can use different types of the electoral system instead of using majority system of winner take all positions such as Nigeria, and Linz's claim the problem was not a

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<sup>27</sup> Stepan, A., & Skach, C. (1994). Presidentialism and parliamentarism in comparative perspective. *The failure of presidential democracy, 1*, 119-136.

<sup>28</sup> Lane, J. E., & Ersson, S. O. (2000). *The new institutional politics: Performance and outcomes*. Psychology Press.

<sup>29</sup> Gasiorowski, M. J. (1997). Political regimes and industrial wages: A cross-national analysis. *Inequality, democracy and economic development*, 244-267.

<sup>30</sup> Horowitz, D. L. (1990). Presidents vs. parliaments: Comparing democratic systems. *Journal of Democracy, 1*(4), 73-79.

presidential system and he focused on the crisis of majority system of the electoral system<sup>31</sup>.

The most intellectuals have found out that presidential system has become unsuccessful in many countries, especially developing countries and parliamentary system more productive, more secure than presidential government system and enhances for implementing accountability and good governance principles (Linz, 1990; Stepan & Skach, 1993; and Riggs, 1997).

## CONCLUSION

In a parliamentary system, parliament is an elected body of the government. The basic functions of parliaments are representing citizens, making rules or laws and overseeing or controlling the government. The core functions of parliament or legislature are to formulate and approve new laws and also make review or amendments of existing rules or laws. Furthermore the legislature has authority to supervise the actions of the executive branch and the ways of using public resources.

The representational role of parliaments seeks to improve the relationship between citizens and their representatives. In addition, in order to get political stability parliament should represent the citizens. In democratic countries, parliaments are the voice of the citizens and accountable to the citizens. The representational role of parliaments in

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid. Horowitz (1990)

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order to be effective may need to make a structural review of parliaments that can allow citizens to bring their basic needs to the parliament such as establishing parliamentary committees that focus on specific issues e.g. disables, women rights etc.

The parliamentary system has greater opportunity than a presidential system for promoting political stability and good governance principles, for example the world's most stable countries in 2016 are using parliamentary system e.g. Finland, Norway, New Zealand, Denmark etc.

In a democratic system, parliaments are the key to achieve political stability and taking an important role in achieving democratic stability. Therefore, effective public institutions that manage effectively and efficiently public resources and develop the transparency of the election process to show citizens openness from institutions involved in election administration this helps to improve the political stability of the country.



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