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**EXECUTIVE DOMINANCE IN INDIA'S PARLIAMENTARY  
DEMOCRACY : TRENDS, CHALLENGES AND IMPLICATIONS**

**Pradip Karmakar**

Ph.D Research Scholar in Political Science, Department of Economics & Politics, Vidya Bhavana, Visva Bharati, Santiniketan, Birbhum, West Bengal, India.

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State Aided College Teacher - I, Department of Political Science, Sailajananda Falguni Smriti Mahavidyalaya, Khayrasole, Birbhum, West Bengal, India.

**E-mail - [pradipkarmakar311@gmail.com](mailto:pradipkarmakar311@gmail.com)**

**ORCID Id : <https://orcid.org/0009-0008-2197-7781>**

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<b>Keywords</b>	<b>Abstract</b>
<i>Parliamentary Democracy, Electoral Politics, Transparency, Governance, Representatives.</i>	Electoral politics is the cornerstone of democratic governance ensuring that citizens can freely choose their representatives. However in recent years, the integrity and fairness of electoral processes have faced significant challenges. Among the most prominent issues are the increasing influence of money power, the use of muscle power, the spread of misinformation and the difficulties associated with enforcing the Model Code of Conduct. These factors collectively threaten the transparency, credibility and inclusiveness of democratic elections. Money power has emerged as a major concern in electoral politics, as excessive campaign spending, vote-buying and the use of unaccounted funds create an uneven playing field among candidates. This often undermines the principle of equal political competition and limits



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opportunities for candidates with fewer financial resources. Similarly, muscle power manifested through intimidation, coercion, and sometimes violence can influence voter behavior and suppress free political participation, particularly in vulnerable regions. Another growing challenge is the rapid spread of misinformation and disinformation through digital platforms and social media. False narratives, manipulated content and targeted propaganda can mislead voters, polarize communities and distort public debate during election periods. These developments complicate the task of maintaining informed and rational electoral choices among the electorate. Furthermore, while the Model Code of Conduct plays a vital role in regulating political behavior during elections, its effective implementation remains a challenge. Issues such as delayed enforcement, loopholes and limited punitive measures often reduce its deterrent effect. This study examines these emerging challenges and evaluates their impact on democratic electoral processes. It also highlights the need for stronger regulatory mechanisms, enhanced transparency in campaign financing, digital literacy among voters and more effective enforcement of electoral norms to safeguard the integrity of democratic elections.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

India is the world's largest democracy and follows a parliamentary system of government, inspired largely by the British model. In this system, the executive such as Prime Minister and Council of Ministers, emerges from the legislature and remains accountable to it. The central principle of parliamentary democracy is collective responsibility of the executive to the legislature, meaning the government must retain the confidence of the lower house or Lok Sabha. Ideally, this structure ensures checks and balances between institutions and promotes accountability in governance. However in practice, the functioning of India's parliamentary democracy has increasingly shown a tendency toward executive dominance. Executive dominance refers to a situation where the executive branch exercises disproportionate control over the legislative process, policy-making and political institutions, reducing the autonomy and effectiveness of the legislature.

## 2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The primary objective of this study is to examine the nature and extent of executive dominance in India's parliamentary democracy and to analyze how it has evolved over time within the constitutional and political framework. The study aims to identify the key factors contributing to the strengthening of executive authority, including the role of political majorities, party discipline, and the centralization of power within the executive branch and the use of constitutional provisions such as ordinances. Another important objective is to assess the impact of executive dominance on the functioning of Parliament, particularly in terms of legislative scrutiny, parliamentary debates, and the role of opposition parties and



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the effectiveness of parliamentary committees. The study also seeks to explore the broader implications of executive dominance for democratic accountability, transparency and the balance of power between institutions in India's political system. Furthermore, it intends to evaluate whether strong executive leadership contributes to effective governance while maintaining democratic checks and balances.

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research adopts a qualitative and analytical methodology to examine executive dominance in India's parliamentary democracy. It is primarily based on secondary sources, including the Constitution of India, parliamentary records, government reports, academic books, peer-reviewed journal articles and credible policy analyses. The study also reviews relevant case studies related to legislative processes, the use of ordinances and executive legislative relations. A descriptive and interpretative approach is used to analyze trends and patterns over time. Through systematic examination of these sources, the research seeks to understand the factors contributing to executive dominance and its implications for democratic accountability and institutional balance. The proposed study is based on purely theoretical framework and secondary data method like; books, journals, periodicals etc.

### 4. KEY FEATURES OF INDIA'S PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY INCLUDE

The Indian Constitution establishes a parliamentary form of government in which the executive is responsible to the legislature. The President is the nominal head of state, while real executive power lies with the Prime Minister and the Council of Ministers.

#### ➤ **Supremacy of the Constitution**

India's parliamentary democracy is governed by the Constitution of India, which is the supreme law of the land. All institutions executive, legislature, and judiciary derive their authority from it. Any law or government action that violates constitutional provisions can be declared invalid by courts. This ensures constitutional governance rather than parliamentary supremacy, unlike the system in the United Kingdom.

#### ➤ **Nominal and Real Executive**

A defining feature of the parliamentary system is the dual executive. The nominal executive is the President of India, who is the constitutional head of the state. The real executive is the Prime Minister of India along with the Council of Ministers. While the President formally exercises executive powers, they are actually carried out by the Prime Minister and ministers, who run the government. This ensures continuity and accountability in governance.

#### ➤ **Collective Responsibility**



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The Council of Ministers is collectively responsible to the lower house of Parliament, the Lok Sabha. This means all ministers stand or fall together. If the Lok Sabha passes a no-confidence motion, the entire council must resign. This principle maintains democratic accountability and ensures that the executive remains answerable to elected representatives.

➤ **Bicameral Legislature**

India has a bicameral Parliament, consisting of two houses, The Lok Sabha represents the people directly through elections, while the Rajya Sabha represents the states. Bicameralism provides checks and balances in the legislative process and ensures representation of regional interests.

➤ **Political Party System**

Parliamentary democracy functions through a multi-party system. Political parties contest elections and the party or coalition that secures majority seats in the Lok Sabha forms the government. The opposition also plays a crucial role by questioning government actions, debating policies, and ensuring transparency in governance.

➤ **Rule of Law and Judicial Review**

India's democracy operates under the rule of law, meaning all individuals and institutions are subject to the law. The Supreme Court of India and other courts have the power of judicial review, enabling them to examine laws and government actions for constitutional validity.

➤ **Federal Structure with Parliamentary Form**

India combines federalism with parliamentary democracy. Powers are divided between the central government and the states, yet both follow a parliamentary system with their own legislatures and councils of ministers.

➤ **The Concept of Executive Dominance**

The concept of executive dominance in India refers to the situation where the executive branch of government particularly the Prime Minister and the Council of Ministers exerts substantial influence over the legislature and policymaking processes. In India's parliamentary system established under the Constitution of India, the executive is formally accountable to Parliament, especially the Lok Sabha. However, in practice, the executive often dominates legislative functioning due to political and institutional factors. One major reason is the strong leadership position of the Prime Minister of India, who controls the cabinet, determines government policies, and influences legislative agendas. Scholars such as Granville Austin and Subhash C. Kashyap argue that the cabinet system in India has gradually evolved into a Prime Minister centric government, particularly when a single party enjoys a clear majority in Parliament. Party discipline further strengthens executive dominance because members of Parliament belonging to the ruling party are usually bound to support government policies due to the Anti-Defection Law (India), which discourages dissent within



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parties. As a result, the legislative branch often approves government bills with limited resistance. The role of the President of India is also largely ceremonial, as most executive powers are exercised on the advice of the Council of Ministers, further reinforcing cabinet authority. Additionally, control over parliamentary procedures, legislative scheduling, and financial initiatives such as the presentation of the Union Budget gives the executive considerable leverage in law-making. Political scientists like Rajni Kothari have observed that the dominance of the ruling party in the early decades after independence strengthened executive authority and weakened parliamentary oversight. Although mechanisms such as parliamentary debates, committees, and judicial review by the Supreme Court of India exist to maintain checks and balances, critics argue that the concentration of power in the executive can reduce the effectiveness of parliamentary scrutiny. Therefore, executive dominance remains an important theme in analyzing the functioning of India's parliamentary democracy and its evolving balance between accountability and efficient governance.

##### **5. HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF EXECUTIVE DOMINANCE IN INDIA**

The historical evolution of executive dominance in India reflects the interplay between constitutional design, political practices, and leadership styles since independence. The Constitution of India (1950) established a parliamentary system where the executive is formally responsible to the legislature, particularly the Lok Sabha. However, from the early years, the Indian executive began to assert significant authority in lawmaking, policy formulation and governance. During the tenure of Jawaharlal Nehru (1947–1964), the dominance of the ruling Indian National Congress in Parliament allowed the executive to shape legislation and implement national policies with limited resistance. Nehru's leadership, marked by vision and pragmatism, emphasized parliamentary debate and consultation but still reflected the centrality of the Prime Minister in directing government priorities. The period following Nehru's death witnessed political instability, yet the executive retained authority, often shaping coalition dynamics and influencing legislative outcomes. The era of Indira Gandhi (1966 - 1977, 1980 - 1984) marked a significant consolidation of executive power. Her tenure illustrated the increasing centralization of authority in the Prime Minister's office and the cabinet. This period reached its apex during the Emergency in India (1975 - 1977), when constitutional provisions were used to expand executive control over political institutions, suspend civil liberties and curb parliamentary autonomy. The Emergency demonstrated the vulnerability of democratic institutions to executive overreach and became a reference point for debates on the limits of executive power. Following the Emergency, political reforms, including the 44th Amendment to the Constitution of India, sought to restore parliamentary oversight, safeguard fundamental rights, and curb arbitrary executive authority. The late 1980s and 1990s introduced a phase of coalition politics, which



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altered the dynamics of executive dominance. Governments led by multiple parties required negotiation and consensus-building, slightly reducing the unilateral authority of the executive compared to single-party majorities. Nevertheless, even in coalition governments, the Prime Minister and core cabinet retained significant influence over policy agendas, legislative scheduling, and administrative control. The enactment of the Anti-Defection Law (India) reinforced executive dominance within party structures by limiting dissent from legislators, thereby consolidating central leadership in decision-making processes. In the 21st century, executive dominance has re-emerged prominently under governments enjoying strong parliamentary majorities. Leaders such as Narendra Modi have demonstrated centralized control over policy and legislative initiatives, with the Prime Minister's office acting as the central hub for governance, coordination, and decision-making. The evolution of executive dominance in India thus reflects a pattern influenced by constitutional provisions, the nature of party politics, leadership styles, legislative control, and political crises. While periods of coalition governance temporarily moderated executive authority, the structural and political environment of India's parliamentary democracy continues to favor a strong and often dominant executive, shaping the trajectory of governance and policy-making in the country.

## 6. KEY TRENDS CONTRIBUTING TO EXECUTIVE DOMINANCE

The result of historical, political and institutional factors that have progressively strengthened the role of the Prime Minister and the Council of Ministers in shaping national governance. One of the primary trends is the centralization of political power within the Prime Minister's office, which has evolved as the central decision-making hub for policy formulation, cabinet coordination, and legislative strategy. Over the decades, strong and charismatic leadership, exemplified by figures like Jawaharlal Nehru, Indira Gandhi, and more recently Narendra Modi, has emphasized the importance of decisive executive action, often concentrating authority in the office of the Prime Minister rather than dispersing it across the cabinet or Parliament. This centralization is reinforced by party dominance in Parliament, especially when a single party enjoys an absolute majority in the Lok Sabha. Party discipline ensures that legislators typically align with executive directives, limiting internal dissent and enhancing the government's capacity to pass legislation with minimal resistance. The enactment of the Anti-Defection Law (India) has further reinforced this trend by penalizing legislators who vote against party lines, thereby consolidating executive control over parliamentary outcomes. Another significant trend is the control of the legislative agenda by the executive. In the parliamentary system, the government decides the schedule of business in Parliament, including the introduction of bills, policy debates, and the allocation of time for discussion. This allows the executive to prioritize its legislative



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objectives while limiting opportunities for prolonged opposition scrutiny. Additionally, the fusion of executive and legislative functions inherent in India's parliamentary democracy facilitates executive dominance, as most ministers are drawn from Parliament and are accountable primarily to the Prime Minister and their party leadership, rather than to Parliament as an independent body. Coalition politics has also influenced executive dominance. While coalition governments in the 1980s and 1990s required negotiation and compromise among multiple parties, they paradoxically strengthened the role of the Prime Minister as the central coordinator who balances competing interests, thereby enhancing executive authority within the coalition framework. Economic liberalization and policy reforms since the 1990s have further increased executive control, as complex administrative and financial decisions require centralized coordination, allowing the executive to set agendas and drive reforms efficiently. Finally, the role of technology and media in modern governance has reinforced executive dominance by enabling the Prime Minister to communicate directly with citizens, bypassing traditional legislative debate and parliamentary channels. Social media platforms, televised addresses, and digital policy outreach allow the executive to shape public discourse, garner support for policies, and reinforce authority. In sum, executive dominance in India is the outcome of concentrated leadership, party discipline, legislative control, coalition management, policy complexity, and technological communication, all of which continue to shape the dynamics of India's parliamentary democracy.

## 7. CHALLENGES

The increasing executive dominance in India's parliamentary democracy presents a complex set of challenges that have significant implications for the functioning of democratic institutions. Traditionally, India's parliamentary system was designed to maintain a balance between the legislature, the executive, and the judiciary, ensuring accountability and deliberation. However, recent trends indicate a consolidation of power in the hands of the Prime Minister and the Cabinet, often at the expense of legislative oversight. One major challenge is the marginalization of Parliament, where debates and question-hour sessions have been reduced, and critical bills are pushed through with minimal discussion, undermining the representative role of elected members. This centralization also raises concerns about policy-making, as decisions may increasingly reflect political priorities rather than broad consensus or technical expertise. Another critical issue is the strain on federalism: state governments, particularly those led by opposition parties, often face pressures and limitations from a strong central executive, which can disrupt cooperative governance and deepen regional inequalities. Furthermore, the judiciary's role as a check on executive overreach is increasingly tested, with controversies over appointments and delays



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in adjudication impacting its independence. Civil society and media, which traditionally function as instruments of accountability, are also challenged by the growing influence of executive narratives and control over information. The cumulative effect of these trends threatens the pluralistic and deliberative character of India's democracy, concentrating power and limiting participatory governance. Addressing these challenges requires institutional reforms, including strengthening parliamentary committees, ensuring judicial independence, and fostering a robust culture of transparency and accountability. Without such measures, executive dominance risks undermining the very foundations of India's democratic framework, potentially eroding public trust and weakening democratic resilience.

#### ➤ **Implications for Indian Democracy**

The implications of executive dominance for Indian democracy are complex and have both positive and negative dimensions. In India's parliamentary framework established by the Constitution of India, the executive headed by the Prime Minister of India and the Council of Ministers is expected to remain accountable to the legislature, particularly the Lok Sabha. However, when the executive becomes dominant due to a strong parliamentary majority, strict party discipline and centralized leadership, the balance between the executive and legislature can be affected. One major implication is the weakening of parliamentary oversight. Since the executive generally controls the legislative agenda and enjoys the support of the ruling party's majority, many government bills are passed with limited debate or scrutiny. Mechanisms such as question hour, parliamentary committees and opposition debates are intended to ensure accountability, but their effectiveness may diminish when the ruling executive commands overwhelming political authority. This situation may reduce the legislature's role as an independent forum for deliberation and policy evaluation. Another implication is the centralization of decision-making, particularly around the office of the Prime Minister. Political scientists have often described the Indian system as becoming increasingly Prime Minister centric, where policy direction and administrative priorities are largely determined by the executive leadership. At the same time, executive dominance may sometimes contribute to administrative efficiency and policy stability. When the executive has a stable majority in the Lok Sabha, it can implement policies more effectively without frequent legislative deadlocks. This was evident during periods of strong majority governments when significant economic and social reforms were introduced. However, critics argue that excessive executive control may also create risks for democratic freedoms and institutional balance, as seen during the The Emergency in India (1975–1977) under Indira Gandhi, when executive authority expanded dramatically and civil liberties were restricted. Another important implication concerns the role of the opposition and political pluralism. In a healthy democracy, opposition parties are expected to challenge government



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policies and represent alternative viewpoints. When the executive dominates Parliament through party majorities and the enforcement of the Anti-Defection Law, India dissent within the ruling party and effective opposition criticism may decline, potentially limiting democratic debate. Furthermore, executive dominance may influence the functioning of other institutions such as the bureaucracy and policymaking bodies, since administrative agencies often operate under the direction of the executive leadership. Nevertheless, India's democratic system retains several safeguards against excessive executive power. Institutions like the Supreme Court of India exercise judicial review to ensure that executive actions conform to constitutional principles, while an independent election system conducted by the Election Commission of India allows citizens to hold governments accountable through periodic elections. In conclusion, the implications of executive dominance in India highlight a continuing tension between the need for strong and effective governance and the preservation of democratic accountability. While a dominant executive may enable decisive leadership and efficient policy implementation, maintaining robust parliamentary scrutiny, judicial independence, and active political participation remains essential to protect the democratic spirit of India's constitutional system.

## 8. CONCLUSION

Executive dominance has become an increasingly visible feature of India's parliamentary democracy, reflecting both institutional design and evolving political practices. While the Constitution envisages a system of checks and balances between the executive and the legislature, in practice the executive particularly when supported by a strong parliamentary majority often exerts significant influence over legislative processes and policy outcomes. Trends such as the frequent use of ordinances, the centralization of decision-making within the Prime Minister's Office, the limited time allotted for parliamentary debate, and the growing role of party discipline have strengthened the executive's position. At the same time, challenges arise from concerns about weakening legislative scrutiny, reduced space for opposition voices and the declining effectiveness of parliamentary committees. These developments raise important questions about accountability, transparency, and the overall health of democratic governance. However, executive strength can also contribute to policy stability and decisive governance when balanced by robust institutional oversight. The implications therefore highlight the need to reinforce democratic safeguards such as empowering parliamentary committees, ensuring meaningful debate in Parliament, strengthening judicial review and encouraging greater political pluralism. Ultimately, sustaining India's parliamentary democracy requires maintaining a careful equilibrium where the executive remains effective in governance while remaining accountable to the legislature and the broader democratic framework. Achieving this balance is essential for



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preserving constitutional values, protecting institutional autonomy, and ensuring that governance continues to reflect the principles of representative democracy and public accountability.

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