semi-presidential executive. This format mixes both models to produce a distinct system with its own characteristics.

Specifically, **semi-presidential government** combines an elected president with a prime minister and cabinet accountable to parliament (Figure 16.5). Unlike the head of state in parliamentary systems, the president in a semi-presidential executive is in, rather than above politics. As a two-headed system, the semi-presidential executive creates a division of authority within the executive and creates the potential for struggle between president and prime minister.

The French political scientist Maurice Duverger (1980, p. 166) provided an influential definition of semi-presidentialism:

**A political regime is considered semi-presidential if the constitution which established it combines three elements: (1) the president of the republic is elected by universal suffrage; (2) he possesses quite considerable powers; (3) he has opposite him, however, a prime minister and ministers who possess executive and governmental power and can stay in office only if the parliament does not show its opposition to them.**

The ‘quite considerable powers’ of the president typically include special responsibility for foreign affairs, appointing the prime minister and cabinet, issuing decrees and initiating referendums, initiating and vetoing legislation, and dissolving the assembly. In theory, the president can offer leadership on foreign affairs, while the prime minister addresses the intricacies of domestic politics through parliament.

If the United States exemplifies the presidential system, the French Fifth Republic provides the archetype of the semi-presidential executive. The 1958 constitution establishing the new regime was designed to provide stable governance in the context of a political crisis caused by a divisive colonial war in Algeria and a rebellious army. In addition, the unstable Fourth Republic, which had experienced 23 prime ministers in its short 12-year life, provided a model to avoid.

The new constitution created a presidency fit for the dominating presence of its first occupant, General Charles de Gaulle (President, 1959–69). De Gaulle saw himself as a national saviour, arguing that ‘power emanates directly from the people, which implies that the head of state, elected by the nation, is the source and holder of that power’ (Knapp and Wright, 2006, p. 53). In office, de Gaulle’s imperious style developed the office to, and perhaps even beyond, its constitutional limits.

The president has been directly-elected since 1962, thus fully establishing the semi-presidential form.

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**Figure 16.5 Semi-presidential government**

Semi-presidential government combines an elected president (who usually appoints the prime minister and can dissolve the legislature) with accountability of the prime minister and cabinet to the legislature.

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**Semi-presidential government**, or the dual executive, combines an elected president performing political tasks with a prime minister who heads a cabinet accountable to parliament. The prime minister, usually appointed by the president, is responsible for day-to-day domestic government, but the president retains an oversight role and responsibility for foreign affairs. Also, the president can usually take emergency powers.