

PARLIAMENTARISM IN A DEMOCRACY. INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

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Summary

The article analyses parliamentarism as a key element of a democratic political system. The article examines its historical development, starting from ancient times, through the formation of parliamentary traditions in the UK, France, and other European countries, and to modern models of parliamentarism in the world. Particular attention is paid to the functioning of parliaments in different political systems, such as parliamentary republics, parliamentary-presidential models, and mixed forms of government. The paper examines the global experience that allows us to assess the effectiveness of parliamentary institutions in different cultural, social, and economic conditions. The article focuses on the current challenges facing parliamentarism, such as the rise of populism, distrust of political institutions, the impact of digital technologies and global issues, including climate change and pandemics. The authors analyze the causes of these challenges and suggest ways to overcome them. It is determined that the success of parliamentarism depends on the ability to adapt to new realities while preserving democratic principles, as well as on strengthening international cooperation and improving parliamentary oversight mechanisms.

Key words: democracy, globalisation, international cooperation, parliamentary systems, political stability, populism, public trust, digital technologies.

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1. Introduction

Parliamentarism in a democracy is one of the key topics of modern political science, which is becoming especially important in the context of global changes and challenges. The system of parliamentary governance ensures effective interaction between state bodies, the people, and the government, which is the basis for the stability of democratic processes. The topic of parliamentarism in a democracy is not only theoretical but also practical, as the issues of the effectiveness of parliamentary institutions, mechanisms for ensuring the rights and freedoms of citizens, and the fight against corruption remain relevant in many countries.

Today, when most countries have chosen the democratic path of development, the issue of the effectiveness of parliamentary representation is becoming even more relevant. Studying the global experience in this area allows not only to compare different models of parliamentarism,

but also to understand which mechanisms work most effectively, taking into account the cultural, social and economic conditions of different countries. In this regard, the consideration of the topic of parliamentarism is necessary for a deeper understanding of modern political processes and the search for ways to improve them.

At different historical stages, the issues of parliamentary functioning and parliamentarism have attracted the attention of such prominent thinkers as J. Locke, S. Montesquieu, J.-J. Rousseau, J. Madison, T. Jefferson and others. Modern researchers, including constitutionalists, comparative lawyers, political scientists and sociologists, are also actively studying these issues. However, to date, scientific developments related to current trends in the development of parliamentarism and constitutionalism, in particular in the context of digital changes, remain underdeveloped. Certain aspects of this topic are covered by such scholars as S. McLean, D. Siqueira, B. Van Wesel, M. Kostytskyi, A. Krusian, N. Kaminska, M. Baimuratov, N. Bocharova, J. de Gregorio, E. Lvova, N. Omelchenko, S. Chukut, V. Shapoval and others.

2. The origins and evolution of parliamentarism

Parliamentarism, as a form of organisation of state power, has deep historical roots that date back to ancient times. One of the first examples of parliamentary practice was the Athenian democracy of the fifth century BC, where the people's assembly, or 'ekklesia,' was the main body of state governance. However, although at that time, parliamentary practice had not yet been formed in its modern form, the principles of representation and collegiality laid the foundations for the further development of this institution. In Athens, every citizen could participate in political processes, which gave rise to the ideas of democracy and participation in decision-making.

The real heyday of parliamentarism came after Great Britain, where in the 17th century, parliament became the main body that limited monarchical power and played a key role in shaping a democratic political system. The English Revolution of 1642-1651 and subsequent political reforms led to a constitutional monarchy, in which the parliament gained real levers of control over the government. An essential step in this process was the Bill of Rights of 1689, which enshrined the principles of parliamentarism in British law and became an essential part of the European democratic tradition.

In the 18th century, after the French Revolution, parliamentarism received a new impetus for development. France, like Great Britain, introduced parliamentary principles into the basis of its political system, although with some differences. In France, after the fall of the monarchy, a legislative body was created, which became the basis for the formation of a republican model of government. Thus, the concept of parliamentarism began to be implemented not only in monarchies but also in republican forms of government, which contributed to the spread of the idea of democracy throughout Europe.

As V. Kreidenko rightly notes, in the XX century, parliamentarism became global, becoming an essential element of the political systems of many countries. The transition to parliamentary and parliamentary-presidential forms of government in several countries allowed for an optimised distribution of powers between the legislative, executive and judicial authorities. This has contributed to ensuring effective control over the activities of governments, as well as the development of public policy based on democratic principles and procedures. The parliamentary systems that emerged as a result of significant political changes have become the basis for the establishment of stable democracies, in particular through the principle of election

and accountability, which guarantees popular representation and control over the authorities (Kreidenko, 2024: 59).

The period after the First World War (1914-1918) gave a special impetus to the development of parliamentarism. The emergence of new nation-states formed after the collapse of major empires, such as the Austro-Hungarian, Ottoman, and German, contributed to the introduction of parliamentary forms of government as instruments of stabilization and political governance in the context of social transformations and post-war chaos (Hoshovska, 2019).

After the Second World War (1939-1945), parliamentarism gained a new impetus, especially in the context of global democratisation and the process of decolonisation. Many countries that had previously been colonies of European powers gained independence and, in particular, introduced parliamentary or parliamentary-presidential systems. An illustrative example is India, which became a parliamentary republic in 1947, as well as numerous African and Asian countries that were formed after the collapse of the colonial empires of Great Britain, France, and others.

It can be noted that modern models of parliamentarism retain the basic principles that were laid down in history, but are adapted to new realities. In the European Union, for example, mixed models are used, where parliaments simultaneously elect governments and oversee their activities, which allows for more efficient governance. In addition, an important aspect is the role of parliaments in ensuring the rights and freedoms of citizens, which is critical for the functioning of democratic states in the 21st century.

3. Analysis of the world experience of parliamentarism

Modern parliamentarism refers to a system of government in which the executive derives its legitimacy and authority from the legislature, commonly known as the parliament. This structure has evolved over the centuries, with different countries adopting different models based on their unique political, historical and cultural contexts. Despite these differences, modern parliamentary systems share common principles, such as the separation of powers in decision-making and the accountability of the executive to the legislature.

According to O. Bodnar: 'The institution of parliamentarism in the political system of a given society can be defined through the status and powers of the parliament as the highest representative and legislative body' (Bodnar, 2018: 35).

The United Kingdom is a classic example of parliamentarism. The supremacy of parliament in the English system of separation of powers is manifested in the following aspects

- precedence of legislation;
- the right to approve the state budget and set taxes;
- collective responsibility of the government to the parliament;
- the right to approve judges;
- lack of competition from other authorities.

It should be noted that the Westminster system is characterized by the merger of the executive and legislative branches of government, with the prime minister being both the head of the executive and a member of the legislature. This system emphasizes accountability through mechanisms such as parliamentary questions, debates, and votes of no confidence, such as the 1979 vote that brought down the Labour government and brought Margaret Thatcher to power.

In addition, the model of a parliamentary republic is implemented in countries such as Germany and India. These systems have a similar structure, where the head of state is usually the president, and the head of government is the prime minister, who is the leader of the largest party or coalition in the legislature.

The German Bundestag, with 736 members as of the 2021 federal elections, elects a chancellor who has executive power and is accountable to parliament. Germany's system is based on proportional representation, which ensures a more diverse representation of political parties. For example, in the 2021 elections, the Green Party received significant support, making it a key player in coalition negotiations.

In contrast, India's parliamentary system exists in a federal structure, with the Lok Sabha (People's House) consisting of 545 elected members. The largest party or coalition elects the prime minister, who heads the government. India's parliamentary system allows for dynamic governance, but can also lead to instability, especially in coalition governments where the prime minister must balance the demands of several political parties.

It should be noted that the Scandinavian model, which is practiced in countries such as Sweden, Denmark, and Norway, is another type of parliamentary democracy that is distinguished by a system of proportional representation. For example, Sweden uses a mixed-member proportional representation system with 349 seats in the Riksdag, the Swedish parliament. The prime minister is usually the leader of the party or coalition that holds the majority of seats, although coalition governments are the norm. The Swedish system, like that of other Scandinavian countries, is known for its high level of political participation, with voter turnout consistently exceeding 80% in recent elections.

We emphasise that these countries emphasise coalition governments, where the prime minister and cabinet ministers must negotiate and cooperate with smaller parties to form a stable government. For example, the Social Democrats in Sweden have often worked with the Green Party to form a governing coalition. However, the system is not without its problems. Sweden's 2018 general election resulted in a fragmented parliament with no clear majority, which delayed government formation and highlighted the potential instability of coalition politics in parliamentary systems (*Ihalainen etc., 2018*).

It is worth noting that the mixed model of parliamentarism, which can be found in countries such as Poland or Italy, combines the characteristics of both parliamentary and presidential systems. In such countries, the president is elected either in direct elections or in parliament, but his or her powers are limited compared to classical presidential republics such as the United States. At the same time, the government is formed by the parliament and is responsible for it. In such systems, the ability of presidents and prime ministers to effectively cooperate and coordinate their activities is important to ensure stability and balance between the branches of government.

For example, in Poland, which has a mixed model, the president has the power to veto legislation, but this veto can be overridden by parliament. At the same time, the president also has significant powers in the areas of foreign policy and defence. In turn, the Prime Minister of Poland, as the head of government, is appointed by the president, but the prime minister's powers are significantly limited by parliamentary control over government activities. The Polish model in particular demonstrates how different forms of government can be effectively combined to ensure both political stability and mechanisms of control over the executive branch.

In our view, the role of the legislature in holding the executive to account is a key feature of modern parliamentarism, and it manifests itself in a variety of ways, including motions of no confidence, parliamentary inquiries and budget approval. In the United Kingdom, for example, the government's annual budget must be approved by parliament, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer sets fiscal policy. If the government loses a vote on the budget or other key legislation, it can trigger a general election. In Germany, the Bundestag has the power to vote on the federal budget, and a vote of no confidence can force the Chancellor to resign, as happened in 1972 when Willy Brandt resigned.

Global experience shows that an important aspect of modern parliamentarism is the growing participation of political parties outside the traditional system, such as populist and non-institutional movements. The rise of populism in Europe, for example, has contributed to the fracturing of traditional party systems. In Hungary, the rise of the Fidesz party and its leader, Viktor Orban, has led to significant changes in the political landscape.

Likewise, in Italy, the populist Five Star Movement gained significant support in the 2018 elections, leading to its eventual coalition with the far-right Lega party. These changes have made it more difficult to form stable governments and have challenged traditional parliamentary accountability mechanisms, as populist parties often seek direct mandates from the people, bypassing traditional legislative channels.

However, it is important to understand that each of these models of parliamentarism has its advantages and disadvantages. Parliamentary systems typically ensure close interaction between the legislative and executive branches of government but can be less stable due to frequent changes in government. Parliamentary-presidential systems allow for stability through a strong president but can lead to conflicts between the president and the parliament. Mixed models allow for a combination of different forms of government to strike a balance but can be difficult to manage because of the need for close cooperation between the president and parliament.

4. Current challenges to parliamentarism in a modern democracy

The peculiarity of the present is that current challenges to parliamentarism in a modern democracy arise against the backdrop of dynamic changes in political, economic and social processes, as well as as a result of globalisation trends. Modern parliamentarism faces various problems that call into question the effectiveness of its functioning in democratic countries. One of the main challenges is the growing distrust of political institutions, including parliaments, among citizens. According to Transparency International's research, the level of trust in parliaments in many countries is constantly decreasing, which is explained by significant political polarisation and scandals related to corruption or mismanagement.

Another important challenge is the threat of the rise of populism, which has become a political factor in social life in many countries. By focusing on simple solutions to complex problems, populist movements often undermine the credibility of traditional parliamentary institutions. Over the past decades, populist parties in Europe and North America, such as Alternative for Germany or the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), have been actively criticizing parliamentary systems, proposing instead 'direct democracy' or other forms of governance that may well weaken parliamentary powers.

Instead, another significant challenge is the technological revolution and the impact of digital technologies on the political process, as noted by E. Zaiets in his article (*Zaiets, 2024*). The Internet and social media have become important tools for citizen mobilisation and political campaigns, but they also pose new risks to parliamentarism.

Disinformation, fake news and manipulation of public opinion have become a reality of modern political processes. As the 2016 US election and the Brexit referendum in the UK have shown, digital platforms can have a significant impact on election results, and this calls into question the ability of parliaments to reflect the will of the electorate based on accurate and fair information.

Speaking about current challenges, we cannot ignore the conclusions of T. Franz-Jakovec, who in his article noted that one of the most significant paradoxes of modern parliamentarism is the contradictory attitude of citizens to the bodies of popular representation that

they elect through general elections. On the one hand, parliaments and their representatives are formed by the people, but on the other hand, these bodies often face the lowest level of trust among other political institutions. Although parliaments are elected by popular vote, they may lose a significant share of popular support over time (*Frantsuz-Yakovets, 2018: 12*).

One of the reasons for the low efficiency of parliaments is also the problem of political fragmentation. In countries where there is no stable political majority, the formation of governments can take a long time, making it difficult to pass important legislative initiatives. This is the case in many European countries, where the growing number of political parties in parliament leads to difficult coalition negotiations. For example, the Netherlands and Belgium have repeatedly experienced long periods without governments, which has had a negative impact on political stability and social development.

In addition to a number of other pressing issues, we also highlight the problem of global climate change, which naturally and rightly poses new challenges to parliamentarism, requiring prompt and effective solutions. However, in the context of political disputes and national interests, legislative bodies are often unable to respond effectively to these threats.

For example, the issue of climate change remains a subject of ongoing debate in many countries. In the United States, despite scientific evidence confirming the dangers of climate change, political disputes between the Democratic and Republican parties often lead to the blocking of important legislative initiatives (*Ganghof, 2021*).

At the same time, another important problem is the lack of global coordination to overcome pandemics, as was the case during COVID-19. In the early stages of the pandemic, the legislatures of many countries were unprepared for such crisis situations. For example, in Italy and Spain, which were among the first epicenters of the outbreak, legislatures failed to quickly introduce measures to help fight the virus. This resulted in significant human and economic losses and showed how unprepared parliamentary systems are to deal with global crises without international cooperation and coordinated action.

To summarise, the challenges for parliamentarism in modern democracies are multifaceted and require adaptation to the changing realities of the globalised world. The answer to these challenges depends on the ability of parliaments to reform and adapt to new political conditions, while maintaining the basic principles of democratic governance.

5. Conclusions

We believe that parliamentarism is a key element of a democratic political system that provides mechanisms for people's representation and control over government activities. An analysis of international experience shows that parliamentarism can have different modifications, depending on the political traditions, historical conditions and socio-economic realities of each country. The success of parliamentary systems often depends on the ability of parliamentarians to maintain effective interaction between the legislative, executive and judicial branches of government, as well as on the level of public trust in these institutions. However, despite the achievements in the development of parliamentary systems, there are serious challenges related to globalisation, political polarisation and problems of effective international cooperation.

While parliamentarism continues to be an important element of the democratic governance model, current challenges such as climate change, pandemics and global geopolitical processes are challenging its ability to respond quickly and effectively to these threats. Political instability, lack of coordination between parliaments of different countries, and internal political

controversies can lead to delays in making necessary decisions. Therefore, for the further development of parliamentarism in a modern democracy, it is necessary to strengthen international cooperation, improve parliamentary oversight mechanisms and ensure greater transparency and accountability of legislatures.

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