



*Better parliaments,
stronger democracies.*

GLOBAL PARLIAMENTARY REPORT



*Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.*

The changing nature of parliamentary representation



Lead author: Greg Power

Assistant to the lead author: Rebecca A. Shoot

Translation: Sega Ndoye (French), Peritos Traductores, S.C. (Spanish), Houria Qissi (Arabic)

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Inter-Parliamentary Union
5 chemin du Pommier
CH-1218 Le Grand-Saconnex
Geneva, Switzerland
Telephone: +41 22 919 41 50
Fax: +41 22 919 41 60
E-mail: postbox@mail.ipu.org
www.ipu.org

United Nations Development Programme
Democratic Governance Group
Bureau for Development Policy
304 East 45th Street, 10th Floor
New York, NY, 10017, USA
Telephone: +1 (212) 906 5000
Fax: +1 (212) 906 5857
www.undp.org

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About the Lead Author

Greg Power is a Director of social purpose company Global Partners & Associates (GPA), and a parliamentary specialist who has worked on projects to support the development of legislative institutions and political parties in the Middle East, Africa and the Balkans. He has published widely on parliamentary and party development, most recently these have included *The Challenges of Political Programming: International Assistance to Parties and Parliaments* (2011, International IDEA), and *The Politics of Parliamentary Strengthening: Understanding Incentives and Institutional Behaviour in Parliamentary Support* (WFD/GPA, 2011). He has provided strategic advice, analysis and programme evaluation for a variety of agencies including DANIDA, FCO, WFD and International IDEA. Between 2001 and 2005 he was special adviser to Rt Hon Robin Cook MP and then Rt Hon Peter Hain MP, as Leaders of the United Kingdom House of Commons on issues of parliamentary reform and wider democratic renewal. Prior to this he was Director of the Parliament and Government Programme at the Hansard Society. He is a Visiting Fellow at Hull University's Centre for Legislative Studies.

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AFLI	Africa Leadership Institute
ANC	African National Congress
CDC	Constituency development committees
CDF	Constituency development funds
CSO	Civil society organization
GNI	Gross national income
IDEA	International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance
ICT	Information and communication technology
IPD	Institute for Parliamentary Democracy (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)
IPU	Inter-Parliamentary Union
LAMP	Legislative Assistance to Members of Parliament programme
LDC	Least Developed Countries
MP	Member of Parliament
MTU	Mobile Training Units
NDI	National Democratic Institute for International Affairs
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PAC	Public accounts committee
PCS	Parliamentary call system
PILDAT	Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency
PMO	Parliamentary monitoring organization
PPP	Purchasing Power Parity
PR	Proportional representation
STV	Single Transferable Vote
TLC	Thematic legislative communities
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WBI	World Bank Institute

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FOREWORD: UNDP

Parliaments are the indispensable institutions of representative democracies around the world. Whatever their country-specific rules, their role remains the same: to represent the people and ensure that public policy is informed by the citizens on whose lives they impact.

Effective parliaments shape policies and laws which respond to the needs of citizens, and support sustainable and equitable development.

For parliaments to be truly representative, elections must be free and fair. Citizens must have access to information about parliamentary proceedings, legislation, and policy, and be able to engage in continual dialogue with parliamentarians.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) are proud to present this first ever Global Parliamentary Report. It focuses on the relationship between parliaments and citizens. The report is the result of extensive research, drawing on interviews with parliamentarians, and on inputs provided by parliaments. The report's findings highlight the diversity of parliamentary systems, reflecting countries' different historical and political contexts. UNDP is grateful to all the parliamentarians, parliamentary staff, experts, and other individuals who supported the research process.

While the report cannot provide an exhaustive review of all the ways in which parliaments connect with citizens worldwide, it does offer a broad assessment of current practices, innovative practices, and some of the main drivers of change expected to affect parliaments in the foreseeable future. It offers politicians, experts, and citizens information on what has been effective in different parts of the world, without promoting a specific parliamentary system.

While the political context of each country is unique, parliaments do face common challenges, including how best to consult citizens and keep them informed about parliamentary deliberations. We hope that this report will stimulate debate on how to perform these functions well, and inspire reform in law-making and oversight through enhanced exchanges with citizens.

Representative and effective parliaments can help advance inclusive and sustainable human development, and so improve people's lives. This report is dedicated to all parliamentarians, policymakers, and individuals who strive to do that through their work.



Helen Clark

Administrator

United Nations Development Programme

FOREWORD: IPU

Parliament is unique. It is made up of men and women who have been elected to represent the people. They adopt laws and hold the government to account. Parliament is therefore the central institution of democracy and constitutes an expression of the very sovereignty of each nation.

Parliament is a political institution. It is a place for political, and often confrontational, debate. But it is also a place where, at the end of the day, national policies are forged and conflicts in society are resolved through dialogue and compromise.

Parliament is a complex institution. It functions at different levels and many actors influence what it does. Members of parliament, the Speaker and leadership, political parties and groups, Secretaries General, clerks and administration all play a part in shaping its work.

No two parliaments are the same. They differ in form, role and functioning. They are shaped by the history and culture of each individual country. Yet they all share the same ambition: to give people a voice in the management of public affairs.

Parliament is the business of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. The IPU brings together almost all parliaments in the world and devotes time, energy and resources to study the parliamentary institution. It develops principles and criteria for democratic parliaments and tools to assess their performance. It builds capacity in parliaments and helps them to strengthen and modernize the institution.

This first ever Global Parliamentary Report constitutes the next logical step in IPU's quest to bring greater focus, awareness and debate around the parliamentary institution. It focuses on major challenges that they face in today's world.

The Report is a joint endeavour of the IPU and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). It draws inspiration from the contributions of many parliaments, parliamentarians, researchers and experts. The IPU is grateful to all of them for their enthusiastic help and support in producing this publication.

The Report turns the spotlight on the pivotal relationship between people and parliament. It analyses changes in citizens' expectations of parliament. It shows how parliaments are responding to those changes. It sets out issues to be surmounted and gives parliamentarians, policy-makers and citizens fresh ideas about how parliament can function more effectively.

Parliament is a time-honoured institution. Many parliaments can trace their roots back to several centuries past. All parliaments need to keep in tune with the times. And that is what this report is all about - helping to place parliaments firmly in the 21st century.



Anders B. Johnsson
Secretary General
Inter-Parliamentary Union

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The focus of this first Global Parliamentary Report is the evolving relationship between citizens and parliaments.¹ The intention is to analyse how citizens' expectations are changing, and how parliaments, politicians and parliamentary staff are responding.

There are three dominant pressures facing parliaments. Each is playing itself out in different ways and at different speeds in specific countries and regions. But there are common themes in the greater public desire for:

- *information and influence in parliamentary work*
- *accountability and responsiveness to public concerns*
- *service and delivery to meet citizens' needs*

The report uses the experience of institutions and individual politicians to illustrate the challenges and the variety of initiatives aimed at enhancing parliamentary representation in different parts of the world. It aims to help parliaments and politicians understand the pressures better, identify some of the tensions that they need to manage and provide examples of good practice which might offer insight, inspiration or emulation.

In 2012 parliaments are more prevalent than ever before. 190 of 193 countries now have some form of functioning parliament, accounting for over 46,000 representatives. The existence of a parliament is not synonymous with democracy, but democracy cannot exist without a parliament. Although varying hugely in power, influence and function, almost every political system now has some form of representative assembly.

1 NB: Throughout the report, we use the term 'parliament' as a generic label to cover the range of legislative and representative bodies that exist throughout the world. We recognize, though, that the term obscures a huge variety of bodies that differ significantly from one another in their roles, make-up, power and function.

Parliaments provide a link between the concerns of the people and those that govern. The existence of a public forum to articulate citizens' concerns is a prerequisite for the legitimacy of government. A global opinion poll in 2008 found that 85 percent of people believed that the 'will of the people should be the basis of the authority of government'.²

The events of the Arab Spring since the beginning of 2011 reinforce the central role of parliaments in the quest for greater political voice and democracy. In countries such as Egypt and Tunisia, the role and powers of the parliament have been pivotal in the discussions about the shape of the post-revolution state. Similarly, in countries such as Yemen, Jordan and Oman, the promise of genuine legislative and oversight powers for the parliament are key reforms in response to public demands. Parliaments are a key element in, and a symbol of, the creation of a representative state.

Public pressure on parliaments is greater than ever before. The growth in the size of government has increased the responsibilities of parliaments to scrutinize and call to account. The development of communication technology and saturation media coverage of politics has increased the visibility of parliaments and politicians. The expansion in the number of parliaments around the globe has been accompanied by increased public expectations of what they can and should deliver.

In many parts of the world there are fundamental questions about the effectiveness of parliaments in holding government to account. The representative role of political parties – central to parliamentary functioning – is, in many countries, weak and poorly rooted in society. With the flourishing of civil society and new forms

2 World Public Opinion.org, 2008.

of participatory democracy, citizens have many routes to representation and redress. Where parliaments were once the single most important way to articulate public concern, now they are competing with a variety of alternatives.

Yet parliaments have never been more vital. Parliaments remain the only bodies that exist specifically to collate and articulate the interests of the nation as a whole. There are strategic roles that parliaments alone can perform, such as making and repealing laws, and calling government to account. The challenge facing parliaments in all parts of the world is one of continual evolution, ensuring that they respond strategically and effectively to changing public demands for representation.

Analysis

1. Genuine public influence over the parliamentary deliberations is limited. The promise of greater influence must result in greater influence.

Chapter II examines the wide range of initiatives being employed by parliamentary institutions to improve information, understanding, and engagement with the public. These measures tend to fall into two broad categories, and seek to:

- provide more information and improve public understanding of parliament
- consult and involve the public more in the work of parliament

Parliaments are using increasingly inventive techniques to provide more access and information, from Open Days and Visitors' Centres to parliamentary broadcasting and websites. And they are finding an audience - demand and supply appear to be increasing exponentially. Yet, there is, to date, little sense of how much such strategies have improved the public perception of parliament, enhanced understanding or improved legislative outcomes.

Even where parliaments seek to assess their effectiveness, the problems they are trying to address (public understanding, trust and perceptions of parliament) have multiple causes. A parliamentary strategy is likely to have only a partial effect and separating the impact of a successful outreach strategy from all other possible causes is difficult. Nevertheless, the absence

of clear, identifiable objectives against which to judge such programmes remains a continuing problem.

Many parliaments have established mechanisms for public consultation - primarily driven by their professional staff and administrative service (invariably with the backing of politicians). But, the implications of greater consultation are overtly political. While the organization of a consultation exercise may be administrative, the impact of that consultation and how far it influences policy is ultimately a decision for politicians.

The danger for many parliaments is that the promise of greater influence heightens public expectations. Failure to meet these expectations undermines faith in the parliamentary process. In short, the promise of greater influence must result in greater influence.

2. Politicians are obliged to account publicly for their actions more regularly and routinely.

Chapter III examines how public pressures for more accountability are manifesting themselves in the representative role of a parliamentarian. Debates about the 'proper' representative role of the MP go back centuries, but there are few definitive answers and little agreement among either politicians or citizens. Being an elected politician remains one of the few professions for which there is no job description, and there are few guides as to whom, how or what a politician should represent.

That political freedom to decide representative styles has been seen as a strength, reflecting flexibility and responsiveness, and a dangerous source of public uncertainty about political roles. The report identifies three separate trends, whose collective impact is gradually restricting the traditionally broad parliamentary mandate.

a) The role of political parties is changing in many regions of the world. Through parliamentary groups, political parties are the organizing blocs around which parliamentary activity is built. Parties' effectiveness largely determines the effectiveness of any parliament. In democracies old and new, parties are increasingly seen as impediments to effective representation, rather than facilitators of it. The challenge for parties and politicians is to demonstrate that they are responsive to public attitudes yet retain enough cohesion to offer the collective

representation on which parliaments are based. Finding that balance between public responsiveness and party coherence continues to elude many parliaments.

b) A number of institutional changes are limiting the scope within which politicians can operate.

Reforms tend to fall into three broad categories, which aim to:

- **limit the length of the parliamentary mandate**, either by preventing re-election or making politicians subject to public votes of confidence, or recall
- **remove potential conflicts of interest** by confining extra-parliamentary activities, particularly outside earnings, and identifying incompatibilities with public office
- **introduce codes of conduct**, which aim to set standards for parliamentary behaviour and further regulate the behaviour of MPs

The motive behind such initiatives is to make MPs more accountable to those who elect them. In many cases, they are popular responses to issues of low political trust. It is perhaps inevitable that they tend to involve either greater regulation of, or restrictions on, what MPs do. Although MPs are accountable to the public at elections, the tenor of these reforms suggests that the electorate increasingly regards the ballot box as an insufficient mechanism of control.

c) The desire for greater public accountability from politicians is driving the growth of a new breed of parliamentary monitoring organization (PMO). PMOs exist to monitor and often to rate the performance of MPs inside and outside parliament. More than 191 such organizations exist worldwide, monitoring the activities of over 80 national parliaments. Their emergence and growth suggest that the public welcomes the existence of intermediary organizations that can decipher, summarize and assess their political representatives.

This drive toward more openness, transparency and independent external validation cuts across many of the traditional ideas about political representation. Many politicians are wary of such developments, particularly the public commentary role being played by PMOs. PMOs undoubtedly present challenges, but

also offer opportunities, provided that parliaments recognize their potential to engage the public.

3. Constituency service is an accepted and expected part of the job and appears to be growing in volume, content and complexity

Chapter IV looks at the growth of constituency service, and public expectations of what politicians should deliver for citizens and their local area. Constituency service is now seen as central to ideas of parliamentary representation by the public and politicians. The challenge for parliaments and politicians is to respond strategically to public expectations in a way that reinforces their role in finding collective solutions to citizens' concerns.

Constituency service covers a huge range of potential activity, but can be broadly grouped into four categories:

- **support to individuals**, which ranges from helping to find work or opportunities, to more clientelistic patterns of behaviour designed to buy support
- **grievance-chasing**, in which citizens have a particular problem with a government service, welfare entitlement or bureaucracy, with the MP acting as an influential friend to help resolve such problems
- **policy responsiveness**, in which voters try to seek or to influence an MP's opinion on particular issues, especially votes in parliament
- **project work**, in which politicians seek funds for the development of the area or the promotion of local economy, with MPs using their position to secure government funding.

Voter expectations of constituency service appear to differ in developing countries and more affluent states. In the former, the expectation is that MPs will provide materially for their voters and act as the principal development agents for the area, whereas in the latter, citizens tend to want MPs to intercede in grievances and, sometimes, to find government funds for the local area. These representative roles have developed in direct response to the needs of citizens; several politicians commented that they felt obliged to make provision because people had no one else to turn to.

Public demand for constituency service is though only part of the equation. Supply has also increased for two main reasons:

- **Politicians enjoy the work.** Numerous MPs suggested that it was the one area where they could have a tangible and positive effect on people's lives.
- **It has a perceived electoral benefit.** Although evidence is patchy, MPs believe that it can generate a sizeable vote. Polls around the world suggest that voters are much more likely to judge MPs on their ability to deliver at the local level rather than on legislation or oversight.

In response to the increasing volumes of work – and pressure from MPs – the official resources devoted to supporting these efforts are increasing. Most obviously, the number of countries with constituency development funds (CDFs) has increased dramatically in the last decade, providing a locally administered pool of money designed to support the community and promote economic development.

In many ways, CDFs are an obvious response to local need and often specifically seek to empower the MP in that role. However, here as elsewhere, the obvious response may not necessarily be the best in the long run. Concerns exist about the financial accountability and effectiveness of such funds, about whether they simply reinforce existing patronage networks and encourage corruption and about whether they make MPs into executive decision-makers, and thus detract from their parliamentary roles in law-making and oversight.

Parliaments and individual MPs need to develop much more strategic responses to the growth of constituency service. Given the level of public expectation and the attachment to the role amongst politicians, constituency service will not disappear. It is, and will remain, an essential element of parliamentary representation. But it needs to be done better, and in a way that reinforces the central roles of parliament. The challenge for parliamentary systems around the world is not simply to provide more resources, but to channel constituency work by moving from:

- the specific to the strategic: finding policy solutions to common problems rather than dealing with each case on its own

- the individual to the collective: finding responses that benefit a number of people rather than individuals
- the local to the national: finding ways of bringing constituency expertise into the parliamentary and policy process much more systematically.

Conclusions

Parliaments' resilience reflects their ability to adapt and evolve to public expectations. Parliamentary change tends to be haphazard and unpredictable, the result of political negotiation and compromise. In many cases, the ability to implement the necessary changes is hampered by a lack of co-ordination, strategy and organization. Rather, change has tended to happen in an ad hoc fashion, as a series of disparate measures rather than guided by a set of overarching objectives. This may be inevitable. The nature of parliamentary institutions may make it impossible to devise and implement an all-encompassing strategy.

However, parliaments need a much more strategic analysis of the causes and sources of pressure for change. Although many parliaments believe they are doing as much as they can to improve their organization and consult with citizens, their responses to public expectations are sometimes constrained by gaps in their own analysis of the factors driving reform. A fuller analysis is likely to give parliaments a much better understanding of the causes and consequences of public opinion. Perhaps more importantly, it would provide a realistic assessment of what is achievable from within parliament, identify where external support is needed and establish a measure against which success could be judged.

Parliamentary efforts to improve the relationship with voters need to be based on an understanding of how the role of the individual representative is changing. The MP is the single most important point of contact with parliament for the vast majority of voters. The way that the MP's role is perceived by the public will do much to determine public attitudes toward parliament and politicians. Institutional reforms will, in turn and often inadvertently, reinforce or shape that perception. A more strategic analysis is needed to harness some of the

pressures for change into reforms that reinforce the roles of parliamentary representatives and of parliament itself in the public mind.

Strategic responses could take many forms, but, from this report, three specific challenges stand out:

- **Reforms need to reinforce the role of the representative and improve public understanding of what MPs do, inside and outside parliament.** For example, the provision of greater resources to MPs for constituency work may simply increase public expectations of what MPs will do locally. Demand may constantly outstrip supply unless the additional resources are accompanied by a strategic change in the approach to the work. Responses should seek to shape how constituency work is done in order to reduce the burden and influence public understanding of the MP's representative role.
- **Reforms designed to improve public understanding and political accountability need to ensure that they strengthen the role of parliament rather than undermine it.** Successive reforms have worked gradually to restrict the scope of the parliamentary mandate, often for very good reasons, and usually in response to public pressure. However, the challenge is to balance calls for greater accountability with ensuring that MPs have enough scope to reflect, deliberate and decide in the national interest. The public expectation is that MPs should account more regularly for their activity, but MPs are elected to act on behalf of voters and reforms need to reinforce that sense of delegated authority.
- **Parliaments need to collaborate more fully with external organizations to strengthen**

links with the public. The relationship between parliaments and citizens can hardly be as direct and straightforward as it should be in theory. There are now a host of mediating bodies that summarize and interpret parliamentary activity, broadcast parliamentary proceedings and rate the performance of individual MPs. In short, the process of parliamentary representation is more complex and intertwined with outside organizations than ever before. Such organizations are potential allies in reinforcing the central roles of parliament and drawing the attention of a much wider audience to parliament.

Compared with 50 years ago, parliaments are, generally, more open and accessible, more professionally-run, better-resourced and more representative. This is crucial for democracy. But citizens are, rightly, more demanding of those institutions and expect higher standards of probity, accountability and conduct than ever before in the institutions' history. Although opinion polls suggest that people have ambiguous views about parliaments, the volume of correspondence, contact and requests for help is increasing rather than decreasing. There are many roles that parliament alone can perform and individuals seem to recognize the significance of the institution. Parliaments are more vital than ever before to the process of political representation.

This resilience is partly due to the fact that parliaments have continued to evolve and adapt. The landscape in which they operate is now more complex and faster moving than ever before. The challenge is to keep up with the public by displaying responsiveness and resilience and continually renew that relationship with citizens. This will be a permanent process of evolution, but the signs are that most parliaments are alive to the size of the task.



PEOPLE AND PARLIAMENTS

1.1 The Evolving Relationship Between People and Parliaments

The focus of this first Global Parliamentary Report is the evolving relationship between citizens and parliaments.³ Its intention is to highlight the main characteristics of that relationship, how citizens' expectations are changing, and how parliaments, politicians and parliamentary staff are responding. Public pressure on such institutions at the beginning of the 21st century appears to be greater than ever before. The growth in government has increased the responsibilities of parliaments to scrutinize and call to account. Communication technology and saturation media coverage of politics have increased the visibility of parliaments and politicians. The expansion in the number of parliaments

3 NB: Throughout the report, we use the term 'parliament' as a generic label to cover the range of legislative and representative bodies that exist throughout the world. We recognize, however, that the term obscures a huge variety of bodies that differ significantly from one another in terms of their roles, make-up, power and function.

around the globe appears to have been accompanied by increased public expectations of what they can and should deliver. In addition, in many parts of the world, there are fundamental questions about the effectiveness of parliaments in holding government to account. The representative role of political parties – central to parliamentary functioning – is, in many countries, weak and poorly rooted in society. And through new technologies and forms of participatory democracy, citizens have many routes to representation and redress. Where parliaments were once the single most important way in which to articulate public concern, now they are competing with a variety of alternatives. The challenge for the development of parliaments around the world is to understand the nature of these changes, determine what they mean for parliamentary representation and identify ways of adapting to what seems to be an ever-quicken pace of change.

Each of these pressures is playing itself out in different ways and at different speeds in specific countries and regions. The report does not claim to provide a

definitive assessment of the state of parliaments, but rather uses the experience of institutions and individual politicians to illustrate the challenges and the variety of initiatives aimed at enhancing parliamentary representation in different parts of the world. Subsequent chapters rely on the analysis, examples and stories from politicians and parliamentary staff to highlight some of the challenges that these institutions are facing in reaching out to and engaging the public. In particular, we focus on the innovations and reforms that parliaments have implemented and the ways in which public expectations have shaped their activity and that of individual MPs. Much of the content is therefore deliberately anecdotal, but we hope the examples illustrate much wider points about the performance and position of parliamentary bodies.

Although they differ, all parliaments exist to provide a link between the government and the people. It is the quality of this link with citizens that is central to the report and to how parliaments are responding to the needs of an ever more demanding society. The report argues that parliaments need to understand the pressures better in order to develop more strategic responses to the challenges they face. It seeks to identify some of the tensions that they need to manage and offer examples of good practice that might offer insight or inspiration or provide the basis for emulation. In this way, this report develops the analysis of the criteria for democratic parliaments – to be representative, transparent, accessible, accountable and effective – set out in the 2006 publication *Parliament and democracy in the twenty-first century*.⁴

This first chapter examines the way in which parliaments have evolved from traditional gatherings to today's institutions and highlights the main issues facing that continuing evolution. It assesses public attitudes to parliaments and suggests that these institutions face continuing challenges in convincing the public of their efficacy and their ability to perform distinct roles. It concludes by arguing that, despite increased alternative opportunities for representation, parliaments are performing roles that are more vital today than at any time in their history.

4 Inter-Parliamentary Union 2006: 10-11

1.1.1. The Quest for Voice: The Popularity of Parliamentary Representation

During the second half of the 20th century, the number of parliaments increased dramatically throughout the world. According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), 190 of 193 countries now have some form of functioning parliamentary institution, accounting for over 46,000 representatives. However, in the Economist Intelligence Unit's most recent assessment, only around 45 percent of the world's countries qualify as 'full' or 'flawed' democracies, with another 20 percent described as 'hybrid' regimes.⁵ In other words, the presence of a parliamentary institution is not synonymous with democracy and suggests that these parliaments vary in significance according to political context. Yet their presence appears to be essential to the idea of a state's legitimacy and its ability to represent the public interest. In all of these contexts, the institutions provide the link between the concerns of the populace and those that govern. Parliaments vary hugely in terms of their power, influence and function, but the existence of a public forum to articulate those concerns appears to be a prerequisite for the legitimacy of government.

190 of 193 countries now have some form of functioning parliamentary institution, accounting for over 46,000 representatives.

Today's parliaments have their roots in a variety of contexts, reflecting the tendency of all societies to create bodies to discuss, deliberate and represent the interests of the people. Such gatherings can be found in every society, from the *majlis* throughout the Arab world to the *panchayat* in India. Across Africa, tribal gatherings took a variety in forms and roles and, in Afghanistan, the *jirgas* were used to resolve conflict and act as a channel of wider communication. This desire to gather, talk and

5 Economist Intelligence Unit 2011.

represent is reflected in the institutional names. Around a quarter of such bodies use the term 'parliament', deriving from the French *parler*, to speak, either as a generic designation for parliament or as the name of one of its chambers. Terminology indicating 'gathering' or 'assembly' is also prevalent, with over 40 percent of legislatures using variants such as congress, *Diet* (Japan), *Knesset* (Israel), *Skupstina* in several Balkan countries, or *Majlis* in many Arabic legislatures. In the Nordic tradition, *Riksdagen* (e.g., Finland, Sweden) can be translated as 'meeting of the realm' and Icelandic *Athingi*, Danish *Folketinget* and the Norwegian *Storting* as 'people's gathering' or 'gathering of all'.

A 2008 global poll emphasized the importance attached to representation as a governing worldwide principle, finding that 85 percent of people believed that the 'will of the people should be the basis of the authority of government' and 84 percent felt that government leaders should be elected by universal suffrage.⁶

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If such sentiments needed reinforcing, the events of the Arab Spring at the beginning of 2011 highlighted the centrality of representative parliaments to the quest for political voice and greater democracy. In countries such as Egypt and Tunisia, the role and powers of the parliament are pivotal in discussions about the shape of the post-revolution state. Similarly, in countries such as Yemen, Jordan and Oman, the promise of genuine legislative and oversight powers for the parliament are key reforms designed to respond to public demands. In short, parliaments appear to be both a symbol of, and a key element in, the creation of a representative state.

6 World Public Opinion.org 2008.

1.1.2. Institutional Structures: Form Following Function

Although every society reflects the central role of representation as an organizing principle, the structures of today's parliamentary institutions have their roots in the European parliaments of the medieval era. The eight or nine centuries since that first incarnation have bred a Darwinian diversity of institutions – all with the same common roots and undoubtedly of the same species, but with obvious distinctions that set them apart from one another.

The Icelandic *Athingi*, considered by many to be the first national parliament, dates from 930 CE, when it first served as a forum for local leaders to meet. The British House of Commons (originally 'communes') has its origins in the 13th century, when its principal role was to bring together nobles to discuss the state of the realm and approve the supply of money to the king from local communities.⁷ The institutions that developed across Europe in time bore three similar traits, namely: first, providing or withholding consent for the monarch; second, representing various communities within the nation; and third, using the power of the purse to bargain with the monarch and petition for the redress of individuals' grievances.

Such institutions were exported to various parts of the world through the colonial powers of Europe. The transformation of the medieval institution into a democratic one began in the USA in the 17th and 18th centuries. The founding fathers who built assemblies in each of the 13 colonies had sought to distinguish themselves from the British experience and, by the time of independence, were operating state legislatures that existed separately from the executive and were, to varying degrees, asserting their own law-making powers. In time, this pattern of institutional development would have a significant effect on how institutions developed in Central and South America, predominantly along the congressional model.

In Europe, by contrast, the parliaments evolved alongside government, with powers that were particularly defined in relation to the monarch. The result was often a complex fusion of executive and legislative powers within the parliamentary institution, where political

7 Norton 2005:16-7.

power was gradually linked with the development of political parties following the expansion of the franchise. This model informed the development of representative institutions throughout the empires of the European nations in Africa, Asia and the Middle East.

This historical legacy is still being felt in every corner of the world, in parliaments of all ages. The evolution of the parliaments in the ex-communist states of Eastern Europe in the 1990s, for example, was an amalgam of their own long history (for example, Poland's parliament enjoyed significant powers until the end of the 18th century) and the Soviet institutional legacy, but was also strongly influenced by the German model, at that time a relatively recent and local example of transition from dictatorship to democracy.

The parliaments of Africa and the Indian subcontinent were (and to some extent still are) shaped by the colonial legacy. The British practice of establishing a legislative council in its colonies of the time was not intended to give legislative power, but rather to create an appointed body that would provide a feedback mechanism for the British administration. Although the Kenyan Legislative Council was established in 1906, the first Kenyan African delegate was not appointed until 1944. Yet institutions like these provided the basis from which parliamentary bodies developed after independence in various African states. Although some former British colonies adopted presidential systems, they also created Westminster-style parliamentary systems, which used first-past-the-post elections, limited parliamentary influence over policy and the budget and possessed a weak committee system.⁸ The parliaments of Australia, Canada and New Zealand were likewise shaped by their colonial legacy and their achievement of responsible government served as models elsewhere in the world. The tradition of the centralized state meant that colonial legislative bodies were less well-developed in Francophone Africa and non-existent in Lusophone Africa; but again, following independence, those states borrowed from the practice of the French, Belgian and Portuguese traditions.

The traditional roles of these institutions have evolved and developed over time in response to the demands of the societies they exist to represent. Parliaments that

started as purely consultative bodies began to assert their legislative powers and increasingly played a role in the governance of their countries. And as they became increasingly institutionalized, their members developed ways of using their existing power to accrete additional roles and greater authority. This, in turn, has affected their composition, powers, functions and rules of procedure.

Although they may all share the same common root, at the start of the 21st century, the parliamentary species is both ubiquitous and extremely diverse in size, powers and function. For example, China's National People's Congress, with 3,000 members, is the world's largest, followed by the United Kingdom's Parliament, with over 1,400 members in both houses. The ratio of population to representative also varies. At one end is India with 1.5 million people per parliamentarian, the United States with around 590,000, and Bangladesh at 470,000. At the other extreme, the parliament of Tuvalu has a mere 15 members of parliament (MPs), each representing around 667 people, and in San Marino, there is one MP per 517 people.

In terms of power and influence, the parliamentary species incorporates purely advisory bodies, such as Saudi Arabia's *Majlis A'Shura*, which was established in 1993 as a wholly-appointed consultative institution with little or no legislative or oversight power, exists effectively to advise the monarch, and can be dissolved at any point. It includes Soviet-style systems, such as the National Assembly of Viet Nam, which meets in plenary for only two one-month sessions per year and where authority, legislation and personnel predominantly derive from the Communist Party. Elsewhere, it has thrown up unique features. For example, in the Mexican Congress, members can serve only one term and cannot be re-elected, immediately curtailing the institution's capacity. At the other end of the spectrum, it includes bodies such as the German Bundestag or the American Congress, which, because of their formidable capacity and power, are the focus of those nations' political lives. The US also has by far the biggest parliamentary budget (\$5.12 billion), followed by those of Japan (\$1.71 billion) and France (\$1.17 billion).⁹

8 Barkan 2009:9-12.

9 NB: If calculated in terms of purchasing power parity (PPP) dollars, the three largest budgets are those of the US (\$5.12 billion), Nigerian (\$2.04 billion) and Japanese (\$1.35 billion) parliaments.

In a report of this length, it is not possible to provide a detailed or exhaustive analysis of this huge variety or provide a definitive assessment of the state of parliaments globally (we hope that such detail will be provided by subsequent Global Parliamentary Reports). Rather, the report is built around the central theme of how the relationship between parliaments and citizens is changing and evolving.

The representation of people and their interests is the basis of all parliamentary systems. Parliaments generally provide a forum for the articulation of public opinion [...].

The representation of people and their interests is the basis of all parliamentary systems. Parliaments generally provide a forum for the articulation of public opinion, a transmission mechanism for feedback to the executive on public policy and a means by which government can explain and communicate its actions. They are thus the single most important representative institution in government and thus derive a large part of their legitimacy from the public's faith in their ability to perform certain key functions. The next section examines public attitudes to parliaments in different parts of the world and the challenges of continually evolving and adapting to public expectations.

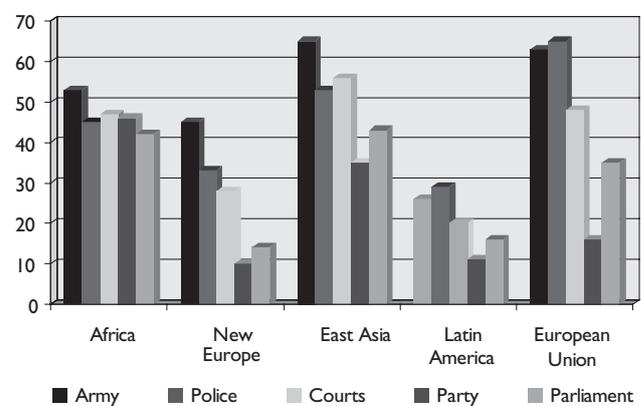
1.2. The Changing Landscape of Political Representation

1.2.1. Public Opinion and Parliaments

Recent analyses of parliaments around the world tend to highlight the fact that they are frequently among the least popular national institutions, with only political parties recording lower levels of popular trust. Parliaments, as one eminent parliamentary analyst

puts it, are “puzzlingly unpopular”.¹⁰ Their proliferation has taken place at a time when the traditional roles of parliaments have never faced a wider set of challenges in securing public legitimacy and competing with an array of new and more direct forms of representation. Survey figures compiled by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) subsequently reproduced in the IPU's publication *Parliament and democracy in the twenty-first century* showed that, in various regions of the world, parliaments were less trusted than other institutions of government.

Trust in National Institutions: Regional Averages



Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union (2006), *Parliament and democracy in the twenty-first century: A guide to good practice*, p. 110.

However, the figures mask huge variation within and between regions. In the established democracies of Europe and North America, support for the national legislative body has been waning for some time. Within the European Union, trust in parliaments now stands at less than a third, while, in the US, trust in Congress hit its lowest ever point in November 2011, registering a mere 9 percent – a decline from 11 percent two months earlier and “the first time approval ratings have been in single digits since CBS News and The New York Times began asking the question more than three decades ago”.¹¹ In the newer democracies of Eastern Europe, there are equally low levels of trust – in Latvia and Lithuania, in 2009, trust in the parliament sat at 11 percent and 8 percent, respectively.¹² However,

¹⁰ Loewenberg 2010.

¹¹ Social Capital Blog 2011.

¹² European Commission 2011.

within Western Europe, those rates of approval range from 46 percent in Germany to 21 percent in Spain, with signs that the recent financial crisis has further dented trust in parliaments rather than in governments *per se*.¹³ Of the then-EU candidate countries surveyed by the Eurobarometer in 2004, trust in parliament was at its lowest in Poland and Bulgaria, where just over 91 percent and 86 percent of respondents, respectively, reported that they “tend not to trust” in the institution. Conversely, at that time, the highest trust levels among candidate countries were those of Cyprus (79 percent) and Turkey (75 percent).¹⁴

In Latin America, the Latinobarometro Report in 2010 suggested that, across the region, the percentage of the population professing trust in parliaments averaged 34 percent. This is lower than the 36 percent approval recorded in 1997, but higher than the 17 percent approval found in 2003. Although the current rating is marginally higher than trust in the judiciary (32 percent) and significantly better than political parties (23 percent), trust in parliament has always lagged behind that for the church, television, government, private companies and armed forces in successive Latinobarometro polls. This again obviously hides national differences, with Uruguay at the top end enjoying an approval rating of 62 percent and Peru at the bottom with 14 percent. However, in general, it is fair to say that, in each of these countries, the parliament scores more poorly than other institutions of government.¹⁵

In the Arab world and East Asia, where, in many countries, democracy is less well-established, parliaments again score poorly by comparison with other institutions – a state of affairs that, at the time of writing, has not yet improved with the events of the Arab Spring. In Kuwait and Lebanon, for instance, over half of the population has little or no trust in parliament. In South Korea, parliaments came near the bottom of the rankings of trust in national institutions, with only political parties less trusted in South Korea.¹⁶

In Africa, the Afrobarometer surveys record a comparatively high level of trust in parliament at around 56 percent across the continent, but they also record high

levels of trust in other governing institutions, and this average masks possibly the widest regional variation. For example, trust in the Tanzanian Parliament sits at around 84 percent while, in Nigeria, it is 34.5 percent; in most (although not all) cases, though, trust in parliament is lower than other institutions of government, including the president, the electoral commission and the courts.¹⁷

Parliaments depend on public support. [...] It is important that people have faith in the parliamentary process.

The reasons for comparatively low levels of trust in parliaments may partly be explained by their role and the public understanding of that role. But that does not take away from the fact that, in order to maintain their legitimacy and centrality to the political process, parliaments depend on public support. Even if they do not like everything that parliaments do, people need to have faith in the parliamentary process. Parliamentary roles have evolved over decades, and in some instances, centuries, in order to stay relevant to the voters they exist to represent. Parliaments have changed their function, form and powers, and continue to do so. Furthermore, it appears that, in recent decades, the political landscape within which parliaments operate has changed significantly.

The next three sections look at separate trends that may be eroding parliaments’ traditional sources of legitimacy. First, in many parts of the world, there are fundamental questions about the effectiveness of parliaments in holding government to account. Second, parliamentary representation is a collective process and reliant on the role of political parties, but parties are weakly rooted or face declining popularity in many parts of the world. Third, partly in response to a more informed and demanding population, there is now a range of routes to representation and redress. Where parliaments were once the single most important way in which to articulate public concern, now they are competing with a variety of alternatives, including forms of direct democracy, consultation and regulation.

13 Ibid.

14 European Commission 2004.

15 Latinobarometro 2010.

16 World Values Survey, 5th Wave.

17 Afrobarometer, Round 4.

1.2.2. Parliamentary Performance – ‘Increasingly Significant’?

The upheaval in the Arab region since the start of 2011 has highlighted the traditional representation deficit in the Middle East and North Africa – a region that has long stood out for the feebleness of its parliaments. The revolutions have brought much expectation and optimism about the future for such bodies. Whereas all 22 members of the Arab League (including the as yet unconsolidated Palestinian Authority) boasted legislative bodies prior to 2011, most of those legislatures were subordinate to dominant executive branches – a fact that, while not peculiar to the Arab world, was nonetheless more evident there than in any other single region. Until recent events, as Ali Sawi notes in his geographical analysis commissioned for this report, “No single Arab parliament [had] succeeded in raising hope among the Arab public as the [primary] source of governing authority or as a key player in the domestic political arena .¹⁸ Even the Kuwaiti parliament, which has arguably been the liveliest and most voluble in the region, has struggled to have much impact in terms of oversight and scrutiny. Parliaments are frequently the executive’s scapegoat, earning public and media ire for governmental failings. But neither did these parliaments help themselves, as they often remained silent on some of the most important issues in these societies, such as unemployment or corruption.

This level of impotence does not go unnoticed, and the public has largely failed to engage in the semblance of representation they have been offered. This sense of futility has been reinforced by traditional patrimonial and tribal cultures, widespread illiteracy, and a dearth of reliable information on the makeup, performance, and daily activities of parliaments in the region. These factors have exacerbated misunderstanding and bred suspicion among the wider public. It is unclear, at the start of 2012, how the revolutions and subsequent parliamentary elections in the region will develop. But, given that calls for a powerful and effective parliament were at the heart of the reform movements, there will be significant pressure on those institutions to live up to public expectations.

In sub-Saharan Africa, parliaments have traditionally also underperformed. Joel Barkan, in a wide-ranging

study of legislative development in Africa, suggests that the situation is changing, with parliaments evolving out of their role as rubber stamps for the executive and becoming more effective as watchdogs, policy-

In the (Arab) region, [...] calls for a powerful and effective parliament were at the heart of the reform movements (in 2011).

makers and representatives.¹⁹ The parliaments themselves have shown a capacity to reform and engage more fully with voters in recent years. The Kenyan Parliament, for example, has extended its role in overseeing the government, scrutinizing the budget and strengthening its committee system. The Tanzanian Parliament was able to overhaul its rules of procedure and secure far greater institutional independence from the executive. In Zambia, meanwhile, the parliament enacted a programme of reforms to improve legislative processes, establish constituency offices and increase opportunities for individual MPs to introduce legislation. In general, parliaments seem to be making better use of their constitutional powers, but Barkan’s conclusion that they are “still weak, but increasingly significant” highlights both the possibilities and the continuing difficulties that they face.²⁰ Despite these changes, each of the parliaments continues to struggle to assert its authority over its government and, in many parts of Africa, politicians struggle to generate public trust. In every country in the region save one (Cape Verde), at least 15 percent of respondents report that “most MPs are corrupt”. A plurality of respondents to the most recent Afrobarometer survey (41.5 percent) testified that “some MPs are corrupt”.²¹ This undoubtedly also reflects the patchy record of parliamentary representation on the continent, where the benefits of multi-party democracy may not be convincing to many electorates. In short, parliaments have failed both to live up to the expectations that came with

¹⁸ Sawi 2011.

¹⁹ Barkan 2009.

²⁰ Ibid., 2

²¹ Afrobarometer 94.

the transition to democracy and to deliver tangible improvements in social and economic conditions.²²

In almost every parliament around the world, there is a gap between the powers that a parliament has to hold the executive to account and the willingness or ability of politicians to use them.

Similar traits are found in the Pacific region, where, although parliamentary democracy is well established and widely accepted, the parliaments themselves seem to be getting weaker rather than stronger. As Nakamura et al. note, “rather than becoming genuine institutions of countervailing power, the reverse has occurred. Parliaments in the Pacific have become marginalised as institutional players while members have benefited as individuals.”²³ At the institutional level, parliaments derive support and legitimacy from being a focus of aspirations for an effective and democratic state, but a high turnover of parliamentarians at each election and pressure on MPs to deliver goods and services to voters has bred short-termism and instability. The authors highlight the particular problem in Melanesia, where parliaments are constrained by three related and mutually reinforcing problems: “a highly fluid and unstable political system manifest in weak parties, personalised politics, and intense competition; overwhelming dominance of parliament by the executive; and widespread perception of corruption.”²⁴

These problems are not confined to the three regions described above. Many parliaments still lack the necessary formal authority to scrutinize legislation and hold government to account. And, even where parliaments do have significant formal powers, parliaments could be performing their functions better. In almost every parliament around the world, there is a gap between powers

that a parliament has to hold the executive to account and the willingness or ability of politicians to use them. Public opinion about the older parliaments in North America and Western Europe highlights the widespread belief that the bodies are not as effective as they should be, and the public seems to be permanently disappointed with the ability of parliaments to fulfil their potential.

However, although there are many inherent weaknesses in many parliamentary bodies in almost every part of the world, this has to be viewed within a broader historical context. Compared with 50 years ago, the world of parliamentary bodies is almost unrecognizable. The tendency to assume that there was once a ‘golden era’ of parliamentary democracy is belied by the facts. It is undoubtedly the case that, in key respects, parliaments can do much more to become more transparent, open and effective, but, by the same token, they have never been subject to more scrutiny by the media and the public.

It is often overlooked that the organizational and administrative operation of almost every parliament is more professional now than in the 1960s. Older institutions such as the British and French parliaments and the US Congress have overhauled their internal procedures, their budgets and their oversight mechanisms in recent decades. There are undoubtedly weaknesses among the parliaments established during the second and third waves of democratization, but these parliaments are generally improving their internal organization and procedures and defining their role. Over the past fifty years, many parliaments have enacted reforms designed to improve legislative scrutiny and executive oversight, and established their financial and statutory independence from governments. In short, there is much to do, but viewed in the longer term, globally parliaments are better resourced, more professional and more representative than ever before. However, maintaining support and legitimacy will depend on how parliaments seek to meet (or manage) public expectations in the coming decades.

1.2.3. Political Parties and Citizens: Collective Representation and the Individual

One of the key factors determining parliamentary performance in every country is the representative quality and effectiveness of its political parties. Political parties perform vital functions in any representative

22 Hamilton and Stapenhurst 2011.

23 Nakamura, Clements and Hegarty 2011:8.

24 Ibid.

democracy, providing the principal vehicles for the representation of citizens' interests, framing political choices at elections and forming the basis for government. Although democracy is continually evolving, it is still difficult to envisage a democracy with broad-based representation of citizens' interests without political parties or organizations very much like them.²⁵

Political parties also perform roles essential to parliamentary representation. In the first instance, they usually provide MPs with the principal route to re-election and the means to a political career. MPs look primarily to their political party for advice and guidance on how they should behave in parliament, which way they should vote or where their support will be expected. Perhaps more significant, parties, through their parliamentary groups, provide the basis for the organization of parliamentary work. While the standing orders or parliamentary by-laws provide the rules of the game, the parliamentary groups determine the games within the rules, providing the vehicles for negotiation between government and opposition over legislation and parliamentary business. In short, they ensure the smooth functioning of parliament – or not.

It is not the principal purpose of this report to provide a detailed analysis of the state of political parties, but their centrality to parliamentary functioning means that they cannot be ignored. And, globally, they face two sets of problems undermining those roles relating to their quality and their capacity to represent citizens.

First, in many countries, and especially developing countries party systems tend to be characterized by one-party dominance or high numbers of fragmented parties. Dominant disciplined parties, such as in some African and East Asian states, often mean that parliament is entirely controlled by the government. In such circumstances, parliament becomes a cipher, especially in post-conflict settings where parties built from rebel movements often continue to display the rigid discipline of former quasi-military organizations. At the other extreme, a multiplicity of parties, which have little discipline or internal cohesion, such as in some Latin American states, makes parliament unpredictable and difficult to organize. Where a party has no control over its MPs, the legislature will struggle

to organize its business, let alone take decisions over legislation or government policy. This situation can be exacerbated in post-conflict situations where there is limited democratic experience, a large number of parties and no mutual trust between different groups. Parties frequently suffer from being weakly rooted in wider society, have little ideological coherence on which to base distinctive policies, and are often based around the charismatic leadership of one person.

Second, the representative role of political parties is changing. Parliaments and political parties are based on the principle of collective representation of interests. Yet this is increasingly at odds with significant cultural, technological and political trends in the last 50 years toward greater individualism. The expansion of public education has created a much more knowledgeable and better-informed citizenry. This growth of knowledge has, in turn, been facilitated by the expansion of media outlets providing a far greater volume and diversity of information for the public. Technological innovation has further extended the availability of that information through the internet and other communication technologies, but it has also increased the speed of exchange and created new opportunities for dialogue and communication among individuals. Such innovations also appeal to a desire for independence and self-reliance in many parts of people's lives.

Political parties [...] are increasingly seen as getting in the way of effective representation, rather than facilitating it.

It may be for these reasons that levels of identification with political parties are declining in many established democracies. Political parties evolved and expanded because they were seen as an effective mechanism for representing the public interest. But, in democracies old and new, they are increasingly seen as getting in the way of effective representation, rather than facilitating it. People simply do not seem to define themselves in the same way that many political parties seek to represent

25 Carothers 2006:10.

them. This has significant implications for how individuals regard parliamentary representation, especially as new forms of participation and oversight have developed, which means that parliaments now face far greater competition in those representative roles.

1.2.4. Alternative Routes to Representation and Redress

The third main trend is the growth of new forms of representation, regulation and redress – all of which replicate or challenge some of the traditional roles of parliament. This is partly the result of a more demanding citizenry, but is also a response to the expansion and growing complexity of government in the nation-state. There are two aspects to this trend: first, citizens can amplify their voices and promote their interests through the expansion of civil society and single-issue groups as well as the development of mechanisms for participatory democracy; second, the number of regulatory and audit bodies to monitor government activity in almost every sphere.

The expansion in the number of organizations within society that seek to represent particular interests is evident in developed and developing countries around the world. The promotion of ‘voice and accountability’ by numerous donor agencies in developing countries is in recognition of the fact that a flourishing civil society is a key part of any healthy democracy. By their very nature, civil society organizations offer a more specific form of representation, as they are often built around a single issue or theme and exist to promote narrow sectional interests. However, they undoubtedly provide a challenge to the broader-based form of representation offered by political parties and perhaps again reflect the desire for more individualized forms of representation.

The interest in finding more direct forms of democracy has emanated not only from citizenship movements, which seek greater impact on the way policies are formulated and implemented, but also from governments that have sought new ways to understand public opinion and to road-test their proposals. In recent decades, there has been a huge number of innovations to this end in different parts of the world, but they can be grouped into four

broad areas.²⁶ First, the increased use of consultation exercises, such as opinion polling, public meetings, focus groups and standing fora. Second, ‘deliberative fora’ to provide space for debate and discussion, including consensus conferences, citizens’ juries and deliberative opinion polling. Third, co-governance initiatives directly involving the public in the decision-making process, such as through local budgeting fora. Fourth, direct democracy mechanisms, including referenda, citizen initiatives and recall, allow voters to suspend their representative’s term pending a vote of approval. The intention behind each of these initiatives is to enhance the connection between the public and public decision-making, allowing a more direct form of public input.

By contrast, the growth of regulatory bodies owes more to the increasing complexity of government and offers citizens multiple routes for redress when things go wrong. The oldest and most common office for public redress is that of the ombudsman, which dates back to its first incarnation in Sweden in 1809. Although there were only 20 national ombudsmen in the mid-1980s, by the beginning of the 21st century, the office existed in 120 countries around the world under a variety of titles such as the Public Protector, *Le Médiateur de la République*²⁷ and *Defensor Civico*. In each case, the role of the ombudsman is to protect the people against violation of rights, abuse of powers and maladministration, and to make the government and its servants more accountable to the public.

The increased number of ombudsmen is partly a reflection of the number of countries that have democratized over that period. However, at the same time, a range of regulatory bodies, audit institutions and inspectorates have developed in most nations to provide additional oversight over public administration. During the 20th century, as governments expanded their responsibility for the welfare of citizens by providing additional services and benefits, there was also a growth in the offices that sought to ensure quality of service and provide support to citizens. The increasing complexity of the state has resulted in a multitude of mechanisms for citizens to seek redress of grievances.

26 Smith 2005; Beetham 2006.

27 Following the revision of the French Constitution in 2008, the *Defenseur des droits* replaced the former *Médiateur de la République* in 2011, with a wider jurisdiction.

These developments present a challenge for parliaments in that they offer alternative forms of representation, accountability and redress. In the first place, the collective representative role of parties and parliament faces competition as citizens can now seek representation in numerous ways through a variety of organizations in civil society. Second, parliament's traditional role as the route for the redress of grievance is now contested by the variety of statutory agencies and individuals, including ombudsmen, watchdogs and audit agencies. Each is designed specifically to deal with aspects of maladministration and has far greater resources and expertise to deal with such cases than would be available through parliament. Third, the existence of those agencies also means that governments are held to account by a multitude of bodies, including formal inspectorates and regulators whose task it is to challenge government maladministration, and other extra-parliamentary forms of accountability, such as the media, the courts, think tanks and civil society, which has led some to suggest that we now have a form of 'post-parliamentary politics'.²⁸

1.3. The Resilience of Parliamentary Representation

Although the three trends outlined above present challenges for parliaments, talk of post-parliamentary politics in the academic and media communities might sometimes be misleading. The public might be sceptical about parliamentary performance and may find other forms of representation attractive, but people and governments alike recognize the need for parliaments. The development of alternative mechanisms for representation and regulation gives citizens more choice and presents parliaments with greater competition. However, they neither remove the need for parliamentary representation nor make it redundant. Parliaments provide the vital link between the public and the system of government, serve as the principal forum for airing issues of public concern and continue to perform functions that cannot be replicated by any other institution. The expansion of alternative mechanisms has occurred partly because citizens are becoming more demanding and partly because the task

facing parliaments in calling governments to account is much greater and far more complex than it was 100 years ago. But, if anything, these developments emphasize the central role of parliaments. Unlike any other institution or organization, parliaments derive their legitimacy from the fact that they are elected by popular mandate specifically to reflect and represent the interests of the nation as a whole. The multiple forms of representation within contemporary society, and its complexity, make this role increasingly important in linking citizens to government.

Parliaments provide the vital link between the public and the system of government, serve as the principal forum for airing issues of public concern and [...] perform functions that cannot be replicated by any other institution.

1.3.1. The Unique Roles of Parliaments

There are still things that a parliament alone can do and that cannot be replicated by other institutions. First, the creation, amendment and approval of law occur principally through the legislature. Although there are various consultative mechanisms for turning citizen concern into policy and executive action, it is parliament that ultimately provides the mechanism by which law is sanctioned. Second, parliaments exist to call government to account. They should provide the forum wherein government ministers and officials are held to account for their policies and actions in public. Third, the parliament is the single most important representative institution. It must aggregate public opinion and make policy decisions on the basis of what is best for the populace as a whole.

This is in marked contrast to other forms of participatory democracy, which have obvious attractions for governments and the people, but also have well-documented limitations. Forms of deliberative democracy, for example, are usually only available to a very small proportion of the population and, by their very nature,

²⁸ Keane 2011:212-3.

are expensive and laborious exercises. Evidence of the use of direct democracy also suggests that it tends to give the most influence to the most active and best-funded campaigns and can simply accord more power to those who already enjoy considerable influence.

Forms of more direct democracy cannot replicate or replace the parliamentary process. But, where they are set up to bypass the representative process, they can be hugely detrimental. In the US state of California, for example, the combination of term limits for legislators, a supermajority on budget issues and multiple referenda, the results of which the legislature is powerless to amend, have paralysed decision-making. All of these innovations were designed to improve the responsiveness of the state's politicians to voters and increase the accountability of government to its citizens. In practice, they have done the opposite.

Forms of more direct democracy cannot replicate or replace the parliamentary process. Where new forms of participation have worked most effectively, they complement and reinforce the representative process, rather than bypass it.

Because they didn't trust legislators, voters slowly took power away from lawmakers and increasingly required them to decide issues by supermajority consensus, or under laws imposed by initiative. Hamstrung, legislators had less success in taking decisive action on difficult issues, especially fiscal decisions which required a two-thirds vote. More and more they delivered muddled compromises that please voters on neither side of controversial issues, or they resorted to tricks and borrowing. Voters, angry at this, passed more initiatives and took more matters into their own hands, deepening the state's fiscal hole.²⁹

To summarize: The legislature served a useful role as a scapegoat, but voters did not recognize that they might be responsible for their own unhappiness.

The experience of the California State Legislature is perhaps an extreme example of the effect of direct democracy. There are other countries, such as Switzerland, where alternative forms of representation and participatory democracy have worked with the parliamentary system. However, the key point is that, where new forms of participation have worked most effectively around the world, they complement and reinforce the representative process, rather than bypass it. By bringing voters directly into the decision-making process, such mechanisms allow them to share some of the difficult decisions and trade-offs with their elected representatives, thus expanding the public understanding of the nature of political representation.

Although many regulators and auditors now police government activity, this fact does not remove the need for parliament; if anything, it reinforces it. The independent think tank the Hansard Society ran a commission examining the strengths and weaknesses of parliamentary accountability in the United Kingdom in 2001. While noting the growth of the regulatory state, it argued that this strengthened rather than undermined the capacity of parliament. The commission suggested that, given the complexity of modern government, parliament alone cannot guarantee accountability. Politicians do not have the time, resources or expertise to keep a close watch on anything as large, fragmented and complicated as modern government. But the plethora of investigatory and regulatory bodies provided parliament with the ammunition to call ministers to account and ensure that mistakes were not repeated. Under this model, parliament would sit at the apex of a system of accountability, drawing on the reports, investigations and findings of the various bodies that exist. Parliament's job is a political one. In short, "Parliament's role is in disentangling the key political issues from technical scrutiny, interpreting their significance and using this as the basis on which to challenge government".³⁰

29 Mathews & Paul 2010:75.

30 Hansard Society Commission on Parliamentary Scrutiny 2001:11.

1.3.2. Public Expectations of Parliament

Public opinion of parliaments appears to recognize the complexity of representation and the vital roles that parliaments continue to play. However, it also indicates changing points of emphasis in the public desire for representation. In the first place, and as mentioned at the outset of this chapter, the events of the Arab Spring at the beginning of 2011 have emphasized the centrality of representative parliaments to the quest for political voice and greater democracy. Despite the trends described above, the demands for political representation in post-revolutionary states have focused on the creation of mass political parties and an effective parliament. In such circumstances, the people still believe that a democratically elected parliament with a significant constitutional role is the best guarantor of government accountability. According to the Pew Global Attitudes Project, the percentage of Egyptian respondents agreeing with the statement, "Democracy is preferable to any other kind of government," rose from 60 percent in 2010 to 71 percent in 2011.³¹

Second, perhaps it should come as no surprise that, when asked whether parliaments are essential to the functioning of representative democracy, people tend to say that they are. For example, the Latinobarometro 2010 showed that, across the region, the vast majority believed that democracy would be impossible without a parliament, with the average approval rating at 59 percent. But perhaps more significant, a global study from 2006 suggested that the power and strength of the parliament was "a – or even the – institutional key to democratization".³² Stronger parliaments offered a better guarantee of accountability, acting to counter-balance the power of presidents, and thus encouraged people and parties to invest in and thereby further strengthen those institutions.

Third, although parliamentary institutions generally appear toward the bottom of polls on trust, attitudes toward individual politicians, and particularly local representatives, are generally much higher. In the United Kingdom, for example, a poll in 2010 showed that, while 5 percent more people were dissatisfied than satisfied with parliament's performance, and 15

percent more dissatisfied with politicians in general, 22 percent were more satisfied with their local MP's performance.³³ A survey in the United States found that 64 percent of people who had asked for help from their representative went away satisfied.³⁴

At the same time, it appears that politicians are busier than ever. If anything, public expectations of representatives appear to be increasing rather than decreasing. In terms of levels of contact, parliaments around the world, as well as individual politicians, report increased contact with citizens, particularly by email. The trend appears to reflect a genuine desire among citizens to engage with their politicians and an expectation that their representatives will not only respond to them, but will also actively take on whatever problem or issue the individual presents. A global survey of politicians conducted by the IPU for this report showed that, when asked what they think that citizens see as politicians' most important role, almost one third identified 'solving constituents' problems' as the single most important issue. The survey also revealed the amount of time that constituency work takes up; one fifth of politicians reported devoting more than 40 hours a week solely to helping constituents, while a further third of MPs spent between 21 and 40 hours each week. And, although we should perhaps not read too much into the finding, almost two thirds believed that relations between parliaments and citizens were getting better rather than worse. (See Annex.)

The key point is that MPs are performing a representative function that is clearly valued by the vast majority of their constituents. Although opinion polls suggest parliaments may not be as popular as other institutions of government, this may be because of their very nature. The fact that parliaments exist primarily to deliberate and discuss, whereas the executive carries out decisions, may account for the fact that governments tend to be more popular than parliaments. In short, an institution whose role it is to reflect division of opinion may inevitably divide opinion. It may be that, as two authors have suggested, parliaments need to "educate citizens better on the need to tolerate conflict in a highly diverse, complex, modern democratic political system. Only then will people better

31 Pew Global Attitudes Project 2011.

32 Fish 2006:18.

33 Hansard Society 2010.

34 Mezey 2008:92.

appreciate the usefulness of institutional arrangements that try to put together solutions by listening to many voices.”³⁵

1.3.3. Parliamentary Responses to Public Expectations

The challenge for parliaments, and one of the central themes of this report, is the need to recognize, understand and harness these pressures for change in a way that reinforces their representative roles. Parliaments derive their authority from the public and maintaining that authority requires them to continually evolve and adapt to public expectations. As Hernando de Soto has shown in his pioneering work in economics, where political institutions fall behind the rapidity of economic change, they become first irrelevant as laws are routinely flouted and then redundant, as people find alternatives that reflect their needs and are “compatible with how people arrange their lives”.³⁶ It is unlikely that parliaments themselves will ever become redundant, but the public perception of their relevance depends on, first, being effective in the areas expected by the public, and, second, ensuring the public understands and recognizes what they are doing.

1.4 About this Report

The research for this report sought to find out how parliaments, politicians and parliamentary staff are responding to these challenges. Despite the importance of these issues, there is a dearth of reliable information on the practice of parliamentary representation in many parts of the world. With some notable exceptions (which are highlighted in the report), there is relatively little analysis of what MPs do, how they interact with voters, how they perceive their roles and how they handle casework or generally approach the process of representation. There is more information available on the institutional approaches of parliaments to engaging with citizens, especially in the increasing number of parliamentary strategic plans. But these also frequently lack any strategic analysis of the causes and problems parliaments face in improving the quality of

representation. Both time and resources meant that a thorough investigation of these factors was impossible for this report, and the report does not offer a definitive analysis of the state of parliaments worldwide. Rather, the intention is to provide a reflection on some of the main issues in the changing nature of political representation and the main parliamentary responses.

Parliaments derive their authority from the public and maintaining that authority requires them to continually evolve and adapt to public expectations.

To that end, the analysis is based partly on a wide range of secondary sources, but owes more to surveys and interviews with individual politicians and parliaments. The IPU disseminated and collated responses to two surveys especially commissioned for the report. The first comprised nine questions probing MPs’ views on relations between citizens and parliaments, conducted with 663 randomly selected parliamentarians through face-to-face interviews in parliaments and at parliamentary conferences. The second asked parliaments about citizens’ perceptions of parliament and the ways in which they are responding to those perceptions, receiving written contributions from 73 parliaments. We also commissioned a series of regional papers from experts in different parts of the world that provided an overview of the main parliamentary trends and developments in those regions. These are referred to throughout the report. In addition, we conducted three focus groups with politicians and over 30 interviews with MPs and parliamentary staff from approximately 25 countries. We also collected input from the parliamentary development community through an online discussion on the web portal Agora (www.agora-parl.org) and convened two ‘virtual roundtables’ of leading parliamentary practitioners identified, in part, through the site. Last, we drew on the staff and country offices and contacts of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and IPU in identifying examples of innovation and experimentation in

35 Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 2002:162.

36 De Soto 2001:112.

various parliaments around the world, inviting written responses and conducting follow-up interviews.

Given the range of issues involved, the report has a number of potential audiences, but the basic intention is to provide politicians, parliamentary staff, practitioners and academics with some insight into the changing practices of parliamentary representation. The publication cannot offer a comprehensive typology of the breadth of parliaments in the world today, nor can it encapsulate the diverse range of citizens these institutions represent. Electorates are not monolithic and certain groups – women, minorities, young people, people in rural areas, to name just a few such groups – will have specific and unique challenges in engaging with their elected leaders and with parliament as an institution. The experiences of these groups merit a full and deep analysis that, while beyond the scope of this report, should be considered at length in future Global Parliamentary Reports.

The politicians and parliamentary staff whom we surveyed and interviewed were asked to identify the principal challenges to the relationship between parliaments and citizens. We use examples and anecdotes throughout the report to illustrate these dynamics, focusing on reforms that offer practical solutions to specific problems, but that also strengthen the key strategic and symbolic roles of parliament in representing the public interest. We rely heavily on the voices of politicians and parliamentary staff to tell that story, as their stories often encapsulated a broad range of issues.

It became resoundingly clear that almost every parliament recognizes the need to improve the public's

understanding and impression of its work and that the vast majority of parliaments are seeking to implement changes to that end. Their responses suggested that public pressure has resulted most obviously in reforms that aim to alter institutional procedures and structures in order to improve how parliaments engage and interact with citizens. But also, that public pressure is influencing how politicians approach their representative role.

Almost every parliament recognizes the need to improve the public's understanding and impression of its work and that the vast majority of parliaments are seeking to implement changes to that end.

The structure of the report is built around these insights. Chapter II examines the various institutional responses of parliaments, first, to the public's expectation of having greater access to, and information about, parliament and, second, to the public's demands to have greater influence over policy. Chapters III and IV then assess how parliaments and politicians are responding to demands for greater accountability, responsiveness and constituency service. The final chapter, Parliamentary Reform – Resilience and Renewal, attempts to draw together the main lessons of the report.



INFORMATION AND INFLUENCE

2.1. Westminster's Outreach Overhaul

One month after John Pullinger was appointed Director General of the Commons' Information Services in 2005, the British House of Commons debated and approved a report entitled 'Connecting Parliament with the Public'. A cross-party committee made a series of recommendations to improve the way that Parliament promotes and explains its work to a wider audience, stating that "too often the House of Commons gives the impression of being a private club, run for the benefit of its Members."³⁷ Under Pullinger's direction and with the backing of the Modernisation Committee, there was to be a five-year strategy to entirely recast the way in which Parliament interacted with the public.

That strategy began by identifying five different groups who used – or might use – parliamentary website information (e.g., politicians, those who work

in politics, active citizens, 'democratic outsiders' and young people) and sought to ensure that, by 2011, citizens would better understand Parliament and see it as welcoming, relevant and working for citizens' interests. This was to be achieved by a three-pronged approach that aimed to engage people through the web and other media, visits to Parliament and local programmes with regional communities across the UK.

The results have been remarkable. The redesign of the website was based not on how many people visited the site, but on how easily and quickly they could find the information they wanted. Parliament now displays news on its front page to highlight current issues, uses YouTube so that people can access Prime Minister's Questions more easily and produces interactive games for young people. Parliament has also developed profiles on Facebook and Twitter, providing regular updates on parliamentary activity. The Commons is now the second most-followed public organization in the UK on Twitter, with over 53,000 followers (second only to the Prime Minister's office).

37 Select Committee on Modernisation of the House of Commons 2004:10, paragraph 9.

Greater emphasis on getting people into Parliament has seen the annual number of young people on educational visits increase from 11,000 in 2006 to approximately 40,000 in 2010; the number of visitors' guides given out during 2008 was over one million, an almost five-fold increase in three years. And a parliamentary outreach team was recruited to work across the different parts of the UK to provide information to local communities and to run events with other organizations such as community groups and volunteer sector organizations, as well as museums and libraries.

The culmination of this strategy came at the end of October, 2011 with the inaugural 'Parliament Week', which comprised a range of events and activities, including television and radio programmes, a meeting of the UK Youth Parliament, a photography competition and YouTube clips depicting 'stories of democracy' as well as a host of locally run events themed around parliamentary democracy. And, in an unprecedented move, Westminster invited internet 'hackers' to explore parliamentary data, manipulate it and test their skills against one another to find new ways of presenting it. One of the winning efforts was the creation of an iPhone app that would allow users to track their defined political interests as they emerge and are debated in Parliament.

The challenge is to “extend reach from the tens of thousands who are already motivated to contact Parliament to the tens of millions who are not.”

However, as Pullinger points out, the challenge is to “extend reach from the tens of thousands who are already motivated to contact Parliament to the tens of millions who are not.” Whether this happens depends on whether Parliament can find new routes to approach the public. Moving away from a strategy that simply responds to requests for information to one that seeks to actively reach out means experimenting and innovating. Or, as Pullinger puts it, “Try it first, and beg forgiveness afterwards,” because, ultimately, “success can only be defined through the eyes of the public”.

2.2. Introduction: Institutional Responses and Engagement Strategies

The experience of the British House of Commons reflects a much wider trend among parliaments globally. In the survey of parliaments conducted by the IPU for this report, all of the 73 institutions that responded indicated that, over the last 10 years, they had enacted measures designed to find new ways of reaching out to voters, providing much more information about parliamentary activity and engaging them more directly in the parliamentary process. This is also reflected in the strategic plans of various parliaments, which are increasingly being used to map out institutional development, improve internal administration and strengthen the role of parliaments in general. In Malawi, for example, one of the four key strategic objectives is to “increase outreach work in order to bring parliament closer to the people”. Similar objectives form part of the Solomon Islands' plan to develop education and outreach work to reinforce the representative role of MPs and the Gambia's intention to improve communication so that the public has a better understanding of MPs' roles. The general principle underpinning all such initiatives, as expressed by the New Zealand parliament, is that, “Parliament requires public engagement in order to be effective” so that it can, in the words of the South African strategic plan, “Further build a people's Parliament that is responsive to the needs of all the people of South Africa, deepening public participation and involvement, and being people-centred.”³⁸

Although parliaments operate in very different contexts and face a range of different problems, the desire to engage the public appears to be central. The measures tend to fall into two broad categories: those that seek to provide more information about and improve public understanding of parliament and those that seek to consult and involve the public more in the work of parliament. Yet, it is not clear how effectively such strategies are meeting their objectives in either of these areas.

38 Malawi: Malawi National Assembly 2010:22; Solomon Islands: Parliament of Solomon Islands 2011; Gambia: National Assembly of the Republic of the Gambia 2009; New Zealand: Parliamentary Service 2011:14; South Africa: Parliament of the Republic of South Africa 2004:6.

In the first place, few parliaments appear to offer a clear sense of the specific problems that these strategies are designed to address. The assumption appears to be that more public involvement is a good thing in and of itself, which it may be, but there is little sense of impact in how far such strategies have improved the public perception of parliament, enhanced understanding or improved legislative outcomes. These may be beyond the reach of any parliamentary strategy by itself, but they highlight some of the tensions and difficulties faced by the institutions trying to make themselves more responsive to public pressure.

This chapter examines, in four main sections, the various ways in which parliaments are attempting to inform and engage their publics and the challenges they face. The first half of the chapter (Section 2.3) looks at attempts to improve public information through initiatives such as visitors' centres, events and youth parliaments, and then (Section 2.4) at the ways in which parliaments are seeking to reach a wider audience through television and radio broadcasting. The second half of the chapter assesses the ways in which they are consulting and engaging citizens. Section 2.5 examines the use of various consultation techniques, while Section 2.6 looks at how far institutions are exploiting the possibilities offered by technology to create a continuous dialogue between people and parliament. In conclusion, the chapter suggests that, although parliaments are arguably more responsive than ever before, they face continuing challenges in implementing their development strategies, identifying what success looks like and managing the tension between the institutional promise of greater influence offered by more consultation and the political implications of giving citizens more control.

2.3. Outreach: Informing, Engaging and Educating

2.3.1 Visitors' Centres, Open Days and Events

Most parliaments have sought to improve their outreach in the basic provision of information, especially through the development of visitors' centres, open days and events – based on the insight that, in

order to interest people in the parliament, there is no substitute for physical access. Typically, visitors' facilities in all parliaments have tended to produce information about the parliamentary building and its work in an easily digestible format. Such materials include guides to proceedings, the role of parliament in government and the legislative agenda. But that provision of information is becoming more complete and interactive.

Since 2002, the Japanese Diet has welcomed guests at its 'Visitors' Hole', where they are invited to enjoy original films on a big screen, make use of personal computer terminals and view a wide variety of exhibits. The Indian parliamentary museum, opened to the public in 2006, has likewise earned high praise from visitors. According to parliamentary administrators, "It has been designed to serve as a high-tech, story-telling museum, depicting the continuum of democratic ethos and institutional development in India". In Austria, the parliamentary centre includes interactive media stations spread across a suite of rooms in which monitors "demonstrate, by way of concrete example, how laws are made" and that include quizzes for citizens to self-test their knowledge. Connecting parliament's past and present is the 'Who's Who' feature, which provides biographies on current and former members, along with demographic breakdowns of parliament's composition over time. 'Parliament Close-Up' uses ICT to shed light on the history and architecture of the *Reichsratsgebäude*, offering simulated explorations of parts of the building, such as the Parliamentary Library, which are unreachable on guided tours.

However, in the last 10 years, the US Congress has built a new visitors' centre that dwarfs almost every other. At 55,000 square metres, it is approximately three quarters as large as the Capitol itself and includes an exhibition hall, two orientation theatres where films about the Capitol and the two houses of Congress are shown, a restaurant, a gift shop and even its own post office. Phone tours enable visitors to access an audio tour of the exhibition hall by using their mobile phones. Between March and April 2009 alone, Congress averaged 15,500 visitors per day, with a record 19,000 in a single day. After opening at the end of 2008, the centre hosted a total of 2.3 million people in its first year of operation – double the number of visitors who had

come to the Capitol in the previous year.³⁹ Yet even smaller centres have a dramatic impact: in its survey response, the Latvian *Saiema* explained how, between the creation of their centre in 2005 and 2010, the number of visitors increased by a factor of 22.

While most institutions have some provision for visitors year-round, space constraints and lengthy waiting lists can deter citizens even when plenary (and, in some cases, committee) sessions are open to the public. To that end, parliaments in different countries have created specific events to bring people in. In South Korea, for instance, the annual 'Cherry Blossom Festival' links cultural events, such as film screenings and concerts, with student debates and parliamentary tours. Staff explained the wider objective of the programme by using a mix of culture and politics: "The National Assembly of the Republic of Korea strives to be a parliament that is open, communicative, and takes direct action on-site in order to realize the core values of representative democracy [and] win the confidence of the Korean people". As part of its larger effort to celebrate diversity and inclusion, the Danish *Folketinget* has held an annual 'Citizenship Day' since 2006 to which all recently naturalized citizens are invited. As an administrative officer explains, "The purpose of the event is to welcome newly naturalized citizens as full participants in political life in Denmark and to demonstrate the accessibility of Parliament as a democratic institution. The event usually draws around 800 guests."

Since the establishment of the International Day of Democracy⁴⁰ by the United Nations in 2008, more than 70 parliaments have used this opportunity to establish links with citizens, particularly young people. The range of initiatives varies greatly, from the very modest to national engagement of schoolchildren in special classes on democracy, as seen in Uruguay, Mongolia and Greece. The common point is parliaments' desire to bring young people into contact with the institution. For many parliaments, these activities take place throughout the year, but the International Day of Democracy seems to give such events greater meaning and focus.

39 Hansard Society 2010a:36.

40 See Inter-Parliamentary Union 2011b for more on the International Day of Democracy.

The perceived impact of Open Days means that they seem to be increasing in popularity and they now appear in almost every region. For instance, Rwanda held its first Open Day in 2010, which "drew hundreds of people from all walks of life", according to a local media outlet. The Director of Parliamentary Communication explained that the initiative came from MPs' desire to "invite the public and show them how and where they work from".⁴¹ The effect on citizens' perceptions of such events is highlighted by the Kenyan website Mzalendo, which tracks the performance of Kenya's parliament. In a blog post entitled 'What do you call a Kenyan citizen visiting Parliament?', one citizen observed:

[Before] August 2010, you would call such a person a stranger, whose access was permitted only at the discretion of the House Speaker. On August 27, 2010, I walked into Parliament as a participant: a citizen empowered to access and be involved in the workings of Parliament. The doors of Parliament have been thrown open: Parliament is to "facilitate public participation and involvement in the business of Parliament". [...] The mood was festive but focused. [...] The new Constitution marks a major shift, from being a part of a crowd to be talked at from a dais, to being individuals who can engage our institutions. I took a small step in the search for such answers by going to Parliament, and I left convinced that I must refuse the word 'Stranger' and embrace the word 'Citizen' whenever I walk through its doors.⁴²

Another site contributor captured the impact of opening parliament on her perception of the institution in her entry entitled "On a (surprisingly) inspiring visit to parliament... and why you should try it": "I had low expectations mainly due to the poor portrayal of our leaders in the media. Instead, I got to see that some MPs really did fight the corner of their constituents valiantly. For those whose expectations of our parliamentarians are at an all time low, it may be time to stop being so pessimistic, to take a visit to parliament; it may inspire you to increase your expectations and make a demand or two of our leaders while you're at it."⁴³

41 Musoni 2011.

42 Majiwa 2010.

43 Ibid.

2.3.2. Parliamentary Youth Programmes

The desire to engage young people forms a fundamental part of many parliamentary initiatives. Of the parliaments surveyed for this report, nearly all reported implementing programmes dedicated to educating young people on parliament's role and purpose, with several announcing plans to expand or enhance youth activities in the coming months. Many youth parliaments, such as Denmark's bi-annual series the *Folketinget* – which has been emulated in the Norwegian *MiniTing*, the Icelandic Solathing, and the Swedish *Democracy Workshop* – have 'gone virtual' with interactive components designed to excite young minds about the parliamentary process.⁴⁴

If citizens can be engaged at a young age, they are likely to stay engaged.

The theme song of the most recent Pakistani youth parliament, featuring pop idol and *bhangra* balladeer Abrar Ul Haqac, has received well over 14,000 views on YouTube.⁴⁵

The rationale behind all of these initiatives is, in part, a recognition that, if citizens can be engaged at a young age, they are likely to stay engaged. In some parts of the world, youth engagement is a response to declining voter participation, while, in others, it is an attempt to encourage integration in conflict-ridden societies. In all, there is recognition that youth involvement is vital to the development of democracy. The Facebook page of the Somali Youth Parliament captures this sentiment, explaining:

Somalia needs to strengthen its democratic institutions and inculcate democratic culture in the society. We need to discourage extremist tendencies and lack of tolerance for others' beliefs and views and strengthen the rule of law. [...] The society should develop tools, mechanisms and systems which can facilitate the exposure of [a] democratic

system to its citizens from an early stage. [...] Sustainable democracy and sound democratic institutions in Somalia [are] not possible without youth's involvement in the democratic and political process.⁴⁶

Or, simply put by the Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency (PILDAT), which organizes the youth parliament, "Sustainable democracy and the sustainability of sound democratic institutions in Pakistan is not possible without youth's involvement [...] even if this involvement is simply as a citizen or voter."⁴⁷

In the Solomon Islands, the parliament convened a 'High School Students Leadership Seminar' aimed at encouraging young people to learn about leadership concepts, values and practices. The seminar gave promising students an opportunity to meet and benefit from former prime ministers, former governors general and current politicians, who related their personal experiences on leadership. As one of the participating parliamentarians summarized the legislature's approach, "Most of our population have little knowledge of Parliament – children especially, but adults also. I think it is very important that we allow this civic education program to go ahead and inform our public and rural population of the role of our Parliament and that we allow them to interact with our parliamentary staff."

In Canada, the Teachers Institute on Canadian Parliamentary Democracy offers a professional development opportunity for teachers of governance and citizenship education. The Teachers Institute brings together 70 outstanding teachers from across the country for a week-long insider's view on how Parliament works. Through sessions with political, procedural and pedagogical experts, participants work together to develop strategies for teaching about Parliament, democracy, governance and citizenship.

Part of the appeal of youth parliaments is that they often give young people a sense of influence. Since 1994, the *Palais Bourbon* in Paris has played host each June to 'junior representatives' in their final year of primary school. In the early months of the calendar year,

44 For a comparative analysis of these Scandinavian ventures, please refer to the Hansard Society's 'Lessons from Abroad'.

45 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=12CHjEcY9qk>

46 <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=104428579596154>

47 PILDAT 2010.

pupils collaborate to develop a draft bill, along with two questions, one each for the National Education Minister and the President of the National Assembly. In addition to comprising students' original work, the bills must "be a reflection of future citizens on societal problems [and] correspond to real action to be taken or a possible law to be enacted." The classes responsible for the best submissions, as determined by a jury of experts, are then asked to elect a representative to take the seat of their constituency's MP. The 577 delegates of the 17th annual parliament worked together to pass a bill mandating that sports associations combat discrimination based on origin, gender, race or ethnicity.⁴⁸

In summary, parliaments in all parts of the world are making much greater efforts to bring people into the institution, combining better provision of information with mechanisms designed to entertain as well as inform. The responses from parliaments suggested that such initiatives were proving increasingly popular with the public, many of them reporting markedly increased numbers of visitors and publications. Yet, beyond those numbers, few parliaments appear to be offering much qualitative assessment of the initiatives or analysis of their long-term effect on public understanding or perceptions. Such evaluation may be beyond the scope of discrete parliamentary outreach strategies, but its absence also partly reflects the fact that few parliaments identify clear objectives in these areas. These themes are picked up below.

2.4. Parliamentary Broadcasting: Changing the Tone of the Debate

Because parliamentary outreach will ever physically touch only a small proportion of the population, the second main element of engagement strategies is the mass broadcasting of parliamentary proceedings through radio and television, which dramatically widens the potential audience. The World e-Parliament Report suggests that around one third of parliaments now televise through their own channels, and a further one third collaborate with other TV channels to

broadcast political programmes.⁴⁹ In India, the *Rajya Sabha* and *Lok Sabha* each have their own television station to broadcast the legislature's proceedings when in session and show committee work while the parliament is not sitting. Noting the importance of this for voters, one MP said, "The parliamentary television station is a big deal. It shows people what we really do. It is the face of parliament for the people." In addition, the channel also shows programmes highlighting cultural events and analysis of political developments around the world, arguably providing more entertaining viewing than simply showing the proceedings. Nevertheless, the number of viewers has increased from an average viewership of 1.4 million to 1.6 million since 2006 and, at times of high drama, ratings can be much higher. During a vote of confidence debate in 2008, the station attracted 6.4 million viewers.⁵⁰ In The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the proportion of television viewers tuning into parliamentary TV can reach as high as 17 percent, according to one MP, who says that the programming taps into a 'politicized' culture. He explained that, "In our society, people debate politics all the time – on the street, at parties. The parliamentary channel is where they can see us in action, debate, and discuss."

However, radio broadcasting is the principal source of information in many parts of the world, and many parliaments are effectively using it, most notably in Africa, the Pacific islands and parts of central Asia. UNESCO's 'Informed Democracies' notes, "Radio is often the only medium available to the vast majority living in rural areas where literacy levels are often low."⁵¹ In the Pacific, for example, where the distance between islands is often vast and communication is complicated by "sketchy or nonexistent ferries, unpredictable waters, language differences and poverty",⁵² parliamentary radio has a significant impact. As Nakamura, Clements and Hegarty observed in Samoa, while eating their lunches, everybody stopped working to gather around portable radios and listen to parliamentary debates.

I learned that not only were the workers at the Chancery listening to parliamentary proceedings [on the

48 Service des Affaires Européennes, Assemblée Nationale 2011.

49 Global Centre for ICT in Parliament 2010.

50 Hansard Society 2010a:24

51 Raine and Bresnahan 2003:24.

52 Gross 2011.

radio], but across the city of Apia and in fact across the whole of the islands of Samoa, thousands were tuned in to the broadcast. And not content with listening to the voices of their own representatives, they were commenting on speeches, arguing among themselves, and debating issues that had come up in the course of the day. I was told that this is a regular occurrence across the country. In every village, people listen intently, waiting to hear their own member speak, hoping their MP didn't make a fool of himself, and making sure MPs from other parts of the country do not chastise their member.⁵³

In the Caribbean, several nations have had comparable experiences, as consumer demand for both radio and televised coverage of parliamentary proceedings is enormous throughout the region. The Broadcasting Corporation of the Bahamas not only streams a full day's parliamentary proceedings – about seven hours – when parliament is in session, but even plays re-runs during recess. In Dominica and St. Vincent and the Grenadines, broadcasting starts and stops with the session, with gaps plugged by regular programming.⁵⁴ In Castries, citizens gather in the square facing the St. Lucian parliament to hear the budget address on portable sets. As Robert Nakamura and his co-authors write, "A parliamentary politics that generates those expressions of interest – whatever the other problems – is one that is performing some of its functions as a means of connecting people to their government."⁵⁵ The televising of the work of the Palestinian Legislative Council has had a noticeably positive effect according to one journalist: "Most Palestinians didn't even know what their members of parliament looked like. Putting them on television was very exciting for us and just the opposite of what we had heard all along: that parliament is very boring."⁵⁶

Although greater broadcasting can have positive effects, there are also numerous examples of its having reinforced negative perceptions of parliament. One Australian MP bemoaned that, "In Australia, the thing that defines parliament for most Australians is Question Time. They have no sense of committee work, the diligence, the cross-party

work that goes on." The media, for their part, often seek to emphasize the worst elements of political behaviour, frequently in an attempt to boost the number of viewers or readers. As noted in *Parliament and democracy in the twenty-first century*, there appears to be a lack of trust between politicians and journalists in many parts of the world.⁵⁷ The result is often a poor and distorted impression of politicians, even among aspirant MPs. As one Thai politician commented, "It's true, people like me, well even I used to criticize all these politicians, but once I decided to be an insider, I actually found out that there were so many good ones who were never being portrayed by the media."

The conundrum for parliamentary broadcasting is that conflict is far more interesting and entertaining than consensus. Plenary debates generally get higher viewing ratings because the sessions tend to encourage a polarisation of opinion. Plenary is characterised by politicians seeking to differentiate their party or themselves from others, heightening their rhetoric and emphasising division. The slow process of committee scrutiny is, by comparison, much less attractive.

Public reaction has sometimes chastened MPs, such as in Benin, where one MP commented, "We had a violent conflict between the majority and the opposition, with very tough words. When we came back to our constituencies, [we received] strong reactions from citizens. The people said they had not sent us to Parliament to insult each other, but to review and vote on legislation. People were reacting to images of parliamentary debates they had seen on TV, and we were receiving moral lessons from them."

The conundrum for parliamentary broadcasting is that conflict is far more interesting and entertaining than consensus.

In the main though, parliamentary strategies need to recognize the fundamental tension between audience size and audience understanding – one that very few parliaments have yet to fully address in their outreach

53 Nakamura, Clements and Hegarty 2011:30.

54 Raine and Bresnahan 2003:14.

55 Nakamura, Clements and Hegarty 2011:30.

56 ASGP, IPU, and EBU-UER 2006:11.

57 Inter-Parliamentary Union 2006.

plans. In their feedback on the impact of televising their activities, most parliaments pointed to increases in viewer numbers, often in the absence of any other indicator of success. As the former Secretary General of the Swedish Parliament, Anders Forsberg, has noted, “When reaching out to a broader audience, we must be ready to concede that this will not necessarily lead to a better understanding of or greater public interest in politics.”⁵⁸

Parliamentary strategies need to recognize the fundamental tension between audience size and audience understanding.

There are, though, examples of broadcasting strategies with more specific objectives than simply boosting numbers. For example, radio has been used to promote dialogue and debate in post-conflict settings such as Angola, where the radio series ‘Parliament and Me’ specifically sought to bridge the gap between voters and politicians. The talk show aims to educate citizens about the role of parliament and “encourage citizens to link issues they are concerned about and advocacy to the National Assembly. It also provides an objective, balanced presentation of issues being addressed by the parliament.”⁵⁹ In each episode, the host would interview a single MP, who would also be given the chance to respond to pre-recorded interviews by constituents, describe his or her daily work and discuss priority issues. According to one local commentator, “MPs like the format, because it gives them a rare platform to talk about their work and initiatives. Listeners like it because it gives them a window into what elected leaders are doing.”⁶⁰

In Afghanistan, a similar project sought to improve contact with constituents in remote regions that other media could not penetrate. The country’s insecurity obviously makes such contact difficult, and so, to bolster

citizens’ sense of ownership of the political process through their representatives – and MPs’ responsiveness to their constituents – a pilot radio roundtable series sought to facilitate a dialogue between MPs in Kabul studios and citizens in the provinces. The Sabawoon Helmand Radio manager said that listeners found themselves engaged in drafting questions and nominating community representatives to participate in the discussion. The programme’s popularity has prompted numerous requests from listeners – who claim never before to have had such access – for additional similar programming. As he points out, “At a time when citizens’ confidence in their representatives and democratic institutions is vital to stability, the more contact they have with each other, the better.”⁶¹

The common theme in both examples is the search to make the parliamentary process accessible to a wider range of voters by focusing on issues. Similar initiatives can be found elsewhere in Africa; call-in radio programmes following parliaments’ deliberations have met with public acclaim in Niger and Zimbabwe, while a cross-border training project has seen MPs from Ghana, Liberia and Sierra Leone come together to improve their interaction with voters through such programmes. Héléne Kèkè Aholou, President of the Standing Committee for Legislation of the Benin National Assembly, spoke of the impact of the parliamentary radio station Radio Hemicycle:

As parliamentarians, we have already noticed that the population raises questions which are more useful for bills we review, as they are now aware of the parliamentary agenda. [...] Some people have even asked for a consultation mechanism that would allow them to express their view before a bill is adopted. As 80 percent of the population is illiterate, we need to take specific measures to inform them in an appropriate way. Some people have suggested that short tapes could be broadcast in villages in order to inform illiterate population on such issues.

Likewise, a deputy in neighbouring Mali reports, “It is difficult when your constituency is distant and you have to report to the people in each of the municipalities of your constituency. [So] we organize direct debates with citizens that are broadcasted on the radio.”

58 ASGP, IPU, and EBU-UER 2006:4.

59 NDI 2010.

60 Ibid.

61 USAID 2011.

The growth in parliamentary broadcasting has brought proceedings to a wider audience than ever before. This bigger audience undoubtedly creates the potential for greater understanding of parliament and representation, but this is far from guaranteed. It appears that the most effective strategies are those that seek to broadcast for a purpose and to engage citizens in the content of debate. This principle – the need to engage rather than merely to inform citizens – is the subject of the second half of the chapter.

2.5. The Promise of Involvement and Influence: Consulting the Public

Although the vast majority of outreach programmes tend to emphasize the better provision of information, there is widespread recognition among parliaments that this is insufficient to meet the needs of the public. As a parliamentary reform committee in the UK noted in 2009, “The primary focus of the House’s overall agenda for engagement with the public must now be shifted beyond the giving of information toward actively assisting the achievement of a greater degree of public participation.”⁶² This change in emphasis is taking place in many parliaments, partly in recognition of the public desire for greater involvement and influence over key policy issues, but also reflecting the sense among politicians and parliamentary staff of the value of incorporating public opinion into the legislative and oversight process. The Ugandan parliament’s strategic plan captured the spirit and content of many such initiatives, providing more funds to hold committee hearings outside parliament as MPs “expressed their overwhelming desire to take Parliament, through their Committees, to the people in the form of site visits and public hearings on controversial draft legislation outside parliament.”⁶³

Parliaments have undertaken many innovations designed to bring them closer to the people by holding sittings in different parts of the country, creating outreach offices or even mobile parliamentary information units. For example, in Namibia, the

parliament’s annual campaign ‘Taking Parliament to the People’ incorporates a number of components, including launching interactive websites, installing information stands at regional trade fairs and holding public hearings. When the House is in recess, the Speaker and his or her Deputy join with a selection of cross-party group of MPs and staff to visit rural areas, meeting with Constituency Development Committees (CDCs), community leaders and citizens. However, the most eye-catching part of the initiative is its Mobile Training Units (MTUs) – specially kitted out buses that tour the country, enabling citizens to use the computers on board to explore the parliamentary website and submit views to parliament. Comments on bills are “channelled to the right parliamentary committees and individual MPs, and responses are furnished almost in real-time.”⁶⁴ Typically, the events are full to overflowing with eager citizens, and the use of info-buses, booths and travelling caravans has met with success in countries as diverse as Germany, Sweden, and Trinidad & Tobago. While such innovations are useful and popular, this section of the chapter focuses on the attempts by parliaments to make consultation a more regular and routine element of their activity through the incorporation of participatory techniques in the parliamentary process.

“The primary focus [...] for engagement with the public must now be shifted beyond the giving of information toward actively assisting the achievement of a greater degree of public participation.”

2.5.1. Committees and Consultation

Consultation has been a routine part of most parliamentary committee investigations and deliberations for some time. However, committees themselves have taken on a greater workload and influence in many

62 Select Committee on Reform of the House of Commons 2009.

63 Parliament of Uganda 2007:19

64 Manda 2010.

parliaments in recent decades. This is partly in recognition of the fact that, while the plenary is at its best when articulating the most prominent political issues of the day, committees are “best suited to develop and shape legislation, exercise oversight of executive action, facilitate overall legislative productivity, increase its policy expertise, and enhance partisan cooperation.”⁶⁵ As the principal mechanism for detailed analysis, they appear to be making greater use of public consultation than is usual in plenary. For example, in the United States, they are “the most widespread venue for public participation, used at all levels for a variety of purposes.”⁶⁶ In France, the use of public hearings has grown exponentially over the last decade, whereas committee hearings were previously rarely open to the public. Indeed, at the French National Assembly, the number of persons (ministers, civil society representatives or experts) who participated in such open hearings at the request of committees was multiplied by 10 between the 2002-2003 and 2009-2010 sessions and nearly doubled between the 2008-2009 and 2009-2010 sessions. The Portuguese Parliament collects online contributions during the legislative process, which helps MPs to see which articles in a draft law attract more questions or are more controversial.

Committees’ consultations tend to target both expert opinion and the public in general, but both appear to be increasing. For example, the Finnish Parliament notes, “Perhaps the most important changes relate to the hearing of experts”, which is usually the start of a committee’s deliberations: in certain instances, a sole witness may be called, but, in major legislative projects, it is common for a committee to hear from dozens of experts. The frequency of such consultation has increased from an annual rate of approximately 2,000 experts during the 1980s to 5,000 today. The Eduskunta also reports that several committees convene open information-gathering meetings in the form of seminars and on-site visits. In this, Finland’s much-lauded Committee for the Future has led the way and is now emulated in various national and regional parliaments, including those of Chile and Scotland. Appointed in 1993 in the midst of a severe socio-economic crisis as a means of addressing foreseeable long-term and “central future-related”

65 Khmelko, Wise and Brown 2010:76.

66 Williams and Fung 2005:31.

issues,⁶⁷ it was at the time “the only such parliamentary committee in the world” and “began to attract attention from other countries”, inspiring the creation of a similar bodies elsewhere. Despite a comparatively small budget, the committee created a 60-member consultative body of academics and scientists to assist its work called the ‘Forum of the Experienced and the Wise’.⁶⁸ An MP active in the Committee, Kyosti Karjula, claims, “Even by international standards, the Committee for the Future has adopted an extraordinary role in representative democracy.”⁶⁹

In other countries, there have been notable initiatives led by specific committees to actively draw in the public more widely. For instance, in Ghana, the first chair of the Public Accounts Committee, concerned about the low response rate to calls for evidence, changed the committee strategy by opening up its proceedings and actively seeking public input. In 2007, the committee held its first public hearing, designed, as he puts it,

[A]t increasing transparency, strengthening the accountability process, and boosting the confidence and support of the public in Parliament. It was also an opportunity for the public to feed the PAC with information on how some projects or expenditures of government were managed. Through advertisements in newspapers, television and discussion platforms the general public and civil society were invited to the hearing. Through both electronic and written media we had asked input from anyone that had information on the matters on the agenda, with the possibility for people to testify in public if they wanted to.⁷⁰

The hearing brought public attention to key issues of corruption and government spending and the subsequent chair of the committee continued the practice, stating that the “flagship activity is the Public Hearing, which is now televised and is one of the major TV programmes in our country.”⁷¹ Members of parliament are nearly unanimous in their approval of the work of the opposition-led committee, with 94 percent of MPs believing it “to be doing a good job”.⁷² Moreover, it has

67 Eduskunta 2011.

68 Hansard Society 2010a.

69 Groombridge 2006.

70 Sallas-Mensah 2010.

71 Parliamentary Centre 2009.

72 Brierley 2010.

led to a transformation in popular opinion of the institution, as two academics observe: “The activities of the PAC signalled the restoration of public confidence in parliament as an institution [... and] progressed steadily to its current state where it is possible to speak of the revival of public interest in issues of corruption and abuse of office.”⁷³

Parliaments need to be able to demonstrate that consultative initiatives are achieving results; otherwise, the impression given to the public is simply one of window-dressing.

While the increased tendency toward consultation is positive, the test of such measures is the extent to which they become routine parts of the parliamentary process, integrated into the work of committees and followed up by concrete actions. As one implementer has noted on the Kosovar experience, “The issue isn’t the number of public hearings – that has grown enormously. The issue is how far in advance they are publicised, who is invited, and what is the follow-up.” In other words, the promise of greater consultation will heighten public expectations. Parliaments need to be able to demonstrate that such initiatives are achieving results; otherwise, the impression given to the public is simply one of window-dressing. For instance, in one Southeast Asian country, authors have noted, “Public hearings are just ritual. They give the appearance that people have a right to participate but in fact the people’s input from the limited participation is not considered an issue in the decision-making process.”⁷⁴

Yet there are examples of parliaments that have a routine and regular commitment to such consultation. In Canada, public consultation is now a routine part of the budget cycle. Each year, “the Finance Committee of the House of Commons receives submissions from Canadians on the federal budget, conducts hearings

across the country, and submits a report outlining recommendations for the next federal budget.”⁷⁵ In Latin America, Chile has been described as an “exemplar of a parliament with institutionalised ties with citizens.” Twice per legislative session, during so-called *Jornados Temáticos* (Thematic Days), each standing committee convenes open sessions wherein citizens are invited to discuss their ideas with legislators.⁷⁶ The authors note that no other legislature in the region has made its committees quite so accessible to citizens, but, in other parts of the region, parliaments are seeking to integrate public consultation into their core activity. In several Latin American legislatures, including Brazil, Bolivia and Ecuador, standing committees are exclusively dedicated to receiving proposals from individual constituents and citizen groups. In Bolivia, the parliamentary Rules of Procedure stipulate that each committee must devote one of its weekly sessions to public hearings. Where a bill is not deemed ‘urgent’ or of ‘extreme importance’, the committee is obliged to hold at least one hearing of at least one hour to receive input. Committee secretaries are also obliged to announce public hearing agendas on the parliamentary website and television station.

Although committees appear to be making much greater efforts to consult the public during their deliberations, the responses from the survey of parliaments and interviews with MPs suggest that they face continuing problems of public awareness and sense of impact. For instance, one legislature reported that “the principal legislative change” in opening parliament to citizens was the adoption of an act that, among other reforms, introduced the practice of public hearings. However, that parliament reports that, in five years since the act’s adoption, “the assessment of the impact of the institution of public hearings is ambiguous. According to the proponents of hearings, the institution is used too rarely and is not fully used to improve the quality of the law. Transcripts are published [on the parliament’s] website but there is no analysis or summary of the debate. [... The institution of public hearings] in practice [is] assessed to be showy.” These themes are returned to in the conclusion, but the next section examines how some parliaments are using more participatory techniques as an alternative way of engaging citizens.

73 Parliamentary Centre 2009:32.

74 Siroros and Haller 2000:157.

75 Citizens for Public Justice 2010.

76 Arnold 2012 (forthcoming).

2.5.2. Issues as Entry-Points: Using Participatory Techniques

People – like most politicians – tend to be motivated by issues rather than process. So it is not surprising to find greater levels of participation around subjects that stir the public consciousness. Furthermore, parliaments in many countries are trying to find ways of engaging citizens in the process of developing policy responses to contentious political subjects.

Increasingly, citizens are being given the opportunity to determine those priority issues for themselves. Citizens' initiatives, petitions and referenda allow non-parliamentary actors to partially determine the legislative agenda. These mechanisms are intended to provide a channel for, and provide parliamentarians with insight into, matters of crucial national interest – and they appear to be growing in frequency. In 2003, almost 10,000 referenda were recorded in US communities alone.⁷⁷ Across 53 countries included in the 2008 World Values Survey, 41 percent of respondents, a clear plurality, held that citizens' ability to change laws through referenda was "an essential characteristic of democracy."⁷⁸ In eight countries, that figure exceeded 60 percent⁷⁹ and in only Malaysia, the Netherlands, Thailand and the United Kingdom did it fall below 20 percent.⁸⁰ However, their popularity should not obscure the fact that instruments of direct democracy work best when complementing the representative process rather than replacing it. As International IDEA's handbook on the topic suggests, "Direct democracy mechanisms and mechanisms of representative democracy can complement and enrich each other rather than being seen as opposed."⁸¹

In the first place, the involvement of the public in such techniques is patchy at best. In Eastern and Central Europe, experience shows that most referenda are initiated from within parliament, but only a few by citizens. Citizen-initiated referenda often barely reach the required threshold and, tellingly, often aim to override decisions taken by the legislature. Ilonszki reports that,

of the seven initiatives put to one Baltic parliament since 2000, only one became a draft law. In another Eastern European legislature, 49 of the 55 drafts between 1999 and 2005 failed to meet technical requirements. Such initiatives often only serve "party-elite interests – misused or even abused", such as in one parliament, where a sudden spike in petitions corresponded to a nadir of partisan conflict and blockade, with the opposition effectively using the tool as a blockade.⁸²

One trend is particularly noticeable in the responses from parliaments and MPs, namely, the enthusiasm for parliamentary petitions as an outlet for public concern. A number of parliaments spread across the globe, including those of Australia, Bangladesh, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Germany, India, Slovenia, and South Africa, now have parliamentary committees dedicated to receiving, reviewing and following up on public petitions. However, the level of use and impact of such petitions varies between parliaments. The Bundestag reports that its introduction of an e-petition tool led to a substantial increase in the number of petitions filed. However, in Central and Eastern Europe, Ilonszki once again reports that, "According to parliamentary sources only a few petitions have been satisfied in the period [since 2001], which reflects clearly the problematic nature of petitions – namely that there is no control over the outcome."⁸³

Other parliaments have sought to use participatory techniques as part of a broader consultation exercise. For instance, in the wake of Iceland's economic meltdown in 2008, a series of protests culminated in the resignation of the government. In November 2009, a collection of grassroots think tanks, collectively dubbed 'the *Anthill*', gathered 0.5 percent of the country's total population for a national conference on the country's future course. In the midst of the outpouring, "much of the public attention was directed at the fact that Iceland had never had an actual democratic discourse concerning its Constitution."⁸⁴ In response, the Althingi took the unprecedented step of passing a bill commissioning a seven-member Constitutional Committee, which was in turn responsible for organizing a National Gathering on the Constitution and reporting its findings to parliament.

77 Ibid.

78 World Values Survey, 5th Wave.

79 Andorra, Argentina, Burkina Faso, Egypt, Georgia, Germany, Switzerland and Viet Nam.

80 World Values Survey 5th Wave.

81 IDEA 2008.

82 Ilonszki 2011.

83 Ibid.

84 *Sigmundsdottir* 2011.

In total, 950 randomly selected citizens (from a population of 320,000) participated in the forum. This was then the basis for wider consultation: the Constitutional Council updated its website on a weekly basis by posting new draft clauses on which citizens could comment. To maximize their interaction with the Council, members of the public could also join a discussion on the Council's Facebook page (which received more than 1,300 'likes') or access interviews and footage of Council members on Twitter, YouTube and Flickr. In one of the world's most computer literate societies, where two thirds of the population is on Facebook, the initiative spoke to citizens in their own language. Or, as a local journalist, put it: "How do you write a new constitution in the 21st century? You go where the people are – online."⁸⁵

The key point of the Icelandic example was the extent to which the exercise reinforced the central role of parliament, and other countries have used tools of participatory democracy within the parliamentary process to good effect. The Congress of Argentina, for example, has collaborated with *Directorio Legislativo*, a parliamentary monitoring organization (PMO) founded in 1999, to use dialogue to "promote the strengthening of the legislative branch of government and the consolidation of the democratic system." The growth of PMOs will be considered at greater length in the next chapter, but it is worth noting that *Directorio's* approach was to bridge the gap between parliament and civil society to create a 'safe space' for dialogue around some of the most contentious issues of the day. Specifically, they established a 'unit on consensus-building' "to make the National Congress a sounding ground for societal debates in Argentina". As well as running programmes on renewable energy and climate change, the longest-standing of the initiatives aims to build consensus over the fraught Argentinean agro-industrial sector, which has long been source of hostility in the country.

Tensions over export curbs began in 2008, when a series of farmers' strikes of unprecedented size gripped the country, leading to scenes of protestors emptying milk tankers onto the road, sporadic violent clashes between demonstrators and authorities, hundreds of road blockades and empty supermarket shelves. The

issue has placed the powerful farm lobby and government at loggerheads and, over the intervening years, has extended into prolonged periods of turbulence. As the crisis came to a head in 2009, the organization launched a multi-stage programme of consultation, involving fieldwork, public debates and a series of cross-sectoral conferences held at regular intervals. *Directorio Legislativo* first circulated a 'document of consensus' containing ten recommendations and guidelines, reached through work with a diverse set of social actors, for various elements of agro-industrial policy.⁸⁶ Signed by over 500 civil society organizations, the document provided politicians with concrete insight into community perspectives and served as a basis for informed discussion. Since then, the organization has used its convening power and close partnership with the Congress to hold a series of debates around the country, each resulting in a written agreement that is then shared with the committee in order to facilitate legislative discussion.

In all such exercises, the key to success appears to depend less on the precise mechanism used than on the public belief that there is some merit to being involved, that the subject is important and that they have a genuine opportunity to influence any decisions that might result. It is undoubtedly the case that parliaments could make greater use of participatory techniques in ways that reinforce the central functions of parliament. Furthermore, the Argentinean example highlights the important roles that outside organizations can play in partnering and strengthening the representativeness of parliament. However, the extent to which parliaments are meeting the expectations and aspirations of voters is unclear, even here. The next section looks at how newer technologies are – or might be – used to create a more permanent dialogue between citizens and parliaments.

2.6. The Possibility of Permanent Dialogue: Parliaments and Communication Technology

Much has been made of the potential of communication technologies to create a genuine dialogue

85 Siddique 2011.

86 Fundacion Directorio Legislativo 2010.

between electors and elected. Professor Stephen Coleman, one of the most insightful and thoughtful commentators in the field, pointed out in 2005 that the internet offered the chance to move away from so-called 'megaphone' politics, where people are talked at, to one which is based on two-way communication and discussion.⁸⁷ Yet evidence suggests that parliaments are far from realizing the full potential of technology. Material constraints, though very challenging in some developing countries, are not enough to explain such a widespread situation. The 2010 World e-Parliament Report, while noting that 97 percent of parliaments had an active online presence, lamented the fact that parliaments were better at using the internet to provide information than to receive it.⁸⁸ Whereas 91 percent of committees used websites to communicate information, only 2 percent used them to solicit submissions. Among the least used technological innovations were e-consultation on legislation (16 percent), e-consultation on policy (15 percent) and online discussion (10 percent). The numbers using social media tools such as Twitter (12 percent) and Facebook (13 percent) were equally poor.⁸⁹

It should be noted that there is also a continuing disparity among parliaments' relative take-up rates of internet tools, and the World e-Parliament Report highlights the extent to which parliaments' internet presence is closely aligned with their respective per capita gross national income (GNI).⁹⁰ Unsurprisingly, less developed countries tend to rely more heavily on radio and television to broadcast parliamentary proceedings. Yet, where internet coverage is poor, the most interesting innovations have come from the use of mobile phones. The NGO Gov2U reports, "Texting is the number one most used data service in the world, with 6.1 trillion text messages sent worldwide in 2010. In developing countries, two in three people have mobile phone subscriptions. Forty-eight million people worldwide have cell phones but no electricity [and], by 2012, 1.7 billion will have phones but no bank account."⁹¹

87 Coleman 2005.

88 Global Centre for ICT in Parliament 2010.

89 Ibid:32.

90 Ibid:35.

91 Gov2U.org Blog 2011.

The growth of mobile phone usage in the Pacific Islands has been dubbed a 'Digicel revolution' that, combined with the increased number of talk radio stations, has changed the tone of the political debate. As the authors of the regional paper commissioned for this report note, the voices of ordinary people are becoming louder through these tools: "Politicians, used to a certain status as leaders, are struggling to deal with this phenomenon. The 'Digicel revolution' [...] will in the long term alter the political system. Such communication enables communities to compare their lot, to share their thoughts, to see what is delivered in the capital but not in their island, and to focus more easily on their shared plight."⁹²

In Uganda, where internet usage stands at only 8 percent for the entire country, a pioneering project has sought to use mobile technology to allow citizens to communicate directly with their representatives. The 'parliamentary call system' (PCS) allows citizens to send messages, via SMS or voicemail, to their MPs. MPs can then log into an online tracking system to check and follow up citizen requests. Although the project is at an early stage, MPs appear to welcome the greater interaction and, during the pilot, 88 percent of participants said they would use the system again.⁹³

Although the use of internet and web technologies is more prevalent in affluent countries, the rapid spread of such technology means that parliaments in all regions anticipate far greater use of the internet in coming years. The examples in this section thus tend to concentrate on specific regions, but their experiments, and the principles behind them, have much wider resonance.

In response to the IPU survey for this report, almost all of the parliaments highlighted the fact that their web presence had been, or was in the process of being, revamped to make material more accessible to voters in recent years. Many of these improvements exist in the searchability of parliamentary data, such as that of the Japanese Diet, whose database of transcripts now goes back to 1947. Others, such as the Swedish Riksdag or the Indian Rajya Sabha, have focused on making information on their websites usable and accessible.

92 Nakamura, Clements and Hegarty 2011.

93 Sacramone-Lutz, Grossman and Humphreys 2010:5.

The Riksdag's site was redesigned in 2006 to include features such as a legislative digest summary, sections in 'Easy Swedish' (written in a more informal style) and films about the role and function of parliament. The site now averages 3.5 million visits per year compared with 400,000 before its rebuild.

That technology has also increased the capacity of parliaments to broadcast proceedings far beyond what was possible through TV and radio. Webcasting appears to be the biggest area of growth for parliamentary websites: although around 43 percent of websites currently show plenary sessions and 20 percent broadcast committee hearings, these numbers are set to increase to 70 percent and 50 percent in the next few years.⁹⁴ Part of the answer may lie in the sorts of targeted streaming of parliamentary information and proceedings made possible by the internet. Whereas television offers broadcasting, websites thrive on 'narrowcasting'. The value of the internet for parliaments is partly in the volume of information that parliaments can now convey as well as in the ability to target that information, responding to a specific audience interest with detailed information, analysis and coverage.

The looming problem for parliaments in general, though, is not simply one of providing information – it is deciding how that information is selected, packaged and presented. Parliaments are competing with a huge number of other sources of information and individuals can easily go elsewhere if they cannot find what they need at the parliament's website. However, marshalling all that information, providing summaries or highlighting interesting items presents problems for parliamentary staff. As one staff member in the UK put it, "Who decides what is newsworthy in parliament? It immediately implies an ordering of importance, which takes us into the realm of politics."

Increasingly, though, parliaments are finding ways of using technology to allow voters themselves to decide the issues they wish to follow. Some parliaments are grappling with this challenge better than others. At the subnational level, the parliament of Catalonia has created an all-encompassing portal, described as a "one-stop shop" that includes such features such as 'My House' to track comments and subscriptions, 'The President

Responds' to share questions and ideas with parliament's president and 'Questions from Citizens' to deal with issues of parliamentary function, as well as links to members' blogs, twitter feeds and educational services.⁹⁵

The greatest number of innovations appears to be taking place in Latin America. Bolivia's *Vota por tu parlamentario* enables citizens to appraise parliamentarians' performance, while, in Peru, the *Parlamento Virtual Peruano* offers information on the legislative process, promotes debate on bills under consideration and serves as an outlet for citizens to voice their opinions. Similarly, Chile's *Senador Virtual* creates a space for visitors to the parliamentary webpage to cast a vote on bills under consideration and to submit proposals for committee analysis. In Costa Rica, 'People's Initiative' offices have gone online, allowing citizens to submit legislative proposals through the web.

The Brazilian House of Representatives' website enables citizens to automatically 'follow' individual MPs in the section *Acompanhe seu Deputado*, automatically receiving bulletins on their activity. One user of the site reports, "To evaluate this tool, I signed up on May 11, 2010 and randomly chose to follow Deputy M. I soon received three email bulletins about M's legislative work, each of which was detailed, well-organized, and as far as I could tell, constructed without bias. Each bulletin offered: M's roll call votes; a list of his floor speeches, with links to transcripts; and links to relevant parliamentary radio or TV clips (and transcripts)."⁹⁶

As Cristiano Faria writes on the 'Personal Democracy Forum', "ICT can act like steroids, enabling us to pump up individual voices, and foster a greater and more direct interaction between society and parliaments. One instance of this kind of high-tech participatory vitamin is the e-Democracia project in Brazil."⁹⁷ The project's primary objective is to facilitate access to the corridors of decision-making for individuals, including young people and members of minority groups, who are unaffiliated with the powerful interests that traditionally "enjoy access to the center of power in Brasilia". The portal's 'Wikilegis' has attracted a wide diversity of voices, including, in one notable instance, a youth

94 Ibid:31-3.

95 Hansard Society 2010a:17-8.

96 Arnold 2012 (forthcoming).

97 Faria 2010.

leader of a native tribe in the Amazonian jungle – emphasizing the potential reach of the technology.

Less than a year after its creation in June 2009, the portal had swelled to encompass five thematic legislative communities (TLCs), 23 virtual fora, 106 topics, 624 contributions and 3,151 registered participants. e-Democracia thus served as a catalyst for four bills, including legislation on climate change, space exploration and youth policy. The House promoted the site through traditional media, but also reached out to targeted demographics through topical blogs and social networking sites, including Facebook, Twitter, and the Brazilian platform Orkut. What distinguished e-Democracia from other similar initiatives was that it made the connection between public input and the resulting legislative output: “One important issue that normally causes digital participation to fail is the lack of connection between people’s contributions and how laws are actually drafted. Writing legal text involves great technical complexity. e-Democracia has minimized this problem by engaging the assistance of legislative consultants, who serve, essentially, as ‘technical translators’ during the entire participatory process.”⁹⁸

In Southeastern Europe, the National Assembly of The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia was featured as an example for emulation at the 2009 World e-Parliament Conference. Jani Makraduli, the Assembly’s Vice President and one of the programme’s godfathers, explained that the parliament’s ICT strategy “covers the entire legislation process, including: automation of the work of the President of the Assembly, Secretary General, MPs, parliamentary groups and committees; parliamentary sessions; and MP questions. The e-Parliament system also embraces the public web portal, Parliament Web TV, scorecards and key performance indicators.”

The integration of information combined with responsiveness appears to be the real value of such initiatives. Makraduli has proposed that all 75 constituency casework tracking databases be centrally linked to ensure that citizen complaints are considered and processed efficiently. He envisages eventually synchronizing the casework databases with the legislative calendar and transcript so that citizens could see when and how input given to MPs in their home districts was then

considered within parliament – a system that would directly connect parliamentarians’ constituency and legislative work. Thanks to an initiative already underway, in 2012, MPs will be able to remotely log in to their constituent casework databases from any web-enabled device, and thus have access to citizens’ opinions and concerns at home, when travelling or even on the floor of parliament.⁹⁹

“The potential uses of technology to engage citizens and involve them in parliamentary activity do offer the promise of permanent dialogue.”

The parliament’s website also allows citizens to cast simulated votes for or against pending legislation. Of the rationale for such an expansive programme, Makraduli explains:

Today, the e-Parliament system empowers citizens to take action in representative democracy. The solution allows constituents to connect with elected representatives in order to vote on ongoing bills and decisions. At the same time, citizens, MPs and government officials can track the online versus real votes. Faster decision-making and lower bureaucracy are achieved through information systems that enable access to information to anyone, anywhere and on any device.

In conclusion, the potential uses of technology to engage citizens and involve them in parliamentary activity do offer the promise of permanent dialogue. Yet, here, as in other areas of outreach, firm conclusions are difficult to reach, partly because many of the innovations remain at the experimental phase, partly because the strategic objectives of such initiatives are often vague and partly because qualitative assessments are difficult to find. There are some examples that are undoubtedly giving citizens greater influence, as cited above. But these are rare.

98 Ibid.

99 At the time of writing, this feature is currently under development by the Institute for Parliamentary Democracy (IPD).

Parliaments appear to be facing three main challenges to using new technologies to engage the public. First, as explained earlier, the volume of information about parliaments publicly available is greater than ever before, thanks to parliamentary websites. But the question of how to order and filter that information for the user takes parliamentary staff into difficult political territory. In some cases, parliamentary monitoring organizations can play a complementary role (as noted in the next chapter) to interpret such information for parliaments.

Second, rates of take-up remain low. In Latin America, for all the innovation and good intentions, awareness and involvement of these initiatives are relatively low. As one academic notes, while several legislatures trumpet the opportunities for citizens to submit legislative proposals on their websites, “many citizens are not aware of their existence”.¹⁰⁰ While six Latin American parliaments have a provision for legislative initiatives introduced by citizens, not a single instance was recorded between 1980 and 2008 according to one study, which goes on to find that “out of the 31 national level direct democratic events which took place in Latin America” during that period, all but nine were mandatory referenda related to constitutionally predetermined issues or were “triggered at the instigation of the executive branch of government”.¹⁰¹ Moreover, according to the 2008 *Latinobarometro*, a majority of citizens in all regional countries save Brazil and Paraguay reported that they “would never contact a member of parliament to resolve problems that affect [their] community”.¹⁰² Similarly, a former member of a Chilean PMO was quick to say of *Senador Virtual* when interviewed for this report, “It’s a great idea, but in over a year of monitoring MPs’ speeches in parliament, I have yet to see anyone referring to the citizen input collected through the site”.

Third, although new communication technologies dramatically widen the possibilities for consultation and dialogue with citizens, they are a means to an end, not an end in themselves. They offer both the capacity to reach a far wider range of people and the opportunity to develop systems that involve a genuine and continuing dialogue between parliament and citizens. But there

needs to be the political will to make this happen. The use of technology is likely to be most successful when it forms part of a much wider commitment from parliament to involve the public in the policy-making process. In other words, these mechanisms are not an alternative to other forms of consultation, but need to be integrated into a wider engagement strategy.

2.7. Conclusion: What Does Success Look Like?

This chapter sought to cover the vast array of initiatives being employed by parliamentary institutions to improve public information, understanding and engagement. It has, inevitably, only scratched the surface of the many efforts enacted, but, in general, it appears that parliaments are responding to the public demand for greater access and information by adopting a range of mechanisms to bring more people into contact with the institutions. From the use of Open Days and Visitors’ Centres to parliamentary broadcasting and websites, these techniques are becoming increasingly inventive. And they are finding an audience – both demand and supply appear to be increasing exponentially. The volume of information on offer is staggering. As Denis Marshall, the former Secretary General of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, has noted, “It is probably possible to monitor a [p]arliament in session somewhere 24 hours a day.”¹⁰³ The difference, even in the last 10 years, is remarkable. John Clerc, the former Deputy Secretary General of the Swiss Parliament has reflected of his country, “Public interest in parliament has changed over time. The Swiss Parliament published no record of its debates before 1891 for fear that people would stay in cafés and read them. Nowadays, all this is available on the Internet.”¹⁰⁴

The evidence from the IPU survey of parliaments, the analysis of numerous parliamentary strategic plans and the responses from parliamentary staff and politicians suggest a qualitative shift in how institutions are approaching the public. As the UK’s Hansard Society has perceptively noted in a global survey of outreach strategies:

100 Arnold 2012 (forthcoming).

101 Breuer 2011.

102 *Latinobarometro* 2008.

103 Raine and Bresnahan 2003:5.

104 ASGP, IPU and EBU-UER 2006:21.

“Over the course of the last decade parliaments that once were very inward looking institutions, focused solely on delivering services for [m]embers and supporting the legislative and scrutiny process, have had to grapple with broader political challenges. Growing political disengagement, diffuse channels of accountability, increased policy and legislative complexity, and declining coverage of parliaments by traditional media have all contributed to the sense of a democratic deficit and an information gap about the work of parliamentary institutions. Increasingly these institutions have therefore had to shift from being service providers within their institution, to service providers externally to the public. They have become promoters of the values and operation of parliamentary democracy, bringing about a cultural and attitudinal shift within each institution based on a recognition that the public are their core stakeholders equally as much as, if not more than, the elected members”¹⁰⁵

The lack of firm data and analysis in this area makes definitive conclusions difficult. Even aside from the consultative aspect of engagement, many parliaments have very little sense of strategy, few indicators and thus little sense of what constitutes success in parliamentary outreach. Most parliaments, when asked, point to the increased number of visitors as evidence that their strategies are working. As one parliament answered in the IPU survey, “There has not been any research or study on the impact of these investments, but by looking at the statistics you can say that outreach is doing quite well.” This is fairly typical, although other parliaments were less candid in admitting they did not evaluate the success of their initiatives. Yet, even where parliaments seek to assess their effectiveness, the problems they are trying to address (public understanding, trust and perceptions of parliament) have multiple causes. This means that, realistically speaking, a parliamentary strategy is likely to have only a partial effect on such outcomes and separating the impact of a successful outreach strategy from all other possible causes is difficult. Nevertheless, the absence of clear, identifiable objectives against which to judge such programmes remains a continuing problem.

Perhaps the more difficult issue consists in integrating institutional and political responses to public consultation. Although it would be difficult to find any politician who would argue against the merits of greater consultation, the

challenge for parliaments consists in implementing that principle so that it genuinely involves the public in a policy-making partnership. The promise of greater consultation needs to be backed up by a sense of tangible impact. Undoubtedly, parliaments are now doing more to consult and engage the public than at any time previously. However, there is a continuing tension between the institutional and political incentives. As this chapter has noted, the key to the public’s perception of consultation depends more on the issues at hand, the amount of time and information given over to the exercise and the follow-up by politicians. Here, performance is mixed at best.

There are undoubtedly examples of effective consultation and citizen participation in different parts of the world, but they have tended to work well only when there has been significant political momentum behind them – either from politicians or from public outcry. Furthermore, the danger for many parliaments is that the promise of greater influence heightens public expectations that are then not met, thus undermining faith in the parliamentary process. The dichotomy is highlighted in Latin America, where such emphasis has been put on citizen engagement. As one author notes, “Latin America appears to have made extraordinary moves toward citizen control over legislation over the last decade. In some cases constitutions specifically assign citizens an unusual amount of agenda setting power in the parliament. However, ‘people’s initiatives’ tend to go nowhere unless MPs make them a priority. Only in Uruguay has there been true ‘bottom-up’ legislation.”¹⁰⁶

The future of political representation is likely to be characterized by greater dialogue between people and parliaments. The tenor of the reforms in this chapter suggests that the general trend is toward greater engagement by parliamentary institutions and – as the next two chapters will show – increasing responsiveness of individual politicians to their voters. This is due, in part, to increased expectations, electoral incentives and the proliferation and immediacy of communication technologies. However, achieving this dialogue requires reconsidering the heart of how parliaments are organized. Reinforcing the central roles of parliament and engaging the public will involve managing what are sometimes competing institutional and political priorities around issues of representation. These are examined in more detail in the next two chapters.

105 Hansard Society 2010a:68.

106 Arnold 2012 (forthcoming).



RESPONSIVENESS AND ACCOUNTABILITY

3.1. How Did my MP Do? The Evolution of Parliamentary Scorecards

The Ugandan 'Parliamentary Scorecard' was first published in 2006. As well as providing factual information about the composition of the parliament and its members, the initial publication from the NGO Africa Leadership Institute (ALI) also sought to rate the performance of individual MPs, listing how many times they had been involved in 17 different parliamentary activities such as number of questions asked, number of motions or bills brought forward and number of statements made. The overall total of contributions was accumulated at the bottom of the table and each MP was given a rating between A (for those who had made more than 16 contributions) and F (for those who had made no contribution at all). The results were damning. The report awarded an A rating to only seven MPs, while 65 (21 percent) were given an F rating. The report found that 237 of the 305 MPs (77

percent) made fewer than six contributions in total.¹⁰⁷

The reaction of the politicians subject to such scrutiny for the first time was predictably hostile, with MPs from all sides questioning the report's motives, its methodology and the right of an NGO to rate MPs who were directly accountable to their voters. Yet, in successive years, ALI has continued to publish annual reports on MPs' performance and it is increasingly becoming part of the political landscape in Uganda.

That continued presence appears to be due to three factors. First is the fact that ALI's leader, David Pulkol, is himself a former member of parliament and minister, but also, as head of ESO, the government's intelligence agency, he was the state's 'chief spy'. His time in parliament meant that he understood its particular challenges and the likely reaction of MPs. But he is also not a man to be easily cowed and is unapologetic about the initiative, describing rollout of the scorecard

¹⁰⁷ Africa Leadership Institute 2007.

as similar to “throwing an object into a beehive, they will all be out to sting you”. The good thing, he claims, is that the personal attacks are coming from MPs of all parties, and “being bashed by both sides means that we are right.”¹⁰⁸

Second, although AFLI is willing to take on its critics, it also listens to them. The methodology for the scorecard has continued to evolve in response to the comments of MPs, journalists, academics and the public. AFLI has a strong desire to make the scorecard fair and transparent and has been working with Columbia University and Stanford University in the US to improve the methodology. From the rudimentary first report, the scorecard is now perhaps one of the more sophisticated analyses of parliamentary activity. As well as providing basic information on each individual MP (constituency, party, committee, etc.), the scorecard now tracks MPs’ work in the plenary session, in committee and in the constituency. Moreover, activity in the plenary session is not judged just by number of questions or speeches, but by the impact of those interventions and the follow-up to them. And in a shrewd move, the card now incorporates a peer assessment, where MPs are rated by their colleagues – suggesting that many MPs are now engaging with the endeavour.

Third, the scorecard has resonated with the wider public, in its attempts to improve the quality of information provided to the public. As the foreword to its first report argued, for democracy to flourish, voters need reliable information about their MPs, which was otherwise unavailable or difficult to find. AFLI believes that it is filling a gap, which responds to wider concerns about the accountability of politicians. The scorecard therefore seeks to summarize and package information in a user-friendly manner to encourage informed decision-making by voters. And the AFLI is now putting this principle into practice by working on an outreach programme and running constituency workshops on the themes and contents of the scorecards themselves, mostly with the active support of the local MPs.

The significance of the AFLI experience is that it is indicative of a much wider trend. There are now more than 190 parliamentary monitoring organizations (PMOs) in

countries around the world, which exist to bridge the perceived gap between parliaments and the people. Invariably, they provide information about, and a rating of, parliamentary performance. They are also finding an audience among the public and, increasingly, within parliaments themselves. Their growth is, in part, a reflection of the fact that the public desire for greater information and responsiveness from politicians appears to be altering the architecture of political accountability around the world. Whereas Chapter II documented the deliberate efforts by parliaments to inform and engage the public, Chapters III and IV examine how public expectations are changing the practice of parliamentary representation.

3.2. Introduction: Representation and Responsiveness

The public demand for greater accountability from politicians goes to the heart of the debate about political representation. It is about how politicians, individually and collectively, interact with and respond to the demands of their voters. Yet, arguments about the nature of parliamentary representation long precede any of the dominant trends identified in this report. Speaking to the electors of Bristol in 1774, Edmund Burke, the English political philosopher and MP, argued that he was not bound by the opinions of his constituents, but elected to make up his own mind and to reflect the national interest. His remarks started a debate that has yet to come to any definitive conclusion. Politicians and academics around the world will give a variety of responses as to whether the proper role is as a ‘delegate’ to reflect the opinion of voters, or a ‘trustee’ of the national interest – with most falling somewhere between the two.

In the two centuries since Burke’s speech, other developments have further obscured his distinction, not least the evolution of mass political parties in most parliamentary systems. In recent decades, the combination of growing individualism, the omnipresence of news media and the immediacy of new communication technologies have further altered the public understanding of political representation. The whole rationale for and direction of technological development is to enable individuals to take control of more

108 Kisangala 2009.

for themselves. At the same time, citizens have found numerous ways of articulating their political beliefs, from membership of campaigning organizations and new forms of direct democracy to buying goods only from particular shops or manufacturers based on their production and management practices. In such an era, ideas of indirect representation – where you elect someone to convey your opinions for you – feel increasingly alien.

MPs are increasingly having to justify themselves to a sceptical electorate. This has both positive and negative dimensions to it, encouraging greater accountability, but potentially constraining the scope of representation.

The cumulative effect of these trends has been a public demand for much greater accountability and responsiveness from MPs. Voters appear to be less willing to trust MPs and want greater explanation and validation of legislators' work. This chapter examines four aspects of these changes. Starting by examining the theory and the practice of the parliamentary mandate, the first section looks at how the role of political parties – and their control over MPs in parliament – is being challenged by public opinion and by the performance of parties themselves. The second section highlights how public pressure is resulting in restrictions to the parliamentary mandate itself – reforms that limit what MPs can and cannot do, such as term limits, incompatibilities and codes of conduct. The third section examines the rise of parliamentary monitoring organizations (PMOs), such as AFLI, that monitor and act as an external arbiter of the work of politicians. The final part looks briefly at how communication technologies are providing new forms of public explanation and accountability.

The overarching direction of these reforms is toward greater regulation of MPs. The parliamentary mandate is being specified and MPs are being obliged to

provide much greater explanation and description of what they do. In short, MPs are increasingly having to justify themselves to a sceptical electorate. This has both positive and negative dimensions to it, encouraging greater accountability, but potentially constraining the scope of representation. The final section suggests that, although reforms may be altering traditional ideas of parliamentary representation, the combination of regulation and explanation offers the opportunity to reinforce the position of parliament and politicians in the public sphere, provided that parliaments are willing to build on these developments.

3.2.1 The Parliamentary Mandate in Practice

The nature of the relationship between voters and their elected representatives is central to any system of parliamentary democracy. Yet, definitions as to whom and what MPs should represent vary from parliament to parliament. Where constitutions articulate the parliamentary mandate, they tend to reflect generalized notions of representing the nation; for example, the Constitution of Namibia states that members of the National Assembly “shall be representative of all the people and shall in the performance of their duties be guided by the objectives of this Constitution, by the public interest and by their conscience.”¹⁰⁹

In some constituency-based voting systems, politicians are elected to represent a particular area, but this is not a binding form of representation. Indeed, the idea of an ‘imperative’ mandate – where MPs are beholden and directly accountable to specific electorates – is disallowed in a number of constitutions. The Constitution of Rwanda is one such and states, “Every member of parliament represents the whole nation and not just those who elected or nominated him or her or the political organization on whose ticket he or she stood for election. Any imperative mandate is null and void.”¹¹⁰

The emphasis on representing the whole nation partly reflects Rwanda's recent divisive history; however, other countries, including Germany, have similar

109 Constitution of Namibia, Article 45.

110 Constitution of Rwanda, Article 64.

clauses. Under its constitution, members of the Bundestag act according to their conscience and shall not be bound by any order or instruction. Similar provisions also exist in Bulgaria, Croatia, Denmark, the Republic of Korea and Spain.

The purpose of this is to preserve the independence of the MP and ensure that an MP does not enter into any agreement to represent special interests. Under this conception, elected representatives are not obliged to support their party or decisions taken by their group in parliament. It also means that the mandate cannot be terminated prematurely, such as by a recall referendum.¹¹¹ In practice, the vast majority of countries deviate to some extent from this theory. Increasingly, reforms designed to extend the accountability of politicians are limiting the scope of that 'free representational mandate'.

Part of the issue is that, by its very nature, the parliamentary mandate is often a poor source of guidance as to how MPs should pursue their representative function. It is based on the assumption that MPs should use their own judgment as to the 'correct' approach. Yet, this means that MPs – even within the same parliament – will define their role in very different ways. A recent survey of ex-politicians in Canada, conducted by Samara, an NGO, showed a high level of misunderstanding and disagreement among politicians about whom they were there to represent and how they should go about it. The report characterized different MPs' styles – from the 'geographers' who saw their job principally to represent the local area, to the 'partisans' who regarded themselves mainly as party representatives, and the 'philosophers' who saw themselves, first and foremost, as representatives of the national interest.¹¹²

Being an elected politician is one of the few professions for which there is no job description and this diversity of opinion and lack of agreement about the role of parliamentarians is reflected in almost every parliament around the world. Research conducted by the African Legislatures Project highlights similar differences of opinion within parliaments on the continent. In Namibia, more than half of MPs believed that their principal focus was the national interest – but this was

the only country where a majority of MPs held to one position. In Malawi, nearly half believed the constituency was most important, but close to 30 percent saw the party as the main source of representation. And, in Kenya, opinion was more evenly split, with 40 percent identifying the national interest and 35 percent citing the constituency as most important.¹¹³

In practice, individual MPs rarely fall neatly into one category or another, but are aware of the fact that they are there to represent a variety of interests. This response from a politician in Algeria, when asked to whom he felt most accountable, highlights some of those conflicts:

Generally speaking, my citizens, my region and the country as a whole. [...] There are large projects that represent the whole country – Algeria is almost a continent itself, the largest country in Africa. I also represent the region because it is those voters who elected me, and my political party. But, mostly, the people, they come first.

The fact that there is no definitive answer as to whom MPs represent is to be expected and is arguably healthy in a modern democracy. The task of parliament is to aggregate public opinion and reflect the national interest. Individual members of parliament may therefore be elected to represent particular interests, such as a political party, social class, ethnic grouping or locality, but they should also be balancing the interests of each of those groups whom they represent with one another and with the national interest as a whole. The process is one of continual recalibration on the part of the representative. In short, this flexibility, and the ability to deliberate, reflect and decide on issues as they emerge, is an integral part of parliamentary democracy.

The counter argument is that the lack of a specific focus for representation can also be construed as a dangerous ambiguity. As the Samara report suggests, the disagreement among politicians themselves about their correct role, means that it is not surprising that the public themselves often do not have a clear view about that role either. That lack of public understanding may or may not be to do with the definition of the MPs' role – in a recent poll, 69 percent of Tanzanian

111 Van Der Hulst 2000:9.

112 Samara 2010.

113 Barkan et al., 2010:17-19.

voters thought that the most important job of the MP was to 'represent', rather than to 'provide services', legislation and oversight, but it is not clear what these respondents thought 'representation' entailed.¹¹⁴

Around the world, the thrust of reforms appears to be toward specifying what MPs do more closely and thus limit the scope of their activity. In countries where trust in politicians and parties is already low, instances of corruption or illegal behaviour are frequently used to suggest that politicians need to be made more accountable to the people who elect them and that their behaviour needs to be regulated more tightly. But, more generally, public concern appears to be increasing the need for MPs to account for their actions in numerous ways. The next three sections examine 1) how these arguments are manifesting themselves in parliaments around the world through the changing roles of political parties, 2) reforms directly designed to make MPs more accountable and 3) the growth of parliamentary monitoring organizations.

3.2.2 Collective vs. Individual Representation: The Role of Political Parties

The most obvious source of conflict for most members of parliament is that between the policies of the party whom they represent and other interests, local and national. Most academic studies seeking to establish whether politicians properly represent voters have tended to focus on the voting records of MPs (this is particularly so in US political science) and on the extent to which they tally with the policy preferences of their voters. This analysis is based on the assumption of individual representation – that is, the extent to which individual politicians reflect the views of electors. In practice, of course, the vast majority of politicians in most countries are elected as members of a political party to promote certain policies and then judged by voters on their ability to implement the party's agenda – which, in other words, is a system of collective representation. However, given the diverse set of demands that MPs are called upon to reflect, expectations of individual accountability may frequently contrast with those of collective accountability.

114 Afrobarometer Briefing Paper No. 59.

This tension is complicated by the fact that political parties are facing problems of relevance and legitimacy in all corners of the world. This report does not provide a detailed analysis of the state of political parties, partly because they vary hugely in different regions. However, in broad terms, they tend to conform to one of three sets of problems in newly established democracies. First, in some regions, the political party system is characterized by high volatility, with many fragmented parties that tend to appear and disappear relatively quickly and that have shallow roots within the electorate. Countries such as Papua New Guinea, Peru, the Philippines, Poland, Thailand and Vanuatu are typical of this trend. Second, at the other end of the spectrum are countries that are characterized by one-party dominance and controlled by a highly organized and centralized political party that prevents any new entrants to the system. Many countries in South America, sub-Saharan Africa and the former Soviet Union conform to this model. Third, and common in both models above, many parties are a leader-centric, top-down, characterized by self-interest and without any obvious electoral constituency, ideology or clear party programme.¹¹⁵

In many parts of the world, and particularly in longer-established democracies, the low levels of trust and political activism and the decline of voter identification are symptomatic of another set of problems for political parties as representative vehicles. At the peak of the UK's levels of party membership in the early 1950s, the Conservatives and the Labour Party claimed approximately 3 million and 1 million members, respectively. In 2010, those numbers stood at approximately 250,000 and 166,000 members, respectively. The World Values Survey showed that people with little or no trust in parties rose from 51 percent in 1990 to over 72 percent in 2008.¹¹⁶ These trends can be seen in other countries with long-standing parliaments and further examples can also be found elsewhere. For example, in Morocco, which has the most developed party system in the Arab world, a poll in 2001 discovered that only 8.7 percent of the public had any sympathy with any of the political parties.¹¹⁷

115 Carothers 2006.

116 World Values Survey, Four-wave aggregate of Values Studies

117 Carothers 2006:40.

Political parties evolved and expanded because they were seen as an effective mechanism for representing the public interest and organizing political debate. But in democracies old and new, they are increasingly being seen as getting in the way of effective representation, rather than as facilitating it. People simply do not seem to define themselves in the same way that many political parties seek to represent them within parliament. Specifically, the public seems to believe that parties restrict the freedom of politicians to represent their interests. The report 'World Public Opinion on Political Tolerance', published in 2009, showed that, in 20 of out 23 nations polled, the public believed MPs were not able to diverge from the political party line. In only one country (Chile) did a majority believe that they were free to express their own opinions.¹¹⁸

In practice, the willingness of politicians to deviate from their party line varies enormously from country to country. One study of democracies established since 1945 found party discipline was generally high, despite variation within and among countries.¹¹⁹ But specific country studies, such as recent analyses in the UK, suggest that the likelihood of MPs to rebel has never been higher.¹²⁰ That diversity is also evident in newer democracies, as highlighted by data from the African Legislatures Project. At one end of the spectrum, 91 percent of Kenyan MPs said they would defy the party if a policy was opposed by their constituency or went against their constituency's interests. At the other end, 88 percent of Mozambican MPs said they would vote with the party – although this is largely explained by the fact that Mozambique uses a PR list system, which renders their re-election more dependent on the opinion of party leaders than on voters. Yet, even within the same electoral systems, there is a divided opinion. In Malawi, the split was 31 percent supporting the party and 49 percent going with the constituency, while, in Zambia the numbers were equal with 40 percent of MPs on both sides of the issue.¹²¹ One Macedonian MP interviewed for this report had the peculiar experience of standing for office under a

majoritarian and PR system alike. Of their respective effects on his behaviour, he said, "Under the majoritarian system, we were servants of the citizen. Now, we are slaves of the party. I have only voted against my party three times [in a decade of service]. I know that is nothing. We have simply become voting machines: the government presses the red button and the opposition, the green."

The other countervailing trend related to party political representation is the phenomenon of MPs switching parties. Although relatively rare in established democracies, it has been prevalent in countries such as Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Indonesia, Japan, some of Central and Eastern Europe and much of the Pacific Island region.¹²² A growing number of states, estimated to number 40, have adopted anti-defection laws, including constitutional clauses that penalize members of parliament who leave their parliamentary party.¹²³

Such laws intend to impose a degree of internal discipline and cohesion and exist mostly where the party system is fragile. They are often a reaction to frequent party-switching by MPs seeking patronage, influence or office; one study of Brazil, for example, found that legislators' principal reason for changing parties was to help them in "search of national and gubernatorial pork".¹²⁴ In India, an anti-defection law was introduced to deter "rampant floor-crossing [... with MPs] lured by the prospect of office or other blandishments"¹²⁵, after 32 governments collapsed as a result of floor-crossing and 212 defectors were rewarded with ministerial positions.¹²⁶ In South Africa, the constitutional provision that prevented defection was repealed in 2002, allowing two 15-day windows for such movements, yet one study found that this only reinforced the dominance of the ruling ANC.¹²⁷

In many emerging democracies, party cohesion needs strengthening, but, in these same countries, there are also concerns about the extent to which the anti-defection laws limit MPs' political independence. The vast majority of states expressly forbid the idea of

118 World Public Opinion.org and IPU 2009.

119 Sieberer 2006:150-78.

120 See the work of Philip Cowley at www.revolt.co.uk, specifically Cowley and Stuart 2010 (<http://www.revolt.co.uk/Wobbly%20Wings.pdf>)

121 Barkan et al. 2010:17-19.

122 Owens 2003.

123 Nikolenyi 2011; Janda 2009.

124 Janda 2009:9.

125 IANS/ India eNews 2009.

126 PRS blog 2011.

127 Masemola 2007.

the imperative mandate and there are only six countries where the constitution penalizes defection and voting against the party line.¹²⁸ In other words, MPs can in theory still exercise their right to a free vote. Yet, the existence of anti-defection laws undoubtedly strengthens party leaders and makes deviation from the party line a potentially costly move.

Effective political parties are essential for the proper functioning of a parliament. Parties are the basis around which parliamentary business is organized. Negotiation between the parties determines legislative priorities, committee complexion and often parliamentary resources. In a highly fragmented parliament in which there are many parties and poor internal party discipline, even the most basic agreements are difficult to reach. But a parliament dominated by one party with no opposition is likely to suffer the opposite problem in that it will offer almost no oversight of government or legislation.

The key point is that parties and politicians need to demonstrate that they are responsive to public attitudes, but they also need a degree of cohesion in order to offer any form of collective representation. Many countries are still struggling with the perception that MPs are constrained by their parties and the lack of faith in parties generally. There are apparently few responses that have sought to dispel that impression. Rather, the institutional response has dealt more with party indiscipline and has sought to increase the control of parties over politicians. Finding the balance between party loyalty and responsiveness to constituents continues to elude many parliaments.

3.3 Tightening the Parliamentary Mandate

The second major trend in the apparent public desire for greater accountability from politicians has tended to focus on the scope of the mandate itself. As mentioned at the start of this chapter, parliamentary by-laws and constitutional provisions offer very little guidance about the extent of representative function or about whom MPs should represent and how.

¹²⁸ Nikolenyi 2011:13.

Members of parliament have taken advantage of this and now undertake a range of activities under the general rubric of representation. However, declining trust in politicians, parties and parliaments, combined with public perceptions of widespread corruption (often for good reason), have led to a tightening of that mandate.

Reformers have put more pressure on members of parliament to account for their activity, with reforms that tend to fall into three broad categories. The first set of reforms aims to limit the length of the parliamentary mandate, either by preventing re-election or making politicians subject to public votes of confidence or recall. The second set of reforms aims to remove potential conflicts of interest by confining extra-parliamentary activities, particularly outside earnings, and identifying incompatibilities with public office. The third set of reforms consists in the growing number of parliaments that establish codes of conduct, which aim to regulate the behaviour of parliament and MPs. All of these, though, alter the nature of the mandate and potentially limit parliaments' and MPs' ability to act.

3.3.1 Recall Referendums and Term Limits

The report's opening chapter highlighted how forms of direct democracy are becoming increasingly attractive to citizens and NGOs. The movement has perhaps gone furthest in relation to legislatures at the state level in the USA, where an increasing number of reforms have made politicians much more subject to popular whim. As a result, 19 states can now cut the legislative term short by holding a recall referendum on the performance of the legislator and 15 states now impose term limits on their legislators. The purpose of such reforms is to keep politicians attentive to the needs of their voters and to prevent a dedicated class of politicians from emerging. The success of these efforts has evidently been mixed, at best.

Elsewhere, relatively few parliaments impose such limits on their politicians. The best known examples of countries using recall include Venezuela, Kiribati, the Philippines, six of the 26 cantons in Switzerland and the province of British Columbia in Canada. Variants of recall provisions also exist in Argentina, Bolivia,

South Korea and Uganda, among others.¹²⁹ Proposals for recall have also been raised in the World Movement for Democracy and considered in countries such as India and the UK. In India, the proposal has emerged as a direct response to public concern about levels of corruption within government and would require a petition containing between 100,000 and 500,000 signatures to force a new election.

Term limits restrict the institutional memory of parliament. With no re-election, every new Congress is filled with novices... , MPs are often poorly-equipped to challenge the president, properly scrutinize legislation and represent their voters.

To the same end, other countries place term limits on politicians. The most obvious example is that of Mexico, where all elected officials at every level of government may serve only one term in office. These restrictions, originally introduced in 1932, sought to weaken the control of the political parties and to make politicians more representative of the public. In practice, the reform has had entirely the opposite effect. Because politicians cannot seek re-election, they have no incentive to pay any attention to the demands or aspirations of their voters. In short, citizens have no opportunity to punish poorly performing legislators by voting them out of office. Rather, the reform has reinforced the political party hierarchies. In order to pursue a political career, politicians move from one tier of government to another, and so depend on party chiefs to place them in different positions. As one Mexican politician commented, the need to seek re-election would make her more accountable and “the possibility of re-election gives more power to citizens”.

But, equally as damaging is the fact that term limits restrict the institutional memory of parliament. With

no re-election, every new Congress is filled with novices. Because there is little institutional hierarchy and MPs lack parliamentary experience, MPs are often poorly equipped to challenge the president, properly scrutinize legislation and represent their voters. In many new parliaments, there is a very high turnover of members, which harms the functioning of the institution. It is significant that the Handbook of National Legislatures, which was published in 2009 and sought to identify the relative strengths and weaknesses of parliaments around the world, included as one of its criteria the re-election of enough MPs to ensure that the institution has experience. As the authors argue, “[T]he sum total of expertise in the assembly on policy matters, legislative procedure, and how to resist executive encroachment depends in part on how much experience members have.”¹³⁰

3.3.2. Restricting Outside Interests

Public concern about the probity and integrity of politicians has tended to manifest itself in an increasing number of restrictions on what politicians may do outside of their parliamentary work, particularly in an effort to fight corruption. The purpose of such restrictions is to remove any potential conflicts of interest, that is, where the private interests of a politician might conflict with the public interests of those they were elected to represent. As a result, most parliaments have incompatibility rulings that prevent MPs from simultaneously holding other positions or jobs. These typically include working in sensitive professions such as the armed forces, security services, civil service or judiciary, where there would be an obvious conflict.

In recent years, the scope of these incompatibilities appears to be expanding in the name of public accountability. Often, these will include positions in any company that might benefit from government contracts or other disbursements from the state. In others, though, there is an outright ban on any other form of employment while being an elected representative. For example, the Iraqi Constitution states, “It is not permissible to combine membership of the Council of Representatives with any work or other

129 Coleman 2011; Twomey 2011.

130 Fish & Kroenig 2009:13.

official position.”¹³¹ Similarly in the Rwandan Senate, members have to give up all employment during their one seven-year term and the restrictions on the members of the lower House are extensive.

The extent to which MPs should be prohibited from having any ‘outside interests’ highlights a debate in many countries about the nature of political representation and whether being a politician should be an exclusive occupation.

However, the extent to which MPs should be prohibited from having any ‘outside interests’ highlights a debate in many countries about the nature of political representation and whether being a politician should be an exclusive occupation. In most long-established parliaments, politics developed as a part-time job, whereby members would earn their living through their chosen profession but engage in politics in their spare time. There remain some countries, such as Switzerland and Malta, where being a member of parliament is still a part-time activity, but this is becoming increasingly rare. One recent report from Switzerland suggested that, among politicians who hold outside jobs, those jobs are increasingly related to that of being a politician in the first place; these include public affairs jobs, which would create a direct conflict of interest.¹³² In Malta, the Speaker recently spoke of the inevitability of politics becoming a full-time job as the workload increased and argued that an ‘independent wage’ for politicians should be aimed at making politicians less influenced by lobbyists.¹³³

In most countries, being a politician is a full-time occupation. Here, the argument tends to divide opinion. There are those who see the dangers of an emerging breed of ‘professional politician’ that consists of

MPs who have worked only in politics and bring little outside experience to the job. According to this argument, MPs who have another profession are able to stay in touch with ‘real life’ outside of parliament. The counterargument is that, if MPs are doing their jobs properly, they should be in regular contact with citizens, either in their constituencies or through their work on committees, to understand the impact of government policies on people. Proponents of this view point to the fact that, where MPs do hold other jobs, those jobs are rarely poorly paid or might give some insight into ‘real life’, but tend to be directly related to parliament (such as advising large companies on political strategy and public affairs) or are professions such as law or journalism.

MPs themselves are divided. One Rwandan senator explained the dilemma of having to give up her law practice during her one seven-year term in office and the difficulty of trying to re-establish it when her term was up. It was, she said, pushing her toward trying to forge a long-term political career as an alternative. Another Eastern European MP lamented his ‘frozen’ position and longed for a ‘thaw’ that would allow him to work at least part-time. In other countries, MPs suggest that their private interests subsidized their services for constituents. In African and Arab countries, for example, several MPs described how they used their legal practices as constituency offices, often employing legal staff to listen to voters’ needs.

It is difficult to think of a career, other than politics, where being described as a ‘professional’ would be regarded as a vague insult. Parliaments perhaps need to make explicit the fact that the era of the ‘citizen-politician’ is no longer viable in most countries where the parliamentary workload and demands of voters mean that being an MP is inevitably full-time. While the public seem to want politicians to be properly representative and ‘one of the common people’, they also seem to want their elected officials to devote themselves full-time. The result appears to be an increasing number of restrictions on politicians’ ability to decide for themselves.

3.3.3. Codes of Conduct

The final trend towards greater control of the activities of politicians has been the emergence of parliamentary codes of conduct around the world. The number

131 Constitution of Iraq, Article 49.6.

132 Swissinfo 2004.

133 Debono 2011.

of parliaments that have codes of conduct is steadily increasing. Such codes build the ideas of incompatibility and conflicts of interest into a regime that typically includes a set of standards for parliamentary behaviour and a regulatory framework to enforce those standards.

In almost every parliament, politicians are expected to abide by certain principles that invariably predate any code of conduct. These are sometimes contained in the constitution or the parliamentary by-laws. For example, the Constitution of Belize states:

Legislators should not act in such a way as:

- To compromise the fair exercise of their public or official duties
- To demean their office or position
- To allow their integrity to be called into question
- To endanger or diminish respect for, or confidence in, the integrity of the government

In Canada, MPs must agree to “recognise that service in parliament is a public trust”, “maintain public confidence and trust in the integrity of parliamentarians” and “reassure the public that Parliamentarians [...] place the public interest ahead of Parliamentarians’ private interests”. In Ethiopia, the parliament’s standing orders state that an MP must be “a loyal and honest servant as well as a good example to the Ethiopian people [...] protecting and respecting national and public interests.”¹³⁴

Nevertheless, public disquiet at misconduct and low levels of trust have led to the introduction of codes of conduct to tighten and to better specify the parliamentary mandate. In the main, such codes tend to emerge for one of three reasons. First, some countries have introduced new systems as a direct result of MPs breaking existing rules. The United Kingdom, for example, has had two bouts of political rule-breaking since the mid-1990s. In the first instance, several MPs were found to have been paid to represent private interests in Parliament, which breached previous parliamentary resolutions and highlighted the weaknesses of the existing system of self-regulation. The second, in 2009, concerned how MPs were interpreting their ability to claim parliamentary expenses and highlighted some

cases of criminal activity and fraud. On both occasions, a new and more comprehensive regulatory system tightening and reinforcing the rules governing ethical conduct was introduced in response to political, public and media concern.

Second, the need for a new ethics and conduct regime has been mooted in response to more general public concern about the standards and behaviour of politicians. This may often be prompted by specific cases of MPs using public office for private gain, but the ethics and conduct regime is seen as a way of emphasizing public standards across the board. In Australia, for example, the debate about the need for a code of conduct was the result of a slew of stories about misuse of public funds and declining levels of public trust in politicians. Indeed, at one stage, only 7 percent of Australians believed that MPs had high standards of honesty and ethics.¹³⁵ In such circumstances, ethics and conduct regimes are principally about attempting to restore public trust in politicians.

Increasingly [...] parliaments are seeing ethics and conduct regimes as a way of reinforcing parliamentary procedure, protocol and etiquette in the chamber, committee work and even interactions with voters.

Third, although ethics and conduct regimes have traditionally been used to combat corruption and unethical behaviour, their scope is expanding to cover other forms of misconduct that interfere with the operation of parliament. There is particular interest in emerging democracies as to how ethics and conduct regimes might be used to establish the authority of the rules – and of the speaker – in a new parliamentary institution. In the early years of a legislature, there is often no general acceptance or common understanding of how the rules of procedure should be interpreted. In fact, they are highly contested by MPs, so that debate

134 Power 2009:18.

135 Roy Morgan Research 1998.

is fractious and the speaker's authority frequently questioned. The battle is over the type of institution that members wish to create – a question in which all members have a direct interest. The high turnover of MPs at each election prolongs that process of contestation. Increasingly, such parliaments see ethics and conduct regimes as a way of reinforcing parliamentary procedure, protocol and etiquette in the chamber, committee work and even interactions with voters.

The codes tend to focus on making MPs' interests more transparent, particularly by disclosing their finances, and further defining incompatibilities, proscribing certain activities and outside occupations. They also include a regulatory framework and enforcement regime, either through a parliamentary committee, an independent commissioner or, in a minority of cases, a judicial committee. In many cases, such codes of conduct are much needed in order to combat corruption and the perception of corruption. Nevertheless, there is concern about how far such codes are starting to stretch and whether they are achieving what they set out to achieve. Some argue that the levels of transparency now exceed what would be expected in any other profession and may, in fact, be limiting the number of people who wish to stand for election.

3.3.4 Balancing Restrictions and Responsiveness

The three trends outlined above reflect the dominant institutional responses to the public desire for greater responsiveness from MPs. The motive behind initiatives such as term limits, incompatibilities and codes of conduct is to make MPs more accountable to those who elect them and, in many cases, they are popular responses to issues of low political trust. It is perhaps inevitable that, as institutional responses, they tend to involve either greater regulation of, or restrictions on, what MPs do. Although MPs are accountable to the electorate at elections, the tenor of these reforms suggests that the public increasingly regards the ballot box as an insufficient mechanism of control. Summarizing this sentiment, Australian senator Gary Humphries has said, "We reach a stage where we need to question the idea, inherited from several hundred years ago, that we elect representatives and send those representatives off to a certain place, a parliament, and

there is no comeback for those citizens until the next choice in three years' time, or whenever it might be, when there is another election of those representatives. [...] In 50 years' time, or 70 or 100 years' time, people are going to look back on this age of parliaments which are unaccountable between elections as quaint and outdated."¹³⁶ The reforms thus seek to give voters greater power to restrict MPs' term of office (e.g., recall and term limits) or oblige them to account more fully between elections for their activity (e.g., conflicts of interest, codes of conduct).

Whether such reforms are succeeding in improving public trust in politicians is, though, a moot point. There remain arguments as to whether recall and term limits inhibit the ability of MPs to do their jobs properly and parliamentary opinion is divided on the merits of greater regulation. Although many countries have introduced codes of conduct, MPs will frequently argue that these reinforce the impression of wrongdoing. This is often seen with codes that are implemented in response to public concern at standards within parliament. Such reforms are often essential to prevent a recurrence of misdemeanours or to tackle corruption. However, they frequently take some time to implement and involve lengthy deliberations in public. Repeated media coverage of the process may not only amplify the public's sense that there is a problem in parliament that needs to be addressed, but also give the impression that the problem is widespread among politicians.

The task facing many parliaments is to find ways of balancing greater restrictions with reforms that reinforce the representative role of the MP. The key issue pointed out by an MP from New Zealand is that it would be impossible to develop a regime that removed all potential conflicts of interest. Conflicts of interest are inevitable for politicians – MPs are constantly being asked to mediate between different interests, such as locality, race, gender, religion and political party. The existence of a conflict of interest, though, is not the same as corrupt or unethical behaviour. Politicians need to be able to recognize the difference and to make the correct decision. The health of parliamentary democracy is likely to thrive more from developing an awareness

¹³⁶ Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory 2001:3289.

of this distinction than from attempting to legislate it out of existence. In short, greater regulation may be necessary, but the political culture accompanying the implementation of those rules is often more important.

Institutional restrictions are not alone in shaping that political culture. Two other developments are influencing representative roles, namely, the growth of PMOs and the impact of new communication technologies, which the next two sections examine.

3.4 The Emergence of Parliamentary Monitoring Organizations

The expanding number of PMOs has been one of the most significant recent developments in demands for responsiveness from parliaments and individual members. A report published by the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and the World Bank Institute (WBI) toward the end of 2011 identified more than 191 such organizations worldwide that are monitoring the activities of more than 80 national parliaments, with the majority of PMOs based in Latin America (42) and Central and Eastern Europe (28).¹³⁷

Although it is questionable whether such organizations are the direct result of a public demand for them to exist, once created, they undoubtedly tap into a latent public (and populist) desire for politicians to be held to account. They are invariably regarded by the media as ‘a good thing’, partly because they provide journalists with a regular source of stories, but also because they are perceived as providing an independent and non-party commentary on politicians across the political spectrum. Such organizations have their strengths and weaknesses, but, crucially, they seem to be creating a new form of external validation of parliamentary representation. Furthermore, although parliamentarians might resist such assessments, it seems unlikely that they will disappear; indeed, they may even come to enhance the public position of parliaments.

The term ‘parliamentary monitoring organization’ covers a broad range of bodies that track parliamentary activity in order to promote public awareness and understanding of parliaments. These include the

Argentinian *Fundacion Directorio Legislativo*, the Jordanian *Al-Quds Centre for Political Studies* and the South African *Parliamentary Monitoring Group*. Other organizations such as the *French Regards Citoyens* and the *German Opendata Network* focus on the innovative collation and publication of available data, to provide new perspectives on political developments.¹³⁸

Regardless of their specific approach, the activities of these groups tend to fall into three broad categories. First, some provide research and analysis to support parliament’s work on oversight and legislative scrutiny. The NDI-WBI report suggests that 48 percent of such organizations provide this sort of research and analysis, which is usually supplied by a research department in long-established parliaments.¹³⁹

Second, in many countries, these organizations play a role in public education, citizen engagement and the promotion of parliament more generally. At the most basic level, this involves gathering and publishing information about parliamentary activity and politicians. Nearly half of the organizations publish profiles of individual MPs and 41 percent publish summaries of a parliament’s activities for the session or year. According to the NDI-WBI survey, 56 percent of PMOs consider information dissemination an important function.¹⁴⁰ But many organizations also seek to engage voters in the parliamentary process, with more than one third conducting outreach activities and others providing means for voters to comment on legislation or submit their views on politicians.

However, it is the third category – that of evaluating and assessing the performance of MPs – that generates most interest and appears to be the dominant feature of these organizations. More than half of PMOs (56 percent) regard evaluation to be among their primary functions, with two thirds publishing assessments of parliamentary performance and 86 percent monitoring the performance of individual MPs.¹⁴¹ This activity is often driven by a desire to make individual politicians more directly accountable for what they do and, although politicians might be initially reluctant to

137 Mandelbaum 2011:18-23.

138 Ibid:31-33.

139 Ibid:20-21.

140 Ibid.

141 Ibid.

recognize the validity of such ratings, they can rarely afford to ignore them. Such rankings of MPs tend to generate a lot of media coverage and, even though politicians might dismiss the methodology or the ratings, they often find that they need to explain them to their voters.

The example of AFLI at the beginning of this chapter highlighted the Ugandan experience, but it has parallels in many other countries. Headlines such as ‘Bosnian Federation Leaders Panned as Lazy’,¹⁴² ‘Indian Politicians Who Hardly Work Hard’¹⁴³ and ‘MPs Work Three Times Less Hard Compared to Ordinary Citizens’¹⁴⁴ are typical and highlight the fact that this aspect of their work will always generate the most publicity. As with all such rankings, these reports are sometimes distorted for party political benefit or by unscrupulous journalists and the results can sometimes be misleading. But most organizations emphasize their desire to be fair and open in their scoring and stress that the monitoring and evaluation of MPs is only one part of their work, which should be understood in the context of their wider purpose of promoting and supporting parliament.

The evolution of the PRS Legislative Research in India, for example, is instructive in the way its combination of activities has improved parliamentary performance and parliamentary reporting. The organization was established in 2005, not principally to monitor parliament, but to provide high-quality, reliable and independent research for members of the Lok Sabha. It was the brainchild of two former investment bankers who were concerned with the quality of debate within the parliament and wanted to improve citizen engagement. The organization’s approach was principally to provide succinct four- to six-page briefs on legislation, highlighting the key points of and background to the bills.

Although treated warily by politicians at first, the group now provides briefings directly to all 790 MPs and around 300 of these are now regularly turning to PRS for specific research papers. Their work has now also expanded to include the Legislative Assistance to Members of Parliament (LAMP) programme, which places recent graduates as research fellows in MPs

offices, training for 800 journalists on how to track the work of MPs, and ongoing work with civil society organizations across India to help them engage with the parliamentary process.

The monitoring and rating of MPs has followed on from this premise – from the desire to provide more information to the public on what their MPs do. According to one senior staff member at PRS, rather than resisting the publication of such evaluations, MPs appear generally to have welcomed it. “MPs call us to ask how they performed – for the good MPs it can be something to brag about at election time.”

The most obvious impact of such activity can be seen at two levels, according to the PRS staff member. First, the media coverage of parliament has improved dramatically, having shifted away from gossip to issues of substance. Because the parliamentary briefs are sent to journalists as well as to politicians, media stories are not only better informed, but journalists have also changed how they engage with politicians on issues of policy.

Second, there has been a change in the attitude of MPs themselves as to how they use their time in parliament. As in many other countries, and especially where there are high levels of poverty, voters are more concerned with “day-to-day problems of water and power scarcity, employment for young people and crime”. In such a context, and with no dedicated staff to help research and analyse complex legal drafts, most politicians regarded legislating as ‘an indulgence’, something secondary to their main role of providing services to voters. However, as a result of the combination of the research services and the publication of MPs’ legislative contributions, most MPs now take this part of their role much more seriously.

The NDI report suggests that PMOs have shown promise in strengthening many components of democratic governance, stimulating popular demands for more effective parliaments, reinvigorating citizen engagement and improving the accountability of parliaments to voters. However, the quality of their methodologies remains mixed and it is recognized that, in some cases, they may increase public cynicism. The key point is that PMOs appear to be filling a perceived gap in the way that politicians account for their activity. In addition, their growth indicates how public expectations of representatives are changing.

142 Balkan Insight 2008.

143 India Report 2011.

144 Index.hr 2010.

Where trust in politicians, parliaments and parties remains low, the existence of an independent organization that highlights the strengths and weaknesses of parliament can be beneficial. It appears that PMOs can reinforce the position of parliament and MPs in the public mind. An interviewee from the PRS Legislative Research, noting that MPs are starting to see the benefits of their monitoring, said, "They can claim that a reputable, external and unbiased agency reported that they have made positive contributions in parliament."

Although this form of external validation for parliaments and politicians cuts across many traditional notions of political representation, it is clearly tapping into public concerns. The emergence and growth of such rankings suggests that they reflect a wider desire for more information and accountability from politicians. The emergence of such organizations might be another sign of how parliamentary representation and accountability are changing. Given the complexities of political representation highlighted in this report, the public appears to welcome intermediary organizations that can decipher, summarize and assess their political representatives. While many MPs will initially resist any outside attempt to score their activity, PMOs are potentially a valuable ally in the process of strengthening and promoting parliament.

3.5 Representation by Explanation?

The final dimension of the changing nature of responsiveness and accountability is the proliferation of new forms of communication technology. MPs appear to be on the receiving end of most of the trends described above, sometimes reluctantly. Yet, they have enthusiastically taken up the use of new media to communicate with voters, a phenomenon that appears to be changing the tone and the content of political communication. Research for the report and interviews with MPs revealed the extent to which politicians were using new technologies to communicate directly with their voters and to explain their position on various policy issues. This form of explanation seems to bridge the gap between individual and collective representation, allowing MPs to account for their activity by using social networking sites and email to personalize their communications to a wide range of voters.

Much research confirms that email, in particular, has dramatically increased the volume of correspondence

that MPs contend with. The World e-Parliament Report from 2010 noted that 85 percent of parliaments indicated that communication had increased as a result of new technologies, with 78 percent of MPs globally using email and over half now using websites.¹⁴⁵ The report also noted that take-up was skewed according to the income profile of particular countries, with high-income countries reporting a much higher use of ICT. A separate survey of MPs in Europe highlighted this sense of growth, probing the purposes for which parliamentarians use ICT and the challenges they face. One Swedish MP commented, "The main drawback is overload. It's sometimes too much – you can't cope with all this contact, and all of the questions, and all the things you should do", while a Dutch MP said, "The main negative point is that you have too little time to answer all of your emails, do your work, update the website and inform people about everything you're doing." Or, as an Austrian MP put it, "Email is a promise that gets broken the moment everybody starts using it."¹⁴⁶

Our discussions with MPs suggest that campaign groups are using email extensively. An Australian MP reported that it was not uncommon for him to come into the office after a weekend to find 12,000 emails. However, at that level, MPs can do little to respond to everyone. "Sometimes there might be five or six campaigns going on, so I have to put up an auto-reply saying, 'Thank you for contacting me, if your issue is about climate change, gay marriage, euthanasia, etc. [...] Go to my website where you can see our position'". In the US, congresspersons tend not to respond to e-petitions until they number in the several thousands. Such has been the growth in e-campaigning.

However, MPs distinguish between the organized emails of campaign groups and requests from individual voters. The problem is that email has created an expectation of immediacy, i.e., that MPs will provide not only a substantive reply, but one that arrives almost instantly. MPs report that they are being asked to respond on a diverse range of topics "because emailing is easy": "people ask me to do things that are close to their lives – not political issues". But many MPs take the time to reply, as one French MP explained:

145 Global Centre for ICT in Parliament 2010.

146 Coleman and Nathanson 2005:13-4

“For decades people have been taking time to respond. When you take time to read them and take them seriously, the message is very important. I often use the substance of my mail to influence legislative actions – very often citizens are putting their finger precisely on the effects or drawbacks of the law”.¹⁴⁷

“I need to get on to Facebook tonight. If I do not post anything for more than a couple of days, then I get loads of messages asking me where I am and what I am up to.”

MPs’ use of social media sites has increased the routes to communicate with voters, but also increased the pressure on MPs. As an MP in Iraq told us, “I need to get on to Facebook tonight. If I do not post anything for more than a couple of days, then I get loads of messages asking me where I am and what I am up to.” The benefit of such technological developments is that they afford politicians direct access to the electorate. One Swedish politician told us that she faced great pressure to be on Facebook and Twitter every day, but that,

The social media is a good way of correcting inaccuracies. I was on a TV show last week and they edited my answers into what they wanted them to be. I wrote about this on my blog – explaining what they asked and what I said. I got a lot of comments on how good it was that I publicised this. Using Facebook and Twitter, I provide a permanent commentary on what I am doing. People now understand better how busy we are. Now they see how many meetings I go to, writing motions, having debates. [...] They can see a lot of what I do. They didn’t know much of this before.

Other politicians told us similar stories about explaining their policy positions and why they were taking a certain stance on votes within parliament. To this extent, the use of ICT, and especially of social media, appears to be creating a new form of accountability. ICT affords individual politicians direct access to a

wider group of voters to account for their policy positions and votes within the parliament, although MPs around the world seem to be in the early stages of learning how to use the technology.¹⁴⁸

3.6 Conclusion: Renewing the Mandate

The developments set out in this chapter highlight the way in which public pressure is shaping the representative role of politicians. All the changes examined here are responses to public concern, low levels of trust and popular expectations of political accountability. The public increasingly seems to assume that political representatives should publicly account for their actions on a regular and routine basis between elections. This marks a significant shift from traditional ideas of the ‘free representational mandate’, which theoretically gave MPs the latitude to decide themselves whom, what and how to represent and that their performance would be judged by the electorate at the polls. In practice, of course, MPs have always been more responsive than this. As the US pollster Dick Morris has pointed out, the nature of political discourse in recent decades, combined with 24-hour news channels and the proliferation of communication technologies, means that elections every four or five years are no longer enough to provide freedom of action for governments, parliaments and politicians. Rather, politicians need to renew their mandate increasingly frequently – and sometimes on a daily basis – by interacting, engaging with and generating support from the public.¹⁴⁹

For members of parliament, the changes designed to improve the way in which they account for themselves have three main characteristics. First, some reforms enforce greater openness and transparency, especially in relation to MPs’ political and private interests. Second, there is an increasing emphasis on the external validation of MPs’ work through the activity of PMOs, other forms of regulation or recall. Third, there is the expectation that MPs should more frequently – perhaps continually

147 Ibid:17.

148 See, for example: Golbeck et al. 2010; Jackson and Lilleker 2009.

149 Morris 2001.

– explain themselves to voters, either voluntarily through their own communications or because they are obliged to by regulations such as codes of conduct.

In every country, some politicians buck these trends and, especially, resist the tendency toward greater regulation. Yet it seems highly unlikely that such developments will be reversed. If anything, the pressures on MPs toward greater openness, regulation and explanation are set to increase. They present MPs with opportunities to reinforce their representative role in the public mind. The development of PMOs is a case in point. Although PMOs were initially often regarded as a challenge to the authority of MPs and parliament, MPs now appear not only to accept them, but also to welcome the validation of external independent organizations. Although PMOs tend to generate publicity by highlighting bad practice, they are also performing a valuable function by promoting the work of parliaments and individual MPs.

It is still unclear whether the changes will have a marked effect on public opinion and political trust. It

may be that, as the opening chapter suggested, parliaments are doomed to suffer low levels of trust because of the very nature of what they do. Parliaments exist to reflect division and are likely therefore to divide opinion. The irony is that, although levels of trust in parliaments appear to be generating more public concern than ever, parliaments and their members have never before been subject to such intense scrutiny as now. MPs are now more accountable and responsive to their voters than ever before. Furthermore, the implementation of the changes set out in this chapter suggests that most MPs and parliaments are acutely sensitive to public opinion. The changes imply that MPs will become more rather than less sensitive. The creation of new communication technologies, in particular, offers opportunities for new forms of representation, involving a much closer and direct relationship between representatives and the represented. Whether those opportunities are seized depends on the ability of politicians and parliaments to recognize and harness them in strategies that reinforce the central roles of parliaments. These themes are discussed in the final chapter.

CHAPTER IV



SERVICE AND DELIVERY

4.1. From Handouts to Helping Hands: Changing Approaches to Constituency Work

Saber Chowdhury is MP for a part of Bangladesh's capital of Dhaka, with a district of around 400,000 voters and containing one million people in total. Like many politicians representing poor communities, his voters look to him not just to offer leadership and to represent their interests in parliament, but also to help them materially. As he puts it, "people see you principally as a development agent, not a legislator, and they expect you to help. They want help getting jobs, with their children's education, getting their phone fixed or ensuring a road is mended." In Bangladesh, as in many countries, the expectation is that the MP will find funds from their own pockets to help their constituents. This is an expectation that few can meet and, in parts of the world, it makes MPs vulnerable to corruption as they seek resources to deliver for their local area.

However, rather than treating each case one by one, Chowdhury is seeking collective solutions and, in the

process, helping people to help themselves. The key innovation was the development of a microfinance system through his constituency office; the credit union of small savers he set up among the people of Dhaka now numbers around 25,000 members, each of whom receives competitive rates of interest on his or her savings. Those savings are then put to work, financing loans to people with smart business ideas who would otherwise struggle to borrow money from a traditional bank. The credit union is a co-operative owned by the people and with a management board that decides where to grant loans. By 2011, around 20,000 loans had been granted to help people establish businesses ranging from a mobile tea shop to the export of saris.

For Chowdhury, the benefits are obvious. "When people come to you for help, you can only give them a one-off gift. This way they are having to use their industry and their enterprise. You are creating a breed of social entrepreneurs, bringing much wider benefits to the community." But this approach to constituency work has other benefits. It raises the profile of the MP

and changes the dynamic between politician and people. “The basic challenge for an MP in a populous place like Dhaka is how you reach out to people, how are you accessible, and how do you connect? With this sort of work, you are touching and transforming people’s lives.”

The politician has used a similar model to develop low-cost health care for his voters and an educational IT programme for young people in his constituency. In both cases, individuals sign up for a one-off fee and then pay low rates for any diagnosis or courses they use. Chowdhury still faces the routine constituency enquiries and holds a day-long constituency surgery one day each week where anyone can turn up and ask the MP for his help. (Even when he is travelling, he will sit in front of his laptop, speaking to constituents via Skype, explaining, “There is something missing if they feel they haven’t seen your face.”) However, Chowdhury distinguishes between ‘individual’ and ‘community’ problems: “The key issue is, how do you have maximum impact? I wanted specifically to help the urban poor in my community, who are often overlooked. A lot of the problems people face are very similar. The more that you can find collective solutions, the more effective you will be.”

4.2. Introduction: The Growth of Constituency Work

In every part of the world, it appears that politicians are struggling to meet the ever-expanding expectations of their voters. Evidence from countries around the world suggests that politicians are not held principally to account for their legislative scrutiny or oversight of the executive, but rather for the tangible benefits that they can deliver to voters. Although generally termed ‘constituency service’, it is apparent that forms of this activity occur in list-based electoral systems, too, and that it is growing everywhere. Discussions with politicians highlight the extent to which their capacity to deliver is being stretched to the limits and that it may be taking them away from their parliamentary duties. The results of the parliamentarians’ survey for this report suggested that it was the single most time-consuming feature of their work. Yet it is clear that this function is immensely important to both citizens and

politicians – indeed, it is an accepted and expected part of the job. Numerous opinion polls in different parts of the world suggest that the public believes forms of constituency service are the most important part of an MP’s role, while MPs themselves undoubtedly see the benefit of responding to voters’ needs for various reasons, not least as it is likely to enhance their chances of re-election.

In short, members of parliament in every part of the world appear to be facing the same sorts of problems that beset Saber Chowdhury. Voter expectations are high and appear to be increasing. The capacity of the MP to respond to such issues is being challenged by the volume and diversity of cases and the level of (often financial) support that citizens request. This chapter examines how that challenge is manifesting itself around the globe and how politicians are responding. It starts by examining levels of public expectation, the sheer diversity of activity that MPs are expected to perform within their local area and the reasons why constituency work has grown. It contends that this is not only a response to citizen demand, but also a consequence of politicians’ search for such activity as they attempt to improve their profile and public image. The second part of the chapter looks at how parliaments and politicians have responded to this increased workload, particularly in relation to the resources that MPs are allocated, and examines two recent developments: the increasing use of constituency development funds (CDFs) and the emergence of parliamentary outreach offices. This chapter concludes by suggesting that the challenge of constituency work is likely to be met only if MPs alter their approach. Constituency work is perceived as vital by voters and MPs alike and, for good or ill, it will not disappear. However, MPs need to find collective solutions and to channel the expertise that they develop in the constituency into the parliamentary process.

4.2.1. Funerals, Development and ‘Pork-Barrel Politics’ – What Voters Want From Their MPs

The global survey of politicians conducted by the IPU for this report showed that, when asked what they think that citizens see as their most important role, almost one third identified ‘solving constituents’

problems'. The survey also revealed the amount of time that constituency work takes up; one fifth of politicians reported devoting more than 40 hours each week solely to helping constituents, while a further one third spent between 21 and 40 hours each week. And, asked to name the problems that prevented them from being effective as parliamentarians, the single most frequent complaint, cited by almost 36% of respondents, was a lack of resources for carrying out constituency work, including funds for running constituency offices, staff to work in the offices and the ability to travel.

That survey and discussions with individual politicians emphasized the extent to which constituency activity dominates the working lives of many members of parliament. Although research in this area is relatively limited, voter expectations and constituency activity in developing countries are apparently different than those in longer-standing parliaments. In the former, the expectation is that MPs will provide materially for their voters and act as the principal development agents for the area, whereas, in the latter, citizens tend to want MPs to intercede in grievances and, in some countries, to find government funds for the local area.

Citizens ask "MPs to take care of their roads, schools or funerals, even if this is not part of the parliament's powers."

MPs from numerous developing countries attest to the fact that voters often want them to provide the basics. As one MP from Gabon told us, citizens ask "MPs to take care of their roads, schools or funerals, even if this is not part of the parliament's powers. Every day people are dying and MPs are asked to contribute financially and physically to the funerals. Others come to the MP because they cannot get any food." The expectation is often that MPs will find ways to pay for such things from their own pockets. For instance, a Malawian MP commented, "The constituents want our help with funerals, clean water sources, transport. [...] Money for coffins or transportation comes from our pockets. We also frequently pay for school fees. It isn't our job, but we

have to do it for human reasons and to gain sympathy with voters." An MP from Papua New Guinea similarly commented, "They think that we parliamentarians get paid a lot of money, but in fact I was a lot richer when I was working as a doctor. Now that I'm an MP, even though I make a little bit more than I used to get before, it makes no difference because my pay does not belong to my family – it belongs to everyone in my electorate."

MPs in many countries also emphasized the extent to which constituency activity takes over almost every aspect of their lives and that voters want to be able to contact them at all times. During one discussion with MPs from Bahrain, the MPs' mobile phones were constantly vibrating as voters phoned them in the expectation of directly talking to the MPs about their concerns. Consequently, the MPs carried two and sometimes three phones in order to identify which were personal calls. One MP from Thailand reported having 33 separate meetings with voters in a single day. Others highlight the fact that citizens assume that they can simply come to their homes. The MP from Gabon told us,

People are so demanding that I often do not even have the time to eat myself: citizens wait in front of my apartment door, without any appointment. I can meet them either at the National Assembly or in a specific office, but 80% of meetings with constituents happen in my home. In Africa, people do not make a difference between professional life and private feelings, your life as a parliamentarian and your life as a private person. Therefore, it is not surprising to find someone who has been waiting for hours at your home, or to see someone already waiting on your terrace in the morning, when you wake up and open your curtains.

In countries where parliamentary systems have been in place for longer, constituency service also appears to be taking up an increasing amount of politicians' time. Surveys conducted in the UK suggest that, in 1996, an already large 40 percent of politicians' time was spent on constituency work, but, by 2006, new MPs put the figure at 49 percent.¹⁵⁰ In Canada, constituency work takes up more time than any other activity and parliament adjourns every fourth or fifth week to enable MPs to spend more time with their constituents.¹⁵¹

150 Norton 2012 (forthcoming).

151 Franks 2007, cited in Arter 2011:148.

Numerous analyses suggest that most work tends to be generated in voting systems that have single-member districts (or multi-member preferential voting systems, such as Single Transferable Vote (STV), used in Ireland). However, even in list-PR systems, there appears to be increasing attention to this form of activity. In Turkey, for example, it has been estimated that parliamentarians spend around one half their time listening to the demands of constituents.¹⁵² In Central and Eastern Europe, MPs are often asked to intercede and to help individual constituents, with Lithuania showing the highest rate of such activity in the region.¹⁵³ A study of Congress in Honduras showed that one quarter of MPs spent time with individual constituents and over one quarter engaged in 'particularistic' services for voters. Even in the Netherlands, where MPs tend to define their representative focus in terms of the party rather than voters, more than one third of the week is spent on external meetings, and contacts with individual citizens increased between 2001 and 2006.

Voters in all parts of the world are increasingly turning to their representatives for help with an increasing variety of problems, regardless of whether they relate specifically to parliament. The assumption is that the MP has access to power, influence and resources and can thus solve almost any problem. One Swedish MP recounted the story of a man going through a divorce who asked if the MP could help him get his wife back, while a British MP recalled being called by a constituent because the rubbish collectors had left his bin in the middle of his driveway. When asked why the man had phoned the MP, he replied that he had already tried the Prime Minister's office, which had told him to phone the MP.¹⁵⁴

Although it covers a huge range of potential activity, constituency service can be broadly categorized under four headings. First, support to individuals ranges from legitimate help to find work or opportunities, to more clientelistic patterns of behaviour that are clearly designed to buy the support of those individuals. Second, grievance-chasing, when citizens have a particular problem with a government service, welfare

entitlement or bureaucracy. The MP acts as an influential friend to help resolve such problems, even though that MP may have no official jurisdiction in many of these cases. Third, policy responsiveness, when voters try to seek or to influence the MP's opinion on particular issues, particularly on votes in parliament. Although not requiring much specific work for the MP, attentiveness to the opinions of key groups within the constituency will involve meetings and public events. Finally, project work involves politicians seeking funds for the preferential development of the area or the promotion of local economy, or 'pork', where MPs use their position to secure government expenditure.

"When people ask for a new road or electricity in a village, I have to pressure the Government in order to make sure the message is received, budget secured and action taken."

The content appears to vary between the longer-standing parliaments, where voters expect help with government services, to newer and often poorer countries, where citizens assume that the MP should provide those services personally. Common to both, though, is the search for 'pork' – or government money to support the locality. The US Congress is probably the most obvious example of this trend, as legislators can insert provisions into existing legislation that allocates part of a federal grant to projects within the districts of specific congressmen. This process of 'earmarks' has grown dramatically in recent decades. For example, congressional legislation on highway funding contained allocations for three specific projects in 1970. By 1987, this had increased to 155 projects and, by 2005, there were 6,371, amounting to \$23 billion.¹⁵⁵ (In recent years, there have been significant efforts to restrict and reform these provisions.) Similar trends can be found in many other countries. In Honduras, more than one half of politicians were directly engaged in finding allocations for their areas, and similar patterns are evident in Brazil, Mexico and

152 Kim et al. 1984 and Hazama 2005, cited in Hazama, Genckaya and Genckaya 2007:246.

153 Ilonszki 2011:6-9.

154 Flynn 1997.

155 Mezey 2008:98.

Argentina. In Africa, many MPs suggested that they were regarded as ‘development agents’ who would be judged by the extent to which they improved the local infrastructure and economy. As an MP from Benin astutely put it :

When people ask for a new road or electricity in a village, I have to pressure the Government in order to make sure the message is received, budget secured and action taken. It is like a race – citizens want the same maternity healthcare as the next village, and you know as an MP, this is a four to eight year obstacle course.

4.3. The Drivers of Constituency Work: Satisfaction, Electoral Benefit and Voter Expectation

The growth of this aspect of MPs’ workload appears to be driven at least partly by demand from voters. Unfortunately, there is relatively little analysis of whether and how demands from voters have increased. It is evident that voters expect MPs to provide them with government services where few, if any, exist. As noted above, the expectation in Africa is that the MP will deliver goods and services for people. But this is also the case in other regions. Across the Arab world, Islamist movements have developed an effective electoral strategy that is based on their provision of services to individuals and communities, where otherwise none would exist.¹⁵⁶ Anecdotal evidence from MPs in most countries suggests voters’ demands are increasing. And it was estimated by one staff member in a Chilean MP’s office that around 95 percent of correspondence from constituents related to requests for personal favours or funds to support local projects.¹⁵⁷

The previous chapter highlighted the extent to which new communication technologies have also increased correspondence. However, the demand for help is only part of the equation. It is evident that supply has also increased. MPs have not only shown themselves willing to take on such responsibilities, but also actively solicit casework from constituents through public meetings,

constituency ‘surgeries’ and town hall consultations. All such activity is designed to inform voters and encourage them to come to the MP with their problems. Speaking to individual MPs reveals a range of answers as to why this is the case, but those answers tend to fall into three categories. First, MPs appear to find such work rewarding; second, they believe it carries an electoral benefit; and third, MPs believe they need to be seen to be active locally due to the pressure of voters’ expectations.

4.3.1. Satisfaction and Reward

Although many MPs complain about some of the cases that are brought to them, it appears for many to be the most fulfilling part of the job. Part of the reward comes from the fact that it is entirely different from the work inside parliament. Within the constituency, MPs are expected to perform a certain role; they are seen as important local dignitaries, treated with respect and perceived to have significant power. Within parliament, by contrast, they are simply one among many MPs, with limited individual influence on legislation or government.

In some countries, part of the constituency focus may be to do with the fact that the parliament has relatively little power. As a result, MPs have limited influence on the key decisions. In every parliament, there are limited opportunities to speak in debates. For the vast majority of MPs, the very nature of parliamentary work entails that they rarely have the sense of having achieved something tangible.

In contrast, dealing directly with a housing, education or welfare problem provides the politicians with a sense of purpose and outcome. Even run-of-the-mill activity may engender self-worth. Constituents are often only trying to find out whether the authorities are examining their case, and the MP can quite easily bring that reassurance. As a British MP commented, “It is the one concrete thing you have some control over and that you will get some personal satisfaction from. [...] Often it is simply enough to get a reply explaining what has happened. But it is something [the constituent] would not have got otherwise.” Various polls confirm this. In Honduras, for example, 75 percent of MPs mentioned personal satisfaction as a key element in undertaking

¹⁵⁶ Ottaway and Hamzawy 2009.

¹⁵⁷ Mezey 2008:113.

such work.¹⁵⁸ Similarly, at 69 percent, it was by far the most popular role identified by MPs in Kenya and, in other African states, more than one half of all MPs cited it as the most satisfying part of their job. (The exception was Namibia, where 41 percent identified it as being the most satisfying part of their job – a rate still markedly higher than that of their next most satisfying role, representation, which registered at 24 percent.)¹⁵⁹

4.3.2. The Electoral Connection

However, this is not to imply that MPs pursue cases just because it is good for their heart and soul. Constituency activity – especially that which improves the profile of the MP – is regarded as an electoral asset. This appears to cut both ways. It appears that much of this activity is driven not simply to get an advantage, but because if they were not seen as doing the work, they would be punished at the polls. For others, there is a belief that constituency activity will generate a sizeable personal vote. For that reason, most politicians who engage in constituency work will also ensure that the public gets to hear about what they are doing through newsletters, mass mailings, websites and public meetings. Such activities generally have two purposes: to show where the MP has been successful and to solicit more casework by advertising available constituency services. Although academics are sceptical about the extent to which MPs can generate such a personal vote, it is clear that MPs believe that it works. One Canadian MP who was elected by only 39 votes in 1997, but increased that margin to over 16,000 by 2008, put his success down to the way he helped his voters. Likening his approach to the constituency with a business operation, he commented that he had dedicated staff who “know very well that they get paid just like staff in a business. We treat our constituents like our customers – if we don’t treat them well, they can go somewhere else.”

Even under list systems, there is an assumption among MPs that constituency activity may help them. In Turkey, for example, one study found that MPs believed that securing investment in the local area and meeting constituents’ demands were the second and third most

important variables, after supporting the party.¹⁶⁰ In South Africa, where there is national list PR, the African National Congress (ANC) allocates constituencies to each of its MPs to tend between elections. Evidence suggests that the opinion of local activists and voters on their local performance can influence where that MP appears on the electoral list in the next election.

Polling conducted in Africa supports this impression. In a selection of six African countries (Kenya, Malawi, Zambia, South Africa, Namibia and Mozambique), voters consistently listed constituency service and representation as the most important parts of an MP’s job.¹⁶¹ In Tanzania, a separate poll showed that 64 percent of voters would vote for the candidate who could deliver goods and services to the local community.¹⁶² Indeed, evidence in many countries suggests that voters have low levels of awareness of parliamentary activity. ‘Law-making’ was seen as the most important role by only one quarter or less of voters, and oversight of government did not poll more than 10 percent in any country.¹⁶³ Few, if any, MPs assume that they are held to account by voters for their legislative or oversight activity; MPs from Ghana, for instance, mentioned the pressures from voters to account for constituency activity, but none reported any pressure to account for their parliamentary work, unless it related to the constituency.¹⁶⁴

4.3.3. Voter Expectations – Managing the Unmanageable?

In many regions, though, MPs attest to the fact that voter expectations far outstrip the ability of MPs to meet them. In interviews and survey responses gathered for this report, MPs in all regions drew attention to the gap between their official role and voter expectations of that role. As an MP from Gabon told us, where MPs do not have the funds to support projects, they will use their own salary, even though “this is not in accordance with the institutional role of the parliamentarian” and responsibility should lie with the government. Yet MPs still take up such work – and this trend is not confined

158 Taylor-Robinson 2011.

159 Barkan et al. 2010.

160 Hazama, Genckaya and Genckaya 2007:11.

161 Barkan et al. 2007:5.

162 Afrobarometer Briefing Paper No. 59:3.

163 Barkan et al. 2007:5.

164 Lindberg 2010:137.

to new parliamentary systems. Analysis from the UK suggests that the vast majority of the cases that MPs took up fell outside their official jurisdiction.¹⁶⁵ Despite increased constituency activity,

Most letters from MPs do not result in a changed decision or a new course of action being pursued. [...] Officials draft letters on the basis of clear guidelines or established precedent; in some cases, the minister will enjoy no discretionary powers. One MP estimated that probably no more than five percent of cases resulted in changed decisions.¹⁶⁶

The difficulty for many MPs is that they will be judged by their performance in areas where they have relatively little influence. As one Kenyan MP put it, voters look to MPs for everything, “from electricity to hospitals. [...] And in most cases when this is not done, everything gets blamed on the MP, even though it is the responsibility of the [e]xecutive.” Similarly, a Senegalese MP commented:

The main challenge lies in the fact that citizens’ requests often come under the purview of the [e]xecutive and thus transform MPs into intermediaries if not ‘beggars’. [...] MPs thus find themselves in an unenviable position as they are not recognised for what they can do, but are asked to act by proxy on behalf of other parts of government where they have no direct control – and are judged by their ability to achieve anything in that area.

This confusion of roles results partly from a conflation of the role of the MP with the traditional roles of the local leader, a situation in which the leader invariably ended up providing materially for the people within his area. In Kenya, the perception is informed by the practice of holding *harambees*, or the taking of collections to meet the basic needs of the most destitute in the community. In Ghana, one author has described how the traditional role of ‘family head’ has been grafted onto the role of the MP, which “puts enormous pressures on office holders to be responsive to constituents’ needs and priorities.”¹⁶⁷

Similarly, MPs in the Pacific region tend to define themselves as leaders rather than representatives. In

the paper commissioned for this report, Nakamura, Clements and Hegarty suggest that this is a combination of traditional conceptions of leadership, but also the heavy emphasis on MPs as deliverers of development. As a Samoan politician commented to the authors, “The attitudes of voters towards their parliamentarians are determined by traditional values and practices where anyone aspiring to leadership needs to be able to pay for it.”¹⁶⁸ This point was reinforced by an MP from Papua New Guinea with whom we spoke. He explained, “When we became MPs the tradition was that MPs would provide for their people. It’s hard now to get out and say that there are only some things we can provide for you, while others you have to work for.”

Although the dynamic is very different in older parliamentary systems, the underlying theme coming from politicians is that the volume and diversity of constituency casework are reaching a point where it is impossible for MPs to cope. Yet they show few signs of being able to say no. One MP suggested that he found it difficult to turn away voters, no matter how odd their request. “They come to me with their tax returns. But I know very little about the subject. So I smile and give them a sympathetic ear, and put them in touch with someone who can help.” Or, as an MP from Papua New Guinea stated, although he could not say no to voters, he could not afford to say yes: “My people expect me to pay for their school fees, funeral expenses, transport expenses. [...] I know I can’t give them what they want because this is not parliamentary procedure. But what do I do? If I say no, my stay in parliament is threatened.”

However, as he suggested, this situation is partly of MPs’ own making. They have created a set of monsters that need to be faced. “We have to face people and tell them what is right and what is wrong as leaders. If we simply run away, the monsters will grow. We need to educate the people about our role and that of parliament.” That challenge appears to be facing MPs in all regions. Balancing the desire to give voters realistic expectations of what they can do against their desire to ensure they are re-elected is difficult, although there is evidence that, in some cases, MPs are having some success.

165 Hall 1999:8.

166 Norton & Wood 1993 49-50.

167 Lindberg 2010:136.

168 Ibid:23

4.4. The Future of Constituency Work: Doing Less, Better?

Although constituency service appears to be overwhelming politicians in many countries, it is unlikely to disappear or even diminish in the near future. It is central to the public's expectations of their representatives and MPs' perceptions of their own role. Perhaps more significantly, MPs enjoy this part of their work and believe that it carries an electoral benefit. However, aside from the fact that MPs are struggling to meet the expectations of voters, there is increasing concern that the amount of time devoted to the constituency is at the expense of MPs' time to work within parliament, to scrutinize legislation and to hold government to account. The task facing many MPs involves

The task facing many MPs involves managing constituent expectations, managing their own workload and balancing the different roles within and outside parliament.

managing constituent expectations, managing their own workload and balancing the different roles within and outside parliament. The latter half of this chapter examines some institutional responses to this challenge in the form of constituency development funds and constituency outreach offices. The remainder of this section briefly suggests that the volume and diversity of constituency may be prompting MPs toward two incipient trends: 1) attempts to shift voter expectations away from individual benefit to collective solutions and 2) attempts to channel the constituency experience into the parliamentary process.

4.4.1. Collective Provision at the Constituency Level

One of the biggest challenges for politicians in many societies, especially those where patronage and clientelism predominate, involves shifting voter expectations of what politicians can, and should, deliver. The vast majority of constituency work is still undertaken on

a case-by-case basis, with MPs offering specific services to individuals. Under patron-client politics, there is the promise of an obvious and immediate reward in voting for a particular candidate, whereas, with collective solutions, the benefits are often less obvious and more diffuse. Yet, as seen in the example of Saber Chowdhury at the beginning of this chapter, it does appear that, in some countries, MPs are attempting to shift the focus of their work to collective provision.

In Ghana, for example, work by Staffan Lindberg suggests that, although clientelism is rife and voters will frequently expect personal support from their MP, the intensity of this pressure means that, in many cases, the traditional approach is unsustainable and is pushing MPs toward collective solutions. As he puts it, "Widespread pressures to pay for individuals' hospital bills become a national health insurance scheme, invariant demands for payment of school fees become scholarship schemes, and so on."¹⁶⁹ In other words, the inability of the MPs to meet individuals' demands is forcing MPs to look for strategic solutions that have a much wider benefit.

Evidence from elsewhere suggests there may be a growing recognition among MPs that this is the most viable way forward. In an initiative similar to that of Chowdhury, one MP from Indonesia described her efforts to empower citizens locally. Her initiative focused originally on training individuals who wanted to set up their own small businesses, which then developed into a micro-finance programme that provided start-up funds. The micro-finance programme also allowed her to create a discounted goods project for the worst-off constituents. Under this scheme, the poorest people are given coupons that they can trade locally for staple foods such as rice and oil at hugely discounted prices.

Studies seem to show that, although voters may expect personal goods from their MPs, they also clearly recognize the role that MPs perform in providing collective benefits for the constituency. In Uganda, voters appear to base their assessment of MPs on the MPs' contributions to community projects rather than just to individual voters.¹⁷⁰ One study of Kenya and Zambia suggests that voters are more

¹⁶⁹ Lindberg, 2010:137.

¹⁷⁰ Africa Leadership Institute 2007:31.

interested in the collective goods that MPs provide and are more likely to vote for an MP on that basis.¹⁷¹

MPs themselves see the obvious benefits of moving in this direction and stress the role that CDFs might play in facilitating this. An MP from Gabon commented that a more significant CDF there would allow politicians to support the population more effectively through larger projects at the local level, which, in turn, would “give more visibility to the MP’s role, and make it less likely that MPs would need to spend money in a high number of small activities, such as buying medicine or coffins for funerals.” It is unclear whether this is the start of a wider trend, but it does suggest that MPs are becoming aware of their need to examine alternatives to individual constituency service.

4.4.2. The Constituency as a Policy Resource

The other dimension to constituency activity consists in ensuring that local experience informs national policy-making. Through their interaction with voters, local MPs gain enormous expertise about the impact of policy decisions and legislation at the local level. That direct experience is often far greater than that of the civil servants and ministers responsible for drafting and implementing legislation, but is rarely used by parliaments in any systematic fashion to shape legislation. Instead it is most frequently due to the initiative of individual politicians that the experience of citizens is used as a policy resource. For example, a number of MPs in Africa told us how the harrowing stories of women within their constituencies made them campaign for an end to female genital mutilation by using the parliament to push for legislation to that end. In Mexico, one MP told us how, following a constituency office visit by a concerned mother, she took up the case of a gifted child, advocating for changes to education policy that would allow talented children to accelerate through grade levels based upon their abilities rather than remain within their age groups. A Thai MP told us about her work to protect gay and transgender young men from persecution by the army and how she managed to change the law regarding their fitness to serve in the military. An Indonesian MP who had a high maternal mortality rate within her constituency cooperated with health officials and parliamentary colleagues to develop a national programme of care.

171 Young 2009:8.

Other MPs told us how they regularly hold local meetings to ask people about their policy priorities and ideas for new legislation. From the MPs with whom we spoke, there appears to be a huge appetite among the public for such events. Typically, an MP would invite between 20 and 100 local voters to come and discuss policy ideas. These might involve local initiatives to improve local infrastructure or housing, but they also often involved the MP taking up legislation at the national level. The MP from Gabon explained how she was asked during such a meeting to propose legislation to increase the proportion of girls in secondary education and to improve their job opportunities. Similarly, an MP from Kenya explained how such meetings had created a set of local objectives built around the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) concentrating on schools, health care and child welfare.

Despite the range of examples of the local experience prompting policy initiatives, we struggled to find instances of parliaments energetically seeking to draw the constituency expertise of MPs into the decision-making process. Many parliaments have provisions for petitions, MP-initiated debates, questions and motions that frequently highlight local concerns, but those tend to be parochial in tone and content; they often raise constituency issues in parliament, but have little direct connection to the national role of parliament in finding collective solutions through legislation or government oversight. Parliaments could do far more to channel widespread constituency concerns into parliament in order to find strategic solutions to common problems. The examples of innovative thinking tend to be ad hoc, with the initiative coming from individual MPs rather than from the parliament itself, which, perhaps, is to be expected. As with other examples of parliamentary reform, MPs’ visible effectiveness often prompts others to copy those MPs’ methods and eventually moves the institution to respond. The next section examines two recent examples of institutional responses to the increase of constituency work and, in the chapter’s conclusion, we reflect on the extent to which such developments may shape the constituency role in the future.

4.5. Institutional Responses to the Growth of Constituency Work

The most obvious impact of constituency work is on the workload of MPs and thus on the resources that they

need to perform that work. It is difficult to prove that growing constituency pressures have resulted in additional resources for parliamentarians. But, in recent years, MPs in many countries have been pushing for both higher salaries and more support in order to do their jobs, the most notable case being Kenya, where salaries increased from 10,000 Kenyan Shillings (KS) in 2002 to 200,000 by 2009¹⁷² and where the constituency allowance increased from 5,200 KS in 2002 to 50,000 by 2007.¹⁷³

The other point, worth noting in passing, concerns the extent to which parliaments have professionalized their parliamentary staffing in recent decades. The survey of parliaments conducted for this report highlighted the extent to which parliaments have responded to the increasing workload of politicians by professionalizing both their internal services and the parliamentary procedures. Parliamentary staff and politicians have sought to improve internal procedures and train staff so that they can support MPs in all aspects of their work. However, there is huge variety in that level of provision, with the US at one extreme, employing nearly 16,000 staff, followed by Japan and Indonesia at nearly 4,000, and with countries like Djibouti, Mauritania and Malta employing around 50 or fewer. However, it seems that, regardless of the number of staff, MPs will always believe that they could use more staff.

Two other developments are worth assessing, namely, the use of CDFs and the creation by parliament of constituency outreach offices on a non-partisan basis. Both initiatives offer institutional support to constituency activity, encouraging greater interaction between MPs and their constituents. Yet they both also shape that activity and, as such, have strengths and weaknesses.

4.5.1. Constituency Development Funds

The expansion of CDFs has been dramatic over the last two decades. According to one analysis, the number of national CDFs increased from three in 1990 to 19 by 2010 in countries as diverse as Bhutan, India, Jamaica, Ghana, Papua New Guinea and the Philippines.¹⁷⁴ The

purpose of the funds is attractive in that they create pots of money that can be disbursed at the local level to promote economic development, deal with infrastructural problems and engage with local groups and individuals. The intention to decentralize decision-making for such projects means that the CDFs should be much more responsive to local need than similar projects run directly by central government. Consequently, they fill a development gap that would otherwise exist, especially in poorer countries.

However, the funds are contentious for various reasons. Concerns exist about their accountability and effectiveness, about whether they simply reinforce existing patronage networks and about whether they make MPs into executive decision-makers and thus detract from MPs' parliamentary roles of oversight and accountability. Many of these concerns revolve around the role played by MPs and the extent to which MPs directly control or influence the allocation of spending.

Although the funds differ in their exact structure, they follow a broadly similar purpose, namely, to promote development. For example, the Jamaican CDF was established to "promote human and infrastructure development at the community and constituency levels" with the government recognizing that the CDF was "an important part of our social safety net".¹⁷⁵ The Kenyan CDF was established to "ensure that a specific portion of the national annual budget is devoted to the constituencies for purposes of development and in particular in the fight against poverty at the constituency level".¹⁷⁶

The principle of fighting poverty and promoting development is thus central to all such funds, but their growth must be at least partly attributed to the desire of MPs to increase the resources at their disposal. For example, in Uganda, the CDF was in part a pledge by President Yoweri Museveni to give MPs funds to help with constituency development, but also to "avoid constituents overburdening MPs with demands for development projects, making MPs delve into their private pockets, get poorer and corrupt in order to make ends meet."¹⁷⁷ A similar analysis was made of the Kenyan CDF in that the main reason MPs supported the bill in 2003 "was

172 An increase from approximately US\$126 in 2002 to US\$2,500 in 2009, according to www.oanda.com.

173 An increase from approximately US\$66 in 2002 to \$740 USD in 2007, according to www.oanda.com.

174 Baskin 2010.

175 Jamaica Labour Party 2008, cited in Baskin 2010:15.

176 Constituency Development Fund Act 2003, cited in Baskin 2010:22.

177 Africa Leadership Institute 2007:8.

not because they loved their constituents more. [...] They supported it because they dreaded another five years of endless harambees for endless development projects in their constituencies."¹⁷⁸ In some cases, CDFs were explicitly designed to strengthen the position of the MP. In Jamaica, the initiative sought to "empower the members of parliament to respond to the needs and priorities articulated by their constituents"¹⁷⁹

There are significant reservations about the rationale and the operation of CDFs. They emphasize voters' expectations that development is an integral part of the MP's job and that this is the way they should be judged.

Among politicians and academics, there are significant reservations about the rationale and the operation of CDFs, though. In the first place, they not only emphasize voters' expectations that development is an integral part of the MP's job and that this is the way they should be judged by voters; they also reinforce the 'Big Man' syndrome. As noted above, MPs' re-election prospects in many countries tend to depend more on MPs' ability to deliver locally than on their legislative or oversight roles. AFLI's analysis of the CDF in Uganda concluded that voters were basing their assessment of MPs on MPs' contributions to community projects and material benefits, concluding that "clearly the legislative role of the MP was not well recognized, or given the prominence it deserved."¹⁸⁰ Critics contend that giving local MPs financial decision-making power blurs the fundamental distinction between the role of the MP as an agent of government oversight and accountability and the executive role of ministers and officials.

There are also concerns about the extent to which CDFs are used for electoral campaigning. In the

Pacific region, there are numerous examples of the funds being used for partisan purposes and reinforcing traditional public ideas about leadership. In one instance, in the Solomon Islands, an MP who had a well dug only permitted those who had supported him to drink from it.¹⁸¹ Similarly, one MP in Papua New Guinea candidly told us that his principal objective was to get re-elected and that the funds helped him to do that. But, more than that, the funds reinforce the public impression of the MP as a leader who is able to deliver.

Do we target people service or parliamentary image? For me[,] I would target people service as long as I'm going to get political mileage – I'm not going to waste my time putting money into an area where my competitor is strong. I would rather put that into one of my stronghold areas and can strengthen my image. This is the practice. Whether we like it or not. That's the way politics is in Papua New Guinea.

Another MP from Papua New Guinea reinforced that analysis, attributing the creation of the CDF directly to the dominant political culture. As he put it:

PNG has its own blend of politics, that outsiders will never understand, as to why our elected leaders act and behave as they do. [...] Because of the people's expectation of our politicians as 'Big Man'[,] the successive governments have established through the annual budgetary allocations that are usually referred to as "MPs slush funds" or "discretionary funds" used by all MPs to meet constituents' expectations.

In other words, it was expected and accepted that the funds would be used for political purposes.

These sorts of perceptions have led to criticism of many CDFs. The evidence from various countries suggests that the key factor in determining whether a CDF achieves its objectives has to do with the structures for its operation. That is, "the governance mechanisms that CDFs operate in are the critical determinant for whether CDFs ultimately foster local development, are rendered ineffectual or, in the worst case, become a vehicle for rent-extraction and pork-barrel politics."¹⁸²

One model, described by Nakamura as the "local-political" model, appears to be most vulnerable to the

178 Okungu 2006.

179 OPM. Ministry Paper: Constituency Development Fund, cited in Baskin 2010:15.

180 Africa Leadership Institute 2007:32.

181 Nakamura, Clements and Hegarty 2011:14.

182 Baskin and Draman 2011:116.

problems described above, as it tends to be characterized by a very loose governance structure, which gives huge discretion to the local MP and requires relatively little accountability for spending.¹⁸³ The Ugandan CDF conformed to this first model, which is perhaps part of the reason why it ran into such problems and was reported to have been scrapped during 2011 (although a new CDF is rumoured to be on the way). Its supporters will argue that its main drawback was that the fund was never large enough to meet the expectations of voters and was inadequate to address any significant local problems. There is some merit in this argument, in that it offered just over \$5,000 per MP per annum and was by far the smallest CDF, compared with just over \$20,000 in Malawi, \$420,000 in India, almost \$800,000 in Kenya and just over \$4 million in the Philippines.¹⁸⁴

However, the Ugandan CDF was also significant because funds were paid directly into the MPs' bank accounts and, by most analyses, were subject to very few checks and controls. The AFLI assessment of the CDF found widespread mismanagement in the use of funds because there were no independent signatories to the account, which gave MPs unfettered discretion. The key factor in the mismanagement of the funds was therefore the fact that the CDF was founded under "scanty interim guidelines, enabling law, and accountability protocols"¹⁸⁵ and that "there appear to be no laws or regulations governing [its] management"¹⁸⁶.

At the other end of the spectrum, the Jamaican CDF falls into a more formalized, professional model. The fund allocates around \$230,000 per MP, who is then obliged to create a five-year development plan. During this process, MPs are compelled to consult with local groups, individuals and NGOs, so that the "responsibility for selection and prioritisation of project ideas must be that of the constituents and not the MP."¹⁸⁷ The five-year plan and project ideas are submitted to the CDF unit in the Office of the Prime Minister and then go to a cross-party committee in parliament for final approval. Monitoring and evaluation take place through implementing agencies, the Constituency Project Oversight

Committee, the parliamentary committee and MPs themselves. Because of this combination of five-year strategic planning, together with rigorous accountability measures, the CDF has delivered tangible results, such as the creation of community centres, training for the unemployed and road improvements.

In short, the development of CDFs is a significant innovation and has shaped how politicians are engaging with their voters, especially in developing countries. Although opinions about CDFs strongly differ, CDFs are evidently broadly popular with MPs and the public. Their management is key to their success and, in some countries, CDFs are being reformed and tightened; Kenya is one such example, where, in 2012, they will be subject to tighter controls as part of a wide-ranging decentralization initiative. But they are generally regarded as a welcome tool to fight poverty. Other firm conclusions are hard to find, partly because CDFs tend to divide opinion. The best summary is provided by Robert Nakamura, who suggests four points: 1) because of their support among MPs, CDFs are unlikely to be abolished entirely; 2) the number of CDFs is growing and the model is spreading; 3) significant variations have developed in their design and in the circumstances that shape their implementation and 4) "they are producing activities that are both positive and negative in their consequences."¹⁸⁸

4.5.2. Constituency Offices

The second development is the creation of constituency development offices. Such initiatives have frequently been supported by international donors and agencies to encourage greater engagement between politicians and voters (especially under proportional list systems) and to promote a non-partisan support role, particularly in post-conflict situations. As such, they have been tried in places such as the Balkans, Iraq and, in a variant form, Indonesia.

The case of The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is a useful example. Initially started in 2003 as a small pilot program, the country's constituency office initiative has expanded to provide 75 constituency offices that are the principal platform through which

183 Nakamura 2011.

184 Baskin et al. 2011.

185 AFLI 2007:9

186 Baskin 2010:28

187 Baskin 2010:17.

188 Nakamura, Clements and Hegarty 2011:3.

MPs communicate with their voters. The model sought to establish offices in municipal buildings in order to emphasize that constituency service was non-partisan. In addition, the offices are now staffed by assistants who are recruited through an open competition; these assistants are also put through a training programme to ensure that they know how to deal with the cases brought before them and that they are adequately equipped to support the MPs.¹⁸⁹

According to local analysts, the impact has been significant on the public understanding of what MPs do and MPs' responses to voters. At the outset, voters assumed that meeting a MP was an opportunity to lobby for direct and individual support, such as an offer of employment. But the system has evolved and citizens have established how to use the system most effectively. Now, cases fall into three main areas. First, the offices offer people help in navigating government bureaucracy and accessing benefits such as pensions or other welfare entitlements. Second, there are infrastructure projects, such involving roads and railways, in which CSOs or groups of individuals highlight specific local problems and where, through contact with government ministers, MPs are expected to expedite the process of finding government funding for such projects. Third, for issues involving public services, such as health and education, the MP works with local authorities and parliamentary colleagues to resolve problems.

The value of the system is that it helps individuals to engage with the state; consequently, the system is no longer faceless. It also makes people more aware of parliament and politicians. Because the offices are so located that no citizen is more than 30 kilometres away and most people are within 5 kilometres, voter awareness of the offices is over 60 percent.

Moreover, the offices have also affected the political culture and the attitude of MPs to such work. The importance attached to the offices by MPs means that every Friday is now regarded as a constituency day, and parliament does not sit. In addition, constituency activity is

¹⁸⁹ The program was initially made possible with support from USAID and technical assistance from the Canadian government and was implemented in partnership with NDI. It has subsequently expanded, thanks in part to further support from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, and is currently implemented with technical assistance from the Institute for Parliamentary Democracy (IPD), NDI's local legacy organization.

increasingly being used as a resource within parliament, with MPs using constituents' concerns as the basis for questioning ministers in parliament. Last, and perhaps most significant, the offices stress the non-partisan nature of such work and are seen as a valuable tool for promoting social integration, with constituency work now enshrined in the Law on Parliament.

Similar initiatives have been implemented elsewhere. For example, a project in Zambia has created offices in all 150 constituencies, again on a non-partisan basis, and these are staffed by trained constituency workers. Local analysis again reveals a high take-up rate, with one constituency reporting over 300 visits in the space of a month. In Indonesia, work has been underway for some time to create regional *Rumah Aspirasi* (or 'House of Aspirations').¹⁹⁰ The intention was to establish regional offices that would register the aspirations of citizens, which would in turn inform the policy proposals of representatives. The hope was thus to find a way to connect constituency experience with the policy-making process. However, the project has stuttered due to public concerns about the amount of money being spent on the offices; although offices are still serving members of the upper, regional house of parliament, analysis of their performance is limited.

The creation of constituency offices seems to be a response to challenges in certain political contexts. In countries where constituency activity already takes up much of MPs' time, there may be less need to create such offices. However, the principles that underpin them – the non-partisan nature of such support, the emphasis on strategic solutions rather than hand-outs to individuals and the provision of properly trained staff – are strong, and could apply to almost every political environment.

4.6. Conclusion: A Strategic Approach to Managing Demand and Supply

Although constituency service appears to be growing worldwide and that the vast majority of MPs seem to be complaining about their inability to meet voters' expectations, neither the MPs nor public appear likely

¹⁹⁰ The *Rumah Aspirasi* programme was initially made possible with funding from the World Bank.

to give it up. For MPs, constituency service provides a rewarding and satisfying element of their job, particularly in systems where parliament perhaps does not have enough formal power to hold government to account. MPs also believe that they derive an electoral benefit from such activity and that they are meeting a real need among voters for such services. For their part, citizens expect MPs to cater to their needs, regarding constituency service as an integral part of what MPs do and, frequently, as the most important aspect of MPs' jobs. In many countries, voting preferences are clearly influenced by MPs' local contributions rather than their national work.

Much analysis has focused on the detrimental effects of the volume of constituency work, that is, on the extent to which it takes MPs away from their roles in parliament, encourages local patronage (and perhaps corruption) and takes up too many resources. Yet there have been few strategic or institutional responses to these developments. Those which have come about have tended to be driven by the need for greater resources to cope with increased expectations. While it is difficult to draw a firm conclusion about the merits of constituency development funds, they have become popular among MPs because they provide additional funds to overstretched politicians. Of course, politicians' use of them for partisan purposes or genuine development depends on the system in place; but, either way, MPs mostly like them and want them expanded.

As the MP from Papua New Guinea put it, the danger is that of simply "feeding the monster". The provision of additional resources may merely increase voters' expectations of individual help. In many regions, constituency service clearly offers an individual and specific response to voters' personal problems. In such cases, constituency service may be an obvious response to changing public expectations of political

representation, which emphasize the individual rather than the collective. Yet there are signs that the sheer volume and diversity of casework is shifting MPs' approach to the constituency.

The examples from Africa and elsewhere suggest that the pressure of individual support is pushing MPs into finding collective and strategic solutions. More significant, polling is starting to suggest that voters judge MPs as much by what they deliver for the area as by what they deliver to individuals. In Central and Eastern Europe, the creation of constituency offices has shown that voters eventually learn how to use the system to best effect. Although voters might initially ask for favours, the system helps to frame those expectations toward more generalized support.

For the most part, though, this pattern is emerging in an ad hoc and sporadic pattern. The insights of innovative MPs like Saber Chowdhury often generate the most interesting responses. There is almost no identification of good practice and little evidence of lesson-learning within, let alone among, countries.

The challenge for parliamentary systems around the world consists not simply in providing more resources, but in channelling constituency work in three ways: By moving a) from the specific to the strategic in order to find policy solutions to common problems rather than to deal with each case on its own; b) from the individual to the collective in order to find responses that benefit many people locally rather than single individuals; and c) from the local to national, finding ways of drawing constituency expertise into the parliamentary and policy process much more systematically. The examples within this chapter provide some indication of how that might happen, but the wider implementation of these lessons requires that MPs, parliamentary staff and parliaments pick up these initiatives and apply them more broadly.



CONCLUSION: PARLIAMENTARY REFORM – RESILIENCE AND RENEWAL

5.1 Introduction: Parliamentary Responsiveness and Public Expectation

The purpose of this report has been to explore the changing relationship between citizens and parliaments, highlighting the ways in which parliaments around the world are responding to public expectations. Chapter II concentrated on the institutional response, examining the efforts that parliaments have made to improve access and information and to involve the public in the legislative and oversight process. Chapters III and IV looked at how public pressure is influencing the work of individual members of parliament in relation to their representative role and their responses to the concerns of individual voters.

Parliaments in most parts of the world appear to appreciate the need to find ways of improving public perceptions of the institution and are implementing a

range of initiatives designed to enhance the relationship between parliaments and voters. These tend to be characterized by a desire to make the institution open, transparent and inclusive of public opinion while simultaneously increasing popular understanding and appreciation of parliament's role. The greater emphasis on public engagement has come about for a number of reasons. In many cases, it has been in response to political crisis, low levels of public trust or a shift in political power within parliament. Politicians themselves, always sensitive to public opinion, have also sought to find ways of improving communication with and responsiveness to voters. But, at a deeper level, the shift reflects the changing political landscape within which parliaments operate. As the opening chapter described, many of the traditional sources of legitimacy have dwindled in recent decades and parliaments are competing with a range of other routes to representation. Parliaments still face many challenges in convincing the public of their role, effectiveness and impact.

However, the resilience of parliamentary representation reflects the ability of these institutions to adapt and evolve to public expectations in order to renew their legitimacy. The responses from parliaments and politicians to this report suggest that they are aware of the pressures. But in many parliaments – possibly most – the ability to implement the necessary changes is hampered by a lack of coordination, strategy and organization. Rather, change has tended to be ad hoc, as a series of disparate measures, rather than guided by a set of overarching objectives. This may be inevitable. Parliamentary change tends to be haphazard and unpredictable, the result of negotiation and compromise, reflecting the nature of parliaments themselves.

This concluding chapter summarizes some of the lessons and principles that have underpinned that process of parliamentary change and is divided into three sections. The first examines the factors that tend to drive greater parliamentary responsiveness to the public and the limitations of institutional responses. The second assesses how parliaments might better use some of their insights to inform strategies and harness the pressure for reform. The third identifies the characteristics of successful reform programmes and how proposals for change need to include incentives for various groups inside and outside parliament.

5.1.1. Understanding Institutional Responses

The central theme of the report has been the way in which parliaments are responding to public pressure for change. In practice, that popular demand manifests itself in many different forms in different countries. The responses from parliaments to the IPU survey for this report highlighted the difficulty in determining a response to the challenge of public perceptions, given the multitude of possible causes for public opinion, and the recognition that many contributory factors are simply beyond the reach of parliaments themselves. But the report's chapters reflected the main parliamentary responses and highlighted the innovations and the similarities among them. Almost all of the parliaments and politicians surveyed cited measures to improve their websites, broadcast proceedings, extend consultation, encourage greater political accountability and devote greater resources to supporting constituency engagement.

However, the way in which the causes of public concern were interpreted and the responses that they elicited often reflected deeper political factors and the relative position of parliament within the system of governance. For example, in several countries, there was a stark recognition that public trust was low because of the parliament's own shortcomings and that any attempt at outreach had to start with the parliament improving its own performance. In India, a submission from the Rajya Sabha noted that public perceptions were part of worldwide concerns about "declining standards in public life, corruption by public functionaries, use of money and muscle power in elections to legislative bodies, etc.," combined with issues specific to the parliament, including, "standards of debate, participation of members in the proceedings of the House, quality of legislation, relevance of proceedings to the public welfare, declining number of sittings in the House, the image of parliament and [...] instances of misconduct and defection by members."

In that context, measures to improve public confidence included strengthening the committee system to enhance legislative oversight, creating a committee on public petitions, establishing a constituency development fund and introducing tighter policing of the parliament's code of conduct to improve parliamentary behaviour. But they also included the more common features of parliamentary outreach, including improving the parliamentary website, televising parliamentary proceedings and digitizing parliamentary records.

In a similar vein, the low levels of public approval in Bulgaria were attributed in large part to the behaviour of MPs and specifically widespread absences from parliament or voting on behalf of absent colleagues. The submission succinctly noted, "Some MPs are continuously absent from plenary sittings for no good reason, fearing no sanctions, be they financial or making their names public." The response also identified the poor quality of legislation and insufficient contact between MPs and voters as additional causes, but added that the "core functions and work of the institution remain unclear and uncomprehended by the public at large" and that people tended to blame parliament for a wide variety of personal problems, ranging from unemployment to holes in the road.

Other parliaments reflected on the need to transform public opinion about the parliamentary institution as the country made the transition to democracy. For example, a submission from Indonesia highlighted the fact that the parliament needed to address the traditional public perception that it had been a ‘rubber stamp’ that existed to give legal force to government decisions. It needed to combat the impression that “parliament has not fully supported the enforcement of good governance, especially related to the eradication of corruption” and its main challenge was thus to build trust by instating better oversight and legislation and encouraging the government to combat corrupt practice.

In Kenya, the parliamentary drive to improve relations with the public was couched in terms of wider constitutional change. Again highlighting the lack of public understanding as a factor, parliamentary outreach has sought to demystify the institution, making it more accessible, broadcasting proceedings, opening committees up to the public and creating constituency offices for every MP. The submission suggested that these were responses to greater public interest, but that greater public interest was itself a result of greater citizen freedom, freedom of expression, public awareness of ‘fundamental rights’ and a vibrant civil society.

The examples highlight two points about how political context determines parliaments’ approaches to improving their relationship with citizens. First, where there are obvious political weaknesses, parliaments need to undertake reforms to improve the accountability of government, enhance the scrutiny of legislation and demonstrate to the public that the parliament is more effective. As David Beetham has argued, “If the problem is that parliaments don’t have the capacity or will to hold executives to account when it matters, then more effectively communicating information about their work will hardly restore public confidence in their usefulness.”¹⁹¹ In fact, in the short term, it may do the opposite: while the emphasis on greater communication, openness and transparency is undoubtedly a good thing, increased awareness of parliamentary proceedings is also likely to increase voter expectations. A Tanzanian MP suggests that, since the parliament started broadcasting live parliamentary debates, “The people of Tanzania are much more vocal and

demanding than they used to be. [...] Constituents call us after a difficult debate to tell us how we did.”¹⁹²

Second, implementing reforms to improve parliamentary performance should be a consideration in all efforts at engagement, but parliaments’ approach to reform is rarely so strategic or coordinated. In all cases, parliaments’ analyses tended to give more credence to those factors which they were intent on addressing. It may seem obvious, but the way in which the problem is defined will determine the quality and extent of the institutional response. Furthermore, although many submissions contained insightful analysis of the challenges that parliaments face, these were rarely followed through in a strategy.

Instead, many parliaments tended to define a problem in terms that they were amenable to institutional responses. Although many parliaments recognized the multiple causes, for the most part – and perhaps understandably – they described challenges that could be addressed by the measures that they were already implementing, such as outreach strategies, codes of conduct for MPs and increased constituency resources. In addition, in attempting to improve their relationship with citizens, all of the parliaments listed several initiatives that they had taken over the years, often dealing with different aspects of public concern. However, these tended to be joined up only in hindsight as aspects of the same problem. In practice, many initiatives existed as isolated attempts to deal with specific problems rather than as complementary measures forming part of a wider response.

Finally, parliaments showed a limited ability to forge an overarching strategy to join those measures together. There were some notable exceptions in which improving outreach was informed by a long-term institutional programme. However, for the most part, there was little evidence of a concerted effort to address several dimensions to the problem of public opinion simultaneously. As the Hansard Society’s perceptive international survey of parliamentary outreach has noted, “The problem with public engagement is that by its nature it is diffuse, encompassing many aspects which necessarily transcend internal organisational boundaries.” This requires cross-departmental cooperation and

191 Beetham 2011:132.

192 Stapenhurst et al. 2011:93.

strategic leadership, but, in most cases, “This is not the institutional reality within parliament.”¹⁹³

The nature of parliamentary institutions may make it impossible to devise and implement an all-encompassing strategy, yet this should not prevent parliaments from trying to get a much more strategic analysis of the causes and sources of pressure for change. Although many parliaments believe they are doing as much as they can, their responses are sometimes constrained by their own analysis and assessment of the factors driving reform. A fuller analysis is likely to give parliaments a much better understanding of the causes and consequences of public opinion. But, perhaps more important, it would provide a realistic assessment of what is achievable from within parliament, identify where external support is needed and establish a measure against which success can be judged. These themes are picked up in the next section.

5.2. Harnessing the Pressures for Change into Strategies for Reform

The main body of this report has discussed not only how parliaments are responding to public pressures, but the fact that they are, for the most part, sensitive to public opinion and responsive to demands for change. However, the structure of the report also reflected that their responsiveness has at least two dimensions. Chapter II concentrated on the institutional responses, that is, on the measures that parliaments could implement directly by changing their structures or processes to encourage and engage citizens more fully.

In contrast, Chapters III and IV examined how the role of the individual MP is being affected as a result of changed and often increased public expectations of what MPs should be doing. This is partly a result of procedural reforms designed to make MPs more accountable (such as codes of conduct) or additional external scrutiny (through the growth of PMOs, for example). But the role is also changing, as MPs themselves respond directly to public pressure, as reflected in the expansion of constituency work or in the increased communication between MPs and citizens that new communication technologies

have made possible. That increased workload, in turn, has frequently required further institutional responses, as parliaments respond to MPs’ own pressures for greater resources and support and, sometimes, changes to the parliamentary timetable (for example, to create time for constituency work).

Parliamentary efforts to improve the relationship with voters need to be based not just on what the institution can do to improve public trust, but also on an understanding of how the role of the individual representative is changing. The MP is the single most important point of contact with parliament for the vast majority of voters. The public’s perception of the MP’s role will largely determine the public’s attitude toward parliament and politicians. Institutional reforms, in turn, will often inadvertently reinforce or shape that perception. For instance, although many parliaments have introduced codes of conduct, those codes are often a defensive reaction to public outcry rather than a strategic measure designed to improve confidence. There may be codes of conduct implemented as part of a wider strategy to enhance engagement, but we found none. In this area, a more strategic analysis is needed to harness some of the pressures for change, so that reform reinforces the role of MPs and of parliament itself in the public mind. These strategic responses could take many forms, but, from this report, three specific challenges stand out.

Parliamentary efforts to improve the relationship with voters need to be based not just on what the institution can do to improve public trust, but also on an understanding of how the role of the individual representative is changing.

First, reforms need to reinforce the role of the representative and to improve public understanding of what MPs do, inside and outside parliament. For example, the usual institutional response to MPs’ complaints that they do not have enough resources to do constituency work is to provide them with more resources, through the creation

193 Hansard Society 2010a:69.

of constituency offices, the development of constituency development funds or an increase in MPs' allowances.

While these may be obvious responses to constituents' expectations, there is the danger that the provision of greater resources will simply increase public expectations of what MPs will do locally. Demand will constantly outstrip supply unless the additional resources are accompanied by a strategic change in the approach to the work. Chapter IV described how many MPs are seeking to find collective solutions to individual requests for help and how, despite the prevalence of clientelism, voters in some countries are increasingly judging politicians by what they do for the community rather than for individuals. Similarly, the use of constituency development funds appears to be most effective where they encourage collective provision and self-help rather than operate as hand-outs.

In short, the obvious response to demands from MPs for more resources may not be the best in the long term for their relationship with citizens. Any response should also seek to influence how that work is done, so that it reduces the burden of constituency work and shapes public understanding of the representative role of the MP.

Second, reforms designed to improve public engagement and political accountability need to ensure that they strengthen, rather than undermine, the role of parliament. Chapter III described how successive reforms have worked to gradually restrict the scope of the parliamentary mandate, often for very good reasons and always in response to public pressure. However, the challenge is to balance calls for greater accountability with the need to ensure that MPs have enough scope to reflect, deliberate and decide in the national interest. The public expectation is that MPs need to account more regularly for their activities, but MPs are elected to act on behalf of voters and reforms need to reinforce that sense of delegated authority.

Similarly, Chapter IV indicated that there is much concern that the volume of constituency work may be taking MPs away from their parliamentary duties. However, given the incentives for MPs and the perceived benefits for voters, it would be impossible (and undesirable) to do away with this aspect of their role, and it is unlikely to diminish in size in coming years. As well as encouraging MPs to take a more strategic approach to their job, parliaments should be

seeking ways of connecting the constituency with parliament. From their constituency casework, MPs have a direct understanding of how legislation and policy are affecting individuals and communities. This expertise could be invaluable to ministers and officials to inform the development of policy. Yet there are very few examples of parliaments actively seeking to draw on the constituency experience through specific debates, committee hearings or question periods. Reforms should seek to encourage MPs to channel their knowledge into finding policy solutions within parliament and promote a public understanding of how parliament responds to individuals' concerns.

From their constituency casework, MPs have a direct understanding of how legislation and policy are affecting individuals and communities. Reforms should seek to encourage MPs to channel their knowledge into finding policy solutions within parliament.

Third, parliaments need to accept and collaborate more fully with external organizations to strengthen links with the public. The report has described at various points how third parties are shaping the public's opinion of politicians and parliaments. The relationship between parliaments and citizens is no longer (if it ever was) direct and straightforward. There are now many mediating bodies that summarize and interpret parliamentary activity, broadcast parliamentary proceedings and rate the performance of individual MPs inside and outside parliament. In short, the process of parliamentary representation is more complex and intertwined with outside organizations than ever before.

The reaction to such perceived 'interference' in the parliamentary process has frequently been hostile, at least initially. Moreover, parliamentary monitoring organizations can increase public cynicism if they present their findings adversarially or simply focus on the negative aspects of parliament. However, the growth of such

bodies reflects the fact that they are tapping into wider public concerns about parliament, politicians and representation more generally. Given the public's support for such initiatives, they offer new ways for parliament to engage with voters and to promote a better understanding of their role and work. It is telling that, in many countries, PMOs are now regarded as allies by MPs who recognize the value of having an independent, external validation of their activity, which strengthens their representative claim with voters.

Collaboration with other organizations also offers the scope to reach more people than would be otherwise possible. Many parliaments are partnering with broadcasters to televise parliamentary proceedings and using YouTube and social networking sites to make themselves more accessible. Events held in conjunction with other organizations also help parliaments to reach new audiences.

In summary, while parliaments appear to be relatively good at developing strategies for engaging the public, they sometimes overlook the fact that what goes on beyond the scope of such 'outreach' is more likely to have a long-term impact on public trust in parliament. The public's changing expectations of their representatives offer huge opportunities to strengthen the role of parliament in the public sphere, but parliaments need to be sensitive to those changes.

5.3. Characteristics of Successful Reforms

The final piece of the reform jigsaw consists in understanding how change happens within parliaments. It is obviously important to recognize the pressures for change and to develop a strategy to harness them, but the most difficult stage is then to find ways of implementing these insights. However, parliaments differ from most other organizations in three ways that make strategic change particularly challenging.

First, one of the most significant problems in understanding how a parliament is run is that there is never one person in charge. Various institutional and political figures run different aspects of parliamentary business. So, although positions such as the speaker or committee chair will be formally responsible for procedure and

maintaining order, they compete for influence with political party leaders, administrative figures such as the secretary general, senior committee position holders or other senior politicians with alternative power bases. Whereas in most organizations, the person at the head would drive through a strategy based on their vision of change, there is no equivalent within a parliament.

Second, parliaments rarely act as collective institutions. Unlike in other organizations bound together by a clear vision and mission, there are almost no circumstances when every MP will be pursuing the same objectives. Instead, parliaments (and especially newly established parliaments) are frequently in a state of flux, as collections of competing, and shifting, sets of interests seek to shape how the institution is run and how it takes (or avoids taking) decisions. Parliaments should be understood in this way: as collections of individuals with a wide variety of interests who band together in a series of shifting coalitions, depending on particular issues and the incentives at work.

Third, this means that generating support for a programme of change requires cobbling together a coalition of interests, often inside and outside parliament. Many of these will have different reasons for supporting change and the process of parliamentary reform is therefore frequently complex, messy and haphazard. One US academic has suggested that reformers have to build support by framing the problem in a way that attracts members interested in things other than the initial underlying motives behind the changes. Consequently, change occurs as an accumulation of innovations inspired by competing motives. New structures are simply placed on top of older arrangements as it is difficult to abolish entirely existing structures. And, often, reforms provoke a contrary reaction from opponents that results in further, contradictory reforms. As a result, institutional development is an "ongoing, open-ended process. The interplay of coalitions promoting contradictory objectives produces institutions that are tense battlegrounds rather than stable, coherent solutions."¹⁹⁴

In this light, the evidence from the report suggests that there are four factors that characterize successful reforms designed to improve parliamentary

194 Schickler 2001:17-8.

engagement. First, and most logical, the reforms that tend to stick are those that have a tangible benefit for the public and members of parliament. The most obvious example within the report is the development of CDFs in various countries. The public like a fund that is specifically designed to promote local growth and development, partly because it offers the potential of direct and material benefit for them. For MPs, meanwhile, CDFs provide an additional resource, giving them greater authority and influence locally. As noted in Chapter IV, the rationale used to justify certain CDFs was specifically to ‘empower the local MP’ by giving him or her greater decision-making power to respond to the needs of local communities. However, CDFs appeal to MPs at a partisan level because they are also used for re-election purposes and, for that and other reasons, they remain contentious.

It is also clear that initiatives designed to bring citizens into parliament, to broadcast parliamentary proceedings, to improve consultation and to generate more accountability from MPs work best where MPs and citizens are convinced of the benefit of such measures.

Second, the combination of internal and external pressure for change increases the likelihood that reforms will be enacted. As we argue, parliaments have shown themselves to be generally responsive to public pressure. However, in some circumstances, reforms have emerged often in response to a political crisis or loss of public trust, as the accepted solution to a commonly understood problem, starting with pressure building outside parliament and then being taken up and championed by MPs themselves. The growth in the number of codes of conduct in parliaments reflects this trend. In most instances, such codes are the result either of an incidence of corruption or of momentum building behind public concern over a general slide in political standards. The need to ‘do something’ has thus most frequently resulted in both MPs and the public focusing on a tightening of the regime under which MPs operate.

Third, internal momentum for change is driven by a diverse coalition of interests and therefore often works best when dealing with several issues at once. In his work on parliamentary change in Africa, Joel Barkan has suggested that successful parliamentary strengthening needs to build a coalition for change that

combines ‘reformers’ and ‘opportunists’ – that is to say, those who genuinely believe in the need for a stronger and more responsive parliament and those whose support can be won through appeals to their self-interest (i.e., through more resources, salary and staff). As such, successful reform programmes combine several changes at once rather than one thing at a time, so that the package of measures appeals to the broadest range of MPs possible.

Fourth, the reforms that have the most impact are those which change behaviour and not just institutional structure. The purpose of all of the initiatives described in this report is to change how the public engages with parliament – which requires altering how the public and politicians behave. This should be self-evident, but too many parliamentary reforms focus on the process instead of the desired outcomes. Simply creating opportunities for greater public involvement in the parliamentary process, making more information available or establishing constituency offices is pointless, unless the public utilises these opportunities. Strategies will therefore need to respond to the trends in voters’ expectations, the changing nature of political representation and the growth of external bodies that provide a public commentary on the role and work of parliament. Ultimately, the long-term relationship between parliaments and citizens will depend less on institutional reform and outreach initiatives and more on how new patterns of behaviour are established inside and outside parliament.

5.4. Parliamentary Futures: Responsiveness, Resilience and Renewal

At the outset of the report, we stressed that the point of this analysis was not to attempt a definitive conclusion about the state of parliaments globally. The intention has been to examine how the relationship between parliaments and citizens is changing, illustrating how parliaments and politicians are responding to public pressure for greater information, involvement, accountability and service. We have focused on examples, innovations and experiments in each of these areas to show how those pressures are manifesting themselves and how parliamentary representation is evolving.

Even in this narrow area of enquiry, there is huge variation in the parliamentary experience. We also recognize that, in many countries, parliaments face significant problems. As we have noted in this chapter, the task of convincing the public of the continuing role and relevance of parliaments goes way beyond an effective outreach strategy and is intimately linked to parliaments' effectiveness in challenging government and shaping its decisions. The difficulty is not only in improving the way that parliaments communicate with voters, but also in distinguishing parliaments' unique function from the variety of alternative avenues for participation and redress – and then convincing voters that parliamentary representation is the most legitimate and effective way to ensure that their voices are heard and their interests protected.

The difficulty consists not only in improving how parliaments communicate with voters, but also in [...] convincing voters that parliamentary representation is the most legitimate and effective way to ensure that their voices are heard and their interests protected.

Despite those challenges, we should not lose sight of the fact that, compared with 50 years ago, parliaments are, generally, more open and accessible, more professionally run, better-resourced and more effective. We also need to recognize that citizens, rightly, demand more of those institutions, anticipate credible parliamentary responses to their problems and expect higher standards of probity, accountability and conduct than ever before in the institutions' history. The challenge consists in keeping up with the public by displaying responsiveness and resilience and in continually renewing that relationship with citizens.

Most evidently, the report suggests that parliaments are responding to public opinion. All of the submissions to the IPU survey indicated that the institutions were sensitive to public perceptions of their work and implementing changes designed to improve public understanding and engagement. Although the quality of the respondents' analyses and the detail of their approaches varied, there has been a significant shift in the way parliaments reach out to citizens. Parliaments now appear to recognize that it is as important – if not more so – that the institution serve the needs of the public as much as it serve the needs of the elected members.¹⁹⁵

Second, the report shows that, despite the concerns and the challenges to their role, parliaments remain central to the representative process. Although opinion polls suggest that people have ambiguous views about parliaments, the volume of correspondence, contact and requests for help is increasing rather than decreasing. The multiplicity of routes to representation now on offer to citizens means that parliaments are competing for space in an increasingly crowded public arena. Yet their resilience reflects the fact that there are still roles that parliament alone can perform and that individuals still recognize the significance of the institution.

However, and in conclusion, that resilience is partly attributable to the fact that parliaments have continued to evolve and to adapt to changing times and expectations. The landscape in which they operate is now more complex and faster-moving than ever before and the traditional sources of legitimacy on which parliaments relied have evaporated. Securing public legitimacy requires continual adaptation to the political, economic and social context within which they operate. This will be a permanent process of renewal, but the signs are that most parliaments are alive to the size of that task.

¹⁹⁵ Hansard Society 2010a:68.

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Andorra (General Council)
Argentina (Chamber of Deputies)
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Austria (National Council)
Belarus (House of Representatives *and* Council of the Republic)
Belgium (House of Representatives *and* Senate)
Bulgaria (National Assembly)
Burkina Faso (National Assembly)
Burundi (National Assembly *and* Senate)
Cameroon (National Assembly)
Canada (House of Commons *and* Senate)
Chile (Chamber of Deputies)
Colombia (Senate)
Congo (National Assembly)
Costa Rica (Legislative Assembly)
Croatia (Croatian Parliament)
Cyprus (House of Representatives)
Czech Republic (Chamber of Deputies *and* Senate)
Denmark (Parliament)
Dominican Republic (Chamber of Deputies)
Estonia (Parliament)
Finland (Parliament)
France (National Assembly *and* Senate)
Georgia (Parliament)
Germany (Bundestag)
Ghana (Parliament)
Greece (Hellenic Parliament)
Hungary (National Assembly)
India (House of the People *and* Council of States)
Indonesia (House of Representatives)
Israel (Parliament)
Italy (Chamber of Deputies)
Jamaica (House of Representatives)
Japan (House of Representatives *and* House of Councillors)
Kenya (National Assembly)
Latvia (Parliament)
Lithuania (Parliament)
Luxembourg (Chamber of Deputies)
Malawi (National Assembly)
Malaysia (House of Representatives)
Maldives (People's Majlis)
Mali (National Assembly)
Malta (House of Representatives)
Mauritius (National Assembly)
Mexico (Chamber of Deputies *and* Senate)
Namibia (National Assembly)
Netherlands (House of Representatives)
Nicaragua (National Assembly)
Nigeria (House of Representatives *and* Senate)
Norway (Parliament)
Pakistan (Senate)
Poland (Sejm)
Portugal (Assembly of the Republic)
Republic of Korea (National Assembly)
Romania (Chamber of Deputies *and* Senate)
Russian Federation (Council of the Federation)
Rwanda (Chamber of Deputies)
Slovakia (National Council)
Slovenia (National Assembly)
South Africa (National Assembly)
Spain (Congress of Deputies *and* Senate)
Suriname (National Assembly)
Sweden (Parliament)
Switzerland (National Council *and* Council of States)
Thailand (House of Representatives)

The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
(Assembly of the Republic)
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ANNEX TO THE GLOBAL PARLIAMENTARY REPORT

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ABOUT THE ANNEX

The Annex contains data, graphs and figures that illustrate some of the most fundamental characteristics of parliaments and parliamentarians. It is intended to promote knowledge of the similarities and differences of the world's parliaments.

Most data has been collected directly from parliaments. For this reason, the number of parliaments covered in each section varies. The sample size and the source of the data are indicated on each chart. Unless otherwise indicated, data is believed to be correct as of 30 September 2011.

129 parliaments provided data on their basic characteristics, equivalent to 68 percent of all parliaments in the world. The list of parliaments that provided data and the regional groupings are found at the end of this Annex. The response rate for each region was over 50 percent, with the exception of the Arab States (39 percent). The data covers 166 parliamentary chambers (62 percent of the total of 267 parliamentary chambers in the world). Some bicameral parliaments provided data for both chambers, others for only one chamber.

Note on bicameral parliaments: The maps and charts in Sections 1 - 6 add together the data for lower and upper chambers to obtain a single figure for the parliament. Where data was missing for one of the chambers, the parliament was excluded from the analysis. The maps and charts in Sections 7 - 8 cover only unicameral parliaments and lower chambers.

663 parliamentarians participated in a survey of their views of relations between citizens and parliaments as part of the research for the report. A summary of the key findings from the survey is included in this Sections 10 - 15 of the Annex.

The Annex presents only a selection of the data collected for the report. The full data set can be viewed and downloaded online at www.ipu.org/gpr, www.undp.org/governance and www.agora-parl.org/globalparliamentaryreport. More data can be found in the IPU's PARLINE¹ database on national parliaments.

For comments, corrections and suggestions, please contact

IPU: postbox@mail.ipu.org, +41 22 919 41 50

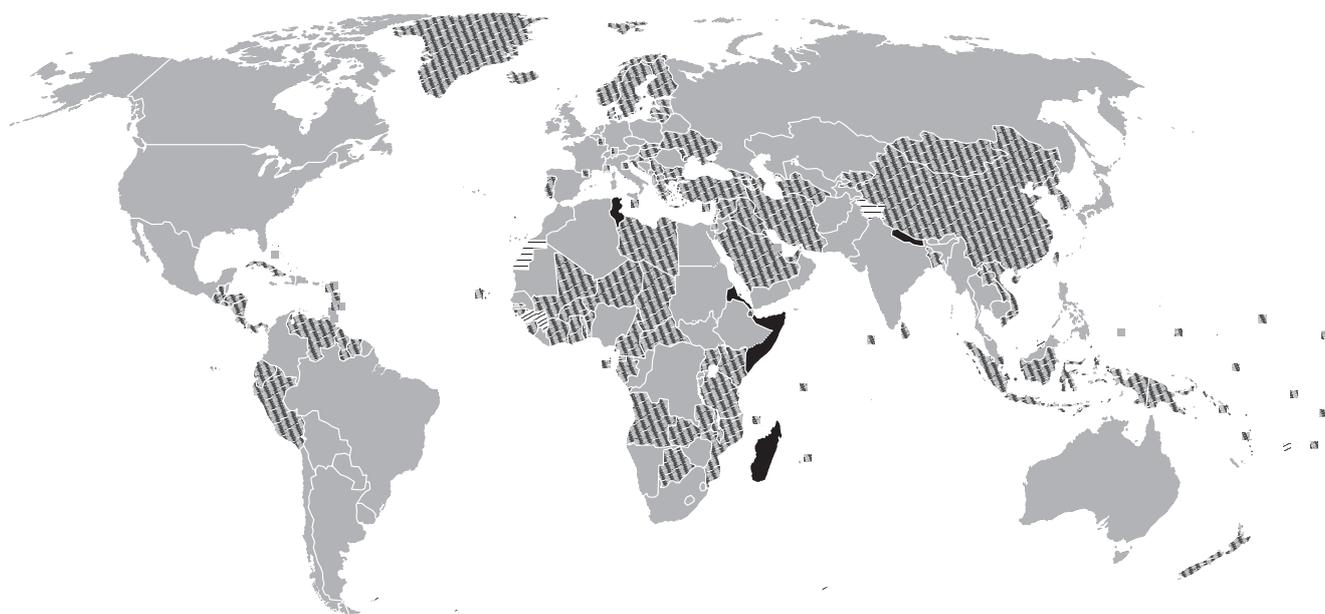
UNDP: cedric.jurgensen@undp.org +1 646 781 4346

BASIC DATA ABOUT THE WORLD'S PARLIAMENTS

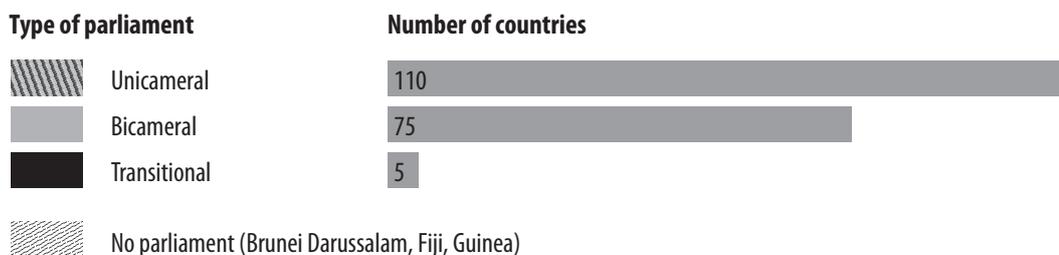
Which are more common: unicameral or bicameral parliaments?

110	unicameral parliaments in the world
75	bicameral parliaments
5	parliaments in transition (Eritrea, Madagascar, Nepal, Somalia, Tunisia)
3	countries with no parliament (Brunei Darussalam, Fiji, Guinea)

Type of parliament



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Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union, 30 September 2011

This map shows which parliaments are unicameral and which are bicameral

Sample size: 190 parliaments (100%)

Data source: PARLINE, population data from the United Nations^{2,3}

Population size matters. Countries with smaller populations are more likely to have unicameral parliaments. 75 percent of parliaments in countries with less than 1 million inhabitants are unicameral, while 76 percent of those over 50 million are bicameral. Countries with a population of between 10 million and 50 million are

fairly evenly split between unicameral and bicameral parliaments.

Unicameral parliaments tend to be smaller than bicameral parliaments. 69.2 percent of parliaments that have fewer than 245 members are unicameral.

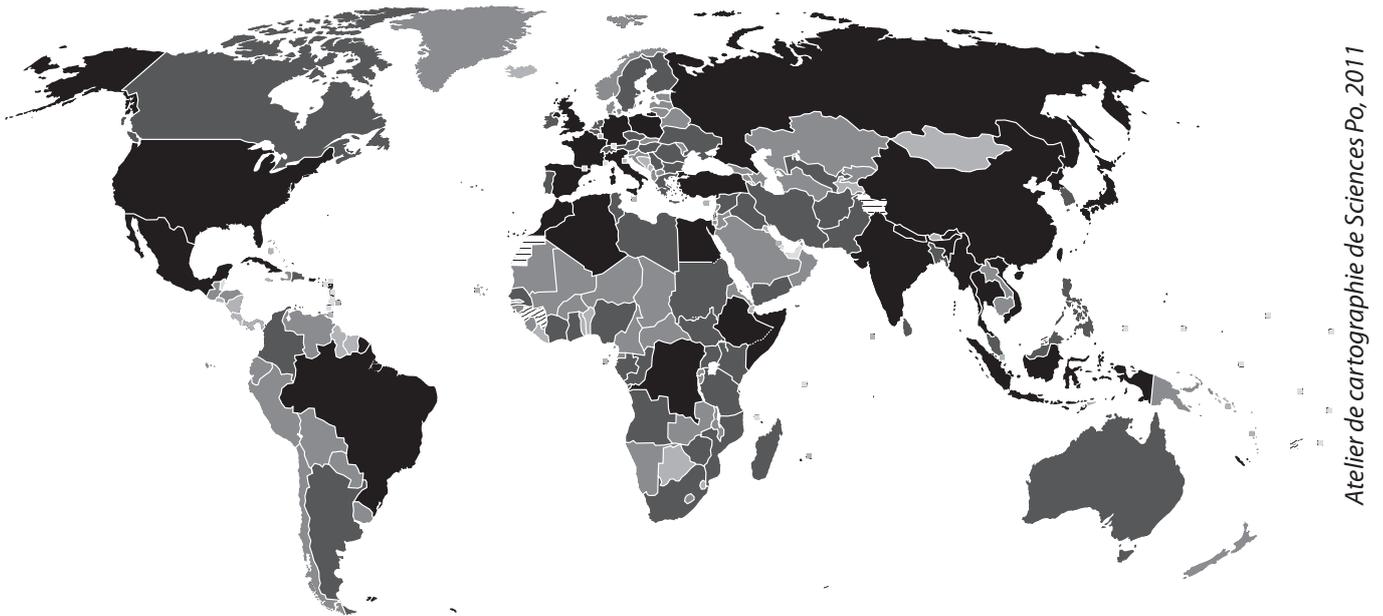
Type of parliament according to population size

Population	Unicameral	%	Bicameral	%	Transitional	%	Total
Below 1 million	30	75.00%	10	25.00%	0	0.00%	40
1 - 5 million	26	66.67%	13	33.33%	0	0.00%	39
5 - 10 million	20	64.52%	9	29.03%	2	6.45%	31
10 - 50 million	28	50.91%	24	43.64%	3	5.45%	55
Over 50 million	6	24.00%	19	76.00%	0	0.00%	25
Total	110		75		5		190

How many parliamentarians are there in the world?

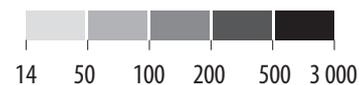
46,552	The statutory number of parliamentarians in the world
3,000	Members of the world's largest parliament, the Chinese National People's Congress
14	Members of the world's smallest parliament, the Congress of the Federated States of Micronesia

Number of parliamentarians per country

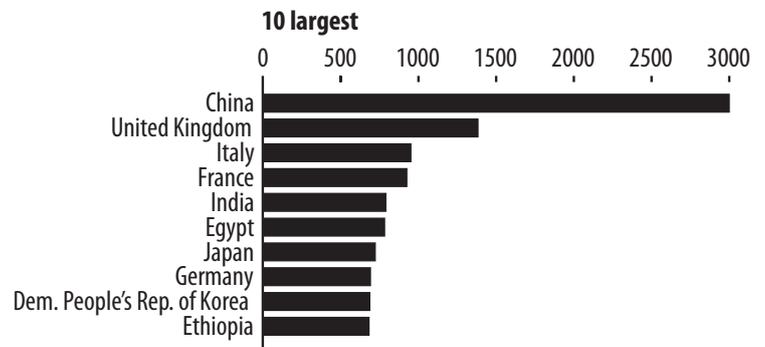


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Number of parliamentarians
as at 30 September 2011



 No parliament (Brunei Darussalam, Fiji, Guinea)



Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union, 30 September 2011

This map shows the size of parliaments in the world.

Sample size: 190 parliaments (100%)

Data source: PARLINE

Notes:

In countries with bicameral parliaments, the number of parliamentarians in both chambers is added together to make a single figure.

The figures represent the statutory number of parliamentarians, which is inscribed in the constitution or other fundamental laws.

The current number of parliamentarians may be lower than the statutory number. For example, 24 seats reserved for the Turkish community in Cyprus have remained vacant since 1974 for political reasons.

The global average number of parliamentarians per country is 245. Parliaments in 130 countries (68.42%) have fewer members than the global average. 22 parliaments (11.58%) have less than 50 members.

Number of parliaments according to statutory number of members

Statutory number	Number of parliaments	Percentage
Below 50	22	11.58%
50 - 99	37	19.47%
100 - 199	54	28.42%
200 - 499	50	26.32%
Over 500	27	14.21%

Eight of the 10 biggest parliaments are bicameral. The exceptions are those of China and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Number of parliamentarians by region

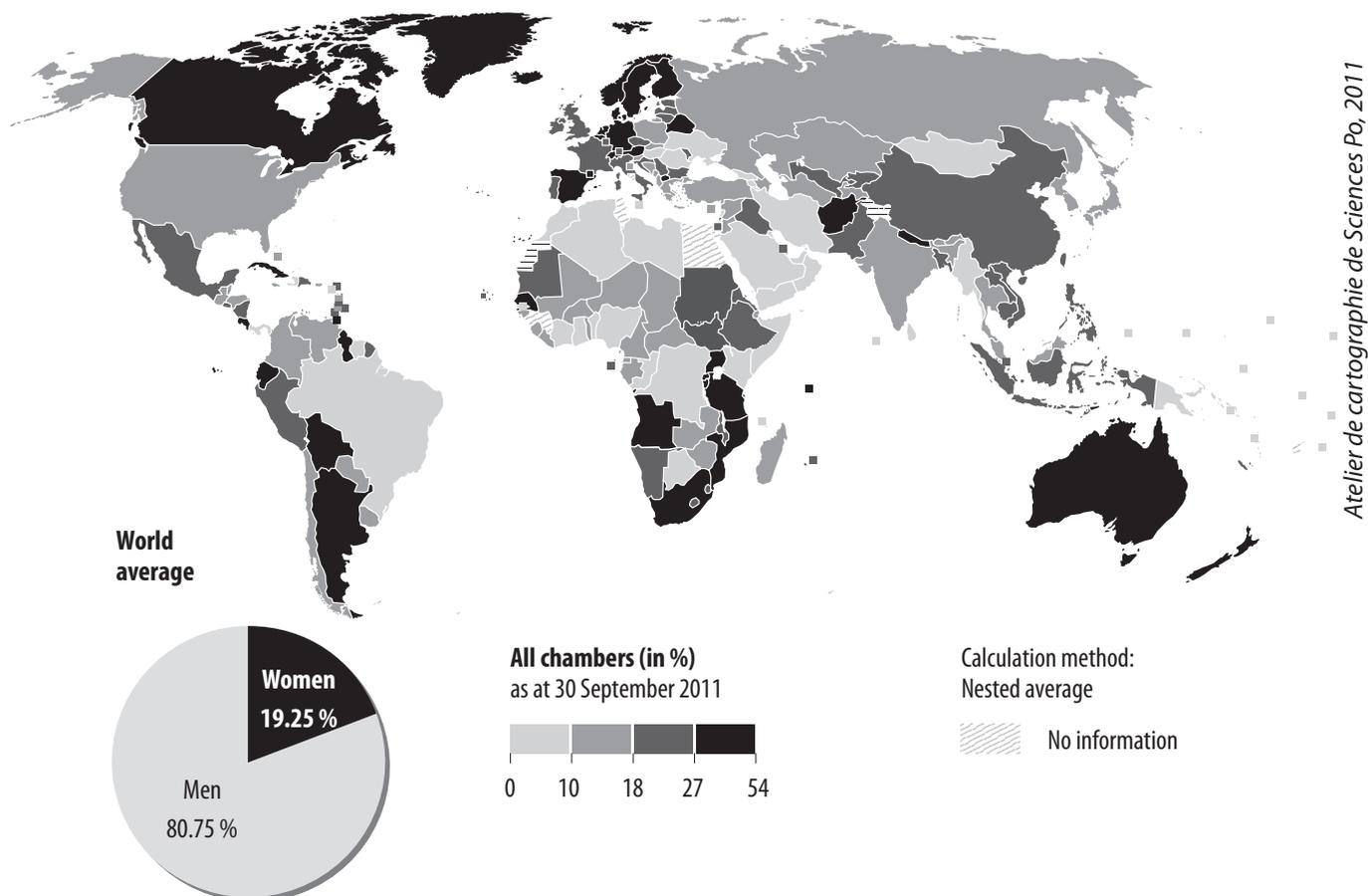
Region	Average	Total statutory number
Africa	206	9,462
Americas	169	5,902
Arab States	270	4,867
Asia-Pacific	325	12,338
Europe	264	13,983
World	245	46,552

What proportion of parliamentarians are women?

8,716	Women parliamentarians in the world
19.25%	Percentage of women parliamentarians in the world
17.05%	Percentage of chambers comprising over 30 percent of women

Percentage of women parliamentarians

This map shows the percentage of women parliamentarians in each country.



Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union, 30 September 2011

Sample size: 190 parliaments (100%)

Data source: PARLINE

Notes:

In countries with bicameral parliaments, the number of women parliamentarians in both chambers is added together to make a single figure.

Data as at 30 September 2011. Monthly updates on the number of women in parliament are published by the IPU at <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm>

The Rwandan Chamber of Deputies has the highest percentage of women (56.25%) in the world. It is followed by the General Council of Andorra (53.57%).

45 (17.05%) of the 264 parliamentary chambers in the world are comprised of more than 30 percent women

members. 20.45% of chambers are comprised of less than 10 percent women.

The percentage of women in unicameral parliaments (19.57%) and lower chambers (19.30%) is higher than in the upper chamber of bicameral parliaments (17.83%).

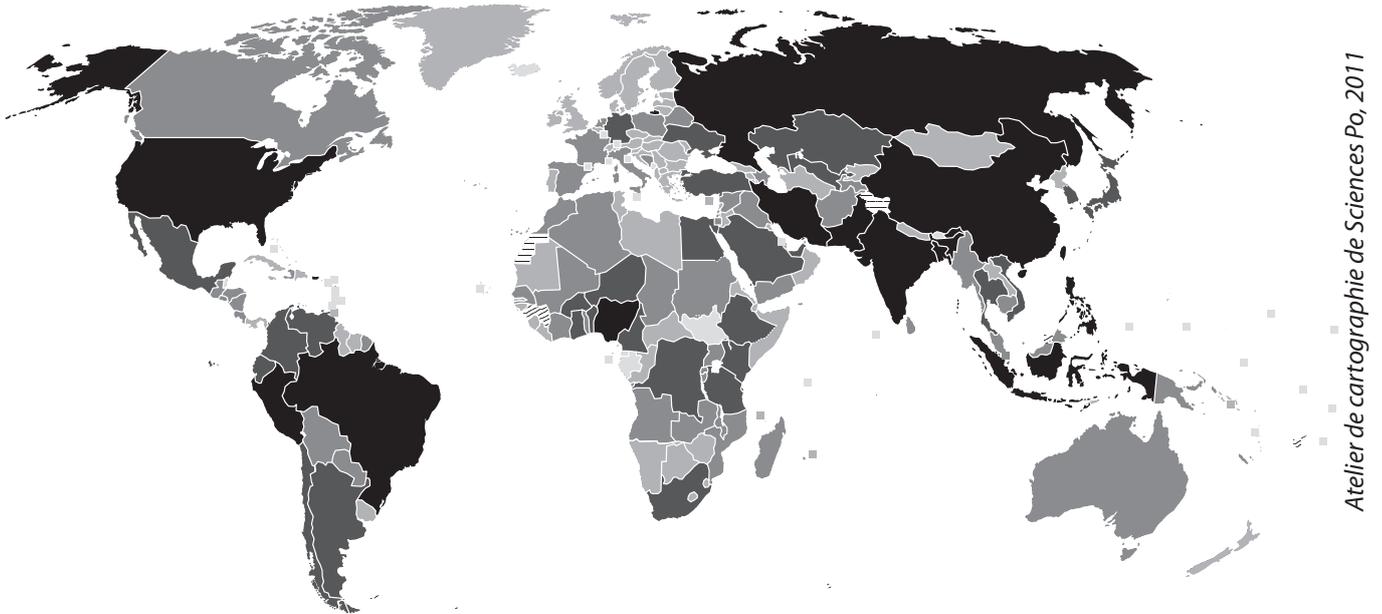
Percentage of women parliamentarians according to chamber type

Percentage of women	Unicameral	Lower	Upper	All chambers
0%	4.46%	3.95%	0.00%	3.03%
0 - 10%	27.68%	11.84%	18.42%	20.45%
10 - 20%	33.93%	40.79%	36.84%	36.74%
20 - 30%	17.86%	31.58%	21.05%	22.73%
Over 30%	16.07%	11.84%	23.68%	17.05%
Total	19.57%	19.30%	17.83%	19.25%

How many people are there for every parliamentarian?

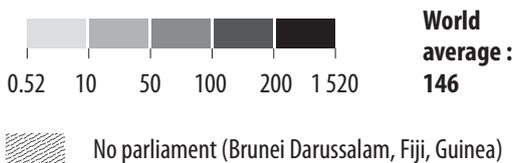
146,000	The global average number of inhabitants per parliamentarian
1,500,000	The average number of inhabitants per parliamentarian in India
517	The average number of inhabitants per parliamentarian in San Marino

Number of inhabitants per parliamentarian

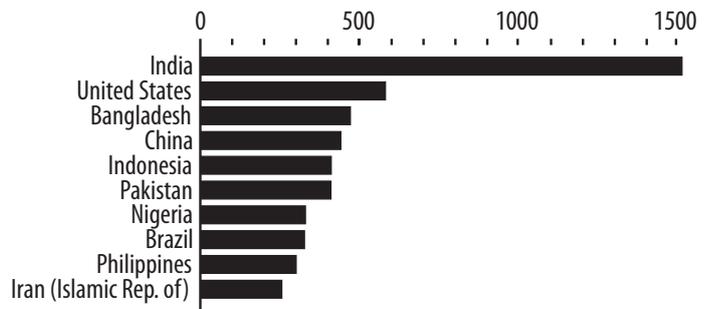


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Number of inhabitants per parliamentarian (in thousands) as at 30 September 2011



10 largest (in thousands)



Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union, 30 September 2011

This map shows the average number of inhabitants for one parliamentarian.

Sample size: 190 parliaments (100%)

Data source: PARLINE, population data from the United Nations

Notes:

In countries with bicameral parliaments, the number of parliamentarians in both chambers is added together to make a single figure.

The global average is about 146,000 inhabitants for every parliamentarian. This figure covers a huge diversity of situations.

India is by far the most extreme case, where there is one national parliamentarian per 1.5 million inhabitants.

At the opposite end of the scale, each of the 60 MPs in San Marino – a country of 31,000 inhabitants – represents 517 inhabitants. This is much less than their Micronesian counterparts, each of whom represents 7,929 inhabitants.

Average number of inhabitants per parliamentarian by region

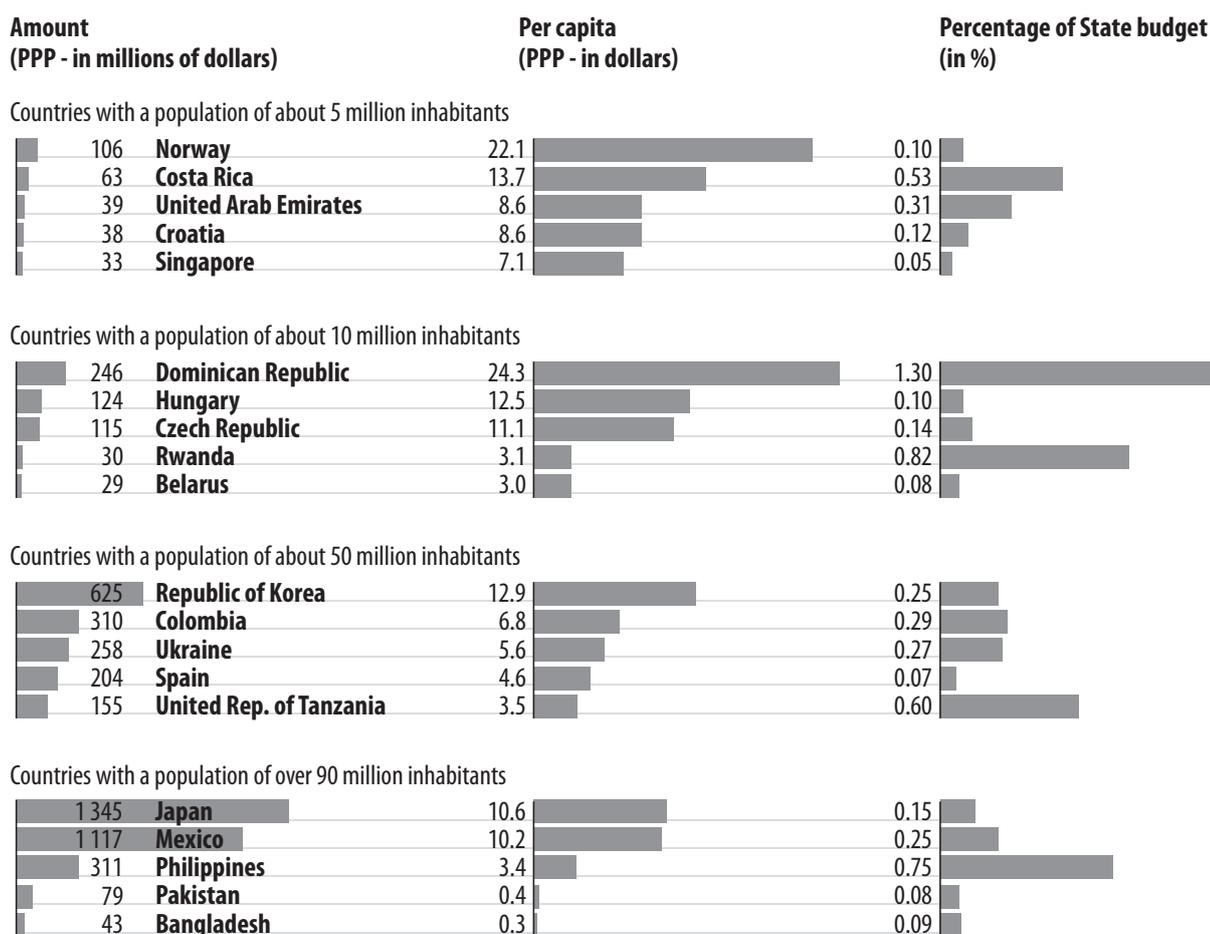
Region	Total MPs	Inhabitants per MP (in thousands)
Africa	9,462	83.43
Americas	5,902	156.73
Arab States	4,867	67.28
Asia-Pacific	12,338	313.25
Europe	13,983	63.25
World	46,552	145.88

What is the budget of parliament?

USD 5,120,000,000	The largest parliamentary budget, the United States Congress
0.49%	The global average percentage of the state budget allotted to parliament
PPP\$ 5.77	The average cost of parliament per inhabitant in the world (PPP dollars)

Parliament's budget

Note: The horizontal scales are the same as the ones used in the graphs on the previous page.



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Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2011

These charts compare the parliamentary budget in selected groups of countries. All charts and tables are based on data received from parliaments.

Sample size: 110 parliaments (58%)

Data sources: Parliaments, World Bank

Notes:

In countries with bicameral parliaments, the budget of both chambers is added together to make a single figure. Where data was received for only one chamber of a bicameral parliament, the parliament is not included in this analysis.

All figures are in 'Purchasing Power Parity' (PPP) dollars⁴ to allow for international comparison. The figures were provided by parliaments in local currency and converted to PPP dollars using World Bank conversion tables.

Figures are for the parliamentary budget in 2010.⁵ The figures include the salary of parliamentarians and parliamentary staff.

The total budget of parliament tends to be higher in the most populous countries, whereas the amount spent on parliament per capita tends to be higher in smaller countries.

The budget of the United States Congress is more than twice as big as that of the country having the second largest budget.

17 countries devote more than 1 percent of the state budget to parliament. The figure is less than 0.5% in 67 (63.81 percent) of parliaments that provided data, and below 0.1% in 9 countries.

Africa is the region that devotes the greatest percentage of the state budget to parliament, at 0.77%.

The average cost of bicameral parliaments (0.44% of the state budget) is slightly lower than that of unicameral parliaments (0.52%).

Parliaments cost an average of PPP\$ 5.77 per inhabitant. The lowest per capita figure is India (PPP\$ 0.25). The figure for Andorra (PPP\$ 219.12) includes funds for a new parliamentary building, but would remain the highest if this investment were excluded.

Six countries spend less than PPP\$ 1 per capita on parliament, while four spend more than PPP\$ 50 per capita.

Parliament's budget according to population

Population	Average budget in PPP dollars	Budget per capita	% state budget
Below 1 million	11,243,339	31.69	0.650
1 - 5 million	43,833,819	14.35	0.418
5 - 10 million	75,814,937	9.98	0.452
10 - 50 million	174,536,804	7.05	0.568
Over 50 million	1,019,255,241	4.89	0.233

Budget per capita: 5 lowest and 5 highest

Country	Budget per capita (in PPP dollars)
India	0.25
Bangladesh	0.26
Ethiopia	0.28
Pakistan	0.44
Lao People's Democratic Republic	0.97
Iceland	49.47
Maldives	52.82
Luxembourg	64.28
Liechtenstein	83.80
Andorra	219.12

Budget in PPP dollars: 5 biggest and 5 smallest

Country	Budget in PPP dollars
United States of America	5,120,000,000
Nigeria	2,043,739,537
Japan	1,345,138,700
Mexico	1,116,543,848
France	998,863,436
Micronesia (Federated States of)	4,234,737
Seychelles	3,035,667
Liechtenstein	3,016,975
Tonga	2,596,322
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	1,816,299

Percentage of state budget

% state budget	Number of countries	% of countries
< 0.25%	33	31.43%
0.25% - 0.5%	34	32.38%
0.5% - 1.0%	21	20.00%
> 1.0%	17	16.19%

Budget by region

Region	% o	Budget per capita (in PPP dollars)
Africa	0.77	3.71
Americas	0.57	13.89
Asia-Pacific	0.53	1.91
Arab	0.38	4.45
Europe	0.28	10.93

PPP\$ 478,710,629	The average parliamentary budget in PPP\$ for OECD countries
PPP\$ 44,091,077	The average budget in PPP\$ for LDCs
0.22% vs. 0.89%	The percentage of state budget allocated to parliament in OECD countries and LDCs, respectively

Parliament's budget - OECD / LDCs

Note: The horizontal scales are the same as the ones used in the graphs on the next page.

Amount (PPP - in millions of dollars) **Per capita (PPP - in dollars)** **Percentage of State budget (in %)**

OECD countries

5 120	United States	16.3	0.20
999	France	16.0	0.23
625	Republic of Korea	12.9	0.25
518	Turkey	6.9	0.16
204	Spain	4.6	0.07
124	Hungary	12.5	0.10

Least developed countries (LDCs)

91	Cambodia	6.2	1.44
49	Malawi	3.2	1.00
43	Bangladesh	0.3	0.09
43	Benin	4.8	0.90
30	Rwanda	3.1	0.82
18	Timor-Leste	16.2	0.09

Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2011

These charts compare the parliamentary budget in selected OECD and Least Developed Countries (LDCs). All charts and tables are based on data received from parliaments.

The average cost of parliament per habitant in OECD countries is PPP\$ 13.06, compared to PPP\$ 2.07 in LDCs. The figure varies within each group, however. Among OECD countries, Mexico spends the most: PPP\$ 64.28, over 14 times more than Spain (PPP\$ 4.55).

Among LDCs, Sao Tome and Principe topped the list, with PPP\$ 27.65, or 106 times more than Bangladesh (PPP\$ 0.26).

How many staff does each parliament have?

862	The global average number of parliamentary staff per country
3.76	The average number of parliamentary staff per parliamentarian
15,097	The number of staff in the US Congress

Parliamentary staff

Note: The horizontal scales are the same as the ones used in the graphs on the next page.

Number of parliamentary staff by country

Number of parliamentary staff per parliamentarian

OECD countries/least developed countries

Number of parliamentary staff by country	Number of parliamentary staff per parliamentarian
15 907 United States	29.7 United States
2 696 Turkey	4.9 Turkey
2 381 France	2.6 France
1 454 Republic of Korea	4.9 R. of Korea
844 Spain	1.4 Spain
603 Hungary	1.6 Hungary

Least developed countries (LDCs)

1 692 Cambodia	9.2 Cambodia
766 Bangladesh	2.2 Bangladesh
300 Benin	3.6 Benin
151 Malawi	0.8 Malawi
115 Rwanda	1.1 Rwanda
91 Timor-Leste	1.4 Timor-Leste

Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union, 30 September 2011

These charts compare the number of parliamentary staff in countries with similar population sizes.

Sample size: 112 parliaments (59%)

Source: Parliaments

Notes:

In countries with bicameral parliaments, the number of staff in both chambers is added together to make a single figure.

The figures refer to the number of full-time permanent staff positions currently filled in the parliamentary administration. They do not include the personal staff of parliamentarians.

The figures exclude library staff in countries where the library is also the national library serving the public (Japan, Republic of Korea and United States) and staff employed by the parliamentary ombudsman in Finland.

More than 60 percent of parliaments employ less than 500 staff. The 10 parliaments with biggest budget⁶ employ an average of 4,268 permanent staff. The 10 parliaments with the smallest budget⁷ have on average 70 staff.

Number of staff by population size

Population	Number of staff	Staff per parliamentarian
Below 1 million	50	1.05
1 - 5 million	378	3.48
5 - 10 million	399	2.25
10 - 50 million	802	2.64
Over 50 million	3,995	5.92
All categories	862	3.76

Number of staff by region

	Number of staff	Staff per parliamentarian
Africa	242	1.60
Americas	2,120	9.55
Arab States	517	2.59
Asia-Pacific	1,136	4.70
Europe	665	3.26

Number of parliaments according to size of parliamentary staff

	Number	%
Below 50	13	11.61%
51 - 100	13	11.61%
101 - 200	12	10.71%
201 - 500	30	26.79%
501 - 1000	22	19.64%
1001 - 2000	9	8.04%
Over 2000	13	11.61%
Total	112	

Number of staff: 5 lowest and 5 highest

Country	Total staff	Staff per parliamentarian
Tuvalu	5	0.33
Liechtenstein	7	0.28
St. Vincent and the Grenadines	8	0.38
Andorra	15	0.54
Nauru	18	1.00
India	3,691	4.67
Indonesia	3,734	6.67
Philippines	3,922	12.90
Mexico	7,257	11.56
United States of America	15,907	29.73
Global average	862	3.76

Regionally, the Americas have the highest average number of parliamentary staff. This average is skewed by the US Congress, whose staff is twice as big as that of the next largest parliament. Meanwhile, Cuba recorded the lowest ratio of staffers per parliamentarian (0.20).

Parliamentary staff

Note: The horizontal scales are the same as the ones used in the graphs on the previous page.

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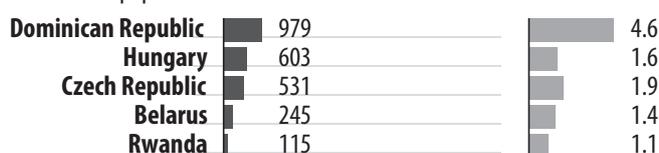
Number of parliamentary staff by country

Number of parliamentary staff per parliamentarian

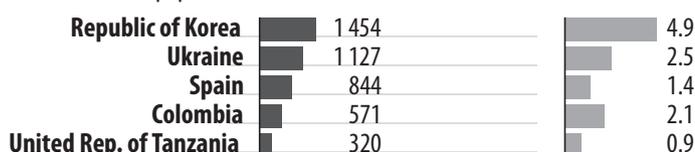
Countries with a population of about 5 million inhabitants



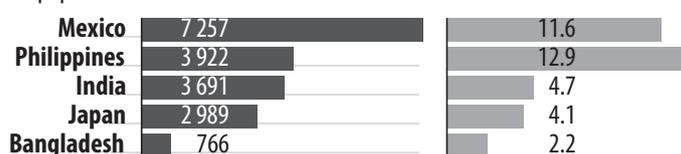
Countries with a population of about 10 million inhabitants



Countries with a population of about 50 million inhabitants



Countries with a population of over 90 million inhabitants



Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union, 30 September 2011

These charts compare the number of parliamentary staff in selected OECD and Least Developed Countries (LDCs).

Unsurprisingly, OECD parliaments have more human resources than their LDC counterparts, both in terms of the number of staff and the ratio of staff per parliamentarian. OECD members have twice as many staff as the global average (based on available data). The average number of parliamentary staff in LDCs is around 34 percent of the global average.

Average number of staff by economic group

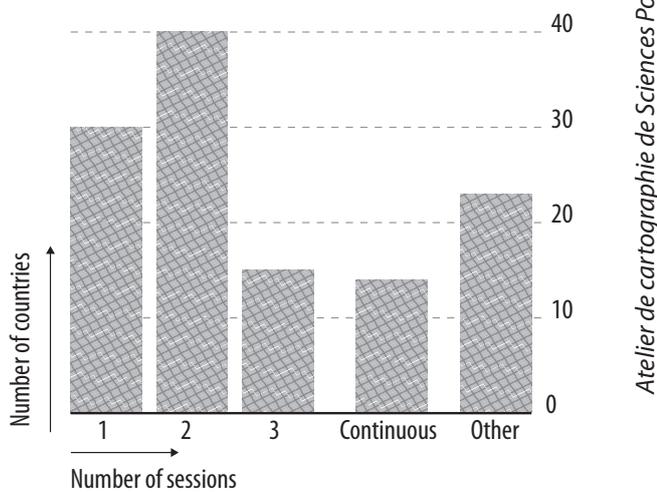
	Total staff	Staff per parliamentarian
OECD	1,734	4.78
LDC	291	1.63
Global average	862	3.76

How often does parliament meet in plenary?

32.79	percentage of unicameral parliaments and lower chambers holding two sessions per year
75.52	average number of plenary sitting days of unicameral parliaments and lower chambers in 2010
58.20	average number of plenary sitting days of upper chambers in 2010

Parliamentary sessions

Number of countries according to the number of parliamentary sessions per year in the lower chamber and in unicameral parliaments



Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2011

These charts show the number of parliamentary sessions and plenary sitting days of unicameral parliaments and lower chambers of parliament. For purposes of comparison, the charts do not cover upper chambers in bicameral parliaments.

Sample size: 163 parliamentary chambers (61%)

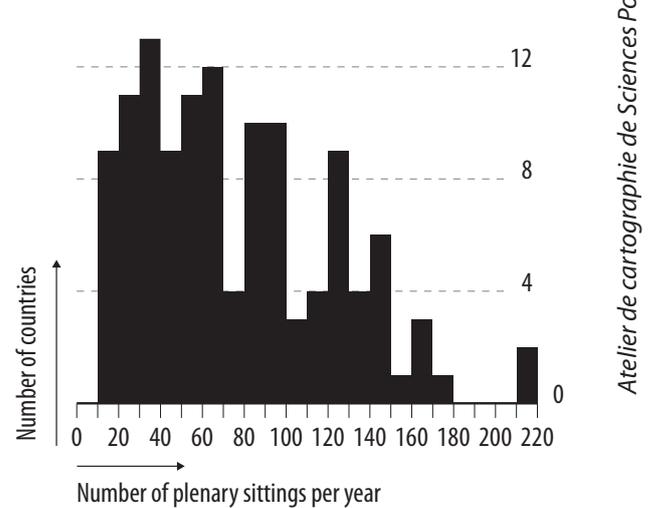
Source: Parliaments

Notes:

The figures do not include days when parliament does not sit in plenary session, but committee meetings do take place.

Plenary sittings of parliament

Number of countries according to the number of days of plenary sittings per year in the lower chamber and in unicameral parliaments



Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2011

Two sessions per year is the most frequently observed configuration across all type of parliament.

Nearly one in five chambers sits 'continuously', meaning that there is no formal break in parliamentary proceedings.

Unicameral parliaments and lower chambers meet more often (75.52 days in 2010) in plenary session than upper chambers (58.20 days). This figure is comparable with the average over the period 2000 -2010.

The number of sitting days varies from eight days in Cambodia (Senate) to 217 days in Brazil (Senate).

Parliamentary sessions by chamber

Session type	Unicameral & lower chambers	Upper chambers
One	24.59%	29.27%
Two	32.79%	31.71%
Three	12.30%	9.76%
Continuous	11.48%	12.20%
Other	18.85%	17.07%

The common types for 'other' were sessions being held on fixed dates (either weekly or monthly) and four or five sessions per year. In several parliaments, the session lasts for the entire legislature.

Plenary sitting days in 2010

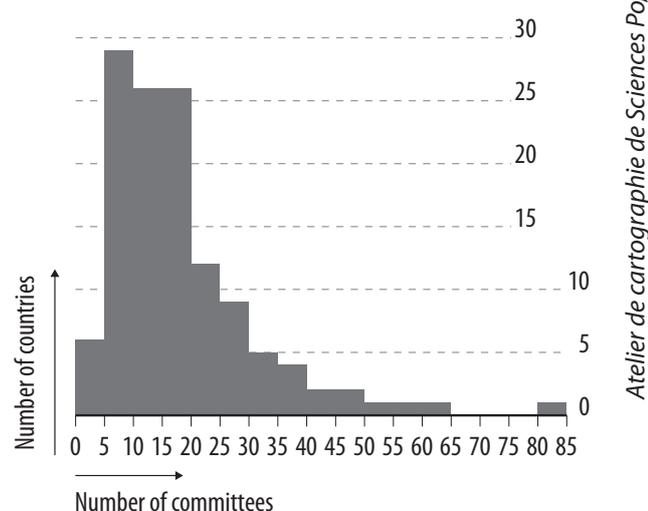
Sitting days	Unicameral & lower chambers	Upper chambers
Below 20	7.38%	24.39%
21 - 40	22.95%	21.95%
41 - 60	13.93%	19.51%
61 - 80	14.75%	9.76%
81 - 100	14.75%	7.32%
101 - 150	20.49%	12.20%
Over 151	5.74%	4.88%

How many committees does parliament have?

17.17	average number of committees per chamber
70.24%	percentage of chambers with less than 20 committees
84	number of committees in the House of Representatives of Nigeria

Parliamentary Standing Committees

Number of countries according to the number of committees in the lower chamber and in unicameral parliaments



Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2011

This chart shows the number of permanent committees in unicameral parliaments and lower chambers of parliament. For purposes of comparison, it does not cover upper chambers. It excludes joint committees in bicameral parliaments. Sample size: 168 parliamentary chambers (63%)
Source: Parliaments

Notes:

The figures refer to permanent committees, which are established for the lifetime of the legislature.

The vast majority of chambers have between five and 20 committees. Upper chambers of bicameral parliaments tend to have fewer committees than unicameral parliaments and lower chambers. 41.86% of upper chambers had fewer than 10 committees, compared to 28.00% of unicameral parliaments and lower chambers.

At the extremes, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has only two parliamentary committees, while the Nigerian House of Representatives has 84. The Senates of Mexico, Nigeria and Pakistan have 59, 57 and 42 committees, respectively.

Number of committees according to parliamentary chamber

	Lower & unicameral chambers		Upper chambers		All chambers	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Below 10	35	28.00%	18	41.86%	53	31.55%
10 - 19	52	41.60%	13	30.23%	65	38.69%
20 - 29	21	16.80%	8	18.60%	29	17.26%
30 - 39	9	7.20%	1	2.33%	10	5.95%
Over 40	8	6.40%	3	6.98%	11	6.55%
Total	125	100.00%	43	100.00%	168	100.00%
Average	17.52		16.52		17.17	

Regional average number of committees

Arab States	Africa	Europe	Americas	Asia-Pacific
10.80	15.50	16.63	19.73	20.16

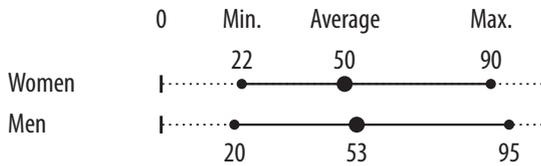
What is the average age of parliamentarians?

53	Average age of parliamentarians globally
50	Average age of women parliamentarians
49	Average age of parliamentarians in sub-Saharan Africa

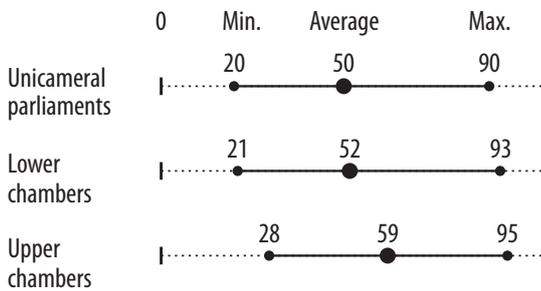
Age of parliamentarians



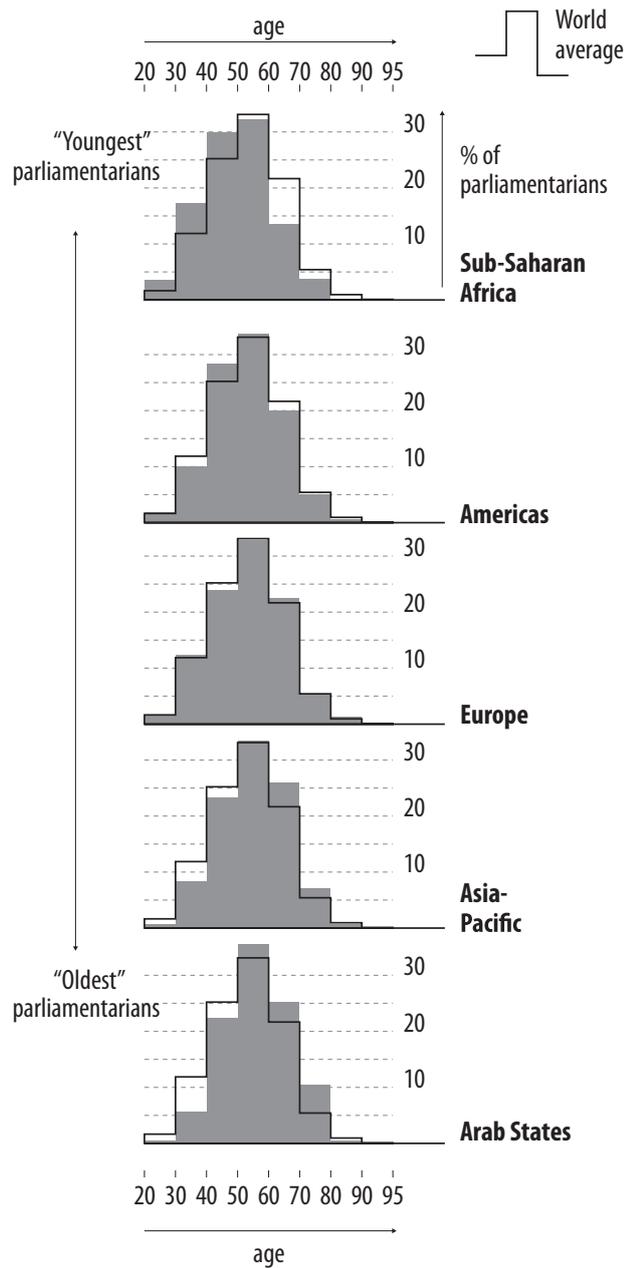
Broken down by sex



Broken down by type of parliament



Age of parliamentarians by region



Atelier de cartographie de Sciences Po, 2011

Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2011

These charts show the lowest, highest and average age of parliamentarians around the world.

Sample size: 19,782 parliamentarians (42.5%)

Source: Parliaments

The average age of parliamentarians in the world is 53. Over 80 percent of parliamentarians are between 40 and 60 years of age. In contrast, the median age of the world population in 2009 was 28.4 years.⁸

Female parliamentarians are on average more than three years younger than their male counterparts.

Members of upper chambers are on average more than seven years older than their counterparts in lower chambers and unicameral parliaments.

Sub-Saharan Africa has the youngest parliamentarians. The Arab States have the oldest parliaments, based on 2011 data.

Average age of parliamentarian by region

Africa	Americas	Europe	Asia-Pacific	Arab States
49.22	52.31	52.94	54.51	55.37

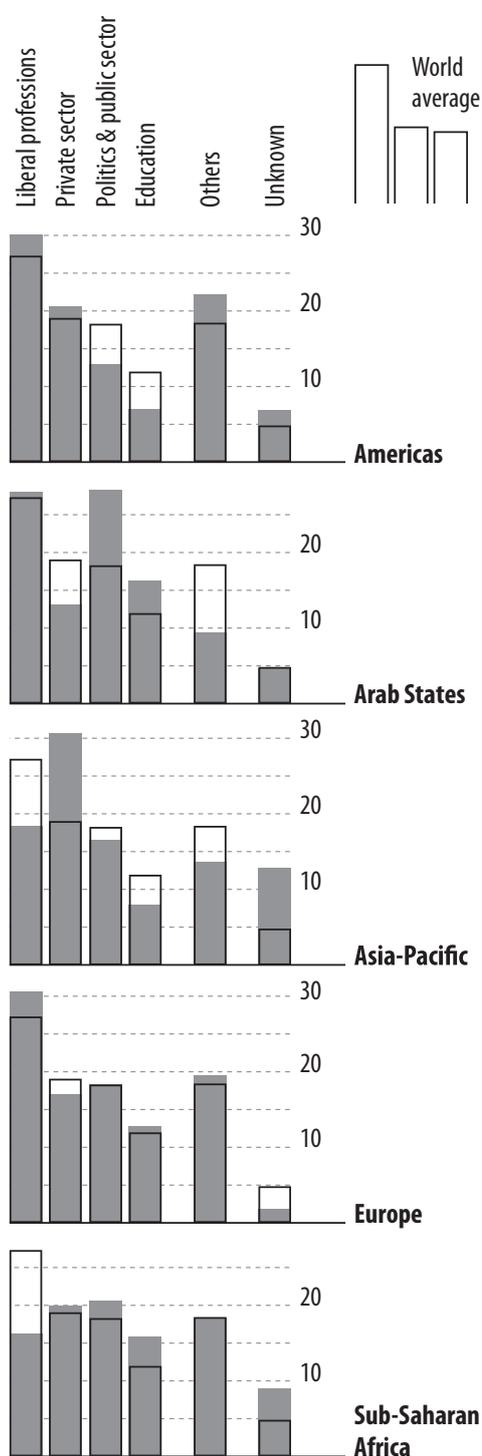
Number of parliamentarians by age range

Age range	Number	%
20s	326	1.65%
30s	2,348	11.87%
40s	4,990	25.22%
50s	6,552	33.12%
60s	4,286	21.67%
70s	1,071	5.41%
80s	188	0.95%
90s	21	0.11%
Total	19,782	100.00%

What is the professional background of parliamentarians?

Professional backgrounds of parliamentarians

In % (order of columns corresponds to that of global average)



Atelier de cartographie de Sciences Po, 2011

Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2011

These charts show the professional backgrounds of parliamentarians by region.

Sample size: Data cover 96 parliamentary chambers in 82 countries. This represents 15,455 parliamentarians, or about 33 percent of the world's total.

Source: Parliaments, PARLINE

Comparative analysis of the professional background of parliamentarians is particularly difficult. Challenges include the hugely diverse professional categories used by each parliament when reporting on parliamentarians' professions and the fact that one parliamentarian may report multiple professions. Very few parliaments identify the most recent profession of parliamentarians before entering parliament.

For the purposes of this report, four broad professional categories⁹ which collectively cover 77 percent of the world's parliamentarians, have been constructed. They provide an approximate picture of the professional profile of the world's parliamentarians based on the data available.

Professional backgrounds of parliamentarians, global average

Category	Number	Percentage
Politics and public sector	2,830	28%
Private sector	2,949	19%
Liberal professions	4,223	18%
Education	1,851	12%
Other	2,852	18%
Unknown	750	5%

In the Arab States, 'politics and the public sector' is overrepresented at the expense of the private sector. In Asia-Pacific and in sub-Saharan Africa, liberal professions are below the global average. In sub-Saharan Africa and the Arab States, 'education' is above the global average. Meanwhile, in the Americas, only 7% of parliamentarians declare a professional background in education.

SURVEY OF PARLIAMENTARIANS ON RELATIONS BETWEEN CITIZENS AND PARLIAMENT

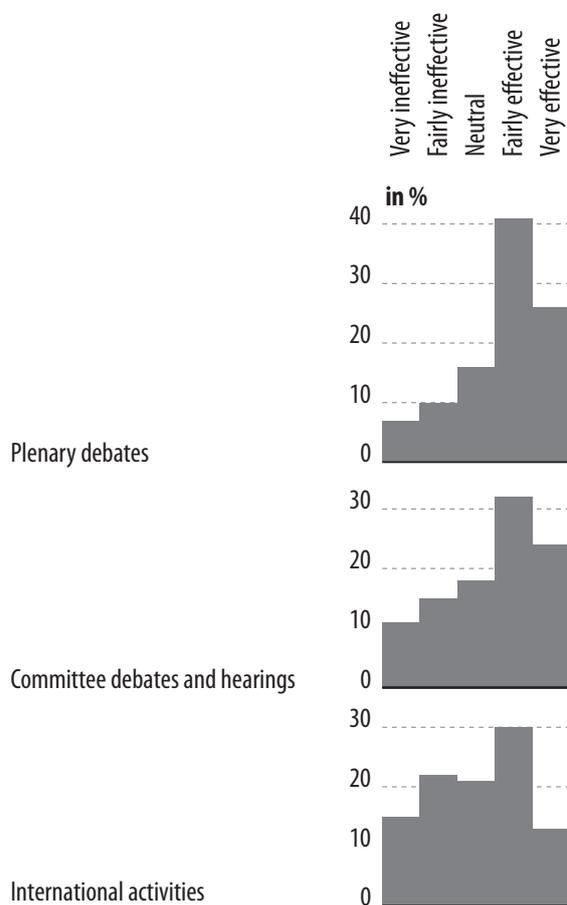
About the survey

663 randomly selected parliamentarians were surveyed between January and April 2011 as part of the research for the Global Parliamentary Report. Surveys were done as face-to-face interviews in parliaments and at parliamentary conferences. Respondents included 183 women (27.6%). 385 (58.1%) parliamentarians were from the government side and 228 in opposition. 505 respondents (76.2%) entered parliament for the first time after 2000 and 449 (67.8%) said that they intend to stand again at the next election.

The survey consisted of nine questions intended to elicit parliamentarians' views on relations between citizens and parliament. The Annex presents a summary of the key findings.

Parliamentarians were asked about the effectiveness of parliament in communicating its activities to the public. Respondents generally have a positive perception of parliaments' ability to communicate effectively. 67.6 percent of parliamentarians said parliaments were very or fairly effective in communicating on plenary debates, compared to 56 percent on the committee work and 42.9 percent on parliament's international activities.

How effective is parliament in communicating the following parliamentary activities to the public?



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Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union, April 2011

How do parliamentarians see their role? How do they think citizens see it?

Parliamentarians were asked about the importance of the seven roles in the table below: (1) from their perspective as a parliamentarian and (2) in the public opinion.

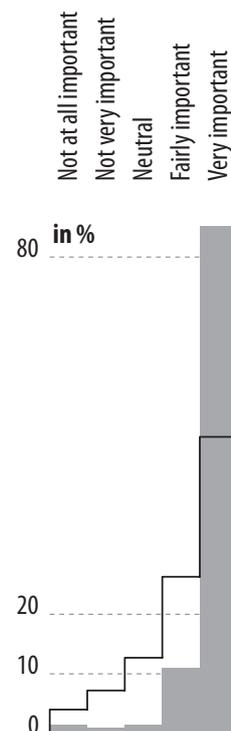
The role that recorded the highest gap was law-making. While 85.2 percent responded that law-making is a very important role for them, only 49.8 percent think it is seen as very important by citizens.

60.0 percent of parliamentarians identified 'solving constituents' problems' as very important, while 71.3 percent think that citizens see this role as very important.

This gap in perception places parliamentarians before a contradiction that they have to try to resolve every day. By focusing their efforts on what they see as their main role (law-making), they risk disregarding the priorities of the people who voted for them (providing solutions to constituents' problems) and vice versa. The work of a parliamentarian is a permanent juggling act between such competing interests and priorities.

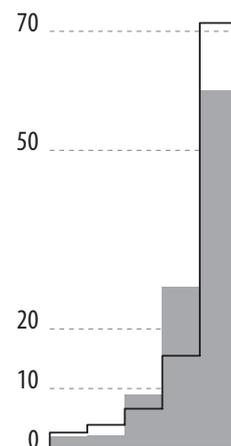
How important is law-making to you?

■ As a parliamentarian
□ In the public opinion



How important is solving constituents' problems to you?

■ As a parliamentarian
□ In the public opinion

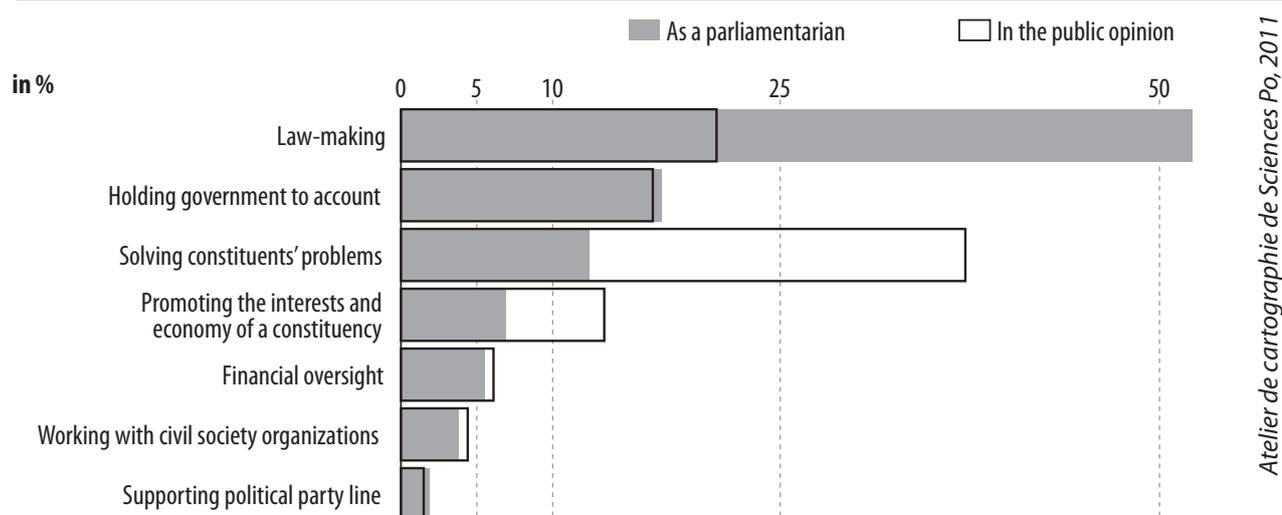


Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union, April 2011

How important are the following roles?

Role	As a parliamentarian		In the public opinion		Difference in percentage points
	Very important (1)	Fairly important	Very important (2)	Fairly important	(1)-(2)
Law-making	85.2%	11.0%	49.8%	26.3%	35.4
Holding government to account	71.3%	22.1%	52.8%	28.1%	18.5
Financial oversight	66.8%	23.3%	48.1%	27.7%	18.7
Supporting political party line	41.4%	37.0%	25.5%	27.1%	15.9
Solving constituents' problems	60.0%	27.0%	71.4%	15.5%	-11.4
Promoting the interests and economy of a constituency	49.8%	31.2%	56.9%	27.6%	-7.1
Working with civil society organizations	47.0%	36.1%	33.2%	28.4%	13.8

What is the most important role of parliamentarians?



Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union, April 2011

The graph shows the difference between what parliamentarians think is their most important role and what they believe to be the most important role in the eye of citizens.

They see law-making as by far their most important role (52.2% of respondents), followed by holding government to account (17.2%) and solving constituents' problems (12.4%).

When asked what they think citizens see as their most important role, however, parliamentarians tell a very different story. They believe that, in the eyes of the citizens, solving constituents' problems is the most important role of parliamentarians (37.2%), followed by law-making (20.8%), holding government to account (16.6%) and promoting the interests and economy of a constituency (13.4%).

Impact of electoral systems

The survey results show that the mode of designation – the majoritarian system or the proportional representation (PR) system – has an impact on how parliamentarians see their role. Parliamentarians elected under the majoritarian system ranked “promoting the interests and economy of a constituency” and “solving constituent’s problems” much higher than did their peers who were elected under the PR system. More parliamentarians elected under the PR consider “working with civil society organizations” as important in the eyes of citizens.

Note: This analysis excludes countries using a mixed electoral system or other modes of designation.

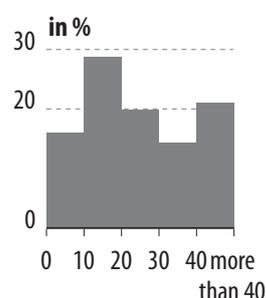
What are the obstacles to effectiveness?

When asked to identify obstacles to their effectiveness, parliamentarians consider the lack of resources for carrying out constituency work to be the most serious challenge – regardless of their mode of designation. More parliamentarians elected under the majority system consider “individual parliamentarians’ salaries” as a serious challenge, compared to those elected under the PR system.

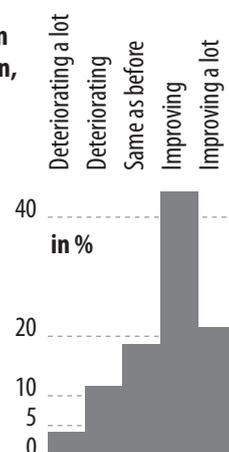
To what extent do the following problems prevent parliamentarians from being effective?

	Great deal	Fair amount	Great deal & fair amount (%)
Resources available for constituency work	37.2%	27.9%	65.1%
Individual parliamentarians’ resources and staffing	30.1%	31.7%	61.8%
Resources and staffing in parliament	31.0%	28.7%	59.7%
Lack of parliamentary experience or technical knowledge	25.4%	30.2%	55.6%
Lack of time for oversight activities	22.5%	30.5%	53.0%
Lack of constitutional or parliamentary power	30.7%	21.2%	51.9%
The political party of parliamentary group system	19.9%	28.4%	48.3%
Inadequate organization of the legislative process	20.7%	26.1%	46.8%
Individual parliamentarians’ salaries	16.8%	22.5%	39.3%

How many hours per week do you spend working with citizens (e.g. meeting people, following up on citizens’ issues etc)?



Compared with when you began your career as a parliamentarian, are relations between parliament and citizens improving or deteriorating?



Atelier de cartographie de Sciences Po, 2011

Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union, April 2011

Parliamentarians spend a considerable amount of time working directly with citizens. 28.7% spend 11-20 hours per week on citizens’ issues, whereas 21% spend more than 40 hours per week, a massive amount in view of their many responsibilities.

The resources available for constituency work have implications for parliamentarians’ ability to satisfy citizens’ expectations, which require them to devote a significant proportion of their time and energy to constituency matters, and for the funding that states devote to the effective functioning of parliament.

REGIONAL GROUPINGS

Parliaments that provided data for the Annex are highlighted in bold. For some bicameral parliaments, data was received for only one chamber.

Americas

Antigua and Barbuda, **Argentina**, Bahamas, **Barbados**, Belize, Bolivia, **Brazil**, **Canada**, **Chile**, **Colombia**, **Costa Rica**, **Cuba**, Dominica, **Dominican Republic**, Ecuador, El Salvador, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, **Jamaica**, **Mexico**, **Nicaragua**, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, **Saint Vincent and the Grenadines**, **Suriname**, **Trinidad and Tobago**, **United States of America**, **Uruguay**, **Venezuela**

Arab States

Algeria, Bahrain, **Djibouti**, Egypt, Iraq, **Jordan**, **Kuwait**, **Lebanon**, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, **Sudan**, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, **United Arab Emirates**, Yemen

Asia-Pacific

Afghanistan, **Australia**, **Bangladesh**, **Bhutan**, **Cambodia**, China, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, **India**, **Indonesia**, Iran (Islamic Republic of), **Israel**, **Japan**, Kiribati, **Lao People's Democratic Republic**, **Malaysia**, **Maldives**, **Marshall Islands**, **Micronesia (Federated States of)**, Mongolia, Myanmar, **Nauru**, Nepal, **New Zealand**, **Pakistan**, **Palau**, Papua New Guinea, **Philippines**, **Republic of Korea**, Samoa, **Singapore**, Solomon Islands, **Sri Lanka**, **Thailand**, **Timor-Leste**, **Tonga**, **Tuvalu**, Vanuatu, Viet Nam

Europe

Albania, **Andorra**, **Armenia**, **Austria**, **Azerbaijan**, **Belarus**, **Belgium**, **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, **Bulgaria**, **Croatia**, **Cyprus**, **Czech Republic**, **Denmark**, **Estonia**, **Finland**, **France**, **Georgia**, **Germany**, **Greece**, **Hungary**, **Iceland**, Ireland, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, **Latvia**, **Liechtenstein**, **Lithuania**, **Luxembourg**, **Malta**, **Monaco**, **Montenegro**, **Netherlands**, **Norway**, **Poland**, **Portugal**, **Republic of Moldova**, **Romania**, **Russian Federation**, San Marino, Serbia, **Slovakia**, **Slovenia**, **Spain**, **Sweden**, **Switzerland**, **Tajikistan**, **The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia**, **Turkey**, Turkmenistan, **Ukraine**, **United Kingdom**, **Uzbekistan**

Sub-Saharan Africa

Angola, **Benin**, Botswana, **Burkina Faso**, **Burundi**, **Cameroon**, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, **Chad**, Comoros, **Congo**, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, **Djibouti**, **Equatorial Guinea**, Eritrea, **Ethiopia**, Gabon, **Gambia**, **Ghana**, Guinea-Bissau, **Kenya**, **Lesotho**, Liberia, **Madagascar**, **Malawi**, **Mali**, **Mauritania**, **Mauritius**, Mozambique, **Namibia**, Niger, **Nigeria**, **Rwanda**, **Sao Tome and Principe**, **Senegal**, **Seychelles**, **Sierra Leone**, Somalia, **South Africa**, South Sudan, Swaziland, **Togo**, **Uganda**, **United Republic of Tanzania**, **Zambia**, **Zimbabwe**

Endnotes

- 1 PARLINE database on national parliaments. www.ipu.org/parline
- 2 Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat (2009). *World Population Prospects: The 2008 Revision. Highlights*. New York: United Nations. http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/wpp2008/wpp2008_text_tables.pdf
- 3 Disclaimer: population figures for Sudan and South Sudan. Preliminary non-official data that has not been published and/or endorsed by the United Nations was used for these two countries.
- 4 To allow international comparison, parliament's budget was converted from local currency to Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) dollars using World Bank conversion tables <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/PA.NUS.PPP>

For more information on purchasing power parities, see <http://go.worldbank.org/A3R6KFYSR0>. According to the World Bank, "Using PPPs instead of market exchange rates to convert currencies makes it possible to compare the output of economies and the welfare of their inhabitants in real terms (that is, controlling for differences in price levels)."
- 5 Where the PPP conversion factor was not available for the 2010, the 2009 conversion factor was applied. The conversion factor for Spain was applied to Andorra as a proxy and that of Switzerland was applied to Liechtenstein.
- 6 Ten biggest parliamentary budgets, based on data received: the US, Japan, Mexico, France, Germany, Republic of Korea, Thailand, Turkey, Canada and Poland.
- 7 Ten smallest parliamentary budgets, based on data received: St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Tonga, Liechtenstein, Seychelles, Micronesia (Federated States of), Gambia (the), Sao Tome and Principe, Malta, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Djibouti.
- 8 CIA World Factbook <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/xx.html>
- 9 Categories used to describe the professional background of parliamentarians:

'Liberal professions' includes lawyers, doctors, engineers, architects, economists, etc.

'Private sector' includes positions in business, finance, management, entrepreneurs, traders, as well as farmers and agriculturists.

'Politics and public sector' includes political party officials and civil servants as well as positions within state-owned companies.

'Education' includes academics, researchers and teachers at all educational levels. Although these professions may belong to the public sector, a separate category was created due to the significant proportion of parliamentarians that have this particular professional background.

'Others' includes all other professions and activities, such as journalists, writers, artists, social workers, civil society activists, trade union officials, clerical/religious professions, technology specialists, home-makers, care-takers, student, unemployed.

Many parliaments reported several professional activities and occupations for each MP. In such cases, only the first profession declared was analysed.



*Better parliaments,
stronger democracies.*

Inter-Parliamentary Union

5 chemin du Pommier
CH-1218 Le Grand-Saconnex
Geneva, Switzerland
Telephone: +41 22 919 41 50
Fax: +41 22 919 41 60
E-mail: postbox@mail.ipu.org
www.ipu.org

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