



# ON THE ISSUE OF ENSURING A BALANCE BETWEEN THE QUANTITATIVE COMPOSITION OF PARLIAMENT AND THE QUALITY OF REPRESENTATION

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Article history:		Abstract:
<b>Received:</b>	30 <sup>th</sup> October 2025	The article examines the structural and functional characteristics of unicameral and bicameral parliaments, as well as analyses the representative nature of parliamentary activity. Special attention is given to the role of a member of parliament as a key actor of representative authority, which is of particular importance for post-Soviet states characterized by low levels of public trust in state institutions. Based on international comparative statistics, the ratio between population size and the number of parliamentarians is assessed, the causes of parliamentary overload are identified, and factors influencing the quality of representation are examined. The article discusses arguments in favor of increasing the number of seats in the lower chamber of the Parliament of Uzbekistan, including demographic trends, the need to strengthen the system of checks and balances, improving the efficiency of lawmaking, enhancing work within electoral districts, and expanding the participation of vulnerable population groups. Special attention is paid to international standards on seat reservation and the specifics of their application. The study concludes that a gradual expansion of parliamentary size and optimization of its structure is advisable in the long term to improve the quality of representation and the effectiveness of parliamentary governance.
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**Keywords:** parliament, bicameral system, unicameral system, representative authority, representative function, member of parliament, electorate, lawmaking, number of parliamentarians, demographic trends, system of checks and balances, electoral districts, parliamentary reforms, seat reservation, vulnerable population groups, international electoral standards.

Virtually every country in the world has a unicameral or bicameral parliament. Of the 190 national parliaments in the world, 78 are bicameral and 112 are unicameral. In total, unicameral and bicameral parliaments comprise 46,000 parliamentarians [1].

A common feature of both unicameral and bicameral parliaments is representative power (system). A number of researchers focus on the functional level of representative power, which is a mechanism for interaction between citizens and representatives of power, who may belong to different types and levels of state power, have imperative powers and are participatory in nature, are united by common principles and goals, and use various means, forms and methods of activity [2].

We support the researchers' opinion that the main task of parliamentarians is to perform a representative function, which manifests itself in representing the interests of the electorate in the country's highest legislative body. However, unlike the

above opinion of researchers, which places the citizen at the forefront, we believe that it is more accurate to focus on the leading role of the deputy. This statement is particularly relevant for post-Soviet countries, where citizens continue to harbour a certain degree of inertia and distrust towards the activities of any state body, including parliament.

The decision on the number of chambers (one or two) is a key component in the work of parliament. There are three main reasons for forming a bicameral parliament: the historical legitimacy of the upper house, the large size of the country, and the federal political system. The second chambers provide an additional level of representation (if regions or states are represented) or an additional level of parliamentary debate (where debate is conducted independently of the policies of individual parties) [3].

Bicameral parliaments perform virtually the same functions as unicameral ones. A distinctive feature is the existence of dual control in lawmaking, where the



upper house reviews bills after the lower house has done so. In addition, bicameral parliaments provide territorial representation, which broadens the scope of the parliament's work. The lower house focuses on voters, while the upper house focuses on territories or regions. On the other hand, another distinctive feature is the so-called system of checks and balances within the two houses of parliament. This has both positive and negative aspects. On the positive side, there is the so-called double filter, which can have a positive effect on the quality of decisions made. But on the negative side, instead of effectively resolving issues, the chambers compete with each other, which manifests itself in bureaucratic obstacles, slow decision-making, and the dispersion of available resources, instead of combining efforts. At the same time, combining efforts can increase the efficiency of the parliament's work.

In Uzbekistan, the highest representative body of state is the Oliy Majlis, a bicameral parliament that exercises legislative power. The lower house, the Legislative Chamber, consists of 150 deputies elected under a mixed electoral system. Half of the deputies are elected by a majority voting system and the other half by a proportional system. The upper house, the Senate, is a chamber of territorial representation and consists of sixty-five senators [4].

Statistical data show the workload of our country's parliament. According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union's indicator 'Number of inhabitants per parliamentarian', the Republic of Uzbekistan, with 142,608 people per parliamentarian, is one of the countries with the most overburdened parliaments. In the post-Soviet countries, the indicators for the number of inhabitants per parliamentarian are as follows: Russia 234.581, Kazakhstan 129.490, Tajikistan 108.219, Ukraine 83.849, Azerbaijan 82.544, Kyrgyzstan 78.600, Poland 69.220, Belarus 52.091, Turkmenistan 40,685, Moldova 30,366, Armenia 27,505, Georgia 25,380, Lithuania 20,241, Latvia 18,820, Estonia 13,535 people per parliamentarian, respectively [5].

Only Turkey (145,450) has figures in the range of 140,000 to 145,000 people, which are closest to those of the Republic of Uzbekistan. Analysis of the data shows that the most balanced number of people per parliamentarian is found in the most developed countries, both economically and politically. The least developed countries account for so-called depressed or overburdened parliament. Thus, Germany (bicameral parliament) 126,759, Australia (bicameral parliament) 116,524, Italy (bicameral parliament) 98,183, Canada (bicameral parliament) 92,699, Netherlands (bicameral parliament) 80,413, Spain (bicameral parliament) 77,904, Israel (unicameral parliament) 77,133, France

(bicameral parliament) 71,826, Belgium (bicameral parliament) 55,776, Singapore (unicameral parliament) 55,663, United Kingdom (bicameral parliament) 47,367, Austria (bicameral parliament) 37,418, Switzerland (bicameral parliament) 36,057, Denmark (unicameral parliament) 33,229, Norway (unicameral parliament) 32,657, Sweden (unicameral parliament) 30,232, Finland (unicameral parliament) 28,005, Ireland (bicameral parliament) 23,623 people per parliamentarian, respectively. The parliaments most overburdened are those of India (bicameral parliament): 1,820,342, the United States (bicameral parliament): 642,013, Pakistan (bicameral parliament): 559,966, Bangladesh (unicameral parliament): 489,906, Nigeria (bicameral parliament): 485,891, Indonesia (unicameral parliament): 484,810, China (unicameral parliament): 474,195, Brazil (bicameral parliament): 355,456, the Philippines (bicameral parliament): 337,915, Burkina Faso (unicameral parliament): 324,310, Iran (unicameral parliament): 312,445, and the United Arab Emirates (unicameral parliament):, 266,050; Saudi Arabia (unicameral parliament), 220,291; Mexico (bicameral parliament), 206,592; Japan (bicameral parliament), 174,433; and Korea (unicameral parliament), 172,497 [5].

The statistical analysis above requires attention to the quantitative census of parliamentary seats. In the academic community, Rein Taagepere was one of the first to present a simple model expressing the size of national (and provincial) assemblies in terms of population size and the degree of social mobilisation. The basic assumption is that efficiency is optimised when the number of communication channels within the assembly is equal to the number of channels for aggregating interests in each constituency [6].

In this regard, it is considered appropriate to consider increasing the number of seats in the lower house of our country's parliament. It should be noted that, among the bicameral parliaments of the post-Soviet countries, the Republic of Uzbekistan does not have a large number of deputies in the lower house of parliament. For example, the lower house of the Russian parliament has 450 seats, Uzbekistan has 150, Belarus has 110, Kazakhstan has 98, and Tajikistan has 63 seats. However, the figures are completely different in European countries. Thus, in the lower house of Germany there are 630 (the ratio of population per deputy is 126,759 people, i.e. 1/126,759), France – 577 (1/71,826), Poland – 460 (1/69,220), Italy – 400 (1/98,183), Spain – 350 (1/77,904), Romania – 330 (1/41,026), Greece – 300 (1/34.143), Bulgaria – 240 (1/28.317), Portugal – 230 (1/45.352), the Czech Republic and Finland – 200 (1/38.470 and 1/28.005),



Hungary – 199 (1/48.673), Austria – 183 (1/37.418), Denmark – 179 (1/33.229), Ireland – 174 (1/23.623), Croatia – 151 (1/25.801), Belgium, the Netherlands and Slovakia – 150 (1/55.776, 1/80.413 and 1/36.787), Lithuania – 141 (1/20.241), Estonia – 101 (1/13.535), Latvia – 100 (1/18.820), Slovenia – 90 (1/16.292), Cyprus – 80 (1/16.813), Malta – 79 (1/8.200), Luxembourg – 60 (1/11.083) seats, respectively [5].

In terms of potential costs, any increase in the size of parliament is an expensive solution, including the costs of salaries, compensation payments and allowances for additional parliamentarians and their staff. Additional resources would also be required for parliamentary departments. Accordingly, any future changes would need to take into account budgetary and administrative considerations, as well as the public benefits that would be achieved through greater access to national parliamentarians, as advocated by proponents [7].

Nevertheless, in order to ensure a balance between the size of parliament and the quality of representation, an adequate number of parliamentarians who are physically capable of coping with the growing electorate is required, especially in countries with positive demographic dynamics, which includes the Republic of Uzbekistan. Luca Gambari notes that the number of deputies grows in proportion to the size of the population [8].

**The increase in the number of seats is intended to contribute to:**

firstly, more effective implementation of the principle of checks and balances between the legislative, executive and judicial branches of government. Although there is no publicly available data on the exact number of legislative, executive and judicial bodies, it is highly likely that the legislative branch has the smallest number of staff compared to the other two branches of government;

secondly, improving the quality of law-making through a wide range of opinions representing different social, professional and regional interests, and strengthening specialisation, as the increase in the number of parliamentarians allows for the formation of more committees and subcommittees where deputies can work on bills in greater depth;

thirdly, improving the quality of work in constituencies, as the number of voters is reduced, allows MPs to work in a more targeted and active manner when holding meetings with voters, personal receptions, considering their appeals, and organising legal education events. In this regard, George Stigler assumes that population size is a key factor determining the size of the legislature [9]. This thesis is also

confirmed by the results of Brian Frederick's research, which show that excessively large constituencies impair the quality of representation, communication with voters, competition and responsiveness, and therefore the chamber should be expanded [10].

fourthly, the increase of the chances of representatives of the most vulnerable groups of the population, in particular women, persons with disabilities, national and ethnic minorities and other categories, being elected to parliament. Thus, according to Alessia De Santo, a larger legislative body improves the representation of women, ethnic minorities and the population of small towns, ensures greater policy coherence between voters and representatives, and influences party representation [11].

fifthly, increasing the openness and transparency of parliament's work is important since a larger number of MPs means a higher level of media coverage and activity in the mass media, social networks and messengers.

As noted above, increasing the number of deputies in the lower house of parliament depends primarily on the financial capabilities of each country. However, in the long term — 50 years or more — it would be advisable to keep this issue on the agenda and strive to gradually increase the number of deputies within reasonable limits. Demographics are also one of the prerequisites. In 1991, when Uzbekistan's first unicameral parliament, the Supreme Council, consisting of 500 deputies, was in operation [12], the population of Uzbekistan was 20.6 million [13], i.e. a ratio of 1/41,000 people. The unicameral parliament of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the Oliy Majlis of the first convocation, was represented by 250 deputies. By 2005, the parliament was divided into two chambers, and the first convocation of the Legislative (lower) Chamber was formed, consisting of 120 deputies [14]. At that time, the population of Uzbekistan was 26.5 million people [15], with a ratio of 1/221,000 people, which is higher than it is now. As of 2025, the ratio is 1 in 142,608. However, according to forecasts, by 2050, 52 million people will live in Uzbekistan (if the lower house consists of 150 deputies, then each of them will represent 347,000 people), and by 2100, i.e. by the end of the century, the population will reach 74.2 million [16]. Therefore, as researchers, we are obliged to think in the long term and propose measures for the further development of parliamentarism and the strengthening of the role of parliament in the socio-political life of the country. In this case, human resources, in the form of parliamentarians, play a key role.

There are already grounds, at least at the initial stage, for increasing the number of seats in the lower



house of parliament by introducing additional mandates to reserve seats, for example, for national minorities (this practice has been introduced in the lower houses of parliament in countries such as Croatia, Slovenia, Romania, Poland, Colombia, and New Zealand).

Despite the experience of a number of foreign countries, we believe that it is advisable to avoid focusing on nationality. In this regard, we agree with the opinion of experts that in societies that are strongly divided along ethnic, racial, religious, linguistic or any other form of ascriptive lines, ethnic divisions hinder democracy, as they tend to lead to the emergence of ethnic parties and ethnic voting [17].

With this in mind, additional seats can be reserved for persons with disabilities, which is fully in line with the spirit of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which states that persons with disabilities should be able to actively participate in decision-making processes concerning strategies and programmes, including those that directly affect them. Furthermore, one of the fundamental principles of this Convention is full and effective participation and inclusion in society. Under this Convention, States Parties undertake to take all appropriate legislative, administrative and other measures to implement the rights recognised in this Convention, and to take all appropriate measures, including legislative measures, to modify or abolish existing laws, regulations, customs and practices that are discriminatory in relation to persons with disabilities. Moreover, according to paragraph 3 of Article 4 of this Convention, when developing and implementing legislation and policies aimed at implementing this Convention, and in other decision-making processes concerning persons with disabilities, States Parties shall closely consult with and actively involve persons with disabilities, including children with disabilities, through their representative organisations [18].

As another option, additional seats may be reserved for compatriots living abroad who, through their activities in various fields, including charitable (patronage) activities in the Republic of Uzbekistan in its interests, make a significant contribution to the development of our state. This decision will make it possible to work with voters who are temporarily outside the Republic of Uzbekistan. For your information, during the parliamentary elections on 27 October 2025, 165,631 voters were registered abroad [19], and deputies are also obliged to continue working and representing their interests after their election.

When discussing the reservation of additional seats in parliament for certain categories of the population, international electoral standards should be

taken into account. In particular, according to the Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters (Guidelines and Explanatory Report adopted by the Venice Commission at its 52nd session (Venice, 18-19 October 2002)), members of at least one chamber of the national parliament should be elected by direct vote [20]. In accordance with paragraph 7.2, in order for the will of the people to serve as the basis of the authority of the government, participating states shall allow all seats in at least one chamber of the national legislature to be subject to free competition between candidates in national elections [21].

Therefore, it would be advisable to reserve additional seats in the upper house for persons with disabilities and compatriots living abroad.

Overall, an analysis of global trends and national characteristics indicates the need for a gradual increase in the number of parliamentarians. An increase in numbers will improve the quality of representation, enhance work with voters, strengthen the system of checks and balances, and ensure the participation of vulnerable social groups in the legislative process. The demographic growth observed in Uzbekistan makes this a long-term strategic priority.

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