

THE ROLE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PARLIAMENT IN THE POLITICAL SYSTEM OF THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA

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Abstract

The Republic of North Macedonia functions as a parliamentary democracy based on the principles of separation and independence of powers. The legislative branch is exercised by the Parliament, the executive power is exercised by the Government and the President, (although the President's role is mostly symbolic/ceremonial and judicial branch exercised by the Courts.

The structure and responsibilities of the Parliament are defined by the Constitution and specific laws. As the holder of legislative authority, the Parliament plays a crucial role in shaping the country's legal and constitutional framework. Its primary functions include: legislation (the adoption and amendment of the Constitution and laws); representation (where members of Parliament represent the interests and concerns of the electorate); political control (monitoring and supervising the executive through various parliamentary mechanisms), elective authority (electing the Government, the Ombudsman, the Public Prosecutor, and other public officials as provided by law).

This paper outlines the key functions of the Parliament and its importance within North Macedonia's political system. Furthermore, it offers recommendations aimed to improve the Parliament's effectiveness as a forum where public interests are discussed, debated and decided.

For this study, descriptive and comparative research methods have been used, along with an analysis of the Constitution, relevant legal provisions and academic and scientific literature.

Keywords: Constitution, MPs, legislative, North Macedonia, Parliament

Introduction

Republic of North Macedonia (RNM), after declaring its independence in 1991, began to build its independent state institutions along with the political system.

RNM operates as a democratic parliamentary republic, based on the principles of democracy. The governance is based on the principle of separation of state powers into: legislative, executive, and judicial. The three state powers are separate and independent of each other (Neziri, 2022:251). According to the Constitution of RNM, the legislative power is exercised by the Parliament (Article 61), the executive power by the Government and the President of the state, (the President mostly performs representative and ceremonial functions) (Article 91), while judicial power is exercised by the Courts (article 98).

Parliament is the key institution of representative democracy and the only institution that has power to make decisions concerning the citizens and the state.

Parliament's functions and its interne organisation are regulated by the Constitution and positive laws. The legal framework includes: the Law on the Parliament, the Law on Members of Parliament, the Rules of Procedure of the Parliament as well as Electoral Code (Neziri, 2022: 17-21).

According to the Constitution, the Parliament:

- *“adopts and amends the Constitution/ Constitution provisions;*
- *Adopts and amends laws;*
- *interprets laws/legislation;*

- approves the state budget and public procurements;
- make decisions concerning the reserves of the Republic;
- elects the Government;
- exercises political control and supervision of the Government and other public officials accountable to the Parliament;
- calls referenda;
- decides on matters of war, peace and changes of state borders;
- elects judges of the Constitutional Court;
- appoints and discharges judges;
- ratifies international agreements;
- decides on accession to or withdrawal from unions with other states;
- elect and dismiss other public officials determined by the Constitution and laws;
- perform other responsibilities defined by the Constitution” (article 68).

Despite its multiple competencies, the Parliament is not above the Constitution and the laws. As an institution, it must comply with the Constitutional and legal provisions.

Study offers an in-depth analysis of the most important roles/functions of Parliament and its significance within the RNM.

Research hypothesis is as follow: *Parliament plays a crucial role within the political system of North Macedonia. It is the key institution that decides on state’s matters and national interests.* Research question is: *What is the role of the Parliament in the political system of the Republic of North Macedonia?*

Methods

For this paper are used: comparative and descriptive methods, analysis of constitutional and positive laws, scientific doctrines (including: dissertations, academic literature and scientific research) and official websites. The research focuses on analysis of constitutional and legal provisions including: the Law on the Parliament, the Law on Members of Parliament, the Rules of Procedure of the Parliament, the Electoral Code and others related acts.

1. The Role and Significance of the Parliament in the Political System of the Republic of North Macedonia

Based on the Constitutional provisions and positive laws, the Parliament performs several functions/roles including:

- constitutional and legislative;
- representative;
- control and supervisory;
- budgetary and financial;
- election.

1.1 Parliament as a Constitutional and Legislative Body :

The Parliament is a legislative body. Its primary role is the adoption and amendment of Constitution and laws. Constitution is adopted through parliamentary voting. Taking into account the Constitution’s significance as the highest legal and political act of the country, its adoption and amendment require wider political support (a two-thirds majority of all Members of Parliament/deputies). Such a majority ensures legitimacy and prevents any possible amendments that might be easily obtained through a simple majority. Laws are adopted through parliamentary voting. Laws should be aligned with constitutional provisions. Draft laws can be

submitted by deputies, parliamentary groups, Government and at least 10.000 citizens/voters (Rules of Procedure, Article 139). Draft law must contain: the title, introduction, text, and its rationale. The legislative procedure is regulated by the Rules of Procedure of the Parliament and is conducted in three readings. In the first reading, the competent working body and the Legislative Committee hold a general debate. After the discussion, it is decided whether it should proceed to the next reading. If approved, the draft proceeds to the second reading. The second reading focuses on amendments proposed by Members of Parliament (MPs), parliamentary groups, or committees. Each amendment is voted on separately. The revised text, is submitted to the President of the Parliament. During the third reading, debate and voting are limited to articles amended in the previous reading. Finally, Parliament votes on the final version of the law in its entirety (articles 147-171). According to the Rules of Procedure of the Parliament, exceptionally, laws can be adopted with an emergency or shortened procedure. A law can be adopted with an emergency procedure when it is necessary to prevent major disturbances in the economy, when it is in the interest of the defence and the security of the Republic; or in cases of epidemics, natural disasters, or other urgent and extraordinary needs (articles 172-174). Shortened legislative procedure may be applied when: it comes to laws that are not extensive or complex, there is termination of the validity of a certain law or particular provisions of a law, or when the law doesn't require an extensive or a complex harmonisation with the legislation of the European Union (article 175). All laws approved by the Parliament, must be signed by the President of the state and published in the Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia (articles 183-184). After publishing, the laws become obligatory for all individuals and legal entities within the state. If the President of the state refuses to sign, then the law is sent back to Parliament for review. Parliament plays an important role in the interpretation of laws. Parliament is the only institution that has the authority to provide an authentic interpretation of laws and also explain their intent, their meaning and the purpose of their adoption (article 185).

1.2 Parliament as a Representative Institution:

Parliament serves as a representative institution. MPs as an integral part of the Parliament, represent the interests and concerns of the electorate, ensuring that the requests of the electorate are heard and represented in the country's legislation and policymaking.

According to the Constitution, the Parliament is composed of 120 to 140 deputies/MPs. Each deputy represents the interests of citizens who elected them.

Through MPs as elected representatives, citizens indirectly participate in state governance. The conditions and procedure for electing the MPs are regulated by the Constitution and the Electoral Code. The positive legal framework also includes: the Law on Political Parties; the Criminal Code as well as the instructions of the State Election Commission (Neziri 2022:18).

"The MPs are elected through general, direct and secret elections, for a four year term" (Electoral Code, article 15). However, the mandate may be extended in cases of extraordinary circumstances or war (Constitution, article 63). MPs enjoy immunity, they cannot be held criminally liable or arrested for an opinion expressed or vote cast in the Parliament.

MPs have the right to form parliamentary groups, which must consist of at least 5 deputies (Rules of Procedure, article 34).

The key duties of the MPs include: communicating and cooperating with citizens as well as with trade unions, non-governmental organizations, international organizations and civic associations (Law on the Parliament, Article 8). Within the Parliament, MPs are involved in discussing and reviewing proposed laws and other important matters issues.

Even though MPs represent citizens' interests, they vote according to their personal judgment. MPs know that ignoring aspirations, ambitions, requests and the interests of the electorate, can lead to consequences in the next elections.

MPs, not only represent the people's interests, but they also supervise and oversee the actions of the Government.

1.3 Parliament as an Electoral Body:

Another important function of the Parliament is its duty to elect high-ranking state officials such as Prime Minister and Government (members of Government/ministers).

The process for electing the Government and the Prime Minister starts with the nomination of a candidate for Prime Minister. The candidate for Prime Minister is nominated by the President of the state. As a rule, the candidate for Prime Minister is nominated from the party or a coalition that has won in the parliamentary elections and has the parliamentary majority. The nominee presents the program of the Government for approval. After review and debate, MPs vote to approve. The Government is elected through a majority vote of all MPs (61 votes) (Rules of Parliament, Article 118).

The Parliament also elects other key public officials, as defined by the Constitution and relevant laws, such as: the judges of the Constitutional Court, three members of the Judicial Council, the members of the Committee on Inter-Community Relations, the Ombudsman, and the Public Prosecutor (Constitution, article 68).

Taking into account that, these individuals play a crucial role in the administration of the state and the implementing national policies, the Parliament as an electoral body ensure that these elected individuals are competent and qualified (Neziri, 2024:149).

1.4 Parliament as a Supervisory Body:

Parliament exercises political control over the work of the executive. The Parliament has the authority to supervise and monitor the work of the Government, the work of the President of the state, as well as other public institutions which are elected by the Parliament and officially obliged to report to the Parliament (Neziri & Saliu & Ismaili, 2025: 8).

Through this function, the Parliament:

- promotes accountability, transparency, responsibility;
- prevents abuses of power,
- ensures that Government and Public Administration act in accordance with the Constitution and positive laws,
- ensures the efficient implementation of policies (Neziri, 2025: 74).

The parliamentary mechanisms through which the Parliament oversee the work of the executive, are categorized into ordinary and extraordinary mechanisms.

Ordinary mechanisms include: the approval of the state budget and the examination of periodic reports submitted by the government regarding its activities; while the extraordinary parliamentary mechanisms include deputies' questions, interpellation, vote of no confidence and investigative committee (Neziri, 2024:161).

MPs duties is to address question (orally or in writing) to holders of public functions elected by the Parliament (including: Prime Minister, Ministers as well as others public officials). Through questions, MPs obtain additional information regarding to a specific aspect of public functionaries.

At least five MPs may initiate an interpellation (Constitution, Article 72). MPs who undertake such an activity usually are part of the opposition. In contrast to deputies' questions, interpellation involves debate and voting and it lasts one working day (Rules of the Assembly, Articles 46-49).

Theoretically, the most serious and the strongest parliamentary mechanisms through which the Parliament oversee and supervise the work of the executive is vote of no confidence. At least 20 deputies may initiate a no-confidence motion (Constitution, Article 92). This instrument is used when the Parliament lost confidence in the Government, due to non-implementation of its

political program. Vote of no confidence can lead to the dismissal of the Government and the dismissal of the Parliament.

The Parliament oversees the activities and the work of the President of the state. In case of suspicion of abuse of the Constitution and positive laws, President's mandate may be terminated; however, the Constitutional Court has the final word (Neziri & Ismaili & Saliu, 2025: 13).

Within the Parliament, the investigative Committee is obliged to examine a specific documentation or case that can serve as a basis for initiating proceedings for potential responsibility of a public functionary (Neziri & Saliu & Ismaili, 2025: 91).

1.5 Parliament as an Institution Responsible for Adopting the State Budget:

Parliament has the authority to approve the State Budget and public procurements. The Government prepares the draft budget and submits it to the Parliament for review and approval. MPs have the right to propose, debate and vote.

Through adopting the state budget, the Parliament determines the financial necessary resources for the functioning of all state organs and how public funds will be allocated across sectors such as: healthcare education, social protection, infrastructure, etc.

1.6 Parliament as a Guardian of State Sovereignty and Democratic Legitimacy :

Among Parliament's most significant powers are the functions related to state sovereignty. This group includes the power of Parliament to declare peace and war; its authority to decide on changes to the borders of the state, as well as its power to determine the country's participation in or withdrawal from international unions or associations (Constitution, article 68).

The Parliament plays a significant role as the guardian of state sovereignty and democratic legitimacy ensuring that the decisions affecting the nation's sovereignty and territorial integrity are made in a democratic and legitimate manner.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This paper shows that the Parliament plays a crucial and a fundamental role within the political system of the Republic.

The Parliament: represents the interests and concerns of the electoral, adopts and interprets the laws, it supervises the executive, it elects high-ranking state officials as well as guards the sovereignty of the Republic.

Taking into account the significance of the Parliament, this study suggests:

- Improving the quality of legislative process by ensuring laws effectiveness in practice. Adopted laws must be precise, without any gaps that may create opportunities for different forms of abuse by the individuals or legal persons;
- strengthening the oversight role of Parliament. MPs should use the parliamentary mechanism more frequently in order to supervise and control the executive;
- Exchange of experiences and best practices with other national parliaments and European Union institutions ;
- Promotion of ethical values;
- Use of technology and digitalization as well as modernization of legislative processes;

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