



Inter-Parliamentary Union
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Report on the ASGP-Meeting during the 150th Inter-Parliamentary Union Assembly

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Summary in Dutch and advise

In het hedendaagse paradigma van democratisch bestuur nemen nationale parlementen niet slechts de rol in van representatieve instellingen binnen de staatsrechtelijke constellatie, maar treden zij tevens op als normatieve actoren die zich adaptief positioneren ten aanzien van maatschappelijke transformatie, globalisering en technologische vooruitgang. Zij opereren op het kruispunt van democratische legitimatie, institutionele responsiviteit en constitutionele duurzaamheid, waarbij zij zich genooddaakt zien fundamentele hervormingen door te voeren teneinde hun opdracht binnen een pluriform en dynamisch rechtsbestel adequaat te blijven vervullen.

Tegen deze achtergrond biedt dit rapport een rechtsvergelijkende en thematisch geordende analyse van hedendaagse parlementaire hervormingsbewegingen. De nadruk ligt op institutionele toegankelijkheid, digitale innovatie, inclusieve participatie en de versterking van rechtsstatelijke waarborgen binnen parlementaire processen. De bijdragen zijn voortgevloeid uit de beraadslagingen van de *Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments* (ASGP), gehouden parallel aan de 150e Assemblee van de *Inter-Parliamentary Union* te Tasjkent, Republiek Oezbekistan.

In mijn hoedanigheid van Substituut-Griffier bij De Nationale Assemblée van de Republiek Suriname had ik de eer deel te nemen aan deze hoogstaande interparlementaire gedachtewisseling. De inhoudelijke reflecties die tijdens deze sessies zijn gedeeld, betroffen onder meer de institutionalisering van jongerenparticipatie, de rechtsstatelijke bescherming van kwetsbare groepen, het behoud van parlementair institutioneel geheugen, en de constitutionele implicaties van technologische disruptie binnen het wetgevingsproces. Tevens kwamen aan de orde: bestuursstrategieën voor digitale communicatie, ethiek in de parlementaire ambtsuitoefening, en de versterking van professioneel kader binnen parlementaire administraties.

De centrale vraagstelling die de bijdragen richting gaf, luidde:

Hoe kunnen parlementen hun grondwettelijke opdracht tot wetgeving, controle en representatie op doeltreffende wijze blijven vervullen binnen een zich transformerende democratische context, zonder afbreuk te doen aan constitutionele stabiliteit en institutionele legitimiteit?

Geselecteerde bijdragen van parlementaire functionarissen, relevant voor de institutionele versterking van De Nationale Assemblée van de Republiek Suriname:

- **Irak - Safwan Bashir Al-Gergeri:** *Jongerenparticipatie als constitutionele pijler van intergenerationele rechtvaardigheid binnen het parlementair bestel.* Gepleit wordt voor de institutionele verankering van jeugdige vertegenwoordiging als democratisch imperatief.
- **Bahrein - Mohamed Alsisi Alboainain:** *Kunstmatige intelligentie en parlementaire besluitvorming.* Aangegeven wordt dat de inzet van AI grondwettelijke toetsingskaders vereist ter waarborging van transparantie, autonomie en rechtsstatelijkheid.
- **Sri Lanka - Kushani Rohanadeera:** *Parlementaire toegankelijkheid in het licht van internationale mensenrechtenverplichtingen.* De bijdrage benadrukt de noodzaak van structurele aanpassingen in overeenstemming met het VN-Verdrag inzake de rechten van personen met een handicap (CRPD).

- **Zuid-Afrika - Xolile George:** *De constitutionalisering van publieke participatie en de institutionele barrières voor inclusiviteit.* Een kritische analyse van structurele determinanten die effectieve participatie belemmeren.
- **Nederland - dr. Remco Nehmelman:** *Het parlement als hoeder van de constitutionele rechtsstaat.* De nadruk ligt op de waarborgfunctie van het parlement ten aanzien van normatieve continuïteit binnen veranderende maatschappelijke contexten.
- **Duitsland - dr. Georg Kleemann:** *Socialmediabeleid in het parlementaire domein.* Gesuggereerd wordt een normatief kader voor institutionele bescherming tegen reputatieschade, desinformatie en instrumentalisering via digitale platforms.
- **Verenigd Koninkrijk - Chloe Mawson:** *Juridische operationalisering van parlementaire inclusie.* De bijdrage richt zich op wetgevings- en beleidsmechanismen ter bevordering van representativiteit en toegankelijkheid in parlementaire procedures.

Bestuurlijke aanbevelingen zijn

1. Institutionalisering van jongerenparticipatie

Jongerenparticipatie dient beschouwd te worden als een constitutief element van democratische legitimatie. Rechtsvergelijkend onderzoek toont aan dat landen zoals Irak en Egypte institutionele mechanismen hebben verankerd ter bevordering van jeugdige vertegenwoordiging. Suriname zou op dit punt een *Parlementaire Jongerenraad* kunnen instellen met een adviserend mandaat, statutair verankerd in het *Huishoudelijk Reglement* van De Nationale Assemblée, waarbij aansluiting wordt gezocht bij artikel 1 van de Grondwet en het daarin neergelegde democratiebeginsel.

2. Realisering van inclusieve toegankelijkheid

In het licht van Suriname's ratificatie van het CRPD, rust op De Nationale Assemblée een verdragsrechtelijke verplichting tot fysieke, digitale en procedurele toegankelijkheid. Aanbevolen wordt een systematische toegankelijkheidsaudit conform de beginselen van *universal design*, evenals verankering van toegankelijkheidsnormen in het huishoudelijk reglement en interne regelgeving.

3. Technologische innovatie binnen constitutioneel kader

De inzet van kunstmatige intelligentie binnen parlementaire processen – zoals toegelicht door Bahrein – vereist een normatief toetsingskader dat de constitutionele beginselen van rechtszekerheid, transparantie, gegevensbescherming en parlementaire autonomie waarborgt. De invoering van een *Toetsingskader Technologische Innovatie* dat is afgestemd op de Wet Bescherming Persoonsgegevens en de Grondwet verdient prioriteit.

4. Behoud van institutioneel geheugen en professionele ontwikkeling

Ter borging van institutionele continuïteit en deskundigheid is normering vereist op het vlak van archivering, digitale documentatie en kennisoverdracht. Het instellen van een strategisch HRM-beleid met focus op permanente educatie van het griffiepersoneel en de digitalisering

van parlementaire archieven kan worden opgenomen binnen het *Statuut voor het Griffiepersoneel*.

5. Versterking van interparlementaire samenwerking

De versterking van de institutionele capaciteit van De Nationale Assemblée kan voorts worden gerealiseerd door de sluiting van bilaterale en multilaterale *Memoranda van Overeenstemming* (MoU's), gericht op juridische kennisuitwisseling, training en gezamenlijke normontwikkeling. Dergelijke samenwerking kan worden gegrondvest op verdragsrechtelijke verplichtingen en constitutionele beginselen van goed bestuur en internationale solidariteit.

De Nationale Assemblée, als hoogste mede-wetgevende macht binnen het constitutioneel bestel van Suriname, draagt een zelfstandige verantwoordelijkheid tot zelfreflectie en institutionele vernieuwing. De inzichten gegenereerd tijdens de ASGP-vergadering bieden waardevolle handvatten voor verdere ontwikkeling van haar constitutionele rol. Door institutionele innovatie, inclusieve participatie en rechtsstatelijke verankering tot kernwaarden van haar functioneren te maken, kan De Nationale Assemblée haar legitimiteit versterken en zich profileren als een toekomstgericht en constitutioneel robuust parlement binnen de veranderende parameters van democratisch bestuur *en zich aldus positioneren als hoeder van democratische stabiliteit, grondwettelijke continuïteit en adaptief bestuur in de 21^{ste} eeuw.*



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Introduction and acknowledgement

In the contemporary framework of democratic governance, national parliaments serve not only as constitutional pillars of representative democracy but also as evolving institutions that reflect and respond to the aspirations of the citizenry. Situated at the intersection of legitimacy, innovation, and inclusivity, parliaments are undergoing transformative shifts to address the demands of an increasingly complex and interconnected global environment. This volume critically examines these institutional evolutions through a comparative lens, offering thematic analyses on parliamentary reform in relation to accessibility, digital transformation, inclusiveness, and the rule of law.

This publication draws intellectual impetus from the deliberations held under the auspices of the Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments (ASGP), which convened alongside the 150th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) in Tashkent, Republic of Uzbekistan, from 5 to 9 April 2025. In my capacity as Secretary General of the National Assembly of the Republic of Suriname, I was privileged to participate in these high-level exchanges. The sessions facilitated critical dialogue on pressing legislative concerns, such as youth engagement in democratic processes, legislative accommodations for persons with disabilities, and the preservation of institutional memory through formalized procedural norms. These engagements provided a robust forum for comparative legal and institutional reflection on the modernization of parliamentary administration and support services. Discussions encompassed governance strategies for institutional social media, the professional development of parliamentary staff, and the ethical frameworks necessary for safeguarding legislative independence. The proceedings underscored the centrality of cross-border parliamentary collaboration in enhancing institutional resilience and upholding democratic principles.

This report assembles a curated collection of contributions and interventions presented during the ASGP meeting. Each chapter engages with a foundational question of parliamentary governance: how can legislatures effectively fulfil their constitutional roles amid conditions of democratic transformation? Contributions from senior parliamentary officials, legal scholars, and practitioners offer normative insights and procedural analyses on institutional adaptation, technological responsiveness, administrative accountability, and democratic accessibility. Together, these perspectives articulate a common thesis: that the enduring legitimacy and effectiveness of parliamentary institutions depend on their capacity to institutionalize transparent, inclusive, and responsive legislative practices.

The 150th IPU Assembly, hosted by the Parliament of Uzbekistan, convened under the overarching theme *Parliamentary Action for Social Development and Justice*. This focus shaped both political deliberations and procedural dialogues, prompting reflection on poverty alleviation, equitable access to decent work, and the political inclusion of marginalized groups. The Assembly also featured a keynote address by President Shavkat Mirziyoyev and commemorated the 40th anniversary of the IPU Forum of Women Parliamentarians—an occasion of particular significance in light of the IPU's latest data indicating that women currently represent only 27.2% of global parliamentary membership, signaling persistent structural barriers to gender parity.

All principal bodies of the IPU convened during the Assembly, including its four thematic Standing Committees, the Forum of Young Parliamentarians, the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians, the Committee on Middle East Questions, and the Task Force on the Peaceful

Resolution of the War in Ukraine. Key resolutions were tabled on matters such as the advancement of a two-State solution in Palestine and the impact of armed conflict on achieving sustainable development goals. Workshops further enriched the programme, addressing critical areas including climate action, parliamentary diplomacy, and the role of social norms in shaping women's health outcomes. Reflecting the Assembly's 2025 thematic emphasis on gender equality, the IPU officially launched the nomination process for the 2025 Cremer-Passy Prize, honoring outstanding parliamentary contributions to this cause.

This Assembly also marked a significant milestone toward near-universality in IPU membership, with Belize expected to accede as the 182nd Member Parliament. Since its founding in 1889 in Paris—with representation from only nine countries—the IPU has matured into a premier global forum, often referred to as the “parliament of parliaments.” The 150th Assembly in Tashkent stands as both a commemoration of this legacy and a forward-looking platform for developing substantive parliamentary responses to contemporary social and developmental challenges.

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Information on articles

This section convenes a distinguished group of Secretaries-General and experienced parliamentary officials whose contributions critically examine the evolving contours of democratic governance through the framework of institutional reform within national legislatures. Each article presents a distinct analytical perspective, informed by the constitutional and legislative particularities of the respective jurisdictions, and anchored in foundational normative commitments to inclusivity, technological progress, participatory democracy, and the safeguarding of the rule of law.

- **Safwan Bashir Al-Gergeri**, Secretary General of the Iraqi Council of Representatives, offers a compelling empirical inquiry titled *Youth Empowerment in Parliamentary Systems: Towards a More Democratic Future*. Drawing on five electoral cycles in Iraq, his analysis critically examines the structural barriers impeding youth representation in legislative bodies. Al-Gergeri argues for institutional recalibration to embed intergenerational equity within parliamentary frameworks, positioning youth inclusion as both a democratic imperative and a catalyst for legitimacy.
- **Mohamed Ebrahim Alsisi Alboainain**, Secretary General of the Council of Representatives of the Kingdom of Bahrain, contributes the study *Harnessing Artificial Intelligence in the Bahraini Parliament: A Transformative Shift in Legislative Innovation*. This contribution explores the integration of AI into parliamentary procedures, highlighting its impact on institutional efficiency while also addressing constitutional and ethical implications. The analysis balances technological utility with democratic oversight, presenting AI as both a tool and a challenge for modern legislatures.
- **Kushani Rohanadeera**, Secretary General of the Parliament of Sri Lanka, in *Accessibility of Parliament for Persons with Disabilities: The Imperative of Inclusive Legislative Processes in Sri Lanka*, foregrounds the rights of persons with disabilities as central to democratic legitimacy. Anchored in international legal standards, her contribution underscores the juridical and institutional obligations of parliaments to ensure equal access to legislative mechanisms and infrastructure, thereby promoting procedural justice and institutional equity.
- **Xolile George**, Secretary to the Parliament of the Republic of South Africa, provides a constitutional analysis in *Ensuring Meaningful Public Participation in the Parliament of the Republic of South Africa*. He examines the normative framework underpinning public involvement as a precondition for legislative validity. His contribution emphasizes the creation of inclusive participatory structures, particularly for historically excluded groups, advancing a model of deliberative democracy grounded in constitutional values of transparency and accountability.
- **dr. Remco Nehmelman**, Secretary General of the Senate of the Netherlands, presents a jurisprudential reflection in *The Rule of Law Dialogue in the Netherlands: Lessons from the Dutch State Commission on the Rule of Law*. Drawing upon the Commission's findings, he conceptualizes parliaments as stewards of legal certainty, institutional independence, and the separation of powers. His analysis affirms the centrality of legislative dialogue in upholding constitutional resilience and safeguarding the integrity of democratic institutions.
- **dr. Georg Kleemann**, Deputy Secretary-General of the Bundesrat of the Federal Republic of Germany, contributes the analytically robust communication on *Social Media Management in Parliaments: Institutional Responsibility, Democratic Engagement, and Strategic Communication*. His work explores the role of digital media in enhancing civic interaction and institutional transparency, while also identifying regulatory challenges. Kleemann proposes a

normative framework for responsible social media governance within parliamentary contexts, balancing engagement with institutional safeguards.

- **Ms. Chloe Mawson**, Clerk Assistant of the House of Lords, United Kingdom, presents *Accessibility of Parliament for Disabled People: A Case Study of the UK House of Lords*. Through detailed examination of procedural adjustments, infrastructural modifications, and administrative innovations, Mawson illustrates how the House of Lords has institutionalized accessibility. Her contribution demonstrates how legal obligations can be effectively embedded into organizational culture to foster inclusive legislative practice.

1. Youth Participation in Parliamentary Work: A Constitutional Imperative and Democratic Investment – Reflections from the Egyptian Experience. *By Mahmoud Etman, Secretary General of the Senate of Egypt*

Abstract

This article examines the constitutional, democratic, and institutional dimensions of youth participation in parliamentary affairs, drawing on the Egyptian experience. It analyzes the mechanisms adopted by the Egyptian Senate to promote meaningful youth involvement in legislative and oversight functions, evaluates the constitutional underpinnings of youth representation, and offers a critical reflection on capacity-building measures for young parliamentarians as a strategy for democratic renewal and generational inclusion.

Introduction

Youth participation in parliamentary institutions transcends the realm of political aspirations and has evolved into a constitutional necessity and democratic imperative across multiple jurisdictions. In the case of Egypt, this imperative is reflected in the evolving political and legal framework that acknowledges the essential role of youth in legislative and policy processes. The integration of youth into parliamentary work is regarded as a critical element for fostering democratic consolidation and rejuvenating institutional structures. As articulated by Mr. Mahmoud Etman, Secretary General of the Senate of Egypt, during discussions on *Meeting the Expectations of Young Parliamentarians*, youth participation is indispensable for reinforcing democratic legitimacy and ensuring generational inclusivity within governance.

Democratic rationale for youth representation

The inclusion of youth in parliamentary work is pivotal to the enhancement of democratic legitimacy, offering a more inclusive representation of the populace. As Etman notes, youth participation enables a substantial demographic, often marginalized in governance structures, to directly influence the formulation of public policies and legislation. This involvement is not merely ceremonial; rather, it serves as a substantive enrichment to legislative processes, ensuring that the perspectives and aspirations of youth are adequately reflected in public decision-making. Furthermore, youth engagement serves as a mechanism for revitalizing political life by fostering values of citizenship, civic responsibility, and active political participation. By providing young citizens with meaningful roles in legislative bodies, the system cultivates a vested interest in public affairs, thereby strengthening democratic culture and fostering social cohesion.

Bridging the generational gap in law and policy

From a jurisprudential perspective, the integration of youth into parliamentary functions facilitates the bridging of generational divides that frequently shape legislative outcomes. As Etman underscores, intergenerational representation is essential in crafting laws and policies that adequately address the broad spectrum of societal needs, encompassing all age groups—from the elderly to the youth. This inclusive approach is particularly significant in policy areas marked by pronounced generational disparities, such as education, healthcare, technology, and employment. The presence

of young legislators ensures that these issues are addressed with contemporary insights and innovative solutions, thereby enhancing the effectiveness and sustainability of governance practices.

Constitutional recognition and institutional measures

In the Egyptian legal framework, the constitutional foundation for youth participation is enshrined in Article 244 of the Egyptian Constitution. This provision mandates the State to ensure adequate representation for youth within parliamentary structures, thereby formalizing the commitment to intergenerational equity in political participation. The Senate of Egypt has actively operationalized this constitutional directive by incorporating young parliamentarians into its legislative processes. Currently, thirty young members serve in the Senate, underscoring the State's commitment to legislative innovation and the inclusion of fresh, diverse perspectives in policy-making.

Institutional support for effective youth participation

While constitutional provisions serve as foundational mandates, their successful implementation requires robust institutional mechanisms. Etman highlights several strategic interventions adopted by the Egyptian Parliament to facilitate the effective participation of youth in legislative activities, which include:

- **Comprehensive training programs:** Designed to equip young parliamentarians with essential knowledge in parliamentary procedures, legislative drafting, and oversight functions, these programs foster a mentorship model by pairing new members with experienced legislators.
- **Committee integration and representation:** By ensuring that young parliamentarians actively participate in parliamentary committees, the Senate enhances their involvement in substantive legislative work, thereby amplifying their influence in shaping policy outcomes.
- **Research and logistical support:** Targeted resources are allocated to assist young parliamentarians in policy research, legislative drafting, and proposal development, enabling them to perform autonomously and with competence.
- **International engagement:** Opportunities for international outreach and participation in global parliamentary forums allow young members to share experiences, learn from international peers, and engage in cross-border political dialogue.
- **Internal dialogue initiatives:** Structured intergenerational dialogues within Parliament foster mutual understanding and collaboration, reinforcing institutional solidarity and promoting cohesion among different legislative cohorts.
- **Youth empowerment frameworks:** Long-term institutional strategies are developed to sustain and further expand youth participation, strengthening the democratic resilience of the Egyptian legislative system.

Simulation models and preparatory training

In a forward-thinking approach to leadership development, the Egyptian Ministry of Youth and Sports has introduced a simulation model of parliamentary proceedings for non-parliamentary youth. This pedagogical innovation serves as a preparatory training tool, equipping future youth leaders with the skills and knowledge necessary for legislative engagement. The simulation model provides participants with the opportunity to engage in mock parliamentary proceedings, receive

targeted training, and collaborate with experts from Senate secretariats. This approach enhances political literacy, while fostering the development of a well-prepared cadre of future legislators.

International outreach and the Nasser fellowship

The Senate has further expanded its efforts to engage with global youth through initiatives like the Nasser Fellowship for International Leadership. Over the course of three years, the Senate has hosted over 450 young leaders from diverse cultural and geopolitical backgrounds. This initiative underscores Egypt's broader commitment to global youth empowerment and international political cooperation, in line with the vision articulated by President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi. The Nasser Fellowship provides participants with opportunities for specialized training, networking, and exposure to Egypt's parliamentary system, while fostering intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding among emerging global leaders.

Conclusion

The Egyptian experience, as presented by Mr. Mahmoud Etman, offers a compelling case study in the institutionalization of youth participation within parliamentary structures. Through a combination of constitutional guarantees, targeted training, institutional support, and international outreach, Egypt has developed a replicable model for fostering intergenerational political participation. The involvement of young people in legislative work is not only a means to enhance democratic representativeness but also an investment in the long-term sustainability and adaptability of governance. Other jurisdictions seeking to bridge generational divides and build resilient democracies can draw valuable lessons from Egypt's approach to youth empowerment in parliamentary work.

2. Youth Empowerment in Parliamentary Systems: Towards a More Democratic Future – Reflections from the Iraqi Council of Representatives. *By Safwan Bashir Al-Gergeri, Secretary General of the Iraqi Council of Representatives*

Abstract

This article analyzes the evolving role of youth in national parliaments, with particular focus on developments within the Iraqi Council of Representatives. Grounded in democratic theory and institutional development, the paper argues that youth participation constitutes a cornerstone of democratic renewal and political inclusiveness. Drawing on empirical data from Iraq's last five parliamentary cycles, it presents a nuanced examination of the demographic trends in youth representation, identifies systemic challenges to effective participation, and offers targeted recommendations to foster age-balanced and gender-inclusive legislative processes.

Introduction

Youth participation in democratic governance is no longer merely aspirational but has become a normative imperative in modern representative systems. According to Mr. Safwan Bashir Al-Gergeri, Secretary General of the Iraqi Council of Representatives, the engagement of young people in parliaments is a fundamental element in the construction of equitable, responsive, and future-oriented governance systems. In Iraq, where youth constitute a significant majority of the population, there is a pressing need for democratic institutions to adjust structurally and culturally to reflect this demographic shift. Despite their demographic prominence, however, young people remain underrepresented in legislative bodies worldwide, often facing structural and systemic obstacles to meaningful participation. The Iraqi experience, while demonstrating some progress, serves as a useful case study for understanding both the challenges and the possibilities associated with youth empowerment in parliamentary contexts.

Democratic value of youth representation

The inclusion of youth in legislative bodies serves multiple critical democratic functions. It strengthens the principle of representativeness by ensuring that a broader demographic spectrum is reflected in lawmaking, thus fostering a legislative process that is more responsive to the evolving needs of society. In particular, youth participation brings innovation, energy, and fresh perspectives to key policy areas such as education, employment, digital transformation, climate change, and civil liberties. Additionally, the integration of youth into parliamentary work reinforces the legitimacy of democratic institutions. As Al-Gergeri emphasizes, youth participation goes beyond mere numerical representation and must involve substantive contributions to legislative drafting, oversight functions, and the articulation of public concerns within parliamentary committees and plenary sessions.

Empirical trends in youth representation: the Case of Iraq

A comprehensive analysis of the Iraqi parliamentary landscape over the last five legislative cycles reveals a gradual, though uneven, trend towards greater youth participation. Out of the total number of parliamentary members during these cycles, 673 were classified as youth (under 45 years of age), comprising 42.4% of all legislators. However, this figure conceals significant gender and age disparities within the youth demographic. Male youth accounted for 69.53% of this group, while female participation remained relatively low. The 40–45 age group dominated youth representation,

comprising 60.47%, while the 30–39 age group accounted for 39.52%. These statistics suggest that political accessibility is improving for older segments of the youth demographic, particularly the 40–45 cohort, which has seen the most significant increase in representation. This trend may reflect both the accumulation of political capital necessary for election and systemic biases that favor older candidates, even within youth categories.

Challenges to effective youth participation

Despite some positive trends, several challenges continue to hinder the full participation of youth in Iraq's parliamentary processes:

- **Institutional barriers:** High candidacy fees, entrenched political party structures, and nomination biases often exclude younger candidates from running for office.
- **Gender disparities:** Young women face additional obstacles, including cultural expectations, limited access to political networks, and discriminatory practices that impede their political participation.
- **Tokenism:** When young people are elected, they are frequently marginalized within party hierarchies and have limited influence over key legislative processes.
- **Lack of capacity-building mechanisms:** Many new, young parliamentarians lack adequate training in legislative procedures, policy formulation, and oversight functions, which impedes their ability to effectively contribute to lawmaking.

Strategic recommendations

To overcome these barriers and embed youth empowerment within the parliamentary system, the following interventions are recommended:

- **Enhancing youth Participation in national parliaments:**
 - Reform candidacy nomination procedures to introduce quotas or reserved seats for younger candidates.
 - Provide public financing or subsidies to support youth candidacies, helping level the electoral playing field.
 - Establish mentorship programs to pair experienced legislators with new, young parliamentarians, fostering skill development and institutional knowledge transfer.
- **Empowering young women:**
 - Implement dual-gender quotas that combine age and gender considerations.
 - Create caucuses for young women parliamentarians to foster solidarity and increase their influence over legislative agendas.
 - Conduct targeted civic education campaigns to enhance the political engagement of young women, especially in rural areas.
- **Achieving generational balance:**
 - Enact legislation that sets minimum and maximum age thresholds for key leadership roles in parliament, ensuring fair opportunities for youth participation.
 - Rotate committee chairmanships to allow young parliamentarians to assume leadership roles and gain visibility within parliamentary functions.
 - Mandate youth inclusion in critical decision-making fora, such as national budget discussions and international treaty negotiations.

The role of legislative support structures

Mr. Al-Gergeri highlights the critical role that institutional support structures play in facilitating the effective engagement of youth within parliament. The Iraqi Council of Representatives has introduced a number of progressive measures to empower younger members, including:

- Encouraging youth-led legislative initiatives, providing them with opportunities to introduce bills and resolutions.
- Supporting the appointment of young parliamentarians to chair or co-chair parliamentary committees, enhancing their leadership experience and visibility.
- Facilitating active participation in international parliamentary exchanges, allowing young parliamentarians to engage with their peers from other countries and share best practices.

While these measures represent a positive step forward, it is crucial that they are institutionalized through durable parliamentary rules and long-term strategies to ensure the sustainability of youth empowerment efforts.

Conclusion

The trajectory of youth empowerment in Iraq's parliamentary system offers valuable lessons for both national and comparative constitutional development. As Mr. Safwan Bashir Al-Gergeri aptly observes, youth participation in parliaments is not merely a demographic adjustment but a democratic imperative. When adequately supported, young parliamentarians contribute to more dynamic, equitable, and future-oriented policymaking processes. To truly democratize the future, states must not only accommodate but actively empower the voices of their youngest citizens, ensuring that they are represented in legislatures, leadership roles, and public policy formation. The development of inclusive parliamentary systems, reflective of the full generational spectrum, enhances the legitimacy and resilience of democratic institutions. While Iraq's experience is still evolving, it highlights the promise and challenges of youth empowerment in formal political structures, offering a valuable framework for other nations seeking to bridge the generational divide in political governance.

3. **Harnessing Artificial Intelligence in the Bahraini Parliament: A Transformative Shift in Legislative Innovation.** *By Mr. Mohamed Ebrahim Alsisi Alboainain, Secretary General of the Council of Representatives of the Kingdom of Bahrain*

Abstract

This article examines the strategic integration of artificial intelligence (AI) within the legislative framework of the Kingdom of Bahrain, highlighting the efforts of the Council of Representatives to harness digital technologies as a means of transforming parliamentary operations. Against the backdrop of Bahrain's ambitious digital agenda and national innovation strategy, the study elucidates how AI applications have contributed to enhanced legislative efficiency, participatory democracy, and institutional transparency. The article further discusses the development of ethical frameworks, institutional readiness, and regional cooperation as essential pillars for the responsible deployment of AI in parliamentary contexts.

Introduction

In the 21st century, parliaments worldwide are increasingly confronted with the dual imperative of embracing technological advancement while safeguarding democratic principles. Nowhere is this convergence more clearly illustrated than in the Kingdom of Bahrain, where digital transformation has become a foundational strategy for institutional modernization. Under the enlightened leadership of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa and His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Crown Prince and Prime Minister, the legislative authority has taken significant strides toward incorporating artificial intelligence into its operations. This article offers a comprehensive analysis of the initiatives undertaken by the Bahraini Council of Representatives to integrate AI into its parliamentary processes, guided by a vision of transformative governance, digital sovereignty, and participatory innovation.

The imperative for digital transformation in legislative institutions

In a time of accelerated digital change, legislative institutions must proactively embrace technological tools to remain responsive, transparent, and accountable. AI, with its capacity to process and analyze vast data sets, offers unprecedented potential to reshape how legislatures operate. It facilitates more informed decision-making, enhances the accessibility and transparency of legislative processes, and improves institutional communication with the citizenry. For the Kingdom of Bahrain, digital transformation in the parliamentary sphere is not merely a matter of administrative efficiency—it is a cornerstone of national development policy. The integration of AI is therefore a deliberate and strategic act aimed at strengthening democratic infrastructure and fostering a culture of innovation across all branches of governance.

Strategic vision and institutional framework

Guided by Bahrain's Vision 2030, the Council of Representatives has embraced a digital transformation strategy anchored in three key pillars:

1. **Technological modernization:** Establishing a smart parliamentary ecosystem that utilizes AI to streamline legislative processes, reduce bureaucratic friction, and enhance procedural accuracy.
2. **Citizen engagement:** Utilizing AI tools to foster inclusive dialogue with constituents, enhance responsiveness to public concerns, and improve access to legislative outputs.

3. **Ethical governance:** Developing robust regulatory and ethical frameworks to ensure the responsible deployment of AI technologies, consistent with democratic values and fundamental rights. To operationalize these goals, a five-year digital transformation roadmap has been adopted. This roadmap includes the institutionalization of ethical directives for AI use, the establishment of oversight committees, and continuous performance reviews to align technological solutions with legislative needs.

Practical applications of artificial intelligence in the Bahraini Parliament.

The Council of Representatives has implemented several flagship projects that exemplify the practical utility of AI in a parliamentary setting:

- a) **Intelligent Legislative Information Systems.** The development of AI-powered platforms has enabled the automated indexing, retrieval, and analysis of legislative texts, parliamentary proposals, and committee reports. These systems ensure greater accessibility and facilitate knowledge-based decision-making by Members of Parliament (MPs).
- b) **The Parliamentary Counselor Platform.** This AI-based system acts as a virtual legislative advisor, providing real-time, data-driven responses to inquiries from MPs regarding existing laws, draft bills, and comparative legislation. Drawing from a comprehensive and continuously updated legal database, the platform reduces research burdens and enhances the quality of legislative debate.
- c) **AI in Plenary Management.** Digital tools supported by AI have been deployed to manage plenary session agendas, document deliberations, and track attendance and interventions. These tools reduce reliance on paper, enhance operational efficiency, and promote institutional transparency.
- d) **Decision-Support Systems.** AI-driven analytics are employed to assess the potential social, economic, and legal implications of proposed laws. By identifying patterns and projecting outcomes, these systems support a more evidence-based legislative process.

Capacity building and institutional readiness

Recognizing that the effectiveness of AI tools is contingent upon human capacity, the General Secretariat has prioritized training and development. Specialized workshops and educational programs have been organized to equip staff with the technical competencies required to operate and interpret AI systems. These initiatives not only ensure smoother implementation but also foster a culture of continuous innovation within the parliamentary apparatus. Moreover, periodic performance reviews are conducted to ensure alignment between AI tools and the actual operational needs of the Council. This iterative approach enhances institutional resilience and adaptability in a rapidly evolving technological landscape.

Ethical oversight and legal compliance

The deployment of AI in legislative settings raises critical questions of data privacy, algorithmic accountability, and democratic oversight. In response, the Council of Representatives has established a dedicated committee responsible for overseeing digital and AI initiatives. This body ensures adherence to ethical standards and compliance with national laws and international norms governing the use of emerging technologies in governance. By embedding ethical considerations into the design

and implementation of AI systems, the Council affirms its commitment to responsible innovation and democratic integrity.

Regional cooperation and global Dialogue

The Bahraini experience underscores the importance of inter-parliamentary cooperation in navigating the challenges and opportunities presented by AI. As a member of IPU, Bahrain actively seeks to exchange best practices, share knowledge, and collaborate on joint initiatives aimed at enhancing digital governance. Such cooperation is essential to building a global parliamentary community that is not only technologically advanced but also anchored in shared democratic values.

Conclusion

The Kingdom of Bahrain, through the proactive initiatives of its Council of Representatives, has emerged as a regional leader in the application of artificial intelligence within legislative processes. The integration of AI technologies has not only improved the efficiency, accessibility, and transparency of parliamentary operations but has also laid the groundwork for a more engaged and informed citizenry. As the digital landscape continues to evolve, the Council remains steadfast in its commitment to responsible innovation, institutional excellence, and participatory governance. The journey toward a technologically enabled parliamentary system is ongoing, and Bahrain stands ready to contribute to the global dialogue on how AI can best serve the ideals of democratic governance.

4. Accessibility of Parliament for Persons with Disabilities: The Imperative of Inclusive Legislative Processes in Sri Lanka. By *Kushani Rohanadeera, Secretary General of the Parliament of Sri Lanka*

Abstract

The participation of persons with disabilities in democratic processes is not merely a question of physical access but a matter of justice, representation, and the fulfillment of fundamental rights. This article explores the evolving legal, institutional, and procedural measures undertaken by the Parliament of Sri Lanka to ensure accessibility and inclusivity within its legislative framework. It critically examines the national context, challenges, and legislative developments that frame disability inclusion, highlighting ongoing efforts to institutionalize accessibility in parliamentary proceedings and committee structures. Drawing upon constitutional guarantees, statutory instruments, and international commitments, this article affirms that the inclusivity of persons with disabilities is essential to a resilient and representative democracy.

Introduction

The right to participate in the conduct of public affairs is a cornerstone of democratic governance. For too long, persons with disabilities have been denied effective access to legislative processes, resulting in their systemic exclusion from institutions meant to represent the totality of the citizenry. In Sri Lanka, the imperative to create a more accessible and inclusive Parliament has gained renewed prominence, coinciding with broader global commitments, such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), ratified by Sri Lanka in 2016, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 16, which emphasizes inclusive and participatory decision-making. In recognition of this, the Parliament of Sri Lanka has taken substantial steps to create a legislative environment where persons with disabilities can participate fully and equally in the democratic process. This article examines these measures within the constitutional, legislative, and administrative context of Sri Lanka.

Legal and constitutional framework

The foundation for disability rights in Sri Lanka is anchored in the Constitution of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, which guarantees equality and non-discrimination under Article 12(1). Moreover, Article 12(4) explicitly permits affirmative action to advance the interests of marginalized groups, including persons with disabilities. This provision has served as a constitutional gateway for the development of targeted policy interventions and legal instruments designed to promote disability inclusion. Key legislation includes the *Protection of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, No. 28 of 1996*, as amended by Act No. 33 of 2003. This statute provides for the formulation of national policies and programs, the promotion of accessibility, and the establishment of a National Council for Persons with Disabilities. Complementary provisions exist under the *Social Security Board Act (1996)*, *National Health Policy (1996)*, and *Ranaviruseva Act (1999)*, which address the health and welfare of disabled persons. Administrative directives, such as Public Administration Circular No. 3 of 1988, mandate a 3% employment quota in public service for qualified persons with disabilities. These legal frameworks provide a basis for integrating disability concerns into public life, yet the realization of these rights within parliamentary structures requires deliberate institutional commitment and systemic reform.

Statistical overview and policy gaps

According to the most recent statistics, 8.7% of Sri Lanka’s population—approximately 1.7 million individuals—live with some form of disability. A disproportionate number of them remain outside formal economic activity, with 74% reportedly uninvolved in any economic process. Equally troubling, 34% of children with disabilities have not received primary education, signaling a broader pattern of systemic exclusion. Gender-disaggregated data further reveal that females disproportionately experience disabilities related to vision and mobility. However, it is noteworthy that existing national data is considerably outdated, limiting evidence-based policymaking. Recognizing this, the 2025 national budget allocates LKR 100 million toward establishing a comprehensive identification system for persons with disabilities—an initiative critical to inclusive governance planning.

Institutional developments in parliamentary accessibility

Recent reforms within the Parliament of Sri Lanka illustrate an emergent paradigm shift towards inclusion. These measures are multifaceted and reflect a holistic understanding of accessibility, encompassing physical, communicative, procedural, and digital domains.

Physical accessibility enhancements

A comprehensive accessibility audit of the parliamentary complex was conducted in early 2023 with the support of the National Democratic Institute. Based on its findings, infrastructure upgrades—including the installation of ramps at main entrances, committee rooms, and improved elevator access—have been prioritized. Notably, committee rooms are strategically located on the first floor of the four-storeyed building, facilitating access for persons with limited mobility. A specially adapted seating area has been constructed in the parliamentary chamber for the nation’s first visually impaired Member of Parliament, marking a significant milestone in the history of political representation.

Communicative accessibility

In 2021, Sri Lanka became the first South Asian nation to introduce sign language interpretation for live parliamentary broadcasts. Budget speeches and other plenary sessions are now accessible to the hearing-impaired community, and the Parliament is actively working to institutionalize sign language interpretation for all official telecasts. The recruitment of a permanent sign language interpreter is underway to embed this capacity within the parliamentary structure. Efforts are also being made to produce parliamentary documents in accessible formats, including Braille versions of the Constitution, Standing Orders, and key legislative texts.

Digital and remote access

The digitization of parliamentary records and the transformation of the Parliament Library into a digital repository have enhanced access for persons with mobility impairments. Additionally, a high-resolution broadcasting system installed in committee rooms allows for hybrid sessions, ensuring that consultations and hearings are accessible through virtual platforms with integrated accessibility features.

Political participation and representation

The inclusion of a visually impaired Member of Parliament in the current legislature represents a paradigmatic shift in Sri Lanka's political culture. This appointment underscores the importance of not merely ensuring access to parliamentary infrastructure but also to political representation and leadership. In March 2025, the Parliamentary Caucus for Persons with Disabilities was formally inaugurated, chaired by the aforementioned visually impaired Member of Parliament, Hon. Sugath Wasantha de Silva. This caucus collaborates closely with the Disability Organizations Joint Front, a coalition of 30 disability-focused civil society organizations representing all major disability categories. Through this engagement, the Caucus has become a focal point for legislative advocacy and institutional reform.

Training and institutional sensitization

Recognizing that inclusion is as much a cultural endeavor as it is a structural one, the Parliament initiated capacity-building programs for its staff and Members of Parliament. A training manual was developed to support this process, emphasizing disability rights, inclusive language, and the accommodation of diverse needs within legislative practice. The Women Parliamentarians' Caucus has also played a vital role by organizing sensitization sessions in 2023 on disability inclusion, highlighting the intersection of gender and disability in legislative settings.

Challenges and future directions

Despite these commendable advancements, several obstacles persist:

- **Legacy Infrastructure:** Many state and historic parliamentary buildings require retrofitting to meet modern accessibility standards. Balancing heritage preservation with accessibility compliance remains a complex task.
- **Awareness Deficits:** Ongoing training and internal cultural change are essential to combat ableist attitudes and ensure that accessibility is seen as a fundamental right, not a charitable accommodation.
- **Budgetary Limitations:** The scaling of assistive technologies and infrastructural projects necessitates sustained financial commitments. Current allocations remain modest relative to long-term needs.
- **Political Inclusion:** Beyond physical access, political parties must proactively support the candidacy and election of persons with disabilities through inclusive nomination practices and campaign support structures.

Conclusion

Accessibility within legislative institutions is not a peripheral concern—it is a democratic imperative. The steps undertaken by the Parliament of Sri Lanka signal a commitment to ensuring that democratic governance is truly representative of all citizens. However, accessibility must not be treated as a finite goal but as an ongoing institutional ethos requiring continuous adaptation and innovation. In line with its constitutional obligations, international commitments, and the aspirations of its people, Sri Lanka continues its journey toward an inclusive Parliament. This journey, while incomplete, provides a model for legislative institutions globally. As members of the Inter-

Parliamentary Union, we collectively bear the responsibility to uphold the principle of universal democratic participation and to ensure that no citizen is left behind—least of all those whose voices have historically been the most silenced.

5. Ensuring Meaningful Public Participation in the Parliament of the Republic of South Africa

By Mr. Xolile George, Secretary to the Parliament of the Republic of South Africa.

Abstract

This article explores the constitutional imperative of meaningful public participation in the democratic processes of the Parliament of the Republic of South Africa. It traces the legal and jurisprudential foundations of participatory democracy, critically examines the institutional mechanisms implemented by Parliament to facilitate public involvement, and reflects on the challenges undermining inclusivity and efficacy. Drawing on case law, legislative frameworks, and practical examples, the article assesses Parliament's efforts to transform public participation from a procedural formality into a substantive democratic engagement, ultimately proposing a reform agenda aligned with constitutional values and the evolving socio-political landscape.

Introduction

The advent of democracy in South Africa in 1994 signalled the dismantling of an exclusionary political system rooted in apartheid and the inauguration of a constitutional order founded on human dignity, equality, and freedom. Among the animating principles of this new order was the establishment of a participatory democracy in which the governed are not merely subjects of legislation but active participants in its conception, formation, and oversight. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, anchors this participatory ethos in its text, compelling all spheres of government—particularly the national legislature—to facilitate public involvement in legislative and other processes. Over the past three decades, Parliament has developed and institutionalized a range of mechanisms aimed at operationalizing this constitutional obligation. However, persistent socio-economic disparities, digital divides, and administrative inefficiencies continue to impede the realization of genuinely inclusive and effective participation. This article examines the constitutional and jurisprudential bases for public participation, evaluates the extent to which Parliament's mechanisms fulfill this obligation, and identifies necessary reforms to ensure that public engagement is not only meaningful but transformative.

Constitutional and jurisprudential foundations of participatory democracy

Constitutional text and structure. The South African Constitution is both aspirational and operational: it delineates the structure of state institutions while embedding transformative objectives. Sections 59 and 72 of the Constitution impose a direct duty on the National Assembly (NA) and the National Council of Provinces (NCOP), respectively, to facilitate public involvement in legislative and other processes. Section 118 extends this obligation to provincial legislatures. These provisions are not hortatory; they impose a positive obligation on the legislature to actively create space for public engagement. The participatory imperative is reinforced by the constitutional values enshrined in section 1(d), which include a "multi-party system of democratic government, to ensure accountability, responsiveness and openness." Read together, these provisions establish a normative framework that renders public participation indispensable to legislative legitimacy and democratic accountability.

Constitutional court jurisprudence. The judiciary has played a pivotal role in shaping the contours of public participation. The seminal judgment in *Doctors for Life International v Speaker of the*

National Assembly 2006 (6) SA 416 (CC) articulated the standard for legislative involvement. The Constitutional Court held that “the duty to facilitate public involvement is a material part of the law-making process,” and that a failure to discharge this duty may render legislative acts unconstitutional. In *Matatiele Municipality v President of the RSA* 2007 (6) SA 477 (CC), the Court reiterated that the public must not be treated as passive observers but as active stakeholders whose inputs must be meaningfully considered. The Court emphasized that the quality, not merely the quantity, of participation is constitutionally relevant. Most recently, in *Mogale v Speaker of the National Assembly* 2023 (CC), the Court nullified legislation on grounds that the public consultation process had been perfunctory and exclusionary. These decisions underscore that the obligation to facilitate participation is substantive in nature and cannot be discharged by minimal procedural compliance.

Parliamentary mechanisms for public participation. Parliament has operationalized its constitutional mandate through a variety of institutional mechanisms aimed at inviting, processing, and incorporating public input into legislative and oversight activities.

Committee processes. Parliamentary committees are the primary locus for public engagement. Both the NA and NCOP Rules mandate public notification prior to the introduction of bills, allow for open calls for written submissions, and require public hearings. These provisions are not merely procedural; they serve to democratize legislative discourse. A notable example is the extensive consultation conducted on the National Health Insurance (NHI) Bill (2023), which included thousands of written submissions and nationwide hearings. Such processes exemplify the potential for committees to serve as platforms for inclusive legislative dialogue, though their effectiveness is often contingent on institutional capacity and public awareness.

Public petitions. The revised Petitions Framework (2016) establishes formal channels for citizens to submit grievances and requests directly to Parliament. Recent reforms include: the institutionalization of dedicated Petitions Committees in both Houses, a 60-day deadline for resolution, a feedback mechanism requiring Parliament to report outcomes to petitioners, and despite this progress, inconsistencies in response times and follow-up have been reported, undermining public confidence in the system’s efficacy.

Targeted outreach and interventions. Initiatives such as “Taking Parliament to the People” (NCOP) and sectoral dialogues with marginalized groups (e.g., women, youth, and persons with disabilities) are designed to bridge the spatial and social gaps that inhibit access. These efforts are commendable for decentralizing Parliament’s presence and enabling direct interaction with underrepresented constituencies. However, their success is often limited by resource constraints, logistical challenges, and varying degrees of community preparedness.

Digital access and media. The expansion of parliamentary broadcasting, now spanning 18 television channels and digital platforms, has significantly enhanced visibility and access. Hybrid sittings introduced post-COVID-19 and following the 2022 parliamentary fire have normalized virtual participation. Social media outreach and public education campaigns aim to foster civic literacy and mobilize digital engagement. While these tools have widened participation, they risk deepening the divide between digitally literate urban populations and rural or marginalized groups with limited internet access.

Constituency offices and democracy development. Members of Parliament receive constituency allowances to support localized engagement, while Provincial Democracy Offices (PDOs) function as grassroots hubs for civic education and participation. In principle, these structures enhance vertical accountability and facilitate direct input from constituents. However, concerns persist regarding partisanship, resource limitations, and inconsistent levels of community engagement across regions.

Challenges to meaningful participation. Despite commendable efforts, several systemic impediments compromise the inclusiveness and impact of public participation.

- **Uneven access:** Rural and economically disadvantaged communities often lack the infrastructure, information, or confidence to engage with formal parliamentary processes.
- **Tokenistic engagement:** In some instances, public participation is treated as a box-ticking exercise, with limited evidence that submissions materially influence legislative outcomes.
- **Institutional capacity:** Budgetary constraints, staff shortages, and competing priorities limit Parliament's ability to scale and institutionalize participatory mechanisms.
- **Transparency and feedback:** A lack of transparent reporting on how public submissions are incorporated into final legislation diminishes the credibility of the process.

Reform agenda for the seventh parliament (2024–2029). Recognizing these challenges, the Seventh Parliament has articulated a set of reform priorities to recalibrate and strengthen the participatory framework:

- **Institutional strengthening of constituency offices:** Transforming these into non-partisan civic access points capable of facilitating continuous engagement and education.
- **Technological innovation:** Introducing artificial intelligence and data analytics to categorize and synthesize public submissions, enabling more responsive legislative analysis.
- **Enhanced monitoring and evaluation:** Developing metrics to track the integration of public input in legislation and oversight, thereby improving accountability and feedback.
- **Inclusive digital infrastructure:** Expanding connectivity and digital literacy initiatives to bridge the urban-rural divide and democratize virtual participation.

Conclusion

Public participation is not an aspirational ideal but a constitutional imperative essential to the legitimacy of South Africa's democratic order. The jurisprudence of the Constitutional Court makes clear that this obligation is substantive, continuous, and central to the integrity of the legislative process. While the South African Parliament has made notable advances in institutionalizing participatory mechanisms, persistent structural inequalities and operational limitations risk reducing participation to a procedural formality. A renewed commitment—grounded in constitutional principle and responsive to evolving societal needs—is required to ensure that Parliament remains a truly inclusive and deliberative space. In doing so, the democratic project can be sustained, not only through representation but through the active and meaningful involvement of the people in whose name governance is exercised.

6. The Rule of Law Dialogue in the Netherlands: Lessons from the Dutch State Commission on the Rule of Law. *By dr. Remco Nehmelman, Secretary General of the Senate of the Netherlands*

Abstract

In 2024, the Dutch *Staatscommissie rechtsstaat*—State Commission on the Rule of Law—published its seminal report titled *"The Broken Promise of the Rule of Law."* Commissioned jointly by all three branches of the Dutch state, the report constitutes a foundational intervention into contemporary democratic theory and practice. At its core lies a sobering diagnosis: while the Netherlands maintains a formally robust constitutional democracy, the lived reality for many citizens—particularly those in vulnerable socio-economic positions—reveals a profound disconnection between legal norms and governmental practice. This article analyzes the report's findings, the structural and jurisprudential critiques it articulates, and the Commission's transformative proposals, with special emphasis on the innovative concept of the *Rule of Law Dialogue* as a civic practice. It argues that the Dutch experience offers valuable insights for any liberal democracy committed to strengthening the legitimacy, accessibility, and resilience of the rule of law.

Introduction

The rule of law (*rechtsstaat*) has long stood as a defining principle of Dutch constitutionalism. Anchored in the *Grondwet* (Constitution of the Kingdom of the Netherlands), and informed by a historical culture of legal rationalism and consensus-oriented governance, the Dutch state has often been viewed as a paragon of legality, equity, and institutional integrity. Yet, this reputation has in recent years been gravely tested. High-profile administrative failures—most notoriously, the *toeslagenaffaire* (childcare benefits scandal) and the Groningen gas extraction crisis—have laid bare the fragility of institutional trust, the precariousness of citizens' legal protections, and the latent asymmetries of power in state-citizen relations. It is in this context that the *Staatscommissie rechtsstaat* was constituted. Unprecedented in both its mandate and its institutional genesis, the Commission emerged from a rare tripartite initiative involving the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government. Its principal mission: to evaluate the functional state of the rule of law in the Netherlands and to formulate structural reforms capable of re-anchoring it in the lived experiences and expectations of the citizenry. This article explores the constitutional, administrative, and normative implications of the Commission's findings, situating them within broader debates on legal accountability, democratic inclusion, and state legitimacy.

The Institutional genesis of the commission

The decision to convene the State Commission in 2022 was itself a jurisprudentially and constitutionally significant moment. Unlike traditional parliamentary or executive inquiries, the Commission's tripartite composition signaled an acknowledgment of systemic failure across all arms of state. It represented a constitutional moment of introspection: an acceptance that the rule of law in the Netherlands was under strain not merely due to isolated administrative errors but owing to deep-seated structural distortions in the relationship between citizen and state. The primary catalysts for the Commission's establishment were two socio-political catastrophes. First, the childcare benefits scandal, in which more than 35,000 families—predominantly of immigrant descent—were falsely accused of fraud, triggering devastating personal and economic consequences. Second, the Groningen earthquake controversy, where extractive practices sanctioned by the state led to widespread property damage, with affected citizens reporting years of governmental indifference. Both events revealed a crisis of institutional empathy, procedural fairness, and democratic

responsiveness. They underscored the Commission’s central thesis: the rule of law, as experienced by many citizens, has become an empty promise.

The Rule of Law as a threefold democratic promise

A core conceptual innovation of the Commission lies in its articulation of the rule of law not as a static legal doctrine, but as a **threefold civic promise**:

- **Protection from the State:** The classic liberal tenet—rooted in *Montesquieuian* separation of powers—that the state must be restrained from arbitrary or abusive action against individuals.
- **Influence over the State:** A democratic imperative ensuring that citizens retain meaningful participatory agency in shaping the laws and policies that govern them.
- **Support by the State:** A social justice dimension recognizing the state's obligation to empower citizens, especially the vulnerable, to participate fully in public life.

This tripartite framing reflects an evolution in the conceptual understanding of the *rechtsstaat*—from a minimalistic focus on legal restraint to a normative architecture that integrates rights, representation, and social solidarity. However, the Commission’s diagnosis is clear: while this model is constitutionally affirmed, its practical realization is deeply uneven and increasingly elusive.

Structural Reforms: ten proposals for realignment

To address this disconnect, the Commission advanced **ten structural reform proposals** directed at key institutional actors. Several merit particular attention for their jurisprudential and institutional ramifications.

A. Rule of Law Governance and Oversight

The recommendation to institutionalize an **annual State of the Rule of Law Debate**, alongside the creation of a **Rule of Law Planning Bureau**, represents a call to entrench reflexivity in governance. This reflects a Habermasian ideal of deliberative democracy—where legitimacy derives not solely from electoral authorization but from continuous justification and public reasoning.

B. Empowering frontline agencies: The “Red Card” Mechanism

The Commission proposes empowering implementing agencies—such as social services and municipal officers—to issue a *red card* when asked to enforce policies that are legally incoherent, administratively unfeasible, or ethically unjust. This initiative, though operationally novel, is grounded in a broader principle of **constitutional subsidiarity**—that legality must be tested not only in courts but also in the lived practices of governance.

C. Simplification of welfare and legal systems

The Commission critiques the excessive complexity and punitive design of current welfare regimes, which disincentivize access and criminalize error. The proposed simplification aims to restore **legal intelligibility**, a fundamental tenet of legal certainty (*rechtszekerheid*), and ensure that law remains a tool of empowerment rather than exclusion.

D. Access to justice and legal aid

Central to the Commission's vision is the **restoration of access to justice**, through reinvestment in legal aid, reduction of procedural costs, and reinvigoration of community legal infrastructure. These measures resonate with the jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights, which underscores that rights without remedies are illusory.

The Rule of Law dialogue: from legalism to co-Creation

Perhaps the most transformative of the Commission's proposals is the institutionalization of a **Rule of Law Dialogue**: a participatory, deliberative practice involving all strata of governance and society. Unlike conventional legal debates or academic symposia, this dialogue is intended to be **experiential, egalitarian, and embedded in community life**. Its methodological basis draws on restorative justice, deliberative democracy, and public administration theory.

Key recommendations include:

- Hosting local dialogues in community centers and town halls, not only in political capitals.
- Ensuring the inclusion of *experiential experts*: individuals who have directly navigated the legal or welfare systems.
- Integrating the outcomes of these dialogues into legislative drafting, implementation monitoring, and judicial review processes. By bridging the epistemic gap between state actors and citizens, especially those marginalized by systemic complexity, the Dialogue aims to reconstitute public trust in legal institutions. It affirms that the *rechtsstaat* is not a monologue of power but a **polyphony of voices**, co-constructing legitimacy.

Shared responsibility in democratic constitutionalism

The Commission's findings culminate in a normative reminder: **the rule of law is a shared civic enterprise**. While state institutions bear a special burden to ensure legality, fairness, and equity, citizens themselves have responsibilities—to participate, to engage, to hold power to account, and to defend the rights of others. Importantly, the Commission shifts the rule of law from a noun to a **political verb**—a practice that requires perpetual renewal through vigilance, empathy, and dialogue. In this, it echoes postwar constitutional theorists such as Böckenförde, who warned that liberal democracies live by presuppositions they cannot guarantee without active civic virtue.

Conclusion

The Dutch case is not idiosyncratic. Across liberal democracies, declining institutional trust, administrative opacity, and legal estrangement pose existential threats to the rule of law. The *Staatscommissie rechtsstaat* provides a powerful template for confronting these crises—not through technocratic fixes alone, but by rehumanizing governance, restoring procedural justice, and cultivating a democratic ethos of mutual responsibility. The report is, ultimately, a call to repair. It invites us to reconceive the rule of law not merely as an abstract ideal, but as a **social contract in motion**—renewed with each act of public listening, each fair decision, and each moment of trust restored. *"The least I expect from government is not to make things worse. But they did."* – Citizen testimony, Rule of Law Dialogue. This poignant statement encapsulates the urgency of the

moment. It demands that we build states where law protects, not punishes; where government is an ally, not an adversary; and where democracy begins not in statutes, but in shared human dignity.

7. Social Media Management in Parliaments: Institutional Responsibility, Democratic Engagement, and Strategic Communication. *By dr. Georg Kleemann, Deputy Secretary-General, Bundesrat of the Federal Republic of Germany*

Abstract

The advent of social media has transformed the communicative landscape of parliamentary institutions. No longer confined to the mediation of traditional press outlets, parliaments now possess the unprecedented capacity to address citizens directly. This article reflects on the institutional implications of social media use within parliamentary contexts, focusing on its normative objectives, communicative strategies, and operational challenges. Drawing from the experience of the German Bundesrat, the analysis explores best practices for institutional engagement, safeguards for neutrality, and strategies to mitigate misinformation while preserving democratic integrity.

Introduction

In contemporary democratic governance, the credibility of parliaments depends not only on their legislative and oversight functions but also on their capacity to communicate transparently, inclusively, and responsively with the public. Social media has emerged as both an opportunity and a challenge in this regard. As parliaments navigate the digital public sphere, questions arise concerning platform selection, content strategy, moderation of interactions, and the preservation of institutional neutrality. This article provides an academic and praxis-oriented analysis of these themes. It argues that social media, when properly institutionalized and professionally managed, offers a vital channel for democratic legitimacy, especially in times marked by increasing political polarization and widespread misinformation.

The normative mandate of parliamentary communication in the digital age

Parliaments are not political actors in the partisan sense; rather, they are democratic institutions whose primary communicative mandate is to inform, educate, and engage citizens in a balanced, fact-based, and politically neutral manner. Accordingly, the digital presence of parliaments must not be confused with that of individual members of parliament (MPs) or political parties.

Social media, in this context, must serve the following constitutional objectives:

- **Transparency:** Enhancing public visibility of legislative processes.
- **Accountability:** Documenting and communicating institutional actions and decisions.
- **Public engagement:** Facilitating structured and respectful citizen input.
- **Democratic education:** Fostering understanding of institutional roles and parliamentary procedures.

These aims, when pursued collectively, uphold the legitimacy of representative democracy and foster trust in public institutions.

Strategic objectives and operationalisation in the Bundesrat

The German Bundesrat has adopted a strategic approach to its social media presence, guided by the principles of professionalism, clarity, and political neutrality. The objective is not mere visibility, but relevance—achieved through fact-based, accessible, and regular communication.

Informing and educating the public

The Bundesrat disseminates content on legislative procedures, plenary agendas, committee deliberations, and resolutions. For example, real-time coverage of plenary sessions through live tweets provides direct insight into institutional functioning. Similarly, short videos, infographics, and explanatory posts enhance understanding of complex policy issues and procedural mechanisms. Moreover, the Bundesrat's communication strategy includes coverage of its activities in the field of inter-parliamentary diplomacy, thereby illustrating the international dimension of its work.

Creating a culture of dialogue

Social media's dialogical potential distinguishes it from conventional forms of communication. Parliaments, as institutions, must tread carefully in this domain, balancing openness to feedback with the practical demands of moderation and the constitutional imperative of neutrality. Although the Bundesrat currently does not deploy interactive formats such as live chats or Q&A sessions, this remains a subject of ongoing evaluation. The essential precondition for adopting such features is the availability of adequate human and technical resources to ensure professional and impartial moderation.

Institutional challenges and normative constraints

Political neutrality

The most fundamental constraint on institutional social media usage is the requirement of political neutrality. Official parliamentary accounts speak on behalf of the institution as a whole, not of any specific political faction. Consequently, all content must be balanced, refrain from partisan language, and represent the collective institutional position. This requirement may at times limit the communicative appeal of content, particularly on platforms where emotive and polarizing messages tend to attract greater engagement. Nevertheless, the preservation of institutional dignity and legitimacy must take precedence over metrics of popularity.

Resource-Intensive engagement and moderation

Interactive engagement on social media requires significant investment in staff training, real-time monitoring, and moderation protocols. Without such infrastructure, engagement may lead to reputational risk, particularly in the face of hostile or manipulative user interactions. This is why the Bundesrat has, at present, refrained from implementing open comment sections or live interactive features. Any future adoption of such mechanisms would be contingent on the ability to guarantee adherence to professional standards and constitutional values.

Combating misinformation and hate speech

Parliaments are not immune to the broader challenges of the digital information ecosystem. False narratives, misrepresentations of legislative processes, and hate speech are daily occurrences on social media platforms. Parliamentary institutions can counteract such trends by becoming reliable sources of verified information. Proactive communication, clear messaging, and direct reference to

primary documents are essential tools in this regard. Additionally, cooperation with fact-checking organizations and academic institutions may enhance credibility and broaden reach.

Platform strategy and audience reach

A major strategic question is whether parliamentary institutions should diversify their presence across multiple platforms or consolidate their efforts on selected ones. The Bundesrat is currently active on X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, and YouTube, with over 175,000 followers on X and 100,000 on Instagram. Yet questions persist: Should parliaments venture onto more informal platforms such as TikTok or Threads? What are the risks of trivialization, and how can they be mitigated? These are not merely technical questions—they implicate the public image and communicative ethos of the parliamentary institution. The challenge lies in translating institutional content into formats that resonate with different demographic groups, particularly younger audiences, without compromising the formality and credibility that underpin parliamentary legitimacy.

Social media as a tool for democratic resilience

Social media, when used judiciously, is not merely a communication tool but a mechanism of democratic resilience. In times of populist discontent and declining trust in representative institutions, parliaments can use social media to: demonstrate procedural integrity, debunk disinformation, humanize institutional work and invite participation in democratic life. However, this presupposes a strategic vision, normative clarity, and a robust professional framework.

Conclusion

The institutional use of social media by parliaments is a dynamic and evolving field. It offers considerable potential to strengthen democratic legitimacy but is fraught with ethical, operational, and constitutional challenges. The experience of the Bundesrat illustrates that social media strategy must align with institutional values: professionalism, neutrality, accessibility, and integrity. Future developments should include deeper inter-parliamentary exchange of best practices, investment in professional communication teams, and structured dialogue with digital platform providers on standards and transparency. In this way, parliaments can ensure that their digital presence is not merely reactive, but normative—anchored in democratic purpose, informed by constitutional obligations, and driven by civic engagement.

8. Accessibility of Parliament for Disabled People: A Case Study of the UK House of Lords

By Ms. Chloe Mawson, Clerk Assistant, House of Lords, United Kingdom

Abstract

The integration of accessibility principles into the structures, procedures, and culture of legislative bodies remains a critical challenge and an evolving imperative. This article explores the specific case of the United Kingdom House of Lords and its efforts to ensure accessibility for disabled members and visitors, against the backdrop of a heritage parliamentary estate and evolving understandings of inclusivity. Through this study, the complexities of adapting physical, procedural, and digital infrastructures are examined, alongside the socio-legal considerations of inclusivity in a non-salaried, life-tenured legislative chamber.

Introduction

The United Kingdom House of Lords, as the upper chamber of the UK Parliament, is distinguished not only by its constitutional and legislative functions but also by the unique demographic and architectural characteristics that frame its institutional context. Membership is largely for life, resulting in a notably senior cohort—the average age being 70—with a consequential increase in the likelihood of disability among its members. Moreover, the physical setting of the House—the Palace of Westminster—poses structural limitations to accessibility owing to its status as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Within these parameters, the House has engaged in ongoing institutional reform aimed at making parliamentary participation accessible to all members, regardless of disability, while preserving the integrity of its historic premises.

Institutional context: Membership and the built environment

The age profile of the House of Lords underscores the necessity of a comprehensive and sustained commitment to disability access. While the House does not maintain formal statistics on disabled members, the presence of wheelchair users, visually and hearing-impaired individuals, and members requiring complex medical support points to a constituency with diverse and significant accessibility needs. The principal structural challenge lies in the Palace of Westminster itself, a 19th-century building whose historical and architectural significance restricts the scope and nature of physical modifications. In response, Parliament has initiated the *Restoration and Renewal Programme*—a long-term infrastructure project mandated not only to restore and preserve the building but also to embed modern standards of accessibility. This includes step-free access, accessible lifts, and inclusive workplace design, marking a shift towards proactive institutional design rather than reactive accommodation.

Disability support in practice: from survey to action

A. Identification of impairments

Recognising the deficit in data regarding the needs of its members, the House conducted a voluntary survey in 2023. Among the respondents, 67% identified as having hearing impairments and 17% as visually impaired. This data provided the basis for targeted responses, including technical reviews of chamber and committee room acoustics and the systematic auditing of hearing loop systems by the

Broadcasting Unit. Personalised consultations have also been introduced to facilitate fine-tuning of assistive hearing devices for members.

B. Assistive technology and accessible documentation

To improve engagement with parliamentary business, essential procedural documents and library briefings are increasingly produced in larger text formats. These efforts are part of a wider strategy to ensure that engagement with the legislative process does not depend on sensory ability alone.

Institutional Adjustments: Workplace and Procedural Innovations

A. Workplace adjustments and physical modifications

Since 2018, the House of Lords has institutionalised workplace adjustments as a standard aspect of its inclusivity agenda. The Occupational Health Department, jointly operated by both Houses of Parliament, evaluates requests for adjustments and oversees implementation. Modifications include provision of ergonomic equipment, height-adjustable desks, and restructured office layouts to ensure proximity to accessible toilets and pass-reader access for wheelchair users.

Notably, within the Chamber itself, three designated wheelchair spaces have been equipped with lowered microphones to allow for full participation in debates. These are centrally located to preserve the integrity of parliamentary discourse through visual and spatial inclusion.

B. Remote participation and procedural flexibility

The COVID-19 pandemic catalysed the introduction of remote participation mechanisms, which have since been institutionalised to accommodate members unable to attend in person due to long-term disabilities. This includes the right to speak and vote remotely, governed by Standing Orders. A significant development in this context was the decision of the Procedure and Privileges Committee to allow members using specialist breathing equipment to have assistants read speeches on their behalf—overturning a Standing Order dating back to 1707. This procedural evolution reflects a jurisprudential understanding of equality that transcends formal presence and embraces the principle of effective participation.

Financial support for disabled members

Given that membership of the House of Lords is not considered employment and most members do not receive a salary, the question of financial support for disabled members warrants particular attention. Members may claim a daily allowance and travel reimbursement; however, those with disabilities may apply for supplementary expenses through the *Additional Support Group*. Applications are anonymised to preserve privacy, and each case is adjudicated individually—striking a balance between need-based support and the maintenance of member dignity.

Digital accessibility and assistive services

The Parliamentary Digital Service has developed a suite of accessibility tools, including text-to-speech and speech-recognition software, to enable disabled members and staff to interact effectively

with digital platforms. These tools are complemented by training initiatives and technical support, ensuring that digital literacy and inclusivity co-evolve within Parliament's technological ecosystem.

Cultural and network-based support: ParliAble and Beyond

Parliament's six Workplace Equality Networks (WENs) function as socio-professional affinity groups that cultivate inclusivity through advocacy, peer support, and education. *ParliAble*, the disability-focused WEN, plays a critical role in creating an accessible institutional culture. Its activities range from organising British Sign Language (BSL) workshops to developing managerial toolkits on neurodiverse conditions such as dyslexia and ADHD. These efforts embed a holistic approach to disability inclusion that extends beyond physical access and encompasses cognitive and psychological dimensions.

Public access and inclusive visitor experience

Accessibility initiatives have also extended to non-members. For visitors with mobility impairments, Parliament ensures step-free routes, accessible lifts, and on-site wheelchair provision. Quiet rooms and ear-defenders cater to neurodivergent visitors. Subtitling of proceedings in both Houses represents a critical step in improving public access to legislative discourse. The House of Commons Modernisation Committee is set to review further improvements in 2025, demonstrating a forward-looking institutional commitment to access.

Accessibility in Parliamentary oversight: the Autism Act 2009 Committee

Parliamentary oversight mechanisms are also being rendered more accessible. The House of Lords' special inquiry committee on the Autism Act 2009 integrated accessibility principles into its evidence-gathering processes. This included easy-read versions of official documents and witness guidance tailored for neurodivergent participants, setting a benchmark for inclusive scrutiny in legislative oversight.

Conclusion

The House of Lords presents a compelling case of institutional adaptation in the face of legal, architectural, and procedural constraints. Its initiatives reflect an evolving constitutional and administrative ethos that seeks to reconcile tradition with the imperative of inclusion. Accessibility, in this context, is not merely an infrastructural concern but a fundamental principle of democratic legitimacy. As parliaments worldwide confront similar challenges, the House of Lords' case offers both a model and a set of cautionary lessons on the complexities of realising disability rights in heritage legislative environments.

General remarks

1. The Egyptian Experience in youth participation: *institutionalizing generational representation*

The Egyptian model, as presented by Mr. Mahmoud Etman, exemplifies a comprehensive approach to embedding youth participation within parliamentary structures. Through a strategic combination of constitutional guarantees, specialized training programs, institutional support, and international outreach, Egypt has created a robust framework for fostering intergenerational political engagement. This approach positions youth involvement in legislative processes as not only a mechanism to enhance the representativeness of democratic systems but also as a long-term investment in the sustainability and adaptability of governance. The Egyptian experience demonstrates how a parliamentary system can integrate younger generations into decision-making processes, ensuring that governance remains relevant and forward-looking. Other jurisdictions seeking to bridge the generational divide in their political institutions can draw significant lessons from Egypt's model, particularly its emphasis on youth empowerment in parliamentary functions.

2. Youth empowerment in Iraq's Parliamentary system: *a democratic imperative*

The trajectory of youth empowerment within Iraq's parliamentary system offers crucial insights for both national and comparative constitutional development. As Mr. Safwan Bashir Al-Gergeri astutely observes, youth participation in parliamentary processes is not simply a demographic adjustment, but rather a fundamental democratic imperative. When adequately supported, young parliamentarians bring fresh perspectives that contribute to dynamic, equitable, and future-oriented policymaking. For a democracy to remain vibrant and forward-thinking, it is essential not only to accommodate the youth but also to actively empower them. Ensuring that the voices of young citizens are represented in legislative bodies and leadership positions fosters inclusivity, strengthens legitimacy, and bolsters the resilience of democratic institutions. While Iraq's experience is still evolving, it offers a promising framework for other nations seeking to empower younger generations in formal political structures.

3. Bahrain's Integration of Artificial Intelligence in Parliamentary Processes

The Kingdom of Bahrain has emerged as a regional leader in integrating artificial intelligence within legislative processes through the proactive initiatives of its Council of Representatives. By leveraging AI technologies, Bahrain has enhanced the efficiency, accessibility, and transparency of its parliamentary operations. This integration has also paved the way for a more engaged and informed citizenry, setting the stage for future innovations in governance. As the digital landscape continues to evolve, Bahrain remains committed to responsible innovation, striving for institutional excellence and participatory governance. The Kingdom's efforts highlight the potential of AI to serve as a tool for strengthening democratic ideals, offering a model for how technological advancements can be harnessed to support democratic governance.

4. Sri Lanka's Commitment to Legislative Accessibility and Inclusivity

The concept of accessibility within legislative institutions is fundamental to the health of a democracy, and Sri Lanka's Parliament demonstrates a commitment to this principle. By focusing on improving accessibility, Sri Lanka affirms its dedication to ensuring that governance is truly representative of all

citizens. However, accessibility should not be seen as a one-time goal but rather an ongoing ethos that requires continuous adaptation and innovation. In accordance with its constitutional obligations, international commitments, and the aspirations of its people, Sri Lanka's Parliament continues to evolve towards greater inclusivity. This process, though still in progress, provides a valuable model for legislative bodies worldwide. The global community, as represented by the Inter-Parliamentary Union, bears the collective responsibility to uphold the principle of universal democratic participation, ensuring that all citizens, particularly marginalized groups, are represented and have a voice in the legislative process.

5. Public Participation in South Africa's democratic framework

In South Africa, public participation in the legislative process is not merely an aspirational goal but a constitutional imperative that underpins the legitimacy of the nation's democratic system. The Constitutional Court's jurisprudence underscores the substantive and continuous nature of this obligation. While South Africa has made significant strides in institutionalizing participatory mechanisms, structural inequalities and operational challenges remain, threatening to reduce public involvement to a mere formality. To sustain democracy, a renewed commitment to active and meaningful participation is required. This commitment must be grounded in constitutional principles and responsive to the evolving needs of society. Ensuring that public participation remains a central feature of South Africa's legislative process is vital to the integrity and resilience of its democratic institutions.

6. The Dutch Case: *restoring procedural justice and rehumanizing governance*

The Dutch experience, as exemplified by the Staatscommissie rechtsstaat, highlights the growing threats to the rule of law, including declining institutional trust, administrative opacity, and legal estrangement. The report offers a compelling framework for addressing these challenges, emphasizing the need to rehumanize governance and restore procedural justice. It calls for a reconceptualization of the rule of law not merely as an abstract ideal but as a social contract that is constantly renewed through public engagement, fair decision-making, and the restoration of trust in government. The report's central message is clear: governance should be protective rather than punitive, and democracy should be grounded in shared human dignity. This ethos underscores the importance of restoring the relationship between the state and its citizens, especially in light of growing disillusionment with institutional mechanisms.

7. Social Media in legislative institutions: *strengthening democratic legitimacy*

The institutional use of social media by legislative bodies presents both opportunities and challenges in the quest to strengthen democratic legitimacy. The Bundesrat's experience demonstrates that social media strategies must be aligned with institutional values such as professionalism, neutrality, accessibility, and integrity. Moving forward, legislative bodies should invest in professional communication teams, foster inter-parliamentary exchanges on best practices, and engage in structured dialogues with digital platform providers to establish clear standards for transparency and accountability. These efforts ensure that social media engagement is not merely a reactive tool, but a normative one, deeply rooted in democratic principles and informed by constitutional obligations.

8. The House of Lords: *adapting to legal, architectural, and procedural constraints*

The House of Lords provides a compelling example of institutional adaptation in response to legal, architectural, and procedural constraints. Its initiatives reflect an evolving constitutional ethos that seeks to reconcile tradition with the necessity of inclusion. Accessibility in this context is not merely an infrastructural issue, but a core principle of democratic legitimacy. The House of Lords' approach offers both a model and important lessons for other parliaments as they confront similar challenges. The institution's ongoing efforts to make legislative environments more inclusive highlight the complexities of realizing disability rights in heritage legislative settings, providing valuable insights for the broader parliamentary community.

In summary, the experiences outlined in these case studies—spanning Egypt, Iraq, Bahrain, Sri Lanka, South Africa, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom—demonstrate the importance of adapting democratic processes to contemporary challenges. Whether through fostering youth participation, integrating technology, ensuring accessibility, or enhancing public participation, each nation's approach offers valuable lessons for strengthening the legitimacy, inclusivity, and resilience of democratic institutions worldwide.

Summary in English

This analytical study offers a comprehensive examination of various international approaches to enhancing democratic inclusivity and fostering the participation of marginalized groups in parliamentary processes. Through a series of case studies drawn from diverse jurisdictions, the articles explore pivotal themes such as youth engagement, disability inclusion, the integration of technological advancements, and the evolving role of social media within legislative contexts.

- One article critically explores Egypt's institutional strategies aimed at facilitating meaningful youth participation in parliamentary affairs, specifically within the Egyptian Senate. The paper scrutinizes the constitutional frameworks that underpin youth representation, evaluating the capacity-building initiatives designed to empower young parliamentarians. By assessing Egypt's approach to enhancing youth involvement in both legislative and oversight functions, the study underscores the country's evolving democratic renewal efforts, the promotion of intergenerational political engagement, and the long-term sustainability of governance structures. The article contends that Egypt's model provides valuable lessons for other democracies striving to address generational divides and foster inclusive governance.
- Another article examines the role of youth within Iraq's Council of Representatives, emphasizing youth participation as a critical element for democratic renewal and political inclusivity. Drawing on empirical data from Iraq's last five parliamentary cycles, the paper analyzes demographic trends in youth representation, identifies systemic barriers to effective participation, and offers recommendations for fostering a legislative process that is both age-balanced and gender-inclusive. The article stresses that empowering young parliamentarians is not merely a demographic adjustment but a democratic imperative, essential to ensuring dynamic, forward-looking policymaking.
- A third article investigates the integration of artificial intelligence into Bahrain's legislative operations. The paper evaluates the Council of Representatives' efforts to leverage AI technologies to enhance parliamentary efficiency, accessibility, and transparency. Situated within the broader context of Bahrain's national digital strategy, the study explores how AI applications have facilitated participatory democracy and institutional transparency. The article further considers the ethical frameworks and regional cooperation necessary for the responsible deployment of AI in parliamentary contexts, emphasizing the need to balance technological innovation with democratic values.
- Another article focuses on the integration of persons with disabilities into Sri Lanka's parliamentary processes, assessing the legal, institutional, and procedural measures implemented to ensure accessibility. The paper examines constitutional mandates and international commitments driving these efforts, asserting that disability inclusion is not merely a matter of physical access but a fundamental requirement for a resilient and representative democracy. The study highlights Sri Lanka's evolving practices in disability inclusion and provides valuable insights into global trends in legislative accessibility.
- A further article explores the constitutional obligation of public participation within South Africa's parliamentary system. It traces the legal and jurisprudential foundations of participatory democracy, evaluating institutional mechanisms designed to facilitate public involvement. The paper critically assesses the structural challenges that undermine meaningful participation and proposes a reform agenda to better align parliamentary practices with constitutional values. By drawing on case law and legislative frameworks, the article argues that South Africa's efforts to

transform public participation into substantive democratic engagement are crucial for maintaining the legitimacy of its democratic institutions.

- A pivotal contribution to the study is an analysis of the 2024 report by the Dutch Staatscommissie rechtsstaat (State Commission on the Rule of Law), which critiques the gap between legal norms and citizens' lived experiences, particularly those in vulnerable socio-economic positions. Commissioned by all three branches of the Dutch government, the report calls for comprehensive reforms to enhance the legitimacy, accessibility, and resilience of the rule of law. The article delves into the commission's findings and proposals, including the concept of the "Rule of Law Dialogue" as a civic practice, highlighting its potential to restore public trust and fortify democratic governance.
- The impact of social media on parliamentary communication is the subject of another article, which explores its transformative role within the German Bundesrat. The paper examines how social media has altered the dynamics between parliaments and citizens, providing new opportunities for direct engagement. It reflects on the operational challenges parliaments face in maintaining neutrality, mitigating misinformation, and safeguarding democratic integrity through digital platforms. Drawing on best practices from the Bundesrat, the article offers strategies for incorporating social media into parliamentary communication while ensuring adherence to institutional values and constitutional obligations.
- Finally, an article on the UK House of Lords addresses efforts to ensure accessibility for disabled members and visitors within a historic parliamentary environment. The paper examines the challenges of adapting the physical, procedural, and digital infrastructures of a non-salaried, life-tenured legislative chamber. It highlights the socio-legal considerations involved in achieving inclusivity within such a heritage institution, offering insights into broader accessibility challenges faced by legislative bodies worldwide.

So, these articles provide a rich and diverse array of case studies that explore the intersection of constitutional law, democratic practices, and institutional innovation within parliamentary contexts. They collectively underscore the importance of inclusivity, technological advancement, and public engagement as fundamental components for strengthening democratic governance globally. Each case study offers valuable insights that may inform the efforts of other nations and regions seeking to foster more inclusive, transparent, and resilient democratic institutions.