

Parliament and the Democratic Process in Ghana's Fourth Republic: An Appraisal

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Abstract

Ghana's fourth republican constitution created a hybrid parliamentary and presidential system of government, making parliament an integral part of the democratic and governance systems. Parliament since then has kept a watch over the performance of the Executive, which controls the public services, to ensure that the implementation of public policy conforms to the approved developmental agenda of the state and expenditure incurred is in accordance with parliamentary authorisations. The aim of this paper therefore is an attempt to appraise the contribution of parliament in the democratisation process of Ghana's fourth republic. The paper utilized a combination of qualitative strategies in the data collection processes. Specifically, data for the analyses contained in this paper was based on interviews conducted with officials and stakeholders in the democratization process, participant observation, review of media reports, and review of Hansards obtained from the office of parliament. A conclusion drawn about the functions of Parliament is the creeping effect of ultra-majoritarian politics which enhances the power of the Executive to determine the outcome of the legislative process by mobilizing the majority seats his party controls in Parliament to get his Bills passed into law.

Keywords: *Parliament, Democratisation, Constitution, Fourth Republic, Ghana*

Introduction

The Fourth Republic of Ghana was inaugurated on January 7, 1993 at the Accra International Conference Center. On the same day, the First Session of the First Parliament was also inaugurated. This Parliament started its life facing a crisis of legitimacy. The New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the other opposition parties boycotted the parliamentary elections after participating in the presidential election; therefore they were not represented in the first parliament. As a result, the first parliament became a de facto one-party Parliament. Chapter Ten (10) of the 1992 Constitution is dedicated to Parliament. This organ of government is vested with legislative powers of the State, which is to be exercised in accordance with the Constitution. This legislative power is exercised by passing of Bills, which must be assented to by the President to become laws. The Constitution broadly assigns to Parliament the key democratic functions of representation, policy/law making, overseeing the

executive, constituency service, and political recruitment. As such, parliament is expected to play a key role in protecting the rights and liberties of the citizenry, ensuring governmental transparency, accountability, and responsiveness, and to promote the social and economic development as well as the general well being of Ghanaians. Elections to Parliament are on competitive basis with the participation of political parties and independent candidates who meet the requirements set by the Constitution and other relevant laws governing elections in the country. The tenure of each Parliament is four years and there is no restriction on the number of times an individual can seek re-election.

The constitution also guarantees the independence of the Parliament as well as its financial autonomy. It states that the financial estimates of public services whose expenditures are a charge on the Consolidated Fund either by the Constitution or by an Act of Parliament are not to be voted on but are to be laid before Parliament for the information of Members only. Section 15 of the Parliamentary Service Act, 1993, Act 460 specifically provides: "the administrative and operational expenses of the Service including salaries and allowances payable to or in respect of persons serving on the Board are hereby charged on the Consolidated Fund". By these provisions, the financial estimates of the Parliamentary Service/Parliament are not subject to the normal budgetary reviews and control by the Ministry of Finance. This however, has not been the case. It is also the responsibility of Parliament to ratify Bilateral and Multilateral Agreements entered into by the Government. The constitution further preserves the dignity of Parliament. It says, any act or omission, which obstructs or impedes a Member, an officer of Parliament, or directly or indirectly affronts the dignity of parliament constitutes contempt of parliament. The dignity is further enhanced under article 115, which confers unimpeachable freedom of speech on all Members during parliamentary proceedings. Under article 117, no civil or criminal process shall be served on the Speaker, Members and the Clerk to Parliament while on their way to, attending at or returning from any proceedings of the House. Article 119 also protects the Speaker, Members or the Clerk from being compelled to appear as a witness in any Court or place out of Parliament while attending to Parliament. The political system prescribed by the Constitution is a hybrid political system with elements of presidential and parliamentary systems. It provides for the appointment of more than half of ministers of state from parliament. As called for under Article 78, the majority of government ministers must be parliamentarians thus partially fusing the executive and the legislative branches. This constitutional mandate for the President to appoint the majority of his Ministers from among MPs without imposing a ceiling on the number of MPs that may be so appointed has strengthened presidential control and undermined the institutional cohesion of parliament. Presidents in the Fourth

Republic have used their power under these provisions to appoint as ministers and deputy ministers, including Regional Ministers, a large number of Members of Parliament. This requirement has crippled Parliament in a number of ways. First, the principle of collective responsibility has committed ministers and other members of the Executive to support and defend publicly the policies and programmes of the government, and may not freely criticize or question a policy or programme of their government on the floor of Parliament. This in a way has impoverished the deliberative and representational role of Parliament. Second, the demands of ministerial responsibility, coupled with the generally more substantial power, prestige, patronage opportunities and perks attached to ministerial or deputy ministerial appointment has allowed MPs who serve simultaneously as ministers to relegate their parliamentary duties, thus depriving Parliament of the full participation of such MPs in the business of the House. Third, Article 78 has helped to divert the interest and ambitions of MPs away from their role as lawmakers and toward the Executive. Mere knowledge on the part of non-minister MPs that the prospect exists of securing a remunerative appointment within the executive branch has affected the way backbencher MPs have conducted themselves when dealing with matters that the President has so much interest in. Once they satisfy their ambitions, little attention is given to their roles as lawmakers. However, it is the thinking of some observers that the presence of ministers in parliament has its distinct advantages. Unlike in the past, the responsibilities of modern governments and legislatures have increased in volume and have become complex. They have to grapple with several matters relating to the economy. When it comes to these complex and technical issues of defence, foreign affairs, health, trade, education etc, the Executive has access to civil servants, experts and can hire consultants. Unlike MPs who lack technical and adequate support staff, research assistants and well equipped library, Ministers in possession of information in concise and comprehensible form enlighten and enrich debates in the House.

The crux of this paper therefore is an attempt to appraise the contribution of parliament in the democratisation process of Ghana's fourth republic.

In what follows the introduction, the paper is organized into six main sections. The first section discusses the materials and methods utilized in the study. The second section focused on the transition to the fourth republic and the third section provides an overview of the fourth republican parliament. The fourth section is an appraisal of the contribution of parliament to the democratization process. The fifth section is on the challenges that parliament has faced in the fourth republic and the final section provides the conclusion to the discussion.

Materials and Methods

Methodologically, the paper utilized a combination of qualitative strategies in the data collection processes. Specifically, data for the analyses contained in this paper was based on interviews conducted with officials and stakeholders in the democratization process in Ghana, participant observation, review of media reports, and review of hansards obtained from the office of parliament. The use of multiple data collection strategies helped to triangulate the information obtained for the purposes of accuracy. Programme officers of the Ghana Centre for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana), Institute for Democratic Governance (IDEG) and the African Centre for Parliamentary Affairs (ACEPA) were interviewed.

Transition to the Fourth Republic

The Fourth Republic came into force in January 1993 when the draft 1992 Constitution was adopted by Ghanaians in a nationwide referendum on 28 April 1992. This ended the reign of the Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC). This transition from military to constitutional rule was the third since the country achieved independence in 1957. The ground work for the constitution was undertaken by the National Commission for Democracy (NCD) which held nationwide public seminars to solicit views of individuals and organizations on the scope, nature and content of the future constitutional order. The NCD presented its report to the government in March, 1991. The report was used as a basis for convening a broad-based national consultative body to produce the draft constitution. A nine member Committee of Experts under the chairmanship of Dr S K B Asante was set up to formulate proposal for the constitution that was placed before the Consultative Assembly (C.A.). The committee took into account, the NCD report and the past Constitutions of Ghana (1957, 1960, 1969 and 1979). The law which established the Consultative Assembly stipulated a total membership of 260, made up as follows: 117 persons elected by District Assemblies (including Municipal and Metropolitan Assemblies), 121 persons elected by 62 identifiable bodies and not more than 22 persons appointed by the PNDC. Two of the identifiable bodies, the Ghana Bar Association (GBA) and the National Union of Ghana Students (NUGS) refused to send a representative each to the Assembly on the ground that the composition would ensure the dominance of persons sympathetic to the PNDC, thus making the membership to be 258.

The Consultative Assembly elected Pe Rowland AdialiAyagitam II (ChianaPio) as its Speaker. He was appointed by the PNDC and was first assisted by one deputy speaker, Mr. Justice Robert John Hayfron-Benjamin who was later joined by a second deputy, Mrs. Justice Joyce Bamford-Addo. Both were also elected to their positions by the Consultative Assembly. Mr. Rex OwusuAnsah was the Clerk of the Assembly until he was replaced with Mr. Samuel NtimDarkwa in January 1992. There were five Standing Committees of the Consultative Assembly. The Consultative Assembly

finished its work and submitted the draft constitution to the government on March 31st 1992. In February 1992 an Interim National Electoral Commission (INEC) was set up and charged with electoral responsibilities for transition to constitutional rule. The Chairman of the PNDC, Jerry Rawlings announced April 28, 1992 as the date for the referendum on the draft constitution and May 18, 1992 for lifting the ban on political parties. The presidential and parliamentary elections were to be held on November 3 and December 8, respectively for the Fourth Republic to be inaugurated on January 7, 1993. The draft constitution was overwhelmingly approved by 92.6 percent of valid votes cast. This gave birth to the Constitution and the Fourth Republic of Ghana thus providing the basic charter for the country's fourth attempt at republican democratic government since independence in 1957.

The Fourth Republican Constitution declares Ghana to be a unitary republic with sovereignty residing in the Ghanaian people. The Constitution is the supreme law of the land and provides for the sharing of powers among a President, a Parliament, and an independent Judiciary. The Constitution establishes the three well-known organs of the state namely, the Executive, the Legislature and the Judiciary. Article 58 (1) vests the Executive Authority of the state in the President. The Constitution establishes one legislative body-Parliament. Unlike the US and Britain, the Constitution is a hybrid underpinned, to some extent, by the doctrine of separation of powers. The Constitution provides for a single-chamber Parliament consisting of not less than 140 members representing single-member constituencies. This figure represented the membership during the Second and Third Republics. The Electoral Commission can review the number of constituencies in Ghana, in which case the number of members of parliament will change. Article 47(5) of the Constitution states that, the Electoral Commission shall review the division of Ghana into constituencies at intervals of not less than seven years, or within twelve months of the publication of the enumeration figures after the holding of a census of the population of Ghana, whichever is earlier, as a result, alter the constituencies. The Interim National Electoral Commission (INEC) in 1992 decided on a 200-member Parliament, which set the membership of Parliament for the First, Second and Third Parliaments. The number was increased to 230 in 2004. This change was effected under the Representation of the People (Parliamentary Constituencies) Instrument, 2004 (C.I. 46).

The Fourth Republican Parliament: An Overview

Article 93 (1) of the constitution provides for a unicameral parliament, which consists of not less than 140 elected members. From 1993, there were 200 seats in parliament but this number was increased to 230 in 2004. In 2012, 45 new constancies were created by the Electoral Commission which increased the number of seats to 275.

MPs are elected for a four year term in a single –member district using the first- part- the post voting system. The legislative authority of the state is vested in Parliament by Article 93 (2) of the Constitution. The power to make laws is exercised through bills passed by parliament and assented to by the president. The president has no power to veto legislation, when the president refuses to assent to a bill, he is required to send a memorandum to the Speaker of Parliament within 14 days stating which specific provisions of the bill he wants Parliament to reconsider. The memorandum must also contain his proposal for amendments, if any. Parliament is the required by Article 106 (9) to reconsider the bill by taking into account the comments made by the president. If a reconsidered bill is passed by a resolution supported by the vote of not less than 2/3 all MPs. It is, mandatory, for the president to assent to it within 30 days after the passing of the resolution. MPs and ministers of state can propose bills in Parliament. However, according to Article 108, bills with financial implication can only be introduced by or on behalf, of the president.

Again, The Constitution gives Parliament an oversight over the Executive. For example, Article 78 empowers Parliament to approve the nominations of ministers and deputy ministers of state by the president. Parliament has the power to approve the nominations or the Chief Justice and other Justices of the Supreme Court by the president as stipulated in Articles 144 (1) and (2). Again, the constitution in Article 75 (21) empowers parliament to ratify any international treaty, agreement or convention executed by or under the authority of the president.

In addition, Parliament exercises oversight role over the Executive through the control of the public purse. Accordingly, as per Article 178, the Executive cannot make any payment from the consolidated, or the contingency and other public funds without the express approval by parliament. According to Article 181, the Executive cannot enter into any agreement for the granting of loans out of any Public fund or for the raising of loans without the authority of Parliament. Article 174 prevents the Executive from imposing any taxes on the people without the consent and approval by Parliament.

Furthermore, Article 179 empowers Parliament to approve the annual budget statement and economic policy of the government and make appropriation for government ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs). The constitution also mandates parliament to exercise oversight over the Executive through its committees. According to Article 103, the functions of the committees of Parliament include investigation and inquiry into the activities of MDAs which may extend to proposals for legislation.

Finally, Parliament is empowered under Article 69 of the Constitution to initiate impeachment proceedings against the president. This is possible if he is found to have acted in willful violations of the oath of office and the provisions of the Constitution, parliament can also remove the president from office if he is found to have conducted himself in a manner that brings his office into disrepute, ridicule, or contempt or if he is unable to perform his functions because of physical weakness of body or mind. To do this, parliament is required to send a notice to the Chief justice which must be signed by not less than 1 /3 of all the MPs. It should contain details of the conduct of the president for which he is being removed from office. Once the Chief Justice receives the notice the rest of the impeachment proceedings are handled by a tribunal set up and chaired by the Chief Justice and made up of four other senior Justices of the Supreme Court. It is the tribunal that determines the innocence or guilt of the president.

Contribution of Parliament to the Democratic Process

Since the inauguration of the first Parliament of the Fourth Republic on January 7, 1993 it has performed some of the functions assigned to it by the Constitution.

Through its representative function, Parliament served as a forum where MPs articulated the interest of their constituents to influence the public policy-making process. Per the principles of representation, contact and constant interactions of MPs with their constituents is necessary as it serves as one sure way the MPs can get to know the concerns and opinions of their constituents on important national issues. The MPs over the decades have always consulted their constituents on topical issues that concern their wellbeing and relayed what transpired in the House to them. In addition, parliament has to some extent exercised oversight responsibilities over the executive, its organs and agencies as mandated by the Constitution. It has performed this function through public hearings and the approval or disapproval of persons nominated by the president as ministers or deputy ministers of state. For example, in 1993, Parliament disapproved the nomination of EkowSpio- Garbrah by President Rawlings as a minister of state because he was not a registered voter as required by the Constitution. Again, in 2001, the minority in Parliament blocked the nomination of Hon. OseiKufour as a deputy minister of state by President Kufour because he was sacked from his former employment for financial malfeasance. Also, in 2007, parliament rejected the nomination of Revered AkwasiOwusu-Bi by President Kufour as a deputy minister of trade. According to the report of the Appointments Committee, the nominee was evasive and not truthful in his answered to the committee. Parliaments in the fourth republic have always approved the nominees of the president, some amidst controversies. For instance, the approval of some nominees such as Alhaji Mohammed Mumuni, Otiko Djaba and Boakye

Kyeremanteg Agyarko were greeted with controversies. Parliament in the performance of this function, has investigated, scrutinized the background of these nominees to make sure that they are qualified for the positions that they are sent to.

In the performance of its oversight responsibilities, parliament debated the various State of the Nation addresses is delivered by the president at the beginning of the parliamentary year, approved the government budget statements and economic policies and passed appropriation bills for the MDAs. It has also scrutinized and ratified international loan agreements entered into by or on behalf of the government. Parliament through its various select and standing committees, supervised all the MDAs and influenced government policies and programs. The Speaker of parliament refers every bill laid before Parliament to the relevant select or standing committee. The committee discusses the bill with the sector minister, proposes amendments where necessary and writes its report for the consideration of Parliament. For example, the parliamentary select committee on health was very instrumental in the passing of the National Health Insurance Act 2003 (Act 650). Again, following the discovery of oil in commercial quantities in 2007, the Mines and Energy, the Finance, the Subsidiary Legislation and the Constitutional Legal and Parliamentary Affairs Committees worked assiduously to craft new legislation to regulate the oil sector. Among these is the Petroleum Revenue management Act 2011 (Act 815).

Moreover, debates in parliament have been lively since 1997 with an increasing near parity of seats between the NDC and the NPP. Controversial issues placed before parliament by the executive have generated vibrant debates and intense scrutiny by opposition MPs. For example, in 1997, parliament vigorously debated the question of whether or not ministers need approval by parliament to serve with a president in a second term. The Supreme Court settled the debate when it ruled that every ministerial nominee needs the approval by parliament. Again, in 2001, parliament scrutinized proposal by President Kufour that Ghana should take advantage of the Highly Indebted Poor Countries Initiative (HIPC) by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank before the country joined the initiative. In 2008, there was a fierce debate in parliament over privatization/sale of the state-owned telecommunication company, the Ghana Telecom, to Vodafone BV. The transaction was finally approved exclusively by the majority side in parliament. In 2011, the minority raised many concerns over a US3 billion Chinese Loan Agreement which compelled the Speaker to defer the debate on the loan agreement for further deliberation by the Finance Committee. These debates have attracted public attention and interest and therefore, made the citizens aware of the issues and got educated about the activities of the executive and parliament.

Also, parliament in the exercise of its oversight responsibilities has promoted horizontal accountability to some extent. In the exercise of this function, parliament receives annual reports from the Auditor General's Department. These are audited reports of the income and expenditure of all government MDAs and publicly funded bodies and organizations. The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) summons those against whom the Auditor General has made adverse findings to account for their stewardship before live television. Ministers of State and public officials are required to appear before the committee to answer questions. For example, in 2012, the PAC summoned a former Attorney General and Minister of Justice, Hon. Betty Mouldiddrisu, and officials of the ministries of Justice and Attorney General and of Finance and Economic Planning to explain the circumstance under which the state entered into a settlement agreement with Construction Pioneer (CP) Limited, a road construction company. That settlement payment resulted in the payment of € 94 million to CP for breach of contracts by the government of four road construction projects awarded to CP in 1996.

Finally, MPs have been engaging in constituency service. This service comes in two forms. The first is when MPs assist their constituents in their individual needs. The second is when MPs offer support on small development projects that provide constituents with public goods such as roads, water supply systems, schools, clinics and meeting halls. To provide this service, each MP is given five percent share of the District Assembly Common Fund (DACF). Each MP is required to identify a development project in his constituency to be financed with his or her share of the DACF. Though provision of a community development project is important for constituents, most constituents tend to hold MPs more accountable for the provision of personal benefits or clientelistic goods. Personalized clientelism including the provision of "pocket money for the payment of school fees, for the purchase of food items, monetary assistance for funerals and weddings or towards a start up-cost for small businesses or a farm; the purchase of roofing sheets is also a common request. Other request is in the form of demand for jobs, especially lower rank jobs in the security services such as the police service, the fire service and the immigration service. However, MPs share of the DACF are not paid directly to them but into a common fund account in the district. Therefore, MPs do not have direct access to the fund and rely on their personal income and money from other sources to provide clientelistic goods. In November 2012, MPs justified an increase in their salaries by the executive with an excuse that a large portion of their salaries goes into "charity". MPs who are ministers of state are able to provide clientelistic goods because they are in a position to raise enough campaign finds from party financiers with a promise for a government contract in return. But MPs without ministerial portfolios also

receive favours from the executive in return for their support for very controversial bills.

Challenges

The first challenge that stands out is that, Parliament remains one of the weakest of the three main branches of government in Ghana's fourth republic. The institution has very little legislative capacity and its oversight functions are casually discharged. The weak legislative capacity of the Parliament of the fourth republic is underscored by its failure to date to initiate and pass a private members' Bill and to meet specific changes under Article 22(2) of the 1992 constitution to enact legislations. It is important to note that the incapacities and shortcomings of the Ghanaian Parliament are derived from multiple sources. The historical legacies of the institution are mostly negative. Five coup d'etat and resultant cumulative total of twenty-four years of military and quasi-military dictatorship as well as civilian authoritarian rule have disrupted and stunted the growth and development of the institution of Parliament. Indeed, until the present republic, the institution never enjoyed continuous and uninterrupted growth.

Moreover, even though Article 103(3) of the Constitution gives Parliament a broad mandate to look into matters of public interest and to undertake public hearings and investigations, it has scarcely used this prerogative. Lacking investigative capacity and unwilling or unable to assert autonomy from the political executive pressure, Parliament, as a body, has seldom initiated its own investigations into national scandals.

Furthermore, the country's unfavourable economic circumstances (including heavy dependence on external sources of funding), heavy and conflicting demands on scarce national resources, chronic under-funding of state agencies and the absence of a rational formula for funding key state agencies as well as lack of control over its own budget leaves Parliament chronically under-resourced. This in turn is reflected in poor conditions of service and inadequate remuneration for MPs and parliamentary staff which results in, among other things, MPs engaging in extra-parliamentary moonlighting activities and readily accepting presidential appointments to public boards and corporation membership and other executive branch blandishments as well as unreasonable demands from MPs service providers to pay extra allowances and make side payment to from MPs as a condition for their cooperation and participation in parliamentary support programmes. It is also reflected in weak infrastructure as well as woefully inadequate research, analytical and other technocratic resources.

More important is the issue of institutional deficits of Parliament emanating from the prevailing political culture which includes a traditionally strong Executive branch which has yet to learn to share power with an increasingly influential elected Parliament. The pre-1993 experience where formal legislative bodies oscillated between the multi-party parliamentary systems of 1957-60 and 1969-72 and the 1961-66 single party presidential and 1979-81 multi-party presidential systems also contributed to this situation. This has left the Parliament of the fourth republic confused about whether to reflect the culture and practice of the Westminster parliamentary or American style presidential system of government.

Finally, Parliament's engagement with civil society and media has increased over the years, and it has been inviting the public to submit inputs into the legislative process. However, the quality of civic engagement remains poor. Parliament is hardly pro-active in sourcing informed and expert input into legislation and policy debates. Committees have held nationwide public forums on a number of Bills, but the criteria used to determine which Bills should be subjected to wider public discussion remains unclear, and the forums have tended to be used by majority and minority MPs to canvass support for entrenched partisan positions. Thus, parliament-civil society interface remains largely episodic and hardly systematic.

Conclusion

The first conclusion drawn is that Parliaments under the fourth republic of Ghana have operated in a challenging context and have dependent on the Executive for their institutional resources. Over the years, the authority of Parliament has been undermined by the fact that the President of the republic of Ghana is constitutionally mandated to appoint majority of his ministers from Parliament, a power successive Presidents have used to their advantage. This has given credence to the widely held view by the Ghanaian public that Parliament is an appendage of the Executive. Also, the legislative and budget powers of Parliament are limited by the Constitution.

In addition to the above conclusion is a common phenomenon of a growing tendency among MPs to act along party lines on parliamentary issues. Since the inception of the fourth republic, Ghana's electoral politics has produced a situation where the majority party in Parliament is also the party that controls Executive power. This has over the years affected the ability of Parliament to effectively exercise oversight powers over the actions of the Executive. Most of the times, the majority party in Parliament usually consider the programmes and policies of the President as that of their party and for that matter will do everything possible to take it through the approval process of Parliament. MPs from the majority party have always supported and voted for the policies that need the approval of Parliament. Again, because of the emerging culture of executive patronage that has engulfed the

fourth republic, the Executive is much aware that MPs depend on the benevolence of the President and his team of ministers to gain material favours as well as electoral support in their constituencies and for that matter, carefully exploit it. Against this backdrop, MPs from the majority party usually manifest their loyalty by not posing difficult questions or raising issues of accountability and transparency during parliamentary debates. They tend to regard themselves as virtual cheer leaders for the Executive and his policies, and therefore, willingly comply with the party's official line both in committees and on the floor of the House. Any contrary behavior on the part of the majority party's MPs risks incurring the displeasure of the President and his Ministers who may see such deviance as a manifestation of disloyalty to the party. Such deviants may be denied access to development projects for their constituencies, or appointments by the President to boards, committees, commissions and to overseas delegations – appointments which carry juicy allowances which MPs of the president's party will not like to lose.

Another conclusion drawn about the lawmaking function of Parliament is the creeping effect of ultra-majoritarian politics which enhances the power of the Executive to determine the outcome of the legislative process by mobilizing the majority seats his party controls in Parliament to get his Bills passed into law. For instance, the President could ensure, through his majority party in Parliament, that fewer Bills were subjected to amendment either by their respective parliamentary committees or by the whole House sitting at the consideration stage of Bills, in addition to using his party's majority in Parliament to get his nominees, policies and programmes approved. This situation threatens the unity, autonomy and supremacy of Parliament and renders it ineffective in the exercise of its oversight powers to check the executive and hold it accountable on behalf of the people of this country contrary to the mandate embedded in their role as representatives of the people. Deliberations by MPs in some committees have also followed this direction and have been polarized along party lines.

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