



WHO SPEAKS FOR THE NATION? THE REAL ROLE OF OLIY  
MAJLIS

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***Annotation:*** *This article examines the Oliy Majlis of Uzbekistan, emphasizing its role as the nation's representative body. It outlines the parliament's historical development, bicameral structure, legislative functions, and role in ensuring government accountability. The study highlights how the Oliy Majlis reflects citizens' interests and contributes to political reforms, underscoring its significance in strengthening democracy and governance in Uzbekistan.*

***Key words:*** *Oliy Majlis of Uzbekistan; bicameral parliament; Legislative Chamber; Senate; constitutional reforms; legislative process; law-making; parliamentary oversight; executive accountability; checks and balances; democratic governance; representation; electoral system; political modernization; institutional capacity; public participation; transparency; budget approval; committee system; national development; separation of powers; governance challenges; policy evaluation; legislative efficiency; parliamentary diplomacy; inclusive representation.*

**Introduction:** The Oliy Majlis, as the supreme representative body of Uzbekistan, plays a pivotal role in shaping the political, legal, and institutional architecture of the nation. Since the adoption of the Constitution, the country has undergone profound political and socio-economic transformations, and the parliament has steadily evolved in both structure and function to meet the demands



of a modernizing state. The transition to a bicameral system marked a significant milestone in strengthening legislative professionalism, enhancing checks and balances, and ensuring broader regional representation within the national decision-making process. Over the last decades, Uzbekistan's parliament has increasingly positioned itself not merely as a law-making institution but as a central pillar of democratic governance, actively participating in oversight, budgetary scrutiny, policy evaluation, and the safeguarding of citizens' rights. With ongoing reforms aimed at boosting transparency, accountability, and public engagement, the Oliy Majlis continues to redefine its place within the state system, reflecting the country's commitment to building a responsive, balanced, and forward-looking governance model. In this context, understanding the structure, roles, and evolving responsibilities of the Oliy Majlis is essential for assessing Uzbekistan's broader political development and institutional consolidation.

**Historical Background:** The modern Oliy Majlis of Uzbekistan emerged as a key institution of statehood following the adoption of the Constitution on 8 December 1992, which legally established a national parliament independent from the former Soviet-era Supreme Council. In the early years of independence, Uzbekistan prioritized creating its own legislative framework, and as a result, the first parliamentary elections were held on 25 December 1994, with additional rounds on 8 January and 22 January 1995, officially forming the unicameral Oliy Majlis. During this initial period, the parliament consisted of 250 deputies and functioned as the primary law-making authority responsible for constructing the legal foundation of the newly independent state.

Throughout roughly a decade of unicameral operation (1995–2004), the Oliy Majlis adopted numerous laws, codes, national programs, and reforms that helped establish political, economic, and social institutions in Uzbekistan, gradually moving away from Soviet legal traditions and shaping a modern Uzbek legislative identity. A major turning point in the evolution of the Oliy Majlis occurred with the nationwide referendum of 27 January 2002, in which the population supported transforming the parliament from a single-chamber body into a bicameral



legislature. Following the referendum results, the unicameral parliament initiated a wave of constitutional and legal reforms, including the adoption of the laws “On the Senate of the Oliy Majlis” and “On the Legislative Chamber of the Oliy Majlis,” which formally defined the structure, authority, and functions of the two new chambers.

The first elections under the new bicameral system took place on 26 December 2004 and 9 January 2005 for the Legislative Chamber, while Senate elections were conducted between 17 and 20 January 2005, marking the full implementation of the new parliamentary model. From this moment, the Oliy Majlis has consisted of two chambers: the Legislative Chamber (Majlisi Qonunchilik), elected directly by the population, and the Senate, partially elected by regional councils and partially appointed by the President from among respected citizens who have contributed significantly to public life. This transition not only strengthened the system of checks and balances but also aimed to ensure broader regional representation and higher legislative expertise. The evolution from the Supreme Soviet to a fully functional bicameral Oliy Majlis symbolized Uzbekistan’s commitment to building an independent, representative, and modern parliamentary institution capable of addressing national priorities and supporting long-term political reforms.

**Structure of Oliy Majlis:** The Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan is a bicameral parliament established as the nation’s supreme legislative authority in accordance with the Constitution. Its structure consists of two distinct chambers designed to balance direct popular representation with broad territorial and professional representation. The lower chamber, known as the Legislative Chamber, is composed of 150 deputies elected for a five-year term through direct, general and equal suffrage. These deputies are chosen from territorial constituencies and represent the political and social diversity of the electorate. The upper chamber, the Senate, includes 100 members, of whom 84 are elected by secret ballot at joint sessions of local representative bodies from each territorial-administrative unit, including the Republic of Karakalpakstan, all regions and the city of Tashkent. The





remaining 16 senators are appointed by the President from among citizens with significant achievements in public service, science, culture, or social life, ensuring the chamber includes experienced and nationally recognized individuals. Senators also serve a five-year term, creating consistency between the two chambers in the legislative cycle. Both chambers conduct their sessions separately, though the Constitution provides for joint meetings in exceptional circumstances such as presidential inaugurations or important national addresses.

For any session to be considered valid, more than half of the members of each chamber must be present, ensuring that legislative decisions reflect a legitimate and representative quorum. Through this structure, the Oliy Majlis maintains a balance between the principles of democratic election and regional representation, forming a legislative system that integrates both the will of the people and the interests of the country's territorial entities.

**Oversight and Accountability:** The Oliy Majlis of Uzbekistan exercises not only legislative authority but also comprehensive oversight and accountability functions designed to ensure that the executive branch, governmental agencies, and public institutions operate in accordance with the Constitution, the laws of the Republic, and established national policies. Both chambers—the Legislative Chamber and the Senate—play integral roles in monitoring and supervising the implementation of laws, regulations, and state programs, ensuring that legislative intentions translate effectively into public administration. Parliamentary committees and specialized commissions are the primary instruments through which oversight is conducted, reviewing executive decisions, government activities, and the performance of ministries and agencies. Through these mechanisms, the parliament can request reports, summon officials for hearings, and conduct inquiries into issues of public interest, ranging from budget execution and economic development projects to social welfare programs, environmental protection, and national security measures.

The Legislative Chamber, representing the population directly, primarily focuses on accountability regarding legislative compliance, public policy



implementation, and the equitable distribution of resources, while the Senate, representing regional and expert interests, provides an additional layer of scrutiny, particularly regarding the administration and effectiveness of policies at the territorial level. Beyond committee work, the Oliy Majlis may establish temporary commissions for ad hoc investigations or urgent legislative oversight, enabling rapid response to pressing societal issues. The Constitution and internal rules of the parliament empower both chambers to evaluate government proposals, examine ministerial reports, and, if necessary, issue recommendations or demand corrective action to ensure proper governance. In addition, the Oliy Majlis supervises the state budget, approving allocations and subsequently monitoring expenditures to guarantee financial accountability and prevent misuse of public funds. This oversight function is reinforced by the bicameral structure, which allows proposed laws and government actions to be reviewed from multiple perspectives before final approval, reducing risks of executive overreach and promoting transparency. Overall, the parliament's oversight and accountability activities serve as a critical check on the executive branch, uphold the rule of law, and maintain public confidence in government institutions by ensuring that state power is exercised responsibly, effectively, and in alignment with national priorities.

**Checks and Balances in the Governance System:** The Oliy Majlis plays a central role in maintaining the system of checks and balances within Uzbekistan's governance structure by ensuring that no branch of power exceeds its constitutional authority. Through its bicameral system, the parliament evaluates executive initiatives, reviews presidential decrees, and scrutinizes state policies to confirm their compliance with the Constitution and statutory norms. Both chambers are empowered to examine the legality, necessity, and potential impact of executive decisions, thus acting as an institutional safeguard against unilateral policymaking. Parliamentary committees continuously monitor whether executive bodies adhere to deadlines, budgetary limits, and legal requirements, while special commissions may be created to investigate cases of administrative misconduct, corruption, or systemic failures. The requirement that key national issues—such as appointments to certain



high offices, approval of major state programs, and ratification of international treaties—must receive parliamentary confirmation further strengthens the balance of power. This system ensures that public authority is distributed and regulated, creating a governmental structure in which decision-making remains transparent, constitutionally grounded, and accountable to the nation.

**Budgetary Oversight and Financial Control:** One of the most critical responsibilities of the Oliy Majlis is the supervision of the state budget and public financial management. The parliament reviews the draft state budget submitted annually by the Cabinet of Ministers, evaluating revenue projections, expenditure priorities, and fiscal sustainability. Deputies and senators assess whether budget allocations reflect national development goals, regional needs, and the social priorities defined in state programs. After approval, the Oliy Majlis continues to oversee budget execution through periodic reports submitted by the government, allowing parliamentary committees to monitor financial discipline, detect mismanagement, and ensure that public funds are used efficiently. The Accounting Chamber, which functions as an external audit body, operates in close cooperation with parliament, providing detailed evaluations of government spending and issuing recommendations for corrective action.

**International Cooperation and Inter-Parliamentary Relations:** The Oliy Majlis also performs an important role in shaping Uzbekistan's international presence through active participation in inter-parliamentary cooperation. Both chambers engage with foreign legislatures, international parliamentary organizations, and regional institutions to strengthen diplomatic dialogue, exchange best practices, and support global legislative standards. Uzbekistan's parliament maintains membership in several major organizations, including the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), the CIS Inter-Parliamentary Assembly, the Parliamentary Assembly of Turkic States, and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, which provides platforms for dialogue on security, human rights, economic cooperation, and legal harmonization. Through parliamentary diplomacy, members of the Oliy Majlis participate in international conferences, bilateral delegations, and





multilateral forums, enabling Uzbekistan to contribute to global discussions and adopt modern legislative approaches.

**Public Representation and Citizen Engagement:** As a national legislative institution, the Oliy Majlis functions as the primary mechanism through which the interests, concerns, and expectations of Uzbekistan's citizens are conveyed into state policymaking. Representation is ensured through the electoral system, where deputies of the Legislative Chamber are chosen through direct popular vote, allowing citizens to influence the formulation of policies affecting social welfare, economic development, human rights protection, and other critical national priorities. This direct electoral connection creates a system in which deputies are accountable to their constituencies and are expected to reflect the socio-economic realities of the population. In addition to elections, the Oliy Majlis promotes citizen engagement through public hearings, consultations, and open sessions where draft laws may be discussed with civil society organizations, professional associations, and academic institutions.

**Constitutional Role and Legal Framework:** The constitutional basis of the Oliy Majlis defines its authority, internal organization, and interaction with other branches of government. The Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan outlines the parliament's exclusive powers, including the adoption of laws, the approval of the state budget, the ratification of international treaties, and the oversight of the executive branch. Furthermore, the Constitution establishes procedural rules governing legislative activity, such as the introduction, discussion, amendment, and adoption of draft laws. These processes ensure legal uniformity and transparency in lawmaking.

**Recent Reforms and Modernization Efforts:** In recent years, Uzbekistan has undertaken substantial political and institutional reforms aimed at strengthening the role of the Oliy Majlis within the national governance system. These reforms include expanding parliamentary oversight, increasing transparency in legislative activities, and improving citizen access to parliamentary processes. Efforts have also focused on enhancing the professional capacity of deputies and senators through



training programs, international cooperation exchanges, and the introduction of modern information technologies into legislative work.

**Role in National Development:** The Oliy Majlis occupies a pivotal position in Uzbekistan's national development, functioning not only as a legislative authority but also as a central institution for shaping and endorsing strategic policies that guide economic growth, social welfare, and institutional reform. By enacting comprehensive legal frameworks, the parliament lays down the foundation for sustainable economic development, regulatory stability, and state governance.

Legislative acts adopted by the Oliy Majlis regulate key sectors such as finance, investment, property rights, labor relations, social protection, education, and healthcare — thereby creating an enabling environment for long-term development, foreign investment, and social progress. In addition, the parliament approves national development plans, state budgets, and public-policy programs that allocate resources across regions and sectors, ensuring distribution of development efforts beyond major cities, and promoting balanced regional growth.

Through its representational and oversight functions, the Oliy Majlis helps ensure that development policies reflect social needs and regional diversity. Deputies and senators frequently raise issues related to regional infrastructure, social services, agriculture, and public welfare — thereby pushing for legislation and state support in underserved areas and helping integrate remote or rural regions into national development trajectories. Moreover, by subjecting executive proposals to parliamentary scrutiny, the Oliy Majlis serves to prevent hasty or ill-considered policies, promoting deliberation, accountability, and the rule of law as foundational conditions for stable development.

Furthermore, the parliament's engagement with civil society, expert communities, and public opinion in legislative processes ensures that policy decisions consider social feedback — combining technical expertise with citizens' real needs. This inclusive legislative process increases the legitimacy and effectiveness of reforms, enhances public trust in institutions, and strengthens social cohesion. As a result, the Oliy Majlis contributes to creating a responsive governance





structure, capable of guiding Uzbekistan's transformation in economic, social, and institutional spheres, and supporting long-term national progress.

**Future Prospects:** Looking forward, the Oliy Majlis has the potential to deepen its role as a cornerstone of democratic governance and national development, provided it continues evolving institutionally and expands public participation. Enhancing transparency and citizen engagement — through expanded public hearings, accessible legislative tracking, and digital tools — could strengthen the bond between the people and their representatives, promoting a more participatory democracy. Institutional reforms that increase the independence and effectiveness of parliamentary committees, equip deputies and senators with better resources, and encourage oversight capacity would allow the Oliy Majlis to carry out more thorough evaluation of government performance, draft forward-looking legislation, and respond quickly to emerging national challenges.

Moreover, further legislative modernization — including harmonization of national laws with international standards, enhancement of human rights protections, reinforcement of decentralization and regional representation — could help ensure sustainable development and equitable growth. Expanding the parliament's role in shaping long-term socio-economic strategies, climate policy, rural development, education reform, and technological advancement may enable Uzbekistan to meet 21st-century challenges effectively. Finally, strengthening the independence of parliament as a check on the executive, and increasing pluralism and diversity within its membership, could elevate public trust, improve the quality of governance, and consolidate democratic institutions — paving the way for a more accountable, inclusive, and resilient state in the years ahead.

**Risks and Challenges:** Despite its expanding role and institutional strengthening, the Oliy Majlis still faces a series of complex risks and structural challenges that can limit its effectiveness in the legislative and oversight process. One major challenge lies in maintaining a balance between the executive and legislative branches. In many post-Soviet political systems, strong executive authority historically overshadowed parliamentary institutions, and overcoming this



legacy requires continuous reforms aimed at enhancing parliamentary independence, transparency, and procedural capacity. Without a robust separation of powers, the parliament may face difficulties in exercising full oversight, ensuring accountability, or preventing excessive concentration of decision-making within the executive branch.

Another challenge involves improving the professional capacity of deputies and senators. Effective lawmaking requires high levels of legal expertise, socio-economic analysis, and policy evaluation skills. While capacity-building initiatives have expanded in recent years — including expert collaboration, research support, and international partnerships — there remains a need for further institutional strengthening to ensure that each legislative proposal is thoroughly analyzed for social, economic, and legal implications before adoption. Insufficient analytical resources may lead to gaps in legislation, duplications, or inconsistencies that affect the overall quality of governance.

**Conclusion:** In conclusion, the Oliy Majlis remains a cornerstone of Uzbekistan's constitutional order and an essential mechanism through which national interests, regional voices, and public needs are translated into state policy. Its bicameral design, legislative authority, and growing oversight capacity illustrate the country's dedication to constructing a more accountable, transparent, and participatory political system. As Uzbekistan continues its path of reform and modernization, the parliament's responsibilities expand beyond traditional law-making, requiring deeper analytical expertise, stronger institutional coordination, and enhanced dialogue with civil society and international partners. The long-term effectiveness of the Oliy Majlis will depend on its ability to strengthen democratic practices, uphold constitutional principles, and ensure that governmental actions remain aligned with the needs and aspirations of citizens across all regions. With ongoing institutional improvements and a renewed commitment to public accountability, the Oliy Majlis is poised to play an increasingly influential role in guiding Uzbekistan toward sustainable development, stable governance, and a more inclusive and responsive political future.

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