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The First Albanian Republic (1925) and Bicameralism: A Cornerstone in the Consolidation of the Albanian State

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Abstract

In 1925, the First Albanian Republic was established, marking a significant constitutional milestone in the political and institutional development of the Albanian state. This constitutional transformation replaced the political system established under the Organic Statute of Albania (1914) and subsequently reaffirmed by the Statute of Lushnja (1920). Following the political upheavals of 1924, the proclamation of the Republic represented an important constitutional response aimed at restoring political stability and strengthening state institutions. The Fundamental Statute of the Republic introduced a new constitutional order founded on the principle of the separation of powers among the legislative, executive, and judicial branches, while establishing a bicameral Parliament composed of the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies. Although the First Republic existed for less than four years, its constitutional framework and bicameral legislature laid important institutional foundations for the consolidation of the Albanian state. The constitutional reforms adopted during this period contributed to the development of representative government, parliamentary practice, and the modernization of Albania's constitutional system. More than a century after the establishment of the First Republic and the emergence of Albanian parliamentarism, many of the constitutional and institutional issues that characterized the country's early democratic development remain relevant. These include concerns relating to the quality of political representation, the effectiveness of parliamentary oversight, and the limited participation of distinguished professionals, academics, and other members of civil society in legislative decision-making. The constitutional model introduced by the First Republic, particularly through its Fundamental Statute and bicameral parliamentary structure, represented an important institutional innovation intended to strengthen constitutional governance and political stability. Bicameralism was designed to promote a more balanced legislative process by introducing an additional level of parliamentary scrutiny, encouraging broader political representation, and reducing the concentration of legislative authority within a single representative body. Within this constitutional framework, the Senate occupied a central

institutional position. As the upper chamber of Parliament, it was intended to complement the representative function of the Chamber of Deputies by providing greater continuity, deliberation, and legislative oversight. Through the review of legislation and the exercise of constitutional functions, the Senate contributed to improving the quality of the legislative process, strengthening parliamentary control over the executive, and promoting institutional balance. Moreover, the existence of a second chamber served as an important mechanism for moderating political conflict and encouraging consensus-building within the legislative process. Owing to the nature of their office and method of selection, senators were expected to exercise greater independence from short-term political pressures than members of the Chamber of Deputies, thereby enhancing the stability and effectiveness of parliamentary governance.

Keywords: First Republic of Albania; Constitutional Statute; Bicameralism; Chamber of Deputies; Senate.

1. Introduction

The year 2025 marked the centenary of the proclamation of the First Albanian Republic, a constitutional milestone in the political and institutional development of the Albanian state. In many countries, the establishment of the first republic represents a defining moment in national constitutional history and is commemorated as an event of enduring historical significance. During the communist period, however, Albania officially celebrated Republic Day in reference to the proclamation of the People's Republic of Albania, leaving the establishment of the First Albanian Republic largely absent from official historical memory. Consequently, despite its constitutional importance, the centenary of the First Republic received relatively limited attention from public institutions, legal scholars, and the broader public. The establishment of the First Republic should be understood within the broader context of Albania's efforts to consolidate its statehood following independence. During a period characterized by profound political instability, institutional fragility, and significant external pressures, the proclamation of the Republic represented a decisive stage in the country's constitutional evolution. Faced with deep political divisions following the events of 1924, the Albanian political elite adopted the republican form of government as a constitutional compromise intended to restore institutional stability and continue the process of state-building. In doing so, they abandoned the constitutional model established under the Organic Statute of Albania (1914) and reaffirmed by the Statute of Lushnja (1920) (Fischer & Schmitt, 2022). Without entering the broader historiographical debate concerning the political objectives of Ahmet Zogu and other leading political figures of the period, the decision to establish a republic inspired by contemporary Western constitutional models—particularly those of the United States and France—constitutes one of the most significant developments in Albanian constitutional history. The adoption of the principles of the separation of powers, constitutional government, and bicameralism reflected an ambition to create modern state institutions capable of ensuring political stability, constitutional

balance, and representative government. Although the First Republic lasted less than four years, its constitutional framework and bicameral Parliament established important institutional foundations for the subsequent development of the Albanian state. The Senate strengthened the representative capacity of Parliament, improved legislative scrutiny, and reinforced parliamentary oversight of the executive at a time when considerable constitutional authority was concentrated in the office of the Head of State. As a second chamber, it also functioned as an institutional mechanism for moderating political conflict and encouraging more balanced legislative deliberation. The professional standing and public authority of many senators contributed to enhancing both parliamentary activity and public administration during a period in which Albania possessed a relatively limited political and administrative elite. The collapse of the First Republic and the subsequent proclamation of the Kingdom of Albania in 1928 should not be interpreted as evidence of the failure of republican constitutionalism. Rather, the constitutional transition resulted from a combination of domestic political developments and international circumstances that enabled President Ahmet Zogu to proclaim himself King Zog I. As Kinley (2025) observes, political fragmentation and institutional instability frequently create favourable conditions for the concentration of executive power. Nevertheless, the transition from republic to monarchy occurred through formal constitutional procedures and was presented as maintaining legal continuity rather than constituting a revolutionary break with the existing constitutional order (Tomes, 2004). Defending the constitutional transformation, Zogu argued that monarchy represented the political system best suited to Albania's circumstances, capable of ensuring greater internal stability and strengthening the country's international position (Tomes, 2004). As Fischer and Schmitt (2022) further note, significant efforts were undertaken to ensure that the transition appeared both legally and constitutionally legitimate. The republican form of government was restored in Albania in 1991 following the collapse of the communist regime. Unlike the constitutional model of 1925, however, the contemporary Republic adopted a unicameral parliamentary system. Bicameralism did not receive sufficient political support despite its adoption in several post-communist Central and Eastern European states, where second chambers were viewed as important democratic safeguards against the re-emergence of authoritarian government (Čepo, 2007). Comparative constitutional scholarship has emphasized that bicameral legislatures may strengthen democratic governance by improving legislative scrutiny, enhancing institutional checks and balances, and reducing the concentration of political power, even if this may result in a more time-consuming legislative process (National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, n.d.). Romania provides a particularly relevant comparative example. Although it inherited a unicameral legislature from the communist period, constitutional reform established a bicameral Parliament to strengthen democratic accountability and reduce the risk of excessive executive dominance (National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, n.d.). Similar considerations emerged during the drafting of the Albanian Constitution of 1998, when proposals for the reintroduction of bicameralism were discussed but ultimately

not adopted. Although the issue has periodically reappeared in constitutional and political debate, no comprehensive institutional initiative has been undertaken to evaluate the potential advantages and disadvantages of restoring a bicameral legislature in Albania. As Albania advances toward membership in the European Union, constitutional reform will inevitably occupy a central place in the country's political agenda. This process provides an opportunity to reconsider alternative institutional models, including the possible reintroduction of bicameralism. Such a reform should not be conceived as a mechanism for accommodating senior political figures but rather as the establishment of a representative institution composed of individuals possessing recognized professional expertise, public credibility, and constitutional authority. A modern Albanian Senate could enhance the quality of legislation, strengthen parliamentary oversight, provide representation for social groups and professional communities that remain underrepresented in existing institutions, and potentially offer institutional representation to the Albanian diaspora. The establishment of a Senate should therefore not be viewed as a return to an obsolete constitutional arrangement but as a possible institutional innovation capable of strengthening democratic governance. As Ponceau (2002) observed, "senators are the roots of the future" (p. 101). Nevertheless, comparative constitutional experience demonstrates that no universal model of bicameralism exists. Whether the establishment of a second chamber would benefit Albania depends upon the country's constitutional traditions, political culture, institutional needs, and democratic objectives. Consequently, any proposal for constitutional reform should be preceded by careful comparative analysis and broad political consensus to determine whether bicameralism would constitute an effective constitutional solution for contemporary Albania (Bulmer, 2017).

2. Methodology, Objectives, Importance of the Study, and Literature Review

This study further aims to highlight the institutional significance of bicameralism by examining its historical development and comparative applications, with a particular focus on its relevance to constitutional design and democratic governance (Lijphart, 1999; Sartori, 1994; Tsebelis, 2002). By linking the experience of the First Albanian Republic with broader European parliamentary traditions, the paper seeks to provide a contextualized understanding of Albania's institutional evolution. Ultimately, it aspires to contribute to academic reflection and policy-oriented debate on whether and how bicameral structures could enhance legislative quality, political balance, and institutional stability in Albania's future democratic development. The methodology applied in this study is primarily based on the analysis of historical sources and a comprehensive review of both Albanian and international literature. The research relies on a qualitative approach to data processing, emphasizing interpretative reading, critical assessment of scholarly works, and contextual understanding of historical developments (Sartori, 1994; Lijphart, 1999). In addition, the historical method has been employed to trace institutional evolution and to situate the Albanian experience

within broader comparative perspectives. Through deductive reasoning derived from the reviewed materials, the study seeks to construct a coherent analytical framework that connects historical facts with contemporary constitutional and parliamentary debates. The literature review for this study is based on a comprehensive examination of both Albanian and international scholarly sources. It includes academic books, peer-reviewed articles, and institutional reports, ensuring a broad and balanced theoretical foundation (Venice Commission, n.d.; OSCE/ODIHR, various years). Particular emphasis is placed on documents and analytical reports issued by international institutions such as the Venice Commission, the OSCE, and relevant Albanian non-governmental organizations, including the Institute for Democracy and Mediation (IDM, various reports). In addition, the review draws extensively on constitutional and legislative materials, as well as historical and political studies by well-known Albanian and foreign scholars addressing parliamentary development, bicameralism, and state formation (Tsebelis, 2002; Lijphart, 1999). Through this combination of primary and secondary sources, the study integrates both normative legal frameworks and empirical-historical analyses. Overall, this approach enables a critical synthesis of diverse perspectives, contributing to a structured understanding of bicameralism and the institutional evolution of the Albanian state within a comparative and historical context.

3. The establishment of the first Albanian Republic and the introduction of bicameralism

After returning to power, “Zogu proceeded with determination, aware of the need to legitimize his position; he reconvened the Constituent Assembly elected in 1923—naturally without the troublesome opposition” (Fischer & Schmitt, 2022, p. 192). The High Council decided to convene the Parliament elected in December 1923 (Kalemaj & Koçi, 2023, p. 27), which had effectively dissolved itself on 2 June 1924 (Luarasi, 2001, p. 361). The Constitutional Assembly (Kuvendi Kushtetues, n.d., pp. 6–9) assumed responsibility for addressing two fundamental tasks in the constitutional establishment of the Albanian state: determining the form of government and drafting a fundamental law for the state. The choice between a republic or monarchy was a central issue in this constitutional process (Fischer, n.d.). The Constituent Assembly succeeded in fulfilling these tasks during the period between January and March 1925 (Anastasi, 2007, p. 107). The republican experiment represented a form of political testing undertaken by Zogu vis-à-vis both his population and foreign powers (Anastasi, 2007, p. 69). The Constituent Assembly ultimately proclaimed Albania a republic. The Constituent Assembly promulgated the Fundamental Statute of the Albanian Republic on 2 March 1925, which replaced most provisions of the Statute of Lushnja and established a bicameral legislature consisting of a Senate composed of 18 members (12 elected and 6 appointed) and an Assembly composed of 57 members. The Senate, whose members served six-year terms, also functioned as a High Court at the discretion of the Head of State, and its approval was required

for all measures adopted by the Assembly (Fischer, n.d.). On 31 January 1925, Ahmet Zogu was elected President (Head of the Republic) for a seven-year term. The Fundamental Statute defined Albania as a parliamentary republic; however, in practice, the extensive powers granted to the Head of State effectively transformed it into a presidential-type republic (Zickel & Iwaskiw, 1992, p. 29). The Fundamental Statute of the Albanian Republic resembled a republican constitution inspired by the American model, including a bicameral legislature (Fischer & Schmitt, 2022, p. 192). This resemblance was largely superficial, as its practical effect was to weaken the Chamber of Deputies and strengthen the President, who was endowed with the power to veto legislation (Tomes, 2004, p. 75). Zogu's key institutional change consisted in the concentration of power in his own hands (Austin, 2012, p. 155). The Republic was proclaimed despite a significant majority of monarchists within the Assembly, a circumstance often compared to the proclamation of the Third French Republic in 1875. For those unfamiliar with Albania's internal conditions, identifying a republic with a more democratic form of government might suggest progress; however, many Albanians perceived Zogu's ambitions as a political manoeuvre rather than genuine democratization (Anastasi, 1998). In the process of state-building, the Statute was based on the principle of the separation of powers. It provided for three branches of government: legislative, executive, and judicial. Legislative power was exercised by Parliament (the national representation) (Constituent Assembly/Parliament, n.d., pp. 10–13), composed of two chambers: the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies. The Statute regulated in detail, through 59 articles, the organization and functioning of the two chambers of the legislature. Deputies were elected by the people, represented the nation, and were not bound by a mandatory mandate. Under the Fundamental Statute of the Albanian Republic, legislative power was exercised by Parliament and was divided into the Chamber of Deputies (Lower House) and the Senate (Upper House), as well as the Legislative Assembly, which constituted the joint sitting of both chambers. In the history of the Albanian state, this represents the first and only instance in which a bicameral parliament was established, remaining the sole historical application of the bicameral principle (Anastasi, 2007, p. 108). The Statute affirmed a bicameral system; however, in certain circumstances it granted precedence to the Senate since, in the event of conflicts between the Senate and the Lower House, the President of the Republic had the authority to dissolve the latter. The Constituent Assembly concluded its work on 2 March 1925, declaring its mission accomplished, although some scholars argue that it could have been transformed into a permanent parliament, thereby avoiding new elections (Anastasi, 2007, p. 107). In the Constituent Assembly, proponents of bicameralism argued in favour of its superiority by drawing on comparative constitutional experiences. They considered the creation of an Upper House (Senate) necessary to prevent the emergence of a despotic oligarchy, viewing it as an institutional safeguard against the concentration and abuse of political power (Anastasi, 2007, p. 113), particularly in situations where the Lower House is dominated by a single political party. They advocated for a democratic Senate composed of elected members rather than a body

reserved for aristocratic privilege. In this conception, the Senate would not include members holding honorary or aristocratic titles but would instead be formed in accordance with the provisions of the Statute (Constituent Assembly Debates, 2012, p. 35), thereby preserving its representative character. In response to criticisms that the Senate would constitute an unnecessary institutional layer and increase public expenditure, proponents proposed reducing the number of members in the Lower House. The Senate's functions were legislative and revisory, involving the review and approval of draft laws previously adopted by the Lower House. This role was considered essential for the quality of legislation, as it moderated partisan tensions and strengthened deliberation. As argued during the debates, "the Senate is necessary for us because many times in Parliament laws and other matters are discussed with heated passion; therefore, when we have a Senate, they will be discussed once again there with a cooler approach" (Constituent Assembly Debates, 2012, p. 46). Opponents of the Senate argued that it was unnecessary and obstructive, further maintaining that the country lacked a sufficient number of qualified individuals to compose such a chamber (Constituent Assembly Debates, 2012, p. 46). The Statute, however, provided that one-third of the Senate members were appointed by the President of the Republic, while the remaining two-thirds were elected by the people. Supporters of this arrangement attributed a corrective function to the Head of State, arguing that "if the people make mistakes in electing senators, he corrects them by improving the composition of the Upper House" (Luarasi, 2001, p. 266).

4. Bicameralism: Arguments in Support and Opposing Perspectives

Bicameralism has evolved alongside the development of state structures. As a model of governance, it developed gradually over the centuries and was not the final product of a single constitutional or political system, but rather the result of a continuous historical process shaped by institutional evolution and changing conceptions of political organization (European Commission for Democracy through Law [Venice Commission], 2024, p. 4). Early proponents of bicameralism viewed it as a safeguard not only against the risks of the "tyranny of the majority," but also against excessive or poorly deliberated decision-making. In this sense, the second chamber was conceived as an institutional mechanism designed to introduce reflection, moderation, and balance into the legislative process, thereby reducing the likelihood of impulsive or inadequately considered political outcomes (Russell, 2013, p. 46). Historically, the second chamber, as the "upper house," primarily represented privileged orders and social classes. This form of representation functioned partly as a custodian of these privileges and partly as a source from which such privileges were derived and reproduced within the constitutional and political order (Venice Commission, 2024, p. 4). The origins of bicameralism have been traced back to the ancient Greek city-states and the Roman Empire. In the medieval period, the division into aristocratic chambers was primarily based on the objective of preserving the privileged position of the nobility and clergy, reflecting broader social and political

hierarchies of the time (Venice Commission, 2024, p. 4). Montesquieu viewed the Senate as a guarantor of the protection of ancient institutions. In his conception, “the Senate must adhere firmly to the ancient institutions and ensure that neither the people nor the magistrates ever deviate from them,” thereby positioning the upper chamber as a stabilizing force within the constitutional order (Montesquieu, 2001, p. 69). He regarded the Senate as a model of virtuous conduct, where senators embodied moral and civic virtues. Thus, the Senate functioned not only as a governing body but also as a moral institution within political life (Montesquieu, 2001, p. 69). Montesquieu further argued that political power should not be concentrated in a single authority but distributed among different branches of government (Montesquieu, 2001, p. 173). He also emphasized that laws must undergo careful deliberation before adoption to prevent harmful consequences arising from poorly examined legislation (Montesquieu, 2001, p. 29). Over the centuries, and with the gradual consolidation of democratic principles, the role of second chambers has evolved beyond the original function of representing privileged social classes (Venice Commission, 2024, p. 4). In contemporary constitutional systems, some countries maintain second chambers primarily for historical reasons. In such cases, bicameral structures persist due to tradition or institutional continuity. In other cases, upper chambers were “copied” from neighbouring states or introduced under colonial influence without sufficient consideration of their functional necessity (Bulmer, 2017, p. 6). Upper chambers tend to be smaller, with longer terms but generally fewer formal powers than lower houses. They typically function as revising and moderating bodies within the legislative process (National Democratic Institute for International Affairs [NDI], n.d., p. 2). Contemporary bicameral systems may be classified as stronger or weaker depending on symmetry/asymmetry, congruence/incongruence, and perceived legitimacy. Symmetry refers to whether both chambers have equivalent legislative powers. Congruence refers to similarities in political composition, while legitimacy refers to democratic justification and institutional authority (Venice Commission, 2024, p. 5). According to leading scholars, second chambers can be categorized into four main types: chambers of review and reflection, territorial representation chambers, chambers ensuring diversification of representation, and chambers based on democratic oversight and control. Each model reflects a distinct constitutional rationale for bicameralism (Bulmer, 2017, pp. 10–11). A recent report of the Venice Commission identifies several objections to bicameralism, including the democratic objection, duplication of the lower house, cost-related concerns, institutional heterogeneity, and resistance to institutional innovation (Venice Commission, 2024, p. 5). The Venice Commission also highlights several advantages of bicameralism, including its added institutional value, its role as a counterbalance in the legislative process, and its contribution to territorial representation. It further emphasizes its ability to represent underrepresented interests, regulate societal tensions, provide technical expertise, ensure constitutional safeguarding, and promote political stability (Venice Commission, 2024, pp. 8–9). Bicameralism may also bring decision-making closer to citizens and strengthen participatory democracy. In this sense, bicameral

systems can evolve to better represent underrepresented groups, including ethnic and linguistic minorities, women, and persons with disabilities, thereby enhancing democratic inclusion and pluralism.

5. The Debate on the Reintroduction of Bicameralism in the 1998 Constitution of Albania

In the constitutional provisions adopted after the fall of the communist regime in Albania, bicameralism did not find a place, although it had received significant support in other former communist countries. Parliament (the People's Assembly) was defined as the highest organ of state power and the sole legislative body. The draft Constitution of 1994 also provided for a unicameral legislative structure. During the discussions within the Parliamentary Commission responsible for drafting the 1998 Constitution, the issue of bicameralism was reopened. The question of the external structure of Parliament was extensively debated during the drafting process of the 1998 Constitution (Zaganjori, Anastasi, & Methasani, 2011, p. 111). At that stage, the idea was raised and a corresponding draft option was prepared to provide Parliament with a bicameral structure (OSCE, 2006, p. XXII). Proponents of bicameralism supported this solution as a means to counter the concentration of power and abrupt changes in the legal and administrative framework. They argued that "a bicameral parliament, due to the different modes of formation and the distinct political composition of the two chambers, enables a more restrained form of governance by tempering political passions from one chamber to the other; it extends the legislative process, thereby making the scrutiny of each draft law more careful; and it protects the heads of constitutional institutions by ensuring that the processes of appointment and dismissal of high officials are less politicized" (OSCE, 2006, p. XXXII). They envisaged a symmetrical bicameral system (Bulmer, 2017, p. 13) in which both chambers would possess equal legislative powers, with the second chamber also being directly elected. They emphasized that "since elections to the two chambers are not held simultaneously, a bicameral parliamentary system mitigates super-majorities that may emerge in one chamber, thereby softening the transfer of power from one political force to another and enhancing the stability of constitutional institutions" (OSCE, 2006, p. XXXII). The political environment in which the constitutional debate and adoption took place did not favour this discussion. The main opposition party did not participate in the drafting and adoption process of the Constitution. Supporters of bicameralism within the Commission did not possess significant political weight, and the parliamentary majority did not endorse the establishment of a bicameral system, arguing that this would require additional parliamentary elections, which could result in a different political composition of the chambers (OSCE, 2006, p. XXXII). In an effort to reach compromise, alternative models were also proposed, including the creation of a council with more limited competences than a senate, as well as a second chamber with restricted legislative functions, tasked solely with reviewing key legislation (such as codes and other important laws) and participating in the

election of constitutional bodies (OSCE, 2006, p. XXXIII). Supporters of bicameralism sought the expertise of the Venice Commission. The Commission's position on bicameralism has been somewhat ambivalent regarding unitary states, oscillating between emphasizing its advantages and highlighting the disadvantages of a second chamber in its advisory practice (Volpe, 2016, p. 834). The Venice Commission maintained that both unicameral and bicameral systems are acceptable from a democratic perspective and that bicameralism, although unusual for a small unitary state, could nevertheless be useful within Albania's specific institutional and political context (Venice Commission, 1998). Representatives of the Venice Commission, invited to the Commission's meetings, suggested that for a bicameral system to be effective, certain conditions must be respected. The two chambers should not possess identical legitimacy; otherwise, they should not have identical powers, since equal legitimacy and equal powers may lead to institutional deadlock (OSCE, 2006, p. 111). The French constitutional scholar Guy Carcassonne also expressed support for bicameralism before the Commission (OSCE, 2006, p. 110). Regarding the argument that bicameralism is unsuitable for small countries such as Albania, he stated: "The size of the country does not matter. Even a small country can have two chambers. In a federal state, a bicameral system is mandatory, whereas in a unitary state it is optional, but it is nevertheless highly beneficial" (OSCE, 2006, p. XXIII). The idea of introducing bicameralism did not gain sufficient support to be included in the 1998 Constitution. However, as a reflection of these debates, a requirement was introduced for a qualified majority of three-fifths of all members of Parliament for the adoption of a number of important laws (OSCE, 2006, p. XXIII). Some scholars have opposed the introduction of bicameralism, arguing that in the context of Albania's political development, the legislature must remain as operational and efficient as possible in order to facilitate the legislative process and align domestic legislation with the *acquis communautaire* (Zaganjori, Anastasi, & Methasani, 2011, p. 112). For this reason, a unicameral structure has been considered the most appropriate model, capable of ensuring continuous legislative production. A bicameral system, by contrast, could slow down the legislative process and create institutional disagreement between chambers (Zaganjori, Anastasi, & Methasani, 2011, p. 112).

6. Bicameralism Today and Its Future Prospects in Albania

Since the adoption of the Constitution, ideas advocating the establishment of a bicameral system have periodically surfaced; however, such proposals have not been translated into formal constitutional initiatives or amendment drafts, nor have they been reflected in the political agendas of parliamentary parties (Zaganjori, Anastasi, & Methasani, 2011, p. 112). Similarly, in other states characterized by unicameral legislatures, it is relatively uncommon for public opinion or political parties to actively debate a transition to bicameralism (Venice Commission, 2024, p. 5). Only occasionally, in the context of broader criticism of parliamentary performance, do demands for bicameral reforms emerge (Venice Commission,

2024, p. 5). Altering the number of parliamentary chambers requires constitutional reform and often encounters resistance from political actors unwilling to relinquish existing institutional power (National Democratic Institute for International Affairs [NDI], n.d., p. 5). Supporters of bicameralism in Albania argue that it would enhance political prudence, prevent domination by a single parliamentary majority, and improve the quality and deliberative nature of legislation (Zaganjori, Anastasi, & Methasani, 2011, p. 112). From this perspective, bicameralism is seen as a mechanism that strengthens the rule of law by reducing the likelihood of unconstitutional legislation, as evidenced by the number of laws annulled by the Constitutional Court. Comparative experience in developed democracies is an important reference point for evaluating bicameralism. According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU, 2025), 106 states operate under unicameral systems, while 81 have bicameral legislatures. In Europe, 31 states are unicameral compared to 17 bicameral systems. In the Americas, 15 states are unicameral and 20 are bicameral. In Asia, 15 states are unicameral, while 12 are bicameral. Bicameralism has also been adopted in many emerging democracies, including Albania. The Venice Commission notes that small countries or those still consolidating democratic institutions may consider second chambers unnecessary; however, they can be particularly important in federal, regionalized, or decentralized states where they represent territorial entities, while lower chambers represent the people (Venice Commission, 2024). The Commission further observes that second chambers are often associated with wisdom, balance, and expertise. Scholars argue that bicameralism broadens political participation but inherently slows decision-making processes (Russell, 2013, p. 46). Second chambers may improve policy quality by preventing errors, delaying premature decisions, or encouraging consensus-building (Mughan, 2020, p. 118). Bicameral systems may also reduce abrupt policy shifts, since elections to two chambers often occur at different times and under different electoral systems (Tatsiy & Serohina, n.d., p. 106). In post-authoritarian states, bicameralism is often regarded as part of a broader system of checks and balances essential to liberal constitutionalism (Maksymiuk & Trubalski, 2023, p. 86). It also enhances representational diversity, as lower houses represent citizens directly, while upper chambers may represent territorial, social, or economic interests (Mughan, 2020, p. 118). In the absence of a second chamber, unicameral systems often develop alternative mechanisms to represent social and economic diversity (Venice Commission, 2006, § 31, p. 10). These include quasi-second chambers, which do not have full parliamentary status but perform advisory functions within the legislative process (Bulmer, 2017, p. 7).

Democratic oversight may also be exercised through referendums initiated by parliamentary minorities, providing a form of direct popular control over legislative decisions (Bulmer, 2017, p. 7). Furthermore, increasing decentralization and regionalization strengthen the argument for second chambers that facilitate dialogue between central and local authorities (Venice Commission, 2006, § 33, p. 10). Territorial second chambers are also becoming more common in non-federal states. The representation of peripheral interests remains a key factor in evaluating

the suitability of bicameralism versus unicameralism (Passaglia, 2018, p. 24). While legislative efficiency remains crucial for reform-oriented states, bicameral systems provide an additional “second opinion” that enhances deliberation and oversight (Mughan, 2020, p. 118). The postponement of legislative review in second chambers allows broader public engagement and more informed debate (Russell, 2013, p. 45). Proposed laws can therefore be examined in a more reflective and less politically pressured environment (Bulmer, 2017, p. 6). This contributes to improved legislative quality and strengthens parliament as a center of political debate (Ponceau, 2002, p. 101). Ultimately, the challenge for contemporary constitutional systems is to balance efficiency with adequate representation (Passaglia, 2018, p. 25).

7. Conclusion

The First Albanian Republic, together with its institutions, constitutes a cornerstone in the consolidation of the modern Albanian state. In the absence of a democratic tradition, stable political parties, and amid significant political and social tensions, the bicameral parliament played an important legislative role by partially filling the existing legal vacuum. It became an arena of political debate and sought to exercise oversight over the executive branch, although it remained structurally weak in relation to the extensive constitutional powers of the Head of State. After more than 60 years, the Republic of Albania was re-established in 1991; however, bicameralism did not gain support, unlike in several other post-communist countries. The Constitution of 1998 maintained a unicameral parliamentary system. Instead of introducing a second chamber to enhance legislative quality and broaden representation, the constitutional drafters provided for the adoption of key legislation through qualified majorities. The Venice Commission and leading constitutional scholars have argued that bicameralism is not a historical relic but an effective institutional mechanism for protecting and representing underrepresented groups, subnational interests in contexts of regionalisation, and citizens residing abroad. Unfortunately, bicameralism is not currently a topic of active discussion in Albania among scholars or political elites, nor is it included in the programmes of parliamentary political parties. Several structural and institutional factors contribute to this situation, including the weak connection between citizens and their elected representatives due to the electoral system, the limited use of referendums as instruments of direct democracy, the weakening of the institution of the President of the Republic following the constitutional reforms of 2008 and 2016, and the limited role of the Constitutional Court as a “negative legislator” in constitutional review. Additionally, the need for a stronger institutional voice for the Albanian diaspora further strengthens the argument for reconsidering bicameralism. The model, name, composition, and institutional relations of a potential second chamber would ultimately depend on political compromise and the will of the citizens. Albania is currently on the path toward accelerated European Union accession. Beyond fulfilling the requirements of the relevant negotiating chapters, a broader reflection on constitutional design may also be necessary. A second chamber

of parliament could incorporate some of the most experienced and distinguished members of the political elite, thereby strengthening the authority and legitimacy of the legislative branch. Both the historical experience of the Albanian Senate and comparative models of contemporary bicameralism may provide a useful foundation for the Albanian legislator, political elite, and academic community in designing a suitable model of bicameralism for Albania's future constitutional development.

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