

**INTER-PARLIAMENTARY RELATIONS IN THE MODERN INTERNATIONAL  
POLITICAL PROCESS**

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The article highlights the features of inter-parliamentary relations in modern world politics, examines theoretical approaches to the classification of existing inter-parliamentary institutions in the world, analyzes the practice of the Inter-Parliamentary Union and integration associations in the post-Soviet space, compares the involvement of the G20 countries in the activities of key IPIs.

**Keywords:** inter-parliamentary relations, inter-parliamentary institutions, IPI, Inter-Parliamentary Union, G20.

Inter-parliamentary cooperation in the modern world is one of the important and prominent aspects of international relations. At the same time, this issue has become an object of serious scientific interest only relatively recently: states and their governments have traditionally been considered as key political actors in the international arena, which corresponded to the actual state of affairs - diplomacy was previously the lot of the executive branch (or those institutions, what such a power would now be called). However, with the growing involvement of national parliaments in international affairs<sup>1</sup> (as well as the influence of non-state actors, such as transnational corporations and NGOs), which has been observed in recent decades in the context of globalization and regionalization, the<sup>2</sup>situation began to change.

Among Russian studies on the topic of inter-parliamentary cooperation, one of the most fundamental works is a collective monograph prepared at IMEMO RAS and published in 2020 edited by I.L. Prokhorenko,<sup>3</sup>in which this topic is considered through an institutional prism. The team of authors, among other things, developed a methodology for studying and evaluating the effectiveness of inter-parliamentary institutions (MPI), and also proposed their typology based on the following criteria such as the presence or absence of the MPI's own contractual

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<sup>1</sup> Cm. e.g.: Varlen M.V. On the Increasing Role of Parliamentary Diplomacy in a Multipolar World // Lex Russica. 2019. №7 (152). URL: <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/vozrastayushey-rol-i-parlamentskoy-diplomatii-v-mnogopolyarnom-mire> (accessed on: 06.06.2022).

<sup>2</sup> См. напр.: Giesen M. Regional Parliamentary Institutions: Diffusion of a Global Parliamentary Organizational Design? KFG WorkingPaper, August 2017, no. 80.

<sup>3</sup> Inter-Parliamentary Institutions in World Politics / ed. by I.L. Prokhorenko (responsible), V.G. Varnavsky, M.V. Strezhneva, E.M. Kharitonova; IMEMO RAS. – M.: Publishing house "The Whole World", 2020. – 352 c.

framework, formal relations with international organizations, the principles of formation, the nature and scope of powers, etc.

In accordance with them, the researchers analyzed and divided **more than 60 international parliamentary institutions** that currently exist, or have already ceased to work, into four types. Let's consider them in order of increasing institutional strength.

First, there are inter-parliamentary non-governmental organizations and networks - semi-structured institutions, in many cases with a specific, rather narrow agenda, and without an international legal entity, as well as any decision-making authority that is binding. Their role is limited mainly to a platform for discussion and lobbying, parliamentarians participate in the work of such MPIs in an individual capacity. Striking examples here are the Climate Parliament, the Parliamentary Network of the International Monetary Fund, the Consultations of Speakers of the G20 Parliaments, the BRICS Parliamentarians Forum, etc.

The second category of institutions of inter-parliamentary cooperation is various international and regional parliamentary organizations. As the name implies, this category of MPI excludes the individual membership of deputies, their participants are already the legislative assemblies themselves. It is to this type of MPI that the very first and, probably, one of the most authoritative organizations of this kind, the Inter-Parliamentary Union, belongs.

Another type of MPI identified by scholars is "international and regional parliamentary specialized agencies" (such as the NATO Parliamentary Assembly and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation). Their main difference from the previous type is that the members of such institutions are only the parliaments of countries united in an intergovernmental organization, and not everyone. Such MIs have a formalized institutional structure and are more or less involved in the work of the "parent" intergovernmental body.

Finally, there are "parliamentary bodies of international, regional and supranational organizations that have a formalized international legal framework." These institutions are a product of regional integration, performing the function of democratic legitimization of the relevant processes, and in terms of their degree of influence, they are closest to the level of traditional national parliaments of democratic countries (although, in the vast majority of cases, they are still very far from this). In fact, this is not just an MPI, but a potential transitional link to a full-fledged interstate parliament of the relevant integration associations.

In terms of the scope of legislative powers, from a formal point of view, researchers consider the Parliamentary Assembly of the East African Community to be the most advanced parliamentary body in this regard, which surpasses even the European Parliament in this indicator - the only supranational parliament in the true sense that is fully functioning at the present time<sup>4</sup>.

However, most MPIs of this type still do not fully possess such important attributes of a full-fledged parliament as legislative, budgetary and supervisory powers. At the same time, "with regard to many organizations in international civil society, a discussion has already begun about

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<sup>4</sup> For more information about the powers of the European Parliament, see: Shapovalov N.I. European Parliament, tendencies of formation / Vestn. Volgogr. State. un-that. Ser. 5, Jurisprud. 2015. № 3 (28). P.198-204.

the need to eliminate such an international deficit of democracy", <sup>5</sup>which means that in the future we can expect progress towards their strengthening.

Thus, this category of inter-parliamentary institutions, among other things, includes the Interparliamentary Assembly of the Commonwealth of Independent States (IPA CIS).

A significant contribution to the study of problems related to the typology of MPI and their comparative analysis was also made by A.A. Vinogradova.<sup>6</sup> Summarizing the achievements of Western political scientists, she identifies three main criteria that are significant for the classification of international parliamentary institutions: the method of formation, geographical coverage and their functional load.

Using these criteria, it is proposed to assign the currently existing MPI to one of three main groups. Firstly, these are international/regional parliamentary organizations (Inter-Parliamentary Union, Latin American Parliament, IPA ASEAN, etc.), characterized by international legal personality, high institutionalization, independence in matters of membership and budget. Organizations of this type can be established in several ways: by an intergovernmental treaty, by voluntary acceptance of international legal personality, through the adoption of a special legislative act or charter, or by concluding an agreement between the participating parliaments (or by them adopting a joint decision).

As for the composition of the participants, the MPI of this group, according to Vinogradova's classification, can be either completely autonomous from any regional integration associations, or have working ties with them of varying intensity. An inter-parliamentary institution may, first, be established by a decision of the members of the international organization concerned; secondly, to have a cooperation agreement with the regional integration association; thirdly, to have observer status at an international organization; fourthly, to be an associate member of the association (this is, for example, the IPA ASEAN).

According to the criterion of orientation, international parliamentary organizations are proposed to be divided into two groups: those engaged exclusively in issues of parliamentary cooperation, or the promotion of cooperation between the governments of their states.

According to Vinogradova's classification, the second large group of MPI is international parliamentary associations, i.e. assemblies of parliamentarians of national states controlled by governments. These include, for example, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, the Asia-Pacific Parliamentary Forum, the Conference of Speakers of EU Parliaments, the Conference of Speakers of the Group of Eight, etc.

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<sup>5</sup> Inter-Parliamentary Institutions in World Politics / ed. by I.L. Prokhorenko (responsible), V.G. Varnavsky, M.V. Strezhneva, E.M. Kharitonova; IMEMO RAS. – M.: Publishing house "The Whole World", 2020, p. 63.

<sup>6</sup> Vinogradova A.A. Interparliamentary Institutes: Criteria, Classifications, Comparative Analysis. 2011. №4 (6). URL: <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/mezhparlamentskie-instituty-kriterii-klassifikatsii-sravnitelnyy-analiz> (date accessed: 06.06.2022); Vinogradova A.A. Interparliamentary Institutes: Dynamics of Development. 2012. №12. URL: <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/mezhparlamentskie-instituty-dinamika-razvitiya> (accessed on: 06.06.2022); Vinogradova A.A. Interparliamentary Institutes: Criteria and Classification // Observer - Observer. 2012. №6. URL: <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/mezhparlamentskie-instituty-kriterii-i-klassifikatsiya> (accessed on: 06.06.2022).

These IPIs are characterized by weak institutionalization, the existence of forums under their auspices focused on interaction with public authorities, the absence of full international legal personality and the establishment in accordance with national legislation. As a rule, such MPIs have national representations.

As a separate subcategory, it is proposed to include specialized parliamentary associations, such as Parliamentarians for World Action and the Inter-Parliamentary Conference on Combating Anti-Semitism, to this type of inter-parliamentary institution.

The third group of MIPs consists of various parliamentary bodies and assemblies of international organizations, such as the European Parliament, PACE, IPA CIS and EurAsEC. They are distinguished by a strong institutionalization and an inextricable connection with the "parent" integration association - the legal personality of such MPI is part of the general legal personality of an international organization; Membership in them is determined in accordance with the composition of its member states.

Inter-parliamentary institutions of this type are formed in several ways. Firstly, we can talk about the initiative of individual deputies representing the legislative assemblies of the member countries of the relevant international association, or the decisions of the parliaments of these associations themselves (subsequently such initiatives should be recognized by the international association). Secondly, an inter-parliamentary institution with an interstate association can be created by concluding an international treaty (this is how, for example, the IPA CIS appeared). Finally, MIPs of this type can be established by supplementing an existing international treaty relating to the activities of the relevant international organization (in this way, in particular, the IPA EurAsEC and PACE were created).

In most cases, MPIs of this type are financed from the budget of the parent international organization, less often from the direct member parliaments. As a rule, they do not have any control and legislative powers, some MPI from this group have the functions of lawmaking and control partially (the European Parliament, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union State of Russia and Belarus, PACE, the Northern Council). There are exceptions - the above-mentioned East African Legislative Assembly of the East African Commonwealth, which is a full-fledged legislative body.

Asian and African assemblies of this type are characterized by decision-making only in the case of consensus, in most cases a majority of votes is sufficient. In some cases, delegates may enjoy parliamentary immunity (European Parliament, PACE).

Vinogradov also proposes to consider "parliamentary organizations under international organizations" as a separate diverse and multifaceted subcategory of inter-parliamentary institutions of the third group, among which she includes such MPIs as the Central American Parliament, the Baltic Assembly, and the NATO PA.

Such institutions are, in fact, a hybrid of the first (international parliamentary organization) and the third type (parliamentary body of an international organization) within the framework of the classification we are considering. Despite the fact that they are always to some extent connected with the parent international integration association, they have in common with international parliamentary organizations the presence of a certain autonomy from the "parent".

The degree of this autonomy, as well as involvement in the activities of the relevant international association, is regulated in practice in a variety of ways. Thus, an international association can give the MPI created under its auspices a special status, as happened in the case of the Central American Parliament and the NATO PA, and include such an institution in an existing international treaty (Parliamentary Cooperation in South-Eastern Europe). In rare cases, it is practiced between an international organization and the MPI to conclude an international treaty on institutional cooperation (the Baltic Assembly).

In addition, an international association can recognize such an inter-parliamentary institution as its simple decision, as well as indirectly as a mention in resolutions. It is also possible to directly fix the connection with the MPI in the charter of an international organization.

As practice shows, parliamentary organizations are established in three main ways: through the conclusion of an international treaty between governments (for example, the Parliament of the Benelux countries), between parliaments (Parliamentary Cooperation in South-Eastern Europe), as well as the adoption of a decision, resolution or declaration by participating parliaments or their speakers (Commonwealth of South African Parliamentary Forum).

The sources of funding for MPI at international organizations are usually contributions from member states or parliaments of member states. In some cases, membership is paid directly by delegations, and additional contributions from other sources are also possible. As a rule, such IPIs are formed at the expense of delegates from member parliaments, although direct elections are also possible (Central American Parliament). The decisions taken by the assemblies of this subgroup are in most cases non-binding. Integration into the "parent" international association can be limited both to the status of a simple observer, and to be closer: for example, the NATO Parliamentary Assembly has the authority to hear reports from the executive bodies of the alliance.

The oldest and most representative institution of inter-parliamentary cooperation in the world is the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), founded in 1889 and headquartered in Geneva. Initially, the members of the organization (until 1899 it was called the International Parliamentary Union for International Arbitration) were individual deputies, but then membership passed directly to national parliaments.

The participants of the IPU are currently representatives of almost 180 states - these are almost all more or less large countries of the world. An important exception among them is the United States. The reluctance of the US Congress to join the organization can be explained by the openness of the IPU to everyone, and not just to Western countries and other American allies. In such conditions, the right to vote in the organization, i.e. the ability to influence its decisions, in addition to representatives of states loyal to the United States, there are also those whom the Americans consider "insufficiently democratic", and therefore "unworthy" to sit at the same table with them<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> См.: Bromund T.R. Why the United States Should Not Join the Inter-Parliamentary Union / The Heritage Foundation. Режим доступа: <https://www.heritage.org/europe/report/why-the-united-states-should-not-join-the-inter-parliamentary-union> (дата обращения: 06.06.2022).

It seems that such a position of the United States is more beneficial to the Inter-Parliamentary Union, since the absence among its members of a country that claims global hegemony and actively imposes its own values on the whole world leaves more space for promoting alternative points of view and equal dialogue. At the same time, it is obvious that the non-participation of the United States, which is currently still almost the undisputed world leader, somewhat undermines the legitimacy of the IPU and limits its potential to become a more influential international body.

In addition to national parliaments, more than a dozen other IPIs, including the European Parliament, PACE and IPA CIS, also participate in the activities of the Inter-Parliamentary Union as associate members. About 70 more organizations have observer status in the IPU (including the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union of Russia and Belarus).

According to the 2017-2021 report, the budget of the <sup>8</sup>Inter-Parliamentary Union rose from 15.9 million francs per year to almost 17.8 million francs per year during this period. The organization "promotes democracy, helps parliaments become stronger, younger, gender-balanced and more diverse," and "protects the human rights of parliamentarians through a special committee composed of deputies from around the world." The number of IPU members has increased by seven over the past five years: from the 171st parliament in 2017 to the 178th in 2021 (this is about 92% of all parliaments in the world). The number of events held for parliamentarians increased from 24 to 52, a total of more than 90 analytical publications were prepared on the issues in the focus of the organization's attention.

Among the most important achievements of the IPU, the report points out, inter alia, the organization of numerous mediation negotiations between parliamentarians in conflict zones, in particular on the Korean peninsula, Cyprus and the Middle East; participation in the development of strategies for comprehensive disarmament, as well as the fight against terrorism and violent extremism.

The Inter-Parliamentary Union pays considerable attention to the issue of expanding the participation of young people in parliamentary activities - this is one of its eight key declared goals. Currently, the number of deputies under the age of 30 in the world is only about 2.6% of the total number of parliamentarians. In order to improve this indicator, in 2020 the IPU launched a PR campaign "I say yes to young people in parliament!", which "in just a few months was joined by hundreds of world leaders, promising to take measures to rejuvenate the parliaments of their countries." The Inter-Parliamentary Union is lobbying for the lowering of the age limit for election as a deputy, the introduction of youth quotas in parliaments, and the creation of special youth parliamentary structures.

Over the past five years, the Inter-Parliamentary Union's efforts to mobilize parliaments around the global development agenda, including climate change and health, have also increased markedly. IPU prepares publications aimed at raising the awareness of parliamentarians on this issue, promotes the involvement of parliaments in the work of the United Nations.

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<sup>8</sup> Impact Report 2017-2021. — Text: electronic // Official website of the Inter-Parliamentary Union: [site]. Available at: <https://www.ipu.org/resources/publications/about-ipu/2022-03/impact-report-2017-2021> (accessed: 06.06.2022).

An analysis of the activities of the Inter-Parliamentary Union through the prism of the structure of its budget expenditures allows us to conclude that the greatest attention in the organization is paid to its internal organizational needs. Miscellaneous administrative expenses in 2021 totalled almost CHF 5 million (about 28% of the budget). Just over 3.73 million francs (21% of the budget) were spent on activities directly related to the achievement of the key goal "Promotion of inter-parliamentary dialogue and cooperation".

The work of "building strong, democratic parliaments" cost 2.57 million francs (14% of the IPU's annual budget); 9% of the budget (1.6 million francs) was spent on the "protection and promotion of human rights"; expenditure on the key goal "Promoting gender equality and respect for women's rights" amounted to just over 1.4 million francs (about 8% of the budget). "Promotion of peacebuilding, conflict prevention and security" required a little more than 1.2 million francs (just under 7% of total expenditures) from the IPU budget in 2021.

Activities to "mobilize parliaments around the global development agenda" cost 1.18 million francs (6.7% of the budget). The key goals "Bridging the gap in democracy in international relations" (923.5 thousand francs, a little more than 5% of the budget) and "Promoting youth empowerment" (473.5 thousand francs, about 2.6% of the annual budget of the Inter-Parliamentary Union) required the least expenses.

In the IPS strategy for 2022-2026<sup>9</sup>, the number of key strategic goals of the organization has been reduced to five. They are formulated as follows:

1. Создание эффективных и сильных парламентов (Building effective and empowered parliaments);
2. Содействие инклюзивности и репрезентативности парламентов (Promoting inclusive and representative parliaments);
3. Поддержка устойчивых и новаторских парламентов (Supporting resilient and innovative parliaments);
4. Catalysing collective parliamentary action;
5. Укрепление подотчетности Межпарламентского союза (Strengthening the IPU's accountability).

Among the inter-parliamentary associations operating in the post-Soviet space, the Interparliamentary Assembly of the CIS (IPA CIS), the Interparliamentary Assembly of the EurAsEC (IPA EurAsEC), as well as the Parliamentary Assembly of the CSTO (CSTO PA) deserve the greatest attention.

The main goals of these organizations are the integration of the participating states through the creation of a single legal, economic, and defense space. However, as A.D. Murzakulova rightly notes, interstate integration is, first of all, a matter of economic benefit. It was this circumstance that turned out to be a significant obstacle to the development of integration processes within the CIS, since "in economic policy it became obvious that the overwhelming majority of countries The commonwealths are gradually moving away from each other." This is due to both the

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<sup>9</sup> IPU 2022-2026 Strategy. — Text: electronic // Official website of the Inter-Parliamentary Union: [site]. Available at: <https://www.ipu.org/resources/publications/about-ipu/2022-01/strategy-2022-2026> (accessed: 06.06.2022).

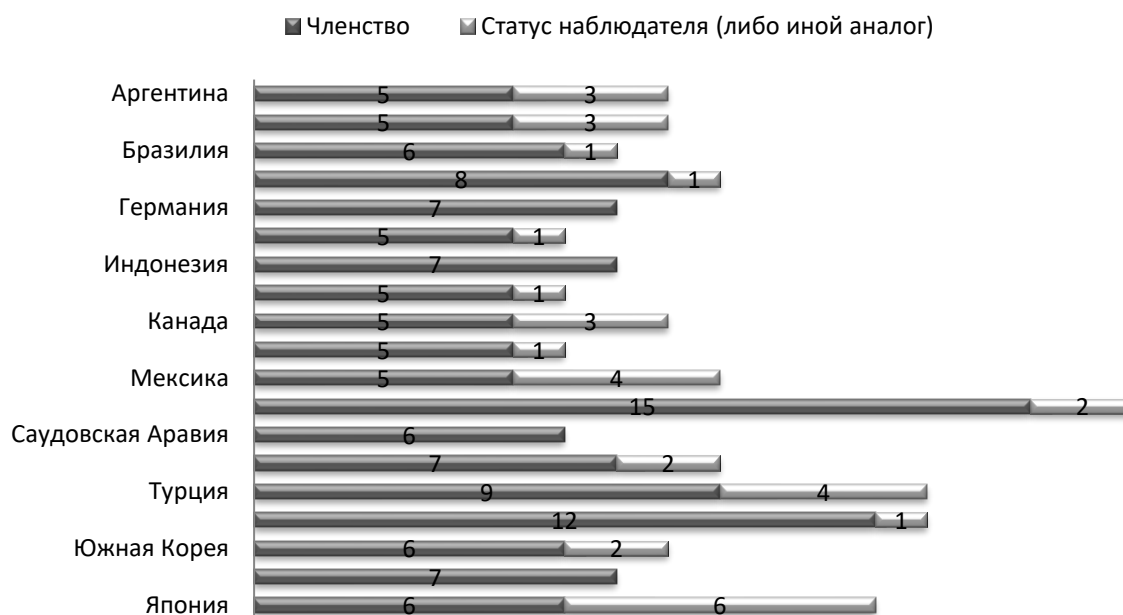
growing orientation of the post-Soviet countries towards multi-vector models of economic development, and the reorientation of export trade flows to partners outside the CIS<sup>10</sup>.

Under such conditions, the inter-parliamentary institutions of the CIS in practice primarily maintain a certain level of symbolic unity of the post-Soviet space, and also perform the function of "socialization" of the parliamentarians of the participating countries<sup>11</sup>, allowing them to "feel the taste" of parliamentarism, exchange experience, including with colleagues from far abroad, gain new knowledge, etc. Legislation.

At the same time, despite all the accumulated positive experience, if the fragmentation of the post-Soviet space continues, there is a risk of strengthening the imitative nature of the integration processes declared on it and reducing the effectiveness of inter-parliamentary institutions with the participation of the CIS countries<sup>12</sup>.

When considering the problems of inter-parliamentary cooperation, it is interesting to touch upon the issue of the comparative involvement of the countries of the world in the activities of various IPIs. Based on the materials collected in the monograph edited by I.L. Prokhorenko<sup>13</sup>, and, if possible, updating them as of the current year, we have compiled an appropriate diagram for the 19 member states of the G20.

Таблица 1. Участие стран G20 в межпарламентских объединениях, количество организаций



<sup>10</sup> Murzakulova A.D. Interparliamentary Institutes in the Process of CIS Integration // Eurasian Economic Integration. 2012. №2 (15). P. 62.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 63.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 66.

<sup>13</sup> Inter-Parliamentary Institutions in World Politics / ed. by I.L. Prokhorenko (Editor-in-Chief), V.G. Varnavsky, M.V. Strezhneva, E.M. Kharitonova; IMEMO RAS. – M.: Publishing house "The Whole World", 2020, pp. 320-249.



These calculations are approximate, as they do not take into account the diversity of inter-parliamentary institutions, and, of course, do not allow us to draw any conclusions about the qualitative level of countries' involvement in their work. However, even a simple quantitative assessment, in our opinion, allows us to get an idea of the degree of at least formal interest of certain states in inter-parliamentary cooperation and its institutional dimension.

Summarizing all of the above, we note that the growth of geopolitical tension that we have seen in recent months obviously determines the increasing relevance of further study of issues related to inter-parliamentary relations. Inter-parliamentary cooperation has the potential to contribute to the resolution of international crises, complementing the efforts of traditional government diplomacy. But in order for this potential to be realized, it is necessary, among other things, to develop approaches to leveling the weaknesses of parliamentary diplomacy (the majority of MPIs do not always have any serious powers, deputies and senators do not always have the necessary knowledge and experience in the field of foreign policy, etc.). In addition, it is essential to ensure the coordination of diplomatic efforts between the executive and legislative branches of government at the national level.

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