

UDK classification: 328

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**THE ROLE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF A PARLIAMENTARY
DEMOCRACY IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE BULGARIAN SOCIETY**

The author of the paper analyzes the parliamentary democracy in the Republic of Bulgaria and considers it to be the important factor of community development. The parliamentary system of Bulgaria depicts the idea of rational parliamentarianism, when the constitutional system has judicial techniques to keep stability and power of the government when there is no parliamentary majority. The relationship between the government and parliament is revealed in their cooperation in carrying out the functions of each other and controlling each other's work. The Bulgarian parliament controls the government's activity by means of classical techniques of requests and inquiries.

Keywords: The republic of Bulgaria, democratization, parliament, opposition, president, political authoritative institutions, bodies of powers, lawmaking, right of legislative initiative

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**РОЛЬ І ЗНАЧЕННЯ ПАРЛАМЕНТСЬКОЇ ДЕМОКРАТІЇ У
РОЗВИТКУ БОЛГАРСЬКОГО СУСПІЛЬСТВА**

Автор статті досліджує парламентську демократію Республіки Болгарія і вважає її важливим фактором розвитку суспільства. У парламентській системі Болгарії відображена ідея раціоналізації парламентаризму, коли конституційна система має юридичні техніки, спрямовані на збереження стабільності і влади уряду при відсутності постійної парламентської більшості. Взаємини уряду і парламенту виражаються у співробітництві по здійсненню функцій кожної зі сторін і в контролі за роботою один одного. Болгарський парламент здійснює контроль за діяльністю уряду шляхом класичних технік депутатських запитів і питань.

Ключові слова: Республіка Болгарія, демократизація, парламент, опозиція, президент, політичні владні інститути, гілки влади, законотворчість, право законодавчої ініціативи.

РОЛЬ И ЗНАЧЕНИЕ ПАРЛАМЕНТСКОЙ ДЕМОКРАТИИ В РАЗВИТИИ БОЛГАРСКОГО ОБЩЕСТВА

Автор статьи исследует парламентскую демократию Республики Болгария и считает ее важным фактором развития общества. В парламентской системе Болгарии отражена идея рационализации парламентаризма, когда конституционная система имеет юридические техники, направленные на сохранение стабильности и власти правительства при отсутствии постоянного парламентского большинства. Взаимоотношения правительства и парламента выражаются в сотрудничестве по осуществлению функций каждой из сторон и в контроле за работой друг друга. Болгарский парламент осуществляет контроль за деятельностью правительства путем классических техник депутатских запросов и вопросов.

Ключевые слова: Республика Болгария, демократизация, парламент, оппозиция, президент, политические институты власти, ветви власти, законотворчество, право законодательной инициативы

Introduction. Since the 19th c. Bulgarians, immediately after the country's liberation from Turkish oppression, have created an important institution of community's political system, the body of legislative power, namely the parliament and started implementation and accumulation of their own experience in parliamentary democracy. But it was little, as the practice of parliamentary democracy in the country soon was broken off. The observation of parliamentary activity in Bulgaria has been carrying out since 1879, when the adoption of the Tarnovo Constitution laid the foundation of the statehood: Bulgaria was announced the constitutional monarchy with the representation of people. This type of political system had been preserved up to 1946.

It must be admitted, that in the political history of Bulgaria in the 19th – 20th c. the traditions of non-democratic governing prevailed. Though, the democratic ideas were typical of the society since the national liberation movement of the 2nd part of the 19th century, but the mass consciousness of Bulgarians did not single out republican or monarchical ideas. The fact of the state creation was more important for them. The last democratic parliamentary elections were held on June 21, 1931. The military takeover of May 19, 1934 canceled all democratic institutions: the constitution was abolished, political parties were forbidden, and the National Assembly or Bulgarian parliament

was dissolved. New parliamentary elections were held in 1938.

It should be underlined that the first Constitution of Bulgaria established not parliamentary, but constitutional and monarchical form of government. The institution of monarch was in the centre of the political system and kept this position till the beginning of the WWII. The establishment of parliamentarianism was prevented by such factors as the constitutional instability (the working of the constitution was interrupted), the political instability (state takeovers), the lack of legal competence among the community and bureaucracy.

The role of the national assembly in the development of the political history in Bulgaria in the 20th century. In the interwar period authoritarianism as a form of governing was embodied in “personal regimes” of Bulgarian rulers. The constitutional principles were often violated. The opposition between the authorities’ branches led to the negative consequences. Permanent conflicts between legal and executive power, which were backed by various political and party interests, caused parliamentary crisis. As a rule, parliamentary governing is based on the political parties’ interaction, and weakness of the political parties stipulates weakness of the parliament as an institution. This statement can be subsumed under the political history of Bulgaria during the interwar period. Weakness of parliament intensified the role of government executive bodies, contributed to the enlargement and strengthening of the monocratic power of the head of the state. The lack of the powerful parties with huge social support in the interwar period led to the frequent change of the cabinets. Strengthening or weakening of the parliament in the political life of Bulgaria depended on how the relations in the parliament corresponded to the relations in the Bulgarian society.

The absence of stable parties with the clear programs, factionalism, and groups’ feuds complicated the work of the parliament up to 1940. The society needed powerful government cabinets created on the basis of well-established parties, which would ensure stable parliamentary government. But, in political life, the parties, which pursued their own interests at a loss to the social interests, prevailed.

Weak parliamentary opposition, unstable parliamentary majority, small parties coalitions were interested in the way how to strengthen their own position in the parliament. Since 1935 after the resignation of K. Georgiev’s government, the monarchical dictatorship of the fascist type established in the country. Under the conditions of fascism escalation in Europe, Bulgarian

leading circles declared neutrality, but in fact pursued a fascist policy. After the difficult and non-democratic elections of 1940 the pro-German majority came to power, and B. Filov's cabinet on March 1, 1941 signed the treaty of Bulgarian accession to the fascist "Tripartite Pact". So, Bulgaria became an ally of Germany in the WWII.

The defeat of the Wehrmacht and the entry of the Soviet army into Bulgaria in 1944 changed the course of the Bulgarian history. In October 1944 the Allied Commission (the USSR, the USA, and the UK) and Bulgaria concluded an armistice. The power in the country was passed on to the Fatherland Front. In November 1945 a new composition of parliament was elected and later it recognized all the decrees made by the Fatherland front government as lawful ones. After 1944 the regime of the Soviet type was established in Bulgaria and parliamentarianism achieved its formal façade form. On all levels, power was in the hands of the Bulgarian Communist Party. Everything positive, that was in the experience of the prewar parliamentarianism, became lost for a long time.

On September 15, 1946 as a result of the referendum on the form of the statehood (93% of Bulgarians voted for the monarchy abolishment), Bulgaria was declared a republic. In October 1946 new parliament was elected. The Fatherland Front, which gained 70% of votes and was a coalition of democratic parties under the aegis of the Bulgarian Labour Party, dominated in it.

The process of civil society formation in Bulgaria began in the 20th c. But the civil society here was rather weak during the 20th c. In the 1st part of the century it revealed itself in the backwardness of democratic political culture and poor democratic traditions. In the 1st part of the 20th c. Bulgaria and other SEE countries were characterized by the repeated "alteration of democratic and authoritarian and dictatorial regimes and the existence of great power in the state's hands for account of widening and deepening of certain civil society's autonomy". As the development of the civil society and individual self-consciousness are deeply interrelated, it is important to discover the way this interconnection revealed itself in Bulgaria and this will contribute to understanding of modern democratic processes.

Bulgaria, as well as the other SEE countries, since the 14th c. and during the next 4-5 centuries had been developing under other conditions in comparison with the west European Christian world. Everyday vicinity with Muslims changed the communities' traditions, which had already been laid in

the Orthodox World, and which became vital for Bulgarians survival under the conditions of Turkish enslavement. These circumstances prevented the appearance and strengthening of the individualism principle among the Bulgarians. H. Fotev mentions, that “civil society could not appear without the turn of the deep-rooted conservative life paradigm of the stable traditionalism”.

The problem of Bulgaria modernization is also interrelated with the traditionalism overcoming and formation of civil society. The scholar believes that the socio-cultural phenomenon of modernization appears when traditionalism is removed as a barrier for the subsequent development of society, and historical memory becomes an instrument, which contributes to the development of society, but does not hamper it. The attempts of the first modernization of Bulgaria are referred to the interwar period; the second wave of modernization took place in the frames of the Soviet type system after the WWII and failed.

In the 80s – 90s of the 20th century the Bulgarian society faced the problem of new modernization of the country, the third in succession. The peculiarities of Bulgaria democratization are stipulated by the differences of the historical processes in this Balkan country in comparison with western countries. European modernism is closely connected with the appearance of national states that became an absolutely new stage in the statehood development. For the Bulgarians the process of statehood creation was a national idea, which united the society during the struggle against the Turks. Belated formation of the statehood that took place in the late 19th c. left its mark on the Bulgarians’ social consciousness, which reveals itself even in the 21st century in the feeling of incompleteness of the national unification of the Bulgarian lands (there are scientific discussions nowadays). The idea of nation-preservation is still dominant in the Bulgarians’ mass consciousness, it feeds statehood frame of mind, which have been deeply rooted in the Bulgarian society since the time of socialistic country. Nationalism as a unified ideology was used by T. Zhyvkov’s regime in the late 80s (the campaign concerning the alteration of Muslim and Bulgarian names, which drew a wide negative response in the world).

New leading elite in the 90s refused from the tactic of searching for legitimacy in the national ideology. They realized that civil society formation requires the necessity for people to feel themselves citizens. It in essence changes their role in society, as a citizen acquires autonomy, which is impossible in the frames of the family, traditional society, totalitarian and

paternalistic country. The process of democracy and parliamentarianism formation in Bulgaria is correlated with strangling the principle of individualism over the last two centuries. To the Bulgarians point of view, individualism is “the main constructive element of the civil society”. Thus, the complicated processes in the political life of Bulgaria are stipulated by the insufficient level of the society development and citizens’ self-consciousness.

After the WWII the development of Bulgaria according to the Soviet model did not contribute to the civil society formation. In the parliament as well as in the socialistic Bulgarian society, multi-party system was only declared. Nominally the political life of the country was characterized by the existence of such parties as – Bulgarian Agrarian People’s Union (BAPU), which was the ally of the communists and the Fatherland Front, as the social movement. But the multi-party system was relative, as the Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP) held the power. Since the 50s of the 20th century the political opposition in Bulgaria was absent. So, the return to this political institution revealed many problems in the 90s of the 20th c. The multi-party system which was invented, fictitious and just kept up appearances of the BAPU and the Fatherland Front significance, led to the fact that the BCP was at the head of the parliament, politics and all other social structures. The unification of the state and the communist party precluded the autonomy of the individual.

The post-communist epoch confronted Bulgaria with the problem of accelerated modernization and the necessity of civil society development. It was vital to help out the country of the social and economic crisis. If till 1989 pre-reform social order was based on the absence of civism and political democracy and was carried out in the frames of central planned economy, then democratization at the beginning of reconstructing was understood as formation of civism, political democracy, new institutional norms and markets. But expectations for rapid changes were illusive; they did not take into consideration their previous experience.

For several times since the late 19th c. Bulgaria has started implementation of radical reforms, which were to have led the country to the cardinal accelerated development. But all the attempts failed. In accordance with a number of Bulgarian researchers’ observations, the attempts to overcome the antagonism between the strengthening of social and economic interests, which characterized the early stages of modernization, and the necessity for various social strata representation in the authorities, which is vital

for democracy, failed.

The mission of modern parliamentarianism is to soften social confrontation and to widen civilized forms of various social strata. To some extent it is embodied in the work of the Bulgarian parliament. Only at the end of the 20th c. for the first time in the Bulgarian history, rights of a personality, his/her dignity and safety were proclaimed the highest state value in the new Constitution (July 12, 1991). But there is a long gap between the declaration of aims and tasks, and their practical realization. And even after a quarter of a century many researches still skeptically appraise the approaching to the solution of these tasks. It is necessary to highlight that at the beginning of transformation (1989) civil society in Bulgaria was just reviving. The society was socially homogenous, as the social differentiation had just begun, and the group identification was absent. Many Bulgarian researchers state that revolutionary changes took place in the country where there were no revolutionary conditions, but where the crisis of legitimacy began and which overgrew into the political crisis that formed new rules of the game.

Till the end of the 80s the Bulgarian society was dissatisfied with some members of BCP's political-bureau and government, but not with the regime in general. The Bulgarians quite understood the growth of the economic crisis and inefficiency of the "cosmetic reforms" carried out by T. Zhivkov's regime and inability of the leading class to sustain the crisis. Social and economic transformation as "the revolution from the top" was implemented by the supreme party elite in their own interests. This elite was the only group who had clearly defined group-consciousness, based on the safeguarding their privileged status. Social breakdown took place when the former Bulgarian communist elite exchanged their political power for leading economic positions and privileges that could happen only in a weak society, which hadn't had time to form its group interests. The wave of the meetings in Bulgaria during the first years of transformation showed the desire to change the political system. The establishment of the democratic parliament institution helped to change the unconstructive street confrontation for the struggle of political and social interests in the institutional frames of representative authority.

At first the tasks of transformation were to weaken the absolute control of the BCP, which was in power, and to create the balanced authority made of various social groups. The Constitution (1991), which legalized social and economic changes in the country, had been preceded by the talks between the opposition and the BCP during the round table conferences (first part of 1990).

26 oppositional political groups and movements took part in creation of the new rules of political cooperation. During the talks between the BCP's elite (later renamed into the BSP) and the opposition, represented by the Union of Democratic Forces (the UDF), which had got stronger in various discussions, the agreements as to the principles of the subsequent democratic system and security assurance for the BCP's elite were achieved. Many UDF's representatives later on became leading politicians in the country. The draft of the law on the recognition of the multi-party system was made up in spring 1990 at the round table conferences. Political pluralism was consolidated in the Constitution in 1991 and later the laws on political parties and regress of the BCP's property into the state's ownership were approved.

The role of the round table, which was in the origins of the country's democratization, more and more draws the attention of the Bulgarian researchers. Its work was stipulated not only by the BCP's position but also by the increasing social tension and the process of young democratic power formation, which, for a long time, hadn't had an opportunity to be in opposition.

From its beginning the process of transformation in Bulgaria was moving towards democratization and parliamentarianism, as the system of governing that presupposed the existence of the multi-party system in the society and the opposition to the ruling majority in the legislative body, which creates the foundations of the talks as a subsequent governing tool. Even before the legislating formation of the new regime with the help of the constitution, the round table conference helped to work out the principles of the future democratic system.

Its meeting was presupposed by the political crisis, which occurred after the resignation of A. Lukanov's socialist government in the late 1990. The practice of holding round table conferences as a mechanism of political crisis solving was fixed in the Bulgarian constitution: the Advisory National Security Council, headed by the president of the country, was created. The experience achieved during the negotiations between the political elites was further used in the parliamentary practice. The subsequent development of the democratic processes is stipulated by the so-called "agreement" between the supreme party elite and politicians-democrats. There was a differentiation of labor between them: political language was developed by the intellectuals and structural reforms were carried out by the old political elite, which did not forget about their own interests in the new social and economic conditions. P. Cabakchieva

states that the success as to the fundamental ideological issues was achieved during the round table conferences, but the mechanisms of their maintenance were not worked out and this slowed down the pace of the reforms, especially in the economy of Bulgaria.

The broadened composition of the parliament – the Great National Assembly established the parliamentary republic in Bulgaria and according to the constitution of 1991 the parliament is a legislative body, the government is the executive body and the president is the mediator between these political institutions. H. Bliznashki states that the problem of achieving the balance between the separated authorities is a key issue not only for Bulgaria but also for any normal parliamentary system, and the history of parliamentarianism is a search for the magical formula of maintenance of the stable balance between the parliament and the government. The search for this formula is complicated as in practice, the centre of balance in the state politics constantly changes and the close cooperation between all spheres of authority in ensuring the legal regulation of social processes is necessary.

Representative democracy in Bulgaria as a form of mediation between the civil society and the state. Revealing the thesis given in the subtitle, it is necessary to mention that ideally the national representatives' activity should be aimed at achieving social benefit. But the Bulgarian reality differs from the ideal model. Parliamentary democracy, which revived in the late 20th c., now is in the process of formation, when party structures have not stabilized yet, and the inner-party splits are real both for the historical parties and the leading parties of the transitional period – the UDF and the BSP. It influences the parliamentary activity as the parties do not represent the interests of the wide strata, but “serve mainly the interests of the elite and a part of middle class, assuring the stability of a new more democratic system for the others”.

The Bulgarian parliament, or the National Assembly, is a single-chamber system, which is elected once in 4 years among 240 deputies, who represent various political parties, which surmount 4% barrier during the elections. The control over the activity of the parliament as a legislative body is taken by the president with the help of veto and the Constitutional Court, which can abolish any adopted law. The parliament plays a key role in formation, structuring and changing of governments, decision making processes as to national referendums, approving state loans, ratification and termination of the most important international agreements, declaring military situation. While

forming the government, the parliament chooses the prime minister. The parliamentary majority offers its candidate for the position, and then the head of the government forms the cabinet. As the government must have the vote of confidence from the parliament, it is elected by the parliamentary voting. This circumstance limits the capabilities of the cabinet's head to change the composition of the government.

The parliamentary system of Bulgaria depicts the idea of rational parliamentarianism, when the constitutional system has judicial techniques to keep stability and power of the government when there is no parliamentary majority. The relationship between the government and parliament is revealed in their cooperation in carrying out the functions of each other and controlling each other's work. The Bulgarian parliament controls the government's activity by means of classical techniques of requests and inquiries. But if the time for the deputies' requests and inquiries is limited and the deputies' speeches are restricted to the short statements concerning the certain problem, then there is nothing of that sort as to the ministers' answers. This circumstance let the latter have the advantage in the course of discussion. Such type of parliament's work presupposes transition to the general consideration of a case after the concrete inquiry, including 1/5 of deputies. The parliamentary opposition has a right of discussion the problems concerning the governmental activities, but it is extremely limited by the majority's will, and the position of parliamentary groups is not taken into consideration.

The parliamentary opposition has a right to cause the dissolution of the government by raising the issue of no-confidence to the government. The right to raise the issue of no-confidence can be achieved with the help of 1/5 of deputies, i.e. 48 persons.

Qualified majority is necessary for the government to be resigned. In case, when the parliament expresses no-confidence to the prime minister and the cabinet of ministers, the cabinet loses its powers. If the parliament does not support the issue of no-confidence, then voting as to this matter can be held only in 6 months. This norm allows defending the government from constant parliamentary attacks. The national assembly can raise the issue of both overall governmental policy and just a concrete case. While voting it is enough for the government to get simple majority, for the decision to be taken for its benefit. Though, according to the Constitution the parliament is the highest power in the country, the executive branch, represented by the government, from time to time becomes the centre of all powers in the country and this, to the point of view of many political scientists,

diminishes parliament's responsibilities, but does not change the model of the authorities.

The main function of the parliament is a legislative one. Every deputy has a right of legislative initiative. The same right has the ministers' council as a collective body and the president. The activity of every composition of a parliament since 1989 has its own peculiarities, but among them we can single out the work of the 36th National Assembly (1992-1994). Reinforcement of the right powers, liberal politicians from the oppositional UDF activated parliament's work in the sphere of adoption laws, which contributed to the cardinal changes in the life of the Bulgarian society. The results of the elections did not guarantee majority for any political power. The confrontation that took place between the BSP and the UDF during the pre-election battles went on inside the parliament and as a result of this 220 laws and 272 decisions were adopted. Among them one can single out a number of laws which accelerated the changes in the political and economic systems of the country. This composition of the parliament adopted the Law on transformation and privatization of the state and communal enterprises, and a number of restitution laws: the laws on renewal the ownership right in the sphere of trade (shops, workshops, storehouses, tailoring shops), the law, according to which the movable and immovable property of the BCP, the BAPU, the Fatherland Front, the YCL, trade unions etc., which had been received by them after September 9, 1944, was returned to the state ownership.

In the parliamentary republic of Bulgaria the president's prerogatives are strictly limited. The relations between the Bulgarian parliament and president are based just to guarantee the independence of the legislative body. The date of convocation of the parliament is fixed in the Constitution. The Bulgarian president cannot dissolve the parliament ahead of time. He can use his right of dissolving the National Assembly, which is backed up by the parliament, only in the case when all constitutional opportunities as to the government formation are confined. At the same time according to the constitution, he is obliged to specify the date of the new parliamentary elections. In order to avoid the development of the parliamentary crisis into the general political crisis, the parliament cannot be dissolved during the last 3 months of the presidential powers. Such immunity of the parliament has its negative side, it can cause a situation when the composition and work of the parliament do not satisfy the society, and the effective government cannot be created.

The institution of the president is a subject of controversy and doubtful interpretations. The constitutional status of the head of the country presupposes his active role in the political life of the country. Being the highest official, he plays the role of a person who unites everyone, the role of a peculiar republican monarch. Researchers, in their theoretical investigations, sharply criticize this presidential function of a referee due to its ambiguity and indeterminacy. Arbitration function of the president is interpreted in the following ways: 1) the head of the country – the highest instance, who takes final decisions; 2) the head of the country, who maintains neutrality, does not interfere with the political game while its rules are not violated. The last interpretation is close to the idea, which is mentioned in the Constitution of Bulgaria. According to it, there is no way to create the presidential authoritarian regime. On the whole, the efficiency of the president's interference with the politics depends on his authority and action pattern more, than on his constitutional powers.

The institution of the president is assessed by the Bulgarian researchers in different ways: some believe it to be a weak and powerless one, other appraise the president's powers as temperate, which correspond to the president's place in the parliamentary republic. In most cases the president's interference with these or those issues is judicially based, but in general its powers has moral character, which allows the president to give recommendations and make demands on other authoritative bodies, namely to address to the Constitutional court. Active role of the president in the process of politics formation is ensured by the political acts, such as address to the nation and to the parliament.

The relations between the president and the parliament in the Bulgarian parliamentary republic are built just to guarantee the independence of the parliament. The date of convocation of the parliament is fixed in the Constitution. Newly elected parliament is convened by the president not later than in a month after the elections. If it does not happen, then 1/5 of deputies is enough to convene the parliament. According to the Constitution, in case when, the agreement as to the government formation is not reached, the president appoints acting government and dissolves the parliament, fixing the date of the new parliamentary elections. This is the only case which allows the president to dissolve the parliament. Such immunity of the parliament is believed to slow down the recovery from political recession and that is why, it is necessary to mention in the amendments to the Constitution, the procedures, which will give an opportunity to renew the parliament quickly.

The relations between the president and the government escalated when the odds in the National Assembly were in favor of left or right forces. In 1992 president Zh. Zhelev criticized F. Dimitrov's government. Both political leaders belonged to the Union of Democratic Forces; Zh. Zhelev was the first UDF's head, and F. Dimitrov took up this position later. Being the head of the country, Zh. Zhelev pursued a policy, aimed at maintaining the balance between various social groups and achieving the national harmony. The cabinet of right forces due to its extremism created some tension in the country, and therefore caused sharp criticism on the part of extra-parliamentary opposition of trade unions.

In 1995 the confrontation between two authority institutions was extremely escalated, when the socialistic government tried to limit the president's power. Zh. Zhelev offered to amend the Constitution by broadening the power of the president. But he was accused of attempts to create dictatorship, interfere with the work of the parliament and government, and control the work of the Constitutional Court. The struggle in the parliament affected the legislative activity. The president used his right to return laws as requiring improvement. The presidential amendments concerned those laws, which were aimed at establishing a non-communistic country. The parliamentary majority, consisted of the socialists, ignored all Zh. Zhelev's amendments.

After a decade of the right politicians' presidency (Zh. Zhelev, P. Stoianov) since 2001 the socialist H. Pirvanov twice has been elected as president of the country. He came out for stoppage of the struggle between the authoritative institutions and believed that it was possible to achieve stability, if the power was divided between the authoritative bodies, but not in case of their separation or confrontation. In 2011 Rosen Asenov Plevneliev was elected as president. The fifth president of Bulgaria is a politician and entrepreneur. He was a minister of regional development in the centre-right government CEED (Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria). In economic policy the president stands for the tax lowering, business maintenance and budget gap reduction. Someone believed Plevneliev's victory as a step towards strict economic reforms but it did not happen. The president carries out his responsibilities and does not interfere with the work of the parliament.

Thus, it should be mentioned that stabilization of the state institutions includes statehood strengthening guarantees. The relationship between the government and parliament is revealed in their cooperation in carrying out the

functions of each other and controlling each other's work. Mutual threat of losing their power by all authoritative bodies is aimed at maintenance of balance between them and at creation of preconditions for constructive cooperation. The Bulgarian parliament controls the government's activity by means of classical techniques of requests and inquiries.

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30.09.2014