

# **Upper Houses in Bicameral Parliaments: Roles, Reforms & Trends**

Masterthesis Comparative Politics

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## **Abstract**

This thesis is about the usefulness of upper houses in modern parliamentary systems. In certain developed countries the upper house has been abolished in the period since 1945. Additionally, in several other countries abolition or reform of the upper house has been an active point of political discussion. This research focuses on what makes an upper house effective. Furthermore, this thesis explores what causes countries to abolish or (re-)establish an upper house. This thesis encompasses a literature study and empirical research in order to find out theoretical aspects of upper houses and upper house reform and whether these aspects can be found in reality. Macro-level empirical research is done on aspects of bicameral and unicameral parliaments of 36 countries. Micro-level empirical study is done on the political discussion on parliamentary reform in four cases (Ireland, the Netherlands, New-Zealand and Sweden). In the conclusion, it is found that upper houses can still have their uses, especially in larger countries with regional minorities, if given a strong degree of powers. In smaller countries or countries with weaker upper houses, senates can still play an important reflective or lesser legislative role. In the case studies, no single argument or causal path for wanting to abolish the upper house could be found. Reasons for reform were discovered in both intra- and extra-political categories and both 'rational choice' and 'institutionalist' categories.

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## 1. Introduction

This thesis is about bicameral parliamentary systems, specifically upper houses and why countries reform. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century through the 1950's bicameralism was the dominant form of parliament in sovereign countries, but in modern times over three-fifths of countries have unicameral systems (Massicotte, 2001). Some countries in the developed 'western' world, such as New-Zealand in 1951, Sweden in 1970 and Iceland in 1991, abolished their upper house. Yet, according to Massicotte (ibid.), since the 1980's only six upper houses in total were abolished, while eleven were restored and 14 new ones were created. Unicameralism has dropped from 68% in 1980 to 64% in 2001. Since the 1980's bicameral legislatures have thus been established more often than they have been abolished. On its own, this does not per se mean that there is no movement towards unicameralism in some regions. It has been a point of discussion in many countries, including those in the developed world. Ireland for example, held a referendum on abolition of the upper house in 2013 (which was ultimately rejected by a small margin) (Elections Ireland, 2014). In Canada the Senate has long been an issue, with some parties wanting to reform and modernize their currently appointed and unlimited term upper house, while others seek abolition (CBCNews, 2007). In the Netherlands, upper house reform has been a point of discussion several times since the second world war with four committees and conventions discussing points for reform. Recently in 2014, several politicians have said to start looking into possible reforms for the upper house again as part of a larger informative research into parliamentary reform (Eerste Kamer, 2014d). The subject is currently relevant, because switches between unicameralism and bicameralism still take place and because upper house reform (or abolition) is an active point of discussion in several countries.

There does not appear to be a clear single reason for when and why countries want to switch. Reforms seem to happen often when a country becomes unstable, or exits a period of authoritarian rule. However, even in Western countries where there has been no instability (political or otherwise), abolitions of bicameral legislatures have occurred (IPU, 2014; Massicotte, 2001). Reasons given are often that upper houses are not necessary, outdated and anti-democratic, meanwhile only costing money. Society and technology are changing (IPU, 2006). It is easier than ever to gather information and to communicate. Why is a reflective or regionally representing upper house still worth the cost? Other reasons for reform used outside the context of bicameral reform, as they exist in other fields of parliamentary or electoral reform (ibid.; Leyenaar & Hazan, 2011; Katz, 2005), may be useful. Yet, as shown above, not all countries agree that unicameralism is better and switches are being made in either direction. A switch back to bicameralism after adopting

unicameralism have been made less often, especially in the Western countries. There also is not as much literature, data and media attention on countries rejecting to switch to unicameralism compared to the abolition of bicameralism. As such it is not easy to identify trends in the adoption of bicameralism or unicameralism at first glance. Bicameralism appears to have the Upper Hand for now according to Massicotte (2001), but the difference is small. Furthermore, one could question whether this 'equilibrium' exists everywhere or only in certain parts of the world.

The aim of this research is to find out why countries switch between uni- and bicameralism, whether the current equilibrium between these two forms exists and why it exists. In developed countries such as Canada, Ireland and the Netherlands it is currently an active discussion, even though reform has not (yet) taken place in these cases. This essay will deepen our understanding of parliamentary reform. This research will thus be looking at the current feasibility of upper houses and specifically what causes countries to switch, or wish to switch, between unicameral and bicameral systems. The research question of this paper will therefore be:

*Is the upper house of parliament outdated or does it still have its uses, and what causes countries to switch from a unicameral parliamentary system to a bicameral parliamentary system and vice-versa?*

The subquestions of this paper are:

- What is the difference between unicameralism and bicameralism?
- What is the role of an upper house in a bicameral parliament?
- What are the possible reasons for parliamentary reform?
- How many unicameral and bicameral countries exist, what are the characteristics of these countries and is there a trend towards uni- or bicameralism?
- What are the actual causes that make countries switch between unicameralism and bicameralism?

In order to answer the main question and subquestions, this thesis consists of two parts. The first part entails answering the first part of the research question: *"Is the upper house of parliament outdated or does it still have its uses?"* Chapter 2 and 3 are literature studies that will try to answer the first two subquestions. The final answer towards the first part of the main research question will be given in the conclusion in chapter 8.

The remaining part of this thesis is about answering the second part of the research question: “*What causes countries to switch from a unicameral parliamentary system to a bicameral parliamentary system and vice-versa?*” Chapter 4 is a literature study into possible reasons for reform and its framework will be used for the second part of this thesis. Chapter 5 outlines the methodology, operationalization and the selection of cases and indicators. Part 6 focuses on macro-level empirical data. A basic overview of all IPU parliaments is provided and it is shown whether they are unicameral or bicameral. Second, an updated list of all establishments and abolitions of upper houses since 1945 is presented, in order to be able to show possible trends, whether Massicotte’s equilibrium still exists and whether this situation is the same for developed countries. Finally, a database is provided showing political aspects of bicameral and unicameral systems in 36 developed countries. Chapter 7 entails four in-depth case studies: the abolition of bicameralism in the cases of Sweden and New-Zealand, and the discussion about abolition in Ireland and The Netherlands. This way macro-level data from chapter 6 and micro-level data from chapter 7 will be gotten. With these case studies specific causes and paths for reforms or lack of reforms will be identified. Chapter 8 provides the final conclusion to both parts of the research question.

Note that, to remain clear, this thesis will use ‘upper house’, and ‘senate’ interchangeably for one chamber and ‘lower house’ for the other chamber. The meaning of ‘first’ and ‘second’ chamber may vary as in some countries the first chamber is referring to the upper house, while in others it can refer to the lower house. One final remark: Massicotte (2001) shows that within bicameral federations, states often only have unicameral systems (or varying situations across states) themselves. While an interesting point to look into, and possibly being unicameral or bicameral for similar reasons as autonomous countries, this study will only focus on the political systems of national parliaments.

## **2. Unicameralism and Bicameralism**

This chapter explores the role of parliaments in representative democracies. This research will examine differences in the roles of both upper and lower houses in different types of political systems. Distinctions on the aspects of legitimacy, power and the relationship with the executive are looked at. Finally, the effects of unicameralism or bicameralism on stability and turnout are explored. In this chapter the first subquestion, *“What is the difference between unicameralism and bicameralism?”*, will be answered. This chapter is divided into two subchapters: the aspects of unicameralism and bicameralism are discussed in part 2.1, whilst the effects of having either uni- or bicameralism are shown in part 2.2.

### ***2.1 Aspects of Unicameralism and Bicameralism***

Tsebelis & Money (1997) describe variations in bicameralism in terms of the characteristics of size, legislative term of office, turnover, membership, representativeness and institutional power. In this part, three aspects in particular are discussed. First, the membership of the two houses: how people become members, selection methods and criteria, and which type of citizens are represented. Related, the concepts of representation and legitimacy are looked at. Second is what power the houses have and what power they have compared to each other. Related to the aspect of power is the third aspect that is explored: the relationship between the legislative power and the executive power.

#### **2.1.1 Membership & Legitimacy**

The IPU (IPU, 2006b) states that upper houses can play an important role in regard to representativeness. In federal states (but also in others), the country’s diversity is often reflected in the composition of the upper house. These upper houses can be tasked with exploring how legislation affects the different regions. In France there is even a representation of expats, currently living abroad. In countries with two chamber systems, the method of selection can be used to guarantee representation of the different cultures, minorities and social groups (ibid.; Bergman et al., 2003).

There is always a difference in the method of selection between upper and lower houses (Tsebelis & Money, 1997), but the two houses usually resemble each other’s composition in proportional systems. As a result, the legislative preferences of these houses are usually similar. The

result is that countries with these kinds of systems are usually called ‘insignificant’ bicameralism (Lijphart, 1984; see part 2.1.2), due to similar outcomes. This does not mean that the outcome is always insignificant in reality. Opinions within parties may vary and opinions of upper and lower houses may be different, even with similar compositions. In majoritarian systems districts of representatives in the upper and lower houses may vary, for example because of a differing number of representatives in the houses, therefore opinions of legislators may vary as well (ibid.). As such, upper and lower houses that have similar compositions may still disagree over issues. Lastly, the so-called decision-making rules can differ between houses. An example is the United States, where the senate can effectively block legislation by filibustering, unless a three-fifth majority votes to end it. This filibustering does not exist in the U.S. House of Representatives and is thus a possible explanation of difference in outcomes between upper and lower houses even when composition and preferences are similar.

A concept related to membership is legitimacy. Of importance for the legitimacy, is the amount of direct citizen input. More direct forms of electing the members of the upper house by the citizens lead to a higher legitimacy and vice-versa (Tsebelis & Money, 1997). However, in many democratic countries citizens often have no direct input in the election or functioning of upper houses. There is a correlation between legitimacy and institutional power of upper houses (ibid.) The upper houses’ degree of direct electoral selection is linked to the degree of institutional power the house has. Directly elected upper houses thus tend to have more powers, often equal to lower houses, than those not directly elected by the citizens. Upper houses that have only members that are appointed or have hereditary seats tend to have only limited powers: in the United Kingdom for example, the House of Lords can only delay legislature. The legitimacy and power of an upper house is thus determined by its institutional structure and method of composition.

There are not only positive things to be said about the legitimacy of upper houses. If there is more than one chamber, a powerful bicameral system can serve to undermine majority rule, for example with vetoes (Ganghof, 2012; Russel, 2001; Bergman et al., 2003). A strong upper house can delay or veto legislative change even if passed by the lower house. When a senate has legislative powers, it may not be seen as truly democratic (in the case that a senate is not directly elected). Also, representation often does not perfectly reflect the composition of the population (Russel, 2001, pp. 449): the average age tends to be higher, possibly due to age restrictions. Hereditary and appointment methods of selection often tend to select upper class and highly educated people. Furthermore majoritarian election systems tend to more often elect men.

## 2.1.2 Powers

Powers between upper and lower houses of parliament often differ. One first important distinction is a house's power over the government (Russel, 2001), which will be further discussed in part 2.1.3. Contrary to lower houses, upper houses often have only the ability to delay legislation. Power over the budget can be even more limited. In some cases, the upper houses can have important powers to block legislation (ibid.; Bergman et al., 2003). One effect of this is that governments are more restrained in trying to enact new legislatures. This will cause delays in itself and make governing executives more thorough before trying to pass a bill. Disputes between chambers can also have the effect of getting the media to focus on the controversial or contentious characteristics of the legislation. Conversely, media scrutiny can also cause powerful upper houses to block, delay or amend legislation. In some cases, where upper houses do not have strong power over legislation, they have greater power over constitutional reforms. In these countries, governments or lower houses can override upper houses when it blocks ordinary bills, but two-third majorities in upper houses are necessary for constitutional reform. This gives upper houses relatively low power in normal legislation, but makes it a sort of constitutional safeguard, demanding that constitutional reform has broad support. In some bicameral countries upper houses are seen as having a lesser role and status than lower houses, which has led some scholars to state that some formal bicameral countries are in fact unicameral in practice (Massicotte, 2001).

Lijphart (1984; Tsebelis & Money, 1997) describes differences in power of houses of representation in terms of relative power of one house compared to the other house. The relative power of the houses compared to each other can be symmetrical, asymmetrical, or somewhere in between. A symmetrical power relation between houses would be that both houses need to be in agreement in order to enact a law, while in a total asymmetry the decision making powers lies in only one house. Lijphart (ibid.) furthermore describes three different forms of bicameralism. 'Strong' bicameral legislatures generally have symmetric power relations between houses and the houses generally have differences in political composition. One effect is that two powerful chambers can cause 'legislative gridlock' (Russel, 2001): legislation is unable to pass as both chamber have differing opinions. The nature of this effect (positive or negative) can vary per bill and depends on which values are seen as important. Even in systems, which do not have powerful upper houses, the upper house may be able to delay legislation. 'Weak' bicameral legislatures have either houses whose composition is, or is determined, too similarly or the power relation between chambers is asymmetrical. A third option, which is called 'insignificant' bicameral legislature, has similar power relations between chambers and the chambers have a similar composition (Lijphart, 1984; Russel,

2001). This form of legislature is thus the opposite of ‘strong’ bicameralism. Table 1 shows this classification.

**Table 1: Significance of Bicameralism**

	Strong Bicameralism	Weak Bicameralism	Insignificant Bicameralism
Power	Symmetrical	Symmetrical if composition is similar. Asymmetrical if composition is dissimilar.	Asymmetrical
Composition	Dissimilar	Similar if power is symmetrical. Dissimilar if power is asymmetrical.	Similar

2.1.3 Relationship with the executive

An important distinction to be made when talking about bicameralism is the different role the upper and lower houses play in either presidential or parliamentary political systems. One considerable difference is about the survival of the government. Lower houses often have power over the government in parliamentary systems. In presidential systems the government is often independent of parliament, and is instead dependent on the (elected) president (Ganghof, 2012; Russel, 2001). The executive cannot dissolve the legislature. In contrast, in parliamentary systems, the executive can have the power to dissolve the legislature and call for (parliamentary) elections. At the same time the executive is dependent on the legislature for its survival and new legislative elections will often be followed by the formation of a new government. Of importance here is that (going back to part 2.1.2) the power of houses over the executives is often asymmetrical. Upper houses generally are not able to hold a binding confidence vote (Russel, 2001). This is generally a result of upper houses being hereditary or indirectly elected, compared to directly elected lower houses. The opposite is true as well: in parliamentary systems, the president is generally able to dissolve the lower house, but unable to dissolve the upper house.

An ‘in-between’ variant could perhaps also be seen. Ganghof (2012) describes a ‘chamber-independent’ government. There are three aspects to this type of government: First, both parliamentary chambers have equal high levels of legitimacy. Second, there must be an upper house with an absolute veto on all legislation. Then there exists a ‘dual legislature’: both chambers have important powers. The third condition is that one chamber has the power to dismiss the cabinet, whereas the other chamber does not have this power. The result of this is that there exists a

government, which does not depend on a majority in both houses, but can survive with the support of one house alone. However support of both houses is needed in order to prevent vetoing of legislation. Important in this system is that both houses matter, but the government does not need both houses in order to survive. Ganghof (ibid.) then creates an alternative classification, based on differences in ‘executive survival’ and ‘executive origin’. In table 2, Ganghof’s classification is shown.

**Table 2: Forms of Government<sup>1</sup>**

<b>Executive survival</b>			
	<b>Fully dependent on assembly</b>	<b>Partially dependent on assembly</b>	<b>Not dependent on assembly</b>
<b>Executive origin</b>			
<b>Popular Executive Elections</b>	[1] Elected Prime-Ministerial (Israel 1996–2002)	[2] Semi-Presidential (e.g. France)	[3] Presidential (e.g. USA)
<b>No Popular Executive Elections</b>	[4] Parliamentary (e.g. Britain)	[5] Chamber-Independent (e.g. Australia)	[6] Assembly-independent (Switzerland)

Table 2 describes the presidential system (type 3) and the parliamentary system (type 4) and all different in-between systems. Important for this thesis are the differences in relationship to the executive that the upper and lower houses can have, in order to correctly identify the role and functions of the upper house and its aspects compared to the lower house.

**2.2 Effects of Bicameralism and Unicameralism**

There are several effects unicameralism and bicameralism have on a country and on the functioning of its political system. Two important effects are stability (Massicotte, 2001; Arretche 2010) and turnout (Carlin & Love, 2013; Stockemer, 2012).

**2.2.1 Stability**

As discussed in part 2.1, having a bicameral system (and thus an upper house) is often said to influence legislation and legitimacy. An upper house often does important legislative work and can have an independent scrutinizing ‘reflective’ role when judging legislation submitted by the

<sup>1</sup> Source: Ganghof, 2012, pp. 5

government or the lower house. Furthermore an upper house can play an important role in representing regions and minorities, protecting them from the 'tyranny of the majority'. On the other hand upper houses have often been attacked on the grounds of being undemocratic. Stability is one of the main advantages of a bicameral system (shown below) and is in a way correlated with selection methods and legitimacy.

Massicotte (2001) shows that unicameral systems are generally more unstable than bicameral systems, with unicameral political systems more often suffering breakdowns. This is not always true, but a trend can be seen. Part of this may be 'correlation, but not causation' as the author shows that poorer (non-developed) countries often chose unicameral systems to save costs. Bicameralism (and multi-party legislature) was something only the Western countries could afford (ibid.). Many of these new unicameral countries were multicultural, but they would not recognize the existence of other cultural groups or regions. An opposite causal relationship with stability can sometimes be established however: bicameralism can disappear, because a country is not stable. When developing countries collapse, new (undemocratic) regimes often set up facade institutions in which a strong upper house is unwanted. Bicameralism works to stop the excesses of the government, especially in countries where the government and lower house majority work closely together (ibid.).

Senates more often block changes that may affect rights of subnational minorities (Arretche, 2010). As such federalism tends to oppose institutional reform: federalism equals a strong upper house and thus preserves the current situation. When bicameralism and federalism are being compared apart from each other, bicameralism is said to be a better predictor of stability than federalism. Regional influence over institutional change is lessened, when under symmetrical bicameralism, since upper houses act as a second institution able to veto legislation. Bicameralism reduces the amount of constitutional amendment, but federalism on its own would not. In asymmetrical bicameral federations, there is not a significant lower rate of institutional reform and protection of the regions (ibid.). The upper house will work as a veto power if, and only if, it has symmetrical powers and its composition and behavior are different from the lower house. If not all of these conditions are fulfilled or there is no upper house, there is no guaranteed constitutional stability and protection of the regions.

Stability itself on the other hand, may not always be enough reason to preserve the upper house. In some bicameral countries, the upper houses functioned but were still abolished (Massicotte, 2001). These countries were recognized as being stable, but they found upper houses unnecessary, costly or anti-democratic. Directly elected upper houses are often seen as having better chances for survival, but this is not always true. Population seems to play a role: the average

population of bicameral states was 47 million in 1996, while it was 24 million for unicameral states. There are however, examples of large and small populations for both systems (Russel, 2001)

In sum, upper houses are seen to be correlated with stability, but the exact relation is unclear. Although a causal relation can be easily theorized, the empirical does not always correspond. Important seems to be the ability of an upper house to act as a 'veto-player', which allows it to decisively protect regional- and minority rights against the tyranny of the majority. If unable to veto, or the upper house is non-existent, minorities in multicultural states can feel unrepresented or repressed. Massicotte (2001) shows that many developing countries did not formally recognize the existence of certain minorities and opted for unicameral systems. Instead of promoting unity these countries achieved the opposite: politics became more fragile and conflicted than it was before.

### 2.2.2 Turnout

Turnout is be influenced by what policies are at stake (Carlin & Love, 2013). Citizens vote more often, the more political influence they have. The more veto players<sup>2</sup> there are, the less policy changes. As such, the more veto players exist, the less there is at stake and the lower the turnout will be. Consequently, switching from bicameral to unicameral systems has an influence on the amount of veto players and should influence turnout (ibid.). When comparing a unicameral system to a powerful bicameral system, the voter has more chance when voting to influence policy in the former than in the latter. This means that in unicameral or insignificant bicameral systems turnout (and thus democratic legitimacy) should be higher than in strong bicameral systems. On the other hand unicameralism can have partisan composition and preference alignment, which may cause supporters of the opposition to not vote, when they think their preference is not in a position to win or their vote does not bring about significant change(ibid.).

Part 2.1.3 looked at the relationship of upper houses with the executive power. This relationship also affects voter turnout. When a country is bicameral, whether the country is presidential or parliamentary is said to have an effect (Stockemer, 2012). Parliamentary systems and presidential systems which hold presidential elections on the same day as parliamentary elections tend to have a higher turnout than presidential systems where elections are not on the same day. Majoritarian or proportional selection of houses is also said to influence turnout (ibid.; Shugart, 2005). In presidential systems, proportional houses have a slightly positive influence on voter turnout in presidential systems non-concurrent elections and a negative impact on concurrent

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<sup>2</sup> Actors and/or institutions that can veto the passing of legislation in the legislative process.

elections. Proportional houses have no impact on turnout in parliamentary systems. Having either a unicameral or bicameral system produced no significant difference.

In sum, the existence of a strong upper house, being a veto-player, negatively affects voter turnout. On the other hand a lower house can be seen by minorities as one big veto-player against them, causing them to not vote. In bicameral presidential systems turnout tends to be higher than in bicameral parliamentary systems. Elections of the executive on the same day as the legislation has a positive influence on turnout, as well as using a proportional election method. Having a proportional house has no influence on turnout in parliamentary systems however. There is no significant difference in voter turnout in having a unicameral or bicameral system. The effect on turnout bicameralism may have and under which conditions are important. A higher turnout of course, means a higher legitimacy as more people participate in political elections. The upper house often suffers from being seen as undemocratic and therefore not legitimate, considerations on turnout should be taken into account.

### ***2.3 Concluding Remarks***

In this chapter the first research subquestion, “*What is the difference between unicameralism and bicameralism?*”, was discussed. Key differences were found on the aspects of membership, legitimacy, powers and the houses’ relationship with the executive powers. The effects of having unicameralism or bicameralism on stability and turnout were looked at. These findings are further discussed later on in the methodology and operationalization chapter (chapter 5). Conclusions regarding the main research question and first subquestion are given in the general conclusion in chapter 8.

From this chapter, several hypotheses can be derived. These will be explained and discussed in part 4.4. The hypotheses are:

- The upper houses that are not directly elected have fewer powers.
- Powerful bicameral systems are more resistant to reform.
- Voters see powerful bicameral systems as less legitimate.

### **3. Upper Houses in Bicameral Parliaments**

This chapter answers the second subquestion: “*What is the role of an upper house in a bicameral parliament?*” The role and characteristics of parliaments is explored first. Second, membership of upper houses is examined. Third, the role and characteristics of parliaments in general are shown.

#### ***3.1 Role and Characteristics of Parliaments in General***

The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) describes several characteristics and attributes of parliaments (IPU, 2006). First, they represent and speak for the entirety of the people. Second, they educate the public and show the public the choices decision-makers have to make. Third, parliaments are a national forum where ideas and policy proposals are discussed and alternative views are looked at. Fourth, as a place for deliberation, parliaments play an important role in bridging differences, both in politics and society. Fifth, they are concerned with the human rights: economic, social, civil and political. These attributes of parliaments are important for a modern, western, democracy. They show respect for the diversity of different cultures (ibid.). They allow discussion between different views, opinions and interests, so that a consensus can be reached. In parliaments there can be a discussion on how to adapt to the future, without destroying past traditions.

Parliaments differ in formal functions. A minimal list of functions parliaments perform is as follows (IPU, 2006c):

- Parliaments make law.
- They do the approval for taxation and expenditure for the national budget.
- They oversee the executive, its actions, policies and personnel.
- Parliaments ratify treaties and check treaty bodies.
- They debate about national and international issues.
- They address and redress grievances.
- They look at and approve constitutional reform.

These formal functions are not sufficient to make a parliament democratic. In order to be democratic as a parliament, five more necessary aspects of exist (ibid.; Strøm, 2003):

- A parliament has to be representative: it has to actually politically represent the diversity of the people.
- Parliaments have to be transparent and open to the public through, for example, the media.
- They have to be accessible to and involve the public and civil society.

- A parliament has to be accountable for its actions. Members of parliament have to be held accountable to the electorate for their integrity and performance.
- Parliaments must be effective: this means that parliaments must be able to adequately perform in compliance with the democratic values and work according to the needs of the people.

In table 3, there is an overview of these functions and powers of parliaments in general. Furthermore there are the necessary conditions required to be considered democratic (2006; 2006c).

**Table 3: Characteristics, Functions and Necessary Conditions of Parliaments<sup>3</sup>**

Characteristics	Functions	Democratic
Representation	Law Making	Representative
Education	Budgeting	Transparency
National Forum	oversight of the executive	Accessible and involving
Bridging Differences	ratification of treaties	Accountable
Human Rights	Debating Issues	Effective according to
	Addressing grievances	people's will
	Constitutional Change	

Massicotte (2001) describes four features, which have played important roles in explaining the evolution of parliaments into unicameral or bicameral systems. First is federalism: in federal countries there is often a bicameral system so citizens can be represented by both region and by population size. Second, countries with smaller populations more often have unicameral systems, whilst countries with a larger population more often have bicameral system. Similarly is the argument about size (surface): in smaller countries the population is more concentrated in a smaller area than in larger countries, making a regional upper house not as necessary. Fourth, a country being a stable democracy will more often be bicameral (further discussed in part 3.2.1).

### ***3.2 The Upper House***

In this section, what an upper house is and what it does is described. First the role of upper houses will be looked at (3.1.1). Second, the way its members are selected will be explored (3.1.2).

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<sup>3</sup> Sources: IPU, 2006; 2006c

### 3.2.1 The Role of Upper Houses

Parliamentary chambers can have a reflective role. Upper houses often have reduced power compared to lower houses (as seen in part 2.1), but they can still have an important role in reviewing legislation. The lower house is often more directly 'connected' to the government (voted a government into power and crucial for its survival in parliamentary systems) making them weary about truly opposing their executives as they need to support the same government (Russel, 2001). This hampers the lower house in its role to control the executive. Upper houses often do not have this problem and can act as a balance against the executive. Upper house members from coalition parties can have an easier time speaking against government legislation than lower house members. The upper house can therefore act as a scrutinizing forum for legislation and play a reflective role, strengthening parliamentary control. Upper house terms of office can also be longer, making members less susceptible to pressure from electors (citizens in direct elections, their political party in indirect elections) (ibid.). An age limit is in place in several countries and methods of selection may favor independents, which may also cause an upper house to be more detached to the lower house and government. Finally, a lower house's smaller size may increase inter-party communication and understanding.

An upper house can also serve to represent different interests compared to those represented in the lower house (Russel, 2001; Bergman et al., 2003). In the past an upper house represented the upper class, whilst the lower house represented the lower class (e.g. the British House of Lords and House of Commons). In contemporary politics, the difference between interests may still be an important distinction. Upper houses can safeguard against an elected 'tyranny of the majority' in elected chambers (Russel, 2001). This protects minority groups against the majority. In federal systems, representation in upper houses is based on the federal states, but regional representation often is also present in unitary countries (Tsebelis & Money, 1997; Russel, 2001).

A last feature is that upper houses can have entirely different duties than lower houses (ibid.). There are more politicians in bicameral systems in total than if there had been only a single house. This means that they can undertake more tasks. Upper houses often perform the detailed legislative work, whilst lower houses debate about bill's principles and related politics. If there is a different method of selection between the houses, one of them can be less pressured by the electorate (usually the upper house). Similarly upper house members can be less responsive to the media and their respective political parties (and sometimes to the executive, as seen in part 2.1). The result is that upper houses often make many sorts of amendments to government bills. They can also easier raise controversial issues, which due to the media and the electorate may be difficult for lower house members to handle.

### 3.2.2 Membership and Selection of the Upper House

Electoral systems may vary from for example single-member districts to proportional representation (Tsebelis & Money, 1997; Bergman et al., 2003; Russel, 2001). The lower house in western-like modern democracies is always directly elected, with each citizen having one vote, and thus having a high degree of legitimacy. However, the selection method for upper houses varies. Differences occur on two specific attributes: the method of selection and the type of representation. On the method of selection four specific types exist (Tsebelis & Money, 1997, pp. 46): hereditary, appointment, indirect elections, and direct elections. Combinations of these methods are also possible. Hereditary systems, where memberships are passed down through inheritance, were historically common in monarchies, but are now rare. New members were appointed by the monarch. Only in the United Kingdom a partial version of this system remains: the House of Lords. From the hereditary system evolved the 'appointment' system. In this system members were appointed for life with their seats not being hereditary. One reason for this evolution is the possibility to override the prevalent opinion in the upper house by appointing new members, in order to pass certain legislative proposals. Because the seats are not hereditary, the upper house does not become too large and impractical. Apart from being the other selection method for the British House of Lords, this type of selection still exists, fully or partially, in many other countries (Tsebelis & Money, 1997). Lifetime membership is now mostly determined by elected national or regional governments, but appointments by monarch still exist in some countries. In this type of system qualities determining individual's appointments are usually based on length and quality of political service or being an expert in a certain profession. The 'hereditary' and 'appointment' methods, have problems with their legitimacy as they lack direct citizen input and citizens see themselves as the main sources of wisdom in decision-making. The most common method of selection for upper houses is elective, either directly or indirectly (ibid.). In the case of indirect selection of upper house members it is often delegated to members of local governments.

Another difference between upper houses is about who is represented. Often the answer is the same as for the lower house: citizens are represented on an equal basis (ibid.). In countries which are federal the representation is often based on which regions the persons come from (ibid.,; Bergman et al., 2003). The effect of this is often that representation is not equal, as populations are not distributed evenly in the different local regions.

### **3.3 Concluding Remarks & Analysis**

In this chapter the role of the upper house and parliaments in general were discussed. In the conclusion (chapter 8), the way the upper house fulfills the aspects of parliament (table 3) is analyzed. There, there will also be an answer on whether the upper house still has its uses or not.

In chapters 2 and 3, several aspects on parliamentary systems were found. Table 4 gives a short overview of some of the main findings of these chapters.

**Table 4: The Role of Parliaments**

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	Lower Houses	Upper Houses
Selection	Directly Elected	Varies: directly elected, indirectly elected, appointed
Legislative Role	Legislative	Varies: legislative, veto, constitutional, reflective/scrutinizing
Representation	Proportional and/or regional	More often regional.
Relationship with Executive	In parliamentary systems, the executive is responsible to and dependent on the Lower House.	Rarely has a direct say about the executive.

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In the operationalization (chapter 5) typologies of table 4 and this chapter will be used for categorization for the empirical part of this research.

## **4. Parliamentary Change and Reform**

In this chapter, the possible reasons for reforming the parliamentary system are discussed. In order to do this, reasons for changing the political system in general will be looked at. First, the general theories of rational choice and institutionalism are described, so they can be used as categories for arguments for reform. Second, reasons for reforming political systems are shown. The aim of this chapter is to answer the subquestion: *“What are the possible reasons for parliamentary reform?”* Afterwards, the hypotheses of this research are listed and explained.

### ***4.1 Rational Choice and Institutionalism***

Rational choice and institutionalist theories are important in the study of reform. Rational choice theory is about actors making rational choices to maximize their preferences (Levi, 1997; Lichbach, 1997; 2003). The rational choice approach is about how actors behave intently, and create a certain collective aggregate outcome. (Levi, 1997). Although individuals act rational, this does not mean that the aggregate macro-outcome is rational. Rational choice theory thus looks at individuals in order to explain the behaviour of the group (Lichbach, 1997). If behaviour changes it is because the preferences of the actor change. In rational choice theory, preferences are usually defined as material desires.

Institutionalism is about the role of institutions in determining social and political outcomes (Lichbach, 2003b; Hall & Taylor, 1996). Institutionalists look at the relationship between institutions and behaviour, and explain origins and change of these institutions. The most relevant form of institutionalism for this thesis is historical institutionalism. Historical institutionalism is about an asymmetry of power in the functioning and development of social groups (Hall & Taylor, 1996). There is ‘path dependency’: choices made in the past affect which choices are viable for the future and there can be unintended consequences. Historical institutionalists also realize that there may be important factors outside of institutions (e.g. socioeconomic development).

In short, rational choice is about rational actors maximizing their personal preferences, possibly creating a suboptimal outcome. Institutionalism is about the relationship between actors, about past choices influencing what future choices are viable and about what institutions guide actors.

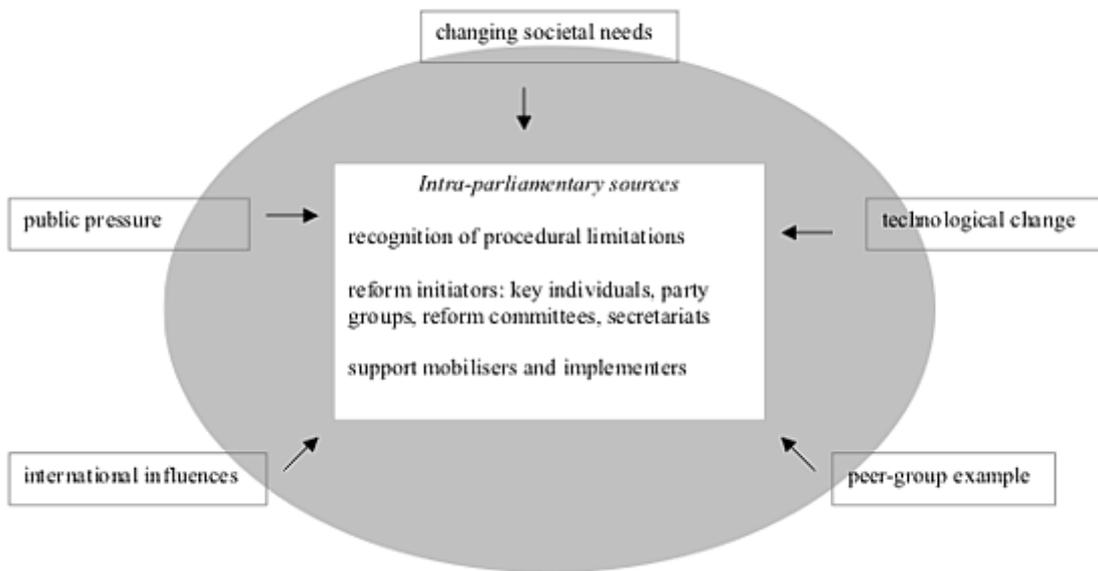
## ***4.2 Parliamentary and Political Reform***

Reasons for reform of parliament and the electoral system will be described in this part, which will be summarized in a single framework later on. Reasons for electoral reform are useful, as a requirement for parliamentary reform is that the 'winners of the game', those currently in power, need to want to change the system they are currently winning.

The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU, 2006) describes five extra-parliamentary 'sources' of parliamentary reform: First, 'changing societal needs'. Changing societies lead to a change in policies and can also lead to a change in how policy-making occurs. The second source is pressure from the public: one common occasion is described as a growing gap between young people and politics, which leads to experimentation on how to increase access to parliament. There are also many other different causes for public pressure to reform. The third source is technological change: television and information technology changes the way parliaments communicate internally and with their publics. International influences are the fourth source: for example within the EU, economic globalization increases the need for parliaments to harmonize legislation. There is also an 'international democratic culture', influencing all countries. Globalization decreases the role of parliaments in controlling the executive in international negotiations. Fifth are the peer-group examples: through bilateral relations, visits, networks and membership organizations parliaments influence each other's processes.

There are also three intra-parliamentary sources of reform (ibid.). First, the *recognition of procedural limitations*. This means that parliament realizes its procedures have limits and that their effectiveness is limited in the context of a changing extra-parliamentary world. Second are the *reform initiators*: this comprises key actors in parliament, which can be both individuals and institutions, whom are willing to reform. Many contemporary parliaments have even institutionalized their reform process through a permanent committee (ibid.). And third, the *support mobilisers and implementers*: the people who influence the support of reform. Figure 1 shows the IPU sources of reform.

Figure 1: Intra- and Extra-Parliamentary Sources of Reform<sup>4</sup>



The IPU (2006) also describes reasons that can forestall parliamentary reform. These are: An unfavorable political or societal context, such as having a large number of political parties in parliament, causing compromise being essential to decision-making, even if it is not always the most efficient or of the highest quality. If forming coalitions is necessary, smaller parties are often essential to govern, but these smaller parties often have different interests than larger parties in the context of proposals of reform. A second reason is an inadequacy of resources and expertise in order to implement reforms. A third barrier are *reform-resistant cultures* in older parliaments or traditional societies. Parties within those cultures may be vehemently opposed to change. Fourth, there may be conflict of interests within parliaments. Lastly, proposals with unintended consequences or which are inadequately tested, may have their support diminished.

Rational choice can be used as a category for reasons for reform. In terms of parliamentary reform parties know about consequences of reform and act accordingly (Leyenaar & Hazan, 2011). This implies that parties expect to win when changing from bicameralism to unicameralism or the other way around, for example through minimizing power of a previously regionally majoritarian upper house. On the other hand parties may not always be sure of the outcome of a reform and therefore be reluctant to change. Who initiates reform can vary: reform initiators can be politicians (executives or legislators), experts or citizen pressure (ibid.). Another reason for reform can be public outrage (Katz, 2005): although it is rarely about the system itself, the system may be seen as symptomatic for

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<sup>4</sup> Source: IPU, 2006

different problems. Voters may interpret reforms as parties trying to consolidate their own power. Parties may take this possible negative interpretation of reform into account. An different reason is that a coalition may think itself electorally vulnerable, even when it is currently in office (ibid.). Public opinion changes over time and reforming the political system may make it easier for a government to remain in power. In the context of bicameral reforms, this could mean wanting to reform, because a party keeps winning lower house elections, but does not win the upper house as it may have a different electoral system (for example regional representation). Parties may use this as a reason to reform the parliamentary system. Next are the values and ideologies, which parties or individuals within parties may take into account (Leyenaar & Hazan, 2011; Katz, 2005). Parties may be willing to change the system in order to achieve other goals. They may trade electoral advantages in order to realize some policy that they may value more than winning elections. Democratic values can be important. Politicians could be willing to reform, because of a genuine desire to improve democracy. A downside of rational choice theory is that parties may act according to preferences, but they may not know what is in their best interest. They may misperceive their chances or could underestimate the strength of their opponents in the new political system. A further reason may be that parties in coalitions may agree to reform, not because their electoral results improve, but because they think that their long-term strength improves. Changing the amount of competition and the mode of competition may decrease competition in general. Finally, it can be about saving costs. For poorer countries especially, bicameral systems were seen as unaffordable (Massicotte, 2001). For other countries this may also be an additional reason for reform. When political actors assume that upper houses do not add much or enough to the political process, abolishing the upper house may be appealing in order to save costs.

There are also arguments that can be categorized as institutionalist. Reforms happen when institutional context changes or existing institution do not, or no longer, function (Leyenaar & Hazan, 2011). It may be so that coalitions are not in complete power and they may have reforms imposed upon them (Katz, 2005). There can also be external factors (to the legislature), like the judicial and executive powers getting involved or referenda taking place. Governments may be forced to take action due to binding referenda. Related to this reason, is that political 'winners' may not be able to govern by themselves. The largest party may be unable to govern without the support of reform-minded parties, and they may be unwilling to pass on the chance to govern instead of being in the opposition. Another category is about diffusion and contagion (Leyenaar & Hazan, 2011), in which elites enact reforms as they've seen in other systems or levels. Legislature on a higher or lower level may be demanding change (Katz, 2005).

Many of these reasons for electoral or political reform can be adapted for use for parliamentary reform, for which a framework will be created in the analysis.

### 4.3 Analysis

In this chapter, possible reasons for wanting upper house reform were explored. This was seen as important in order to find out why states switch between bicameralism and unicameralism. Why would politicians enact political change in the first place? I found reasons for reform to be categorized along two dimensions. First is where the call for change comes from: the IPU had reasons for change that are intra-parliamentary and that are extra-parliamentary. For use in this research, they are now combined with the reasons from other sources in intra- or extra-political categories. The second dimension is about what the reasons are. They can be based on rational-choice or institutions and specifically about things like values, about diffusion and contagion and many others.

Table 5 contains a summary of the discovered reasons for wanting political change, categorized along rational choice & institutionalist and intra- & extra-political lines.

	<b>Rational Choice</b>	<b>Institutionalist</b>
<b>Intra-political</b>	Public pressure	Recognition of procedural limitations
	Politicians expect to win	Institutions do not longer function
	Reform initiators	Reform initiators
	Values & ideologies	Support mobilizers
	Bargain deal	
	Cost saving	
<b>Extra-political</b>	Changing societal needs	International influence
	Public pressure	Peer-group examples
	Referenda	Referenda
	Cost saving	Judicial/executive powers enact reform
		Technological change

Possible intra-political rational choice reasons are politicians wanting change because they expect to ‘win’ in the new system or to lose in the old one. They may want to change in order to maximize their ‘preferences’: their values and ideologies. Or they may use change as a bargaining proposal in order to gain support for some of their other preferences. On the extra-political side we again find public pressure, as it may be the public’s preference to want change, for example because their needs have changed. They may make this want for change know through referenda. On both intra- and extra-political sides we find cost saving as an argument. Both politicians and the public may feel that some processes or institutions are not worth the cost and that they should be abolished.

Institutionalist intra-political sources can be politicians who recognize that policy implementation procedures could be made better or that the current institutions no longer function as intended. There need to be people or institutions willing to initiate or support reform. On the extra-political side, international influence and examples from other parliaments and other actors could influence reform. Sometimes judicial and executive powers can play a role in enacting change. The institution of referenda could bring extra-parliamentary pressure. Finally, context such as technological change can have influence on the functioning of current procedures and possibilities of new ones.

From this chapter, four hypotheses can be derived. They will be discussed in the next part (4.4):

- Countries reform their uni- or bicameral system, because of intra-political rational choice reasons.
- Countries reform their uni- or bicameral system, because of extra-political rational choice reasons.
- Countries reform their uni- or bicameral system, because of intra-political institutionalist reasons.
- Countries reform their uni- or bicameral system, because of extra-political institutionalist reasons.

#### ***4.4 Hypotheses***

Based on the theory in the first chapters of this thesis, the following hypotheses are found:

H1: Countries reform their uni- or bicameral system, because of intra-political rational choice reasons.

H2: Countries reform their uni- or bicameral system, because of extra-political rational choice reasons.

H3 : Countries reform their uni- or bicameral system, because of intra-political institutionalist reasons.

H4: Countries reform their uni- or bicameral system, because of extra-political institutionalist reasons.

H5: The upper houses that are not directly elected have fewer powers.

H6: Powerful bicameral systems are more resistant to reform.

H7: Voters see powerful bicameral systems as less legitimate.

H8: Upper houses are not being abolished more or less often than they are established.

The first four hypotheses are based on the framework created in table 5 (part 4.3). Hypothesis one is based on the idea that politicians want reform. They think reform will be to their (political) advantage, in order to prevent disadvantage or because of sincere values. Hypothesis two entails reform because of changing preferences of society or a motivation of society to act upon these preferences. Hypothesis 3 is about reform because the political system realizes the system is outdated, no longer functions, or could function better. Lastly, hypothesis 4 is about reform, because institutions from outside of the own political system have shown that institutions can function better or because of a change in extra-political context. Which reason for reform belongs in what category may be highly contextual and/or not specific to only one category or hypothesis. For example there are the effects on stability and turnout that were found in part 2.2, that uni- and bicameralism can have. Stability and turnout can both be reasons for politicians to want reform, as well as for the people. At the same time these are indicators of institutional (mal)functioning.

Hypothesis five is based on chapter 2.1, where it is shown that whether an upper house's is directly elected is related to its legitimacy and powers. Hypothesis six is also derived from this chapter: bicameral systems with power are more useful. Being a useful parliamentary chamber, there should be less need for reform. Strong bicameralism also has the side effect that an upper house must agree to its own abolition.

Hypothesis seven is about legitimacy. In part 2.2.2 it was found that there are less voters when there are more veto-players (more actors in the way of direct democratic influence). If there is a powerful upper house there is an extra veto-player, which causes turnout and thus legitimacy of the democratic system to suffer.

Last, hypothesis eight is derived from Massicotte's (2001) findings as stated in the introductory chapter. Massicotte found that there was no clear trend in 2001 of abolitions of upper houses happening more or less often than establishments of new upper houses.

## 5. Operationalization & Methodology

In the second part of this research, I will look at current trends in abolitions of upper houses as well as the reasons that are used for countries to switch between uni- and bicameralism. This chapter adapts the theory of the previous theoretical chapters for empirical analysis at the macro-level (chapter 6) and for case studies (chapter 7). For the macro-level study, indicators of general characteristics and characteristics of parliamentary will be discussed. Chapter 6 explores how many modern parliaments exist and how many of those are unicameral or bicameral, what the differences are between countries' parliamentary systems, and how many countries have switched between uni- and bicameralism. Afterwards, the methodology for the micro-level research in chapter 7 will be discussed. In these case studies specific causes and pathways for switching from bicameralism to unicameralism are looked at. It may further specify what roles upper houses play in bicameral systems.

### *Case Selection*

Chapter 6 focuses on the parliaments of all modern countries. In order to make this research relevant for western countries, the most relevant cases are developed western or western-like countries (preferably democracies). For the research of chapter 6 then, 36 countries listed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) as 'advanced economies' (IMF, 2014) as well as 'high income' members of the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) as listed by The World Bank (World Bank, 2014), are used.

The countries used for the macro-level analysis are therefore: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, the United Kingdom and the United States.<sup>56</sup> The IMF advanced economies of Hong Kong and San Marino will not be listed as the first is not a sovereign country and the second is a tiny city-state.

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<sup>5</sup> Chile and Poland are not IMF advanced economies.

<sup>6</sup> Cyprus, Latvia, Malta, Singapore and Taiwan are not members of the OECD.

## ***Indicators***

An important aspect found is the method of selection: it can differ between the houses. This influences democratic legitimacy and whether regions and minorities are represented. For this aspect, the categories by Tsebelis & Money (1997; as discussed in part 3.2.2) are used: a seat in a house can be hereditary, appointed, indirectly elected or directly elected.

Another aspect related to selection method is what electoral system (if elected) is used to determine the composition of a house. This composition can be majoritarian, 'first past the post' or proportional. Also important is whether there are multiple elective districts or only a single district. Two other specific classifications are the 'alternative vote' (AV) and the 'single transferrable vote' (STV). Alternative vote entails that people, when voting, are able to number candidates in order of preference. Single transferrable vote entails a similar system in which part of a person's vote can transfer to another candidate if the necessary votes for the primary option have been satisfied. In districted proportional systems some countries use 'complex districting'. Complex districting (Lijphart, 1990) is that on a national level the difference in seats in local districts is compensated for when compared to the national vote share.

Table 4 showed that of importance in establishing an upper house's role and power is its relationship with the executive. In part 2.1.3 (table 2), the sixfold classification of Ganghof (2012) was explored. This classification can be used for the more in-depth analysis for chapter 7. For chapter 6, a simplified, more classic, threefold classification of a parliamentary, semi-presidential or presidential system is used. These are also described in Ganghof's classification. In a parliamentary system the executive is dependent on parliament for his or her survival. The executive generally originated from parliament. In presidential systems the president is elected by the people and does not depend on parliament for its survival. The opposite is also true: the president is unable to disband parliament. The president forms a cabinet. In semi-presidentialism, the head of state is directly elected, while the the rest of the government is responsible to parliament (Elgie, 1999; Ganghof, 2012).

Another aspect found in chapter 2 is power. For power, Lijphart's (1984; Tsebelis & Money, 1997) classification is used as previously shown in table 1. Strong bicameralism means symmetric powers between houses and different compositions, weak means either asymmetrical powers or similar compositions and insignificant means asymmetrical power between houses and a similar composition. For the tables of chapter 6, only symmetrical or asymmetrical is used, as the tables will also list differences in composition and selection method, making the strong/weak/insignificant classification redundant. These types will be used however, for the further analysis and in-depth analysis in chapter 7. The macro-level research will be unable to go very deep into details of the

power of upper and lower houses. Thus 'as asymmetrical power relation' categorized are those systems in which one house (the lower one) has significantly more legislative power than the other (the upper house). Crucial, is the existence of the 'veto-power' of the upper house: can the upper house veto legislative proposals by the lower house and is the lower house unable to overturn this veto with a simple majority? In this research, this specific power is used as the most important factor in order to establish whether the power relationship between the houses is symmetrical or asymmetrical. An upper house can have other important powers and roles, but in those cases one cannot speak of the power relationship being equal or symmetrical. The same goes for a symmetrical power relationship between houses in only specific fields (such as the constitution): these are important roles an upper house may play, but overall the power relationship is still asymmetrical. For the tables of chapter 6, I will not go further in-depth in these specifics, but they will be looked at in the in-depth analysis of chapter 7.

The aspects and indicators for the macro-level research are thus the following:

- Currently Bicameral or Unicameral
- Amount of seats of both chambers.
- Term of both chambers
- Method of selection of both chambers: hereditary, appointed, indirectly elected or directly elected.
- Composition: proportional, majoritarian, first past the post, alternative vote or single transferrable vote; single or multiple districts, complex districting or not. This category encompasses electoral system, distribution of seats and the amount of districts, but it will be simply called 'composition' in the tables due to limited space.
- Power of the upper house: symmetrical or asymmetrical, compared to the lower house.
- Relationship with the executive: parliamentary, semi-parliamentary or presidential.

### ***In-depth Analysis***

After the research of chapter 6, several interesting cases for a more in-depth case study in chapter 7 are selected. These countries are Sweden, New-Zealand, Ireland and the Netherlands. At the end of chapter 6, the selection process is further discussed. As these countries are more in-depth looked into, for chapter 6 deeper variants, such as Lijphart's (1984; table 1) strong, weak and insignificant classifications and Ganghof's (2012; table 2) full sixfold classification of parliament's relationship with the executive, of several classifications is used. For these countries, the reasons they could have for

reform are explored (adapted from chapter 4 and table 5): whether change came from inside parliament or from outside needs and pressures, and whether the change was based on rational choice, values, institutions and/or diffusion and contagion. Although the framework classifies the categories as intra- and extra-parliamentary reasons for reform, it is perhaps better to look at them as intra- and extra-political reasons for reform. Lastly, the research will focus on the effects of change: whether stability (adapted from chapter 2.2.1) or turnout (adapted from chapter 2.2.2) were influenced.

In order to find the data necessary, political acts and records, public discussion (for example newspapers and websites), approval scores (surveys) and scientific literature are explored. This research focuses on finding the pathway, arguments and processes undertaken by these countries to reform (or not reform) their bicameral system.

## 6. Bicameralism at the Macro-Level

This chapter focuses on the *“How many unicameral and bicameral countries exist, what are the characteristics of these countries and is there a trend towards uni- or bicameralism?”* subquestion. First, table 6 shows how many uni- and bicameral countries there are. Table 7 shows countries that have introduced and abolished bicameral systems. Table 8 gives an overview of the parliamentary systems developed countries use.

How many political systems are unicameral and how many are bicameral? The Inter-parliamentary Union (IPU) provides data for its 192 members' parliaments. Of these 192 countries, 79 (41.15%) are bicameral and 113 (58.85%) are unicameral (IPU, 2014c). So, over half of parliamentary systems are unicameral. In table 6, these countries are listed. In the operationalization 36 countries were defined as highly developed. Of these countries 18 are bicameral and 18 are unicameral<sup>7</sup>. More info on these developed countries is shown in table 8.

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<sup>7</sup> Taiwan (Republic of China) is not on the list of table 6, but as one of the highly developed countries it is included in this statistic.

**Table 6: List of Bicameral and Unicameral Countries<sup>8</sup>**

Unicameral			Bicameral	
Albania	Indonesia	Portugal	Afghanistan	Jordan
Andorra	Iran	Qatar	Algeria	Kazakhstan
Angola	Iraq	Moldova	Antigua and Barbuda	Kenya
Armenia	Israel	Saint Kitts and Nevis	Argentina	Lesotho
Azerbaijan	Kiribati	Saint Vincent	Australia	Liberia
Bangladesh	Korea (Republic of)	Samoa	Austria	Malaysia
Benin	Korea DPR	San Marini	Bahamas	Mauritania
Botswana	Kuwait	Sao Tome and Principe	Bahrain	Mexico
Bulgaria	Kyrgyzstan	Saudi Arabia	Barbados	Morocco
Burkina Faso	Lao	Senegal	Belarus	Myanmar
Cabo Verde	Latvia	Serbia	Belgium	Namibia
Chad	Lebanon	Seychelles	Belize	Netherlands
China	Libya	Sierra Leone	Bhutan	Nigeria
Comoros	Liechtenstein	Singapore	Bolivia	Oman
Costa Rica	Lithuania	Slovakia	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Pakistan
Cote d'Ivoire	Luxembourg	Solomon Islands	Brazil	Palau
Croatia	Macedonia (FYROM)	Somalia	Burundi	Paraguay
Cuba	Madagascar	Sri Lanka	Cambodia	Phillipines
Cyprus	Malawi	Suriname	Cameroon	Poland
Denmark	Maldives	Sweden	Canada	Romania
Djibouti	Mali	Syria	Chile	Russia
Dominica	Malta	Timor-Leste	Colombia	Rwanda
Ecuador	Marshall Islands	Togo	Congo (DRC)	Saint Luccia
El Salvador	Mauritius	Tonga	Congo (Brazzaville)	Slovenia
Eritrea	Micronesia	Tunisia	Czech Republic	South Africa
Estonia	Monaco	Turkey	Dominican Republic	South Sudan
Finland	Mongolia	Turkmenistan	Equatorial Guinea	Spain
Gambia	Montenegro	Tuvalu	Ethiopia	Sudan
Georgia	Mozambique	Uganda	France	Swaziland
Ghana	Nauru	Ukraine	Gabon	Switzerland
Greece	Nepal	United Arab Emirates	Germany	Tajikistan
Guatemala	New Zealand	Tanzania	Grenada	Trinidad and Tobago
Guinea	Nicaragua	Vanuatu	Haiti	United Kingdom
Guinea-Bissau	Niger	Venezuela	India	United States of America
Guyana	Norway	Vietnam	Ireland	Uruguay
Honduras	Panama	Zambia	Italy	Uzbekistan
Hungary	Papua New Guinea		Jamaica	Yemen
Iceland	Peru		Japan	Zimbabwe

<sup>8</sup> Source: IPU, 2014c

How many times did a country switch between unicameralism and bicameralism and when did these switches take place? Table 7.1 gives an overview. In the 'abolished' and 're-established' columns, countries are listed which have either abolished and/or re-established their upper house in the period after World War II (1945-present). Additionally in the third column are listed those countries which have newly established an upper house in recent times (since the end of the Cold War, 1989-present). Consequently, many of these newly established upper houses are in post-Soviet states. Several of these new newly established upper houses, have already been abolished again: this goes for the upper houses of Burkina Faso, Comoros, Croatia, Kyrgyzstan, Malawi and Nepal.

**Table 7.1: Abolished and (Re-)established Upper Houses<sup>9</sup>**

<b>Abolished</b>	<b>Re-established</b>	<b>Recently Newly Established<sup>10</sup></b>
Burundi (1965)	Burundi (1966)	Afghanistan (2004)
Burkina Faso (2002)		Burkina Faso (1989)
Congo (DRC) (1967)	Congo (DRC) (2006)	Algeria (1996)
Comoros <sup>11</sup>		Comoros
Croatia (2001)		Croatia (1990)
Cuba (1960)		Belarus (1996)
Czechoslovakia (1945)	Czechoslovakia (1969)	Bosnia-Herzegovina (1998)
Denmark (1953)		Cambodia (1998)
Ecuador (1979)		Cameroon
Egypt (1952; 2013)	Egypt (1980)	Chad
Fiji (2013)		Congo (Brazzaville) (1992)
Guyana (1966)		Ethiopia (1995)
Hungary (1918; 1945)	Hungary (1926)	Gabon (1991)
Iceland (1991)		Georgia
Iran (1979)		Kazakhstan (1995)
Iraq (1958)		Mauritania (1991)
Kenya (1966)	Kenya (2010)	Morocco (1996)
Kyrgyzstan (2007)		Kyrgyzstan (1991)
Laos (1975)		Namibia (1989)
Liberia (1980; 1990; 2003)	Liberia (1985; 1997; 2005)	Poland (1989)
Libya (1969)		Romania (1991)
Malawi (2001) <sup>12</sup>		Malawi (1994)
Nepal (2008) <sup>13</sup>		Nepal (1990)
New Zealand (1951)		Russia (1993)
Nicaragua (1979)		Senegal (1998)
Norway (2009) <sup>14</sup>		South Sudan (2011)
Peru (1992)		Tajikistan (1999)
Philippines (1935; 1972)	Philippines (1945; 1987)	Togo
Portugal (1974)		
Serbia (2003) <sup>15</sup>		
South Africa (1980)	South Africa (1983) <sup>16</sup>	
South Korea (1961)		
Spain (1923)	Spain (1976)	
Sri Lanka (1971)		
Sudan (1958)	Sudan (2005)	
Sweden (1970)		
Thailand (1952; 1976; 1991; 2006) <sup>17</sup>	Thailand (1968; 1974; 1997; 2007)	
Turkey (1923; 1980)	Turkey (1961)	
Venezuela (1999)		
Zimbabwe (1989)	Zimbabwe (2005)	

<sup>9</sup> Sources: Massicotte, 2001; IPU, 2014b; Fijian Elections Office, 2013; Muntarhorn, 2009; Senate of the Philippines, 2014; National Council for Law Reporting, 2010; Election Guide, 2014; Council of States, 2014; Sénat, 2014; Sénat, 2014b; Sénat, 2014c; Sénat, 2014d; BBC News, 2008; Al Jazeera, 2014; Sénat de la RD Congo, 2014; Embassy of Afghanistan, 2014; GOSS, 2014; Joys, C., 2013; Sénat, 2014e; Sénat, 2014f; Sénat, 2014g; Sénat, 2014h; Sénat, 2014i; Sénat, 2014j

<sup>10</sup> Chad (1996), Togo (2002), Georgia (1995), Cameroon (1972/1996): These countries' constitutions make provision for the existence of a Senate, but they have not yet been introduced as of 2014.

<sup>11</sup> Introduction and abolishment dates unknown.

<sup>12</sup> Malawi's upper house never fully materialized and was again abolished.

<sup>13</sup> As of writing, there is an ongoing process in Nepal to introduce a new constitution.

<sup>14</sup> Norway was not truly bicameral, but its unicameral lower house split itself in two to act like a bicameral system.

<sup>15</sup> As the successor state of Yugoslavia.

<sup>16</sup> South Africa introduced a tricameral system in 1983, but switched to bicameralism in 1994.

<sup>17</sup> As of writing, Thailand is experiencing a military coup. Subject to change.

Table 7.1 shows that 28 countries have recently newly established an upper house. Of those 28 countries four (Chad, Togo, Georgia and Cameroon) are yet to be realized. One (Malawi) has been abolished before it could be realized. Five others (Burkina Faso, Comoros, Croatia, Kyrgyzstan and Nepal) had been realized, but have also been again abolished. This leaves 18 new and functioning upper houses that have been established since 1989. On the other hand, 40 countries have abolished their upper house since 1945 (or have re-established it since then), of which 16 since 1989. Of these 40 upper house abolitions, 11 have been permanently restored since then. This includes three upper house restorations of countries that had abolished one since 1989 (Liberia, Thailand & Zimbabwe). Since 1989, we have thus seen 18 permanent new upper houses and 13 permanent abolitions leaving us with a net increase of five upper houses. Although there have been many abolitions since 1945, more recent data does not suggest that upper houses are in fact getting less popular.

Table 7.2 shows whether the same can be said about the developed countries. Czechoslovakia is on the list (the precursor to both listed Czech Republic and Slovakia), with an abolition in 1945 and a re-establishment in 1969, but these events happened during its dictatorial communist period. Poland is a recently newly established bicameral country in 1989 (after communism). Spain abolished its Senate in 1923 and re-established it in 1976 (shortly after the death of dictator Francisco Franco). The Scandinavian countries Denmark, Sweden and Iceland abolished their upper houses in 1953, 1970 and 1991 respectively. Norway disestablished the splitting of its single house in 2009. New Zealand, South Korea (during a coup d'état) and Portugal (after the end of its authoritarian regime) also abolished their upper houses in 1951, 1961 and 1974 respectively.

**Table 7.2: Abolitions and (Re-)established Upper Houses in Highly Developed Countries<sup>18</sup>**

<b>Abolished</b>	<b>Re-established</b>	<b>Recently Newly Established</b>
Czechoslovakia (1945)	Czechoslovakia (1969)	Poland (1989)
Denmark (1953)		
Iceland (1991)		
New Zealand (1951)		
Norway (2009)		
Portugal (1974)		
South Korea (1961)		
Spain (1923)	Spain (1976)	
Sweden (1970)		

Table 7.2 shows, similarly to Massicotte’s (2001) claims, that many creations and abolitions of upper houses for the modern countries happened during periods of political instability and regime change. What can be seen is that all Scandinavian countries have switched to unicameralism (Finland already

<sup>18</sup> Same sources as table 7.1

was unicameral). Outside of Scandinavia only New Zealand made the switch towards unicameralism during a period of political stability. After ending their autocratic periods Spain and Poland thought it worthwhile to (re-)establish their upper houses.

Since the total amount of reforms for developed countries is limited, it may not be fair to speak of clearly visible trends. This is especially the case since some of the reforms in table 7.2 happened during an era when some of the countries listed would not have been in the 'highly developed' group. If there is a trend, it may be that for developed countries not much at all seems to happen, and even less so when not taking any of the cases into account in which there had been political unrest prior to creation or abolition of the upper house.

Now, the parliamentary systems of developed countries are explored. Table 8.1 and table 8.2 show data on the 36 developed countries on whether they have a unicameral or bicameral system, and how their specific system works.

**Table 8.1: Parliaments of Highly Developed Countries<sup>19</sup>**

#	Country	Uni/Bi	Members		Term		LH	Selection
			LH	UH <sup>20</sup>	LH	UH <sup>21</sup>		
1	Australia	Bi	150	76	3	6	Direct	Direct
2	Austria	Bi	183	62	5	5 or 6	Direct	Indirect
3	Belgium	Bi	150	60	4	4	Direct	50 indirect, 10 co-opted
4	Canada	Bi	308	105	4	-	Direct	Appointed
5	Chile	Bi	120	38	4	8	Direct	Direct
6	Czech Republic	Bi	200	81	4	6	Direct	Direct
7	France	Bi	577	348	5	6	Direct	Indirect
8	Germany	Bi	598	69	4	-	Direct	Indirect
9	Ireland	Bi	166	60	5	5	Direct	43 indirect, 11 appointed, 6 direct
10	Italy	Bi	630	323	5	5	Direct	315 direct; 7 Appointed; 1 ex-officio
11	Japan	Bi	480	242	4	6	Direct	Direct
12	Netherlands	Bi	150	75	4	4	Direct	Indirect
13	Poland	Bi	460	100	4	4	Direct	Direct
14	Slovenia	Bi	90	40	4	5	Direct	Indirect
15	Spain	Bi	350	266	4	4	Direct	208 Direct; 58 Indirect
16	Switzerland	Bi	200	46	4	4	Direct	Direct
17	United Kingdom	Bi	650	779	5	-	Direct	Appointment, hereditary
18	United States	Bi	435	100	2	6	Direct	Direct
19	Cyprus	Uni	80		5		Direct	
20	Denmark	Uni	179		4		Direct	
21	Estonia	Uni	101		4		Direct	
22	Finland	Uni	200		4		Direct	
23	Greece	Uni	300		4		Direct	
24	Iceland	Uni	63		4		Direct	
25	Israel	Uni	120		4		Direct	
26	Latvia	Uni	100		4		Direct	
27	Luxembourg	Uni	60		5		Direct	
28	Malta	Uni	65		5		Direct; co-opted	
29	New Zealand	Uni	120		3		Direct	
30	Norway	Uni	169		4		Direct	
31	Portugal	Uni	230		4		Direct	
32	Singapore	Uni	99		5		Direct, Appointed	
33	Slovakia	Uni	150		4		Direct	
34	South Korea	Uni	300		4		Direct	
35	Sweden	Uni	249		4		Direct	
36	Taiwan	Uni	113		4		Direct	

<sup>19</sup> Sources: IPU, 2014b; Gallagher et al., 2006; U.S. Senate, 2014; Swissworld, 2014; National, 2014; Senate of the Republic of Poland, 2014; Senato della Repubblica, 2014; House of Councillors, 2014; Bundesrat, 2014; Senado República de Chile, 2014; Senado de España, 2014; Belgische Senaat, 2014; CIA, 2014; Legislative Yuan, 2014; Chamber of Deputies, 2014.

<sup>20</sup> The amount of members of the upper houses in Austria, Belgium, France, Italy, Spain and U.K. may vary.

<sup>21</sup> Length of term for Austria and Germany depend on the region upper house members represent.

<sup>22</sup> Ireland: Directly elected members are elected by university graduates. Slovenia: Members are elected by interest groups.

**Table 8.2: Parliaments of Countries (Continued)<sup>23</sup>**

#	Composition		Power UH	Rel. Executive
	LH	UH		
1	AV, Districted	STV, Districted	Symmetrical	Parliamentary
2	Proportional, Complex districting	Regional	Asymmetrical	Parliamentary
3	Proportional, Districted	Regional	Asymmetrical	Parliamentary
4	FPTP, Districted	Regional	Asymmetrical	Parliamentary
5 <sup>24</sup>	Proportional, Districted (2)	Proportional, Districted (2)	Asymmetrical	Presidential
6	Proportional, districted	Majoritarian, Districted	Asymmetrical	Parliamentary
7	Majoritarian, Districted	Regional	Asymmetrical	Semi-Presidential
8	Half FPTP, districted; proportional, Complex districting	Regional	Asymmetrical	Parliamentary
9	STV, districted	Regional; By LH members	Asymmetrical	Parliamentary
10	Proportional, Single District; 1 FPTP	Proportional, Districted	Symmetrical	Parliamentary
11	300 FPTP Districted; 180 Proportional districted	Proportional, single district; FPTP, districted	Asymmetrical	Parliamentary
12	Proportional, Single District	Regional	Symmetrical	Parliamentary
13	Proportional, Districted	FPTP Districted	Asymmetrical	Parliamentary
14	Proportional, Complex Districting; minority seats	Interest Representatives	Asymmetrical	Parliamentary
15	Proportional Districted	Proportional, districted; Regional	Asymmetrical	Parliamentary
16	Proportional Districted	FPTP Districted (2)	Symmetrical	Parliamentary <sup>25</sup>
17	FPTP Districted	667 Life Peers, 88 Hereditary, 24 bishops	Asymmetrical	Parliamentary
18	FPTP Districted; 1 Majoritarian	FPTP Districted; 1 Majoritarian	Symmetrical	Presidential
19	Proportional, Complex districting			Presidential
20	Proportional, Complex districting			Parliamentary
21	Proportional, Complex districting			Parliamentary
22	Proportional, districted			Parliamentary
23	Proportional, Complex districting			Parliamentary
24	Proportional, Complex districting			Parliamentary
25	Proportional, single district			Parliamentary
26	Proportional, districted			Parliamentary
27	Proportional, districted			Parliamentary
28	STV, Districted			Parliamentary
29	Proportional, Complex districting			Parliamentary
30	Proportional, Complex districting			Parliamentary
31	Proportional, Districted			Semi-Presidential
32	FPTP, districted; minority Seats			Parliamentary
33	Proportional, single district			Parliamentary
34	246 FPTP, districted; 54 proportional, single district			Presidential
35	Proportional, Complex districting			Parliamentary
36	73 FptP Districted; 34 proportional, complex districting; minority seats			Semi-Presidential

<sup>23</sup> Same sources as table 8.1

<sup>24</sup> In Chile two member districts are used in which the winning coalition gets both seats if their vote-share is over 75%. Otherwise the seat distribution is split.

<sup>25</sup> In Switzerland the governing Federal Council together act as a head of state.

From table 8.1 and 8.2 several observations can be made. 18 countries use a bicameral political system, while the other 18 use a unicameral system. As such, in the highly developed group of countries, there is no inherent correlation found between economic development and bi- or unicameralism. The bicameral countries together have 5897 statutory lower house members and 2870 upper house members, showing that on average upper houses have about half as much members than lower houses (48.67%).

All countries directly elect their lower house members (with Malta and Singapore using additional methods). For upper houses the selection methods are a lot more diverse: only 10 out of 18 countries use a direct selection method and of those 10 countries, three use additional methods of selection for a part of their upper house. Indirect democratic election is used in six countries.

The composition of houses is completely diverse. The most popular electoral distribution of seats (listed under "composition") for the lower house is proportional, with 28 countries using it either partially or completely for their lower house. Single transferrable vote, also a system aimed at getting proportional representation, accounts for a further two countries. Majoritarian or 'First Past the Post' methods are used in 9 countries, with 'Alternative Vote' the method of one other country (Australia). By contrast, the composition of upper houses is equally diverse, but often different than that of the lower house. Half (8 out of 16) of the upper houses are composed according to regional representation: they are indirectly selected by regional actors. The other half of the countries composition method is either proportional or FPTP/Majoritarian methods, but they all work with multiple regional districts. Two exceptions are the United Kingdom, which has appointed and hereditary members, and Slovenia, which has an upper house composed of interest representatives.

Lijphart (1984) stated that it was important to see in bicameral systems whether the composition of both houses is similar or not. Of the 18 bicameral systems only Chile and the United States use methods that can lead to a similar composition. The Senate of Spain uses a similar method as the lower house for a part of its composition. Of note is that in neither of these three countries the amount of lower house and upper house members is exactly the same, logically requiring differently bordered districts. Similarly, length of term differs: in Chile an upper house member serves 8 years, while a lower house member serves 4 years. In the United States a senator serves 6 years, whilst a representative serves 2 years. In Spain the length of term is both 4 years however. The average length of term for a lower house is 4.11 years, while that of the upper house is 5.23 years<sup>26</sup>.

Looking at the power of the upper houses, it is found that in 5 out of 18 cases there is a symmetrical power relation between upper and lower houses. In the other 13 cases the upper house was clearly less powerful in legislation than the lower house, most notably lacking veto power over

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<sup>26</sup> Upper house term of Austria used is 5.5 years. Upper house term length of Canada, Germany and the United Kingdom is not taken into account.

proposed legislation. At first glance there does not appear to be the expected correlation (Tsebelis & Money, 1997; part 2.1.1) between selection method or composition and power. Of the six countries identified as having a symmetrical power relation between houses, only three are directly elected by the people (with a fourth, Ireland, having only a small amount of directly elected seats). On the other hand, of the 13 countries classified as asymmetrical, five upper houses are directly elected. There also cannot be any strong conclusions drawn about the relationship with the executive as a measurement of power. Of the bicameral countries only two are identified as 'presidential': Chile and the United States. Chile has an asymmetrical power relation, while the U.S. has a symmetrical one. The only bicameral semi-presidential country is France and it is in the asymmetrical category.

### ***6.1 Concluding Remarks***

In this chapter a general overview of upper houses, bicameralism and parliamentary systems in general was given. From table 6, the conclusion can be drawn that overall unicameralism is a bit more popular than bicameralism in the world (58,85% versus 41,15%). Table 8 however, showed that this is not true for modern developed countries, as they are split 50/50 between unicameralism and bicameralism.

In table 7.1, all abolitions and re-establishments of upper houses since 1945 were displayed, as well as all newly established upper houses since 1989. This table shows us that there is no visible recent trend of abolishing bicameralism. Although there had been many abolitions, since 1989 there has been an increase in the amount of upper houses in fact. This tells us that countries themselves apparently still see the value in establishing upper houses and that more countries are led by the assumed advantages, rather than the assumed disadvantages. New and re-establishments of upper houses outnumbered the amount of permanent abolitions by five.

For the highly developed countries we saw that, with the exception of Scandinavia (which went completely unicameral) and New Zealand, not much reform happened during periods of stability. Of these 10 countries, two re-established an upper house (Czechoslovakia and Spain), and one other newly established one (Poland). It should be noted that all three of these establishments happened either during or shortly after an autocratic period, the upper houses of Czechoslovakia and Spain having been abolished at the onset of their autocratic regimes. This may seem logical, as during stable times reform may not seem necessary, but it may still be of note.

In table 8, the macro-level details of parliamentary systems of developed countries were shown. Upper houses are indeed mostly about regional representation. They are mostly either indirectly elected by regional political actors or directly elected in multiple districts. Most countries do indeed have different composition methods of upper and lower houses and those that do not at

the least have different selection districts or different lengths of term. This means that one half of Lijphart (1984) his requirement for meaningful bicameralism is fulfilled. The other aspect, a symmetrical power relation between houses, is present in only a few countries (5 out of 18: 27.78%).

The expected correlation between power and selection method (legitimacy) is seen in the countries in the scope of table 8. Nine out of 18 developed countries with an upper house had a direct selection method, of which four have symmetrical powers between the houses. In the other countries (with non-direct selection methods) only two upper houses have symmetrical powers compared to the lower house.

## ***6.2 Country Selection for In-Depth Analysis***

To answer the second part of the research question, *“What causes countries to switch from a unicameral parliamentary system to a bicameral parliamentary system and vice-versa?”*, it is necessary to select a few cases for an in-depth analysis. In chapter 6, there were countries that switched from bicameralism to unicameralism, countries that newly established bicameralism, and countries that switched either way and then switched back. In order to limit the scope of this thesis, the case selection is limited to the ‘advanced economies’ and ‘high income’ countries as described in chapter 5 and used in chapter 6, table 7.2 and tables 8.1 and 8.2. Of those cases, four countries will be selected.

The first country is Sweden. Sweden is a typical western democracy and one of the most recent ones (1970) to switch from bicameralism to unicameralism. Other developed countries that made the switch more recently either did so were not truly bicameral (Norway) or reformed when becoming democratic. Iceland also switched in a later period (1991), but is a rather small country that may not be very representative for other (larger or more populated) countries. The second country I will study is New Zealand. New Zealand, like Sweden, switched from bicameralism to unicameralism in 1951 and did not return to it. Like Sweden, New Zealand is a highly developed western country, but unlike Sweden (and Iceland and Norway) it is not a Scandinavian nor a European country. As such, the case of New Zealand may show us a different motivation and result than the first case. Third, Ireland will be looked at. Ireland did not abolish an upper house recently, but in 2013 it held a referendum on abolition which was rejected by popular vote. This makes the case of Ireland the most recent and actual case about the existence of an upper house. Its recentness makes it easier to find data on popular opinion. Last, I analyze The Netherlands. The Netherlands is still a bicameral country, but for several decades there have been public debates on reforming or abolishing the upper house. As it is an ongoing discussion, and has been for a long period, it is a very

interesting case. In 2014 several politicians, including those from governing parties, announced a possible new future research into possible parliamentary reforms.

## 7. Reasons for Parliamentary Reform

This chapter focuses on four in-depth case studies on (attempted) upper house reform. The subquestion “*What causes countries to switch from a unicameral parliamentary system to a bicameral parliamentary system and vice-versa?*” is explored. First, the abolishment of the upper house of Sweden in 1970 is described. Second, the abolishment of the upper house of New Zealand in 1951 is shown. Third, I analyze the case of Ireland and the events surrounding the rejected referendum on abolition in 2013. Lastly, the current situation in the Netherlands, where reforms and abolition have been debated on for several decades, is discussed. In all cases four aspects will be explored: history, functions (of the upper house), reform (attempt) and reasons (for reform). The sources used are not the same for all four cases: due to the fact that reform happened decades ago, for Sweden and New-Zealand sources are mostly academic resources. Since Ireland is more recent, a lot of the information used comes from news articles and recent polling. The Netherlands’ sources are mostly descriptive of previous proposals for reform.

### 7.1 Sweden

Swedish Bicameralism was established in 1865 (Sveriges Riksdag, 2014). The upper house was called the First Chamber and the lower house was called the Second Chamber. The lower house was directly elected, by a limited number of men who owned real estate or paid taxes. Several reforms were passed over the years slowly giving more rights to men and women until in 1919 universal suffrage was enacted. The upper house had different methods of selection and composition. The First Chamber members were selected by indirect election by municipal councilors. Its role was to represent ‘education and wealth’ and as such be a guardian institution against radical elements in the directly elected second chamber (ibid.; Massicotte, 2001). Similar to the second chamber, at first only men with certain income or property were eligible for election. The Swedish upper had symmetrical power compared to the lower house (Massicotte, 2001). This makes sense, because otherwise it wouldn’t have been able to function as intended, as a counterweight to the popularly elected lower house. Its members served 8 year terms.

However, in practice the upper house functioned differently than intended. Sweden’s upper house, instead of being a counter institution to the popularly controlled lower house, became dominated by Social Democrats for a long period (Massicotte, 2001). This domination was so strong that it helped Social Democrats to remain in office, even during periods when they had only a minority in the lower house (after the 1957 lower house elections).

The reform to unicameralism was made because the Swedish Riksdag parliament had conflicting majorities in its houses. Because of the advantage the bicameral system gave to Social Democrats, a wide coalition of parties (including the Social Democrats themselves) came to share the idea of abandoning bicameralism. Sweden henceforth switched to a unicameral proportional system in 1970. Ironically, unicameralism brought its own problems for Sweden as the unicameral house was deadlocked in between two equal party groups in 1973, requiring a lottery in order to decide on proposals (Sveriges Riksdag, 2014). However, in the end there is not any regret in Sweden about the reform (Patterson & Mughan, 1999).

## Analysis

Sweden can be seen as an example of institutionalist reasons. In table 5 in the intra-parliamentary institutionalist category, the 'institutions do not longer function' reason was listed. Sweden's upper house was originally intended to be a representation of education and wealth, and to be opposed to radical elements. Instead of carrying out these functions, it turned into an institution that gave an advantage to one certain party (the Social Democrats), locking out other (moderate) players. This problem was extra important, as the First Chamber had similar (symmetrical) powers compared to the Second and that it could keep a government in power even if the other chamber would not. A democratically elected lower house could be in conflict and blocked by an ('illegitimate') upper house. This made the upper house a strong "anti-democratic" (against the directly elected lower house) element.

An institution no longer being necessary and a change of context were identified as a possible reasons for reform. Sweden's First Chamber's method of selection was indirect election by municipalities. This would, apart from the official role, have given it a function of regional representation. A further, not specified, reason for its abolishment may be the lack of necessity of this function: although Sweden is a rather large country, its population was (and is) relatively low and homogenous. This makes a function an upper house may have, regional representation for certain minorities, unnecessary. As an upper house is a factor in a nation's political stability (part 2.2.1), Sweden lacks certain factors, such as the aforementioned minorities, that could be causes for instability. Sweden's upper house was established during an era (1865) in which Europe faced a lot of popular movements and revolutions. As this European instability had disappeared by the period before the reform, not only did the upper house of Sweden no longer functioned as intended, the original reason, that is prevention against radicalism, had disappeared as well.

There does not appear to have been much debate on the First Chamber after it had been abolished (Patterson & Mughan, 1999; Massicotte, 2001). Furthermore there is no recent discussion to be found on the Swedish upper house. This can be further supported by the turnout rate, which is a good indicator for legitimacy. Turnout for Swedish Riksdag parliamentary elections in 1973 was 90.8% and never dropped below 86% in the 20 years after the reform (Miles, 1997). This confirms that in Sweden, there does not appear to be any regret of abolishing the upper house.

In sum, Sweden's upper house was abolished because of several reasons. It no longer functioned as intended. Furthermore, the original reason for its existence had disappeared by 1970. Also, Sweden does not have a population large or diverse enough to make a representation of regions or minorities necessary. These three institutional reasons are arguments that explain the abolishment of the First Chamber. A direct source that states that reform happened because of a significant public pressure for reform was not found. However, since an argument was that the upper house decided about executive survival when the governing party had only a minority in the lower house, there could have been discontent in the public opinion.

## ***7.2 New Zealand***

New Zealand's upper house was called the Legislative Council and existed until 1951 (New Zealand Parliament, 2014). Its methods and aspects were based on the British House of Lords. Where New Zealand's lower house, the House of Representatives, was (and still is) directly elected, the Legislative Council's members were appointed by the government. As governments appointed the upper house members, they started to fill the Council with their own supporters (a procedure called 'stacking'). This caused conflict between (newly) elected lower house members and upper house members that were appointed by a previous government. The Legislative Council was introduced in 1854 to prevent the House of Representatives from enacting new laws too quickly and to introduce laws of its own. The periods of term of its members were lifelong at first, but this later changed to seven year periods in 1891 (NZHistory, 2014; Massicotte, 2001; Wood, 1983; Kumarasingham, 2010). This gave the government the power to reward and punish politicians by (re)appointing politicians for the upper house or not.

The Legislative Council tried to do active legislative work in the 1860s and 1870s, but it was often in conflict with the lower house (New Zealand Parliament, 2014). After this period of conflict, it often limited itself to amend lower house proposals. During the 1890's, there was a liberal government which was continuously in conflict with the Legislative Council. The government tried to overturn this conflict and stack the council, but this was refused by the governor. The conflict was

resolved when the British Government supported the New Zealand government, making the Council less powerful. Noteworthy is that a reform proposal, to change the selection method and composition of the Legislative Council into direct election with proportional representation, was passed in 1914, but postponed and later dropped because of the first World War (Massicotte, 2001). As the Legislative Council was based on the House of Lords, it could not in the same way represent older and conservative interests or act as a tempering factor. As there was no long ago established aristocracy in New Zealand, possible hereditary members (Lords) would not have been seen as legitimate (Kumarasingham, 2010). The hereditary principle could not work in the settler colonies.

Due to stacking and shorter terms, New Zealand's upper house had been mimicking the position of the lower house for a long time before its abolition and as such the upper house became unnecessary (Wood, 1983; Patterson & Mughan, 1999). Although bicameral, the appointment method and (relatively) short terms, meant a de facto unicameral legislature: "*Abolition of the New Zealand upper house then underlined rather than caused concentration of power in the lower house, the House of Representatives*" (Wood, 1983, pp. 334).

The National Party was the leading actor in the abolishment of the Legislative Council (New Zealand Parliament, 2014; NZHistory, 2014; Massicotte, 2001; Kumarasingham, 2010). The National Party came into government in 1949 and stacked the council with its supporters. This so-called 'suicide squad' in the upper house, would accept the National Party government's proposal to abolish the Legislative Council. At the time nobody was upset about the upper house being abolished (NZHistory, 2014; Wood, 1983): the proposal for abolition and the council itself were neglected by the media, the council itself was unassertive, and the population was uninformed and uninterested. National Party leader and later Prime Minister Sidney Holland was the foremost actor trying hard to enact reform and he used it to attack the sitting Labour government (NZHistory, 2014; Massicotte, 2001; Kumarasingham, 2010). Abolishment was only a minor item in the National Party's overall platform. The strategy used was abolishment first and think whether an alternative is necessary later. National Party politicians thought that if necessary, they could easily create a new upper house. What made change possible in 1949, as opposed to an earlier attempt by Holland in 1947, was being in power and the enactment of the Statute of Westminster (making New Zealand able to amend its own constitution without British consent).

Although interest in the Legislative Council was low during the period it was abolished, there has been discussion in New Zealand over the necessity of some sort of counterbalance on the power of government (Massicotte, 2001; Patterson & Mughan, 1999). There have been studies by parliamentary and election committees in New Zealand about checks on the lower house and the creation of a possible upper house in 1952, 1961, 1964 and 1986 (Massicotte, 2001; Wood, 1983). Former prime ministers Geoffrey Palmer and Jim Bolger were advocates of bicameralism, but

abandoned these sympathies in office, because the public was not enthusiastic. In 1990, only 21% supported the reestablishment of an upper house with 43% being against. Instead reformists focused on making the House of Representatives proportional instead of 'first past the post', which was enacted in 1993.

## Analysis

The British colonizers based New Zealand's upper house, the Legislative Council, on the British House of Lords. The British House of Lords back then mainly consisted of hereditary seats and was a powerful player in legislation (UK Parliament, 2014). This caused the House of Lords to be a conservative institution representing established interests and maintaining the status quo. It was completely independent of the lower house, the House of Commons. This is what Lijphart (1984) would have classified as 'strong bicameralism', as the House of Lords had a different composition and had symmetric powers compared to the lower house. As there was no established nobility in the settler colony of New Zealand, there was no reason to make seats in the Legislative Council hereditary. Thus, at first the peers were appointed for life. Although these life peers were appointed by a sitting government, they would thereafter be independent of government. They may have not been completely neutral in politics, but they were able to formulate and act on their own personal conviction after taking their seats. As such, and being legislatively powerful, Lijphart would still classify this as strong bicameralism. This however, changes when they introduced the seven year terms in 1891: stacking became an ongoing process to put supporters of the governing party into the Legislative Council. These councilors were dependent on the government in office for their seats. Dissident voices either do not appear in such a system, or are easily replaced after their seven year term ends. Strong bicameralism had turned into weak bicameralism: the Council still had the legislative power, but its composition was too similar to (and dependent upon) the lower house. The relationship of the upper house with the executive can best be described as Ganghof's (2012) 'chamber-independent' category. The sitting government was only partially dependent on the assembly (specifically the lower house). Although the case does not fulfill all the other requirements of the chamber-independent category.

As described above, the New Zealand upper house had effectively turned opinionless. The Legislative Council no longer represented any (old) established power or interest, but the current government. As the government in office was also represented by the lower house, the House of Representatives, this made having bicameralism pointless. This pointlessness was a main reason in causing its abolishment.

In New Zealand, there has been discussion on whether bicameralism is necessary or if unicameralism is sufficient. Although nobody really missed the old Legislative Council, arguments have been made on the necessity of an upper house in order to prevent a government having too much power. The statement of the National Party that an upper house could be easily reestablished has not become reality (even though it might be true). There have been many discussions, but the population does not appear to find having an upper house a necessity. Turnout rate in New Zealand had not significantly dropped in the period after abolishing the upper house (the lowest in the period of 1945-1960 being a high 89.1%) and Sidney Holland's National Party again won the general election in 1951 and 1954 (Electoral Commission, 2014; Electoral Commission, 2014b).

In sum, the reasons for reform appear to be a combination of rational choice and institutionalism. Sidney Holland is identified as using the Legislative Council to attack the (Labour) government in office. As such he belongs in the intra-parliamentary and rational choice categories, as he expected to win by reforming (or at least proposing it). The public's (an extra-parliamentary source) preferences also did not entail a necessity of having an upper house, as they did not care it being abolished. They do not want a new upper house to be institutionalized. Institutional reasons were also identified: the Legislative Council becoming 'weak bicameralism', dependent on the government, is an example of an institution no longer functioning. Crossover reasons exist as well: Sidney Holland for example, acted as a reform initiator and support mobilizer. He was institutionalized as a member of parliament, but had the rational choice preference to reform.

### ***7.3 Ireland***

Ireland held a referendum in 2013 to abolish the Senate, but it was rejected by the citizens. The Seanad Éireann is the upper house of the Irish parliament, the Oireachtas. The lower house is called the Dáil Éireann. The Seanad has 60 members selected by three different methods (Oireachtas, 2014). 43 of its members are elected by representatives of vocational interests: Culture and Education, Agriculture, Labour, Industry and Commerce and Public Administration. 6 members are elected by graduates of Irish universities: three by the University of Dublin and three by the National University of Ireland. Furthermore, 11 members of the Seanad are nominated by the Taoiseach (the Prime Minister). Parties do not officially exist in the Seanad, but the selection method tends to create a Seanad with a party strength similar to the composition of the Dáil. This is because the electorate for the group of 43 interest seats are the senators in office, the members of the Dáil and county councilors (Doyle, 2013). The Seanad's role and functions are mainly examining, revising and amending legislative proposals by the Dáil, but the Seanad is also able to take the initiative for

legislative proposals on all subjects except financial legislation and the constitution (Oireachtas, 2014; Doyle, 2013). A Dáil bill can be delayed by the Seanad, although not indefinitely.

On 4 October 2013 a referendum was held on the 'Thirty-second Amendment of the Constitution Bill 2013'. This bill was meant to abolish the Seanad and make Ireland a unicameral country with parliament (Oireachtas) consisting only of the Dáil Éireann (although the president is also part of Oireachtas) (Oireachtas, 2014b). The referendum for abolition was rejected by 51.73% of voters against 48.27% (Elections Ireland, 2014). Turnout was 39.17%.

What were the arguments used for and against the Seanad? Several newspaper surveys and polls were held in order to find out the reasons for voting yes or no. Strangely, all of these polls showed the population being in favor of abolition, with a high amount of people undecided (McConnell, 2013; RTÉ News, 2013; McShane, 2013; Mac Cormaic, 2013). An Irish Times opinion poll showed that arguments in favor of abolition by the people were (in order of popularity) cost, lack of power, superfluity, a wish to reduce the amount of politicians, and the institution being anti-democratic (Beesley, 2013). Another argument was that the Seanad never really functioned as counterweight to the Dáil as it had delayed a bill only twice (the last time being in 1964) (Mac Cormaic, 2013). Of the political parties, Fine Gael (christian democrats, governing), Labour (governing), Sinn Féin (democratic socialists) and the Socialist Party were in favor of abolition, while Fianna Fáil (conservatives) was against.

A significant reason for the no voters was that they did not want the Seanad abolished per se, but that they wanted reform instead (Mac Cormaic, 2013; Doyle, 2013; Brennan, 2013). An argument was that the Seanad should be a true check on power, not the current non-functional institution. The choice between abolition and keeping the current system was therefore too undifferentiated.

## Analysis

Ireland's senate is unique, because of its composition. It is composed of interest representatives, university graduates and nominees by the prime minister. However, the interest representatives are by far the largest group (43 out of 60 seats) and are elected by national and local politicians. Combine these representatives with those nominated by the prime minister (11 out of 60 seats) and you find that 54 out of 60 seats are elected by those currently in power. This fails Lijphart's criterium of not having similar composition in both houses. The Seanad also does not have as powerful legislative power as the Dáil. Although it is able to introduce and amend legislation, it does not have this power (or only partially) on key areas like financial proposals and the constitution. Furthermore it cannot

indefinitely veto Dáil proposals, but only delay them temporarily. Failing both Lijphart's criteria, this makes Irish Bicameralism completely insignificant. Similar to New Zealand, Ireland's parliament's relationship with the executive power can best be described as chamber-independent, although it does not fulfill the requirements of actually being a 'dual legislature' (being powerful, like having symmetrical powers).

Although abolition was rejected by a very small margin, it is important to note the very low turnout rate for the referendum. This tells us that instead of being in favor of or against bicameralism, a significant portion of the population just does not care. Whether election turnout has been affected is impossible to establish as of yet, as there has not been a general election since the rejection of the abolition referendum.

How then, can we best summarize the Irish reasons for (not) reforming? The reasons of the electorate as found in an opinion poll (cost, lack of power, superfluity, reduction of the amount of politicians and being anti-democratic) are a mix of rational choice and institutionalist arguments: cost saving and reducing the amount of politicians are rational choice preferences, while the arguments about the lack of power are institutionalist reasons. Being anti-democratic can be both as it is an aspect of the institution, as well as it being the preference of having more direct influence on politics. Another institutionalist argument was that the institution of the Seanad never really functioned to begin with (a variant of 'no longer functions'), as it never had any real (veto) power. The referendum, which was used to reject abolition, falls in both rational choice and institutionalist categories. The people who voted their rational choice preferences seemed to prefer some sort of reform over a quick abolition. However, as there was a low turnout and the vote in favor of abolition had been leading the polls, a large part of the population did not care or their preferences are unclear. For the politicians it is hard to find out their genuine motivation for being either for or against reform, especially since it has been such a recent political event. As different parties were for or against their reasons would differ. It is reasonable to suggest that at least some politicians would have a genuine will to reform, because of democratic values and because the current institution does not function or to save costs (e.g. Meade, 2013; BreakingNews.ie, 2009). Of course, politicians would also support reform or switch opinion (e.g. thejournal.ie, 2013), because they think to gain from it, either in votes or political power.

## **7.4 The Netherlands**

The Dutch upper house is the 'Eerste Kamer' (First Chamber) of parliament, the 'Staten-Generaal' (States-General). The Dutch Senate has 75 members, who are selected for a term of four years (Eerste Kamer, 2014). They are indirectly elected, as they are elected by members of the (directly elected) Provinciale Staten (the States-Provincial). The First Chamber has an important legislative function. The upper house cannot either initiate or amend proposals which passed through the Second Chamber, but it does have the power to veto all proposals (Eerste Kamer, 2014b; Eerste Kamer, 2014c). This veto by the First chamber cannot be overturned by the Second Chamber.

Recently, in 2014, new calls by politicians have been made for a future exploration into possible reforms of the political system (Vries, 2014; Eerste Kamer, 2014d). One of the possible subjects named has been the First Chamber, to abolish it or to reform it. This is not the first time possible reforms of the Dutch senate have been discussed. In 2006, cabinet established the so called 'Nationale Conventie' (National Convention) in order to research whether certain aspects of the Dutch political, democratic and electoral system were still functioning adequately or whether they were outdated (ibid.; Parlement & Politiek, 2014b; Nationale Conventie, 2006). The convention made two main recommendations regarding representative democracy and the First Chamber. The first one consisted of a right to return a proposal to the Second Chamber by the First Chamber, rather than outright rejecting it. This causes the Second Chamber having to reevaluate their proposal. The second recommendation consisted of a return to the First Chamber's electoral system before 1983. Until 1983 terms in the First Chamber were 6 years, where every three years half the chamber would be elected by the States-Provincial. This would cause the composition of the First Chamber to be less up to date to political reality, as in the current system the election of the First Chamber can be more recent than the election of the Second Chamber. This affects the reflective role the First Chamber is supposed to play. Neither of these recommendations were put into law.

This was not the first time reforming the First Chamber was discussed. In 1990 the 'Committee De Koning' discussed several reform proposals, in the end recommending the same power for the First Chamber to return a proposal to the Second Chamber (Parlement & Politiek, 2014c; Tweede Kamer der Staten Generaal, 1993). Before that, in 1967, the 'Statecommittee Cals/Donner' discussed abolition of the First Chamber, but the majority recommended against it (Parlement & Politiek, 2014d). The First Chamber was said to have a lesser legislative role, it instead having a reflective function, so it could more thoroughly assess proposals by the Second Chamber. A majority of the committee did however, recommend introducing direct elections for the First Chamber. Indirect Elections were not seen as necessary for the First Chamber to function. The committee was not afraid that direct elections would make the chamber more political, as it had only

a limited function. Unanimously, the committee recommended changing the term from six to four years and not having elections for half the chamber every three years. All except one member wanted to remove the budgetary right from the First Chamber, as it was not seen as useful to discuss in the Senate. Lastly, all committee members rejected giving the upper house the ability to initiate or amend proposals, or the ability to return a proposal to the Second Chamber, as this would slow down the legislative process. Even earlier, in 1950, a majority of the 'Statecommittee Van Schaik' also recommended to limit the budgetary right of the First Chamber (Parlement & Politiek, 2014e). Similarly, they also suggested changing terms from six to four years, and stop doing partial turnovers.

Several arguments against the current system exist. First off, is a presumed lack of democratic legitimacy (Parlement & Politiek, 2014). The indirectly elected First Chamber (elected by the 566 members of the States-Provincial) is able to veto legislation proposed by the directly elected Second Chamber. An issue is that the First Chamber is seen by some as a reflection chamber, but in political reality it plays an active political and party partisan role. A government with a majority in the Second Chamber can see their legislative proposals get blocked, because they do not have the majority in the First Chamber. This often happens for constitutional amendments, as there is a requirement for a two-third majority vote and getting a two-third majority in the First Chamber can be difficult. Second, abolition of the upper house would save a lot of time in passing legislation, and of course also in costs.

In Dutch politics, the opinion on the First Chamber varies. Political Parties D66 (progressive liberals), GroenLinks (greens) and PVV (right-wing populists) have for a long time been supporters for abolition, but there is also an increasing amount of support within other parties (D66, 2014; Verhoef, 2010). Governing coalition party VVD (conservative liberals), has also recently criticized the upper house, for being opposed to their government's policies (as they do not have a majority in the upper house) (NRC, 2013).

Public opinion in The Netherlands on the First Chamber varied over the years. In 2011, 60% thought indirect elections were outdated (Bruinewoud, 2011). 69% thought direct elections for the upper house would be an improvement. On the subject of abolition, 75% of respondents thought the First Chamber was important. 60% did not want to abolish the Senate. In a more recent poll, conducted after the governing VVD stated to want abolition, 62% of the people stated that they thought that the First Chamber had an important role in Dutch politics (Peil.nl, 2013). However, at the same 63% of the people stated that the First Chamber should limit itself to reflect on the quality of legislation and not participate in partisan politics. Only 25% (versus 65%) thought that the First Chamber should be abolished.

## Analysis

The Dutch case is different from the other cases in a few key areas. The Dutch Senate cannot initiate or amend proposals, but it is able to permanently block legislation of the lower house. This makes the upper house a strong veto power. Although it does not have powers that are completely similar to the Second Chamber, being a veto-player makes the Senate important enough to qualify as a symmetrical power relationship between the houses. The selection method and composition of the Second Chamber are also different than those of the First Chamber. The First Chamber is elected indirectly by regional actors. A small majority coalition in the Second Chamber often does not have a majority in the First. As the powers of the houses are symmetrical and the composition is different, Dutch bicameralism is the only case of chapter 6, that can be classified as Lijphart's 'strong bicameralism'. In its relation with the executive, the Dutch parliament does fulfill all requirements of Ganghof's (2012) chamber independent category, as both chambers have important powers and the government can remain in power with a majority in only the lower house.

There are several important aspects related to this case's classification as strong bicameralism. As we have seen, Dutch public opinion in polls have shown that a majority does believe that the role of the First Chamber is important. Related, public support for abolition is comparatively low. Citizens do want to have more direct influence on its composition and do not want the First Chamber to play a political role. These arguments may be contradictory, direct elections would sort of give it a political role per definition. However, the polling results indicate that most people seem to realize the importance of the reflective, neutral and non-partisan role the upper house is supposed to play.

The Dutch government established several committees over the years, consisting of a wide variety of politicians, scientists, lawyers and others in order to find out whether political reforms are necessary. Several trends can be seen, while values changed over the years. In 1950 and 1967, committees wanted to take the budgetary right from the chamber, but this recommendation was not made in later periods. They also wanted to change the terms and turnover, while the most recent recommendations talked about changing them back to the 6 year terms and partial turnover. The 1967 committee wanted to introduce direct elections, unafraid that this would make the chamber more political, but would not give the upper house any additional legislative functions (to keep it focused). The 1990 and 2006 committees did want the right for the First Chamber to return a bill to the Second, while neither wanted direct elections.

The later committees did not want direct elections anymore. This is possibly related to want to return to a more non-political 6 year term and partial turnover. By keeping the budgetary right and introducing the ability to return bills, its powers would be strengthened. The result would be a

stronger, more independent and neutral bicameralism. Politicians from D66 and GroenLinks have been long-term opponents of bicameralism. The VVD suddenly spoke in favor of abolition because the First Chamber does not support their government. The sincerity of the VVD’s arguments are doubtful, as it seems logical for a Second Chamber majority to dislike First Chamber opposition. It may be anti-democratic, but having a Senate to only mimic the lower house undermines the point of having bicameralism, making it weak.

Can the arguments used be classified as institutionalist or rational choice? From the public there is no significant pressure to abolish the Senate. There is the rational choice preference for having more direct influence, although this may be correlated with the idea that the Senate is currently not acting politically neutral. Here we find institutionalist arguments: the Senate is seen as important and it does function in a way, however there are limits as it is seen as not being politically neutral, while it should be. There have been several institutionalized committees looking for changing preferences, changing needs and deficiencies of and improvements for existing institutions. However, none of the proposals have been accepted.

**7.5 Analysis & Conclusion**

This chapter explored an in-depth analysis into four cases in which the upper house has been abolished or in which there was (or is) an active discussion about abolition. The aspects of history, functions, reform and reasons were explored.

In table 9, details about the cases are summarized, repeating some of the data of table 8. This table presents the aspects of bicameralism of the four cases of this chapter. In the case of New Zealand and Sweden, this data is from before they switched to unicameralism. The simple threefold classification of the relationship with the executive was switched with Ganghof’s (2012) sixfold one.

**Table 9: Bicameral Systems of Four Cases Before Reform<sup>27</sup>**

Country	Selection		Composition		PowerUH	Rel.Exec. <sup>28</sup>
	LH	UH	LH	UH		
Ireland	Direct	Indirect, appntd, direct	STV, districted	LH, governm people	Asymm.	<i>C-independent</i>
Netherlands	Direct	Indirect	Proportional, Single District	Regional	Symm.	C-independent
New Zealand	Direct	Appointed	FPTP, districted <sup>29</sup>	Governm. appointed	Symm.	<i>C-independent</i>
Sweden	Direct	Indirect	Proportional, Complex	Regional	Symm.	Parliamentary

<sup>27</sup> Same sources of table 8.

<sup>28</sup> ‘C-Independent’ is the ‘Chamber Independent’ category.

<sup>29</sup> Note that New Zealand switched from First-past-the-Post to a proportional system, after changing to unicameralism.

Ireland and New Zealand do not fulfill all necessary requirements for the 'Chamber Independent' category. Ireland's upper house was not powerful enough, while New Zealand's upper house was not a form of actual strong bicameralism either (too similar composition). Sweden's exact old bicameral parliament's relationship with the executive power is not easy to find, but as the upper house was able to keep the government in power, it appears to have been parliamentary. Neither of the four cases thus have popular executive elections, or a system in which the executive is completely independent from parliament. As there were only few cases in the developed world to choose from, the issue of switching to unicameralism appears to be more lively in parliamentary or other dependent executive (parliamentary-like) systems. In other words: only bicameral systems in the parliamentary category (in contrast to presidential and semi-presidential systems) seem to switch from bicameralism to unicameralism.

At first glance, The Netherlands and Sweden are rather similar cases. While New Zealand and Ireland have or had key differences compared to the other two. Both New Zealand and Ireland have (had) a lot of incumbent government influence on the selection of the members of the upper house, but New Zealand's upper house had a lot of power, while Ireland's upper house is rather powerless. In Sweden the upper house was elected by the municipalities, in the Netherlands they are elected by its provinces. Because the municipalities in Sweden were for a long time dominated by the Social Democrats (even when the lower house was not), the upper house was led by Social Democrats as well. This helped the Social Democrats to remain in government, even without a majority in the lower house. As such its upper house did not serve to be a counterweight to the ruling government, but rather was the institution that kept the government in power. In The Netherlands, the composition of ruling majorities varied more often and so did the composition of the houses. A situation in which just the upper house kept the government in place has not existed (nor could it). On the contrary, governments have ruled with a lower house majority, but without one in the upper house. This led to the accusations that the upper house was illegitimately blocking democratically directly elected lower house majorities. The perceived (rather contradictory) problems of the upper houses thus are that in Sweden the upper house served to keep the government in power, while in the Netherlands it restricts the government's power.

In table 10 the arguments used by the different countries in this chapter for reforms are summarized. For Ireland, in *italics*, there are the reasons that blocked abolition. 'Intra' and 'extra' stand for intra-political reasons and extra-political reasons.

**Table 10: Reasons for Reform for Case Studies**

	Rational Choice		Institutionalist	
	Intra	Extra	Intra	Extra
<b>Ireland</b>	Cost Saving Political Advantage Democratic Values	Cost Saving Public want for more democratic influence <i>Wish for Checks</i>	UH did not function Anti-democratic	<i>Referendum</i>
<b>Netherlands</b>	Political Advantage	Public want for more democratic influence	UH not neutral as intended	
<b>New Zealand</b>	Political Advantage Reform Initiator Support Mobilizer	Changing Preferences	UH did not function Reform Initiator Support Mobilizer	
<b>Sweden</b>	Political Advantage		Not function as intended	Original reason disappeared

A lot of different reasons were named as reasons for reform. The most listed reasons, and present in all countries, were intra-political institutionalist ones. This means that it is stated that there is something wrong with the institution: it either does not work at all, does not work like how it was intended or is “anti-democratic”. Institutionalized actors, such as politicians who initiate and mobilize, also exist in this category. In the extra-political institutionalist category we find contextual change, the original reason for the upper house’s existence disappeared, and the referendum. Rational Choice arguments are plenty in both seen both intra- and extra-political columns. Both within and outside of politics, many possible preferences were identified. In Ireland and the Netherlands, democratic values and a wish for more democratic influence were listed as important reasons. In both Ireland and New-Zealand, politicians appeared to be using abolition of the upper house for political gain. In Ireland, the public used a preference for more checks and balances as a reason to reject abolition, as they wanted reform instead. For Sweden, I was unable to find any (non-speculative) rational choice argument as used by politicians or the citizens.

## 8 Conclusion

In this thesis, I tried to answer the following question: *“Is the upper house of parliament outdated or does it still have its uses, and what causes countries to switch from a unicameral parliamentary system to a bicameral parliamentary system and vice-versa?”* The question consists of two parts. First, whether the upper house of parliament is outdated or still has its uses will be answered.

In chapters 2 and 3, the concepts of unicameralism and bicameralism, the role of upper houses and functions of parliament in general were explored. As was seen in table 4, important differences were found in the ‘role’ the two chambers are supposed to play, in their methods of selection, in their respective powers and in their relation with the executive. These aspects appear to be connected and correlated. Lower houses in western-like democratic countries are always directly elected, while the selection method of upper houses varies. Consequently, lower houses always have a legislative role. Upper houses do not always have veto-powers over legislation, especially when not elected at all. Despite having fewer formal power, they can still play an important role in doing legislative work. In those cases upper houses often have a more neutral or non-partisan reflective and scrutinizing role over legislation and the executive power.

Lower houses can be elected through proportional systems or through regional majoritarian/First Past the Post systems. Upper houses are more often elected regionally, especially in federal systems. As such these ‘senators’ play a role for representing and protecting their regional (and/or minority’s) interests. These federal senates tend to have more power than other upper houses. Senates elected through a proportional system tend to have a lower democratic legitimacy and less political power than those elected through majoritarian systems. In cases where a strong indirectly elected upper house exists, democratic aspects are affected. In these cases, an upper house can serve to undermine democracy, by blocking legislative and constitutional change, or it can be seen as a positive force: a protection against a ‘tyranny of the majority’.

Another distinction is the relationship with the executive power: whether the country has a presidential or a parliamentary system, or an in between form. In parliamentary systems, the executive can have the power to dissolve the lower house, but often not the upper house. At the same time, unlike the lower house, the upper house cannot hold a vote of confidence about the executive. In presidential systems both the upper and the lower house are independent of the executive: parliament cannot hold binding votes of confidence on executives, while the executive cannot disband either house of parliament. Like the ‘legislative power’ of the houses, the upper house’s relationship with the executive is often correlated with its selection method. Directly elected

upper houses usually play an important role in the survival of the executive, together with the lower house. Indirectly elected or appointed upper houses rarely have a binding say on votes of confidence.

In order for a bicameral system to be useful (significant) according to Lijphart, an upper house needs to have similar powers and a dissimilar composition as the lower house. If only one of those conditions is present, the bicameral system is weak. If the upper house is powerless and has not a substantially different composition as the lower house, the bicameral system is pointless and insignificant. On the other hand, a strong upper house can be detrimental to democracy. Upper houses can delay or veto legislative or constitutional change.

Unicameralism and bicameralism can have significant effects on stability and turnout. A functioning bicameral system is positively correlated with political stability. An important cause is the protection of regional and minority rights of a country when compared to unicameralism or weak bicameralism. An upper house must have a significant power (i.e. being a veto-player) in order to be useful. Turnout (and thus the legitimacy of democratic systems) can be influenced by the type of parliamentary system a country has. A unicameral system has fewer veto points and as such should have a higher turnout and legitimacy compared to bicameralism. On the other hand, a unicameral system can be felt as being unrepresentative for minorities, a single (lower) house can be seen as a veto-player against their interests. This decreases turnout of minorities in unicameral systems. These arguments may seem opposed to each other as bicameralism is said to increase political stability, but also decrease democratic legitimacy (due to lower direct influence by the population). These points do not need to be in conflict, because if bicameralism exists in the countries in which it is necessary (large and/or significant minorities), it will act as the veto points Carlin & Love (2013) identify, giving the regions equal representation.

On representation, upper houses can have an important additive effect, especially if the lower house is proportionally represented and the upper house is regionally selected. This way, by representing the voice of regions and minorities, it can add to the role of parliament being the national forum and it can be the institution for bridging differences and looking at human rights.

In sum, an upper house can still have its uses. This is especially the case in larger countries or countries with large minorities, in those situations upper houses appear to be crucial. In other situations, the advantages of an upper house may be less clear: if one assumes there is a homogenous population with similar interests an upper house would only serve to slow down the legislative process. However, even in presumed 'single-culture' countries, there can be different interests and as such a regional upper house would still be useful. The exception are the smallest countries, where the distance of the political center to the political periphery is very short. Furthermore, an upper house can be useful, but it does need power or important tasks. When representing minorities and regions, it needs veto-power to decisively protect those minorities

against a tyranny of the majority. When an upper house lacks veto-power or other legislative power, it seems less useful. There are several other tasks listed: other legislative work or a reflective and scrutinizing role. These tasks may be important as well, but this would certainly make the upper house the less important house in a bicameral system. Upper houses thus can fulfill several roles and functions as listed in table 3, functions that can be different, similar or complimentary to the lower house.

The second part of the research question was “*What causes countries to switch between unicameralism and bicameralism?*” In chapter 4, the possible reasons for reform were explored. Four categories were identified and presented in table 5. Reasons for reform are either ‘rational choice’ (about actor’s preferences) or ‘institutionalist’ (instrumental reasons). They are also either intra-political (politicians or political institutions) or extra-political (the public or contextual). Chapter 7 then identified these reasons in four case studies.

Reasons in all four categories could be identified. Importantly, there does not appear to be a single cause for wanting to abolish a senate. For example in the recently active case of the Netherlands and Ireland, where abolition has not taken place, it was found that the population who voted or were polled did not want abolition. In the cases of New-Zealand and Sweden however, where the upper house was abolished, it was found that the population was more indifferent. Due to low turnout at the referendum, a large part of the population in Ireland could also be described as indifferent. Institutional problems were identified in all the four cases. This makes sense, because if an institution is not malfunctioning, there is no true reason to reform it. Contradictory, what is seen as institutional malfunctioning was not the same in all countries: in New-Zealand and Ireland, reasons for reform were that the institutions were weak and/or not functioning as a possible counterbalance to the government, while in Sweden and the Netherlands reasons for reform were that their indirectly elected powerful upper houses were not cooperating with lower houses. A rational choice argument that does seem nearly universal is that politicians use reform to gain an advantage. In both Ireland and New Zealand, politicians appeared to propose reform in order to gain popularity. In the Netherlands, governing politicians were identified who suddenly became “anti-senate” when it opposed their policies. In Sweden, no individual actors could be found, but reform would be to the advantage to, and was supported by, all non-Social Democrats.

The hypotheses of part 4.4 related to reasons of reform were hypotheses 1 till 4:

- H1: Countries reform their uni- or bicameral system, because of intra-political rational choice reasons.
- H2: Countries reform their uni- or bicameral system, because of extra-political rational choice reasons.
- H3 : Countries reform their uni- or bicameral system, because of intra-political institutionalist reasons.
- H4: Countries reform their uni- or bicameral system, because of extra-political institutionalist reasons.

As we have seen above, reasons from all four categories have been identified in the case studies.

Alongside the reasons for reform, hypothesis 6 (“powerful bicameral systems are more resistant to reform”) was explored in chapter 7. Of the four case studies, three upper houses had symmetrical power compared to the lower houses. Of those three cases, two (Sweden and New-Zealand) abolished their upper house. At first glance, based on the four case studies, hypothesis 6 would be rejected. New-Zealand however, had government appointed senators. According to Lijphart’s, this would not count as ‘strong bicameralism’. Only Sweden and The Netherlands would classify as ‘strong bicameralism’. In the Netherlands no reform has taken place, even though multiple times change has been proposed by expert committees. Public opinion is also in favor of reform of the currently seen as partisan upper house. Chapter 7 then has two strong bicameral systems, of which one abolished the upper house and the other did not reform, and two weak bicameral systems, of which also one abolished and the other did nothing. Hypothesis 6 can therefore be falsified, as no proof has been found that strong bicameral systems are more resistant to reform than weaker ones.

Hypothesis 7, “voters see powerful bicameral systems as less legitimate”, was not a very highly discussed aspect in the cases of chapter 7. In Ireland (not a powerful bicameral system) and the Netherlands voters wanted more democratic influence in the political system, and reform of the upper house, but do not want their senate abolished per se. In Ireland, those who voted wanted a more powerful upper house. For the Netherlands a point in favor of the hypothesis can be made as strong bicameral system exists, but the public wants it to be changed to not block the directly elected lower house for political reasons. New Zealand did not have a powerful bicameral system, and the public was indifferent about it. Sweden did have a strong upper house and the public was not interested in it, nor in its abolition. Definitive empirical evidence for hypothesis 7 is lacking and circumstantial: the cases of Netherlands and Sweden show that their population is indifferent or

negative towards strong bicameralism, while New Zealand and Ireland show that their population is indifferent towards weak bicameralism or wanting a stronger senate.

The answer to hypothesis 5, “the upper houses that are not directly elected have fewer powers”, can be found in chapter 6. Of the eighteen developed countries with an upper house, nine had a direct method of selection (for the majority of seats). Of these nine bicameral systems, only four were identified as having symmetrical power between the houses. In the nine bicameral systems with other methods of selection however, only two upper houses had similar powers to the lower one. At least for current developed countries, hypothesis 5 appears to be true.

Concluding, hypothesis 8 stated that “upper houses are not being abolished more or less often than they are established”. Massicotte (2001) found that there were a lot of switches between uni- and bicameralism, but that overall there was no clear trend (unicameralism went from 68% in 1980 to 64% in 2001). In chapter 6, this research tried to find out whether the situation has changed since 2001 and whether a trend could be seen for developed countries. It was found that in the period of 1989 till 2014, more upper houses were established than abolished (18 versus 13). Many of these new establishments however, were in former communist states.

For the countries in 2014 identified as ‘developed’, a slight trend towards unicameralism was seen. However, not counting post-communist period establishments and abolitions, only New-Zealand and the Scandinavian (Finland already being unicameral) countries switched to unicameralism since 1945. It may be that the Scandinavian trend is a cultural or geographical thing (further research is required) and that New-Zealand is an exception in the developed country group. Aside from these cases, the developed world does not seem to have a trend towards uni- or bicameralism at all (not many switches happen). These observations therefore suggest that in the future the rate of uni- and bicameralism will remain more or less in a stable equilibrium. This is logical for the developed countries as the well-off countries are generally politically stable.

Table 11 shows the final results found by this thesis for the hypotheses listed in part 4.4.

**Table 11: Results of Hypotheses**

#	Hypothesis	Findings
1	Countries reform their uni- or bicameral system, because of intra-political rational choice reasons.	True
2	Countries reform their uni- or bicameral system, because of extra-political rational choice reasons.	True
3	Countries reform their uni- or bicameral system, because of intra-political institutionalist reasons.	True
4	Countries reform their uni- or bicameral system, because of extra-political institutionalist reasons.	True
5	The upper houses that are not directly elected have fewer powers.	True
6	Powerful bicameral systems are more resistant to reform.	False <sup>30</sup>
7	Voters see powerful bicameral systems as less legitimate.	Undecided
8	Upper houses are not being abolished more or less often than they are established.	False <sup>31</sup> , True <sup>32</sup>

### Nuance

For several hypotheses further research is needed. Four case studies may not be sufficient to determine clear trends. Especially hypotheses 6 and 7 may yield different results if different or more cases are studied. For these two hypotheses especially, it may be interesting to see what the results are in lesser developed countries. It is relevant to do case studies in countries that are not small or homogenous: in large regionally divided multicultural societies the protective role the upper house plays (against the “tyranny of the majority”) may be seen differently by the population and politics. Even if in no large multicultural developed country upper house reform is an active issue, it may be interesting to study what the upper house its image and legitimacy is.

Further research is also needed on several other related aspects of bicameralism and the role of upper houses. Other scholars (e.g. Tsebelis & Money, 1997) have done research on what happens when there is a disagreement between the houses. In-depth research is necessary to find out how this affects the role, image and legitimacy of the upper house. Another topic for further research is alternatives for upper houses: a constitutional court for example, partly performs a similar role as a reflective upper house.

<sup>30</sup> For the four case studies in highly developed countries.

<sup>31</sup> Worldwide, more upper houses were established than abolished.

<sup>32</sup> For highly developed countries.

Lastly, the effects of populism on the upper house could also be analyzed. In the case studies, I found that the two old abolitions were marked by indifference of the general population. More recently in Ireland, the population rejected a referendum (with a low turnout) to abolish the upper house and wanted a stronger senate to act as a check upon sitting politicians. In the Netherlands (and partly in Ireland), the population voiced a wish for reform in order to have more direct democratic influence. This tells us that, the role of the population in politics in these two recent cases is more active, or people want to have more direct influence, than in the two older cases. This appears to affect how people see the upper house.

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