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THE ASSOCIATION OF EUROPEAN SENATES AS A CHANNEL FOR INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITY OF OPPOSITION PARTIES UNDER CONDITIONS OF BICAMERAL PARLIAMENTS

Łukasz Jakubiak*

ABSTRACT

The growing role of diplomacy, assuming the participation of legislative branch of government, is nowadays an unquestionable political phenomenon. The international cooperation of parliamentary chambers may be regarded as one of the means that serves this purpose. This applies not only to first (lower) chambers of modern parliaments, but also to second (upper) ones, regardless of their constitutional status. Hence, in the present study, the Association of European Senates (founded in 2000) as seen in the context of parliamentary aspects of plural diplomacies was analysed. Under conditions of a parliamentary system of government combined with the asymmetry of bicameralism (the second chamber is weaker than the first one), second chambers do not necessarily need to be pro-government bodies. Diverse procedures used to elect their members give the opportunity to form majorities that could be in opposition to the relevant national governments, which results in incongruence of bicameralism. In contrast to first chambers, which by definition provide political support to cabinets of ministers (under each parliamentary regime), second chambers may be dominated by formations of the opposition. The results show that such political configurations create a starting point for increased international involvement of leaderships of chambers, in which such political groups play a dominant role. Hence, the Association of European Senates may be a convenient field for strengthening, at the international level, the position of politicians belonging to the anti-government opposition in their own countries. However, this is only possible if a specific model of the second chamber is adopted.

Key words: the Association of European Senates, parliamentary diplomacy, second chambers, opposition parties, incongruent bicameralism

* Łukasz Jakubiak, PhD. is a political scientist and jurist; an Associate Professor in the Chair of Constitutionalism and Systems of Government in the Institute of Political Science and International Relations at the Jagiellonian University in Cracow, 5 Jabłonowskich Street, 31-114 Cracow, Poland, e-mail: lukasz.jakubiak@uj.edu.pl.

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Introduction

Plural diplomacy carried out with the participation of parliamentarians is steadily gaining in importance. Diversified forms of supranational integration influence the specificity of decision-making processes carried out at various levels. Modern parliaments, especially in Europe, where integration processes are the most advanced, must therefore adapt to the phenomenon of internationalisation of such processes in various areas of public policies. This in turn is linked to the need for inter-parliamentary coordination (Crum –Fossum 2013, p. 3). Such interactions between parliaments may take diverse forms. They do not necessarily have to be limited to informal activity of individual members of legislatures at the international level. The parliamentary dimension of plural diplomacy can also take a more established form, involving not so much ordinary parliamentarians as parliamentary chambers themselves and their political leaderships. One of the features of this type of plural diplomacy can also be its multilateralism, which increases the territorial scope of interactions between various institutionalised actors at the supranational level. What is more, institutions involved in such parliamentary cooperation may be both parts of the legislative branch, not only unique or first (lower) chambers (depending on whether national parliaments are uni- or bicameral), but also second ones. This means that this inter-parliamentary cooperation can be even more diversified, and second chambers occupy a special place in this regard. It is due to the fact that although parliamentary diplomacy as one of the existing varieties of plural diplomacy is more and more important nowadays, inter-parliamentary cooperation is generally not dependent on the existence of the second chamber within the framework of the legislative branch of government. Hence, unicameralism itself does not exert an influence on parliamentarians' international activity taking place outside the executive power. However, some forms of cooperation between members of national parliaments may be inaccessible in such a case. This applies to those mechanisms that have been reserved for members of second chambers as legislative bodies that do not exist in all countries.

An additional factor that must be taken into account in the case of parliamentary diplomacy is its strictly political aspect, which is the influence that opposition to the government may have on its conduct. The particular nature of such inter-parliamentary cooperation is linked to the fact that institutions involved in it may be those parts of the legislative power that do not have a pro-

government political profile. Hence, it can be argued that the parliamentary formula of the plural diplomacy creates, under some conditions, special opportunities for international activity of political formations that do not belong to the pro-government majority. This may be regarded as a criterion that distinguishes traditional diplomacy carried out by the executive from that conducted by the legislative power. This stems from the fact that the political composition of the parliament in democratic states presupposes the existence of relevant parliamentary opposition groups equipped not only with effective instruments to control the government's actions, but also with means to present political alternatives to policies implemented by the ruling camp¹. An in-depth analysis of the status of the parliamentary opposition at the international level requires, however, paying attention to the fact that, apart from its legal anchoring in the parliament as such, the construction of the legislature is also of great significance in this regard. It can be assumed that these are the organisational forms, which can be, under certain circumstances, a convenient channel of supranational activity for parliamentary groups that are in opposition to respective national governments. Leaving aside unicameral legislatures, it can be stated that within a parliamentary system in which the government by definition has a majority in the first chamber of bicameral parliament the situation indicated above applies to second chambers. The specificity of bicameralism lies in the fact that thanks to this a favourable institutional context is created for the opposition parties to obtain a special position as representatives of such chambers in the international arena.

Looking from this perspective, it is thus legitimate to formulate the assumption that a bicameral structure of the legislature may constitute a particular institutional basis for increasing, at least to some extent, political potential of the opposition. This, however, requires the fulfilment of a number of additional conditions. In general, as far second chambers are concerned, there should be real possibilities to create majorities built around opposition

¹ For the same reason, constitutional protection extends nowadays more and more to activities of political groups remaining in minority. The phenomenon of constitutionalisation of such participants of political life may be exemplified by the changes introduced to the French basic law in the aftermath of the 2008 constitutional act on modernisation of the Fifth Republic (*Loi constitutionnelle n° 2008-724 du 23 juillet 2008 de modernisation des institutions de la V^e République*). The constitutional status of parliamentary minority groups was then recognized (Avril – Gicquel, 2010, p. 97-98). Such legal changes occurring in contemporary states may be seen through the prism of further extension of constitutional provisions concerning political parties and their functioning at the parliamentary level.

formations, so that these bodies do not duplicate the political composition of first chambers. Achieving such an effect seems to depend, however, on the application of legal mechanisms that will prevent long-term persistence of political identity of both segments of the legislative branch. Thus, parliamentary diplomacy, as seen in the context of second chambers, remains to a greater or lesser extent conditioned by constitutional and political specificity of such bodies. It can be argued that the most important factor – at least from the point of view of the possibility of representing second chambers by politicians from the parliamentary opposition – is the existence of so-called incongruent bicameralism, which results in the fact that the majority in both chambers do not coincide in terms of their political composition. This means that, at least in a parliamentary model, the cabinet which bears political responsibility before the parliament, must reckon with the fact that the second chamber, in which the opposition dominates, remains beyond the reach of direct influence exerted by the entire executive, or at least by the government.

Proper analysis of the international cooperation of second chambers of the parliament must, therefore, take into account the conditions resulting from the specifics of incongruent bicameralism embedded in the structure of a parliamentary system of government. This kind of institutional and political determinants of plural diplomacy conducted at the parliamentary level can be examined on the example of the Association of European Senates – a forum for cooperation between the aforementioned institutions in Europe. Regarding the applied methodology, the assessment of potential possibilities of using this form of cooperation as a channel of diplomatic influence exerted by politicians from opposition parties requires taking into account not only the actual functioning of the indicated institution, but also constitutional regulations that hinder congruent bicameralism. The differences result primarily from various institutional arrangements, such as possible ways the chambers are chosen or the length of terms of office that differ significantly from those applied in the case of first chambers (Borthwick, 2001, pp. 21-25). This, in turn, allows second chambers to play the role of representatives of various group interests (Hass, 2010, pp. 9-11). Conversely, congruent bicameralism – if it is connected with a parliamentary system of government – causes the opposition in the second chamber, like in the first one, to be in the minority, and puts obstacles in using supranational forums as channels for their international presence. As noted above, such activity is, however, at least partially dependent on meeting some specific conditions, which leads to different types of second chambers being distinguished.

1 The Association of European Senates as a forum of interparliamentary activity

The aforementioned form of inter-parliamentary activities at the European level is provided by the Association of European Senates as an informal forum that enables the cooperation of parliamentary second chambers in almost all European countries, which have adopted a bicameral structure of the legislative branch of government (Baraggia, 2016, p. 100). The organisation under discussion was founded on November 8, 2000 in Paris by **Christian Poncelet**, the then president of the French Senate from the neo-Gaullist political party – the Rally for the Republic (*Rassemblement pour la République*). The need to set up this forum was justified by its initiator in two ways – by the conviction of the importance of a bicameral structure of the legislature and by the conviction of the significance of parliamentary chambers for the European construction (Association of European Senates. 2019a). What deserves to be stressed is that previously there had been no framework for cooperation between second chambers of contemporary Europe. The idea has been expressed in Article 2 of the rules of the association: “*The aims of the Association of European Senates shall be the development of relationships between members, promotion of bicameralism in the framework of parliamentary democracy, and strengthening of European identity and awareness*” (Association of European Senates. 2019b). The association was thus intended to create a permanent forum of discussion for bodies particularly interested in maintaining or even strengthening bicameralism perceived as the optimal formula for the functioning of contemporary national parliaments.

The organisation is composed of the following second chambers: the Federal Council of Germany; the Federal Council of Austria; the Senate of Belgium; the House of Peoples of the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia-Herzegovina; the Senate of Spain; the Senate of the French Republic, the Senate of Ireland, the Senate of Italy; the First Chamber of the States General of the Netherlands; the Senate of Poland; the Senate of Romania; the Federation Council of the Russian Federation; the National Council of Slovenia; the Swiss Council of States; the Senate of the Czech Republic; the House of Lords of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Furthermore, the Council of State of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg (it should be emphasized that the latter institution is not regarded as a typical second chamber but solely as an advisory body of the Chamber of Deputies treated as

a unicameral parliament) participates in the activities of the association as an observer. The admission of a new member requires a decision taken by consensus. According to Article 1 of the Rules governing the Association of European Senates, this applies to both full members and observers (*Ibidem*). As illustrated by the list of second chambers taking part in this initiative, membership in the association is not subject to membership in the European Union or any other pre-existing political structures at the European level. For obvious reasons, it is necessary, but also sufficient, to adopt a bicameral structure of the legislature. The latter condition causes, however, many parliaments in Europe to be excluded from the possibility of participating in the work of the association. Unicameral legislatures exist in such countries as Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Lithuania, Latvia, Norway, Slovakia, Sweden, Portugal, Ukraine and others. It should be mentioned that from among forty-eight European countries, a bicameral construction has been adopted in only seventeen (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2019). It is worth adding that Belarus is the only European state with a bicameral parliament that is not involved in the work of the association.

Each year, at least one meeting should take place. The second chambers participating in the initiative under discussion should be represented by their presidents or, alternatively, by other parliamentarians appointed for this purpose. Besides, the association should take steps to conduct research as well as exchange information and experience related to the operation of bicameral legislatures. As results from Article 3 of the Rules governing of the Association of European Senates, some emphasis is also placed on the administrative dimension of the functioning of the relevant second chambers, which is understood as “*permanent relationships between parliamentary administrations*” (Association of European Senates. 2019b). This includes the exchange of parliamentary officers employed in internal structures of such bodies. It is also possible to create working groups related to studies on the evolution of bicameralism and the role of contemporary second chambers. They may be composed not only of presidents of the second chambers belonging to the association but also of designated parliamentary officers or experts. The association functions mainly in the form of the aforementioned annual meetings (as practice has shown, they occasionally take place twice a year) (*Ibidem*). There have been twenty-three such meetings conducted in different member states so far. Each of them was subordinated to a specific leading topic. Although their common denominator is that they are largely devoted to bicameralism as a

structure and way of functioning of contemporary parliaments, other issues relating to modern legislatures as such are also taken into consideration.

The first meeting within the Association of European Senates – not counting the founding meeting of 2000—took place in 2001. It was organised in Paris in order to discuss the role of modern second chambers as bodies enabling political participation of local authorities at the national level. In subsequent years, the specificity of second chambers and various aspects of their functioning dominated as well. In this context, the following issues may be mentioned: the influence of second chambers on the quality of legislation (2001, Brussels); the activity of civic society through bicameral parliaments (2002, Ljubljana); second chambers as bodies controlling activities of the executive branch (2003, Madrid); the efficiency of second chambers and the method of determining their composition (2003, Prague); the significance of second chambers from the perspective of European integration (2004, Warsaw); functions of bicameral legislatures in federal states (2005, Berlin); second chambers and their role in creating grass-roots politics (2006, Bern); functions of second chambers in the 21st Century (2006, Prague); the impact of second chambers on accountable governance (2007, Bucharest); communication technologies in legislative proceedings (2008, Vienna); the role of second chambers in cultural dialogue (2008, Saint Petersburg); the specificity of European second chambers (2009, the Hague); democracy in Central and Eastern Europe from the perspective of twenty five years after the beginning of the democratisation process (2009, Gdańsk); the influence of second chambers on the evolution of parliamentary diplomacy (2010, Rome); various mechanisms of second chambers' cooperation with regions and local entities (2011, Madrid); the role of parliaments in the fight against the economic crisis (2012, Paris); relationships between first and second chambers (2013, London); the role of second chambers within contemporary parliamentary systems (2015, the Hague); the contribution of the legislative branch of government to the fight against terrorism in Europe (2016, Bern); the possibility of creation of a bicameral parliament at the European Union level (2017, Ljubljana); the European Senates and economic, social and territorial cohesion (2018, Bucharest) (Association of European Senates. 2019c). The above brief overview of the main problems discussed by leaders of European second chambers proves that the functioning of bicameral structures may be regarded as a fixed reference point. On the other hand, participants of such meetings do not shy away from discussing current political topics on the general forum. An

example of this may be the fact of paying more attention to issues such as serious international economic problems or terrorism as a threat to societies in European countries. The latter proves that presidents of second chambers belonging to the association may be sometimes perceived as politicians involved, at least to a certain extent, in solving current problems that simultaneously engage governments of their own countries as major actors on the international arena.

2 Diversity of European second chambers and its consequences at the international level

When analysing the impact of the parliamentary opposition at the national level on the functioning of the Association of European Senates, the starting point should be the assumption that such a form of cooperation between second chambers may be regarded, under some specific institutional conditions, as one of the means of interaction that are available for politicians being “faces” of such bodies, and at the same time belonging to opposition parties in their own countries. The analysis of this issue requires, first of all, taking into account different functions of second chambers within European parliamentary systems. The main structural mechanism of parliamentarism is the adoption of the principle of the government’s political responsibility before the legislature (at least before the first chamber of parliament if its bicameral structure is adopted). Sometimes, the cabinet of ministers is responsible simultaneously in front of both chambers (Italy). In such a situation, the majority of supporting governments must exist in both of them. This is one of the manifestations of symmetry of bicameralism. Otherwise, political support provided exclusively by the first chamber is sufficient, which means that the opposition to the cabinet may enjoy a dominant position in the body. The latter creates conditions for deep diversification of second chambers in modern states. This in turn is heavily connected with a different way of choosing their members. Thus, second chambers need not necessarily constitute a nationwide representation which is typical of first chambers, but establish a representation of another kind (second chambers representing federation territories, local self-government entities, social or professional interests, etc.) (Patterson – Mughan, 1999, pp.10-12). It is worth noting that this idea has been expressed in the preamble to the Rules governing the Association of European Senates indicating the need to respect “*the balance of power and the necessary diversification of national representation*”.

All in all, in the case of contemporary second chambers, universal elections, in which all adult voters may participate, cannot be seen as the primary means for choosing their composition. Alternative methods are fully justified because they allow the implementation of representation, which is supposed to differ significantly from the nationwide one. It can even be said that without meeting this condition, the application of a different model of representation provided by second chambers would not be possible. An example of such a body can be the National Council in Slovenia, which is defined in the 1991 constitution as “*a representative body of social, economic, vocational, and local interests*”. It is composed of forty members. Eighteen of them are representatives of employers, employees, farmers, craftsmen, and independent professions. Twenty-two members of the Slovenian second chamber defend local interests. They are all elected for a five-year term (whereas the first chamber is elected for a four-year term). The clearly visible dissimilarity of the models of representation in both segments of the legislature causes the Slovenian bicameralism to be evidently asymmetric (imperfect). As a consequence, the National Council, whose powers are severely limited, can only be treated as “*a correcting actor*”, which takes part in the legislative process without having an important impact on its final outcomes (Haček – Kukovič – Brezovšek, 2017, pp. 59-61).

Moreover, second chambers may be chosen at a different time than first chambers. Such elections do not have to affect all the members of a given second chamber, but they should take place at shorter intervals. In this case, a term of office does not concern the whole chamber but to its individual members. It is legitimate to express the view that this increases the likelihood of choosing different majorities in both segments of the legislature. It is due to the fact that elections carried out at different times do not reflect the same voters' moods and political expectations. The phenomenon of this kind can be seen on the example of the German Federal Council. Bicameralism in this country may be reasonably considered incongruent. The reason lies in the fact that the composition of the Federal Council is based (although indirectly) on the results of legislative elections in the Länder, which take place at different times, influencing the political composition of the relevant executives (members of the chamber are designated by governments functioning in particular states). This means that the political profile of the body may change fundamentally during the term of the federal government. Hence, party systems at the regional level, which do not have the same structure in each of the Länder, are a key factor contributing to major political differences between the two chambers of

parliament (Swenden, 2004, p. 107). Besides, the German case proves that the second chamber, whose main task is to represent sixteen member states of the federation, and which is not deprived of significant legislative powers, can be a real problem for the federal government. This is the case when the initiatives formulated by the chancellor and ministers are blocked at the parliamentary level. The cause lies in the fact that the Federal Council may be sometimes used as “*an efficient second opposition*” (Patzelt, 1999, p. 61). As a consequence, incongruent bicameralism combined with a relatively strong second chamber seems to be in conflict with each other.

The combined application of these different arrangements affecting the composition of modern second chambers means that such bodies may act in isolation from political connections (treated as necessary in each parliamentary system) between governments and first chambers. This in turn leads to the fact that political leaderships of so-constructed bodies may derive from parties that are in opposition to their respective governments. Hence, once the conditions outlined above have been fulfilled, the possibility of a stronger involvement of politicians representing such formations arises. As far as the phenomenon of plural diplomacy is concerned, a specific channel of influence of the parliamentary opposition is thus created. The analysis of the second chambers being members of the Association of European Senates proves that there are far-reaching differences between legislative bodies engaged in this initiative. Suffice it to say that only some of them are elected by universal suffrage (for example, in the Czech Republic, Italy, Poland or Switzerland). Members of other second chambers are selected in mixed elections (only partly universal), or are not chosen by universal suffrage at all (they are designated etc.). Structural factors of this kind are not without impact on the analysed aspects of plural democracy. It is beyond doubt that an important role of the Association of European Senates is to build mutual contacts between leaders of each second chambers. Taking into account those involved in the association, it may be stated that their political profiles as compared to the profiles of respective first chambers differ significantly. It is enough to confront the French Senate under the 1958 constitution and the Polish Senate under the 1997 basic law. In the case of the former, there exists bicameral incongruence. The best evidence is that governments created by the French left most often had to rely solely on the majority in the National Assembly, because the then centre-right opposition played a dominant role in the Senate (for example, in the years 1981-1986 or during the third cohabitation 1997-2002). A completely different situation occurs

in Poland, where a decisive majority of senators is pro-government, regardless of whether the cabinet is created by centre-right parties or by left-wing ones. For this reason, bicameralism in Poland is highly congruent. It means that the Senate cannot be treated in any way as a counterweight to political formations influencing the composition of the cabinet. On the contrary, senators' activity, which consists basically in supporting the executive, is very strongly conditioned by their partisan affiliations.

It should be stressed that the characteristics of both aforementioned second chambers affects their personal representation at the annual meetings of the Association of European Senates. In the case of the Polish Senate, the leaders of such delegations are in general politicians belonging to the ruling camp or at least openly supported by such political parties. Even if the president of the chamber was replaced by a vice-president, the latter usually came from the same political option. As far as chairmen of the chamber are concerned, it should be mentioned that **Alicja Grześkowiak** represented the Polish Senate under centre-right rule of the party coalition known as the Solidarity Electoral Action (*Akcja Wyborcza Solidarność*) before 2001. In the subsequent term of parliament, the post-communist left of the Democratic Left Alliance (*Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej*) held government posts (2001-2005). The principal representative of the second chamber was then **Longin Pastusiak**. After the victory of the Law and Justice in 2005, **Bogdan Borusewicz** as an independent senator was elected the president of the second chamber by two major political parties. After taking over power by the Civic Platform (*Platforma Obywatelska*) in 2007, **Borusewicz** kept his position in the Senate (thanks to the support given by the Civic Platform). Another change took place after the 2015 parliamentary elections. **Stanisław Karczewski** of the Law and Justice (*Prawo i Sprawiedliwość*) was then chosen its president and started taking part in annual debates of the association. In the light of the above, it can be concluded that anti-government formations in Poland have never gained particular opportunities to participate in international politics through the Association of European Senates. As mentioned earlier, leadership in the second chamber was basically dominated by politicians belonging to the ruling camp, regardless of which part of the political scene it represented. Such an effect should be treated as a natural consequence of the adopted legal structures on which the Polish Senate has been built. They contribute to the fact that if a given party enjoys the best position in the first chamber, its domination in the second chamber is even greater.

In turn, the way in which the composition of the French Senate is determined shows that majorities in both chambers may not overlap, which exerts an influence on the representation of the body on the international forum, creating additional opportunities for the anti-government opposition. Hence, the representation of the French Senate taking part in meeting of the Association of European Senates under left-wing governments (the third cohabitation period and the Hollande presidency in the years 2012-2017) was led by centre-right politicians such as **Christian Poncelet** and **G rard Larcher** from the neo-Gaullist party (the Rally for the Republic, the Union for the Popular Movement – *Union pour un mouvement populaire*, the Republicans – *Les R publicains*). Incidentally, it deserves to be emphasized that **Poncelet** was the first president of the Senate belonging to the Gaullist camp under the Fifth Republic (Chevallier – Carcassonne – Duhamel, 2007, p. 444). Previously, some centrist formations from outside the Gaullist camp kept a relatively strong position in the Senate, which was not without significance for the chamber’s leadership. It is also worth noting that **Poncelet**, the initiator of this association, presented his proposal to create this forum under conditions of cohabitation between President **Chirac** and Prime Minister **Jospin**. Most importantly, the French second chamber was then in opposition to the government and supported the presidential camp. This political configuration forced the government to use quite frequently the so-called procedure of the last word (Article 45 paragraph 4 of the 1958 Constitution) in order to avoid the necessity to adopt ordinary laws by both chambers. Thanks to this procedure, the support of the National Assembly is sufficient for such legal acts to come into force (after its promulgation by the head of state) (Ardant – Mathieu, 2014, pp. 462-463). Therefore, the Senate can be quite effectively neutralised in the legislative process. The dominant role of the centre-right opposition to the government formed by the so-called pluralist left (*gauche plurielle*) caused criticism for the Senate expressed by representatives of the ruling camp. The chamber was even identified by Prime Minister **Jospin** as “*an anomaly among our democratic institutions*” (Smith, 2009, p. 76; Boyer, 2007, pp.44-45). The politically difficult situation of cohabitation between the president and the government additionally complicated the process of governance, which undoubtedly contributed to the sharpening of such critical assessments. Although political parties belonging to the coalition of the pluralist left did not make any efforts to weaken the second chamber, not to mention its abolition, the attitude of the left to the Senate was not favourable. Anyway, Poncelet’s initiative headed in the opposite direction.

After all, his intention was to create a forum for exchange of experiences in order to strengthen and promote the principle of bicameralism in contemporary European countries, including France itself. Thus, there was no agreement between the then French left-wing parties and the centre-right opposition on the role and place of the second chamber in the entire institutional structure. Although such differences were more or less noticeable in previous decades as well, during cohabitation they gained a new dimension resulting from the specificity of increased competition between main political camps. This is what defined the context of the initiation of periodic interactions between second chambers operating within the framework of some European legislatures.

Conclusions

In the light of the above findings, it can be concluded that the Association of European Senates should be reasonably perceived as one of contemporary forms of well-established parliamentary diplomacy. International cooperation of second chambers existing within the framework of national bicameral legislatures offers special opportunities to increase the influence of opposition parties operating in national parliaments. Its field of activity is, however, to a large extent limited to the functioning of parliamentary second chambers and the challenges they face because of various political, social and cultural factors within contemporary European political systems. It does not change the fact that the analysed initiative creates greater opportunities for international involvement of politicians representing opposition parties, which undoubtedly affects the dimensions of broadly understood plural diplomacy. Although the activities of the Association of European Senates focus mainly on the issue of bicameralism and the place of second chambers in contemporary political and social contexts, there is also some space for discussing strictly political issues of international importance. The specificity of this cooperation is that it connects leaders of the second chambers as politicians who, due to differentiation of these bodies, may belong to political camps that remain in opposition to governments in their own countries. Such a situation deepens the plurality of the analysed form of diplomacy. First of all, it involves solely second chambers, and secondly, when certain conditions are met, it provides opportunities for wider participation of opposition formations existing at the national level.

With this in mind, three types of second chambers can be distinguished. The first of them assumes that majorities in both segments of parliament overlap and

this is regarded as a desirable political effect (e.g. Poland). The second type is based on the political autonomy of a given second chamber with respect to the first one. The incongruence of bicameralism causes leaderships in such second chambers to be in the hands of the anti-government opposition, which gains, as a result of including these organs in the framework of parliamentary diplomacy, new opportunities for political activity (e.g. Germany). As far as the third type is concerned, it deserves to be highlighted that the appropriate second chambers are not purely political bodies. This means that although majorities in both parts of the legislature may not coincide, anti-government formations are not given much wider opportunities for political influence, including that at the international level. These properties can be assigned to chambers of occupational or functional representation, which are, at least to some extent, non-partisan bodies within bicameral legislatures (e.g. Slovenia). Such organs do not necessarily become a typical arena of rivalry between major parties, which may also be attributed to their limited powers. Certain limitations imposed, at least theoretically, on exclusively partisan profiles of second chambers in order to provide representation of other interests can also be seen in some federal states. In the cases of both latter types, international activity of parliamentarians belonging to second chambers allows for the over-state presence of politicians who do not have to be directly linked to political parties ruling at the national level. The brief overview of some second chambers participating in the Association of European Senates seems to confirm that all three types are present within the framework of European political systems, which is not without significance not only for the national, but also for international activity of these bodies. Hence, although such a diversified parliamentary representation at the international level provided by second chambers certainly should not be overestimated, this specific aspect of broadly understood parliamentary activities seems to have its well-established place in the area of plural diplomacy.

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