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Parliament and Digital Platform Governance: A Literature Review of Legislative Oversight Functions

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Abstract

In contemporary democratic systems, the rise of digital ecosystems has severely disrupted traditional legislative oversight. While existing literature predominantly focuses on static legal texts, this study aims to comprehensively analyze the empirical mechanisms, challenges, and effectiveness of parliamentary oversight regarding digital platforms across various jurisdictions. This research employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) strictly calibrated to PRISMA 2020 guidelines, extracting data from academic databases and authoritative grey literature through thematic synthesis. The findings reveal that parliamentary institutions globally face an acute structural crisis exacerbated by absolute information asymmetry. Consequently, there is a pathological overreliance on the reactive "Fire Alarm" oversight model, while the proactive "Police Patrol" capacity remains severely hindered. Furthermore, legislative hearings frequently degenerate into "political theater" rather than substantive investigations. Corporate lobbying and transnational regulatory capture further erode sovereign regulatory efforts. Ultimately, this study concludes that restoring democratic accountability requires radical structural transformations, including the institutionalization of independent cyber investigation task forces and the integration of algorithmic auditors.

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INTRODUCTION

In contemporary democratic systems of government, the legislature performs three fundamental constitutional functions: representing the people, enacting legislation, and overseeing the conduct of government. Historically, the functions of legislation and representation have received far greater attention from the public, the mass media and the academic community. This tendency is reflected in the abundance of literature in the fields of law and public policy that focuses exclusively on the study of legislative texts as the final legal product. In fact, the oversight function designed to evaluate policy implementation, monitor the performance of executive bodies, and ensure that any party holding significant authority remains responsive and accountable is an equally vital element in upholding the principle of checks and balances (Stapenhurst et al., 2008).

In recent decades, the landscape of parliamentary oversight has undergone unprecedented disruption alongside the development of the digital ecosystem. Global technology platforms, social media, and artificial intelligence-based systems have shifted from being mere commercial communication tools to becoming vital infrastructure that mediates the public sphere, shapes public opinion, influences the dynamics of general elections, and manages the personal data of billions of citizens worldwide (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2024). This research stems from the realisation that existing academic studies have largely produced literature on digital regulation, yet most of it is static in nature. Researchers in the fields of law and policy tend to focus on analysing the text of legislation, ranging from Indonesia's Electronic Information and Transactions Law, the European Union's Digital Services Act, privacy protection frameworks across various jurisdictions, to content moderation regulations such as the Online Harms Act (Thomas, 2023).

Whilst such a doctrinal approach has considerable academic merit, it leaves a significant gap in the research. Systematic studies that specifically analyze the process of parliamentary oversight itself remain very rare. There is also a scarcity of literature that empirically explores how parliamentarians in various countries debate in committee sessions, how they respond to digital crises such as the online exploitation of children, massive personal data breaches, or organised disinformation campaigns, and how the actual dynamics of power unfold when parliaments interrogate government executives or the leadership of technology companies. This research is designed to fill this gap through a comprehensive and in-depth analysis of the mechanisms, challenges, and effectiveness of parliamentary oversight of the digital ecosystem in various countries (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2024).

By adopting a systematic literature review approach, this study deliberately shifts the focus from a static analysis of legal texts to the institutional dynamics and actual policy processes at play. This study traces the shift in the role of parliament from merely a "watchdog" of conventional government to a far more complex role as a "digital watchdog" in the era of social media and algorithmic systems. Furthermore, this report critically examines how traditional oversight instruments such as the right to question, interpellations, public hearings, and investigations through special committees adapt when confronted with transnational corporations whose business models are shrouded in extreme information asymmetry and the complexity of technological architecture. At the same time, this report highlights how parliamentary committees across the globe, including (Mitts & Ofir, 2026).

Committee I of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia continues to grapple with issues of jurisdictional boundaries, the potential for confusing regulatory overlaps, and the urgent need to ensure that foreign digital platforms comply with national law. By compiling data from various multidisciplinary journals, inter-parliamentary institutional reports, and committee proceedings from diverse jurisdictions, this report presents a comparative mapping of the regulatory challenges facing digital platforms. This theoretical and empirical exploration is expected to provide a more robust understanding of how legislative bodies can strengthen their institutional capacity, avoid the pitfalls of regulatory capture triggered by high-value corporate lobbying, and ultimately restore the

balance of democratic accountability within an increasingly automated ecosystem (Block, 2025).

METHODS

To ensure methodological rigour, objectivity, and the reproducibility of findings, this study employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) design, strictly calibrated in accordance with the 2020 edition of the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines (Withanage et al., 2026). This review not only covers peer-reviewed journal articles in the fields of political science, legal studies, and communication, but also broadens its scope to include authoritative grey literature. The decision to include this type of literature comprising parliamentary committee investigation reports, congressional hearing proceedings, think tank working papers, and publications from global oversight bodies such as the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) is based on the fundamental need to capture the actual dynamics of the oversight process, which are often not documented in conventional academic journal literature. The literature identification process was carried out through a comprehensive search strategy on internationally standardized academic databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, PubMed, and Google Scholar (Laor, 2026). During the screening stage, the initial bibliometric-based study and extensive systematic literature review as reflected in the Scopus analysis that screened over 500 studies to identify core clusters were replicated to distinguish relevant studies from repetitive articles (Alazemi et al., 2025).

This multi-layered screening process deliberately excludes studies that merely offer doctrinal-legal interpretations of legislative texts without paying sufficient attention to the political dimensions and dynamics of committee oversight. The primary and secondary data successfully extracted from the selected body of literature were subsequently analysed uzing thematic synthesis. This approach enables researchers to systematically map recurring patterns, identify striking differences between jurisdictions, and gain a more detailed understanding of the structural and operational obstacles faced by parliamentary institutions in various countries (Rachmawati et al., 2026). The evaluation of the effectiveness of oversight instruments was conducted using a triangulation approach, employing three key indicators as benchmarks: the strength of law enforcement, the institutional independence of committees, and the existence of political will that transcends partisan interests.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Adaptation of the Surveillance Model and Information Asymmetry

A review of the literature indicates that, in response to the evolution of the digital ecosystem, parliaments in various countries have been compelled to make fairly fundamental methodological adjustments to both models. Further analysis reveals that parliaments' absolute reliance on the 'Fire Alarm' model often constrains state autonomy in designing a 'Resilient' digital architecture (Alazemi et al., 2025). The resulting responses are frequently guided by public emotional dynamics, producing a patchwork of regulations rather than a long-term systemic framework. Based on the perspective of Agency Theory, which underpins much of the research on democratic accountability, effective oversight relies on the ability to narrow the information gap between the principal (parliament as the public's representative) and the agent (the executive or business entities subject to oversight) (Warner, 2022).

The literature on platform economics, including the findings of Cusumano et al. and the Thurman Arnold Project at Yale University, confirms that technology companies hold structural dominance over data flows and algorithmic surveillance architectures. Neither consumers nor legislators have empirical access to verify the commercial value of the data collected, thereby creating the phenomenon of surveillance capitalism—a condition in which platforms compile massive user profiles without consent that is genuinely based on adequate information (Hong & Liu, 2026). Various literature reviews, including analyses of data leaks by whistleblowers, confirm that leaked internal documents are often the sole catalyst capable of breaching the platforms' walls of

secrecy, shifting public opinion, whilst equipping legislators with concrete data to drive more robust reforms in platform governance.

Comparative Dynamics of Oversight and Lobbying Penetration

Hearings are the most visible instrument of parliamentary oversight, both in their ceremonial and investigative dimensions. A synthesis of the analysis identifies three main prototypes of how hearings are conducted across the globe (Turillazzi et al., 2023). The consensus in the literature concludes that high-level oversight hearings in Washington are often reduced to a political theatre and a platform for sensationalism for members of Congress. The final report and proceedings of the UK's Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) Committee under the leadership of Damian Collins are recognized in the literature as representing the most comprehensive, tenacious and incisive model of parliamentary oversight ever published (Pegg, 2019). The committee's findings called for fundamental change: the era of self-regulation was declared over, and the UK government was urged to establish an independent regulator with the power to impose significant financial penalties to curb the excesses of surveillance capitalism (Turillazzi et al., 2023).

In the European arena, the European Parliament is pursuing a distinctive supranational oversight approach, driven by the most ambitious regulatory instrument to date: the Digital Services Act (DSA). This confrontational dynamic underscores the fundamental transformation of parliamentary committee chambers, which have now metamorphosed into arenas of geopolitical supremacy and jurisdictional warfare, where commercial platforms face pressure from multiple fronts of sovereignty simultaneously. Examining the Indonesian context through journal studies and meeting documents, the literature indicates that the Indonesian House of Representatives, specifically through Commission I, applies a hybrid model of oversight (U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on the Judiciary, 2025).

Nevertheless, the literature and meeting transcripts note the existence of systemic obstacles in the form of overlapping regulations and the fragmentation of jurisdictional authority. The biggest controversy currently centers on the debate surrounding the revision of the Broadcasting Act. In response to calls for modernization, the Secretariat of the Indonesian House of Representatives has also experimented with adopting innovative transparency channels, such as the launch of the "DPR Now!" app to collect public reports directly an approach to oversight based on public participation that also serves as a strategic effort to compensate for the limitations of internal monitoring capacity (U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on the Judiciary, 2025). An institutional analysis of the integrity of parliamentary oversight would be incomplete without accounting for the external forces deployed by industry to disrupt, weaken, or divert the regulatory formulation process a political phenomenon known as regulatory capture. This architecture of transnational regulatory capture systematically erodes the prerogative of national parliamentarians to design a sovereignly secure digital regulatory space.

The Collapse of Agency Theory and the Surveillance Paradox

However, the convergence of various studies in the literature on digital platforms strongly suggests that this hierarchical command structure has collapsed in the era of the interactive web. Consequently, the chain of accountability has shifted from a bilateral format to an asymmetrical tripartite arrangement: parliamentary institutions, state law enforcement agencies, and mega-corporations providing infrastructure. The flow of algorithmic information dissemination (network effects) and the phenomenon of user-generated content functionally transcend the linear broadcasting model (point-to-multipoint) (Hong & Liu, 2026). Consequently, surveillance has become profoundly anachronistic, an endeavor doomed to failure for attempting to shackle light-speed computational innovation with the procedural surveillance methodologies of the analog era.

However, empirical evidence suggests that this reproduces a public policy environment that is highly fragile, sporadic, and heavily dependent on the issue attention cycle. Without leaks of internal research documents presenting authentic

and empirical evidence regarding the engineering of user behaviour, the psychographic manipulation of voters, or documentation of the disregard for the safety of underage users in the name of algorithmic retention, parliamentary committees are effectively left completely isolated. This dependence is an admission that discredits the capabilities of the 'Police Patrol' within the current parliamentary environment (Warner, 2022).

Institutional Transformation and the Prevention of Regulatory Capture

This dilemma of dual compliance is ultimately highly destructive, as it often provides a loophole and a logical justification for platforms to employ delaying tactics in order to safeguard their threatened commercial data extraction architecture. Firstly, legislative bodies must recalibrate their oversight structures by democratising access to analytics, formally incorporating external counterbalancing forces. Secondly, amidst the escalating erosion of administrative regulatory doctrine, as exemplified by the overturning of the Chevron doctrine in the United States, which has crippled the flexibility of federal agencies in interpreting regulations, parliamentary committees are required to enact performance-based digital regulations and distribute technical compliance standards through collaboration with neutral accreditation bodies such as NIST or IEEE (Ananda & Umanto, 2025).

Thirdly, systemic transformation requires parliaments to integrate their own digital surveillance tools. Faced with an existential threat to the integrity of elections and consumer safety, parliaments must transform by abandoning the paradigm of corporate self-regulation, which has proven corrosive, in favor of legal instruments granting absolute data seizure powers (digital subpoenas) and the establishment of an independent algorithmic oversight authority (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2024).

CONCLUSION

This analytical and systematic literature review critically unpacks, examines and reconstructs the landscape of the debate surrounding the role of parliamentary oversight in the architecture of the contemporary digital platform ecosystem. Moving beyond the limitations of traditional academic studies, which focus solely on the jurisprudential interpretation of static final legal products, an in-depth examination of policy-making processes, tensions within committee chambers, confrontations between political factions, and the interrogation of multinational corporate executives has stripped away the naïve narrative regarding legislative power in the era of cyber disruption. A synthesis of the key findings irrefutably demonstrates that legislative bodies at the epicenter of global power from the US Congress with its policy ambivalence, the European Parliament with its supranational DSA instrument, the UK Parliament's DCMS Committee with its forensic investigative acumen, and the regulatory jurisdictional struggles within the corridors of the Indonesian House of Representatives' Commission I, are all caught in the vortex of an acute structural crisis. The success of institutional interventions is constantly undermined by an absolute asymmetry of information. The impotence of these institutions' technical capacity has instilled a syndrome of systemic dependence on the 'Fire Alarm' model of oversight.

At the same time, this deficit in legislative competence has fostered the proliferation of the pathology of 'political theatre' (grandstanding) within committee rooms, a tragic distortion in which substantive truth-seeking and the evaluation of algorithmic compliance are sidelined in favor of securing visual attention for short-term electoral gain. The restoration of sovereignty requires structural and methodological transformation: revitalizing the 'Police Patrol' framework by institutionalizing an independent cyber-investigation task force within the parliamentary secretariat, recruiting algorithm auditors with global expertise, democratising data support from civil society organizations, and strictly enforcing transparency in lobbying audit instruments. If legislative bodies globally continue to fail to reform their oversight mechanisms, allowing state instruments to be overwhelmed by a knowledge deficit and sabotaged by the operations of unlimited capital, then the essential

foundations of participatory democratic systems will be permanently marginalized.

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