

ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY AND GOOD GOVERNANCE: THE ROLE OF PARLIAMENTARISM AND CONSTITUTIONAL RESPONSIBILITY IN UKRAINE'S EU INTEGRATION

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Abstract. Good governance and economic sustainability are fundamental prerequisites for Ukraine's successful integration into the European Union. In the context of martial law and accelerated Europeanisation, the effectiveness of parliamentary institutions and constitutional accountability mechanisms is crucial for ensuring long-term economic resilience and protecting constitutional freedoms. This article examines how parliamentarism and constitutional responsibility influence good governance and economic sustainability in Ukraine's EU accession process. Drawing on the doctrinal concept of constitutional freedom as the axiological foundation of Ukrainian constitutionalism, the study analyses the interaction between parliamentary institutions, constitutional accountability mechanisms and economic governance. The research employs doctrinal analysis, an institutional approach, a comparative legal method and an examination of EU enlargement policy documents. Despite notable legislative reforms aimed at increasing transparency and public participation, the findings demonstrate that martial law has resulted in the centralisation of executive power and a significant weakening of parliamentary oversight. This has given rise to a hybrid institutional model in which formal alignment with EU standards coexists with reduced constitutional accountability and fewer safeguards for constitutional freedoms. These imbalances in the institutional landscape increase policy uncertainty, reduce investor confidence and threaten long-term economic sustainability. The article argues that constitutional responsibility should be understood as both a set of sanctions and a value-based instrument for safeguarding constitutional freedom and ensuring credible democratic governance. Reducing governance risks and building sustainable economic institutions requires strengthening parliamentary accountability and aligning constitutional responsibility mechanisms with EU standards. The study provides practical recommendations for enhancing institutional resilience during wartime and the subsequent reconstruction period. It emphasises that Ukraine can only achieve the protection of constitutional freedom and the economic sustainability required for full European integration by embedding constitutional responsibility as a living and enforceable value.

Keywords: good governance, economic sustainability, EU integration, parliamentarism, constitutional responsibility, constitutional freedom, martial law, institutional resilience.

JEL Classification: K30, K38

1. Introduction

The European Union's enlargement policy has long recognised good governance and economic sustainability as interdependent prerequisites for successful integration. For candidate countries, the quality of democratic institutions, the effectiveness of public administration, and the accountability of elected

bodies are fundamental conditions for ensuring long-term economic resilience and sustainable development, not merely technical requirements under Chapters 23 and 24 of the *EU acquis*. In this context, parliamentary institutions and constitutional responsibility act as mechanisms that link political accountability with economic performance and the credibility of public governance.

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At the same time, contemporary constitutional doctrine increasingly emphasises that the ultimate purpose of these institutional arrangements is to safeguard the constitutional and legal freedom of the individual. In Ukrainian constitutional scholarship, this concept is defined as a specific legal and factual situation in which individuals are protected from unconstitutional interference and can exercise their rights within a framework of legal certainty, accountability, and the rule of law. Within this axiological framework, parliamentarism and constitutional responsibility take on an extra dimension. They not only operate as formal governance mechanisms, but also as value-based guarantees of constitutional freedom. This freedom is a necessary foundation for stable economic development.

Ukraine's journey towards EU membership is unfolding amid exceptionally challenging circumstances. Since 2014, and especially since the large-scale Russian invasion of 2022, the country has implemented far-reaching reforms while operating under martial law and bringing its legal system into line with European standards. These overlapping processes have put enormous strain on the public administration system, particularly on the Verkhovna Rada, the central parliamentary institution. Although significant legislative progress has been made, including the adoption of laws on transparency, public consultations, international territorial co-operation, and budgetary flexibility, the fragmented and frequently reactive nature of these reforms calls into question their contribution to good governance, constitutional freedom, and long-term economic sustainability.

This article examines the role of parliamentarism and constitutional responsibility as the institutional foundations of good governance and economic sustainability within the context of Ukraine's integration with the EU. Despite the growing body of literature on Europeanisation processes, insufficient attention has been paid to the interrelation between parliamentary accountability, constitutional responsibility, and the realisation of constitutional freedoms, particularly in times of war and accelerated institutional transformation. This study aims to address this gap by analysing the influence of the quality and effectiveness of parliamentary systems and constitutional responsibility on the state's capacity to ensure compliance with EU governance standards and protect constitutional freedoms while maintaining economic resilience.

The central research question guiding this study is as follows: "What is the extent to which parliamentarism and constitutional responsibility contribute to good governance, economic sustainability and the realisation of constitutional freedom in the context of Ukraine's EU integration?" To answer this question, the article pursues three main objectives:

(1) To conceptualise the relationship between parliamentarism, constitutional responsibility, good governance, economic sustainability and constitutional freedom.

(2) To examine the evolution and current state of these institutions in Ukraine between 2014 and 2025.

(3) To identify main institutional challenges affecting their effective implementation under conditions of martial law.

The article continues as follows. Section 2 develops the conceptual frameworks of parliamentarism, constitutional responsibility, good governance, economic sustainability, and constitutional freedom. Section 3 examines EU standards and benchmarks for candidate countries. Section 4 analyses the evolution of parliamentarism and constitutional responsibility in Ukraine within the context of wartime. Section 5 identifies the main challenges and risks associated with implementing constitutional responsibility under martial law, as well as the implications for economic sustainability and constitutional freedom. Section 6 concludes the study by outlining the policy implications and recommendations.

2. Conceptual Framework: Parliamentarism, Constitutional Responsibility, Good Governance and Economic Sustainability

Good governance has become a central normative and operational concept in the European Union's enlargement policy. According to the European Commission, it encompasses transparency, accountability, the rule of law, effectiveness and inclusiveness in public administration (European Commission, 2024). In the context of economic sustainability, good governance is understood as the institutional capacity to ensure transparent and accountable decision-making processes that support long-term economic stability, mitigate corruption risks, and foster an attractive investment climate (World Bank, 2024; Kaufmann et al., 2011).

Parliamentarism occupies a special place within this framework. As the primary representative institution, parliament carries out the vital tasks of legislation, oversight and budgetary control. A strong parliament is widely regarded as a prerequisite for democratic accountability and, consequently, for sustainable economic governance. Constitutional responsibility functions as a complex legal and institutional mechanism through which accountability is formalised, operationalised, and enforced. This encompasses negative sanctions, such as the dissolution of parliament or impeachment procedures, as well as positive obligations, such as transparency requirements, public consultations and effective oversight.

These concepts can be understood within the frameworks of institutional economics and

constitutional political economy. According to North (1990) and Acemoglu (2005), inclusive institutions characterised by strong checks and balances, accountability, and the protection of property rights are fundamental to long-term economic growth. From this perspective, parliamentary systems and constitutional responsibility act as "commitment devices" that restrict arbitrary executive power, reducing the likelihood of policy changes and thereby increasing investor confidence and ensuring long-term economic sustainability. Furthermore, national parliaments have become increasingly important in multi-level economic governance, particularly in the context of the European Semester and post-crisis recovery (Crum, 2018; Fasone & Lupo, 2023).

Importantly, within this framework, constitutional responsibility can also be viewed as a bridge that connects the values and functions of formal institutional design with its practical effectiveness in ensuring credible commitments.

For EU candidate countries, the Copenhagen criteria explicitly link democratic institutions and the rule of law to the ability to adopt and implement the *acquis communautaire*. The experiences of Poland, Romania and the Baltic States in recent enlargement rounds demonstrate that the strength of parliamentary oversight and the effectiveness of constitutional accountability mechanisms can significantly influence the speed and quality of European integration, as well as the resilience of national economies during periods of crisis.

In the Ukrainian context, the relationship between parliamentarism and constitutional responsibility is further complicated by the concurrent pressures of martial law and accelerated EU accession. While martial law can improve short-term crisis management by temporarily centralising decision-making, it can also undermine parliamentary oversight and long-term accountability. Conversely, the EU accession process demands greater transparency, stronger checks and balances, and more effective constitutional accountability mechanisms. This tension is the central analytical focus of the present study.

The conceptual framework of this article therefore rests on three interrelated pillars:

- (1) Good governance as the overarching normative standard required by the EU;
- (2) parliamentarism as the key institutional arena in which accountability is exercised; and
- (3) constitutional responsibility as the legal mechanism that translates democratic principles into enforceable rules. Subsequent sections will examine how these pillars interact within Ukraine's current legal and political landscape, and the implications this interaction has for the country's economic sustainability and successful EU integration.

3. EU Standards and Benchmarks for Candidate Countries

The European Union has developed a comprehensive set of normative and institutional benchmarks that candidate countries must meet to progress towards full membership. These benchmarks are based on the Copenhagen criteria (1993), Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union and the specific requirements of the EU *acquis communautaire*, particularly Chapters 23 (Judiciary and Fundamental Rights) and 24 (Justice, Freedom and Security). Together, they form a rigorous framework that places a strong emphasis on democratic institutions, the rule of law and effective accountability mechanisms.

A key aspect of the EU's political criteria is the requirement for candidate countries to demonstrate "stable institutions that guarantee democracy, the rule of law, human rights, and respect for and protection of minorities" (European Council, 1993; Charron et al., 2010). This stability is not merely understood as the formal existence of democratic procedures, but as the effective functioning of checks and balances. This includes having a strong and independent parliament that is capable of exercising meaningful oversight of the executive. The European Commission's annual reports on candidate countries consistently highlight the quality of parliamentary work, legislative process transparency, and constitutional accountability mechanisms as indicators of democratic consolidation.

Parliamentarism occupies a central position in the EU's evaluation of good governance. A functioning parliament is expected to fulfil three interrelated functions:

- (1) legislative (adopting laws in line with EU legislation);
- (2) oversight (holding the government to account) and
- (3) representative (ensuring public participation and legitimacy).

Constitutional accountability mechanisms, such as procedures for parliamentary dissolution, the impeachment of officials, and penalties for breaching constitutional obligations, are vital for ensuring accountability and preventing the concentration of power. The Commission regularly identifies the absence or weakness of such mechanisms as a significant issue in the accession process.

The link between parliamentarism, constitutional responsibility and economic sustainability is explicitly recognised in EU policy. From an economic governance perspective, this link is particularly pertinent, given that institutional quality directly impacts transaction costs, regulatory predictability, and the credibility of state commitments within both domestic and international markets (Buchanan et al., 2012). Effective parliamentary oversight and robust constitutional

accountability reduce policy uncertainty, strengthen the rule of law, and improve the investment climate – all of which are critical factors for achieving economic resilience and sustainable growth. The 2024 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy repeatedly emphasises that weak parliamentary institutions and inadequate accountability mechanisms undermine democratic standards and a candidate country's ability to credibly and sustainably implement the economic and sectoral *acquis* (European Commission, 2024). Recent empirical studies emphasise that the growth effect of EU funds is significantly influenced by institutional quality. This suggests that financial integration alone cannot ensure economic convergence without robust governance (Szörfi & Augusztin, 2024).

Recent experiences of EU enlargement provide instructive benchmarks. Poland, Romania and the Baltic states successfully acceded to the EU following significant reforms that strengthened parliamentary oversight, introduced clearer rules of constitutional responsibility, and enhanced transparency in decision-making. These countries have demonstrated that robust parliamentary institutions and effective accountability mechanisms are crucial for achieving both political objectives and economic convergence and long-term sustainability within the European Union.

For Ukraine, EU standards represent both an opportunity and a challenge. Adhering to these standards could accelerate the country's institutional modernisation and economic recovery. However, the current conditions of martial law give rise to structural tensions between the need for rapid executive decision-making and the long-term requirements of robust parliamentary oversight and constitutional accountability. It is essential to understand how Ukraine navigates this tension in order to assess the prospects of its European integration.

This section looks at the concrete developments in Ukraine's parliamentary and constitutional framework between 2014 and 2025. It pays particular attention to recent legislative changes and their implications for good governance and economic sustainability.

4. Parliamentarism and Constitutional Responsibility in Ukraine: Between Constitutional Freedom and Wartime Realities (2014–2025)

The development of parliamentarism and constitutional responsibility in Ukraine since 2014 cannot be understood through formal institutional changes alone. According to Krusian (2024), it must be analysed through the lens of constitutional and legal freedom as the ultimate objective of modern Ukrainian constitutionalism and how this aligns with the core values of the European Union: freedom,

equality, justice and respect for human rights. The author conceptualises constitutional and legal freedom not merely as an abstract philosophical construct, but as a concrete legal and factual condition. This is defined as a tangible legal and factual state in which individuals are physically, economically, politically and spiritually independent from any unconstitutional interference by public authorities or other social actors. This freedom constitutes the axiological core of Ukrainian constitutionalism, providing the ultimate benchmark against which the effectiveness of parliamentary institutions and constitutional responsibility mechanisms can be evaluated. Article 3 of the Constitution recognises the human being as the highest social value, placing them at the centre of this axiological paradigm.

In practice, however, the period from 2014 to 2025 was characterised by ongoing tension. On the one hand, Ukraine has taken significant legislative steps to enhance transparency and public engagement. The 2024 laws on local self-government transparency, public consultation expansion, international territorial co-operation, and the ratification of the Almaty amendments to the Aarhus Convention formally advance parliamentary oversight and participatory democracy. These reforms align with the EU's demands under Chapters 23 and 24, promoting constitutional freedoms through increased accountability and inclusivity (Fromage et al., 2019).

Conversely, martial law imposes structural limitations on this freedom. As Krusian (2024) emphasises, any restriction of constitutional and legal freedom in extraordinary circumstances must fulfil strict criteria, such as being temporary, constitutional, necessary, proportional, just, and not violating the core principles of the individual's constitutional status. In practice, however, many transparency and oversight provisions have been suspended, executive decision-making has become more centralised and the Verkhovna Rada's oversight capacity has been significantly reduced. Constitutional accountability mechanisms remain fragmented. The grounds for the early dissolution of parliament (Article 90) are narrowly defined and rarely invoked. Meanwhile, the accountability of individual parliamentarians, for example with regard to incompatibility of mandate and the prohibition of "button-pushing", lacks effective enforcement.

This creates a profound axiological and institutional paradox. In economic terms, this translates as weakened institutional credibility, which can have an adverse effect on long-term investment expectations and governance stability. Constitutional responsibility, valuable because it protects the Constitution, advances constitutionalism, and guarantees constitutional order (Batanova, 2025), is being used primarily as a crisis management tool rather than a mechanism for safeguarding constitutional freedom. The result is

a hybrid model in which progressive legislation coexists with weakened parliamentary accountability and the partial limitation of the freedom that constitutionalism is intended to protect.

In comparison to the successful EU accession of Poland and Romania, Ukraine's experience demonstrates that formal legislative alignment alone is insufficient without the genuine institutionalisation of constitutional responsibility as a value-based guarantee of freedom. The current situation risks turning parliamentarism into a formally democratic yet substantively weakened institution, which undermines good governance and long-term economic sustainability directly (Rodrik, 2018).

Thus, both the doctrinal and practical analyses demonstrate that achieving constitutional freedom through effective parliamentary accountability remains an unfinished task. Closing this gap is not only a technical requirement of the EU accession process, but also essential for the long-term development of Ukrainian constitutionalism during and after wartime.

5. Challenges and Risks in Implementing Constitutional Responsibility under Martial Law: Implications for Constitutional Freedom and Economic Sustainability

From 2014 to 2025, the implementation of constitutional responsibility in Ukraine's parliamentary sphere revealed profound challenges arising from the pressures of full-scale war and accelerated European integration. While legislative reforms in 2024 promoted transparency and public participation, the introduction of martial law has created structural risks that threaten the realisation of constitutional and legal personal freedom – the ultimate axiological objective of modern Ukrainian constitutionalism.

It should be emphasised that constitutional freedom is not an abstract philosophical concept, but rather a tangible legal and factual state in which individuals are independent of any unconstitutional interference, whether physical, economic, political or spiritual. This freedom is central to Ukraine's constitutionalism, serving as the ultimate criterion for evaluating the effectiveness of parliamentary institutions and mechanisms of constitutional responsibility. Any restriction of this freedom in extraordinary circumstances, such as under martial law, must strictly adhere to the principles of temporariness, constitutionality, necessity, proportionality and justice. The fundamental rights and freedoms of individuals, as enshrined in the constitution, such as human dignity, equality and the rule of law, must remain inviolable.

In practice, however, these criteria are only partially observed. Many transparency and parliamentary

oversight provisions have been suspended, executive decision-making has become more centralised and the Verkhovna Rada's control functions have been weakened. Constitutional accountability mechanisms remain fragmented: the grounds for the early dissolution of parliament are narrowly defined and rarely invoked, and the enforcement of accountability measures for individual parliamentarians (e.g., incompatibility of mandate, prohibition of non-personal voting) is ineffective. As Batanova (2025) argues, constitutional responsibility has a multidimensional value that extends well beyond formal sanctions. It is an essential instrument for legally safeguarding the 1996 Constitution, developing constitutionalism, reinforcing the rule of law, and ensuring constitutional order. However, its implementation is currently predominantly reactive and crisis-oriented rather than value-driven.

This has direct implications for good governance and economic sustainability. In particular, institutional fragility increases governance uncertainty and risk perceptions, and constrains the state's capacity to implement stable economic policies. Similarly, weak parliamentary accountability leads to policy unpredictability, reduces investor confidence, and undermines the long-term institutional foundations necessary for sustainable economic development. The tension between the need for rapid executive action during wartime and the EU's demand for robust checks and balances results in a hybrid model, where formal legislative progress exists alongside substantive deficits in constitutional responsibility. The erosion of parliamentary oversight poses a particular risk to fiscal stability, given that strong constitutional budget institutions are statistically correlated with better economic outcomes and fiscal discipline (Voigt & Blume, 2013). In modern economies, the stability of these institutions is increasingly recognised as an essential form of intangible capital for long-term productivity and resilience (Corrado et al., 2022).

Addressing these challenges is not merely a technical requirement of the accession process. Rather, it is a fundamental condition for ensuring that constitutional responsibility fulfils its axiological potential and that constitutional freedom continues to be the guiding value of Ukrainian constitutionalism, even in the most challenging circumstances.

6. Conclusions

This study demonstrates that parliamentary institutions and constitutional responsibility are essential for good governance and long-term economic sustainability within Ukraine's EU integration process. These are not mere formalities. However, the analysis reveals a persistent discrepancy between formal legislative progress and the actual implementation of constitutional accountability mechanisms. While

the 2024 reforms promoted transparency, public participation, and international co-operation, martial law conditions have restricted parliamentary oversight and weakened accountability mechanisms, creating a hybrid institutional model that jeopardises democratic quality and economic resilience.

This article's doctrinal perspective emphasises that the most important goal of modern Ukrainian constitutionalism is the constitutional and legal freedom of the individual, which is closely linked to the fundamental values of the EU (freedom, equality, justice and human rights). As a multidimensional value, constitutional responsibility is the principal mechanism for safeguarding this freedom and upholding the rule of law. However, its current implementation remains predominantly reactive and insufficiently institutionalised, particularly within the parliamentary sphere. Evidence from Poland, Romania and Moldova shows that successful EU accession requires robust pre-accession consolidation of accountability mechanisms – a standard that Ukraine has yet to fully meet.

From an economic perspective, these institutional weaknesses carry significant financial implications. For instance, weak parliamentary accountability can lead to unpredictable policies, erode investor confidence and increase the risk premium on Ukrainian assets. Without effective constitutional accountability, the investment climate remains fragile, public finance management becomes less predictable, and long-term economic sustainability is jeopardised. On the other hand, strengthening these mechanisms would reduce transaction costs, improve the reliability of commitments, and establish the institutional

prerequisites for long-term economic convergence with the EU.

This study's central finding is as follows: Ukraine's formal alignment with EU standards may achieve technical compliance without the modernisation of constitutional responsibility within parliament, but this will not lead to sustainable economic and democratic development. The axiological potential of constitutional responsibility, as a value-based guarantee of constitutional freedom and order, must be operationalised effectively in practice.

To achieve this, Ukraine should prioritise the following three strategic steps: (1) constitutional and legislative reform to strengthen accountability mechanisms for individuals and groups, while preserving the free mandate; (2) institutional safeguards to ensure that any limitations on parliamentary functions during wartime are temporary, proportionate, and subject to strict constitutional scrutiny; (3) the systematic alignment of parliamentary practices with EU benchmarks in Chapters 23 and 24. These findings reinforce the argument that institutional reforms in parliamentarism and constitutional responsibility should be viewed not only as legal or political adjustments, but also as fundamental elements of the economic governance framework.

Ukraine's successful integration into the European Union ultimately hinges on two things: the speed of legislative adaptation and the depth of institutional transformation. Ukraine can only ensure the protection of constitutional freedom and the economic sustainability required for full and irreversible European integration by embedding constitutional responsibility as a living and enforceable value within the parliamentary system.

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