

they already shared their leaders' policy. A by-product of this process was the emergence of programmatic parties.

Whereas scholars applaud the emergence of programmatic parties (Kitschelt 1995), in a new democracy such as Poland, the combination of programmaticism, majoritarianism, and high societal polarization is particularly threatening. Once the majoritarian control of the Sejm—largely emulating that of the US House of Representatives (Rohde 1991), although without strong institutional checks characteristic of the US Constitution (Patty 2007)—had been established, functioning as an incoherent party was no longer an option. To even have a chance at governing—a task at which both Civic Platform and Law and Justice (PiS) succeeded—acting as a unified party has become an absolute necessity. Moreover, while in the government, a party had the means and—given high polarization—the incentive to shut out any voice from the opposition. Consequently, by 2018, the only opposition to the rule of PiS is coming from street protesters and the European Union. ■

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DE-DEMOCRATIZATION: THE CASE OF HUNGARY IN A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

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In this decade, we can observe a process of de-democratization in countries having experienced a political transformation, democratic consolidation, and Europeanization (Szymański 2017).

Any legal short-term measures attempting to restore balance between the legislative and executive branches in Hungary and other countries seem to be either counterproductive (e.g., new competences for parliaments) or unrealistic (e.g., returning to procedures that guarantee the influence of all parties in the parliament). What remains is to consider long-term measures that may reverse the current trends in the party/political systems.

The strengthening of the executive power at the cost of the parliament is a part of this process. In this article, Hungary is compared with Poland and Turkey to demonstrate that this phenomenon

occurs in more than a single region. I argue that the deterioration of the standards of a liberal democracy has only strengthened the dominance of the executive power that has been gradually developing since the mid-1990s.

Parliamentary systems—those with a limited role for the president (with some delay in Poland) and a position of prominence for a parliament—were a reality at beginning of the 1990s. In Hungary, the “coordinate” parliamentarianism meant that although the legislative initiative belonged to the government, the parliament was “strong enough to get some of its legislature approved” (Ilonszki 2007, 55). However, changes from the mid-1990s to 2010 led to an increase in the role of the executive and incumbents, especially relative to the parliament and opposition.

In Hungary, the number of parliamentary parties decreased (due to the electoral system and the threshold) and bipolarization increased. This resulted in the development of majoritarianism, which meant the dominance of incumbents in the parliamentary bodies. Moreover, an increasing number of government laws were approved whereas opposition proposals were blocked (Zubek 2011). Incumbents also used questions or interpellations as a means for government deputies to publicize governmental policies. Furthermore, the formal institutionalization of the parliament (following the legalistic tradition of communism) meant it had formal competences but no real authority. Paradoxically, the EU accession process also contributed to a relatively stronger government, primarily due to the EU’s “fast-track legislative procedures.” Almost all of these factors could be identified in Poland and many of them in Turkey, although the timing of their appearance differed (Ilonszki 2007; Mansfeldová 2011).

These factors created a fertile breeding ground for a more noticeable strengthening of executive power and the power of incumbents after 2010. This was the result of an assumption and consolidation of power by single-party governments or those with a dominating coalition partner (e.g., Hungary), which then preferred a majoritarian understanding of democracy. These consolidations took place in Hungary and Turkey through subsequent elections, in which incumbents made extensive use of their advantage. Hungary’s particular “supermajoritarianism” (since 2010) means that Fidesz and its partner have a two-thirds majority and, therefore, the possibility to change the constitution or appoint people to the judiciary, electoral, or media bodies without participation of the opposition (Pozsár-Szentmiklósy 2017).

Further strengthening of executive power in Hungary and other countries is a part of demolishing the system of checks and balances. However, although we observe a similar strengthening of executive power at the cost of the judiciary, there are differences

between Central Europe and Turkey in government and parliamentary relationships (influenced by different political cultures and historical experiences).

In Hungary and Poland, the Council of Ministers is the main beneficiary of the strengthening of executive power, keeping the parliamentary system intact. The formal dimension differs from the political practice. Although the parliament receives new formal powers (e.g., the appointment of high-court justices)—in accordance with a populist call for “giving the power to the sovereign”—its position is increasingly weak in practice. It is becoming a subordinate body serving mainly the interests of the government. The opposition—left without a substantial impact on the legislative process—organizes protests, but these are ineffective (Bankúti, Halmai, and Lane Scheppele 2012).

In Turkey, the role of the president has been strengthened. The constitutional amendments accepted in the April 2017 referendum are leading to the introduction of a presidential system *a la Turca*, with the dominant position of the president as the head of government (Esen and Gümüşçü 2017). The parliament has lost some control measures vis-à-vis the executive and legislative competences, particularly during a time of emergency rule based on decrees of the executive.

Any legal short-term measures attempting to restore balance between the legislative and executive branches in Hungary and other countries seem to be either counterproductive (e.g., new competences for parliaments) or unrealistic (e.g., returning to procedures that guarantee the influence of all parties in the parliament). What remains is to consider long-term measures that may reverse the current trends in the party/political systems. These measures would be possible only through the will of political elites. However, this requires the development of their democratic political culture, including a critical attitude toward majoritarianism or dominant parties. In addition, a more advanced democratic culture within these societies (with a foundation in civil education) would be necessary to strengthen other participatory bodies beyond political parties (e.g., NGOs and trade unions) and to create more critical attitudes (reflected in the electoral behavior) toward any anti-parliament and anti-opposition undertakings of incumbents. ■

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THE GRAND NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF TURKEY: A DECLINE IN LEGISLATIVE CAPACITY

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This article focuses on the current challenges of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (GNAT) in developing its legislative capacity, with a special focus on the availability of resources for individual legislators. On the eve of full implementation of a new presidential model in Turkey, the availability of resources dedicated to the improvement of legislative capacity is crucial for an effective system of checks and balances. This emphasizes the vital connection between the lack of resources available to individual legislators in their lawmaking and supervisory processes and the overall legislative capacity of the GNAT (Gençkaya 1999; Nakamura and Gençkaya 2010).

Various factors may influence the effectiveness of a parliament, such as the constitutional structure of the state (i.e., presidential versus parliamentary), the power of political parties, the functioning of parliamentary committees, the government oversight, the rules of procedure, and individual role orientations (Johnson 2005; Massicard 2005; Olson and Norton 1997).

The most important challenge of the 1982 Constitution is the empowerment of the executive by rationalizing the legislative process. Numerical requirements for lawmaking and supervision activities, except for written questions, are limited to parliamentary party groups rather than the parliamentarians. Considering the high part of discipline and lack of institutionalization in the GNAT, parliamentarians became less able to initiate any legislative proposal. On the contrary, the superiority of the parliamentary majority (party) in lawmaking and supervision activities was enhanced gradually. The “basic law” and “bag law” methods, which require special deliberation rules for bills in the general assembly, minimized the intervention of opposition parties and parliamentarians in this process. The GNAT’s supervision function of the executive also was limited by recent constitutional amendments in 2017. Interpellation and oral questioning were repealed. Contrary to the argument on the rationalization of legislative process, the procedural capacity of parliamentarians was weakened. That is, recent constitutional changes constrained parliament’s power.

After 16 years in power—surviving backlash from the old elites and their middle-class base—the Justice and Development Party in Turkey clearly has become the new status quo. However, rather than creating more democratic and inclusive rules of politics, Turkey has witnessed in recent years a democratic breakdown coupled with the development of a less-rule-based regime. The result of this political transformation has been a power shift from parliamentary supremacy to a very strong executive, deterioration of the independence and impartiality of the judiciary, and a lack of effective checks and balances (Bertelsmann Transformation Index 2018).

Therefore, this article argues that increasing technical capacity of parliamentarians in lawmaking and supervision activities—especially at committee stages—may promote their and parliament’s overall effectiveness. Our analysis leads to a conclusion that parliamentary structures and functions require certain