

2. We asked: "For each institution I am going to mention, please tell me how much you personally trust it. Use the scale from 1 to 5, where 1 means very little or no trust, 3 means moderate trust, and 5 means complete trust. So, how much do you trust...."
3. We asked: "How would you describe the relationship between the following institutions? Rate from 1 to 5, where 1 is a hostile relationship, 3 is a working relationship with certain differences, and 5 is a relationship characterized by complete cooperation."

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CONCLUSION TO THE SPOTLIGHT "DYNAMICS IN LEGISLATIVE-EXECUTIVE RELATIONS: GLOBAL OUTLINE FOR 2019-2024"

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This conclusion summarizes the main goals for this Spotlight and discusses empirical findings and implications for the theory and practice of legislative-executive relations worldwide. The Spotlight's main goal is to explore the dynamics in legislative-executive relations from 2019 to 2024. Published research discusses populist executive branches coming to power and fundamentally reshaping legislative-executive relations in some countries; however, this has not been a monotonic process. In some countries, legislatures preserve and even increase their influence in policy processes. Given the fast pace of changes in the power distribution between legislative and executive branches of power and how

consequential those changes are for the future of democracy and overall security in the world, this Spotlight identifies some of the most important explanations for the observed dynamics. The Spotlight articles focus on the question: What are some of the most important factors associated with observed dynamics in legislative-executive relations?

The contributions to this Spotlight highlight a wide range of developments in legislative-executive relations worldwide. Many countries experienced a rapid power shift from a legislature to a more powerful and frequently populist executive. Some articles, however, focus on institutional and contextual factors. Many contributors described a crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, that resulted in the executive claiming more power and retaining it after the crisis. The articles discussed institutional changes—such as those in election laws and constitutional reforms—that governments introduced in response to the crisis. Some articles highlighted economic factors that influenced legislative-executive relations. Finally, other articles discussed culture and ideology as the main factors that can explain observed dynamics.

Crises and Institutional Changes

Adam Szymanski discusses a rapid power shift toward the executive in Polish legislative-executive relations. He examines the changes at the national and subnational levels and concludes that, whereas some factors explain the dynamics of legislative-executive relations at all levels, others are specific to the subnational level of government. This includes long-term deficits of democratic governance and changes to election law. Overall, Szymanski describes changes in election law and administrative reforms as the main factors that resulted in a power shift in legislative-executive relations in Poland toward the executive.

Luai Allakaria describes the deadlock in legislative-executive relations in Kuwait that shifts power toward the executive. She argues that the system in Kuwait is set up with permissive rules for interpolations and motions of no confidence. When combined with a personalized nonpartisan system, the result is an excessive utilization of oversight rules, which leads to executive strategies to delay or block this oversight.

Andrea Cullen makes a novel argument in discussing how the physical proximity of the executive to the legislature contributes to its exercising power in Australia. The "deliberate design" houses the executive branch in the legislature building. Cullen discusses how the executive has used the physical proximity to influence the legislative decision-making process.

Damien Lecomte and Calixte Bloquet examine constitutional reforms to explain changes in a historically weak position of the French Parliament relative to the government. They discuss how a shift from a seven-year to a five-year mandate for presidents in the early 2000s gave more power to the president. This, in turn, led to a slow erosion of in-party cohesion inside of the main parliamentary party groups and to heightened difficulties in disciplining majorities. This process eventually was completed by rapid party fragmentation that culminated in the current (as of August 2024) unusual situation of a minority government.

Ömer Faruk Gençkaya and Selma Gençkaya discuss the recent consequences of adopting the Turkish Constitution in 1982, the failed coup attempt of 2016, and subsequent constitutional engineering that led to a significant increase in presidential power at the expense of the legislature in Turkey. They argue that the

president’s unrestricted executive power and the weakened legislative functions resulted in the erosion of democratic institutions in Turkey.

Khrystyna Perlchar, Erik S. Herron, and Geir Flikke present the interesting case of Ukraine, where the COVID-19 pandemic did not lead to a significant power shift from the legislature to the president. Moreover, the legislature has remained an important and independent policy actor after the pandemic. However, Russia’s war against Ukraine has resulted in a significant power shift. They discuss how martial law and internal dynamics in Ukraine shifted power to President Zelenski.

Culture and Ideology

David Jágr and Zdenka Mansfeldová suggest the increased range of ideologies in the Czech Parliament as one factor that influences the power of a legislature. Phenomena that accompany parliamentary polarization include frequent obstructions and late-night and numerous extraordinary plenary meetings. The authors conclude that the Czech Parliament became more focused on “talking” than “working.” The authors argue that the reasons for polarization in the Czech Republic environment do not stem from different ideological attitudes but rather from the personal antipathy of political party leaders. Personalization of politics led to paralysis in legislative decision making, which has weakened the Czech Parliament.

Sven Siefken describes the political culture and the increased range of ideologies that influenced the role of a parliament in legislative–executive relations in Germany. For example, the rise of a far right has affected the degree of conflict in parliament. The new strategic approach of the opposition and internal conflicts in the coalition are two other factors that affect the German parliament and its strength relative to the executive branch.

Osnat Akirav focuses her research on how Prime Minister Netanyahu’s indictments changed the legislative–executive relations in Israel, specifically after October 7, 2023. The indictment of Netanyahu—coupled with overlapping crises, political polarization, and populist rhetoric—led to a significant reduction in legislative power and the executive gaining power at the legislature’s expense.

Jisun Park highlights intraparty dynamics as an important factor that explains legislative–executive relations in Japan. Depending on the strength or weakness of the party that supports the prime minister, intraparty dynamics may have different degrees of conflict among different parties, which can be associated with the strengths and weaknesses of the executive.

Economy

Sergio Blogna Tistuzza discusses economic factors that explain the decline in legislative power in Argentina. High national debt led the Argentinian Congress to transfer power to the executive. In addition, the COVID-19 health emergency and the need to reduce its impact on the economy resulted in more power shifting to the executive at the expense of the Argentinian legislature, which further weakened it.

Hilmar Rommentveld argues that economic factors can be associated with the dynamics in legislative–executive relations in Norway. He describes how not only world crises—including the pandemic and the increasing price of energy resources—but also individual scandals involving legislators have affected the

power of the Norwegian legislature. Several scandals involving government ministers and Members of Parliament present new challenges regarding trust in political institutions, thereby influencing the strength of the Norwegian legislature.

Overall Conclusions

Institutional factors are important for explaining the dynamics of legislative–executive relations in countries worldwide. Whether in response to a pandemic, war, or economic turmoil, countries engage in constitutional engineering, make changes to election laws, and introduce administrative reforms. This usually allows the executive branch to claim more power at the expense of the legislature. It argues that the urgency of an issue requires a quick response and that the executive is in a better position to provide the population a much-needed solution to a problem than the legislature, which would take time to debate the issue. As expected, when a crisis is over, the power balance is not likely to return to what it had been before.

Other factors, however, must also be considered for an accurate assessment of the development of legislative–executive relations worldwide. Systems with constitutionally strong executives but without the separation of power tend to lean toward a more authoritarian system of government, with executives assuming more power than in systems with a separation of power and checks and balances in place. Thus, when an executive has the power to dissolve a legislature, the lack of a mechanism to balance this power can give the executive almost unlimited power over the legislature. However, multiple factors must be considered to provide a comprehensive explanation. Thus, public support, the legitimacy of a legislature, and other factors are important in influencing not only the power but also the influence of a country’s legislative and executive branches. Intraparty politics is an important factor in many legislatures that explains legislative–executive relations.


Political culture is another important factor that can be powerful in explaining the dynamics of legislative–executive relations. A high degree of conflict, political polarization, and an increased range of political ideologies present in a legislature may lead to gridlock and a weakened legislature. Finally, personalization of politics is important to consider when discussing the dynamics in legislative–executive relations.


Future research should continue to analyze how institutional factors influence legislative–executive relations. Specifically, it should explore how constitutional reforms—as well as reforms in legislative rules and procedures—may address issues related to political polarization and the increasing range of ideologies represented in world legislatures. In addition, analyses of changes in political culture are important for explaining changes in legislative–executive relations. Personalization of politics and the increased range of political ideologies coupled with extreme political polarization are important topics for future research. Finally, legislatures in some countries have stood their ground even in the presence of strong executives. Developing a theoretical explanation for this is another important area for future research.


CONFLICTS OF INTEREST


The authors declare that there are no ethical issues or conflicts of interest in this research. ■


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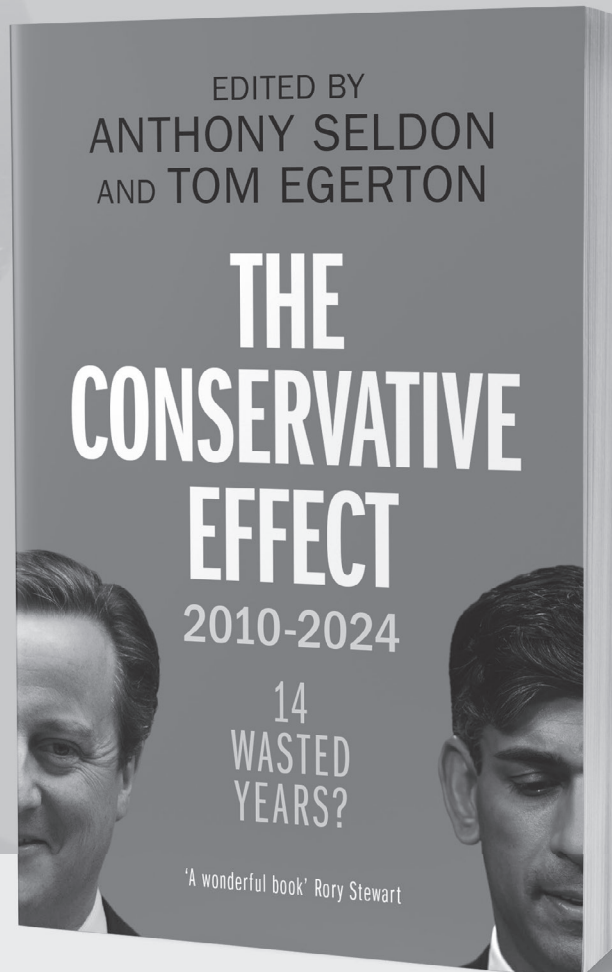
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