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Making and Breaking Parliamentary Opportunity Structures²

ABSTRACT

The Hungarian parliamentary arena has witnessed major political scandals in the last few years with attempts at obstruction, the use of megaphones, whistles and provocative banners by the opposition and the application of a unique combo of parliamentary procedural rules including the line-up of the Parliamentary Guard by the government. Part of these events are ever-present anomalies of parliamentary work as obstruction is a well-known phenomenon in the history of parliaments that the parliamentary procedures aim to limit. Another part of these events however are rather new elements of the Hungarian parliamentary arena introduced and induced by the reform of parliamentary rules in 2012-2014 and lead to the reconfiguration of opposition-government dynamics and to an ongoing debate about how parliamentary rules reshape and perhaps limit the opposition's structure of opportunity (see Szente, 2015; Szabó, 2017). In this paper, I aim at discussing how opposition-government dynamics changed as a result of parliamentary reform which entails the enactment of the Act XXXVI of 2012 on the National Assembly and the Resolution 10/2014 (II. 24.) OGY on certain provisions of the Rules of Procedure.

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INTRODUCTION

The Hungarian parliamentary arena has witnessed major political scandals in the last few years with attempts at obstruction, the use of megaphones, whistles and provocative banners by the opposition and the application of a unique combo of parliamentary procedural rules including the line-up of the Parliamentary Guard by the government. Some parts of these events are ever-present anomalies of parliamentary work as the obstruction is a well-known phenomenon in the history of parliaments that the parliamentary procedures aim to limit. Another part of these events however is the new elements of the Hungarian parliamentary arena introduced and induced by the reform of parliamentary rules in 2012-2014 and led to the reconfiguration of opposition-government dynamics and to an ongoing debate about how parliamentary rules reshape and perhaps limit the opposition's structure of opportunity (see Szente, 2015; Szabó, 2017). In this paper, I aim at discussing how opposition-government dynamics changed as a result of parliamentary reform which entails the enactment of the Act XXXVI of 2012 on the National Assembly and the Resolution 10/2014 (II. 24.) OGY on certain provisions of the Rules of Procedure.

In the international literature there is an increasing attention paid to parliamentary rules and institutional changes (see Sieberer-Müller, 2015; Garritzmann, 2017) especially because the direction and the nature of these changes affect the strategy of parliamentary actors on the floor (Sieberer et al, 2016). This connection between the regulatory framework and the strategy of actors can be documented in Hungary where the protest-focused communication of the opposition is met by the strengthened disciplinary powers of the Speaker. Based on the theory of nested games (Tsebelis, 1990) that is used to describe to complexity of the parliamentary game, I argue that the structure of opportunity of the opposition is not only determined by the parliamentary rules and procedures but by their use (as in how the opposition can profit from the available resources) and application (as in how the government can apply the rules to limit these opportunities) thus the analysis of the legal framework needs to be complemented by behavioural aspects about how actors play the parliamentary game. The focus on parliamentary rules raises further questions about the conceptualization of opposition as the concept in itself is highly political and is not used in legal texts that rather talk about MPs and (qualified) minority.

Thus, the first part of my paper will deal with some theoretical considerations about how to connect the legal concepts to the political realities in order to define opposition in a given context and about which subset of parliamentary rules should be studied. The second section of my paper will be dedicated to the analysis of those subset of rules with special attention to the changes occurred in 2012-2014. Along with the analysis of rules I will present data about the use of the available tools and also about the application of the rules. My goal is to track the change in opposition-government dynamics prompted by the reform of the parliamentary rules.

THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS ABOUT THE CONCEPT OF OPPOSITION

What is parliamentary opposition? As Garritzmann notes we lack a theory of political opposition (2017:2) since the opposition is usually understood in a negative way as the non-governing part of the parliament. However, as Andeweg (2013) has demonstrated it is hardly a stable definition, since in certain political context, the opposition becomes blurred or following Dahl (1966) it loses its distinctiveness. It can happen when opposition parties support the government or when governing parties oppose the government or when opposition parties provide structural support to a minority government and even when the government anticipates an opposition majority in another institution of the government. Thus, it seems that opposition is a blurry political concept that is further weakened by the decrease in partisan conflict that distinguishes government and opposition parties, which was observed by Andeweg – De Winter and Müller (2008) in relation to post-consociational democracies. While this theory of the waning of political opposition can be critiqued (see for example Loxbo-Sjölin, 2017), many studies point out that opposition behaviour is dependent on a complex set of factors including systemic and party specific features such as the need to differentiate themselves from the government (Tuttnauer, 2018), the government-types (Christiansen-Damgaard, 2008), the MPs' socio-demographic background (Steinack, 2011), the bill specific features such as the ideological significance of the bill (Mújica-Sánchez-Cuenca, 2006) and even regime-types (Franklin, 2002).

Focusing on rules, there is a need to give a more exact definition of our understanding of the opposition. Following the conceptualization of Sieberer and Müller we can regard opposition as a minority group in the parliament, which in terms of parliamentary processes emphasizes the role of minority rights: "Minority rights are particularly important as they distribute institutional power along the most important line of conflict within parliaments – the one between the governing majority and the opposition." (Sieberer-Müller, 2015:998). This conceptualization is in line with how legislation, in our case the rules of parliamentary procedure, standardizes opposition as the application of "opposition tools" are often linked to a qualified minority (for example 1/5 of MPs can promote the establishment of a committee of inquiry). Clearly, this approach cannot capture the party level of opposition that can be useful in order to map resources for opposition activity (Kopecky-Spirova, 2008) but on the other hand, is better fit to understand the dynamics of an unstable opposition arena such as the Hungarian case.

In terms of legal procedures, "opposition tools" such as control tools are not conceptualized in terms of qualified minority but rather as the right of individual MPs. Both approaches to the opposition's rights - the qualified minority and the MP level - are open concepts in the way that being in opposition is not a prerogative to possessing those given rights: government MPs can also ask the government interpellations (which actually they often do) and a given group of government MPs can form a committee of inquiry to, say, evaluate the wrongdoings of a previous government. How do these levels interact then?

The parliamentary level focuses on the institution itself. According to Montesquieu's doctrine of the separation of powers, the role of the parliament is responsible for the legislation and the control of the government. The capture of the parliament by the government which typically controls the majority of mandates imposes a threat on its autonomous functioning because it hinders the effective execution of these parliamentary functions. This idea is widely explored in the literature propagating the decline of parliaments (for a critical review, see Baldwin, 2004). Still, in order to approximate the

doctrine of the separation of power, it is not the parliament in itself but rather a qualified minority that is enabled through constitutional and other legal warrants. As Smuk (2016) points out based on the case study of the German Federal Constitutional Court decision (2 BvE 4/14) the opposition is a political and not a legal phenomenon thus it is the minority and not the opposition that should be granted the rights to control the government. The puzzle of the German case was what happens if the opposition is smaller than a minority required for accessing those tools. The Court's decision underlines that the separation of powers is based on *the imperative of an effective opposition* meaning that the opposition should have the necessary tools and measures to realize its parliamentary deliberative and control functions.

The MP level focuses on the role of the elected representatives in the parliamentary process. In legal terms, all MPs have the right to attend the parliamentary debates, to participate in the formulation of policies and to control the government. Thus, as I indicated above these are not "opposition rights" but rather MPs' rights and MPs operate along a complex set of drivers out of which one of the most important ones is the need for reelection. Reelection is a complex game again since it depends on various agents such as their parties and their electorate. Their expectations cannot always be derived from the opposition/government position even if it is about MPs' activities on the parliamentary floor. As Proksch-Slapin (2015) demonstrate parties play an important role in allocating speaking time to their members and that speaking time is in high demand thus government parties not only hinder opposition MPs from speaking but they do so also with their own representatives. Thus, it is important to assess how MPs actually behave and what they do. Also, MPs not only have rights assigned but also obligations that are often restrictive in terms of debate and control. In order to understand the MPs' opportunity structure in its complexity, we should take into consideration how the government uses tools of disciplinary control on the floor.

This complex set of rules and drivers calls for a complex approach to research:

- first, the opposition's structure of opportunity is examined to evaluate the array of tools available to the qualified minorities and MPs;
- second the actual application of those tools is examined to see how the opposition goes about its "opposition business". The analysis of the application of the tools available tells us about how useful they are regarding the imperative of an effective opposition;
- third, the rules regarding disciplinary power should be examined to see what type of obligations they are and what the sanctions are to make MPs follow the lines, what the tools are to curtail obstruction attempts.

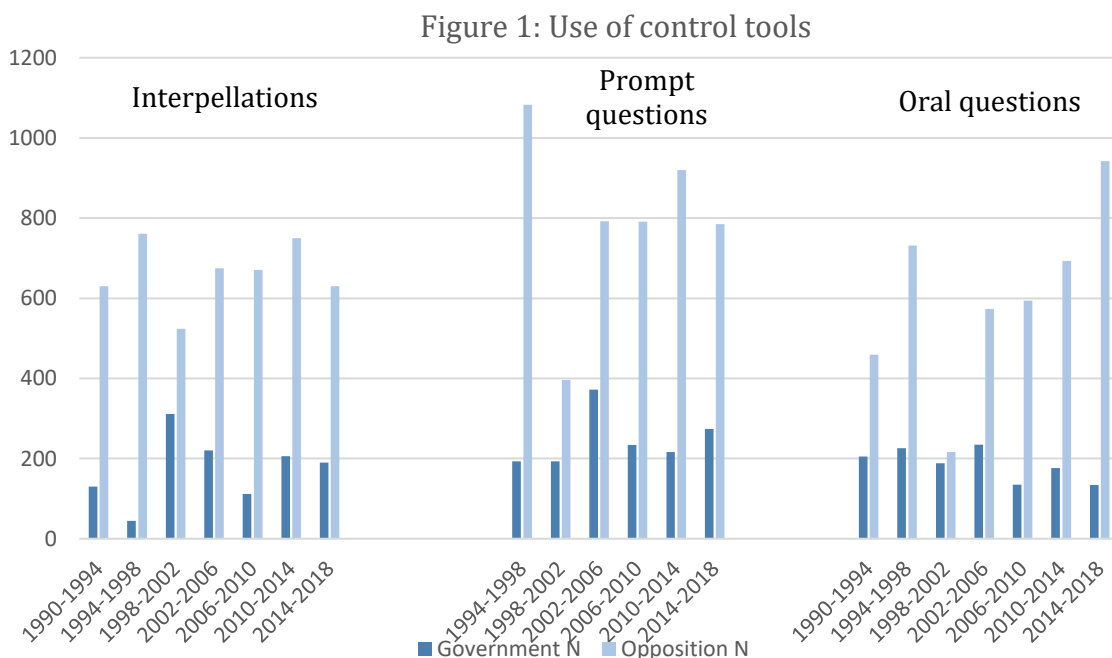
Based on the theory of nested games (Tsebelis, 1990) that many researchers use to describe to complexity of the parliamentary game (Sieberer et al, 2011), I argue that the structure of opportunity of the opposition is not only determined by the parliamentary rules and procedures but by their use also as in how the opposition can profit from the available resources; their application as in how the government can apply the rules to limit these opportunities.

THE CHANGING OPPORTUNITY STRUCTURE OF THE OPPOSITION IN HUNGARY

In order to capture the most important elements of the opportunity structure of the opposition as well as its potential dynamic of change, Garriztmann proposes an encompassing index that attempts to quantify and measure the degree of freedom of the opposition that I will use as a starting point for the analyses of the Hungarian case. The index reflects on the basic functions of the opposition – control, influence on legislation and the (re)presentation of political alternatives – which will be explored in the following sections. Many of these dimensions have been thoroughly explored in previous publications (Ilonszki-Jáger,2011, Ilonszki-Várnagy, 2018), but the enactment of the Act on the National Assembly in 2012, the reform of parliamentary procedures in 2014 along with their amendments since then make the revision of changes necessary. Moreover, I will address some additional dimensions that are missing from this framework, mainly the disciplinary powers.

CONTROL FUNCTIONS

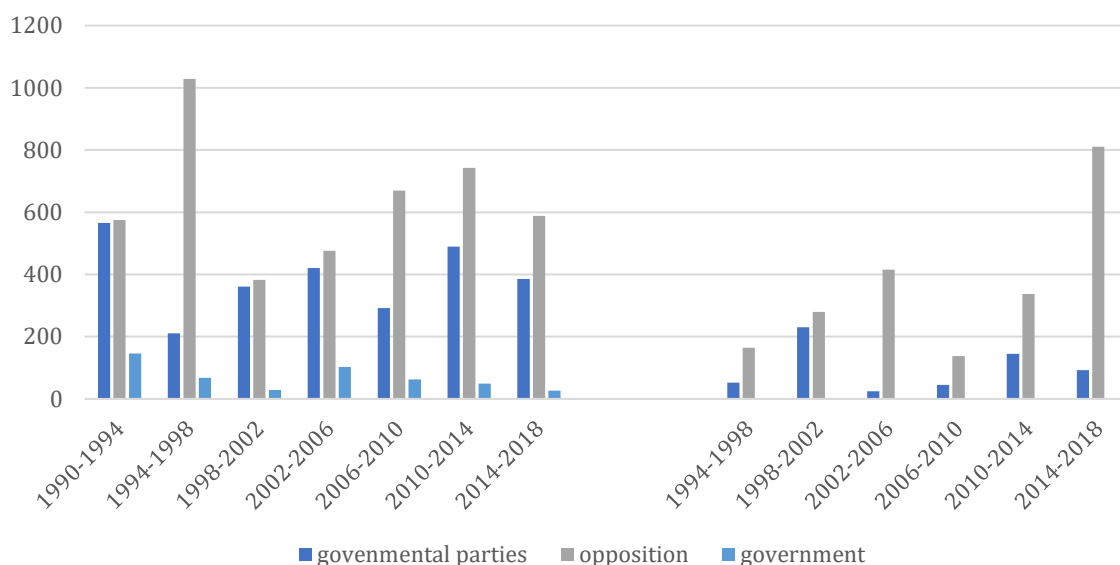
The traditional monitoring tools are interpellations, prompt questions and oral questions used by Members in a plenary sitting. Out of these three, interpellations are the most important ones as the representatives vote on the response given and if the Parliament rejects the response a committee report is drawn up and submitted for debate at a plenary session. The change of the parliamentary rules did not modify the regulation of these tools, so our expectation is that we cannot track disruptions in the use of these tools after 2014. Figure 1 depicts the use of the tools which did not follow a clear pattern in the previous cycles and while we can witness an increase in the number of oral questions presented on the floor, it is a trend that had been present before 2014.



Source: Website of the Hungarian Assembly, www.parlament.hu

The Members of Parliament can also make speeches before and after the orders of the day with the former being broadcast by radio and television. Regarding the trends, we can conclude that in the 2014-18 parliamentary cycle, the speeches after the orders of the day became significantly more popular among MPs. The increase can be attributed to the fact that the access to the plenary has become more limited after 2012 and also to the increase of the number of independent MPs' sitting in the Parliament as they can access this form of communication while speeches before the orders of the day can only be tabled by the members of PPGs.

Figure 2: Speeches before and after the orders of the day



Source: Website of the Hungarian Assembly, www.parlament.hu

Committees of inquiry are also the inherent tools of exercising control. They can be formed by the Parliament following a motion tabled by one fifth of the MPs. While before the parliamentary reform such proposals were automatically accepted, the new regulation introduces a new requirement stating that committees of inquiry can only be formed in case the given case cannot be sufficiently explored through interpellation and that the plenary vote on the proposal is needed for the establishment of the committee. The change had a clear effect on the formation of such committees after 2014 as none were formed during the last parliamentary cycle in spite of the relatively high number of proposals submitted. Based on the data presented in table 1, it is important to note that in spite of not needing a plenary vote on the proposal, the establishment of committees of inquiry was often sabotaged during the process even before the reform: in many instances the proposal on the establishment was not tabled, or the committee was not able to be formed due to the absence of its members or the plenary failed to accept the report suggested by the committee.

Table 1. The proposals to establish a committee of inquiry

	Initiator	Proposal	Establishment	Formation	Report
1990-1994	Government MPs	11	0	0	0
	Opposition MPs	13	1	1	0
	Total	24	1	1	0
1994-1998	Government MPs	2	1	1	0
	Opposition MPs	25	6	5	3
	Total	27	7	6	3
1998-2002	Government MPs	8	4	4	1
	Opposition MPs	16	2	0	0
	Total	24	6	4	1
2002-2006	Government MPs	8	5	3	0
	Opposition MPs	20	9	9	1
	Committee	1	1	1	0
	Total	29	15	13	1
2006-2010	Government MPs	3	2	0	0
	Opposition MPs	14	6	1	0
	Total	17	8	1	0
2010-2014	Government MPs	6	5	5	4
	Opposition MPs	16	2	1	1
	Total	22	7	6	5
2014-2018	Government MPs	0	0	0	0
	Opposition MPs	23	0	0	0
	Total	23	0	0	0

Among the control tools, MPs have the right to initiate policy debates: based on a motion submitted by one-fifth of the MPs, the Parliament holds a policy debate on the policy topic identified in the motion. Table 2 indicates that there is a growing popularity of the debates after 2014 although the trend is not clear as the tool was also widely applied in the 2002-2006 parliamentary period.

Source: Magyar, 2018

Table 2. Policy debates submitted broken down by submitter

Submitter	1990-1994	1994-1998	1998-2002	2002-2006	2006-2010	2010-2014	2014-2018
Government	3	1	2	0	3	0	4
Governmental parties	0	2	2	5	2	4	1
Opposition parties	2	10	11	22	5	6	17
Total	5	13	14	27	9	10	22

Source: Website of the Hungarian Assembly, www.parlament.hu

To sum up, we can observe a certain shift in the use of control tools in the Hungarian Parliament: while the use of the various type of questions has not changed much, the requirement of a plenary vote basically killed off the committees of inquiry which prompted MPs to turn towards other resources of floor time such as speeches outside the orders of the day and policy debates.

LEGISLATION AND DEBATE

The legislative process of the Hungarian National Assembly underwent major changes according to the Law on the National Assembly. Figure 3 depicts the current legislative process which is different from the former process in three ways: first, the scope of bills requiring a qualified majority of two thirds of MPs was modified. While the increase in the number of supermajority bills points to the importance of cooperation with the parliamentary minority, the fact that after 2010 the minority was only strong enough to block the legislation of 2/3 bills for three years between 2015 – 2018 suggests that the governing parties are not always limited by this institution. Thus, the analysis of the

adoption of bills requiring qualified majority is not part of this paper as it would not reflect on the opposition's structure of opportunity but rather on the political context in which the government operates.

The second critical change introduced is the shift of the detailed debate from the plenary session to the so-called "designated committees" that are assigned to each bill by the House Speaker. Thus, after a general debate which usually consists of the introduction of the policy and main guidelines of the legislation, the meticulous work of dissecting the proposal partly along the emerging policy alternatives and of partly along the introduced amendments takes place in committees. In this phase the committees make also decisions about the introduced amendments. While it could strengthen the role of committees in the decision-making process and enable MPs to contribute to the debate without the added pressure of the media and public attention, the data on the total number of committee meetings and the amount of time spent in committee meetings actually decreased by almost 45-50% from 2010-2014 to 2014-2018 (Országgyűlés Hivatala, 2018). This decrease along with the growing responsibility of committees rather suggests that the work of committees became even more simplified supposedly by the widespread use of political voting without meaningful debate.

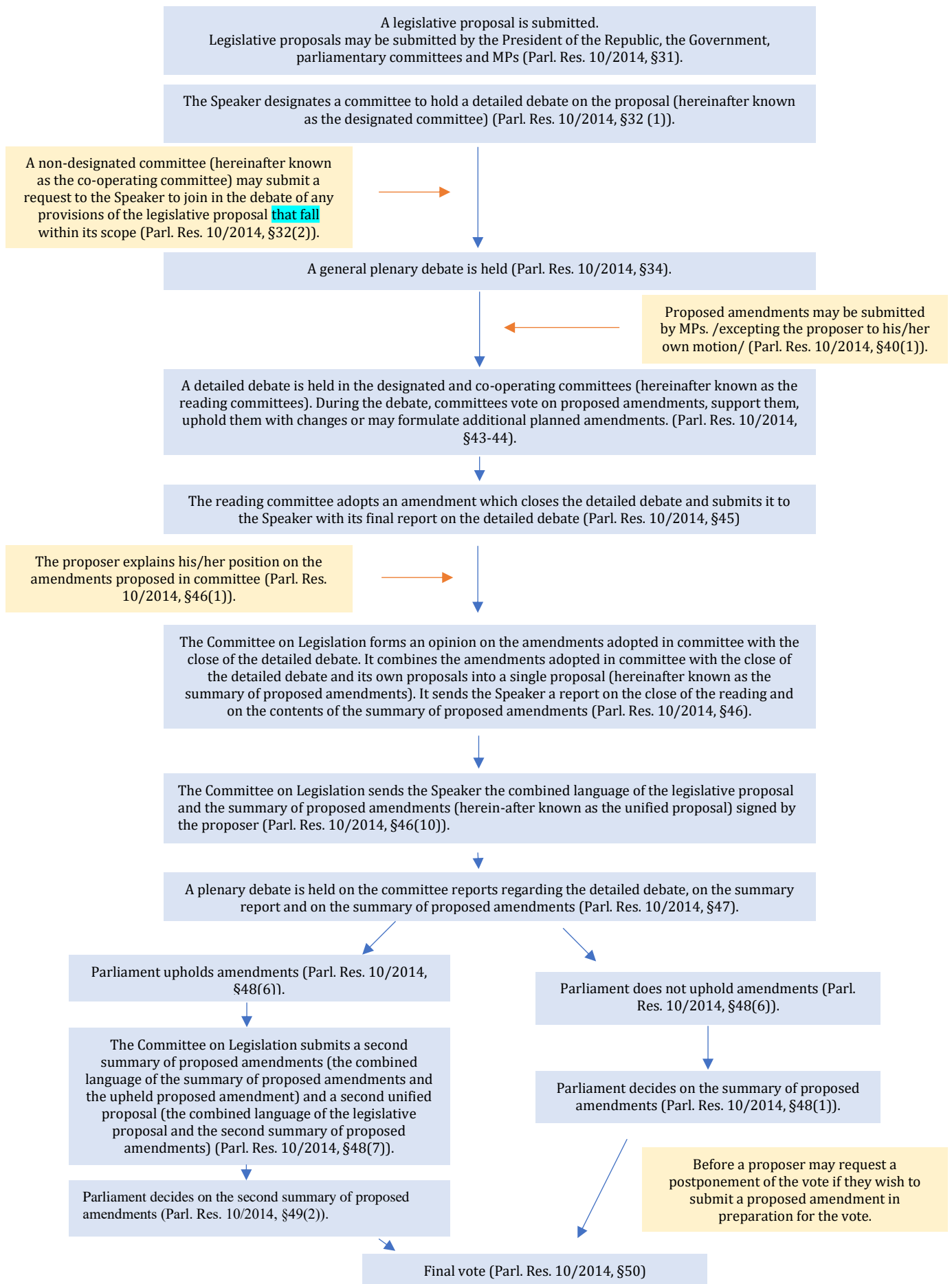
The third major change was introduced to the process following the committee phase. A new committee, a Committee on Legislation was founded that enjoys a high political status since it reviews the amendments adopted in committees, its own amendments and combines the original bill and its modifications into a single proposal. This single proposal called the summary of proposed amendments is to be discussed on the plenary floor. It means that most of the amendments will not reach the plenary floor by themselves, only if they were successfully integrated in the single proposal. While the MPs can request the debate of a certain amendment on the floor, the parliamentary bottleneck prompts the actors to only revise the viable proposal and not waste time on amendments that are not supported by the committees thus by the government. This shift towards the revision of the viable document (along with the committee reports though) weakens the potential of presenting-, revising-, and debating alternatives and diverting policy ideas.

Also the presentation of a single proposal, the summary of proposed amendments can change the dynamics of voting – while MPs had the chance to express their detailed opinion through the vote on amendments before, now the stakes of expressing opposition are higher not because it threatens the vote on the bill but rather because the discontent MP can only refuse the bill as a whole. In case of popular decisions, this routine makes it hard to express nuanced criticisms (such as "I like the idea but not the realization"). Also, it is hard to differentiate between the acceptance and the rejection of certain amendments as voting is done en bloc, about all of them. It is even more problematic if we take into consideration that the Committee on Legislation can propose an amendment to the bill three hours before the opening of the sitting when the final vote is scheduled leaving very limited time for MPs (and their experts) to revise the new, modified proposal.

While time as a scarce resource is the explanatory factor behind many parliamentary reforms, its use is also the most criticised aspect of the reform as the legislative process seems to have gathered speed leaving very limited time window for debate. In the Hungarian National Assembly there are three types of special procedures that can accelerate the legislation process:

- The proposal of urgency can be submitted by at least twenty- five MPs and can be applied no more than six times within half a year. By adopting the proposal the time frame between the day of ordering and the final vote on the legislative proposal can be shortened to six days.

Figure 3. The legislative process of the Hungarian National Assembly



- The proposal for exceptional proceeding requires the supporting signatures of at least one-fifth of the Members and can be applied four times in half a year. The deadline for submitting the proposals for amendment shall not be less than three hours after the decision ordering the exceptional procedure
- upon the proposal of the House Committee, the National Assembly may decide, to derogate from the provisions of the Rules of Procedure with the votes of at least the four-fifths of the Members present. This derogation can affect either the course of the discussion and/or the decision-making on specific matters.

The resulting quickening in the legislation process and its consequences have been discussed in earlier work (Ilonszki-Várnagy, 2018) while its consequences regarding the quality of the political debate and the ensuing quality decision-making is to be explored further (see the report of the Corruption Research Center Budapest, 2015 for an early attempt).

Following the reasoning of Szente (2018), we can relate the problem not only to the opposition but to the government MPs as well. On the one hand, plenary time becomes an even more scarce resource among governmental benches. On the other hand, the growing number of bills introduced by government MPs suggests that political debate is avoided not only in relation to the opposition but also in relation to politicians of its own. These routines chip away from the right to debate of all MPs in the Parliament. The lack of sufficient time to debate bills is not a Hungarian phenomenon, in her expert review of arrangements for allocating time to proceedings on bills, Newson (2017) concludes that the time spent on scrutinising a bill should be increased. This question clearly touches upon the issue of efficient changes and redistributive changes (Tsebelis, 1990). As Sieberer and Müller state: “The process and outcome of institutional reforms depend on the question whether actors are affected equally by institutional changes. [...] Efficient reforms benefit all actors involved in the reform process irrespective of their position in political competition (e.g. their government status or their position in the party hierarchy). Distributive reforms, on the other hand, strengthen some actors at the expense of others – i.e. actors are affected differently depending on their position in political competition.” (Sieberer-Müller, 2015). The overview of the changes in the legislative process suggest that while these reforms clearly helped to address the parliamentary bottleneck, the need for such frantic legislation can itself be questioned and the redistributive nature of the reform is undeniable.

THE CHANGES IN THE DISCIPLINARY POWER OF THE PARLIAMENT

One of the main changes in the legislation concerning parliamentary work was the strengthening of the disciplinary powers that are mainly practised by the Speaker of the House. According to the new rules, the functions of the disciplinary power is to secure the undisturbed proceeding of the sittings, to safeguard the reputation of the National Assembly and the chair and to safeguard the measures taken by the Speaker. One of the main drivers behind the change was to hinder obstruction and also to enable the Speaker to deal with the new methods of communication occurring in the Hungarian Parliament such as the use of megaphones, banners and such. This phenomenon is not exclusively Hungarian: Bell (2017) notes that the introduction of large numbers of amendments or sub-amendments appears to be a prevalent obstructionist tactic.

Table 3. Disciplinary measures in the Hungarian Parliament

MPs activity	Decision 1	Decision 2	Decision 3	Legal Consequence	Legal remedy
The MP deters from the subject of the speech in a clearly unreasonable manner.	First warning to focus on the given topic	Second warning to focus on the given topic	Withdraw the right to speak	The MP can not have the floor again on the same sitting day, in the course of discussing the same item on the orders of the day.	
The MP used up all the timeframe available for him/her or for his/her parliamentary group.	Withdraw the right to speak (giving the cause of the withdrawal)				
The MP uses an indecent term or a term offending the reputation of the National Assembly or any person or group.	Reprimand the MP	In case of repetition, withdraw the right to speak		The MP cannot have the floor again on the same sitting day, in the course of discussing the same item on the orders of the day.	
The MP uses a term ostentatiously offending the reputation of the National Assembly or any person or group	Exclusion of the MP without warning	The National Assembly takes vote without debate on the proposal for exclusion	If the National Assembly has no quorum, the chair of the sitting shall decide on the exclusion.	The Member excluded from the sitting day shall not have the floor again on the same sitting day. The Member excluded from the sitting day shall not be entitled to remuneration for the day of exclusion.	At the next sitting of the National Assembly the chair of the sitting shall inform the National Assembly of the exclusion and its reason. Then the National Assembly shall decide without debate on the lawfulness of the decision taken by the chair of the sitting.
The MP objects to the decision or the conducting of the sitting by the chair (except for making a procedural proposal)	Withdraw the right to speak without warning			The MP shall not have the floor again on the same sitting day, in the course of discussing the same item on the orders of the day.	The MP, whose right to speak has been withdrawn without calling and warning, the committee responsible for the interpretation of the provisions of the Rules of Procedure to take an ad hoc position.

MPs activity	Decision 1	Decision 2	Decision 3	Legal Consequence	Legal remedy
The MP seriously violates the reputation or the order of the National Assembly, or infringes by his or her conduct the provisions of the Rules of Procedure..	Reprimand the MP and give a warning of exclusion	Exclusion of the MP for the remaining part of the sitting day. The remuneration payable to the Member may be decreased		The MP excluded from the sitting day shall not have the floor again on the same sitting day. The Member excluded from the sitting day shall not be entitled to remuneration for the day of exclusion. The Parliamentary Guard shall be in charge of the enforcement of this prohibition	At the next sitting of the National Assembly the chair of the sitting shall inform the National Assembly of the exclusion and its reason. Then the National Assembly shall decide without debate on the lawfulness of the decision taken by the chair of the sitting.
The MP exerts physical violence at the sitting of the National Assembly, threatened with or called for direct physical violence, or hindered the taking out of another person.	Exclusion of the MP from the sitting day. The remuneration payable to the Member may be decreased.	The National Assembly takes vote without debate on the proposal for exclusion	If the National Assembly has no quorum, the chair of the sitting shall decide on the exclusion.	The MP excluded from the sitting day shall not have the floor again on the same sitting day. The MP excluded from the sitting day shall not be entitled to remuneration for the day of exclusion. The Parliamentary Guard shall be in charge of the enforcement of this prohibition.	At the next sitting of the National Assembly the chair of the sitting shall inform the National Assembly of the exclusion and its reason. Then the National Assembly shall decide without debate on the lawfulness of the decision taken by the chair of the sitting.
	Suspension of the exercising of the Member's rights in case of repeated conduct.			The MP shall not attend the sittings of the National Assembly, shall not participate in the work of the parliamentary committees and shall not receive remuneration. The Parliamentary Guard shall be in charge of the enforcement of this prohibition.	The MP against whom a policing measure has been applied by the chair of the sitting may submit an objection to the committee on immunity, incompatibility, discipline and mandate
In case of disturbance taking place at the sitting of the National Assembly of such extent that makes the continuation of the discussion impossible	The sitting may be suspended for a definite period or may be closed by the chair of the sitting.	If the chair of the sitting is unable to announce his or her decision, he or she shall leave the chair and the sitting shall be interrupted. If the sitting has been interrupted, the sitting shall only continue upon the Speaker convening it again.			The MP may request that the Committee on Immunity, Conflict of Interest, Discipline and Mandate Control would? rescind a decision.

Source: Website of the Hungarian Assembly, www.parlament.hu

Table 3 presents the arsenal of disciplinary tools available to the Hungarian Parliament, most of which can be applied by the Speaker. Based on the new legislation we can observe a growing disciplinary trend: in the 2010-2014 cycle there were 15 votes on proposals to decrease the remuneration of MPs (affecting 40 MPs in total), in 2014-2018 there were 22 while in the current parliamentary cycle (2018-2022) there have already been 45 such proposals.

This shift from debate to discipline is clearly problematic. While the causes and consequences are hard to distinguish namely, if it is the government that wishes to silence further the opposition or if it is the new communication style that prompted the changes to guard the reputation of the Parliament, the outcome is clear: an only person, the Speaker of the House can decide on what he deems acceptable and suitable for parliamentary debate. If we consider that at the time of the reform tools to question these decisions were not available, we can clearly see the redistributive nature of the reform. Although, on 13 February 2014 the Parliament passed an amendment to the Parliament Act, modifying the rules of disciplinary procedure for MPs introducing the possibility for a fined MP to seek a remedy before a committee, it does not solve our original concern about who is entitled to overrule the representatives in the House.

CONCLUSIONS

The overview of the reform of the rules of the parliamentary game and its changes after 2012-2014 depicts a rather strict picture of the parliament where it seems, the interference of the oppositions is rather seen as an inconvenience and bother to the smooth business of legislation. While we can observe changes that have a minority-friendly aspect, the fact that the government has enjoyed supermajority for all but 3 years since 2010 modifies our understanding of current affairs. Still most of the introduced changes are rather majority-friendly and enable the majority to dominate the parliamentary process.

The problematic nature of opposition has been pointed out by various case-studies (De Giorgi-Ilonszki, 2018) but my analysis brings to light one yet understudied aspect of the institutional framework: the disciplinary tools. These tools are important because they affect MPs as individuals and thus their effect is direct (while the effect of the increase of qualified minority rule is indirect). They also shift the opposition-government dynamic, influence the nature of their conflict towards value-based evaluations and assessments. In case we conceptualize the opposition as MPs or group of MPs whose role is to control the government, the adequate answer is not discipline but accountability. Of course, in this shift it is not only the government who is to blame since the opposition is clearly changing its communication and often attempts to use the plenary floor as a theatre stage where conflict and spectacle sell. But the narrowing of the structure of opportunities will hardly change the political culture for the better, instead it will prompt some further conflicts which will soon be undebatable in their nature thus truly unfit for the parliamentary floor.

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