

elections when eight of 16 provincial councils were won by the PiS (compared to only one before 2018). This resulted in even more aggressive nondemocratic activities of this party, including a further weakening of local and regional councils by

primarily to the PiS rule, advanced majoritarianism, and the COVID-19 crisis. In contrast, other reasons were specific to the subnational level, including long-term deficits of democratic governance and election law.

## *The executive aggrandizement and the weak position of legislative branches were observable at both the national and subnational levels in Poland in 2019–2024.*

stronger self-government executive branches. This included so-called *voivodes* (i.e., representatives of central administration in provinces) who, within the centralization initiated by the PiS, continued to weaken the decision-making competences of provincial councils. Other governing parties and local committees often behaved similarly, but the scope of undemocratic activities was not as conspicuous (Mieñkowska-Norkiene, Szymański, and Zamecki 2024).

From 2019 to April 2024, the city and provincial councils had theoretical legislative and control competences but, in practice, they were limited. This was particularly evident during the COVID-19 pandemic when the governance system strengthened the executive branches and in the situation of the majority belonging to the party of the executive-branch leader. In the latter situation, resolutions as main legal acts often were adopted automatically by councils (in great majority on application of the executive-branch leader), similar to what took place in the *Sejm*. This occurred with limited discussions or even full debates—which, however, had no impact. The only issue concerning the city executive branches that could be a subject of a resolution was their general work directions. However, a president or mayor often did not implement a resolution without consequences. The incumbents rejected the draft resolutions of the opposition—sometimes adopting them later as their own proposals. However, a consensus between the majority of the mayor or president and the opposition also could take place (e.g., in the Rzeszów and Otwock councils) (Mieñkowska-Norkiene, Szymański, and Zamecki 2024).

The control function of the city and provincial legislative bodies was limited to specific activities: adopting the budget; accepting the financial and budgetary reports presented each year by the president or mayor (city) or the entire executive board—that is, the *marszałek* and board members (province); and approving (since January 2018) the yearly report of these bodies concerning the implementation of policies and plans in the previous year. However, these control measures were not significant, notably when the majority supported the mayor or president or *marszałek*. Even if a council rejected the financial reports, accountability was not automatic—for example, dismissing the executive-branch leader requires problematic and not necessarily effective procedures (e.g., a referendum).

The executive aggrandizement and the weak position of legislative branches were observable at both the national and subnational levels in Poland in 2019–2024 (until late 2023 at the national level). Some reasons for this situation were standard for all territorial tiers—that is, the ongoing de-democratization related

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### THE SOUTH AFRICAN PARLIAMENT'S CAPACITY TO CONSTRAIN THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH WEAKENED BY A DOMINANT PARTY SYSTEM

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Perceptions of parliamentary weakness are prevalent, particularly as an influential executive branch emerges from a parliamentary system dominated by a single party. In such contexts, legislatures often are seen as reactive and subordinate to executive-branch elites. In South Africa's parliamentary system, the executive branch is drawn from the legislature, which means that the cabinet sits in the legislature and needs the confidence of its majority. Until the national elections on May 29, 2024, the African National Congress (ANC)—as the dominant party—consistently secured stable governments and legislative-branch majorities without interruption in the past three decades of democratic consolidation. However, this dominance also

weakened the Parliament's ability to effectively scrutinize the executive branch, which has played a significant role in the prevalence of chronic corruption and maladministration in the country during the past decade.

Constitutional provisions formally bind the Parliament, but practical constraints frequently stem from the party system shaped by the electoral system and the nature of society—in this

portfolio committees and four standing committees. The chairs of all committees (except SCOPA) were held by members of the governing party. The party representation at committees is proportional to their representation in the National Assembly. If specialization through parliamentary committees is at the heart of institutionalization, then South Africa qualifies as an institutionalized parliament. However, in terms of scrutiny,

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case, a fragmented society. Since the advent of democracy in South Africa, the electoral system has been a closed party-list proportional representation. It has national and regional districts (each consisting of 200 seats) with a Droop quota (i.e., minimum number of votes needed for a party to guarantee it will win at least one seat in the legislature) for the allocation of 400 seats without a legal threshold. South Africa's party system historically exhibited an effective number of legislative parties index rate of 2.57 until 2024, which indicates the presence of more than two major parties in Parliament. These parties included the ANC as the dominant party; the Democratic Alliance, which held the role of official opposition from 2004 to 2024; and the Economic Freedom Fighters, which emerged as the third largest party in 2014.

In institutional terms, the South African Parliament retains a Westminster-style system inherited from British colonization. As a result, parliamentary parties are structured around party caucuses and whips, and the chair of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts (SCOPA) is held by an opposition party. Likewise, this Parliament exhibits a substantial institutionalization in which specialized committees have jurisdiction over government departments. They are vested with the power to gather evidence (i.e., to call witnesses and require the submission of written reports); to initiate amendments on legislation after the first reading on the floor; and to determine their agendas. South African committees typically are composed of only 10 to 20 members. Compared to larger committees, they possess a stronger capacity to hold the government accountable. Except for the Joint Committee on Intelligence, all committee meetings are open to the public unless they are declared closed. Parliament allocates time for questioning ministers and the president. The agenda for the business conducted in the National Assembly is determined by the Program Committee, wherein each parliamentary party is entitled to proportional representation. This ensures that every party has at least one representative on this committee.

For the duration of the previous legislative-branch term (2019–2024), the National Assembly was composed of 25

shortcomings have been identified within the committees (e.g., gathering and examining evidence), which may require an explanation from department heads. These deficiencies include instances in which the government frequently provides vague or inadequate responses that fail to address the substance of the questions posed. Additionally, party mechanisms (e.g., study groups) are used to assist and train Members of Parliament (MPs) about matters related to executive-branch departments and to instruct committee members on party positions, thereby ensuring a cohesive approach when participating on portfolio committees. In terms of policy making, only half of the bills were amended within these committees in the previous legislative term.

### Parliament's Performance in Constraining Government

During the initial and subsequent democratic parliaments (i.e., 1994–2004), the primary focus of the institution was on repealing apartheid legislation and passing new laws aligned with democratic principles. During this period, Parliament passed 817 bills. Nevertheless, the oversight function of Parliament received comparatively less attention amid the legislative-branch effort. Since 1999, there has been a growing demand in the country for reform to empower Parliament to exercise greater control over the executive branch. This includes reforms and adjustments to enable the National Assembly to use the power that it already has more effectively, as well as external reforms that advocate for the adoption of a constituency-based electoral system. Initially resistant to these demands, the government eventually made some concessions, leading to various changes in parliamentary structures and procedures. In particular, in 2003, Parliament established a Task Team on Oversight and Accountability through the Joint Rules Committee that was tasked with studying the constitutional mandates related to oversight. The Task Team conducted three focus groups (i.e., projects, budget, and committees) to develop an oversight model aligned with the constitution and Parliament's new strategic vision. The Oversight and

Accountability Model, officially adopted by Parliament on March 19, 2008, enhanced existing tools of parliamentary oversight, integrated components of the new oversight model with existing components, and bolstered Parliament's capacity to fulfill its oversight function.

Despite these initiatives to strengthen the institution, the South African Parliament largely has failed to fulfill its oversight and accountability mandate. This was especially evident during the past decade, which was characterized by rampant corruption within the state and the administration, commonly referred to as "state capture." In response to these challenges, in 2018, the president appointed a Judicial Commission of Inquiry to investigate allegations of corruption and fraud in the public sector. The Judicial Commission's findings concluded that parliamentary oversight often proved ineffective—even when there was a willingness to oversee the executive branch. The final report, presented by the Judicial Commission in 2021, included recommendations (Chief Justice of the Republic of South Africa 2021, 461) meant to fortify oversight and enhance accountability within the legislative branch. The recommendations included procedures related to National Assembly resolutions arising from oversight activities and responses; executive-branch reports and submissions to Parliament; executive-branch attendance; selection of office-bearers in state institutions; establishment of an oversight committee over the presidency; and appointments of committee chairpersons. In response, the Rules Committee of the National Assembly convened on November 23, 2022, to review the Judicial Commission's recommendations. Currently, the parliamentary Rules Committee is engaged in deliberations regarding these recommendations.

## Conclusion

Certain types of reactive legislative institutions may show varying levels of institutionalization. However, the correlation suggesting that institutionalized parliaments possess greater capability to restrain the executive branch than less institutionalized parliaments is not supported in the South African case. As a result of South Africa's party-dominance system, the legislative branch's capacity to constrain the executive branch has been significantly jeopardized. South Africa's Parliament demonstrates a substantial institutionalization in which specialized committees have jurisdiction over government departments. Moreover, they are vested with the power to initiate and amend legislation, collect evidence, and determine their agendas. However, despite the level of specialization exhibited by committees, the Parliament nevertheless is subordinated to the government, which—operating through a disciplined parliamentary majority—can minimize the Parliament's capacity to constrain the executive branch. Thus, in South Africa—where the executive branch is selected from among the MPs and consists primarily of leaders from a dominant majority party—the legislative-branch oversight has been weakened by MPs who are reluctant to scrutinize or hold accountable a government led by their own party's leaders. Moreover, the current closed party-list proportional representation electoral system intensifies party discipline because MPs often retain their seats based on the decisions of the party leadership.

## CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

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## DOES TURKISH-STYLE PRESIDENTIALISM TRIGGER DE-PARLIAMENTARIZATION IN TÜRKİYE? THE POST-2018 DEVELOPMENTS

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The rationalization of parliament—that is, procedures bolstering productivity and expediting lawmaking—and the empowerment of the executive branch were the cornerstones of Türkiye's 1982 Constitution. Three key constitutional amendments—the popular presidential election in 2007, the judicial reform in 2010, and the so-called Turkish-Style Presidentialism in 2017—brought about "competitive authoritarianism" in Türkiye (Gençkaya and Dunbay 2024, 14–15). Following the failed coup attempt on July 15, 2016, the declaration of a state of emergency lasted for two years. During this time, the referendum for 2017 amendments to the constitution and hastily scheduled early presidential and legislative elections were conducted in 2018. The president's unrestricted executive powers, weakened legislative functions, and submission of the judiciary have resulted in a concentration of powers in a single authority (Yılmaz 2020, 269–73), as well as the erosion of democratic institutions toward authoritarianism in law and practice (Adar and Seufert 2021, 7). This article assesses the outcomes of the post-2018 developments in legislative–executive relations in Türkiye.

Despite the nondelegation of legislative powers defined by the 1982 Constitution (Article 7) principle of the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye (GNAT), the 2017 constitutional amendments in Türkiye enhanced the president's authority to issue executive decrees, appoint or select senior civil and judicial officials, implement a provisional budget to avert a government shutdown and curtailed legislative oversight mechanisms, thereby converting the parliament into a "rubber stamp" institution (Gençkaya 2023).

The changes in GNAT rules and procedures in 2018 further allowed the president to influence the legislative process. The agendas of the parliamentary standing committees—where the People's Alliance (i.e., "parliamentary coalition"), composed of the Justice and Development Party and the Nationalist Action Party, control the majority—are set by their chairs. The opposition parties' proposals are unlikely to be included on the agendas, limiting the parliament's deliberative capacity (Bakırcı 2018, 222–24; Gençkaya 2022, 274–75). Since 2015, and especially after the implementation of presidentialism, the Consultative Council—which is composed of the party groups and presided over by the