ABSTRACTS

János Tóth I.

POLITICS AS TRANSCENDING THE PRISONER’S DILEMMA

Under the conditions of non-cooperative game theory the mutual defection that is the Pareto inferior Nash equilibrium is necessary in the two and multi-person prisoner’s dilemma. Using the terminology of political philosophy the state of nature is characterized by the “common bad”, and this is unacceptable for the community. John Elster (1976) is right when defining politics as “the study of ways of transcending the Prisoner’s Dilemma”. Several authors (Olson 1965, Ostrom 1990, Boda 2013) also emphasize that politics is essentially nothing else than to prevent failures of collective action. The cooperative game theory can help point out that there is no opportunity either for the spontaneous cooperation, or the social contract in the prisoner’s dilemma. Evolutionary game theory offers opportunities for the spontaneous formation of the conditional cooperation only in special cases. In the same time, the evolution gives possibility for “external” transcending of the prisoner’s dilemma by new types of agents and new types of institutions associated. Using the terminology of political philosophy this paper examines how a population from the bad state of nature gets to a better and better social status by evolutionary processes. My argumentation is that the new form of cooperative solutions also has serious deficiencies that require more and more answers.

Keywords: Game theory, free rider, violation, altruism, common good and bad

Miklós Sebők – Bálint Kubik – Csaba Molnár – Gábor Szendi
FACTORS OF SUBMITTING INTERPELLATIONS IN HUNGARY (1990–2014)

The paper investigates the factors shaping the number and content of interpellations, a form of parliamentary questions by MPs in post-regime change Hungary. A number of hypotheses are drawn from four theoretical propositions: political control; policy-oriented information seeking; parliamentary group leadership and constituency service. A new database consisted of 4096 observations for the period 1990–2014 of the Comparative Agendas Project is compiled in order to analyse these hypotheses and to better understand the legis-
Count data regressions are utilized in order to gauge the impact of government and opposition position; the source of the mandate in a mixed electoral system; and the position in the parliamentary faction on the number of interpellations presented. We find that opposition MPs interpellate more, whereas representatives of single-member districts and regional lists interpellate less than their peers. Computer-assisted content analysis techniques and regressions are used to describe the text of interpellations in terms of their geographical and policy content. Our results show that representatives from single member districts and regional lists make more reference to local issues, although these references are not necessarily aimed at their own district or county. Furthermore, policy specialization (as measured by committee membership) increases the likelihood of submitting pertinent parliamentary questions.

Keywords: Legislative studies, parliamentary questions, electoral connection, policy specialization

Zsolt Boda – Veronika Patkós
“POLITICAL GOVERNANCE” AS REFLECTED BY THE MEDIA AND POLICY AGENDAS, 2010–2014

A general assumption about the policy-making process in Hungary is that in the past four years it has been largely dominated by political initiatives originating from the government and the ruling party. That is, policy change has been primarily driven by political initiatives of the power centre, instead of being responsive to the concerns of the public. In our study, we are empirically testing the hypothesis about the politically driven policy change, using the media agenda and legislative agendas of the Hungarian Comparative Agendas Project. We identified the important policy changes as those topics to which the media has provided a larger-than-average coverage on a yearly basis. Outstanding coverage has been usually linked to one policy issue, and in most of the cases, we found some kind of policy decision related to the issue. However, locating the policy decision or the first interpellation related to the given issue we found that they usually preceded the media coverage – that is, instead of the media agenda pulling the policy agenda, the general logic is just the opposite: media is talking about the policy initiatives of the government. Only a few cases show the ‘textbook case’ of increased media coverage spurring political interest. This is explained by both the style of governance and the weak policy capacities of Hungary.

Keywords: Media agenda, policy agenda, media effect, policy change
The study analyses the overhead reduction initiative, the leading issue of public policy in Hungary between 2013 and 2014 in the face of the punctuated equilibrium theory. The case is examined from the perspective of how the punctuated equilibrium theory and the associated concepts (as policy image, policy monopoly and stream) can be applied to the overhead reduction initiative, a significant change in public policy. After clarifying the terminology, the study presents that the increase of the expenditure of the domestic energy plus the rising numbers of the those who are in arrears have already been issues as a real societal problem for years. Nevertheless, the intermittent character and the emergence of the policy image and monopoly can be justified with the priority of political aspects and the aspiration for bigger popularity. The series of provisions of the overhead reduction initiative perfectly matches the governmental narrative. Between the discourse of the overhead reduction initiative generated by the government and the punctuated equilibrium provisions and the climax of popularity of Fidesz, a close interrelation can be detected. However, the widespread support of Fidesz cannot exclusively be attributed to the overhead reduction initiative.

Keywords: Overhead reduction, punctuated equilibrium theory, societal problem

There has been a debate for decades among scholars and policymakers whether economic sanctions are effective or not. The effectiveness of restrictive measures are often disparaged and regarded as an unproductive foreign policy tool. Despite this pessimism in the literature, states around the world, especially the United States, have been increasingly applying economic statecraft against other countries in order to achieve their foreign political objectives. The European Union has also become active in imposing sanctions for the last couple of years. Nevertheless, the overall perception of restrictive measures has not changed much since most of the authors still argue that economic sanctions have its own limit, therefore, they cannot achieve breakthrough results in world politics.

Keywords: Economic sanctions; restrictive measures; coercive measures
CONTENTS

GAME THEORY

- Tóth I., János: Politics as Transcending the Prisoner’s Dilemma ................. 7

THE HUNGARIAN COMPARATIVE AGENDAS PROJECT

- Boda, Zsolt – Sebők, Miklós: Foreword: Presentation of the Hungarian Comparative Agendas Project ......................... 33
- Böcskei, Balázs: Overhead Reduction: Policy Change as Political Innovation ......................................................... 94

REVIEW ARTICLE

- Szép, Viktor: The Political Effectiveness of Economic Sanctions ................. 117

BOOK REVIEW

- Szabó, Gabriella: Colonies and Colonizers (Péter Bajomi-Lázár: Party Colonisation of the Media in Central and Eastern Europe) ........................................... 148

BOOK WATCH ......................................................... 154

ABSTRACTS ......................................................... 158