ABSTRACTS

MIKLÓS BÁLINT TÓTH
Dessewffy, Asbóth, Tisza.
Moderate Progression and Democracy from a Conservative Perspective

The study examines whether, by analogy to the widely used notion of liberal democracy, such an idea exists in Hungarian political thought which bears the marks of the conservative and the democratic worldviews at the same time. In other words, does conservative democracy exist?

According to the hypothesis, moderate progression can be regarded as a specific variant of conservative democracy. The study has a three-tier structure. Firstly, I clarify my understanding of Hungarian conservative tradition. Secondly, I show the conservative character of moderate progression. Finally, I point out that the representatives of moderate progression consider democracy, under certain circumstances, acceptable, even supportable. To prove this, the argument draws on Aurél Dessewffy’s, János Asbóth’s and István Tisza’s works.

Keywords: conservative democracy; moderate progression; Aurél Dessewffy; János Asbóth; István Tisza

ZOLTÁN BRETTER
Machiavelli – The Artist

My paper consists of three parts. In the first part, I seek to sum up the essence of Aristotle’s normative politics, and in some points I compare Machiavelli’s and Aristotle’s relationship to politics in general.

In the second part, I sum up the Aristotelian teaching concerning the difference between doing and making, to have a clear understanding of what is the tradition inherited by Renaissance humanists, through Aquinas.

In the third part, I show how Machiavelli bypasses that tradition, how he shifts the emphasis from “action” to “creation”, and thus he sets the framework for the modern interpretation of politics, as something that is not part of normative politics anymore, but becomes the “art of government”.

Keywords: Aristotle, Aquinas, Machiavelli, political action; political creation
ABSTRACTS

RUDOLF METZ
Democratic Leadership as an „Idol Concept”?

The tension between democracy and political leadership is one of the great paradoxes in the field of political theory and political leadership studies. The contradiction emerges in the expectations towards leaders that require leaders to solve community problems and to enforce the public will at any cost, but at the same time to respect the rules of democracy, to allow and not to jeopardize the self-government of the people or civic participation. The literature has pointed out that the question is not whether leadership is necessary for the functioning of democracy, but how these concepts and practices can be linked to each other. Accordingly, this study is based on the presupposition that democracy and leadership are not only conceptually related, but they also depend on each other in practice. The article is written with the modest ambition to illustrate the necessity of this conceptual relationship from the perspective of leadership. Drawing on political and generic leadership literature, the paper unravels the stable denotation, the strict boundaries and the normative connotations of leadership that make democratic leadership not an oxymoron, but even an “idol concept”.

Keywords: leadership theory, leadership, democratic leadership, power, interactionist paradigm

PÉTER BORDÁS–ILDIKÓ BARTHA–TAMÁS HORVÁTH M.
Doing Better?
Centralization and Quality of Public Services

This article examines the impact of changes in local government finance in Hungary from the citizens’ perspective in an international comparison. The 2011 Local Government Act (in effect from 2013) drastically reduced local governments’ responsibilities, centralising several municipal functions and transformed the previous income-based funding system to a ‘task-based’, expenditure-oriented regime. Our analysis shows that the new financing system did not improve public sector performance and seems to be less beneficial for the people, i.e. for the consumers of public services, still provided at the local level. By confirming this observation, the results of an international comparison prove that the level of citizens’ satisfaction with local services in Hungary is less than the European average. The article argues that such an outcome is not a ‘failure’ of the legislator in finding the appropriate instruments for the objective pursued, but the objective itself was not the improvement of quality of public services. The paper provides a comparative analysis based on empirical
evidence of satisfaction surveys carried out in Hungarian and other European cities.

**Keywords:** local governments; centralization; resource-based versus expenditure-based regulation; public service delivery; citizens satisfaction

**ATTILA ÁGH**

The Crisis of Global Democratization: The Conceptual Failure of US Mainstream Democratization Research

The ruling paradigm of democracy research for decades has been formulated by Huntington in his book on the Third Wave, which states that the process of democratization has reached its third, global wave, therefore democratic transition and consolidation have become the key terms of democracy theory. In the big euphoria of democracy, however, it was forgotten or marginalized that Huntington had also predicted recession or a counter-wave between particular waves, and referred that such a counter-wave might also follow the third wave described by him. The positive scenario of democratization remained valid until the late 2000s, moreover, the topic of recession was not discussed meaningfully either, as if global democratization had reached the point of no return. But in the 2010s there was a sharp turn in democracy theory and the global counter-wave has become the central topic of democratization. It has also produced the conceptual failure of the previously dominant American democracy theory. In such a way, the crisis of global democracy has come “home” to the US in the second half of the 2010s. This paper, from the huge literature of democracy research, only deals with the conflict between the mainstream concepts of US and European democracy research, and its implications for the East-Central European region.

**Key words:** the periods and the three main directions of democracy research, US and European mainstream, the thin and thick concept of democracy.