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Tapio Raunio • Thomas Sedelius

Semi-Presidential Policy-Making in Europe

Executive Coordination and Political Leadership

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Palgrave Studies in Presidential Politics

ISBN 978-3-030-16430-0

ISBN 978-3-030-16431-7 (eBook)

<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-16431-7>

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Cover illustration: Nora Carol Photography / Getty Images

This Palgrave Macmillan imprint is published by the registered company Springer Nature Switzerland AG

The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

PREFACE

With this book, we conclude a four-year project (2015–2018) about semi-presidentialism in transitional regimes. The overall purpose of this broader project was to provide new theoretical and empirical knowledge on the implications of semi-presidentialism in transitional regimes. We have examined to what extent and in what ways the institutional interaction between the president, prime minister, and parliament matters to governability in semi-presidential regimes. The project has produced large-N studies on democracy and government performance (Sedelius and Linde 2018), diffusion and choice of constitutional regimes (Åberg 2017), and a number of focused comparisons and single-case studies on inter-institutional relations in semi-presidential regimes in Central and Eastern Europe (Raunio and Sedelius 2017; Sedelius 2015, 2016; Sedelius and Åberg 2018).¹

In terms of conceptual and theoretical framing and level of empirical ambition, research on semi-presidentialism has made significant strides forward during the past two decades. Yet, in a meta-analysis of this sub-field, Åberg and Sedelius (2018) identified a number of important gaps. Among these, they call for more research on political leadership and elites, public administration, informal avenues of influence, and studies that explore the challenges involved in distinguishing between domestic and foreign policies in the context of semi-presidential regimes. The objective of our book is to at least offer exploratory insights about these topics and to encourage further research on intra-executive coordination mechanisms and on presidential strategies and behavior.

This comparative study focuses on actual power-sharing and institutional coordination between the president and the prime minister. Anchored in the new institutionalist tradition, and by no means ignoring formal constitutional rules, party-political dynamics, or the broader societal context, our core idea is to reach further into the halls of executive power-sharing. We are especially interested in the level of institutional coordination at the point where the two executives need to interact directly or indirectly to reach policy goals. In contrast to much of existing comparative work on semi-presidentialism, we emphasize the role of institutions at the most concrete level of executive policy-making. In order to reach ‘behind the scenes’ and to go beyond most obvious data on political and institutional conditions, we draw mainly on a set of unique expert interview data in Finland, Lithuania, and Romania. Theoretically, we develop a tentative framework based on four strands of literature: semi-presidentialism, public administration, political leadership, and foreign policy analysis. To policy-makers and other stakeholders that might take an interest, we hope that our study will contribute to an increased understanding about effective leadership and policy coordination in semi-presidential regimes.

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NOTE

1. The references are found in the bibliography section of Chap. 1.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Swedish Research Council under the granted project VR 2014-1260 provided resources to make this book possible. The support of many others, however, was fundamental to get it all done. Conducting expert interviews in three different countries certainly requires a lot of support. We are especially indebted to Bogdan Dima at the Faculty of Law, University of Bucharest, and his assistant, Dragos Petrescu, for coordinating, undertaking, and translating the interviews in Romania, and similarly to Sigita Trainauskiene at the Research and Higher Education Monitoring Research Center in Vilnius, who did the corresponding work in Lithuania. We certainly appreciate all the time you have put into this project.

Our sincerest gratitude goes to each one of the 30 anonymous experts in Finland, Lithuania, and Romania, who agreed to be interviewed and who shared so much of their unique expertise from the inside of their political systems. Due to the sensitive nature of the interview topics, they are unnamed in this book but include current and former high-level civil servants, counselors, and advisors in the offices of the president and the prime minister, speakers and members of parliament, and ministers, including one former prime minister.

We are also grateful to our colleagues and friends in the political science department at Dalarna University, who gave valuable remarks and comments on chapter drafts and early papers of this book project. Especially, we should mention Jenny Åberg, Kjetil Duvold, Ulf Hansson, Erik Lundberg, Jenny Lönnemyr, and Mats Öhlén. During the writing of the book, we have called upon colleagues with expertise on Lithuania and Romania to comment on certain sections and chapter drafts. Algis

Krupavičius, Bogdan Dima, and especially Veronica Anghel deserve our warm gratitude in this regard. Needless to say, remaining errors and misinterpretations rest entirely with us.

Our project has also benefited substantially from feedback by colleagues at various conferences—especially the Presidential Politics Sections at the European Consortium of Political Research (ECPR) General Conferences in Oslo 2017 and Hamburg 2018. This includes, among others, Carsten Ankar, Miloš Brunclík, Cristina Bucur, Martin Carrier, Svitlana Chernykh, Robert Elgie, Rui Graça Feijó, Vít Hloušek, Michal Kubát, Philipp Köker, Sébastien Lazardeux, Sophia Moestrup, Malkhaz Nakashidze, Gianluca Passarelli, Timothy Power, and Joseph Tsai.

Finally, we would like to thank the Palgrave editors Ambra Finotello and Anne-Kathrin Birchley-Brun for guiding us through the processing of this book, and Robert Elgie and Gianluca Passarelli, series editors of *Palgrave Studies in Presidential Politics*, as well as the anonymous reviewer, for being constructive and supportive of the project.

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