



Austrian Parliament

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**The sentimental value of parliaments: how to take
care for it**

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THE SENTIMENTAL VALUE OF PARLIAMENTS

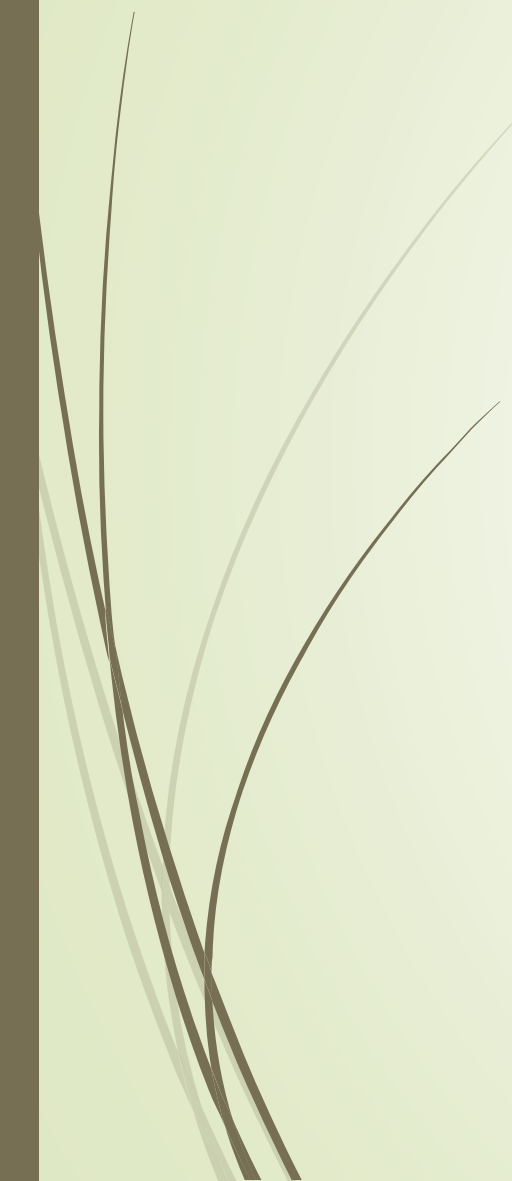


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The sentimental value of Parliaments

- I aim to explore **the interaction between parliaments and the emotional sphere** to help shape possible strategies for a positive approach to the "sentimental value" of parliamentary institutions.
 - My research adopts the interdisciplinary methodology of **parliamentary studies** (Benoît & Rozenberg, 2020)
 - To this end, I identify **three fundamental categories in the relationship between emotions and parliamentary institutions**
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Parliaments as antidote to passions





Parliaments as antidotes to passions

- ▶ Modern parliamentarism arose as an antidote to the irrational component of politics. Parliaments counter the violent passions of political struggle with the rational discussion.
- ▶ They are deliberative assemblies that debate pro et contra according to certain procedures and rules for agenda-setting (Palonen, 2018).
- ▶ Through ‘arguing and bargaining’ (Elster, 2000), parliamentarism contributed to the stabilization of social conflict using the calm passions of interests as tamers of the wild passions potentially destructive of civil coexistence (Hirschman, 1977).
- ▶ Passions push for immediate action: on the contrary, all parliamentary functions can be viewed as intermediary and interrupting (Konrath & Rathmair, 2026).

Parliaments as theatres of passions





Parliaments as theatres of passions

- ▶ Parliaments are however also ‘theatres of passions’. Elsewhere (Rizzoni, 2024), I sought to demonstrate how modern parliamentarism combines the three fundamental elements of encyclopedism as theorized by Bacon and Diderot: reason, memory, and imagination.
- ▶ Two of these components—memory and imagination—are intensely linked to the emotional sphere: on the one hand, parliaments are living monuments to the great moments of national political history; on the other hand, their legislative function inevitably projects these institutions toward an imagination of the future.



Parliaments as theatres of passions

- ▶ Parliamentary debates often offer the opportunity to express intense emotions.
- ▶ MPs can **strategically use emotions** in their speeches to maximize their influence and visibility (Yildirim, 2025)
- ▶ Emotive displays and negativity **are more likely to be picked up by media outlets** (Maier & Nai, 2020).
- ▶ Committees as places of cold reasoning and bargaining vs. the Plenary as the place of emotions.

Parliaments as catalysts of passions



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Parliaments as catalysts of passions

- ▶ Parliaments are also catalysts of collective political passions: even in recent times, when the masses want to express anger, yearning for freedom, or fear, it is towards parliaments that they turn.
- ▶ From this perspective, it is enough to consider the events—of opposite emotional slant—of the pro-Trump militants storming U.S. Congress and of the citizens of Seoul courageously surrounding their parliament to protect it from an attempted coup



Sentimental strategies

- Full acknowledgement of all these different — and often conflicting — emotional dimensions of parliamentarism is crucial for contemporary democracies.
- Emotional well-being is essential for political culture: emotions as intelligent responses to the perception of value (Nussbaum, 2012)



Sentimental strategies

- ▶ Parliaments **should remain indispensable antidotes to passions in the age of the 'tirrany of emotions' or 'emotionalism'** (D'Angelo, 2020)
- ▶ However, emotions should not be expelled from the parliamentary arena
- ▶ Parliaments should remain open to emotions both internally and externally
- ▶ Heckling as a vital, if controversial, component of parliamentary debates
- ▶ Parliaments **should create spaces for democratic resonance**: this cannot be managed solely on an intellectual level, but affects and emotions also have to play a major role (Konrath & Rathmair, 2026)

Thank you for your attention!





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