

Rebuttal letter

We thank the reviewers for their comments, which contributed to improving our original research. In the following text, we list their recommendations (in black) and our reactions (in red).

In the revised version we highlighted in red the most substantively relevant changes. Purely grammatical changes or parts that have been language edited are indicated sparingly.

Sincerely,
the authors.

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Reviewer 1

Comment 1: The problem is that they consider implicitly that the alternative was between working in persons or virtually. Instead, legislatures actually faced 3 choices at the beginning of covid: in persons meetings, virtual meetings and closing. Therefore it is possible that some parliaments involved in consensus democracies or preferring confrontation between majority and opposition opted for virtual solutions despite their reluctance towards them as it was the only way in some cases to remain open (and as these countries put a lot of emphasis in keeping their legislatures open). The paper should consider this issue discussing it and resting on the rich work on the opening of parliaments during covid that is partly used in the data section (the Oxford compendium, Waismel-Manor et al. 2022, IUP...)

Our response: We acknowledged that the alternative faced by parliaments consisted of three options. At page 2 we added this sentence: "While in the very beginning a limited number of parliaments took more stringent measures such as temporary closure (e.g. UK, Switzerland) (Rozenberg, 2020), as time passed legislatures generally adopted some forms of organizational adjustments to perform their functions in full while protecting the health of their members."

Comment 2: The 2 first hypotheses are largely contradictory. As such, this is acceptable but it requires some acknowledgment and explanations. This could account for the fact that hypo 1 is not verified contrary to hypo 2.

Our response: We substantially revised the hypo 2. See our response to Reviewer 2

Comment 3: "The correlation rates for hypo 1 & majority/consensus systems are not that low. It seems rather that they are noticeable."

Comment 4: "To the contrary, the authors could be more cautious regarding hypo 3 as the number of extreme cases is limited (and BTW France probably changed category since Sieberer paper). Alternatively, the author could consider Martin & Depauw ranking of the committee strength."

Our response: We acknowledged that our results are driven by a limited number of extreme cases. At page 16, we added a footnote "Although it is notable that all extreme cases

behave as predicted, we must concede that the results are driven by a rather limited number of observations. However, this limitation is inherent in the research design adopted.”

Reviewer 2:

Comment 1: “...the second hypothesis does not seem to build on firm grounds. There is an important piece in the literature that introduces a kind of opposition index and this should be considered in working out the second hypothesis about the relevance of the majority and opposition divide. Garritzman’s article...”

Our response: We have included Garritzmann arguments in the justification for hypothesis 2. We explained why hypothesis 2 is not simply the reverse of hypothesis 1, distinguishing between the degree to which a parliament is “transformative” and the institutional resources allowing the opposition to present itself as an alternative to the government. We found that this was not only an improvement of our original argument but also one which fits well with our previously mostly implicit line of reasoning. One of Garritzman’s indicators built on the Russo and Wiberg article we had already mentioned. In the empirical analysis we employed both the Russo-Wiber and the Garritzmann indicators, obtaining remarkably similar results.

Comment 2: “As for the third hypothesis it is not quite clear why did not the authors incorporate already in the build-up the section Sieberer’s (2011) framework that eventually is applied in the analysis”

Our response: thanks for this suggestion, we have now included Sieberer’s (2011) framework in the hypothesis building.

Comment 3: “On page 5 it might be useful to distinguish between classical liberalism and new liberalism (the former embodied by Locke and Montesquieu for example, and the latter by Bagehot and Mill), just to make the development of the thinking about the role of parliaments more visible – and the connection as well as the difference between the two periods clear-cut.”

Our response: We added a sentence to specify the peculiarity of the former type of liberalism

Comment 4: “When the article talks about the power of informality in many parliamentary activities and particularly in legislative activity the reference and the incorporation of Andeweg and Nijzink’s , 2005 chapter on „beyond the two party image” would be essential”

Our response: thanks for the reminder, we included this classic work in the references

Comment 5: “On page 10 it remains unclear for the reviewer why “ actively participating in informal or preparatory meetings held remotely has not been considered a form of participation”. Probably some explanation would be helpful”

Our response: We added a footnote on page 11 where we explain the reasons for our choice. “Informal or preparatory meetings held virtually have not been considered as a form of participation essentially for three reasons. First, it is difficult to find comparable data about

unofficial meetings. Second, the degree of informality may differ among different parliaments, making comparisons slippery. Third, and perhaps most importantly, there is a substantial difference between formal and informal meetings: considering them alike would artificially reduce the observed (and substantially important) variance.”

Comment 6: “Finally, the authors at the end of the article mention the potential ways and means to pursue this research focus and go deeper – there is one potential direction missing: It remains a question for the reviewer - or a question to the authors - how to pursue the scholarly analysis prospectively – probably exceeding and going beyond the most similar cases research design would offer even richer conclusive findings about how parliaments evolve in face of crisis.”

Our response: thanks, we reflected on this question in the conclusion