

Changes in Journalism in Politicized Media Systems: A Study on Newspapers in Poland and Hungary

Agnieszka Stępińska, Gabriella Szabó & Kinga Adamczewska

To cite this article: Agnieszka Stępińska, Gabriella Szabó & Kinga Adamczewska (15 Apr 2024): Changes in Journalism in Politicized Media Systems: A Study on Newspapers in Poland and Hungary, Journalism Practice, DOI: [10.1080/17512786.2024.2340541](https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2024.2340541)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2024.2340541>



© 2024 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group



Published online: 15 Apr 2024.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 234



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

Changes in Journalism in Politicized Media Systems: A Study on Newspapers in Poland and Hungary

Agnieszka Stępińska ^a, Gabriella Szabó ^b and Kinga Adamczewska ^a

^aFaculty of Political Science and Journalism, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań, Poland; ^bDepartment for Political Behaviour, HUN-REN Centre for Social Sciences, Budapest, Hungary

ABSTRACT

This paper comparatively investigates variations in journalistic role performances in politicized media systems. Poland and Hungary are included in the quantitative content analysis as illustrative cases of Central and Eastern European countries featuring democratic erosion, political polarization, and media systems with a high level of political parallelism. Our study identifies whether the fall of liberal and deliberative democracy and increasing political pressure on the media have been accompanied by modifications in the manifestation of journalistic roles and, if so, what those changes have been. We employ Mellado's (2015) concept of journalistic roles by focusing on democracy-related domains, namely journalistic voice and power relations, and four roles: interventionist, watchdog, loyal facilitator, and civic. We compare data from national newspapers from two periods, namely 2012 and 2020. Despite experiencing similar changes in political context, journalists in Poland and Hungary have differed in their performance of the watchdog and civic roles. However, they have been alike in relation to the steady rise of journalistic interventionism. Surprisingly, we found no evidence of the elevation of the loyal facilitator model in newspapers. This study indicates that systemic politicization and political pressure on the media go alongside with diminishing objectivity and detachment in professional role performance.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 15 July 2023
Accepted 30 March 2024

KEYWORDS

Journalism; role performance; media system; politicization; political parallelism; Central-Eastern Europe

Introduction

Journalists in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) have a long history of dealing with state pressures, censorship, politicized media owners, and legal blocks to their work. It is therefore unsurprising that much of the scholarship that has been devoted to the role of the media in the process of democratization (Carpentier, Dahlgren, and Pasquali 2013; Price, Rozumilowicz, and Verhulst 2002; Voltmer 2008) has taken an especially high interest in the media's role in the transformation of former communist countries in Central and Eastern Europe (see Dobek-Ostrowska and Głowacki 2015; Gross 2002;

CONTACT Agnieszka Stępińska  agnieszka.stepinska@amu.edu.pl

© 2024 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group
This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, and is not altered, transformed, or built upon in any way. The terms on which this article has been published allow the posting of the Accepted Manuscript in a repository by the author(s) or with their consent.

Jakubowicz 2007; Jebbil, Stetka, and Loveless 2013; Splichal 1994; Tworzecki and Semetko 2012).

Today, three decades after the democratization process and the increasing independence of the media in the late 1980s and early 1990s, there is a need to study the increasing politicization of the media. Scholars have documented contemporary pressures on the media in the CEE region in the form of media ownership, regulation, legislation, physical attacks, and threats against journalists or media owners (Selva 2020; Štětka 2014). While many previous studies have focused on analysis of governments' performance or the potential and actual consequences of political decisions for the media system in general (Balčytienė et al. 2015; Dobek-Ostrowska 2015; Hrvatin and Petkovic 2016; Bajomi-Lázár 2014, 2017), less is known regarding how exactly a change in political environment is affecting the way journalists perform their professional roles in countries where democratic principles have substantially decayed, resulting in "significant deteriorations in freedom of expression at the hands of governments" (V-DEM 2022, 16).

Following previous research on how socio-political factors shape journalism across countries (Blumler, McLeod, and Rosengren 1992; Esser and Pfetsch 2004; Stępińska et al. 2021), this paper aims to compare and contrast journalistic role performance in two CEE countries, Poland and Hungary, which we consider to be the most similar from the viewpoint of the politicization of news media, a relatively limited experience of democracy, political pluralism, and media autonomy (Blokker 2013). Since 2010 in Hungary and 2015 in Poland, the political field has been dominated by national conservative and right-wing populist political parties, namely Fidesz (Hungary) and Prawo i Sprawiedliwość [Law and Justice] (Poland). Both countries are also colliding with the European Union's democratic values, partly due to their media policies and practices. In the first decade of the twenty-first century, increasing numbers of political observers and analysts have warned of growing polarization in Polish and Hungarian politics, especially among members of the elite (Bajomi-Lázár and Horváth 2023; Baylis 2012; Körösenyi 2013). In addition to the issue of polarization, it has also been widely argued that the populist domination of power in both countries endangers pluralism in politics and engagement in deliberative actions (Bayer 2013; Galston 2018).

This academic endeavor is a continuation of our previous study, which provided a global perspective on the impact of the socio-political environment on journalistic role performance. Global findings demonstrate that political, legal, and economic freedom have a significant influence on journalistic roles (Stępińska et al. 2021), yet the media-politics relationship's impact remains unclear (see also Márquez-Ramírez et al. 2020; Mellado, Hellmueller, and Donsbach 2017). In the present article, we devote attention to the data longitudinally, arguing that Hungary and Poland are excellent cases for assessing how selected media-related political contextual factors shape journalistic roles over time. In the literature, a relatively small number of studies have discussed the impact of political circumstances on changes in journalistic role performances. To our knowledge, no such studies have addressed CEE countries' specificities. Thus, our aim is to fill these gaps.

By analyzing data collected in two periods (2012 and 2020), the paper explores (1) ways journalistic roles materialize in news content across the political leanings of the Polish and Hungarian print newspapers, (2) similarities and differences in role performance of Polish and Hungarian newspapers across time and different political contexts, and (3) media-specific political factors that relate to the performance of journalistic roles across time.

The daily newspapers' positions in the media ecosystem differ in analyzed countries. In Poland, daily newspapers have been regarded as more trustworthy news sources than television and media online in Poland (Wirtualne Media 2016). Also, press has been the media type with a dominant role in the inter-media agenda setting, that is they are mostly cited by other media (Instytut Monitorowania Mediów 2023). In Hungary, the newspaper industry has been in a steeper decline because of the loss in readership and ad revenue (Kovács, Polyák, and Urbán 2021). Consequently, broadsheets and tabloid papers are clearly losing their importance in having an impact on public opinion and voters' behavior.

Still, we decided to focus on newspapers for several reasons. First, although traditional print press is declining in both countries, all newspapers under our study went to online platforms. By doing so, at least some of them were able to keep their positions in the news circulations in both countries. According to Eurobarometer (2021), 39% of Poles and 36% of Hungarians still read written newspapers at least once a week.

Second, legacy media is relevant from the viewpoint of professional socialization in both countries. Most of the active journalists have been educated by practitioners of traditional media and started their careers in print press editorial teams or publishing houses. So the journalistic role performance is indirectly, but very likely impacted via the generational knowledge transfer.

Third, we studied a content of newspapers because it was collected in two waves of the Journalistic Role Performance project, hence the data allowed us to conduct a comparative study across countries and time.

Finally, the comparative study on the role performance across platforms and countries, including Hungary and Poland (Mellado et al. 2023), revealed that media platform has a significant influence on the performance only of some of the roles, namely the interventionist role, the infotainment role, and the civic role. In contrast, while the performance of the watchdog and loyal role is higher in both print and television news than in online and radio, those differences are not statistically significant when controlling for country and news outlet levels. By openly acknowledging both similarities and differences between the two countries, we believe that the comparative nature of the investigation provides beneficial suggestions for further analysis of role performance studies.

Theoretical Background

The relationship between media and politics has been studied for decades from two perspectives: the media system and journalism. Applying a media system framework resulted in theories of the press (Siebert, Petterson, and Schramm 1956), conceptualizations (Blumler and Gurevitch 1995), and classifications and typologies of the media systems (Brüggemann et al. 2014; Dobek-Ostrowska 2015; Hallin and Mancini 2004; Mellado and Lagos 2013; Meyen 2018; Peruško, Vozab, and Čuvalo 2013). Studying factors affecting journalism led to the development of concepts of journalistic cultures (Hanitzsch 2007, 2011) and dimensions of professional roles either perceived (Hanitzsch and Vos 2018) or performed by journalists (Mellado 2015).

In this study, we will employ Mellado's (2015) concept that distinguishes three main domains by which the practice of journalism can be analyzed (Donsbach 2014; Hanitzsch 2007). The power relations domain deals with the relationship between journalists and

those in power. Journalists might defend the idea of monitoring *de facto* powers and denouncing wrongdoings (Waisbord 2013)—the watchdog role—or they may see their role as acting as loyal spokespersons for those in power, conveying a positive image of them, supporting official policies, and portraying a positive image of their country—the loyal facilitator role (Donsbach 1995). The journalistic voice domain deals with the more active or passive presence of the journalist's voice in the news (Donsbach and Patterson 2004) and includes the opposing interventionist and disseminator roles. Finally, the audience approach domain deals with the way in which journalists address the audience (Eide and Knight 1999).

Previous research on role conception (Hanitzsch 2011) and role performance (Márquez-Ramírez et al. 2020; Mellado, Hellmueller, and Donsbach 2017) has suggested that higher levels of democratic and civil rights should be positively associated with journalists' eagerness to monitor, question, criticize, or accuse those in power (watchdog role) and negatively associated with a tendency towards supporting the political agenda set by the government, showing loyalty to power, and supporting and defending the government's policies (loyal facilitator role). Furthermore, a democratic regime provides favorable conditions for disseminating information to citizens and representing citizens' activities, demands, and questions (the civic role; Stępińska et al. 2021).

The second concept employed in this study is political parallelism. This concept was first introduced in the 1970s by Seymour-Ure (1974) and Blumler and Gurevitch (1995) and gained popularity in the 2000s after Hallin and Mancini (2004) made it one of the four analytical variables of their comparative media systems framework. As de Albuquerque (2013) note, the term "political parallelism" has been used to name at least three different phenomena. First, it is used to describe the existence of recognizable patterns of relationships between media and politics in a given society. Second, it may describe stable patterns of convergence between certain media outlets and political parties, groups, or tendencies with regard to their agendas, worldviews, and in some cases organizational ties. Third, political parallelism is defined as a specific circumstance in which a significant degree of connection between particular media and political groups is a feature common enough to define the political communication system as a whole.

For the purpose of this study, we will use a combination of all three definitions. Such an approach will allow us to capture a long tradition of high-level political parallelism defined as a parallelism between media outlets and political ideologies in Poland and Hungary, as well as a shift towards political parallelism manifested by strong relationships between certain media outlets and political parties in both countries. Such clear political leanings of the press, accompanied by governing political parties' instrumentalization of public media and financial control over regional media, create a highly politicized environment for journalism.

Previous studies have hinted that expressing journalistic voice has always been a major component of news media coverage in the sampled countries (Stępińska et al. 2016; Szabó and Kiss 2012), but little has been said about the development of the watchdog, civic, and loyal facilitator roles. With this analysis, we aim to longitudinally assess the changing or consistent patterns of journalistic role performance.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

This study is driven by the following research questions:

In what ways do journalistic roles materialize in news content across Polish and Hungarian printed newspapers of various political leanings? (RQ1)

What are the similarities and differences in the role performances of Polish and Hungarian newspapers across time and different political contexts? (RQ2)

How do media-specific political factors relate to the performance of journalistic roles? (RQ3)

To answer our research questions, we conducted a two-step study. First, taking advantage of a broad comparative content analysis of print news carried out by the first (2012) and second wave (2020) of the Journalistic Role Performance Project, we carried out a content analysis of Hungarian and Polish samples. The Journalistic Role Performance (JRP) project (Mellado 2020) identifies professional roles in a quantitative way and in a comparative setting. The majority of the investigations into journalism have focused on role conceptions, usually measured through surveys using self-reported data. The JRP project, however, measures role performances, which are a single aspect of journalistic roles as manifested in news content.

In this paper, we concentrate on democracy-related journalistic roles across three domains (Mellado 2020). The journalistic voice domain relates to the presence of the journalist's voice in the news. Within this domain, content is coded for indicators of the interventionist role, or the active role the journalist plays in interpreting and commenting on the news. The interventionist role is conceived as contrasting with the disseminator role, which, as a passive role, is not measured separately.¹ A second domain has to do with the way in which journalists relate to the structure of power in society. Within the power relations domain, two roles are measured: the watchdog role, which sees the journalist's role in terms of monitoring those in power and denouncing wrongdoing, and the loyal facilitator role, which sees the journalists' role as cooperating with political authorities and institutions to enhance the loyalty to the political elite.² The third domain links journalists to the audience; here, one role is involved in the analysis, namely the civic role. In this approach, journalism addresses audience members as citizens in need of a voice and information related to civic participation.³

To assess if the changes over time in journalist role performances in the two selected countries are statistically significant, we ran a variance analysis and Mann–Whitney U test. We also include selected macro-level contextual factors in the logistic regression to measure whether the changes in the relationship between politics and media matter in the evolution of democracy-related journalistic role performances in Hungary and Poland. The following four hypotheses are tested.

To assess if the changes over time in journalist role performances in the two selected countries are statistically significant, we ran a variance analysis and Mann–Whitney U test. We also include selected macro-level contextual factors in the logistic regression to measure whether the changes in the relationship between politics and media matter in the evolution of democracy-related journalistic role performances in Hungary and Poland. The following four hypotheses are tested.

H1: Decreasing press freedom in Hungary and Poland is connected to the increase in the loyal facilitator role.

To evaluate the relevance of media-specific political circumstances, we focus on the World Press Freedom Index of Reporters Without Borders for 2012 and 2020. This Index assigns a score ranging from 0 to 100 to each country or territory, with 100 being the best possible score (the highest possible level of press freedom) and 0 the worst. This score is calculated on the basis of two components: (1) a quantitative tally of abuses against media and journalists in connection with their work and (2) a qualitative analysis of the situation in each country or territory based on the responses of press freedom specialists (including journalists, researchers, academics, and human rights defenders) to a questionnaire available in 24 languages. Countries with high scores are placed in the upper ranks (with 1 as the highest position on the list).

In 2012, Hungary's position was 40, while Poland's was 24. Their respective positions dropped to 89 and 62 in 2020, and thus both countries were demoted from a higher to a lower position in the ranking. The demotion indicates decreasing press freedom and editorial independence. We postulate that the reduction in press freedom rank indicates rising political influence in both countries, and we assume that the rising political influence in the news media explains the increasing manifestation of journalistic loyalty towards the authorities—just as the loyal facilitator role performance model registers. We expect that from 2012 to 2020, the loyal facilitator role performance indicators will rise in both countries, which can be statistically connected to the shrinking press freedom in Hungary and Poland.

H2: Increasing media bias in Hungary and Poland is connected to the elevation of the interventionist role.

V-DEM data on media bias measures if there is media partiality against opposition parties or candidates in a country. Coverage can be considered impartial when the media as a whole presents a mix of positive and negative coverage of each party or candidate. The scale of the V-Dem media bias indicator runs from 0 to 4; 0 represents a situation in which the print and broadcast media cover only the official party or candidates, have no political coverage, or there are no opposition parties or candidates to cover, while 4 refers to the case of print and broadcast media covering all newsworthy parties and candidates more or less impartially and in proportion to their newsworthiness. Thus, the lower the number, the greater the media bias. For Poland, the V-DEM media bias score was 3.74 in 2012 and 2.48 in 2020, which indicates growing political partiality in the media. The numbers show the same tendency in the case of Hungary: 2.92 to 2.01 (2012 versus 2020), demonstrating increasing media bias. Given these V-DEM media bias scores, we presume more biased coverage goes hand in hand with increasing journalistic voices in the news media. Our hypothesis is that in both countries, systemic impartiality manifests in decreasing neutrality and objectivity in journalistic role performances, so we expect rising interventionism in Hungary and Poland as well.

H3: The decrease in media criticism is connected to the fall of the watchdog role.

Our third hypothesis seeks an explanation for the changes in the watchdog role. This paper connects watchdog journalism to criticism in the news media; therefore, we involve

the V-DEM *media critical* indicator in our analysis. The *media critical* indicator measures whether the major print and broadcast outlets routinely criticize the government or not. The scale runs from low (0) to high (3). Experts indicate 0 if there is no media outlet that routinely criticizes authorities, while they register 3 if all major media outlets criticize the government at least occasionally. Hence, the lower numbers demonstrate diminishing criticism in news media outlets. For Hungary, the V-DEM *media critical* score was 2.3 in 2012, whereas in 2020 it was 1.57. In Poland, the numbers have also decreased from 2.76 to 1.93. As criticism has decreased over time, we expect the watchdog role to become less prevalent in the second wave of data collection than in the first one.

H4: The decrease in engagement in public deliberation is connected to the decrease in civic role performance.

To learn more about the civic role and its changes, we test if and how citizens' engagement in deliberation is connected to the decrease in the civic role performance in Hungary and Poland. We use V-DEM's *engaged society* metric, which refers to deliberation as manifested in discussion, debate, and other public forums such as popular media. The scale runs from low (0) to high (5). If public deliberation is never or almost never allowed, this equates with 0, while 5 indicates that large numbers of non-elite groups as well as ordinary people tend to discuss major policies among themselves, in the media, in associations or neighborhoods, or in the streets, and grass-roots deliberation is common and unconstrained. Accordingly, low numbers demonstrate a lack of deliberation and engagement. In Poland, the V-DEM *engaged society* score was 3.77 in 2012, while in 2020 it was 3.02. In Hungary, scores also became lower, dropping from 2.23 to 1.4. We use V-DEM's *engaged society* metric to shed some light on civic journalism and its changing manifestations between the two data collection periods.

Sampling

Based on a general codebook for studying democracy-related journalistic roles in news content, we sampled the eight most important newspapers by country (see [Table 1](#)). Newspapers were selected based on several features: audience size and reach⁴, press type (up-market or popular press), and the political orientation of the media organizations (left- or right-leaning, liberal or conservative) and either pro- or anti-government stance.⁵ It should be noted that while all the examined media outlets' political leanings remained the same across time (2012-2020), in some cases the attitude towards the government has changed. Specifically, two Polish newspapers with strong political orientations, that is

Table 1. Sample.

| Country | N (summa) | N (2012) | N (2020) | Newspapers | |
|---------|--------------|-------------|-------------|---|---|
| | | | | Broadsheet | Tabloid |
| Hungary | 1151 | 663 | 488 | Magyar Nemzet (right leaning); Népszabadság/ Népszava (left leaning, liberal) | Blikk (centre); Bors (right leaning) |
| Poland | 1157 | 605 | 552 | Rzeczpospolita (right leaning); Gazeta Wyborcza (left leaning, liberal); Nasz Dziennik (right, ultra- conservative) | Fakt (centre) |

Gazeta Wyborcza (liberal) and Nasz Dziennik (ultra-conservative) redefined their stance towards the government in 2020. While in 2012 Gazeta Wyborcza attempted to keep its distance to any political party (Stępińska et al. 2016), in 2020 the newspaper has openly opposed the United Right government established in 2015 headed mainly by the Law and Justice party. In contrary, Nasz Dziennik – a nationwide, Catholic-nationalistic daily opposes any liberal or left-wing political party (including Platforma Obywatelska, one of the parties in power in 2012), while it openly supports right-wing political parties (including Law and Justice, the main governmental party in 2020).

The overall content analysis included data from 2012 and 2020. By using the constructed week method, a stratified-systematic sample was selected that we applied to both Hungary and Poland. The unit of analysis was the news item. Due to certain changes introduced to the sampling strategy in the second wave of the project (2020), we had to adapt the sample in order to make the data comparable. First, we used data from just one year from the first wave of the study (2012) instead of two years (2012 and 2013) to make the number of dates for collecting the data in both waves equal (two constructed weeks in 2012 and 2020). Second, in the second wave of the study, we collected data from print media, radio stations, TV stations, and online news media, while in the first wave, we collected content only from print newspapers. Hence, for the purpose of this comparative analysis, we use only the data collected from the newspapers from both periods. Third, in the second wave of the study, we did not select purely foreign news (we used only domestic news and domestic news with foreign participation) because in the first wave, only news stories published in sections associated with the national desk were coded. It is worth mentioning that in the first wave, only one topic per item was coded, while in the second wave, up to three topics per news item could be coded. Hence, we decided to include news items devoted to all topics from Wave 1 and Wave 2 items devoted to topics related to politics and elections (at least one out of three topics must be either Government/Legislatures or Campaigns/Elections/Politics). In total, our sample consisted of 2,308 news items: 1,151 in the Hungarian sample and 1,157 in the Polish sample.

Findings

Role Performance Across Political Orientations of the Media Outlets

Responding to the first research question regarding the political color of the media outlet, our correlation analysis shows that political leaning causes slightly statistically significant differences between journalistic role performances in sampled newspapers. This observation holds true in both countries. To learn more about the nuances of role performances, we discuss the findings role by role and country by country.

Interventionism Role

In the case of Hungary, statistically significant differences are discovered in the interventionism index scores among media outlets of different political orientations ($F(3,1147) = 25.389, p < 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.062$). As post-hoc tests demonstrate, left-leaning printed media perform the role of interventionism to a greater extent than right- and center-oriented newspapers. Newspapers' political orientation explains 6.2% of the variance in the

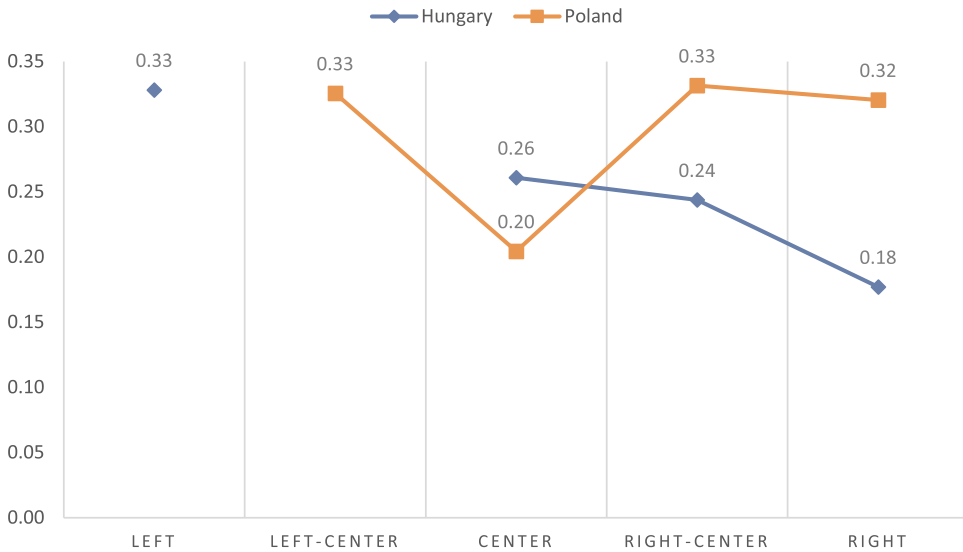


Figure 1. Interventionism Role Index (Means) in Hungary and Poland Across the Political Orientations of the Media Outlets.

dependent variable. In Poland, a similar effect is found ($F(3,1153) = 15.497$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.039$), but the political orientation variable explains 3.9% of the variance of the dependent variable. After conducting post-hoc tests, we assessed that journalists for centrist publications perform the role of interventionism to a (statistically significant) lesser extent than journalists of newspapers with different political leanings. Thus, in Poland, the data suggests that political centrism decreases the chances of the manifestation of journalistic voices, while in Hungary, interventionism is slightly more prevalent in media outlets leaning towards the political left (see Figure 1).

Watchdog Role

Differences in the average watchdog role index score of Hungarian journalists' performance are also statistically significant ($F(3,1147) = 23.124$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.057$). As Figure 2 displays, the presence of a watchdog is more likely in left- and right-leaning press than in publications with no explicit political preference. The relative absence of the watchdog role in publications associated with the center can be explained by the broadsheet/tabloid differences rather than the political leanings of the media outlet. This result might also be due to the fact that indicators of this role included criticism of both opposition elites as well as elites of the governing party. Journalists of the popular press, who are less politically explicit (center-oriented), pay minimal attention to holding elected officials and the elite in general accountable.

In Poland, the differences were also statistically significant ($F(3,1153) = 12.677$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.032$). The center-right press obtained a significantly lower average watchdog role index score in comparison to newspapers representing the right-wing and center-right political orientations. Significant differences were also noted between center-left and center-right newspapers, where the average watchdog index was lower than in right-wing newspapers. Media political orientation as a variable explains 5.7%

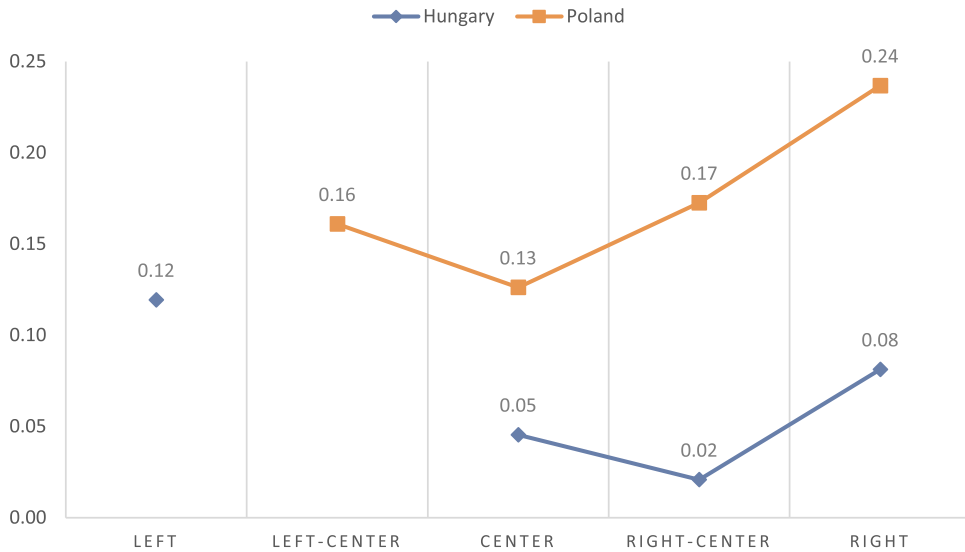


Figure 2. Watchdog Role Index (Means) in Hungary and Poland. (incl. Political Orientation of the Media Outlets).

of the variance of the dependent variable in the case of Hungary and 3.2% in the case of Poland.

Loyal Facilitator Role

In Hungary, the average index score of the role of a loyal facilitator varied significantly across the political orientations of the studied newspapers ($F(3,1147)=6.350$, $p<0.001$, $\eta^2=0.016$). Those with a left-wing orientation achieved the lowest average values of the role index in comparison to the centrist and right-wing press. These findings are not surprising since the conservative, right-wing populist Fidesz party ruled the country in both waves of data collection. Therefore, we are not able to test if journalists working in media outlets with a leftist-liberal orientation would become more loyal if socialist, liberal, or progressive parties governed Hungary. Similarly, in Poland, the center-oriented newspaper (which was a tabloid) was the least likely to play the role of loyal facilitator in comparison to media outlets representing different political orientations ($F(3,1153)=5.555$, $p<0.001$, $\eta^2=0.014$; see [Figure 3](#)). It should be noted that in both countries, the strength of the effect of the political orientation of the media was very weak (approximately 1.5% of the variance of the dependent variable was explained), which means that other factors not included in this analysis played a more significant role regarding this role.

Civic Role

Similar to the loyal facilitator role performance model, the elements of civic journalism are more important for the left-leaning press in Hungary than the centrist (tabloid) and right-leaning outlets in our sample ($F(3,1147)=4.326$, $p<0.001$, $\eta^2=0.001$). The findings indicate that the civic role is almost absent in most parts of Hungary's print journalism, but the civic role is slightly more pronounced

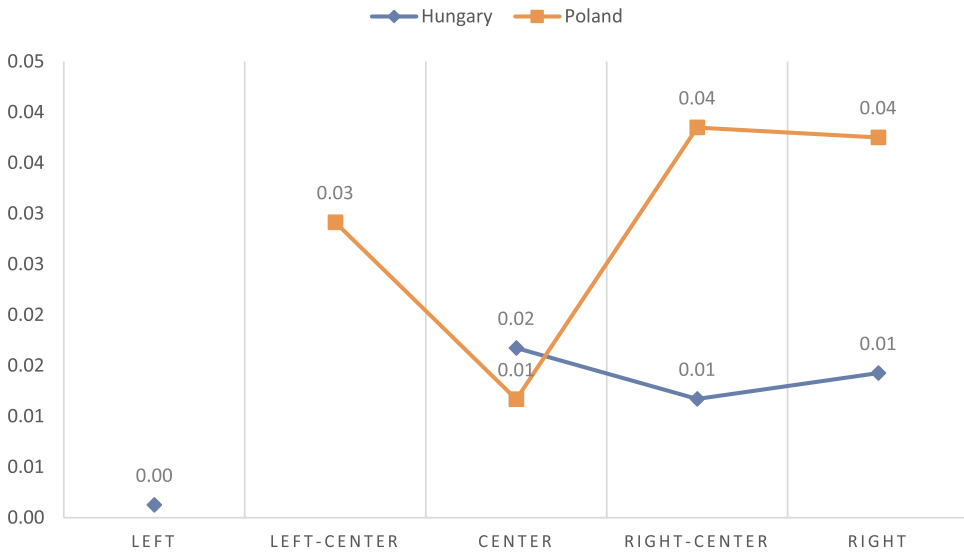


Figure 3. Loyal Facilitator Role Index (Means) in Hungary and Poland Across the Political Orientations of the Media Outlets.

in the left-leaning press. In Poland ($F(3,1153) = 17.215, p < 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.043$), the center-oriented press (tabloid) played the civic role significantly less often than left-wing and right-wing (quality) newspapers (see Figure 4). In the case of Polish media, political orientation explains a larger range of variance (4.3%) than in Hungary (1%).

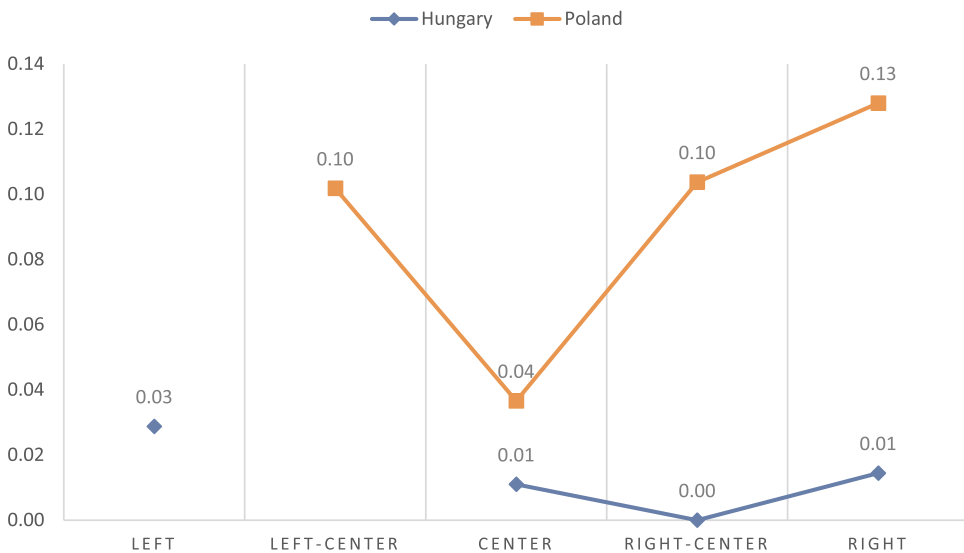


Figure 4. Civic Role Index (Means) in Hungary and Poland Across the Political Orientations of the Media Outlets.

Table 2. Summary of journalistic role performance indices 2012 and 2020, Hungary and Poland.

| | | Hungary | | | Poland | | |
|------------------------|-------------|------------------------|------------------------|-------------|------------------------|------------------------|-------------|
| Role index | | M ₂₀₁₂ (SD) | M ₂₀₂₀ (SD) | Difference | M ₂₀₁₂ (SD) | M ₂₀₂₀ (SD) | Difference |
| | | Watchdog | 0.07 (0.12) | 0.10 (0.11) | +0.03 | 0.13 (0.16) | 0.21 (0.21) |
| Loyal | 0.01 (0.05) | 0.01 (0.05) | 0.0 | 0.02 (0.08) | 0.04 (0.1) | +0.02 | |
| Civic | 0.02 (0.09) | 0.01 (0.05) | -0.01 | 0.06 (0.13) | 0.12 (0.17) | +0.06 | |
| Interventionist | 0.19 (0.23) | 0.31 (0.28) | +0.12 | 0.24 (0.26) | 0.36 (0.26) | +0.12 | |

Changes in Journalistic Role Performance Over Time

The second research question investigates the changes in journalistic role performance indicators between the two timeslots of the analysis in both countries.

Descriptive statistical analysis reveals that the interventionist and, to a lesser extent, the watchdog roles increased in both countries. According to the data (see Table 2), the Hungarian and Polish journalistic voice measurement indexes skyrocketed from 2012 to 2020. The correlation analysis revealed significant differences in the average role index scores over time in Hungary for interventionists, watchdogs, and civic roles. The average interventionist role index score increased from 2012 ($M = 0.19$; $SD = 0.23$) to 2020 ($M = 0.31$; $SD = 0.28$), ($t(919) = -7.318$; $p < 0.001$). The result indicates the moderate rise of watchdog role performance in news media content from 2012 ($M = .07$; $SD = 0.12$) to 2020 ($M = 0.10$; $SD = 0.11$), ($t(1149) = -4.03$; $p < 0.001$). In Poland, the average interventionist index score increased from 2012 ($M = 0.24$; $SD = 0.26$) to 2020 ($M = 0.36$; $SD = 0.25$), ($t(1155) = -8.292$; $p < 0.001$). Additionally, the watchdog index score increased from 2012 ($M = 0.13$; $SD = 0.16$) to 2020 ($M = 0.21$; $SD = 0.20$), ($t(1039) = -7.33$; $p < 0.001$).

Based on the data, it seems that the interventionist reporting style is a common feature of the journalistic culture in the sampled countries. Hungary and Poland also share the tendency toward rising journalistic engagement in the subjects of the news and the shrinking presence of detached professional roles. In both countries' leading newspapers, the cold and neutral reporting style has lessened over time. Whether right or wrong, interventionism and agenda-driven role performance in covering politics seem to be happening more and more. Concerning the watchdog model, its score generally increased from 2012 to 2020, although this increase was higher in Poland than in Hungary. Interestingly, the loyal facilitator role's performance appears peripheral; the numbers remained consistent (neither increasing nor decreasing) in the sampled countries' printed press outlets. This is especially surprising in the case of Hungary since, from 2012 to 2020, the Fidesz party consolidated its dominance as a governing force and exerted pressure on the media sector. Regardless, the loyal facilitator journalistic role neither decreased nor increased in Hungary's newspapers.

Hungary and Poland clearly differ from each other when it comes to the civic role. The civic role performance index score exhibits the diametrically opposite trend between the Hungarian and Polish sample. In the Hungarian sample: in 2012 it was higher ($M = .02$; $SD = 0.08$) than in 2020 ($M = 0.01$; $SD = 0.05$), ($t(1105) = 3.940$ $p < 0.001$). In Hungary, the civic orientation of journalistic performance was irrelevant in both 2012 and 2020, at least in the newspapers sampled. Conversely, in Poland, the time-bound data and results indicate moderate growth from 2012 to 2020 for the intersection of reporting and deliberation. The civic role index changed from 2012 ($M = 0.06$; $SD = 0.13$) to 2020 ($M = 0.12$; $SD = 0.16$), ($t(1052) = -6.539$ $p < 0.001$). Again, the Cohen d value indicates a weak relationship

between the roles played by journalists in Poland in 2012 and 2020: 0.18, and 0.15, respectively.

Although frequency changes are observable in journalistic role performance in Hungary from 2012 to 2020, the difference between the two waves of data collection is not immense regarding the watchdog (Cohen's $d = 0.12$) and civic roles (Cohen's $d = 0.07$). In relation to interventionism, the increase from 2012 to 2020 is more noticeable, but statistics confirm that the effect size is small (Cohen's $d = 0.25$).

To understand whether the changes in role performances can be related to certain context factors (RQ3), we test four hypotheses about media freedom, media bias, media criticism, and public engagement level. In the initial phase, we examined correlations between the values of selected contextual factors and indicators of specific journalistic roles, expressed on a quantitative scale for each country. Subsequently, the scrutinized dependent variables were converted into dichotomous variables, indicating, for each unit of analysis, the presence or absence of the journalist's role (see Table 3). The variable thus prepared was employed in logistic regression to ascertain the impact of independent variables on the likelihood of a specific role being performed by a journalist within the research sample.

H1 links the decreasing position in the World Press Freedom Index (RSF) in Hungary and Poland to the increase in the loyal facilitator role. Spearman's rho correlation analysis was employed to examine the relationship between these variables, revealing a weak positive correlation $\rho(1157) = 0.076$, $p = 0.010$ in case of Poland. While the correlation coefficient indicates a limited degree of association between the variables, the outcome attains statistical significance. In contrast, Hungary exhibited no discernible relationship ($\rho(1151) = -0.045$, $p = 0.126$). Consequently, it can be inferred that a moderately weak relationship exists between the analyzed variables for the data from Poland, signifying that as press freedom diminishes (manifested by an ascent in the ranking position), the propensity to assume the performance of the loyal facilitator role intensifies.

Logistic regression model was performed to examine whether media freedom predicts the performance of the loyal facilitator role. The overall model was found to be statistically significant (Chi-squared value (3) = 48.37, $p < .001$), with Nagelkerke R-squared value of .044. Logistic regression analysis revealed a statistically significant interaction between the country and media freedom factors ($B = 0.019$, $SE = 0.007$, $Wald = 7.186$, $df = 1$, $p =$

Table 3. Number of news item with and without indicators of the journalistic roles.

| Country | Role | Number of articles with indicators of a given role | Number of articles without indicators of a given role |
|--------------------|------------------------|--|---|
| Hungary (N = 1151) | Loyal Facilitator role | 67 | 1084 |
| | Interventionist role | 695 | 456 |
| | Watchdog role | 494 | 657 |
| | Civic role | 85 | 1066 |
| Poland (N = 1157) | Loyal Facilitator role | 157 | 1000 |
| | Interventionist role | 782 | 375 |
| | Watchdog role | 695 | 462 |
| | Civic role | 442 | 715 |

0.007). The $\text{Exp}(B)$ value for this interaction was 1.019, indicating that the influence of decreasing media freedom on the likelihood of assuming the role of a loyal facilitator increases by approximately 1.9%, but only in the case of Poland.

The second hypothesis (H2) examines whether media bias matters to the performance of the interventionist role. We assume that increasing media bias in Hungary and Poland is statistically and significantly connected to the rise of interventionist role performance. In Poland, a lower level of interventionism was observed in 2012 ($M = 0.24$; $SD = 0.26$) than in 2020 ($M = 0.36$; $SD = 0.26$), while the media bias score decreased from 3.74 in 2012 to 2.48 in 2020. The same trend appears for Hungary. Specifically, the index of interventionist role was lower in the first wave of research ($M = 0.19$; $SD = 0.23$), and decreased in the second wave of research ($M = 0.31$; $SD = 0.28$), while the media bias indicator decreased from 2.92 to 2.01, respectively. Spearman's rho correlation analysis showed statistically significant negative relationships between the intervention role and media bias in both Hungary ($\rho(1151) = -0.207$, $p < 0.001$) and Poland ($\rho(1157) = -0.246$, $p < 0.001$). The results suggest that in both countries, as the value of journalists' intervention role increased, the value of media bias decreased (referring to the method of measuring this variable, the media became more biased).

The initial stage of logistic regression analysis demonstrated the statistical significance of the constructed model ($\chi^2 = 112.154$, $df = 3$, $p < 0.001$). The evaluation of the Nagelkerke R-squared statistic indicates the model's appropriateness to the data, despite a relatively modest R-squared value (Nagelkerke's $R^2 = 0.065$). Logistic regression analysis further revealed a noteworthy influence of the media bias on the manifestation of the intervention role ($\chi^2 = 34.244$, $df = 1$, $p < 0.001$). The regression coefficient ($B = -0.810$) signifies a negative association between media bias and the probability of assuming an intervention role. The interpretation of $\text{Exp}(B)$ (0.445) suggests that with each unitary alteration in media bias the likelihood of engaging in an intervention role diminishes by approximately 55.5% in both countries. The standard error ($SE = 0.138$) attests to the precision of the coefficient estimation. The Wald statistic ($Wald = 34.244$) substantiates the statistical significance of this relationship at the $p < 0.001$ significance level. Therefore, we argue that the less objective the media are, the less detached journalism is. Plausibly, involved, politically committed, and engaged journalism flourishes in public communication environments, that are incrementally turning into a partisan and politicized media system.

The third hypothesis (H3) seeks to explain changes in watchdog role performance that may be related to the media criticism indicator. We assume that the increase in media criticism is connected to the rise of the watchdog role in both countries and not the other way around. Since the scale runs from low (0: there is no media outlet that would routinely criticize authorities) to high (3: all major media outlets criticize the government at least occasionally), lower numbers demonstrate diminishing criticism in news media outlets.

The correlation analysis revealed a statistically significant and moderately strong negative correlation in Hungary ($\rho(1151) = -0.229$, $p < 0.001$) and in Poland ($\rho(1157) = -0.247$, $p < 0.001$) between the watchdog role performed by journalists and the assessment of media criticality. The negative correlation means that as the value of the watchdog role played by journalists increases, the assessment of media criticality decreases.

The performed logistic regression analysis indicated that within the applied model ($\chi^2 = 150.619$, $df = 3$, $p < 0.001$; Nagelkerke's $R^2 = 0.084$), the variable representing media criticality ratings holds statistical significance with a negative regression coefficient. This

negative coefficient ($B = -1.153$) suggests that an escalation in media criticality ratings significantly diminishes the likelihood of journalists' performance of assuming the watchdog role in both countries. The standard error ($SE = 0.168$) of the regression coefficient is relatively low, confirming the precision of the estimate. The Wald statistic ($Wald = 47.337$, $df = 1$, $p < 0.001$) further underscores the statistical significance of this relationship.

Yet again, we noticed an interesting contradiction. The V-DEM metrics suggest that the media are becoming less and less critical of the governments in both countries. However, we found evidence for the moderate emergence of watchdog roles, especially in Poland. One possible explanation is that journalists routinely scrutinize elite groups other than elected officials at the national level. Given the tensions between the representatives of the European Union and national governments in both countries, it would not be surprising that the watchdog orientation, at least partly, concerns the supranational elites' wrongdoings. The other explanation is—again—the political orientation of the media outlet and the definition of the political elite. Since this term is not limited to the government but also to political parties represented in legislative bodies (and, as such, also in power), journalists may closely monitor political actors from a broad ideological spectrum, including the actual opposition to the ruling party.

The fourth hypothesis (H4) investigates whether the decrease in engagement in public deliberation is connected to the decrease in the civic role performance. A statistically significant relationship between the civic role and deliberation was obtained in both countries, but the direction of this relationship differs between Hungary ($\rho(1151) = 0.124$, $p < 0.001$) and Poland ($\rho(1157) = -0.177$, $p < 0.001$). Taking into account the interaction between the country and engagement society variables, the analysis revealed a statistically significant interaction effect of both variables on the likelihood of journalists fulfilling a civic role. The negative regression coefficient suggests that the influence of public involvement on this role varies across countries, and is associated with a decreased probability of journalists fulfilling a civic role in Hungary compared to Poland ($B = -2.45$, $SE = 0.368$, $Wald = 44.421$, $df = 1$, $p < 0.001$, $\text{Exp}(B) = 0.086$).⁶

Hungary illustrates that the decline of public deliberation correlates with the shrinking importance of the civic role in journalistic performance. When news producers do not write in a way that facilitates public engagement, conversation, and debate on political and social issues, it does not create a favorable communication environment for vivid deliberations and an overall engaged society.

Poland, however, tells a different story. Statistics demonstrate a negative relationship between the professional role variable and the contextual factor. In Poland, the average civic role index increased in 2020 ($M = 0.12$; $SD = 0.17$), compared to 2012 ($M = 0.06$; $SD = 0.13$), but the level of engagement in public deliberation fell from 3.77 to 3.02 in the same period. In elite media, such as broadsheet papers, civic orientation increasingly mattered in news coverage, but it did not contribute to the elevation of the general engagement level of the society. Reporting about citizens' activities is politically biased and, as such, seems distant from the majority of the people.

Conclusions

This paper comparatively investigated the variation of journalistic role performances in highly politicized media systems. We selected Poland and Hungary as illustrative cases

of two Central and Eastern European countries with democratic erosion, political polarization, and media systems with a high level of political parallelism. Indeed, Hungary and Poland are countries where anti-pluralist parties are driving autocratization (V-DEM 2022, 23). By collecting data from two waves of the *Journalistic Role Performance* project, we aimed to identify whether the fall of liberal democracy and increasing political pressure on the media over time have been accompanied by the modification of journalistic roles' dimensions.

Since both media systems share a long tradition of high levels of political parallelism, we started our analysis by considering the political leanings of print newspapers. First, we examined the performance of selected roles related directly to democracy, namely the watchdog role, the civic role, and the interventionist role. Our findings confirmed previous observations (Stępińska et al. 2016) that popular/tabloid media outlets with a strong market orientation (broad target audience) and center orientation are less focused on monitoring political actors in power and providing comments and interpretation than quality newspapers thus targeting readers with clear political preferences. Polish center-oriented tabloid newspapers were also less eager to address audience members as citizens in need of a voice and information related to civic participation. In Hungary, all three aforementioned roles were performed more frequently by a left-wing-oriented (oppositional to government) quality press than either right-leaning or center-oriented media.

At the same time, we found that the role of loyal facilitator was performed mostly by newspapers with right-wing leanings in Poland, while in Hungary the center-oriented print press scored the highest in this role. Newspapers' tendency to act as loyal spokespersons for those in power, conveying a positive image of them and supporting official policies, might be explained in both cases by political factors including the ideological preferences of journalists working in the particular media outlet (Poland) or the political leanings of the media owner (Hungary).

In the second stage of our study, we examined changes in journalistic role performance across time and—more importantly—political circumstances. Our findings indicate that, despite experiencing similar changes in political context over the last few years, journalists in Poland and Hungary differ in their performance of professional roles. The presence of watchdog role performance indicators slightly increases in both countries, but the growth is noticeably higher in Poland. In Hungary, civic role performance was low in 2012 and remained nearly unchanged, while Poland shows a different trajectory: civic journalism became more prevalent in 2020 than it was in 2012.

As for the loyal facilitator role, it appears not to have been a common practice in Hungary's newspapers in either 2012 or in 2020. In contrast, in Poland journalism became slightly more inclined toward the loyal facilitator model than it was in the first wave of the project. However, the media coverage in favor of political actors in power aligns with the political orientation of the media outlets. Specifically, in 2020 the conservative newspaper *Nasz Dziennik* openly supported the government of right-wing political parties, while in 2012 it was an "oppositional press" criticizing previous governments that represented other ideological stances.

The relatively low presence of loyal facilitator role performance in our sample indicates the need to further measure the manifestation of collaboration between journalists and the governing elite in news media content. This study suggests that such support is

not necessarily explicit; rather, it is implicitly presented by priming and framing techniques, which are mostly registered under the category of journalistic interventionism. Another possible way of demonstrating loyalty to the political elite would be the selection of sources: journalists may show their loyalty to the elite when they decide whom they interview, refer to, or cite. We suspect that professional ideas, political leanings, and elite orientation matter in choosing information sources and keeping certain voices out of the news cycle.

Combined with findings on the increase in the watchdog role, our study supports previous observations that political parallelism might be manifested mainly in criticism of the opposing party rather than in supportive coverage of the party with which a publication is aligned (Baumgartner and Bonafont 2015). We invite the academic community to dig deeper into the sourcing strategies of news content to learn more about the varieties of loyal facilitator journalistic roles.

Lastly, data on civic role can be interpreted conversely as well. The low and decreasing attention paid to citizens' actions in Hungary clearly supports the elite-centrism of news media journalism.

While there are a few dissimilarities, there is a trend in the data indicating that interventionism is skyrocketing in both countries. Our results indicate that subjectivity, expressivity, and interpretative and opinionated journalism that propagates certain views of how readers should make sense of politics have been on the rise since 2012. This finding supports the thesis that news media journalists in Central Europe tend to consider their profession as a mission to educate and enlighten the audience via mass media culture (Bajomi-Lázár 2017; Jakubowicz 1992). Overall, our analyses reveal that the fall of liberal and deliberative democracy is not necessarily accompanied by the absolute similarities of journalistic roles in different countries. H1, linking a decreasing position in the World Press Freedom Index with an increase in the loyal facilitator role, was only partly confirmed. H2, examining whether media bias matters to interventionism, was positively confirmed for both countries, as was H3, which assumed that the increase in media criticism is connected to the rise of the watchdog role's performance in both countries and vice versa. H4, connecting the decrease in civic role with the decrease in engagement in public deliberation, was confirmed for Hungary but not for Poland.

We interpret these observations as evidence that every nation has its own path of journalistic role performance development. While Hungary is a case that combines a high level of interventionism, a less relevant but still relevant watchdog role, and an extremely low level of loyal and civic role performance, Poland represents a journalistic culture with a clear and frequent presence of a journalistic voice in the news media, a critical approach to (all) political elites, and a strong sense of a "public mission" among journalists.

The findings of this study have certain limitations. First of all, only print newspapers were analyzed for both waves of the JRP project. We used a content analysis of this type of media for the purpose of our comparative longitudinal study. Although traditional printed press publications represent a specific segment of the media market, they fit well into the design of the study on media outlets with a strong political leaning and a well-recognized target audience. Furthermore, the comparative study on the role performance across platforms and countries (including Hungary and Poland) revealed that media platform has a significant influence on the performance of the interventionist role, the information role, and the civic role. In contrast, while the performance of the watchdog and

loyal role is higher in both print and television news than in online and radio, those differences are not statistically significant when controlling for country and news outlet levels (Mellado et al. 2023). Hence, some of our findings may serve as indicators of general tendencies, while others reflect only on a print media journalism. In particular, in 2020 online news performance of the loyal role did not substantially differ from print and radio news in Hungary, while it was significantly lower in the online media than on other platforms in Poland (with radio and print press scoring highest on this role) (Mellado et al. 2023).

Second, some of the indicators are not necessarily aligned with the journalistic practices of the two examined countries. Mainly in the case of the loyal-facilitator role, we suspect that the political support of the newspapers manifests in other ways, like selection of sources, selection of topics, avoiding critical questions, spoken or unspoken editorial guidelines, and so on, which is difficult to capture with the JRP project's framework. Lastly, a comparison between the two countries does not provide a full picture of journalism, but the cases of Poland and Hungary nonetheless shed light on the importance of journalistic voices in news media production in countries where there is a high level of elite hostility and polarization.

A study of these two countries reveals that a tendency towards political parallelism, combined with political and economic pressure (instrumentalization of the media or "a colonization of the media," as Bajomi-Lázár [2014] calls it), leads to political bias in the media (Dragomir 2018; Ruschmann 2006) and eclipses democracy-related journalistic roles.

Notes

1. The interventionist role's indicators include the journalist's point of view, interpretation, call for action, qualifying adjectives, and the use of first person.
2. The watchdog role's indicators included in the index role were as following: information on judicial or administrative processes, doubting by journalist, doubting by other (e.g., journalist cites the doubt of the third communicator), criticism by journalist, criticism by other (e.g., journalist cites the critical statements made by other person), uncovering by journalist, uncovering by other, external investigation, and investigative journalism. The loyal-facilitator role towards political elites included: defense/support of activities, defend/support for policies, and positive image of the elite.
3. The civic role manifests in covering citizens reactions, questions, demand, or activities, enhancing citizens' credibility, focusing on local and community impact, educating on duties and rights, providing contextual background information, and supporting citizens' activities.
4. As reported in Poland by the Association of Print Press Circulation Control (2012) and Polish Readership Report (2020), with exception of *Nasz Dziennik*, in Hungary as reported by MATESZ Audit 2012/1 (see: <https://kreativ.hu/cikk/nem-a-bulvar-negyedeve-volt>) and 2020/1 (see: <https://matesz.hu/hirek/2020-i-negyedeves-print-gyorsjelent-es-adatak>)
5. Political leanings of media outlets were determined based on previous studies. For Poland see (Dobek-Ostrowska 2011; Klepka 2011; for Hungary see: Szabó and Kiss 2012; Mérték 2016)
6. The overall model was found to be statistically significant (Chi-squared value (3) = 402.683, $p < .001$), with Nagelkerke R-squared value of .243.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

ORCID

Agnieszka Stępińska  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-7361-2986>

Gabriella Szabó  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-5336-0179>

Kinga Adamczewska  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-0755-0788>

References

- Bajomi-Lázár, P. 2014. *Party Colonisation of the Media in Central and Eastern Europe*. Budapest: Central European University Press.
- Bajomi-Lázár, P., ed. 2017. *Media in Third-Wave Democracies Southern and Central/Eastern Europe in a Comparative Perspective*. Budapest: L'Harmattan.
- Bajomi-Lázár, P., and K. Horváth. 2023. "Two Journalistic Cultures in One Country The Case of Hungary in the Light of Journalists' Discourses on Fake News." *Journalism Practice* 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2023.2223173>.
- Balčytienė, A., P. Bajomi-Lázár, V. Štětka, and M. Sükösd. 2015. "Oligarchization, de-Westernization, and Vulnerability: Media between Democracy and Authoritarianism in Central and Eastern Europe A Roundtable Discussion." *Tidsskrift For Medier Erkendelse Og Formidling/Journal of Media Cognition and Communication* 3 (1): 119–141.
- Baumgartner, F. R., and L. C. Bonafont. 2015. "All News is Bad News: Newspaper Coverage of Political Parties in Spain." *Political Communication* 32 (2): 268–291.
- Bayer, J. 2013. "Emerging Anti—Pluralism in New Democracies: —the Case of Hungary." *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Politikwissenschaft* 45:95–110.
- Baylis, T. A. 2012. "Elite Consensus and Political Polarization: Cases from Central Europe." *Historical Social Research/Historische Sozialforschung* 37 (1): 90–106.
- Blokker, P. 2013. *New Democracies in Crisis? A Comparative Constitutional Study of the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Blumler, J. G., and M. Gurevitch. 1995. *The Crisis of Public Communication*. London: Routledge.
- Blumler, J. G., J. M. McLeod, and K. E. Rosengren, eds. 1992. *Comparatively Speaking: Communication and Culture Across Space and Time*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Brüggemann, M., S. Engesser, F. Büchel, E. Humprecht, and L. Castro. 2014. "Hallin and Mancini Revisited: Four Empirical Types of Western Media Systems." *Journal of Communication* 64 (6): 1037–1065. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcom.12127>.
- Carpentier, N., P. Dahlgren, and F. Pasquali. 2013. "Waves of Media Democratization: A Brief History of Contemporary Participatory Practices in the Media Sphere." *Convergence: The International Journal of Research Into New Media Technologies* 19 (3): 287–294. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354856513486529>.
- de Albuquerque, A. 2013. "Media/Politics Connections: Beyond Political Parallelism." *Media, Culture & Society* 35 (6): 742–758. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443713491302>.
- Dobek-Ostrowska, B. 2011. *Polski system medialny na rozdrożu. Media w polityce, polityka w mediach* (Polish media system at the crossroads. Media in politics, politics in media). Wrocław: Wrocław University Press.
- Dobek-Ostrowska, B. 2015. "25 Years After Communism: Four Models of Media and Politics in Central and Eastern Europe." In *Democracy and Media in Central and Eastern Europe 25 Years On*, edited by B. Dobek – Ostrowska and M. Głowacki, 11–44. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.
- Dobek-Ostrowska, B., and M. Głowacki, eds. 2015. *Democracy and media in Central and Eastern Europe 25 Years On*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.
- Donsbach, W. 1995. "Lapdogs, Watchdogs, and Junkyard Dogs." *Media Studies Journal* 9:17–30.
- Donsbach, W. 2014. "Journalism as the new Knowledge Profession and Consequences for Journalism Education." *Journalism* 15 (6): 661–677. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884913491347>.
- Donsbach, W., and T. E. Patterson. 2004. "Political News Journalists: Partisanship, Professionalism, and Political Roles in Five Countries." In *Comparing Political Communication: Theories, Cases, and Challenges*, edited by F. Esser and B. Pfetsch, 251–270. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Dragomir, M. 2018. "Control the Money, Control the Media: How Government Uses Funding to Keep Media in Line." *Journalism* 19 (8): 1131–1148. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884917724621>.
- Eide, M., and G. Knight. 1999. "Public/Private Service: Service Journalism and the Problems of Everyday Life." *European Journal of Communication* 14 (4): 525–547.
- Esser, F., and B. Pfetsch. 2004. *Comparing Political Communication: Theories, Cases, and Challenges*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Eurobarometer. 2021. "Media use in the European Union Report." <https://op.europa.eu/pl/publication-detail/-/publication/d2dbcf78-11e0-11ec-b4fe-01aa75ed71a1>.
- Galston, W. 2018. *Anti-pluralism: The Populist Threat to Liberal Democracy*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Gross, P. 2002. *Entangles Evolutions. Media and Democratization in Eastern Europe*. Washington: Woodrow Wilson Center Press.
- Hallin, D. C., and P. Mancini. 2004. *Comparing Media Systems: Three Models of Media and Politics*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Hanitzsch, T. 2007. "Deconstructing Journalism Culture: Toward a Universal Theory." *Communication Theory* 17:367–385. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2885.2007.00303.x>.
- Hanitzsch, T. 2011. "Populist Disseminators, Detached Watchdogs, Critical Change Agents, and Opportunist Facilitators: Professional Milieus, the Journalistic Field, and Autonomy in 18 Countries." *International Communication Gazette* 73 (6): 477–494. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1748048511412279>.
- Hanitzsch, T., and T. Vos. 2018. "Journalism Beyond Democracy: A new Look Into Journalistic Roles in Political and Everyday Life." *Journalism* 19 (2): 146–164. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884916673386>.
- Hrvatín, B. S., and B. Petkovic. 2016. "State-media Financial Relations in the Countries of South East Europe: Financial Engineering for State and Media Capture." *SEE Media Observatory*. <https://mediaobservatory.net/sites/default/files/Financial%20Engineering%20for%20State%20and%20Media%20Capture-10%20Apr.pdf>.
- Instytut Monitorowania Mediów. 2023. "Najbardziej opiniotwórcze media (The most cited media)." https://www.imm.com.pl/category/baza_wiedzy/raporty-imm/najbardziej-opiniotworcze-media/.
- Jakubowicz, K. 1992. "From Party Propaganda to Corporate Speech? Polish Journalism in Search of a New Identity." *Journal of Communication* 42 (3): 64–73. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1992.tb00798.x>.
- Jakubowicz, K. 2007. *Rude Awakening. Social and Media Change in Central and Eastern Europe*. Cresskill, New Jersey: Hampton Press.
- Jebriil, N., V. Stetka, and M. Loveless. 2013. *Media and Democratization*. Oxford: Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism.
- Klepka, R. 2011. *Polityka w krzywym zwierciadle mediów. Stronniczość polityczna mediów w relacjonowaniu parlamentarnych kampanii wyborczych w 2015 i 2019 roku*. Kraków: Pedagogical University of Krakow Press.
- Körösényi, A. 2013. "Political Polarization and its Consequences on Democratic Accountability." *Corvinus Journal of Sociology and Social Policy* 4 (2): 3–30. <https://doi.org/10.14267/cjssp.2013.02.01>.
- Kovács, I., G. Polyák, and Á. Urbán. 2021. "Media Landscape After a Long Storm: The Hungarian Media Politics Since 2010." Accessed November 2, 2023. <https://mertek.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/MertekFuzetek25.pdf>.
- Márquez-Ramírez, M., C. Mellado, M. L. Humanes, A. Amado, D. Beck, S. Davydov, J. Mick, et al. 2020. "Detached or Interventionist? Comparing the Performance of Watchdog Journalism in Transitional, Advanced, and Non-Democratic Countries." *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 25 (1): 53–75.
- Mellado, C. 2015. "Professional Roles in News Content." *Journalism Studies* 16 (4): 596–614. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2014.922276>.
- Mellado, C., ed. 2020. *Beyond Journalistic Norms: Role Performance and News in Comparative Perspective*. New York, NY: Routledge.

- Mellado, C., N. Blanchett, A. Stępińska, C. Mothes, S. Lecheler, D. Blanco-Herrero, Y.-N. Katherine Chen, et al. 2023. "Does News Platform Matter? Comparing Online Journalistic Role Performance to Newspaper, Radio, and Television." *Digital Journalism*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2023.2191332>.
- Mellado, C., L. Hellmueller, and W. Donsbach, eds. 2017. *Journalistic Role Performance: Methodological Approaches to the Study of Journalistic Role Performance*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Mellado, C., and C. Lagos. 2013. "Redefining Comparative Analyses of Media Systems from the Perspective of new Democracies." *Communication & Society* 26 (4): 1–24. <https://doi.org/10.15581/003.26.36058>.
- Meyen, M. 2018. "Journalists' Autonomy Around the Globe: A Typology of 46 Media Systems." *Global Media Journal, German Edition* 8 (1): 1–23.
- Mérték Médiaelemző Műhely. 2016. "A politikai tájékozódás forrásai Magyarországon. A médiastruktúra átalakulása előtti és az utána következő állapot (Sources of political information in Hungary. Before and after the transformation of the media structure) by Mérték Médiaelemző Műhely." Accessed November 2, 2023. <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/budapest/13063.pdf>
- Peruško, Z., D. Vozab, and A. Čuvalo. 2013. "Audience as a Sources of Agency in Media System: Post-Socialist Europe in Comparative Perspective." *Mediální Studia* 2: 137–154.
- Price, M. E., B. Rozumilowicz, and S. G. Verhulst, eds. 2002. *Media Reform. Democratizing the Media, Democratizing the State*. London: Routledge.
- Ruschmann, P. 2006. *Media Bias*. Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers.
- Selva, M. 2020. *Fighting Words: Journalism Under Assault in Central and Eastern Europe*. Oxford: Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism.
- Seymour-Ure, C. 1974. *The Political Impact of Mass Media*. London: Constable/Sage.
- Siebert, F. S., T. Petterson, and W. Schramm. 1956. *Four Theories of the Press: The Authoritarian, Libertarian, Social Responsibility, and Soviet Communist Concepts of What the Press Should be and do*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Splichal, S. 1994. *Media Beyond Socialism: Theory and Practice in East-Central Europe*. Boulder: Westview Press.
- Stępińska, A., E. Jurga-Wosik, K. Adamczewska, B. Secler, and D. Narożna. 2016. "Journalistic Role Performance in Poland." *Central European Political Studies* 2: 37–51.
- Stępińska, A., G. Szabó, M. Márquez-Ramírez, S. Pasti, and N. Panagiotou. 2021. "Journalistic Role Performance: A Societal-Level Approach." In *Beyond Journalistic Norms*, edited by C. Mellado, 205–224. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Štětka, V. 2014. "The Watchdogs That Only Bark? Media and Political Accountability in Central and Eastern Europe." In *Journalism That Matters: Views from Central and Eastern Europe*, edited by M. Glowacki, E. Lauk, and A. Balcytiene, 35–60. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.
- Szabó, G., and B. Kiss. 2012. "Trends in Political Communication in Hungary: A Postcommunists Experience Twenty Years After the Fall of Dictatorship." *International Journal of Press/Politics* 17 (4): 480–496.
- Tworzecki, H., and H. A. Semetko. 2012. "Media Use and Political Engagement in Three New Democracies: Malaise versus Mobilization in the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland." *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 17 (4): 407–432. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1940161212452450>.
- V-DEM. 2022. "Democracy Report 2022. Autocratization Changing Nature? V-DEM Institute." https://v-dem.net/documents/19/dr_2022_ipyOpLP.pdf.
- Voltmer, K. 2008. "Comparing Media Systems in New Democracies: East Meets South Meets West." *Central European Journal of Communication* 1 (1): 23–40.
- Waisbord, S. 2013. *Reinventing Professionalism: Journalism and News in Global Perspective*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Wirtualne Media. 2016. "Dwa razy mniej Polaków ufa mediom publicznym niż prywatnym. „To skutek dużych rozsad dziennikarskich i stronniczości." (Half as much of Poles trusts public media than private media). "This is due to huge changes and media bias". <https://www.wirtualnemedi.pl/artikul/dwa-razy-mniej-polakow-ufa-mediom-publicznym-niz-prywatnym-to-skutek-duzych-rozrad-dziennikarskich-i-stronniczosci>.