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Editorial: The Reflection on the Constitution of the Republic of Poland 1997 from the Political Science Perspective

Although constitution is regarded as a legal act that has the highest position in the hierarchy of legal acts in the particular state, regulating the basic issues concerning its functions, such as the principles of the constitutional-legal system, rights, freedoms and obligations of the individual and the system of governance, it has been a subject of interest for not only legal but also political scientists. Not without a reason during the twenty-year period between the World Wars the branch of law concerning the analysis of the constitutional rules was called “political law.” Furthermore, the American classification of the research areas in the political sciences contains the public law, including constitutional law. Such approach seems to be clearly right because legal rules, especially rules of a constitution, strongly influence the broadly considered political life.

What exactly is the subject of political science research concerning constitution? The simplest answer would be that legal scientists deal with the interpretation of the constitutional rules, therefore their considerations have mainly abstractive character, whilst political scientists are interested in the constitutional practice, i.e. how the rules work in reality. However, such statement would be an oversimplification and would not present the whole scope of the political research on constitution. At first, it should be noted that constitutions very often use the terms which have been the subject of detailed research

by political scientists, such as “democracy (democratic state),” “sovereignty (of the nation, of the state),” “power (division of power, sorts of power)” or “social justice.” The political science research on constitution could focus on the comparison of how such terms are understood in political sciences and how they are interpreted by legal scientists whose research concerns a constitutionalism. The research could also follow another directions, for example: what views concerning constitution and the issues it regulates are presented by political doctrines and their prominent representatives, which political doctrine is a source of the particular constitutional provisions, what views concerning the constitutional issues and the present constitutional provisions are presented by different political parties and their representatives, what motivations had the persons who participated in the creation of constitution and its particular rules, or what are the views of the society concerning the particular constitutional issues.

The recent 20th anniversary of adoption of the Constitution of the Republic of Poland inspires the political science community to reflection on the constitutional issues. This issue of “Horizons of Politics” publishes articles presenting research approach corresponding with the above scope of political science research on the constitution. The articles should be regarded not only as a serious scientific reflection on the constitutional issues but also as a voice in the pending public discussion concerning the functioning of the Constitution of the Republic of Poland from 1997 in the Polish political system.

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theme issue editor