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Minority Governments and Coalition Management

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Introduction: What Are Minority Governments, and Why Do They Matter?

Despite decades of scholarship on parliamentary coalition bargaining, minority governments remain a puzzle. Minority governments are cabinets formed in parliamentary systems by one or several parties that jointly do not control a majority of seats in the national legislature. More specifically, their members in the parliamentary chamber(s) to which the cabinet is responsible do not constitute a voting coalition large enough to prevent a motion of no confidence to pass. And it seems unlikely that a government thus lacking a stable majority in parliament could govern with the kind of effectiveness that democracy presumably requires. After all, democracy means not only that the holders of high political office somehow emerge with popular support and remain accountable to the voters, but also that they actually **govern**. Minority governments seem seriously ill equipped for this purpose. Not only do they lack support among the members of the legislature (and therefore presumably often also among the voters), but in addition they also seem to lack the means to have their policy proposals enacted by the same legislators under the majority decision rules that typically prevail in such bodies.

Traditional views of minority governments have therefore ranged from skeptical to dire. These views were once reasonable enough, based on historical experience in several large European countries and the state of political science scholarship. As we shall see, however, a growing literature emerged from the 1970s and 1980s on that attempted to explain minority governments as “normal” cabinet solutions and identify the conditions that favored their emergence. The empirical literature that has also blossomed over these years shows that minority governments continue to be surprisingly common across a broad range of parliamentary democracies (and under presidential systems as well, although that is beyond the scope of our present investigation). Altogether, this scholarship has normalized minority governments in the eyes of most beholders (at least academic ones). Yet, the most puzzling aspect of minority governments is still not well understood. That aspect is the question of governance. How do minority governments actually govern? How do they pass the legislation they sponsor? How do they keep their legislative coalitions together when they have neither portfolios and co-partisanship to rely on? How do they achieve whatever legislative effectiveness they need and whatever successes they want to point to in their confrontation with the voters?

In this paper, we shall address what we thus believe is the least adequately understood feature of minority governments. But before we can do so, we shall first explore the actual incidence of minority governments across a broad range of parliamentary democracies. As in most of the literature, our focus will be on national governments. We shall review existing scholarship on the incidence and types of minority governments. We shall then examine an aspect of minority governments that has been much less intensively explored, namely their governance mechanisms and what we shall refer to as their coalition management devices. We argue that minority governments, and especially those that include two or more parties in the executive coalition, face coalition management challenges that surpass those of most other governments in parliamentary democracies. At the same time, however, research on parliamentary governance has identified an increasing number of vehicles by which even minority governments can secure some measure of security in

office and legislative success. Although we see little reason to celebrate minority governments per se, we believe that a fuller understanding of their governance mechanisms will further contribute to their “normalization.”

The Puzzle of Minority Government

Minority governments puzzle us because they seem incompatible with the very foundational principles of parliamentary democracy, most specifically the rule that the executive is selected from and responsible to the majority in the national legislature. Because the opposition parties by definition collectively constitute a parliamentary majority, minority governments have traditionally been thought of as less stable, since they can be removed at any time through a vote of no confidence. As Gallagher, Laver, and Mair (2011:425) put it: “At first sight the idea of a minority government, made up of parties whose members do not themselves control a majority of seats in parliament, seems at best a paradox and at worst downright undemocratic.” The main reason such governments constitute a paradox, of course, is that by definition the opposition controls enough seats in parliament that it should be able to prevent such governments from coming into power.

Yet, the greatest and most important puzzle is not why minority governments come to power, since after all that could happen by accident and since it need not have a real consequences if the undersized government is swiftly removed from office. Rather, the most puzzling and consequential question is why and how minority government manage to maintain themselves in power and often actually pass important legislation. After all, the opposition should be in a position to bring down the incumbents at virtually any time through a no-confidence motion.

The first cue to this puzzle is that removing an incumbent government, however weak, requires motive as well as opportunity. Motive here simply means that a majority of legislators must expect larger gains from the defeat of the government than they could expect to reap from its continued existence. The existence of motive may at first glance seem obvious. Parties are in the business of contesting elections because they want to gain office and the perquisites thereof. These goods could of course come in a variety of forms valued by politicians, including most notably office spoils and policy influence (Strøm 1990). Yet, the attractions of office may be less than compelling for coalitions of parties that do not expect that they can find a way to use the advantages of office to their mutual advantage.

Even when motive exists, political institutions may conspire to deprive the opposition of the opportunity to defeat an incumbent government however feeble it may look. Opportunity refers here to the existence of a majority block of legislators with no partisan allegiance to the incumbent government. Under Westminster parliamentarism with a majority party, the opportunity is hardly ever there, which is the main reason no British government has been defeated in a confidence vote since James Callaghan in 1979. And even if overt opportunities exist, as they plainly often do in many parliamentary democracies with PR elections and

multiparty systems, minority governments can find a variety of ways to survive, some of which are well known and some of which are not always obvious. In this paper, we shall examine some strategies minority governments may thus employ. The critical point is that minority governments, like other executives, benefit in large part from having agenda control, and that this agenda control entails access to a variety of governance mechanisms, some of which are constitutionally entrenched, and others of which are purely “private” and at the discretion of the party leaders. The story of the survival of minority governments is therefore in large part a story of creative political management and, in Riker’s (1986) terms, heresthetics (the art of political manipulation).

Where and When Do Minority Governments Form?

Minority governments may appear puzzling at first glance, yet they are surprisingly common across a wide range of parliamentary democracies. Most analyses to date have focused on their frequency in Western Europe. Table 1 thus shows the incidence of minority cabinets in seventeen Western European democracies from 1945 to 1999. In sum, minority governments comprise over a third (34.7 percent) of all cabinets in this sample (Mitchell and Nyblade 2008). In fact, minority cabinets are the modal outcome: they occur more frequently than one-party majorities, minimum winning coalitions (MWC), or surplus majorities. Minority governments have been especially common in the Nordic countries of Denmark (87.1 percent), Sweden (73.1 percent), and Norway (65.4 percent), where they have come to represent something of a norm. It is thus perhaps unsurprising that the Nordic cases have had a large influence on the development of theories explaining the formation of minority governments, from Luebbert’s (1986) analysis of the role of corporatism in these “consensual democracies” to Strøm’s (1990) focus on oppositional influence and electoral competitiveness. On the other end of the spectrum from the Scandinavian countries are countries such as Luxembourg (0 percent), which has never had a minority cabinet, and many nations where they remain rare events, including Austria (4.8 percent), Greece (10 percent), and Germany (11.5 percent).

(Table 1 about here)

Minority governments, however, are not limited to Scandinavia, much less to Western Europe. Table 2 expands our geographic scope and shows the frequency of minority cabinets in thirty-two democracies in the postwar period (Cheibub, Martin, and Rasch 2014). In addition to Western Europe, this sample includes a broader range of countries from Eastern and Southern Europe as well as four non-European nations: Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and Japan. In Table 2, countries are ranked from those (at the top) that have most typically featured majority governments to those (at the bottom) that have had more minority cabinets. Note that Finland, Belgium, France, and Sweden appear more than once to account for significant changes in their

political institutions during this period.¹ Also, Table 2 focuses only on “non-caretaker minority cabinets,” which means that it excludes minority governments that ruled for short interim periods until a new election was held or a new government was formed. For example, Germany has had three short caretaker minority governments since 1945 (as shown in Table 1), but in Table 2 it is treated as having spent the entire postwar period under majority rule.

(Table 2 about here)

Even with these exclusions, Table 2 shows that minority governments have been remarkably common. They have accounted for at least one-third of all governments in each of eleven different countries (twelve regimes, since Sweden is represented by two) and a majority of all governments in five. The Scandinavian monarchies of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden are all to be found among the “majority-minority” countries, but minority cabinets are common elsewhere in Northern Europe as well, such as the Baltic states of Latvia (40.0 percent of all governments), Lithuania (40.0 percent), and Estonia (30.8 percent). Minority governments also form frequently in parts of Southern and Eastern Europe, though the results there are more mixed. In Southern Europe, Spain (66.7 percent) and to a lesser extent Italy (39.3 percent) have often been ruled by minority cabinets. Italy’s Christian Democrats, for example, feature prominently in Laver and Shepsle’s (1996) “strong party” theory of minority government formation. Elsewhere along the Mediterranean, however, minority cabinets either never form, as in Malta, or are rare events, as in Greece (6.3 percent). In Eastern Europe, the greatest incidence of minority government occurs in Romania (75.0 percent), which has been ruled predominantly by minority cabinets since its transition to democracy in 1991. In fact, Romania’s time spent under minority rule rivals that of even the Nordic countries. Other Eastern European states, in contrast, have mostly had majority cabinets and fall somewhere in the middle of the rankings on minority government, including Hungary (20.0 percent), Slovakia (27.3 percent), Poland (29.4 percent), and Bulgaria (33.3 percent).

Minority cabinets form on other continents as well. Of the four non-European countries in Table 2, minority government is most common in Canada (38.5 percent), which with three successive minority cabinets from 2004 to 2011 experienced its longest period under minority rule. At the other end of the scale, Australia (3.1 percent) had its first ever minority government in 2010 when its federal election failed to give any party a majority for the first time since 1940. Prior to the 1990s, New Zealand (19.4 percent) also had relatively few minority governments. However, since the introduction of the mixed member proportional (MMP) system in 1996, no party has managed to win a majority of seats in Parliament, and minority governments have ruled for all but two years since then. Similarly, Japan (15.4 percent) passed electoral reform under a succession of minority cabinets in the early 1990s, which constituted its first experience with minority government in more

¹ Finland appears twice (1946-1999; 1999-2012), Belgium twice (1946-1995; 1995-2012), France three times (1946-1954; 1954-1958; 1958-2012), and Sweden twice (1946-1976, 1976-2012). Finland approved a new Constitution in 1999; Belgium held its first direct elections as a full-fledged federal state in 1995; France’s Fourth Republic collapsed in 1958; and Sweden formed its first non-socialist coalition government in 1976.

than forty years. The parliamentary histories of all of these countries are, of course, heavily influenced by Westminster, which shows that minority governments are not at all incompatible with this majoritarian tradition.

For the purposes of this paper, it is useful to further break down the incidence of minority cabinets by distinguishing between single-party and coalition governments. In his early study of minority governments in 15 parliamentary democracies, Strøm (1990:61) found that almost two-thirds consisted of only a single party, where just over one third were interparty (executive) coalitions. In a recent study, Bergman, Ersson, and Hellström (2015) explore how the absence of a single majority party in parliament affects the type of cabinet that is formed (single-party or coalition) and cabinet duration. Table 3 shows their data on a total of 273 non-majority cabinets in 27 countries from 1989 to 2010. Several findings are worth noting. First, when there is no single majority party in parliament, the majority of government formation processes result in coalition governments. Of 233 identified minority situations, 199 (85.4 percent) have led to coalitions. While these scholars do not report the distinction between minority and majority cabinets in their table, it is clear that many of their coalitions are in fact minority cabinets. For example, Denmark, which has had almost exclusively minority cabinets in recent decades, has featured nine coalitions. Similarly, Romania has had 11 coalitions, Italy 13, and Latvia 18. These are countries in which the proportions of minority cabinets overall have ranged from about 40 to 75 percent. It thus appears that among minority cabinets in the parliamentary systems of the post-Cold War era, coalitions are somewhat more common relative to single-party cabinets.

(Table 3 about here)

In addition to their frequency, it is perhaps surprising to see that many minority situations result in governments that manage to stay in power for long stretches of time. Even measured by tenure in office, minority governments account for a majority of government duration in the same five countries and at least one-quarter in an additional eight countries in the Cheibub, Martin, and Rasch (CMR) sample. Again, the Scandinavian “usual suspects” (Denmark, Norway, and Sweden) figure prominently at the top of the table, but they are in no way alone. Similar results emerge from the study by Bergman, Ersson, and Hellström (BEH), who show that the relative duration (actual duration as a proportion of maximum possible duration) is close to one in several countries with a high incidence of minority governments, such as Norway, Sweden, Spain, and Lithuania. In a separate analysis that looks just at minority governments in Western Europe, Clark, Golder, and Golder (2013: 483) calculate that minority governments have ruled for more than a quarter (30 percent) of the postwar period, with each minority government holding power well over a year (539 days) on average.

Finally, to what extent has the incidence of minority governments changed over time? The findings outlined in this section are, in many ways, strikingly similar to studies completed close to thirty years ago by Strøm (1990) and Laver and Schofield (1990). In 1990, minority cabinets similarly constituted about a third of Western European governments; were most common in the Scandinavian countries, Spain, and Italy; and were least frequent in Germany, Austria, and Belgium. One notable change is that newer parliamentary democracies

in Central and Eastern Europe, such as Romania, are also experiencing high numbers of minority governments. Outside of Europe, too, many democracies that always had the potential for minority government have nevertheless seen an increase in the frequency of minority cabinets over the past two decades (including Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and Japan). Lastly, there are several nations where minority governments have become regular phenomena at the subnational level, even though they may be largely absent at the national level, opening up new avenues of research for scholars to explore.

What Governance Challenges Do Minority Governments Face?

Governing together is never easy.² The difficulties of managing governments composed of various parties, factions, or individuals with differing interests and skills arise from three conditions: preference divergence, uncertainty, and opportunism. Preference divergence simply means that the members of the different parties, and their cabinet representatives, may have different and often conflicting preferences over the rewards that flow from control over the executive branch, such as policy influence, office benefits (spoils), and future electoral advantage (Strøm 1990; Müller and Strøm 1999). All of these goods are likely to be scarce, so that not all demands can be satisfied simultaneously (Müller and Strøm 1999). At least in the short run, the contest for cabinet portfolios and other office benefits tends to be constant-sum. Ministerial posts are typically unique and indivisible. The prime ministership, for example, can normally be awarded to only one party, to the exclusion of all others. Electoral advantage, to the extent that politicians care foremost about *vote shares*, is even more strictly constant-sum. Ultimately, one party's gain has to be another party's loss. Of course, coalition parties may hope that all such losses will come out of the hide of the opposition parties. Much more commonly, however, coalition parties compete amongst each other for votes (Rose and Mackie 1983), and their leaders will be acutely aware of the robust cross-national tendency for incumbent parties to suffer at the polls (Narud and Valen 2008). Finally, while the parties that make up a coalition may have more or less compatible policy preferences, it is hardly ever the case that all of their policy preferences can be realized simultaneously.

Cooperation in multiparty coalition governments often also suffers from the fact that politicians face considerable uncertainty over the decisions that they will have to make and the circumstances under which they will do so. Party leaders involved in coalition bargaining face at least three important kinds of uncertainty. One is that they do not fully understand the relationships between the policy instruments at their disposal and the political outcomes they seek (see Krehbiel 1991). A second source of uncertainty lies in the exogenous political events that party leaders may confront over the course of a parliamentary term. Will there be a recession or an international crisis? The third and final source of uncertainty is that even if they were intimately familiar with

² The sections that follow have in substantial part been adapted from Strøm, Müller, and Smith (2010).

their policy instruments and could perfectly predict the course even of future events beyond their control, politicians cannot know in advance how voters will respond to their decisions.

Uncertainty in coalition government situations makes cooperation and delegation risky and therefore drives parties to seek ways to control their coalition partners. As North (1990: 57) puts it: “No institutions are necessary in a world of complete information. With incomplete information, however, cooperative solutions will break down unless institutions are created that provide sufficient information for individuals [or coalition parties] to police deviations.” Institutions assuring cooperation need to provide (1) “a communications mechanism that provides the information necessary to know when punishment is required” and (2) “incentives for those individuals to carry out punishment when called on to do so” (North 1990: 57).

Often, uncertainty gives rise to the further problem of opportunism. Coalition partners may fear that their political environment may be manipulated to their own disadvantage. The risk of opportunism arises when coalition partners can use uncertainty to derive private gain at the expense of others. Opportunistic parties may take advantage of unforeseen circumstances to extract policy concessions or other advantages. Non-simultaneous exchange and non-contemporaneous benefit flows create particularly tricky problems in coalition bargaining (Weingast and Marshall 1988). If the payoffs to all partners are evenly distributed over the coalition’s anticipated duration, then most likely each partner will have a constant incentive to maintain the coalition. If, however, the payoffs are unevenly distributed over time, then a party that early on receives a large benefit (e.g., a major piece of legislation or key long-term government appointments) has little incentive to fulfill its part of the deal later. Thus, the sequence in which the parties secure their gains may (de)stabilize coalitions.

Opportunism also stems from the problem of verification – ascertaining whether all parties in fact honor their commitments. The division of government into increasingly specialized agencies makes this a formidable challenge. To the extent that policy expertise is monopolized by the ministry that has prepared the bill, and when one party has exclusive control over that ministry, it can be difficult for other parties to oversee the fine grain of government policy making and to ensure that coalitional commitments are implemented. For all these reasons, coalition partners have reason to concern themselves with the “downstream” implementation of their policy platform.

To understand these challenges, we need first of all to understand that governing politicians typically need to keep together not just one, but a series of political coalitions. At a minimum, a prime minister needs to keep his party together, to the extent necessary to win confidence votes and other votes in parliament and to avoid being replaced by challengers within his or her own party. A second challenge arises whenever the prime minister depends on the support not only of his own party, but also on that of one or several coalition partners represented in his cabinet. This means that in addition to the challenge of party management, there is a cabinet management challenge that involves the ministers and other leaders of all the other parties with which the

governing party is in a cabinet coalition. Finally, prime ministers who, even counting the support of their cabinet coalition partners, do not control a parliamentary majority need to devise ways to generate and sustain a legislative coalition with parties or individual MPs not represented in the cabinet. While we have little systematic evidence on how these challenges are interrelated, it seems reasonable to assume that the challenge of governing grows with the number of distinctive coalitions that have to be maintained, as well as with their relative diversity from one another.

The first challenge, then, has to do with maintaining cohesion and decisiveness within a single political party. This is a challenge that all prime ministers, and indeed all partisan executives, face, regardless of the characteristics of the cabinet that they lead. And the mechanisms that are at the prime minister's disposal in this respect are similarly general. In a seminal analysis of party discipline in Westminster democracies, Christopher Kam (2009) thus identifies three ways in which the loyalty of party backbenchers can be secured: advancement, discipline, and socialization. Since the devices that help prime ministers in these endeavors are not specific to minority governments, or indeed to any other cabinet type, we shall in the following "bracket" them in favor of challenges (and responses) that differ more systematically from cabinet to cabinet and from political system to political system. These are the challenges of maintaining unity among on the one hand a set of parties that are represented in the cabinet coalition, and on the other hand a set of parties sufficiently strong to muster a parliamentary majority, pass legislation, and prevent a vote of no confidence. We shall refer to the former issue as the challenge of **executive coalition management** and the latter as the challenge of **legislative coalition management**.

In more casual thinking about parliamentary governments, we often assume that the executive and the legislative coalition are identical, that the parties that support the government's proposal in parliament are the same as those that hold cabinet portfolios. A minority cabinet with any kind of legislative success challenges that assumption. Yet, we know even more broadly that even governments that do not depend on the votes of any parties not represented in the cabinet for the passage of their bills often get some such support, and indeed that they often seek support from the opposition and are willing to bargain for it. Thus, it is clearly necessary to recognize that the executive and the legislative coalitions may not perfectly overlap.

All coalition governments have to concern themselves with executive coalition management. All minority governments have to concern themselves with legislative coalition management. And all minority coalition governments must cater to executive as well as legislative coalition management. We would expect governments to create and rely on management mechanisms in those arenas where they most critically need them. We would therefore expect all coalition governments to make use of conflict resolution mechanisms in the executive arena, and minority governments to rely on mechanisms in the parliamentary and extra-parliamentary arenas as well. Below, we shall explore what those management mechanisms and arenas might be.

The Art of Coalition Management

Coalition management consists of the development and use of institutions and practices that help coalition partners overcome these problems and realize gains from governing together. Coalition management may consist in the establishment and permanent legislative or executive institutions that survive beyond the life of a particular governing coalition of political parties. It may also encompass agreements and practices that are specific to that particular coalition. And the devices of coalition management may be constitutionally entrenched, based in statutory provisions, created through an agreement between the relevant political parties, or they may simply be regularized practices or even individual, ad hoc decisions designed to serve the purposes of the participating parties (or at least some of them) right there and then.

We mentioned above that the challenges of coalition management apply both to executive coalitions and to legislative coalitions. For single-party majority governments, both of these challenges can be subsumed under the issue of maintaining party discipline. While this challenge may be serious enough, as a series of British prime ministers have experienced, they can respond to many of them with powers they possess as party leaders. For most majority coalitions, the critical challenge of coalition management is to secure the collective gains of the parties that are bound together in control of the cabinet. Parties and legislators that are not part of this coalition typically do not require or receive the same attention. In the context of minority governments, however, it is important to distinguish between the executive and the legislative coalition. To the extent that cabinets are interparty coalitions, they have to worry about maintaining the executive coalition. To the extent that they are single-party minority governments, they have to worry instead about maintaining or building, consistently or ad hoc, interparty coalitions with parties or legislators that do not inhabit the executive branch. And to the extent that governments are both coalitions and minority governments, they have to worry about both of these tasks at the same time.

Thankfully (from the point of view of incumbent politicians), minority governments and other administrations under parliamentary democracy have their ways of dealing with such challenges. Despite the problems inherent in interparty delegation and control, coalition governments are not doomed to fail. Not every situation of multiparty government requires coalition partners to rely heavily on formal mechanisms of monitoring and control. In some cases, the preferences of the parties may be sufficiently well aligned so that governing together is not conflictual. Alternatively, party leaders may cooperate because they anticipate either repeat interactions in the same arena, or other interactions with the same players in different arenas. Yet, such easy cases are more likely to be the exception rather than the rule. Parties that agree to enter a coalition

government cannot always hope that the shadow of future interactions will be sufficiently long, or their preferences sufficiently well aligned, to induce voluntary cooperation. The greater the preference diversity between the parties, the more fragile their coalition is likely to be. And the more fragile the coalition, the greater the need for coalition partners to monitor and control each others' behavior. Moreover, it is important to note that the agreements that underlie cabinet coalitions typically cannot be enforced by courts of law. Thus, even if one partner recognizes that another partner is not faithful to their deal, there may be no means outside the political arena to make the latter behave.

Ex Ante Controls versus Ex Post Controls

The relationship between prime ministers (and other party leaders) and their respective cabinet members can be viewed as a principal-agent relationship, in which the cabinet minister are given discretionary authority to act on behalf of the prime minister, their respective party leaders, and the government as a whole. In any principal-agent relationship, the principal can employ a range of control mechanisms to overcome the problems of hidden information and hidden action (see Kiewiet and McCubbins 1991). Some of these mechanisms are employed before the delegation relationship is established (*ex ante*). Coalition partners can rely on several such *ex ante* control mechanisms to reduce uncertainty and the resulting opportunism in coalition governance. *Ex ante* control mechanisms are particularly useful for preventing the agency problems driven by hidden information (such as adverse selection) that may arise when coalition parties delegate authority to a cabinet minister acting as the “agent” of another party.

Besides *ex ante* mechanisms of contract design and screening, political parties can use *ex post* mechanisms (applied after the fact of delegation) to control the behavior of cabinet ministers in office. *Ex post* mechanisms of control can help lower the potential for hidden action (moral hazard) in coalition government situations. **Monitoring** might be the most obvious way to do this. However, direct monitoring, which McCubbins and Schwartz (1984) call “police-patrol oversight,” is costly and error-prone. Principals have to exert effort, and they have to be able to assess the information that they obtain. Instead, principals can rely on oversight by third parties (i.e., organizations or institutions that are not part of the principal–agent relationship). Such players, known as “fire alarms,” must have incentives to inform the principal about the agent’s behavior. For example, interest groups might have their own incentives to inform the parliament, or specific political parties, about executive decisions that deviate from the coalition platform or that have adverse consequences. Again, relying on third parties for *ex post* oversight has its own drawbacks, as “fire alarms” can be false or exaggerated. As Lupia and McCubbins (1994) have shown, “fire alarms” are efficient when the principal and the “fire alarm” share interests, when alarms require effort, and when false alarms get punished. Finally, principals can install **institutional checks** to control the agent’s behavior. In that case, power is delegated to an additional agent with the power to veto or block decisions by the initial agent. In the ministerial arena, such checks come in the form of constraints on the policy discretion of individual cabinet members.

Arenas of Control

Mechanisms of parliamentary control can be exercised in a variety of different political arenas. The most important is the **executive arena**, which comprises the cabinet and other executive offices under the control of the governing parties, the **parliamentary arena**, with its various instruments of legislative oversight, and the **extra-parliamentary arena**, which is mostly dominated by politicians acting as agents of their respective parties, but outside of the executive or parliamentary context. These arenas are by no means mutually exclusive, as particular governance mechanisms may well include all three. Nevertheless, these settings are sufficiently distinct that it makes sense to discuss them successively. Table 4 displays several important ex ante and ex post mechanisms of control that are available to coalition partners, and the arenas in which they are exercised. Below, we discuss these mechanisms arena by arena, examine their use in 15 Western European countries that frequently feature coalition governments, and review of our knowledge of how parliament and parliamentary parties maintain control over delegation and accountability in multiparty parliamentary governments.

Table 4 About Here

THE EXECUTIVE ARENA

Many of the more stylized models of parliamentary governance assume that to the extent that parliamentary control of coalition governments can succeed, the key to success lies at the executive level. The architecture of Western European cabinet governance mechanisms varies with respect to the allocation of authority within the governing coalition. The literature on contracts assumes that such issues are resolved through a specification of residual rights of control, that is, by identifying the party that has the right to make final decisions on matters not specified in the contingencies covered by the contract. On this basis, we can distinguish between centralized governance structures, in which such residual authority is vested in the principal, and decentralized arrangements, in which the agent has this power (Aghion and Tirole 1997). In the context of government coalitions, centralized authority places residual rights of control in the hands of a team of coalition leaders, in which each party would presumably be represented. This team of coalition leaders would decide jointly, or, at least, maintain effective mutual veto powers on critical decisions. In contrast, decentralized authority means that such rights are held by whatever party controls a particular government agency, for example a cabinet portfolio, or even a smaller subset of government offices.

The analytical literature on parliamentary institutions contains one prominent theory (Laver and Shepsle 1996) that stresses the decentralization of cabinet authority and one (Tsebelis 2002) that emphasizes its centralization. In their seminal book, *Making and Breaking Governments*, Michael Laver and Kenneth Shepsle

(1996) highlight the critical powers of agenda control vested in the executive branch. According to Laver and Shepsle, parliamentary democracies coordinate policy decisions by granting jurisdictionally specific “property rights” (ministerial discretion) through the assignment of cabinet portfolios. In the authors’ own words, “the agenda and implementation power that the cabinet exercises vis-à-vis the parliament is in turn exercised vis-à-vis the cabinet by individual ministers and their civil servants” (Laver and Shepsle 1996: 281). Each portfolio, generally representing a government department, is allocated to one and only one party, and there is no mechanism by which any other party can prevent the portfolio holder from implementing its ideal point within that jurisdiction. The set of government portfolios is assumed to be exogenously fixed. Parliament, in contrast, has in their model only the limited tasks that the title of their book suggests. These powers privilege the cabinet vis-à-vis parliament, and they render parliamentary control of cabinet members very difficult.

Hallerberg (2004: 16) refers to this structure as *fiefdom* government, where “ministers have relative autonomy over decisions in their jurisdiction; that is, ministers are essentially lords of their ministerial fiefdoms.” We can think of this set of assumptions as a model of **ministerial government** (Strøm 1994), since it assumes that the locus of government decision making is at the ministerial level, and that parliamentary control of individual cabinet ministers is challenging at best.

Mutual Control in Cabinet

An alternative account of coalition decision-making instead emphasizes the centralization of cabinet authority as a key to coalition governance. In Tsebelis’ (1995, 2002) representation of coalition politics, each coalition party is a veto player that can maintain the status quo against the demands of its coalition partner(s). Jean Tirole (1999: 768) refers to this arrangement as “veto collegiality,” in the sense that “one party has authority, except that the other party has the right to impose the status quo if he does not like the other party’s choice.” Tsebelis (2002: 106–9) argues that this veto power is exercised through the authority structures of the cabinet, or through other binding agreements between the leaders of the coalition parties. In the cabinet, any coalition party is a veto player regardless of the allocation of cabinet portfolios (Tsebelis 2002: 96).

In the real world of coalition politics, however, individual coalition parties often cannot veto policy proposals they do not favor. They may have negotiated away such veto powers in coalition bargaining by accepting decision-making rules short of unanimity or by committing to substantive policy agreements. Indeed, it is difficult to see why political parties would bear the transaction costs of negotiating a coalition agreement unless this resulted in a decision procedure less restrictive than mutual veto powers. Yet, even in the absence of specific negotiated constraints on coalition partners, their veto powers may be uneven rather than mutual and balanced. In short, parties not pivotal to the coalition and parties that cannot credibly threaten to leave the cabinet (because by doing so they would lose more policy influence or office benefits than they would by submitting to their partners) are unlikely to be effective veto players. Even though Tsebelis’ equation of cabinet status and veto power is a stretch, however, his model of **cabinet government** (Strøm 1994) points to an important arena of coalition policy enforcement. As the top collective decision-making body, the cabinet

provides an opportunity for **mutual control** by the coalition parties. To the extent that cabinet ministers are faithful party agents, they can monitor and check one another and hence help to enforce coalition policy.

Junior Ministers

The appointment of **junior ministers** – executive appointments that do not carry full voting powers in the cabinet – is another mechanism of control at the executive level. “Watchdog” junior ministers are frequently assigned to senior cabinet members from a different coalition party. The job description of such junior ministers includes screening of departmental affairs from a partisan perspective, raising potentially controversial issues with the ministers, and reporting to their party superiors. While the official duty of any junior minister remains to advise and assist the senior minister, these control tasks may be much more significant when junior ministers are of the “watchdog” variety. Their presence helps to reduce information asymmetries between the party holding the respective portfolio and its coalition partner(s). If controversial issues cannot be resolved in-house (i.e., between the minister and the junior minister), the information provided by the latter can enable her party to act in other arenas – the cabinet, a coalition committee, or the corresponding parliamentary committee.

Several studies have examined the use of junior ministers in coalition governments (Müller and Strøm 2000; Thies 2001; Manow and Zorn 2004; Verzichelli 2008). Table 2 provides a descriptive account of the presence of “watchdog” junior ministers in Western European coalition governments (adapted from Verzichelli 2008). Note that such offices do not always exist, either because the cabinet parties decide to do without them or because the constitution does not permit this type of post, as in Denmark, Finland, and Iceland (Verzichelli 2008). The empirical evidence from Western Europe shows that the use of “watchdog” junior ministers is more likely under conditions associated with low trust among the coalition parties, such as high electoral volatility and a credible parliamentary opposition. Such appointments also seem to be an alternative to comprehensive coalition agreements, as some parliamentary democracies (mainly in continental Europe) are more likely to feature the former and others (principally the Nordic countries) the latter (Müller and Strøm 2008: 183). It is thus also interesting to note that there appears to be no positive correlation between the use of watchdog junior ministers and minority governments

THE PARLIAMENTARY ARENA

Much of the literature on coalition bargaining has focused on the activities of political parties within the executive branch, in cabinet and subcabinet settings. However, the executive arena is not the only venue through which coalition parties can monitor one another and their respective representatives in executive office. Other opportunities for monitoring and control exist in parliament itself.

Investiture Procedures

Many parliamentary democracies, and especially those with recent constitutions, feature some form of investiture requirement before a new government can constitutionally assume its tasks. An investiture vote represents an initial control by the parties in parliament with regard to which government is permitted to form.

Coalition governments that require parliamentary consent before they are allowed to take office may find themselves compelled to commit to specific policy positions before presenting themselves to parliament.

Investiture requirements come in a variety of guises. Bergman et al. (2003) note that in countries that require a formal investiture vote, it can be formulated as a vote on the prime minister alone, or on the entire cabinet (as in Belgium, Italy, and Luxembourg). In all the Western European cases except Ireland and Sweden, the head of state nominates or appoints the prime minister. In four countries (Belgium, Greece, Luxembourg, and Portugal), the designated prime minister must then lay out the proposed government's policy program and cabinet nominations and subject both to plenary debate and an investiture vote (Bergman et al. 2003).

While such institutional constraints may not determine the final outcome of coalition bargaining, they help reduce uncertainty among coalition partners. They also affect the type of cabinet formed. Bergman (1993) finds that in parliaments with *negative formation rules* (where no investiture vote is required for a government to assume office), minority governments are more likely to emerge. In countries with *positive formation rules* (such as Belgium, Germany, Ireland, Italy, and Luxembourg), coalition governments are more likely to form, and their formation may require potential coalition partners to negotiate and commit to certain policy positions up front. Moreover, Saalfeld (2008) finds that such investiture rules depress cabinet stability. Table 2 lists, for each of our selected countries, whether or not a formal investiture vote is required before the government may assume office.

Parliamentary Questions

Most parliaments feature regular occasions on which cabinet members or civil servants have to appear and answer questions from members of parliament. These occasions sometimes provide valuable information (or questionable amusement), and they constitute a classic means of parliamentary control once a government has been formed. Parliamentary questions are frequently used by opposition parties in single-party government situations to extract information from or embarrass the governing party. In coalition government situations, questions can serve the additional purpose of keeping coalition partners in check. Notwithstanding the many differences in the details of the parliamentary questioning regimes (see Wiberg 1995), such questions are a common means to extract information from the government. The answers to these questions may constitute the basis for further parliamentary initiatives (such as further questions or commissions of inquiry, or even motions of no confidence). Parliamentary questions are particularly suitable for matters not associated with current legislation, since information on the latter may more readily be extracted from the minister or from civil servants during committee deliberations.

Parliamentary Committees

An alternative vehicle for coalition management exists in the form of **parliamentary committees**. In most parliamentary democracies, government bills that require legislative approval are assigned to a parliamentary committee, in which the most intensive and detailed part of the legislative scrutiny takes place. Mattson and

Strøm (1995) find that among the functions that parliamentary committees serve, information collection is of particular importance. Parliamentary committees serve as crucial providers of information and monitoring under coalition government, especially when committee jurisdictions match the policy responsibilities of specific ministries, and when the committee chairperson does not come from the same party as the corresponding minister (Hallerberg 2000). Indeed, Kim and Loewenberg (2005) find that in Germany, coalition parties tend to distribute committee chairs in such a fashion. In parliaments that rely on parliamentary scrutiny of coalition government bills to keep tabs on coalition partners, committee chair positions thus serve as a legislative equivalent of “watchdog” junior ministers.

Hallerberg (2004) finds that in budgetary matters, under coalition government parliamentary committees are most active in collecting information where ministers have relative autonomy over policy decisions within their respective portfolios. Martin and Vanberg (2011) provide cross-national evidence that the greater the ideological divergence between coalition partners in a specific policy area, the more parliamentary scrutiny the relevant bills receive (as measured in the length of time a government bill is under deliberation in committee before it reaches the plenary stage, as well as in the number of changes introduced in committee). Hence, parliamentary committees under coalition government not only allow for the scrutiny of executive bills by the legislature, or of government bills by the opposition, but also provide opportunities for one coalition party to scrutinize another. Thus, when individual ministers have substantial policy discretion, parliamentary committees can provide for “ministerial correction” by their respective coalition partners.

THE EXTRA-PARLIAMENTARY ARENA

In addition to using the relevant executive and parliamentary institutions, coalitions frequently create their own, extra-constitutional mechanisms and venues for mutual control. Even where parliamentary committees can amend legislation proposed by the government, there is always the risk that overly specialized committees may become accomplices to their ministerial counterparts, rather than remain faithful agents of the parties in parliament (see Krehbiel 1991). Thus, although the use of parliamentary committees for oversight is common in Germany and the Netherlands, other European parliaments rely more on coalition committees and other extra-parliamentary methods to resolve problems of preference divergence in policymaking. Being extra-constitutional, these mechanisms depend on the political clout of their members for their effectiveness. Often, coalition parties rely on several such extra-parliamentary vehicles, some staffed by policy experts and others by party leaders themselves. While the more technical committees typically take on screening functions, those composed of high-ranking party leaders commonly engage in top-level log-rolling and conflict resolution.

Coalition Agreements

One of the first opportunities to promote coalition discipline through extra-parliamentary means lies in the design of the coalition agreement between the governing parties. All cabinet coalitions are based on some tacit or explicit agreement between their respective members. At a minimum, these parties have to agree on the division of cabinet portfolios. In most cases, however, the coalition partners will make an explicit agreement

that goes beyond the division of high office spoils. Such agreements may define the government's policy agenda, from at a minimum identifying its top priorities to, in the most ambitious cases, cataloging all major legislative initiatives to be introduced during the parliamentary term. The coalition parties may also decide to spell out the rules under which they will cooperate in government. They may even decide how they will interact in other institutions or at other levels of government. Thus, coalition agreements vary greatly in their content, comprehensiveness, and formality.

Coalition agreements are primarily designed to govern the relationship *between* governing parties but may also serve to promote cohesion *within* each party. The external functions of coalition agreements are to bond the leaders of the different coalition parties, ease communication between them, and contain inter-party conflict (or facilitate its resolution). These external functions of coalition agreements are typically the more critical ones. Müller and Strøm (2008) have made the most extensive cross-national study of coalition agreements. In Western Europe, most cabinet coalitions are based on a single, public, written agreement, although some coalition parties may have a private agreement that they do not release to the public. Occasionally, parties devise more than one coalition document, for example a joint pre-electoral declaration to signal their intent, followed by a more detailed post-electoral agreement. Coalition agreements may be kept wholly or partially private for several reasons. First, they may violate the constitution or contain potentially embarrassing clauses (for example, on the division of rents such as public sector jobs). Second, detailed procedural clauses signal distrust that may make the government look weak and divided. Third, a coalition agreement that is rich in policy detail may provide a dangerous yardstick against which government performance could subsequently be measured. Finally, if the agreement contains a lot of "fine print," the coalition parties may fear that they will have trouble keeping public debate focused on their main message to the voters.

Müller and Strøm's data include 262 coalition cabinets in 15 Western European parliamentary systems over the period 1945-99. Almost two thirds of these cabinets were based on a coalition agreement. Two-thirds of these coalition agreements (67%) were concluded immediately after elections, whereas a fifth (21%) were negotiated during a parliamentary term, mainly in conjunction with a change of the government's party composition, and thirteen coalition agreements (7.6%) were purely pre-electoral. Nine cabinets had both pre- and post-electoral agreements. Of the 169 written coalition agreements, 141 (83.4%) were originally intended for the public domain. There has been a clear trend over time toward greater use of coalition agreements. While in the 1940s no more than a third of all coalition cabinets were based on written agreements, by the 1990s this was true of no fewer than 81%. There is substantial variation, between and within countries, in the length of coalition agreements, ranging from just over 200 words (Finland) to more than 43,000 words (Belgium). The number of words serves as a rough indicator of the agreements' comprehensiveness (see Huber, Shipan and Pfahler 2001: 336-8). All else equal, the longer the agreement, the more policies it covers and the more detailed the coverage.

The three general issue areas contained in most coalition agreements are (1) policy, (2) procedural rules, and (3) the allocation of government offices and other benefits. Most coalition agreements have substantial and explicit policy content. Indeed, in the majority of Western European countries, policy questions have accounted for 90 percent or more of the contents of coalition agreements on average. The second most frequent content has been procedural rules designed to impose coalition discipline in parliament. In contrast, only a minority of coalition agreements deal with inter-party distributions of offices and competencies, most likely because the coalition parties see such agreements as unnecessary and potentially embarrassing. Informal agreements about such matters are probably much more common.

Müller and Strøm (2008) find that much of coalition “contracting” is driven by path dependence: once a certain set of governance institutions has evolved in a particular country, these institutions tend to get replicated in subsequent coalitions. Yet, the coalition parties do so only when the transaction costs are not overwhelming. Thus, parties may deviate from an established pattern of writing a formal agreement when they expect that the coalition might not last long (e.g., when the end of the parliamentary term is approaching or the coalition is unlikely to survive). Coalition partners are more likely to negotiate formal agreements the more balanced their bargaining power is and the fewer parties make up the coalition. Thus, the use of coalition agreements depends in part on their costs and in part on their value in inducing politicians to abide by their commitments.

A few studies have addressed the effects of coalition agreements on coalition governance. The two-country study of Timmermans and Moury (2006), covering Belgium and the Netherlands, analyzes the completeness and preciseness of coalition agreements. The authors show that the presence of a written coalition agreement does not prevent conflict over the issues covered in the agreement during the coalitions’ lifetime. Yet, coalitions rarely terminate over these issues and hardly any of the relevant issues the authors analyze ended in a non-decision. Coalition agreements also seem to foster cabinet stability. Saalfeld (2008) shows that cross-nationally coalitions based on a written agreement are more durable than those without such a mechanism.

Coalition Committees

Coalition parties typically also establish various types of ex post **coalition committees** that are inserted at strategic points in the policy process. Such committees are designed to coordinate policy and manage potential conflicts within the coalition. They often include non-cabinet members selected on the basis of either their policy expertise or their capacity to harm the coalition (by issuing public criticism, starting intra-party revolts, or persuading significant groups of MPs to vote against government policy). Tying them into the government’s policy-making apparatus is designed to increase the government’s legitimacy and avoid defeat and electoral fall-out. This is all the more important in fragile coalition government situations, as it is easier to shelter such committees from public scrutiny, compared to official bodies such as parliamentary committees or the cabinet.

Unfortunately, the literature on coalition committees has remained scarce even with regard to single-country studies (for insightful analyses see Criscitiello 1993; Rudzio 2005; Miller 2009). Andeweg and

Timmermans (2008) and Miller (2009) have provided the only cross-national studies, mixing quantitative analysis and case studies. Andeweg and Timmermans (2008) distinguish coalition committees according to their composition, and thus identify internal, mixed, and external committees, with the first type consisting entirely of cabinet members and the last type entirely of non-cabinet members. Examples of mixed and external committees include coalition committees composed of both cabinet and parliamentary leaders, those composed exclusively of parliamentary leaders, and party summits containing party leaders, but no cabinet ministers. The authors show that while cabinet-internal arenas are the most frequently used forums for interparty coalition conflict resolution, the weight shifts towards mixed and external solutions when conflicts become more serious (2008: 278). Andeweg and Timmermans also report that external arenas are more likely when the coalition is fragile or the bargaining environment complex, when the cabinet parties have failed to write a comprehensive coalition agreement, and when the institutional rules have vested one party, typically via its control of the prime ministership, with extensive powers. Table 2 lists by country the percentage of cabinets which relied on mixed or external coalition committees for resolving the most serious conflicts that arose during coalition governance (adapted from Andeweg and Timmermans 2008).

Miller (2009) focuses exclusively on mixed arenas. Perhaps not surprisingly, he shows that whether parliamentarians or representatives of the extra-parliamentary party constitute the bulk of the external representatives in such committees depends on the resources commanded by these respective actors. Miller also reports that the presence of mixed coalition committees has a marginal life-prolonging effect on coalitions.

Clearly, coalition committees constitute one of the most difficult research topics of coalition governance. To begin with, often neither the composition nor the jurisdiction of such committees is entirely clear, so considerable research effort is required to acquire information about their use in controlling coalition partners. Nor can researchers draw on (publically available) records of coalition committee meetings. While cabinet governance in general is a matter of discretion and secrecy, coalition committee deliberations probably exceed the secrecy that surrounds them. Despite the shortage of reliable information, however, there is ample indication in the existing literature that such arenas of coalition control matter. This should identify coalition committees as one of the key topics of further research into coalition governance.

Table 5 summarizes the use of coalition management mechanisms by county for the 15 coalition systems covered in Strøm, Müller and Bergman (2008). We note that cabinets in a large number of these countries routinely rely on several of these mechanisms at the same time. This multitude of arenas and mechanisms is, for example, clearly reflected in the cases of Belgium and Italy, both of which have been characterized by large coalition frequently comprising four or five parties or more, as well as by comparative cabinet instability, but not by particularly high rates of minority governments. Denmark, on the other hand, appears to rely on much less institutionalized and formal mechanisms, which is particularly remarkable given the country's high incidence of minority governments. The Danish experiences thus seems to throw into doubt

the expectation that minority governments would have to rely more heavily on parliamentary and extra-parliamentary arenas of coalition management. And while one might suspect that the institutions singled out in Table 5 underrepresent the centrality of the parliamentary arena in Danish coalition bargaining, it is worth noting that Denmark shares with Norway and Sweden a low emphasis on coalition committees as an extra-parliamentary management arena. Whether this absence of formalized arenas and procedures are a particularly Scandinavian pattern or can be generalized to minority governance more broadly is, however, a question that we cannot conclusively settle in this paper.

Table 5 about here

CONCLUSION

Minority governments remain both a puzzle and a remarkably stubborn outcome of government bargaining. The study of coalition politics has primarily been concerned with on the one hand the formation of coalition governments and on the other hand their termination. Yet the reality of coalition politics is fundamentally about what happens in between these events. During their time in office, executives in parliamentary democracies face formidable problems of coalition management. These challenges are even more acute for minority governments than for any cabinets, and their solution is the least understood aspect of minority governments today.

Our analysis in this article has explored how governments, and especially minority governments, in parliamentary democracies manage their coalitions so as to survive and make policy. Coalitions can attempt to combat their problems at various stages of the policy process and in various arenas. Ex ante, that is, before the government is inaugurated, the member parties can attempt to resolve their differences through a coalition agreement. In many parliamentary democracies, the constitutional rules in the form of investiture requirements may also work to induce coordination among the parties that are about to enter government together. A broader array of enforcement mechanisms are available ex post, after the government has taken office. These include cabinet committees and “watchdog” junior ministers in the executive arena, scrutiny through questions and committee deliberation in the parliamentary arena, and even extra-parliamentary vehicles of conflict resolution, such as coalition committees.

The dilemma that faces politicians in multiparty governments is how to balance the risks that face them in coalition situations against the costs of devising mechanisms by which they can contain or reduce these risks. Ex ante mechanisms of control such as coalition agreements can lower uncertainty, yet it is often difficult to ensure that they will be enforced. Besides, such agreements are beset with transaction costs and because of the problems of enforcement, they are also susceptible to opportunistic behavior. Ex post mechanisms of control serve to reduce moral hazard by limiting the opportunities for coalition partners to engage in self-interested

ways at the expense of their coalitional partners. Coalition partners can avoid such problems of by employing watchdog junior ministers and strong parliamentary committees. Yet, these ex post mechanisms often have limited effect, since they do little to affect the agenda control vested in executive offices such as cabinet portfolios.

Minority governments start at a disadvantage compared to single-party majority governments in that they cannot solely rely on intraparty mechanisms of control. They are at a disadvantage compared to majority coalition governments in that they cannot simply add controls in the executive arena to intraparty devices. Hence, coalition management devices in the parliamentary as well as the extra-parliamentary arena must necessarily take on greater responsibilities. In this paper, we have begun to map the use of these devices, especially in coalitional systems in Western Europe. The surprising pattern that seems to emerge is that minority governments do not seem to require a plethora of parliamentary and extra-parliamentary mechanisms of governance, and that the presence of a large number of such devices tends to reflect bargaining complexity rather than the absence of a pre-negotiated parliamentary majority. Thus, perhaps information matters more than numbers for this aspect of coalition politics. Yet, more intensive studies of individual cabinets, countries, and coalition management devices are clearly necessary before we can solve this puzzle of minority governance.

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Table 1
Cabinet Types in 17 Western European Democracies, 1945-99

Country	Total	One Party Majority		MWC		Surplus Majority		Minority	
		<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Austria	21	4	19.0	14	66.7	2	9.5	1	4.8
Belgium	33	3	9.1	14	42.4	12	36.4	4	12.1
Denmark	31	0	-	4	12.9	0	-	27	87.1
Finland	37	0	-	7	18.9	20	54.1	10	27.0
France	23	1	4.3	7	30.4	8	34.8	7	30.4
Germany	26	1	3.8	17	65.4	5	19.2	3	11.5
Greece	10	7	70.0	1	10.0	1	10.0	1	10.0
Iceland	26	0	-	17	65.4	4	15.4	5	19.2
Ireland	22	6	27.3	5	22.7	0	-	11	50.0
Italy	48	0	-	4	8.2	21	42.9	23	47.9
Luxembourg	16	0	-	15	93.8	1	6.3	0	-
The Netherlands	22	0	-	9	40.9	10	45.5	3	13.6
Norway	26	6	23.1	3	11.5	0	-	17	65.4
Portugal	11	2	18.2	3	27.3	3	27.3	3	27.3
Spain	8	2	25.0	0	-	0	-	6	75.0
Sweden	26	2	7.7	5	19.2	0	-	19	73.1
United Kingdom	20	19	95.0	0	-	0	-	1	5.0
Overall	406	53	13.1	125	30.5	87	21.7	141	34.7

Source: "Government Type in Western Europe by Country" in Mitchell and Nyblade (2008, 207).

Table 2: Minority Cabinets in 32 Parliamentary Democracies, 1945-2012

Country	Cabinets	Non-caretaker Cabinets	Non-caretaker Minority Cabinets	Non-caretaker Minority Cabinets(%)	Time Spent under Non-caretaker Majority Gov't (%)	Start Date	End Date
Finland	7	7	0	0.0	100.0	Apr-99	Oct-12
Germany	24	24	0	0.0	100.0	Sep-49	Oct-12
Luxembourg	18	18	0	0.0	100.0	Mar-47	Oct-12
Malta	13	13	0	0.0	100.0	Apr-66	Oct-12
Belgium	10	7	0	0.0	100.0	Jun-95	Oct-12
Australia	34	32	1	3.1	96.7	Nov-46	Oct-12
Netherlands	30	22	1	4.5	97.5	Jun-46	Oct-12
Greece	21	16	1	6.3	99.1	Nov-74	Oct-12
Austria	31	26	2	7.7	94.8	Nov-47	Oct-12
Iceland	31	28	3	20.7	97.4	Jun-46	Oct-12
Belgium	34	31	4	12.9	98.4	Mar-46	Jun-95
U.K.	23	23	3	13.0	93.3	Feb-50	Oct-12
Japan	53	52	8	15.4	87.7	May-47	Oct-12
France	19	18	3	16.7	83.7	Jun-46	Jun-54
New Zealand	31	31	6	19.4	78.5	Dec-46	Oct-12
Hungary	10	10	2	20.0	90.7	May-90	Oct-12
France	38	37	8	21.6	89.8	Jun-58	Oct-12
Slovenia	13	13	3	23.1	89.5	Apr-92	Oct-12
Finland	42	35	9	25.7	84.6	Mar-46	Apr-99
Slovakia	12	11	3	27.3	90.6	Jan-93	Oct-12
Poland	19	17	5	29.4	80.4	Aug-89	Oct-12
Portugal	21	17	5	29.4	71.9	Jul-76	Oct-12
Czech Rep.	12	10	3	30.0	67.3	Jan-93	Oct-12
Estonia	13	13	4	30.8	73.0	Oct-92	Oct-12
Ireland	25	25	8	32.0	67.4	Feb-48	Oct-12
France	6	6	2	33.3	55.3	Jun-54	Jun-58
Bulgaria	9	6	2	33.3	76.5	Nov-91	Oct-12
Canada	26	26	10	38.5	74.9	Nov-48	Oct-12
Italy	59	56	22	39.3	72.8	May-48	Oct-12
Lithuania	16	15	6	40.0	75.8	Jan-91	Oct-12
Latvia	20	20	8	40.0	70.9	Aug-93	Oct-12
Sweden	13	13	7	53.8	34.0	Oct-46	Oct-76
Norway	29	28	18	64.3	42.9	Oct-49	Oct-12
Spain	12	12	8	66.7	41.3	Jul-77	Oct-12
Romania	17	16	12	75.0	25.2	Oct-91	Oct-12
Sweden	16	16	13	81.3	21.0	Oct-76	Oct-12
Denmark	35	35	32	91.4	11.0	Nov-47	Oct-12

Source: Jose Antonio Cheibub, Shane Martin, and Bjorn Erik Rasch, "Investiture Rules and Formation of Minority Governments in Parliamentary Democracies," October 2014.

Table 3

Coalitions, Number of Ministers, and Duration in Europe (1989-2010)

	Cabinets	Minority situation			Number of ministers		Median duration	
Country	Number of Cabinets	One-Party	Coalition	N	Mean	SD	Relative	Absolute (number of days)
Austria	8	0	8	8	14.00	1.77	0.766	991
Belgium	10	0	10	10	15.1	0.74	0.559	303.5
Denmark	9	0	9	9	19.67	1.73	0.692	825
Finland	10	0	10	10	18.00	1.25	1	720.5
France	11	2	4	6	21.36	6.70	0.770	539.5
Germany	7	0	7	7	17.57	3.74	0.988	1386.5
Greece	10	1	2	3	20.40	2.91	0.539	785.5
Iceland	10	0	10	10	11.30	0.95	1	613
Italy	13	0	13	13	26.14	3.39	0.452	358
Luxembourg	6	0	6	6	11.83	2.04	1	1772
The Netherlands	9	0	9	9	14.33	1.58	0.823	1113
Norway	9	4	5	5	19.11	0.33	1	959.5
Portugal	7	3	2	5	17.57	1.51	0.994	874
Spain	6	5	0	5	17.00	1.10	0.962	1362
Sweden	7	4	3	7	22.14	0.90	1	1262.5
United Kingdom	7	0	1	1	22.57	0.53	0.833	1236
Bulgaria	8	2	1	3	16.70	1.49	0.494	611
Czech Republic	10	2	8	10	17.18	1.40	0.579	459
Estonia	12	2	10	12	14.33	0.49	0.522	665
Hungary	10	2	6	8	15.70	3.06	1	691
Latvia	19	1	18	19	15.79	1.81	0.315	307.5
Lithuania	12	0	6	6	15.92	2.54	0.627	340
Poland	16	5	11	16	20.31	2.96	0.343	410.5
Romania	17	4	11	15	19.76	1.64	0.467	440.5
Slovakia	10	1	9	10	16.90	1.53	0.668	439
Slovenia	12	0	12	12	18.08	3.68	0.802	508.5
TOTAL	273	38	199	233	17.49	4.11	0.728	610
WE-17	147	19	107	122	18.18	4.81	0.831	874
CEE-10	126	19	92	111	16.77	3.10	0.501	426

Source: Torbjörn Bergman, Svante Ersson, and Johan Hellström, “Government Formation and Breakdown in Western and Central Eastern Europe,” *Comparative European Politics*, 13:3 (2015): 349.

Table 4

Mechanisms and Arenas of Executive Coalition Control

	<i>Executive Arena</i>	<i>Parliamentary Arena</i>	<i>Extra-parliamentary Arena</i>
<i>Ex Ante Mechanisms</i>	Portfolio Allocation	Investiture Vote	Coalition Agreements
<i>Ex Post Mechanisms</i>	Mutual Control in Cabinet	Confidence Procedures	Coalition Committees
		Parliamentary Questions	
	Junior Ministers	Parliamentary Committees	

Table 5

Use of Coalition Control Mechanisms by Country

	Executive Arena	Parliamentary Arena		Extra-parliamentary Arena	
	Junior ministers from different party	Investiture vote required	Parliamentary committees can redraft gov't bills	Written coalition agreements	Coalition committees manage most serious coalition conflict
Austria (17)	88	No	Yes	82	47
Belgium (28)	79	Yes	Yes	71	68
Denmark (17)	-	No	No	47	-
Finland (33)	-	No	Yes	100	42
France (17)	88	No	No	47	18
Germany (22)	45	Yes	Yes	45	100*
Greece (2)	-	Yes	No	50	100
Iceland (22)	-	No	Yes	82	-
Ireland (10)	90	Yes	No	80	100
Italy (34)	100	Yes	Yes	3	100
Luxembourg (16)	-	Yes	No	100	50
The Netherlands (23)	91	No	No	48	100
Norway (8)	38	No	Yes	100	14
Portugal (6)	-	Yes	No	100	100
Sweden (7)	43	Yes**	Yes	100	-

Source: Strøm, Müller, and Smith (2011). Junior minister data are from Verzichelli (2008); investiture rules data are from Bergman et al. (2003); parliamentary committees data are from Mattson and Strøm (1995); coalition agreements data are from Müller and Strøm (2008); coalition committees data are from Andeweg and Timmermans (2008).

Notes: Numerical entries represent the percentage of coalition cabinets that have used each mechanism of control. The total number of cabinet observations for each country is noted in parentheses.

*Based on 18 cabinets.

**Since 1975.