The Role of Parliamentary Committee Chairs in Coalition Governments: 
Office and Policy theses reconsidered

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Abstract

The chairs of parliamentary committees are undoubtedly powerful and have considerable influence over parliamentary proceedings and the fate of the draft legislation. Currently there is a debate over the roles committee chairs play in coalition governments and the logic driving the allocation of these powerful positions. This paper provides comprehensive analysis of committee chair appointments in the Baltic states over last two decades and argues that committee chair positions are strategically allocated to benefit senior partners in coalition governments by either guaranteeing an easy passage through the committee stage for legislation coming from the ministries they control or by scrutinizing the ministers from other cabinet parties.

Key words: Committee-chairs; mega-seats; Baltic states; coalition governments.

Introduction

In their path-breaking study Caroll, Cox and Pachon (2006) divided the process of electoral democracy into chapters. Chapter 1 refers to the first stage of democratic process, where political parties compete for votes in the general election. This chapter of electoral democracy has been studied for quite some time and is well researched. In stark contrast, Chapter 2 of electoral democracy has long been outside the scope of academic inquiry. This refers to the moment when after an election political parties compete for prized post-electoral positions or mega-seats. Of course, competition for one type of mega-seats – cabinet positions has also been very thoroughly researched. But other types of mega-seats, such as chairs of parliamentary committees, junior minister positions or seats at parliamentary directing boards, have been unfortunately neglected.
This situation is surprising, as holders of these mega-seats have substantial sway over the day-to-day functioning of the parliament and can substantially influence the fate and content of legislation that passes through the parliament. However, since the topic of mega-seats started receiving more attention from the academic community, it has been demonstrated that the rules regulating the manner in which these mega-seats are allocated can influence the behavior of individual MPs even more so than, for instance, the design of the electoral system (Martin 2011). They also play a crucial role in ‘policing the bargain’ and holding coalition cabinets together (Martin and Vanberg 2004; Thies 2001).

It is the latter strain of research that is the most controversial. On the one hand there is a sizable group of authors claiming that mega-seats are allocated among the partners in a coalition government to manage the power-delegation problems and oversee the actions of ministers belonging to another party (Carroll and Cox 2012; Clark and Jurgeleviciute 2008; Kim and Loewenberg 2005; Martin and Vanberg 2004; Thies 2001). According to the proponents of this thesis people are appointed to mega-seat positions in order for one cabinet party to maintain a certain degree of influence over policy in a sphere directed by the minister from another cabinet party by routinely scrutinizing his/her actions. In this paper such dynamic will be called the ‘policy thesis’, for convenience sake.

On the other hand, another strand of literature disagrees with this policy thesis and maintains that mega-seats matter for their office value, and in coalition governments they are used as a currency to compensate those parties which received disproportionally smaller shares of cabinet positions (Manow and Zorn 2004). This argument will be named the ‘office thesis’.

The problem with these competing claims is that the evidence backing them is not mutually exclusive. The pattern of mega-seat allocation in a given case can exemplify both: the evidence of oversight or ‘shadowing’, where ministers from one cabinet party are ‘shadowed’ by a junior minister or chair of a corresponding parliamentary committee from coalition partner’s party; as well as the evidence of compensation for parties underrepresented in cabinet. Therefore, in order to resolve this debate, there is a need to go beyond existing research and to reformulate the main research question. Instead of asking “Is there evidence supporting either office or policy theses?” there is a need ask “What underlying logic drives the process of mega-seat allocation?” and “What role do mega-seats play in coalition government?”.
This paper aims to provide a modest contribution to this end. Based on data concerning cabinet portfolios and committee chair allocation in the Baltic states, we will argue that committee chairs are strategically allocated to benefit the senior partners in coalition cabinets: to help the ministers from bigger parties to pursue desired policy by pairing them up with the chair of parliamentary committee from their party. Meanwhile the autonomy of ministers from junior parties in a coalition is limited by appointing ‘shadow’ committee chairs to scrutinize them. The paper is structured as follows: the first part is dedicated to an overview of the existing literature on mega-seats and the debate between the office and policy theses. The second part provides a brief overview of the history of coalition governments in the Baltic states and descriptive statistics of committee chair allocation. The third part dives deeper into three aspects relating to the committee chair allocation: the size of the party group; the roles of committee chairs and impact of party ideology. The fourth part presents the overall pattern of committee chair allocation, while the final part summarizes and concludes.

### 1. Mega-seats: overview of existing research

Strom and Muller (1999) drew a parallel between exiting research on coalition governments and romantic Hollywood films: there is a lot of attention paid to the initial courting phase or ‘who gets whom’, but what comes after, is very much neglected. It could be argued that this analogy could be extended even further: not only existing scholarship is unevenly distributed between coalition formation and governance phases, but it also, much like the movies, focuses exclusively on the main characters (in this case ministerial portfolios), while everything else is being neglected.

There is wide-spread agreement among coalition theories that governmental coalitions are formed with both policy and office-maximizing motivations in mind (Budge and Laver 1986). This implies that at times some parties are willing to put up with ideologically more distant coalition partners to get a bigger share of government offices or, on the contrary, sacrifice a share of office spoils to form a coalition with an ideologically close partner. However, in either case, ministerial portfolios are allocated to reflect the plenary seat share that each partner has (Gamson 1961).

Yet, during the office allocation phase parties compete not only for ministerial portfolios, but also for a variety of other prized post-electoral positions, such as places in parliamentary boards, junior minister positions and chairs of parliamentary committees. But, despite these positions having substantial power and influence over the everyday life of the parliament, they have largely
remained outside the scope of analysis. In their study Carroll, Cox and Pachon (2006) introduced the term ‘mega-seats’ referring to these prized post-electoral positions. Later studies have demonstrated that mega-seats have a larger and more substantial impact on the functioning of parliaments than just the formal powers vested in these positions. For instance Martin (2011) demonstrates that the manner of mega-seat allocation can explain the high levels of party discipline in political systems where the electoral system should encourage MPs to vote independently, primarily driven by the interests of their constituency in order to cultivate the personal vote. Meanwhile in a study of Danish Folketing Hansen (2014) demonstrates that the strategic allocation of committee chair positions has allowed minority cabinets to secure backing from some opposition parties and thus foster cabinet stability.

So far the biggest and most developed strain of research on mega-seats has focused on their use for oversight purposes in coalition governments. Since Thies (2001), attention has been drawn to how junior ministers are employed to ‘keep tabs’ on coalition partners. Because of their privileged access to information and keen awareness of the moods and attitudes inside the ministry, junior ministers are well suited to combat information asymmetry between the ministry and the parliament, as well as the information asymmetry between the ministerial party and the other parties in a coalition cabinet.

Later studies have demonstrated that the chairs of parliamentary committees can be used in similar fashion (Kim and Loewenberg 2005; Martin and Vanberg 2004). However, committee chairs are able to not only report instances of ministerial shirking to other coalition partners, as the junior ministers, they can also take a more active role in enforcing the coalition agreement.

Since parliamentary committees are endowed with substantial powers to modify legislative proposals, they enable the committee chair to act as a ‘counterweight’ to the minister (Carroll and Cox 2012). Cross-appointment of committee chairs to ‘shadow’ ministers reduces the amount of uncertainty and mistrust among coalition partners. By controlling the committee chair position, one coalition partner is ensured that an adopted policy will be in line with the provisions of the coalition agreement and will not harm its interests. Furthermore, such ‘shadowing’ can also act as a preventive measure: if a minister knows that his/her attempts to shirk from the coalition agreement or extract rent will be noticed and successfully countered, then this knowledge eliminates the very incentive for the minister to shirk and ensures that he/she only proposes policy which would be
acceptable to the coalition partners. In addition, committee chairs can serve as an ‘early-warning’ mechanism for the intentions of a particular minister, since they have the power to summon documentation and witnesses from the ministry in order to investigate any ongoing developments there. Finally, committee chairs also have the power to exercise ‘temporal veto’ power over a particular policy proposal by manipulating committee agenda to give the coalition party leaders ample time to negotiate the issue.

However, this strain of research also received criticism. The main argument of the critics is that each mega-seat has its own office value and, therefore, partners in a coalition government aim to have them allocated as proportionally as possible. Since often there is no chance to allocate the most prized cabinet positions with perfect proportionality, other mega-seats are used to compensate those partners who were disadvantaged during the ministerial portfolio allocation. Any matchups between junior ministers or committee chairs from one cabinet party and the minister form the other result from mere accident rather than from a conscious design (Manow and Zorn 2004). Another argument supporting this office thesis comes from Moury’s (2013) study on ministerial autonomy. She demonstrates that, though coalition ministers are far from independent when making policy decisions, junior ministers rarely, if ever, serve as a tool facilitating information exchange between coalition partners and rather they function just as policy directors in their departments.

It is important to note that both aforementioned studies supporting the office thesis only analyzed the role of junior ministers, and committee chairs, which are the focus of this study, remained outside their scope. Furthermore, it could be argued that the evidence used to support the policy and office theses are not mutually exclusive, thus making it nearly impossible to determine which claim has more validity. It is entirely possible that in a single case cabinet ministers will be ‘shadowed’ by either junior ministers or committee chairs from their partners’ parties while at the same time the overall distribution of mega-seats would be more proportional than distribution of cabinet positions alone, thus also indicating the compensation pattern. Manow and Zorn (2004:18) have noted this, but interpreted the situation in support of their thesis.

The problem that evidence supporting competing claims can exist in a single case demonstrates the need to engage in more comprehensive research and to shift the research focus from mere
attempts to find evidence supporting either office or policy theses to a more thorough analysis of the role certain mega-seats play in coalition governance and the overall motives of their allocation.

2. Government Coalitions and committee chair allocation in the Baltic states

This study analyzes cabinets and committee chair allocation patterns in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania from 1992 to 2012. Table 1 presents key descriptive statistics on the cabinets that were in office during that period. In total, there were 46 cabinets in the Baltic states during that time, averaging just above two cabinets per legislative period.

Roughly one third of the cabinets did not have a majority in the plenary, which is consistent with the European average (Strom 1990; Döring and Manow 2012). Coalition cabinets were the norm, with but a few exceptions. During this period Estonia had the smallest number of parties in governmental coalitions and the longest average cabinet life-span of the Baltic states, while the opposite was true for Latvia. It is highly probable that one of the reasons why Latvian cabinets lasted for a shorter period of time was that they were made up of a relatively high number of smaller parties (see the average size of governmental faction in the parliament), while in Estonia a same-sized majority in the parliament was achieved by including fewer parties in a coalition.

Furthermore, relatively narrow parliamentary majorities indicate that Baltic political parties are highly sensitive to the office gains associated with being in government and seek to maximize the office spoils rather than building broader consensus-oriented coalitions. This is especially evident in the way committee chair positions are allocated, as shown in Table 2 and Figure 1.

First, there is a clear disproportionality between governing and opposition parties’ shares of committee chair positions, with governing parties being disproportionately over-represented. Though there is some disproportionality favoring governmental parties in many European democracies (Fernandez 2013), it is considerably more pronounced in the Baltic states. That is especially evident in Lithuania, where opposition parties on average hold just 7% of committee
chair positions. Interestingly enough, only in the Lithuanian case there is a parliamentary rule of procedure stating that committee leadership positions should be allocated proportionally between all parliamentary party groups (Art. 46 of Statute of Seimas). However, most of the time governing parties get around that provision by keeping the committee chair positions for themselves and giving away vice-chairmanships to the opposition parties to keep up the proportionality clause.

Second, in line with the ‘policy thesis’ most of the committee chairs from governmental parties appear to be matched with ministers from different governmental parties, which would indicate that they are ‘shadowing’ ministers (Carroll and Cox 2012). Committee chairs matched with ministers from the same party constitute a far smaller group – less than a third from all the committee chairs.

Parliamentary committee chairs are very well suited for the task of overseeing ministers from coalition partners’ parties for two reasons: first, in many European countries, and the Baltic states among them, committees have substantial powers to acquire information about what developments are taking place in the ministry. This can be done by requesting documentation from the ministry or summoning witnesses (in case of the Baltic states with explicit obligation to appear), which might include high-ranking civil servants or the minister him-/herself.

Furthermore, in some European countries (and the Baltic states) committees in parliament are endowed with substantial powers to shape and amend the legislative proposals or even the authority to ‘kill’ a bill before it reaches the plenary. Hence, committees can have substantial influence over the text of the legislative proposal and have ample leeway to push a bill in the direction they prefer. Finally, committee chairs themselves have far-reaching control over committee’s timetables and, therefore, can either hasten or delay the passage of a certain bill onto the plenary. In fact, a chair’s control over the committee’s agenda can even be interpreted as a right to exercise ‘temporal veto’ over a specific bill: a committee chair through the manipulation of the committee’s timetable can put off the deliberation of a bill for long enough that coalition partners cannot meet and discuss the issue in coalition committee.

However, at the same time, evidence supporting the office thesis can be found as well. Table 3 shows regression analysis results depicting the relationship between the relative size of a party’s group in parliament and its share of either ministerial positions or all mega-seats it receives. In both sets of models (either analyzing all parties in the plenary or cabinet parties only) the inclusion
of committee chairs increases the models’ explanatory power and reduces the amount of outlying cases, which indicates that non-cabinet mega-seats reduce the disproportionality of cabinet position allocation. This finding is consistent with those of Manow and Zorn (2004), who brought forward the office thesis. Graphic representation of this relationship is depicted in Figure 2.

Furthermore, it appears that committee chair allocation is closely tied to the ministerial portfolio allocation. Usually committee chairmanships are (re)allocated immediately after cabinet formation in both scenarios: when a cabinet is formed following a general election or when a new cabinet is formed after the collapse of a previous cabinet. In both instances committee chair positions are reshuffled substantially. The only instances when formation of a new cabinet is not followed by a substantial re-allocation of committee chair positions is when after a collapse of a previous cabinet, a minority government takes office. Allowing the opposition parties to keep a sizable portion of committee chairs can then be interpreted as ‘buying favors’ (Hansen 2014) to ensure the stability of the cabinet.

Therefore, the Baltic states during the analyzed period exemplify both the office and policy theses of committee chair allocation. This is a clear indication that existing tools and indicators are imperfect and need to be improved by carrying out more in-depth comprehensive analysis of mega-seat allocation.

3. Logic of mega-seat allocation

This part of the paper discusses the main features of how mega-seats are allocated in the Baltic states and the logic behind this process. There are three sub-sections: first, discussing the relationship between cabinet party size and the disproportionality of mega-seat allocation; second, inquiring why certain parties get higher shares of ‘shadow’ committee chairs than others; and third, whether a party’s ideological position plays a role in mega-seat allocation.

3.1. Party size and committee chair allocation

Since Gamson’s theory of coalition formation (1961), it has been known that in coalition governments cabinet positions are allocated in a manner proportional to each partner’s parliamentary seat share. The same logic can be applied to all types of mega-seats. Yet, though the
mega-seats are allocated proportionally, there are still certain disproportionalities and differences (Fernandez 2013; Manow and Zorn 2004). Figure 3 shows the disproportionalities and differences of both cabinet position and committee chairmanship allocation in the Baltic states. Disproportionality of mega-seat allocation is calculated by the formula:

<Formula 1 about here>

Here Min/CC (P1) indicate the number of committee chairs or cabinet positions the party has, while T Min/CC denotes the overall number of parliamentary committees or cabinet positions. S (P1) and TS refer to the number of parliamentary seats the party controls and the overall number of seats in the parliament respectively.

<Figure 3 about here>

Table 2 shows that the relationship between a party’s size and its share of ministerial portfolios has higher \( \alpha \) coefficients (or y-intercepts) and lower \( \beta \) coefficients (slope coefficients) than its relationship with committee chair allocation. Figure 4 provides a graphic representation of this relationship.

<Figure 4 about here>

As seen in Figure 4, smaller parties in the coalition get a substantially greater share of ministerial portfolios than their size would suggest, while bigger parties receive higher portions of the committee chairs. In other words, it appears that junior coalition partners enjoy premiums during cabinet position allocation, while the senior coalition partners enjoy premiums during committee chair position allocation.

### 3.2. ‘Shadowing’ and committee chair allocation

Since committee chairs in the Baltic states have the authority to manipulate committee’s agenda and have substantial sway over how committee uses its powers, this position can either help or hinder a certain minister to implement his/her policies. In addition to the aforementioned temporal veto power, a committee chair also leads the formulation of the memorandum, which needs to be attached to the draft bill after the committee stage. The memorandum can sometimes urge either quick vote or more in depth deliberation of the matter. In Lithuania, it can also call for the adoption of a special procedure, which entails shorter breaks between plenary deliberations of a draft bill.
(Arts. 162-64 of the Statute of Seimas), thus substantially hastening the adoption of a particular piece of legislation.

Therefore, committee chairs have important leverage and influence over the content of policy that eventually gets adopted and especially over the duration of deliberation. Because of this, it can be expected that each partner in a coalition is tempted to pursue the minister + corresponding committee chair combination, as it would allow them to implement their preferred policies in that issue area with ease (Hansen 2014). However, at the same time each party has a vested interest to prevent its partners from acquiring such pairs, as it would greatly limit their authority over these policy spheres.

Due to their size, bargaining power and the fact that bigger parties agree to cede disproportionately large shares of ministerial positions to their junior partners, it can be expected that bigger parties would seek compensation by getting more minister + committee chair combinations. At the same time, they would seek to limit the influence of their junior partners by denying them such arrangements and appointing a faction of their committee chairs to ‘shadow’ ministers from those parties. Table 4 shows the regression results depicting the relationship between the relative size of a coalition party and the share of its ministers that were either ‘shadowed’ or had a committee chair from the same party.

<Table 4 about here>

The results in Table 4 demonstrate that the size of a cabinet party has an effect on the type of committee chairs it possesses even when controlling for opposition mega-seat share (as a proxy for minority government, under which committee chairs are allocated differently). Positive β coefficient in Models 3 and 4 indicate that bigger parties usually get more minister and committee chair combinations, as the party size is positively associated with the overall share of minister + committee chair pairs. Meanwhile, a negative β in Models 1 and 2 indicates that ministers from the smaller parties are more likely to use their committee chairs as ‘shadows’, since party size also means higher overall proportion of ‘shadows’ among a party’s committee chairs.

Furthermore, Models 5 and 6 indicate that smaller parties are also more likely to have their ministers ‘shadowed’ by a committee chair from another coalition party. Some of those matchups can occur purely by accident, as bigger parties can get more committee chairs than ministers,
making it inevitable that such committee chairs would be matched up with the ministers from other parties. However, based on the Models 1, 2, 5, and 6 it is evident that smaller parties are more likely to use their committee chairs as ‘shadows’ and simultaneously are more likely to have their ministers ‘shadowed’, which indicates that bigger parties have prevented them from acquiring minister + committee chair combinations. Therefore, while bigger parties in a coalition enjoy easier policy implementation due to the minister + committee chair pairing, smaller partners in a coalition are more likely to have their ministers ‘shadowed’ and overseen. Furthermore, it appears that smaller parties are often overseeing one another in bigger coalitions.

### 3.3. Ideological position and committee chair allocation

As Figure 3 demonstrates that there are substantial disproportionalities in how the committee chairs are allocated, that these are considerably bigger than disproportionalities of cabinet position allocation. To explain why such disproportionalities occur, Jorge Fernandez (2013) proposed a Party Power Index (PPI), which is calculated as follows:

<Formula 2 about here>

Where \( S(P) \) refers to the number of seats a party controls in the parliament, \( TS \) – total number of plenary seats, \( \text{Cab.} \) and \( \text{PM} \) are dummies for cabinet membership and prime minister’s position respectively.

However, this paper argues that PPI is not sufficient on its own to explain the disproportionality of committee chair allocation. Since committee chairs have sizable influence over the fate and the content of a draft bill, parties in a coalition cabinet should have certain policy-related sensitivities regarding who gets to be appointed a committee chair. We argue that coalition should have a clear negative preference towards committee chairs from non-central or ideologically immoderate parties.

Figure 5 shows how the policy proposals (\( p_1-p_2 \)) move based on a position of a veto-player (an institutional actor that can block a proposal (Tsebelis 2002)). Since committee chairs can exercise ‘temporal veto’ by manipulation committee’s agenda and delaying the deliberation of a certain bill or can urge the committee to heavily amend or ‘kill’ a proposal altogether, parliamentary committees can in fact be treated as institutional veto players. Ministers (P) anticipating a committee’s reaction are likely to move their proposals from their ideal-point (\( p_I \)) to a more
acceptable position ($p2$). If they do not do that, the adjustment is likely to be made in a committee anyways, and its course will be entirely out of the hands of the minister. For this to happen it does not matter if a veto player (V) is located centrally (scenario 2) or marginally (scenario 1). However, the marginal position of a veto player (in this case a committee chair) could have a destabilizing influence which could increase policy volatility. It would occur as more actors would have it in their interests to challenge marginal policy. Consequentially, all coalition work in general could be negatively affected, since this could lead to the mutual blocking of legislative initiatives, gridlock and, eventually, coalition break-up.

Because of this, a committee chair from an ideologically centrally located or moderate party is naturally more preferred to an immoderate alternative. That is especially important, since the majority of committee chairs are ‘shadowing’ ministers and are tasked to oversee the content of their policies. Table 5 presents the regression analysis results, where disproportionality of committee chair allocation is the dependent variable and party’s relative size, PPI and immoderation are used as independent variables. Party’s immoderation is measured using Chapel Hill Expert Survey data (Bakker et al. 2015) by taking an absolute value of the difference between a party’s position on a general left-right scale (ranging 1-10) and the center of a left-right spectrum.

First, Table 5 shows that PPI explains the disproportionality of committee chair allocation much better than the relative size of a party alone. Second, as Model 3 indicates, a party’s immoderate stance alone can account for roughly 10% of total variance and negative $\beta$ indicates that more immoderate parties receive less committee chair positions. Model 4 measures the effect of PPI and Immoderation together. Both variables perform as expected and together explain roughly 40% of the variance.

### 4. The pattern of committee chair allocation

As mentioned before, the way the committee chairs are allocated in the Baltic states can be interpreted in two ways: as supporting either the policy or office theses. However, as our previous part demonstrated, the actual committee chair allocation scheme is more complex. This part summaries the insights from the three elements that shape committee chair allocation into one coherent pattern.
First, the allocation of committee chairs is quite disproportional and thus substantially departs from Gamson’s law of portfolio allocation in coalition governments. Cabinet parties usually receive an absolute majority of committee chair positions, even if parliamentary rules of procedure recommend proportional allocation of committee chairmanships among all party groups. The only instances where opposition parties get substantial proportions of committee chairs are when the cabinet is backed by a minority in the parliament and needs to “buy favors” (Hansen 2014).

Second, it comes as no surprise that in the Baltic states smaller parties that make it into the cabinet receive disproportionately larger shares of cabinet positions. However, it appears that bigger parties compensate for smaller shares of cabinet positions by getting bigger shares of committee chairmanships. The bigger parties use their committee chair positions to get as many minister + committee chair combinations as possible and employ the remaining committee chairs to oversee their partners.

Third, smaller parties in a coalition are usually denied such arrangements. Smaller parties are more likely to use their committee chair to shadow a minister from a different party and are more likely to have their ministers shadowed as well. This indicates that in bigger coalitions junior partners are tasked with ‘checking’ and overseeing each other’s actions.

Fourth, though undoubtedly bigger parties get disproportionally large shares of committee chair positions and smaller partners disproportionally small ones, the size of a party alone does not fully explain the disproportionality of committee chair allocation. First, there appears to be a bonus associated with holding a prime minister’s position (see PPI in the previous part). Second, a party’s ideology also plays a role. Since committee chairs can act as institutional veto players, they can push draft legislation to be more closely aligned with their preferences. For this reason, parties which are immoderate (i.e. located further from the center of the political spectrum) receive fewer committee chairs than their moderate counterparts.

**Summary and conclusions**

Parliamentary committee chairs wield substantial influence over the day-to-day functioning of parliamentary committees and, consequentially, the legislative proposals that come through them. This paper aimed to analyze the logic and motivations that drive the allocation of committee chair positions among coalition partners.
Existing literature has identified two competing explanations for this. One represents the policy thesis which advocates that committee chair appointments are primarily driven by policy concerns, as coalition parties seek to oversee and shadow the activities of a minister belonging to a different party. Meanwhile, the office thesis argues that committee chairmanships are allocated with a principal aim to compensate the parties who received disproportionally small shares of cabinet positions. The problem is that the evidence presented to support either of those theses has not been mutually exclusive: a single case can contain patterns of committee chair appointment that would support both theses.

This paper analyzed data from the three Baltic states from 1990 to 2012 which are also characterized by such mixed evidence. The analysis demonstrated that both policy and office motivations drive the process of committee chair allocation, but the logic behind these motivations is more complex than previously anticipated. First, bigger parties compensate for their losses during cabinet formation by getting most of the committee chairs. They try to secure as many minister + committee chair combinations as possible, as it makes passing desired legislation much easier and efficient.

At the same time, there is a clear tendency that the majority of the committee chairs serve as shadows to a minister from another coalition party to ensure that they are not shirking from the coalition agreement. Furthermore, it appears that often junior partners in a coalition are tasked with overseeing and monitoring each other’s ministers. Finally, ideologically more moderate parties get more committee chairmanships than their immoderate colleagues.

These results are not surprising, as committee chairs have an office value primarily because of their capacity to influence draft legislation. Other benefits that come with that position, such as salary increases, a bigger office, etc. pale in comparison with that power. Therefore, it is very natural that mixed motivations drive the allocation of such prized positions. However, the problems identified here with existing explanations regarding the functioning and allocation of mega-seats indicate that more thorough analysis is needed in this area.

**Bibliography:**


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Tables and Figures:

Table 1: Descriptive statistics on cabinets in the Baltic states

<table>
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<th>Latvia:</th>
<th>Lithuania:</th>
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<td>Number of cabinets:</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>12</td>
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<td>Minority:</td>
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<td>12 (58%)</td>
<td>9 (75%)</td>
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<td>2 (15%)</td>
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<td>Coalition:</td>
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<td>9 (42%)</td>
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<td>Avg. number of parties in cabinet:</td>
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<td>Avg. seat share of cabinet groups in plenary</td>
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<td>55%</td>
<td>57%</td>
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Table 2: Committee chair allocation in the Baltic states

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<td>Avg. number of cabinet positions</td>
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<td>Governing coalition share</td>
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<td>89.8%</td>
<td>93%</td>
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<td>Opposition</td>
<td>25.1%</td>
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<td>Same</td>
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<td>Shadow</td>
<td>57.4%</td>
<td>63.9%</td>
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Figure 1: Committee chair types in the Baltic states

![Committee chair types in the Baltic states](image)

Table 3: Proportionality of mega-seat allocation

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<tr>
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<td>Model 2</td>
<td>Model 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relative size (all parliamentary parties)</td>
<td>0.94*** (.07)</td>
<td>1.14*** (.07)</td>
<td>1.07*** (.07)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relative size (only cabinet parties)</td>
<td>1.05*** (.10)</td>
<td>1.37*** (.11)</td>
<td>1.31*** (.08)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.002 (.01)</td>
<td>-0.02 (.01)</td>
<td>-0.01 (.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R2</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>0.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>377</td>
<td>377</td>
<td>377</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sig. levels: ***-at 0.00; **- at 0.01; *- at 0.05
Figure 2: Relationship between the size of party’s parliamentary group and the share of cabinet positions and all mega-seats

![Graphs showing the relationship between size of parliamentary group and cabinet positions/mega-seats](image)

**Formula 1:**

\[
D = \left( \frac{\text{Min}(P1) \text{ or } CC(P1)}{\text{TMin or TCC}} - \frac{S(P1)}{TS} \right)
\]

Figure 3: Disproportionality of mega-seat allocation

![Graphs showing kernel density of cabinet and committee chair allocation](image)
Figure 4: Differences in mega-seat allocation by party size

Table 4: Party group size and different types of committee chairs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>‘Shadow’</th>
<th>Same</th>
<th>‘Shadowed’ minister</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Model 1</td>
<td>Model 2</td>
<td>Model 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relative size</td>
<td>-.78*</td>
<td>-.74*</td>
<td>1.39***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.33)</td>
<td>(.33)</td>
<td>(.30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share of committee</td>
<td>-.39*</td>
<td>-.39*</td>
<td>.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chairs controlled by</td>
<td>(.17)</td>
<td>(.17)</td>
<td>(.16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the opposition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>.83***</td>
<td>.88***</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.07)</td>
<td>(.07)</td>
<td>(.07)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R2</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sig. levels: ***-at 0.00; **- at 0.01; *- at 0.05
Figure 5: Policy impact of a single veto-player on a one-directional scale.

Formula 2:

\[ PPI = \frac{S(P)}{TS} + Cab + PM \]

Table 5: Explaining disproportionality of committee chair allocation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
<th>Model 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N=340</td>
<td>Model 1</td>
<td>Model 2</td>
<td>Model 3</td>
<td>Model 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relative size</td>
<td>.14 (.07)</td>
<td>.07*** (.01)</td>
<td>.19*** (.03)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPI</td>
<td>.07*** (.01)</td>
<td>.07** (.02)</td>
<td>.05** (.02)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immoderation</td>
<td>-.02 (.01)</td>
<td>-.05*** (.01)</td>
<td>-.05 (.03)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPI*Immoderation</td>
<td>.07** (.02)</td>
<td>- .02 (.01)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-.05*** (.01)</td>
<td>-.05** (.02)</td>
<td>-.05 (.03)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R2</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sig. levels: ***-at 0.00; **- at 0.01; *- at 0.05