Intra-party Conflict and Cabinet Survival in 17 West European Democracies, 1945-1999

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Introduction

Formal coalition theory and comparative empirical studies have traditionally modelled coalition politics as a game between party leaders, whose parties were seen as unitary or, at least in general, unified actors. This seemed justifiable as the parties’ parliamentary behaviour tends to be characterised by high levels of cohesion. Despite the existence of conflict, therefore, parties in parliamentary systems of government generally tend to behave as if they were unitary actors, at least in situations where they compete for scarce resources such as votes, office or the success of their preferred policies. The lack of realism bedevilling the 'unitary-actor assumption' was generally acknowledged, even by those who defended it (e.g., Laver and Schofield 1990: *). Nevertheless, it was taken to be a generally justifiable assumption that made the comparative study of inter-party bargaining in coalitions tractable (Laver 1999: 7-8). Theoretical models were to be evaluated against the accuracy of their predictions rather than the realism of their assumptions, to draw on Friedman's (1953) famous proposition.

Yet, empirical investigations have shown that many coalition phenomena cannot be predicted without relaxing the unitary-actor assumption and modelling coalition politics as being determined ‘by two interlocking political games … At one level, party leaders do interact with each other, as modelled by classical coalition theorists. At another level, each decision a party leader makes has to be carried through within the party’s internal political system – and of course party leaders will anticipate the need to do this when making commitments to other party leaders’ (Laver 1999: 11). Three examples should suffice to illustrate the point: The failure of the centre-right majority in the Norwegian Storting to dislodge Gro Harlem

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1 The data on which this paper draws were collected by a multi-national team of researchers for (1) Wolfgang C. Müller and Kaare Strøm (eds.), Coalition Government in Western Europe. Oxford: Oxford University Press 2000 and (2) Kaare Strøm, Wolfgang C. Müller and Torbjörn Bergman (eds.): Delegation and Accountability in Parliamentary Democracies. Oxford: Oxford University Press 2003. This project was supported in part by a grant to Torbjörn Bergman from the Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation through the project on ‘Constitutional Change and Parliamentary Democracy’ (Project No. 1996-0801). I owe thanks Magnus Blomgren, Elisabeth Gerber, Scott Kastner and Ben Nyblade for their invaluable assistance in preparing the data set and to Torbjörn Bergman, Wolfgang C. Müller, Kaare Strøm and the other contributors to this volume for much of the information. Needless to say that any remaining errors or opacities are my responsibility alone.
Brundtland’s Social Democratic minority cabinet in 1987 cannot be adequately understood if intra-party processes are disregarded. Uncertainties in the centre-right parties’ internal ‘delegation regimes’ were exploited by the then leader of the Progress Party thus preventing the centre-right opposition parties to realise benefits from inter-party cooperation (in the form of a cabinet of their own parties replacing the Social Democratic cabinet; Strøm 1994; 1999; 2001). Cabinet instability in post-war Italy (until the early 1990s) is hard to understand without appreciating the complicated interaction between inter-party and intra-party competition, including the competition within the faction-ridden Democrazia Christiana (cf. Mershon 2001). The ‘oversized’ nature and seeming instability of German cabinets in the 1950s is largely a result of serious conflicts within the centre-right and conservative parties that were in coalition with the Christian Democrats as well as the Christian Democrats’ own internal lack of cohesion (Saalfeld 1995; 2000).

Yet, ‘[l]ifting the lid off intraparty politics when we model interparty competition in a parliamentary government system is’, as Laver (1999: 10) puts it, ‘much more easily said than done’. In addition to the inevitable increase in the complexity of theoretical models, intra-party conflict (and conflict management) is often not directly observable by the researcher. Observable actions reflecting dissent within parliamentary parties are rare occurrences in the competitive parliamentary systems of government in Western Europe, where government ministers and government backbenchers generally see themselves as ‘sitting in the same boat’ and competing against other parties. Members of parliament tend to believe that public dissent may jeopardise their re-election chances and that it is likely to have negative consequences for a party’s ability to affect policy (see, e.g., Cowley 2002: 176-179). Both government ministers and backbenchers often consider backbench rebellions ‘as an admission of failure’ (Cowley 2002: 179), which typically occurs when discreet intraparty bargaining ‘behind closed doors’ (Heidar and Koole 2000) has failed. In addition, governments often anticipate the reactions of their backbenchers to policies agreed in cabinet or in coalition committees and attempt to avoid overt revolts by making proposals that are broadly acceptable to their respective parliamentary constituencies. Thus the absence of overt backbench action in relation to government policies may reflect the strength rather than weakness of backbench influence on the interministerial and interparty negotiations at cabinet level.

Therefore, case studies (see, for example, Laver 1999; Luebbert 1986; Maor 1998; Mitchell 1999; Narud 1995; Timmermans 2003) and ideographic studies (for the Federal Republic of Germany see, for example, Baring and Görtemaker 1982; Koerfer 1988; Niclaus 2001) have
generally been the dominant and most successful approach to the study of the intraparty sources of cabinet instability. Comparative empirical studies, by contrast, have been few and far between. To my knowledge, Druckman’s (1996) study of the influence of party factionalism on cabinet durability is the only comparative, quantitative analysis in English language. Druckman demonstrates that increasing levels of party factionalism reduce the life expectancy of cabinets significantly, even if other institutional variables are controlled for in a multi-variate design. Further comparative studies will be needed to complement case studies, if more general, cumulative knowledge is to be produced in this crucial area.

The present paper will not be able to close the empirical gaps in our understanding of the link between intraparty conflict and cabinet stability completely. In its first main section, it will present some unpublished descriptive data on the extent to which behavioural (as opposed to purely technical) cabinet terminations in Western Europe’s parliamentary and semi-presidential democracies (1945-1999) have been influenced by intraparty conflict. The data were collected by a multi-national team of researchers and largely published in Müller and Strøm (2000a) and Strøm, Müller and Bergman (2003). In the second main section, I will then summarise the intuitions behind two game-theoretic models designed to analyse the interaction between interparty and intraparty bargaining in parliamentary systems. The first model was suggested by Laver (1999) and focuses on the political costs and benefits of ‘whipping’, whereas the second model, outlined by Druckman (1996) and Strøm (2001) focuses on the impact of intraparty delegation regimes on interparty bargaining. In the third main section, these two models will be operationalised and – as far as possible – tested using data on cabinet survival and institutional information from the data sets mentioned above. The dependent variable will be the hazard rate of behavioural cabinet terminations in 17 West European parliamentary democracies between 1945 and 1999. A ‘unified’ model of cabinet termination (following the approach first used by King, Alt, Burns and Laver 1990) and a competing risks design (following Diermeier and Stevenson 2000) will be used to estimate a number of multivariate survival models with the hazard rate of behavioural cabinet termination on the independent and a number of time-constant institutional covariates on the dependent side.

Cabinet Duration and Intraparty Conflict as a Significant Source of Cabinet Instability

There is no complete consensus in the literature dealing with the measurement of our dependent variable, cabinet duration (cf. Huber 1998: 577-81; Laver and Schofield 1990: 145; Lijphart 1984).
'A government typically begins when it is appointed by a head of state. In some European countries, a government or the individual designated to head it must surmount a second hurdle: a formal parliamentary vote of investiture' (Warwick 1994: 27). If there is an investiture vote, it is treated as a government’s first parliamentary test rather than its formal beginning (Warwick 1994:27). This seems to be a convincing approach as it allows to standardise the ‘birth’ of cabinets across a large number of different cases and practices and treats an investiture vote as a potential terminal event in the life of a cabinet rather than its starting point. A variety of alternative cut-off points have been suggested to determine the termination of a cabinet (Lijphart 1984). In the present study, a cabinet is considered to be terminated with the occurrence of any one of the following conditions (I am using the definition suggested by Müller and Strøm 2000b: 12): (1) Any change in the set of parties holding cabinet membership. We count as members of the cabinet those and only those parties that have designated representatives with cabinet voting rights. Hence parties supporting the cabinet in parliament without holding cabinet portfolios are not included. (2) Any change in the identity of the head of government and (3) any general election, whether mandated by the end of the constitutional inter-election period (CIEP), or precipitated by a premature dissolution of parliament. Cabinet duration is the period between the official inauguration of a cabinet and the date on which the head of government submitted the government’s resignation.\textsuperscript{2} In cases where the administration continued in office during general elections, the date of the election is used as a termination point (cf. Strøm 1990: 115).

Table 1 provides data about the mean cabinet duration (in days) for all 17 West European parliamentary democracies in our sample for the entire period 1945 (or the respective establishment of a liberal democracy) until 1999. The table demonstrates that the average cabinet duration varied considerably in the 17 countries considered. The range between the average cabinet duration in Luxembourg (1,170 days) at one extreme and Italy (347 days) at the other is 823 days, more than two years.

The majority of cabinet terminations in our ‘window of observations’ were not of a technical, but of a ‘behavioural’ nature. In other words, the majority of terminations were at the discretion of one or more of the actors involved. Technical terminations would, for example, be regular elections, other

\textsuperscript{2}Resignations that were subsequently withdrawn or refused have been discounted.
constitutional reasons or the death of the head of government. Discretionary terminations, by contrast, include early parliamentary dissolutions, voluntary enlargements of coalitions, parliamentary defeats at the hands of the opposition, conflicts between coalition parties over policy or personal matters, and conflict within any coalition party. Between 1945 and 1999, approximately six out of ten cabinet terminations in West European parliaments were discretionary, that is, they resulted from choices made by the actors (parties or party leaders) involved (not to terminate a cabinet unless forced to for technical reasons is, strictly speaking, of course, also a choice made by the actors). There are considerable variations between the individual countries. The only countries with a preponderance of technical terminations are Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden, the countries with the highest levels of cabinet stability overall. At the other end of the spectrum, discretionary terminations account for at least three-quarters of all terminations in Ireland, Italy, Belgium and Denmark (Müller and Strøm 2000c: 585). These observations confirm that cabinet terminations are an important field for behavioural political analysis, as they are not predominantly determined by institutional constraints.

Although nearly one in three cabinets in post-war Western Europe (1945-99) was terminated due to conflicts between the coalition parties (Müller and Strøm 2000c: 586), intraparty conflicts were a significant source of cabinet instability, too. Between 1945 and 1999, approximately one in seven cabinets was terminated as the result of conflicts within one or more of the parties represented in the relevant cabinet (Table 3). Table 3 also shows that coalition cabinets were not significantly less likely to be terminated as a result of intraparty conflicts than single-party cabinets.

Table 4 differentiates between different types of intraparty conflicts. Like the information on which Table 3 is based, the raw data for Table 4 were provided by the country experts who collected the data for Müller and Strøm (2000a). The categories used for coding allow to distinguish between intraparty conflicts (1) within the national party leadership, (2) between a united national party leadership and ‘non-leaders’ (for example parliamentary backbenchers or lower-ranking party members outside the parliament) and (3) within the national party leadership, but involving ‘non-leaders’ as well. Table 4 demonstrates that nearly eight out of ten intraparty conflicts that led to cabinet terminations were within the national party leadership with Italy, Germany, France and Ireland accounting for the vast majority of cases. In other words,
the most dangerous threats to incumbent cabinet ministers do not stem from government backbenchers or regional party organisations, but from their fellow party leaders in the national leadership (for example, factional leaders).

Hierarchy or Delegation? Alternative Game Theoretic Models

In the previous section it could be established that intraparty conflicts are a significant source of cabinet instability, although interparty conflict is quantitatively more important across Western Europe. However, the coding of the causes of cabinet terminations was carried out ex post facto. Our data do not provide any information on the number and nature of intraparty conflicts that did not lead to a cabinet termination. Interministerial bargaining between ministers of the same party or of different parties in a coalition cabinet may have been discreetly influenced by backbenchers ‘behind closed doors’ (Heidar and Koole 2000) avoiding open rebellion. ‘Worse’ from the perspective of a behavioural study, ministers may have anticipated acceptance problems in the government party or parties. These types of latent conflict are not observable for researchers. It may be possible to identify processes of influence in ideographic studies, but they present serious problems for students of comparative politics as they rule out research strategies based on process tracing. From an institutionalist perspective, however, the numerical ratio of those intraparty conflicts that led to a cabinet dissolution and those that did not is not the most interesting issue. The most interesting question is: Are there institutional mechanisms that systematically increase or reduce the risk of cabinet terminations due to intraparty conflict? To what extent does the risk of a termination resulting from intraparty conflict follow specific patterns that distinguish it from other dissolutions? This question can be addressed through a research strategy of studying outcomes rather than tracing processes: ‘Influence’ as Martin (2000: 9) points out in a slightly different context, ‘is best measured by looking at patterns of outcomes, asking whether they covary with characteristics of the legislative environment. Studies of activity alone are insufficient for testing claims about influence; patterns of outcomes will be more revealing.’

This approach, however, requires appropriate ex-ante theoretical models that specify the mechanisms connecting variations in the actors’ preferences, legislative environments and outcomes. In the following sections, I will present the intuition behind two game-theoretic models, which provide a specification of the relevant mechanisms, namely Laver’s (1999) ‘whipping game’ and Druckman’s (1996) and Strøm’s (2001) models based on intraparty
delegation regimes. Both types of models are influenced by the idea of party politics as a ‘nested game’ with variable payoff where political parties pursue competitive and cooperative strategies in several but connected arenas. The parties’ payoffs in the ‘main arena’ vary according to the outcome of further games in other, connected arenas. As a result, strategies that seem to be ‘irrational’ if one focuses on one arena only, may be perfectly rational responses to a situation where payoffs are influenced by strategies and payoffs in other arenas (Tsebelis 1992: 188).

*Laver’s ‘Whipping Game’*

Laver’s (1999) ‘whipping game’ provides a useful illustration for a game-theoretic representation of a nested game. An intra-party ‘whipping game’ is nested within a larger inter-party coalition game. The game models interparty negotiations between a Party Leader P and his or her opposite number in the other party, Party Leader Q. Assuming that both party leaders agree on a particular policy and that the convention of collective cabinet responsibility is an important norm, both party leaders now have an obligation to persuade their own parties (here only symbolised by Pivotal Legislator P’) to support this policy in a parliamentary vote. Hence, the interparty game is followed by an intraparty ‘whipping game’, in which Party Leader P can (a) apply party discipline (‘whip’) or (b) allow independent decision-making by members of his or her own parliamentary party (what matters in this illustration is only the pivotal Legislator P’).

The willingness and/or ability of Party Leader P to carry his party – even if he has to impose a whip and to sanction dissenters within his own party – then feeds back into the interparty coalition game as Party Leader Q will have to decide how to respond to the decisions taken in the other party. The game cannot be developed fully here (see Laver 1999: 12-23). The possible moves and payoffs for Party Leader P, Pivotal Legislator P’ and Party Leader Q are given in the game tree and explained below the diagram.

*— Figure 1 about here —*

The crucial variables in Laver’s ‘whipping game’ are the payoffs and costs associated with the various moves: costs and payoffs of reneging, costs of applying sanctions to one’s own party members and credibility hits for reneging and/or ability or unwillingness to carry the own party. This has a number of important strategic consequences:

‘…a party leader’s failure to deliver on commitments may be seen either as a straightforward reneging on the part of the leader, or as a political failure by the leader to carry the commitment within party. This failure … may … have been anticipated quite
accurately by a party leader who cynically made a commitment to others in the clear expectation that this could not be carried within his or her own party. This raises ... the clear possibility of shirking by party leaders, who may not put in the effort needed to ensure fulfilment of commitments that have become inconvenient. These different potential reasons why a party leader might fail to honour commitments may well have a bearing upon how other political actors react to such failure. We quickly find ourselves in muddy strategic waters’ (Laver 1999: 11-12).

Laver's model is based on the party leaders' ability and willingness to ‘whip’ and punish dissenters, if necessary. It provides an elegant model of a nested game at a high level of generality. It is not difficult to identify institutional arrangements that are likely to increase the cost of reneging and/or failure to carry one's own party dramatically. If Party Leader Q is simultaneously the head of government and if this affords him with the right to table a confidence motion or dissolve parliament before the end of the CIEP, he or she can reduce Party Leader P's payoff for reneging and pivotal Legislator P's defection payoff, depending on the timing of the inter-party and/or intra-party conflict within the parliamentary term. Diermeier and Feddersen (1998) as well as Huber (1996) have developed game-theoretic models to explain how the availability of the confidence procedure enhances the discipline of government parties in parliamentary systems of government. In addition, far-reaching dissolution powers may add credibility and severity to Party Leader P's ability to sanction pivotal Legislator P', if he chooses to defect and increases the credibility of Party Leader Q (on dissolution powers, also see Strøm and Swindle 2002, although from a different angle).

The data set generated for the Müller and Strøm (2000a) and Strøm, Müller and Bergman (2003) projects do not provide data with a great deal of variation in regard of the head of governments' powers to table a confidence motion unilaterally. Huber's (1996) dataset does not include all countries in the present sample. Nevertheless there is considerable variation in the head of governments' possibilities to impose electoral penalties by dissolving parliament and reasserting their authority and credibility by taking policy issues or ‘betrayal’ by a coalition partner to the country. Therefore we would expect the head of government's power to dissolve parliament to reduce the risk of a cabinet termination due to intraparty conflict (Hypothesis 1).

The second institutional device that potentially increases a credibility hit to Party Leader P, if s/he reneges on an agreed policy or fails to carry his or her party is a clearly understood norm of coalition discipline in legislation. In other words, the existence of an established norm that coalition parties do not vote opportunistically against each other in the legislative process would increase the political cost of defection. This norm reinforces the norm of collective responsibility and affects the credibility of party leaders in the long run. Again, the existence of such a norm
increases the political cost of reneging and should decrease the risk of a cabinet termination due to intraparty conflicts (*Hypothesis 2*).

Laver’s (1999) crucial independent variables focus on the perceived costs of ‘reputational hits’ suffered by party leaders and of sanctions imposed (or not imposed) by them. In empirical studies, such costs are best analysed in case studies with a large amount of contextual information (as produced by Laver 1999: 23-26). It is less suitable for comparative designs with a larger number of cases, because the detailed information necessary to assess such costs is not available *ex ante*. Therefore it is necessary to use variables that are likely to influence the costs identified by Laver. These variables have the character of proxy variables, which are always only a second-best. In designs with larger numbers of cases, it may therefore be sensible to rely on more readily available information about variations in intra-party ‘delegation regimes’ that could be used to estimate such costs (e.g., Druckman 1995; Strøm 2001).

**Delegation Regimes**

In Strøm’s (2001) model of coalition bargaining in the context of the ‘Presthus debacle’ in Norway (1987), payoffs are influenced by the actors’ preferences (office, votes, policies), institutional constraints, stage of the electoral cycle and intra-party constraints imposed on party leaders. Strøm’s starting point is that coalition bargaining may fail, if there is a significant amount of uncertainty in the game, which reduces the negotiators’ ability to commit themselves to a particular bargaining outcome. Strøm (2001: 16) argues that

‘[i]nformation asymmetry in coalition bargaining may in large part be a function of intraparty politics. Party leaders may know each other’s personal preferences and yet be less than fully informed about the discretion each enjoys vis-à-vis his respective party. This goes at the heart of the assumption that parties bargain as unitary actors ... It is often more fruitful to think of party leaders as agents of their respective parliamentary or extraparliamentary parties (their principals) in coalition bargaining. Because of variation in delegation regimes, party leaders may be constrained in different ways in these negotiations. Such constraints may strongly affect outcomes, and when bargaining fails, it may be because of how the hands of the agents are tied’.

Whereas Laver’s ‘whipping game’ is based on a coercive ‘top-down’ perspective, delegation models give certain powers to party members outside the government. This adds to the realism of such models. Delegation models of party politics generally rest on the assumption that democratic politicians care about jointly produced goods such as policy, office and votes, but
need leaders to overcome collective-action and coordination problems in the electoral process and in the legislature (Aldrich 1995; Cox 1987; Cox/McCubbins 1993; Müller 2000). Hence party members delegate the authority to act on their behalf (with a specified amount of discretion) to leaders as their agents. Delegating to leaders can yield superior outcomes, if these experts have superior knowledge of 'the state of the world', including external shocks and factors influencing the mechanisms of coordination within and between political parties. Delegation to party leaders may be problematic, however, if the preferences of agents and principals are not entirely congruent. Leaders, for example, may be more interested in office benefits, whereas their followers may place a stronger emphasis on policies (Strøm and Müller 1999).

Preference incongruence and the informational asymmetries typical for principal-agent situations may give agents incentives to exploit their informational advantage (for which they have been appointed in the first place) and engage in opportunistic behaviour to bring a decision closer to their own rather than the principal's ideal point (Lupia 2003). Principals can use a number of ex-ante and ex-post screening and monitoring devices to reduce the risk of agent opportunism and, hence, agency loss.

Before delegation takes place, principals may seek to protect themselves by screening agents and constraining them, in advance, through the use of contracts. Formal contracts may include coalition agreements committing the government and government parties to a particular set of policies, which they have negotiated and often formally ratified. Such a contract could be sealed by an explicit ratification through party bodies or a parliamentary investiture vote. The existence of an explicit, mutually agreed coalition agreement provides a degree of ex-ante control and is expected to reduce the risk of a cabinet termination due to intraparty conflict (Hypothesis 3). The investiture vote is the formal parliamentary ratification of this agreement. If such a vote is meaningful at all, it gives parliamentary principals (i.e., the parliamentary parties)
a chance to refuse delegation, if the coalition agreement is not satisfactory. Thus the existence
of an investiture vote should initially increase the probability of a cabinet termination due to
insufficient intraparty support. However, after this initial phase, the probability of a cabinet
termination due to intraparty conflict should decrease (*Hypothesis 4*).

Yet, as Laver (1999: 12) points out: ‘[t]he ideal-type coalition agreement defines a mutually
agreed strategy for each coalition partner in every foreseeable political circumstance, together
with a procedure for dealing with unanticipated political shocks. Real-world coalition
agreements will, of course, remain silent on many potential future political circumstances.’
Therefore, an effective delegation regime will also entail some of the *ex-post* mechanisms
specified by agency theory. After powers have been delegated to an agent, principals may
seek to reduce the risk of agent opportunism by requiring agents to report and account for their
activities regularly, or by setting up more or less elaborate monitoring systems (Kiewiet and
McCubbins 1991: 22-39). Both single-party governments and coalition cabinets often employ
special bodies that provide a forum for the articulation and monitoring of compliance issues and
for the renegotiation of coalition agreements after the occurrence of unanticipated ‘external
shocks’ (e.g., an economic crisis, a war or a rapid decline of government popularity). The
existence and frequent use of such bodies should reduce the probability of a cabinet
termination due to intraparty conflict, if these bodies include not only members of the cabinet,
but also members of (a) the parliamentary parties and (b) the extra-parliamentary parties
(*Hypothesis 5a and 5b*).

**Testing the Models**

The dependent variable is the hazard rate of cabinet termination. The hazard rate is the
conditional probability that a certain event occurs in a specified period. In order to estimate the
impact of any covariates, a ‘baseline hazard’ rate needs to be specified. This requires a
theoretical expectation about the distribution of the probabilities of an event occurring over
time, for example, over the lifetime of a cabinet. The regression models presented here are based on a Cox proportional hazard model. The model assumes that there is a baseline hazard rate \( h_0(t) \) indicating the underlying probability of cabinet termination over time when all independent variables are zero, but makes no assumptions about the distribution of probabilities over time. The independent variables (covariates) lead to deviations in the hazard rate from this baseline. The ‘hazard ratios’ reported in our multivariate analyses below are the exponents of the estimated coefficients. Ratios equal to one indicate that as a covariate’s value changes, the marginal change in the hazard is zero. Ratios greater than one imply that the hazard is increasing as the value of the covariate increases by one unit. In contrast, ratios less than one imply the hazard is decreasing as the value of the covariate increases by one unit (Box-Steffensmeier and Jones 1997: 1450).

Hazard-rate models can also be specified as ‘competing risks models’, if an event may occur for different reasons. In the context of our study, for example, cabinets may fail due to (a) intraparty or (b) interparty conflicts. Here, the technique of censoring is particularly useful. In order to estimate the hazard ratio, every type of event other than the one of interest is censored. For example, if we want to estimate the risk of cabinet termination due to intraparty conflicts, all other terminal events (e.g., technical terminations or terminations exclusively due to interparty conflicts) are censored, but remain in the analysis.

In order to uncover any particular strategic dynamics and institutional effects a competing risk analysis was carried out using the following censoring regime:

- In all models, I censored the records of cabinets terminated for purely technical reasons (including regular scheduled elections), for cabinets that ended within 10 per cent of the CIEP and for those that were still in existence on 31 December 1999 (the endpoint of or ‘window of observation’). The pooled hazard rates estimated in the seven models discussed below follow this censoring regime.

- For the estimation of intraparty-conflict hazards, I additionally censored the records for cabinets exclusively terminated by interparty conflict.

- For the estimation of the hazard rates for interparty conflict, I censored technical terminations and cabinets terminated due to intraparty conflicts.

The research hypotheses formulated in the section above are:

**Hypothesis 1**: A head of government’s unrestricted power to dissolve parliament will reduce the risk of a cabinet termination resulting from intraparty conflict.
Hypothesis 2: The existence of a norm coalition discipline in legislation will decrease the risk of a cabinet termination resulting from intraparty conflicts.

Hypothesis 3: The existence of an explicit, mutually agreed coalition agreement will reduce the risk of a cabinet termination resulting from intraparty conflict.

Hypothesis 4: The existence of an investiture vote will initially increase the risk of a cabinet termination due to insufficient intraparty support. However, after this initial phase the probability of a cabinet termination resulting from intraparty conflict should decrease.

Hypothesis 5: The existence and frequent use of conflict-management bodies will reduce the risk of a cabinet termination resulting from intraparty conflict, if these bodies include (a) governmental and non-governmental members of the parliamentary parties and (b) leading representatives of the extra-parliamentary parties irrespective of their parliamentary or government status.

Each of the following multivariate models will include a number of largely institutional control variables, which have repeatedly proved to be important predictors of cabinet duration but are not our main theoretical concern in the present chapter. These variables include the majority status of a cabinet, the number of parties in cabinet and the timing of a cabinet's formation ('post-election status'). There is conclusive evidence that cabinets enjoying the support of a parliamentary majority are less likely to be terminated prematurely than minority cabinets and that the probability of a premature cabinet termination increases as the number of coalition parties in the cabinet increases. Cabinets formed immediately after elections have better survival chances than cabinets formed at a later stage during the CIEP. In addition to these general attributes, the three models will include various variables testing the hypotheses formulated above. The variable descriptions and operationalisations can be found in Table 5.

Table 6 presents the parameter estimates for the pooled hazard rates (for all discretionary terminations), the hazard rates for cabinets terminated due to intraparty conflicts and – as a comparator – for cabinets terminated due to interparty conflicts. The estimated coefficients are expressed as hazard ratios. Ratios equal to one indicate that as a covariate’s value changes, the marginal change in the hazard is zero. Ratios greater than one imply that the hazard is increasing as the value of the covariate increases by one unit. In contrast, ratios less than one imply the hazard is decreasing as the value of the covariate increases by one unit.

Due to the fact that a number of variables in the whipping and delegation models have valid observations only for coalition cabinets, the estimates in Table 6 are effectively restricted to
coalition governments only. The pooled dissolution hazards for the general attributes included as control variables are all in the expected causal ‘direction’ and statistically significant at least at the one-percent level. With each increase of the number of parties in the cabinet by one, the probability of a discretionary termination increases by approximately one-third. Cabinets that have an overall majority and cabinets that were formed immediately after an election are less than half as likely to suffer a discretionary dissolution than other cabinets. None of these covariates has a statistically significant effect (at the five-percent level) for the risk of suffering a dissolution resulting from intraparty conflict.

Turning to the ‘whipping model’, strong dissolution powers enjoyed by heads of government reduce the risk of a discretionary dissolution is reduced for all three models, although the effect is statistically significant at the five-percent level only for the intraparty and interparty conflict hazards. If there is a norm of coalition discipline in legislation, the risk of a discretionary dissolution is reduced in all three models, although the effect is statistically not significant at the five-percent level for the intraparty conflict hazards, which constitute the focus of this paper. Therefore, Hypothesis 2 can be rejected; Hypothesis 1 cannot be rejected for cabinets terminated as a consequence of intraparty conflicts.

In the ‘delegation model’, the risk of a termination due to intraparty conflicts is significantly (at the five-percent level) reduced, if a formal coalition agreement exists. Thus, Hypothesis 3 cannot be rejected. The same is true for Hypothesis 4 if coalition parties have to commit themselves to a coalition agreement through a formal investiture vote, the risk of dissolution increases significantly. However, as predicted, the (smoothed) hazard rate of termination decreases after the initial surge. In other words, cabinets that have survived an investiture vote face a declining or constant risk of discretionary terminations in general (Figure 2) and of terminations resulting from intraparty conflicts (Figure 3) until after day 1,000, when the risk of a behavioural dissolution increases rapidly (see also Diermeier and Stevenson 1999, 2000; Warwick 1994). While these findings are largely in line with our theoretical expectations, the use of mixed conflict management bodies consisting of members of the cabinet and members of the government parliamentary parties (Hypothesis 5a) or of a summit of party leaders (Hypothesis 5b) does not reduce the risk of a termination, but increases it, although the effects are not statistically significant at the five-percent level, with one exception. The risk of a cabinet termination resulting from intraparty conflicts increases strongly (5.16) and significantly at the five-percent level, if a mixed body of government
and parliamentary members is the most commonly used conflict management mechanism. Similar results have been obtained with slightly different model specifications and on the basis of a larger sample (including single-party governments). One plausible explanation for this finding is that cabinets, which anticipate conflicts, may be more inclined to use such bodies than other cabinets – without necessarily a great deal of success. Thus Hypothesis 5 (in both parts) can be rejected.
Conclusions

The data presented in this paper demonstrate that conflicts within government parties are a significant cause of early cabinet terminations. Empirical work on the importance of the intraparty dimension of coalition governance and advances in the theoretical modelling of coalition governance have contributed to a growing interest in the development and rigorous empirical testing of appropriate models. The present paper summarises the intuitions behind two models that treat the interaction of intraparty and interparty processes in coalition politics as a nested game: Laver's (1999) ‘whipping game’ and a ‘delegation model’ proposed by Druckman (1996) and Strøm (2001). A Cox proportional hazard model and a competing risks design were used to test five hypotheses derived from these two models. The results of the competing risk analyses demonstrate that dissolutions resulting from intraparty conflicts do not follow a logic that is fundamentally different from other types of dissolutions. The credible threat of prime-ministerial dissolution and the existence of an explicit coalition agreement as part of a formalised intraparty delegation regime reduce the risk of early terminations resulting from intraparty conflict. The impact of formal investiture votes (as part of a de-facto contract between cabinet and its supporters) is more complex. As predicted, the existence of a positive investiture requirement increases the risk of an early termination in the first days after a cabinet’s formal appointment, but contributes to a declining risk after that initial phase. This is true for both intraparty and interparty conflicts.
Bibliography


Saalfeld, Thomas (2005). ‘Determinanten der Fraktionsdisziplin: Deutschland im internationalen


Intra-party Conflict and Cabinet Survival in
17 West European Democracies, 1945-1999

Thomas Saalfeld

Tables and Figures
Table 1: Mean Cabinet Duration (Days) in 17 West European Countries, 1945-1999

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Period</th>
<th>CIEP&lt;sup&gt;a)&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Mean Duration 1945-99</th>
<th>Total N 1945-99</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>1945-97</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>854.29</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>1946-95</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>520.22</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>1945-98</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>626.40</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>1945-95</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>397.93</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>1959-97</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>625.14</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>1949-98</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>699.52</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>1977-96</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>685.10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iceland</td>
<td>1944-99</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>770.12</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>1944-97</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>891.10</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>1945-98</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>346.66</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td>1945-95</td>
<td>3&lt;sup&gt;b)&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>1170.47</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Netherlands</td>
<td>1945-98</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>808.14</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>1945-97</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>755.32</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>1976-95</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>486.31</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>1977-96</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>956.86</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>1945-98</td>
<td>4&lt;sup&gt;c)&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>770.96</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>1945-97</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>980.53</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean/Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>726.18</td>
<td>401</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Data collected for Müller and Strøm (2000a)

Notes:

a) CIEP: Constitutional inter-election period (maximum time between elections). Data taken from Gallagher, Laver and Mair (1995:30) and amended with the help of the public information office of the Swedish Riksdag and information provided by Dumont and De Winter (2000:413)

b) 1945-1954: Six years with half of the Chamber renewed every three years. 1954 to the present: five years (Dumont and De Winter 2000:413).

c) The duration of the CIEP was four years 1920-70, three years 1970-94 and four years since 1994.
Table 2: Technical and discretionary cabinet terminations in Western Europe, 1945-1999

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nature of termination</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Technical</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>36.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discretionary</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>58.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not terminated at the end of the observation window</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing observations</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>424</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Data collected for Müller and Strøm (2000a).

Table 3: Cabinet terminations in Western Europe, 1945-1999: Crosstabulation of coalition governments (columns) by dissolution type (rows) – counts and column percentages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cabinet termination due to intra-party conflicts</th>
<th>Single-party cabinets</th>
<th>Coalition cabinets</th>
<th>All cabinets</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>122 (86.52%)</td>
<td>211 (84.74%)</td>
<td>333 (85.38%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>19 (13.48%)</td>
<td>38 (15.26%)</td>
<td>57 (14.62%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>141 (100.00%)</td>
<td>249 (100.00%)</td>
<td>390 (100.00%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi²: 0.2301, p=0.631

Source: Data collected for Müller and Strøm (2000a).

Please note: categories are not mutually exclusive.
Table 4: Type of intra-party conflict leading to discretionary cabinet termination in
Western Europe (1945-1999, by country)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>No intra-party conflict</th>
<th>Conflict</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>... within in national party leadership</td>
<td>... between united national party leadership and non-leaders</td>
<td>... in national party leadership involving non-leaders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iceland</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total N</td>
<td>363</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total percent</td>
<td>86.43</td>
<td>10.71</td>
<td>1.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of intra-party conflicts</td>
<td>78.95</td>
<td>10.53</td>
<td>10.53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Data collected for Müller and Strøm (2000a).

Please note: categories are not mutually exclusive
**Figure 1: Laver’s (1999) ‘Whipping Game’**

*Intra-party game*

**Key:**
- \( p \) = payoff to Leader P from reneging on deal with Leader Q
- \( q \) = cost to Leader Q of Leader P reneging
- \( p' \) = defection payoff to pivotal Legislator P
- \( s \) = sanction applied by Leader P to pivotal Legislator P if latter defects
- \( c_1 \) = cost to Leader P of applying sanction to pivotal Legislator P
- \( k_1 \) = credibility hit to Leader Q from leaving cabinet even after Leader P applies whip

\[\begin{align*}
\text{Leader } P &\xrightarrow{\text{intra-party game}} \text{Pivotal Legislator } P' \xrightarrow{\text{intra-party game}} \text{Leader } P \xrightarrow{\text{intra-party game}} \text{Leader } Q \\
\text{Whip} &\rightarrow \text{Defy whip} \\
\text{Don’t whip} &\rightarrow \text{Obey whip} \\
\end{align*}\]

\[\begin{align*}
(0, 0, 0) &\rightarrow \text{Stay} \\
(-1, -1, -1-k_1) &\rightarrow \text{Go} \\
(p-c_1, p'-s, -q) &\rightarrow \text{Stay} \\
(-1-c_1, -1-s, -1) &\rightarrow \text{Go} \\
(p-c_2, p', -q-k_2) &\rightarrow \text{Stay} \\
(-1-c_2, -1, -1) &\rightarrow \text{Go} \\
(p-c_3, p', -q-k_3) &\rightarrow \text{Stay} \\
(-1, -1, -1) &\rightarrow \text{Go} \\
\end{align*}\]
Table 5: Variable Definitions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Predicted hazard ratio</th>
<th>Operationalisation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dependent variable</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hazard rate of cabinet termination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>a) all cabinets (technical terminations censored)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>b) cabinets terminated due to intraparty conflict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>c) cabinets terminated due to interparty conflict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>General attributes</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of cabinet parties</td>
<td>&gt;1</td>
<td>Number of parties represented in cabinet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cabinet majority status</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
<td>Dummy variable (1 if the cabinet controls 50%+1 seats)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-election status</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
<td>Dummy variable (1 if cabinet was formed Immediately after an election)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Whipping model</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prime minister’s dissolution power</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
<td>Dummy variable (1 if head of government can propose or decide to dissolve parliament)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coalition discipline in legislation</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
<td>Dummy variable (1 if such a norm exists)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Delegation model</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coalition agreement exists</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
<td>Dummy variable (1 if the answer is yes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investiture vote</td>
<td>&gt;1</td>
<td>Dummy variable (1 if such a constitutional norm exists)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combination of members of the cabinet and government parliamentary parties used as most common conflict management mechanism</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
<td>Dummy variable (1 if such a body exists)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summit of party leaders used as most common conflict management mechanism</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
<td>Dummy variable (1 if such a body exists)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Data collected for Müller and Strøm (2000a) and Strøm, Müller and Bergman (2003).
Table 6: Competing risks for cabinet terminations in 17 West European countries (1949-99): Hazard ratios for cabinets terminated due to intra-party and inter-party conflict

Dependent variable: hazard rate of cabinet termination

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Covariates (expected causal direction in brackets)</th>
<th>Pooled hazards</th>
<th>Intra-party conflict</th>
<th>Inter-party conflict</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>General attributes</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of cabinet parties</td>
<td>1.32**</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>1.35**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cabinet majority status</td>
<td>0.42**</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-election status</td>
<td>0.46**</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>0.61*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Whipping model</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prime minister’s dissolution power</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>0.35*</td>
<td>0.47*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coalition discipline in legislation</td>
<td>0.51*</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Delegation model</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coalition agreement exists</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>0.40*</td>
<td>1.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investiture vote</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>2.99*</td>
<td>2.84**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combination of members of the cabinet and government parliamentary parties used as most common conflict management mechanism</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>5.16*</td>
<td>1.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summit of party leaders used as most common conflict management mechanism</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td>0.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log likelihood</td>
<td>-688.44</td>
<td>-146.41</td>
<td>-454.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\chi^2$</td>
<td>69.29**</td>
<td>40.96**</td>
<td>51.09**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N (number of cases failing due to risk)</td>
<td>244 (152)</td>
<td>244 (36)</td>
<td>244 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Data collected for Müller and Strøm (2000a) and Strøm, Müller and Bergman (2003).

**: p<0.01; *: p<0.05
Figure 2

Smoothed hazard rate of cabinet termination in West European parliamentary democracies with and without explicit investiture vote (1945-1999)

Source: Data collected for Müller and Strøm (2000a).

Figure 3

Smoothed hazard rate of cabinet termination due to intra-party conflict in Western Europe with and without explicit investiture vote (1945-1999)

Source: Data collected for Müller and Strøm (2000a).