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POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS AND POLITICAL ELITES IN CHANGING LIBERAL-DEMOCRACIES

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1. Introduction

THE STUDY OF POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS AND ELITES IN CONTEMPORARY DEMOCRACIES

1. Why Does Democratic Change Matter for Political Institutions and Elites?

This *Habilitation* investigates the linkage between political institutions and political elites in parliamentary and semi-presidential democracies. In particular, it emphasizes the interconnection between party democracy's change and the shape that this linkage takes. The attention is payed (but not limited) to the period over the passage from the 20th to the 21st century.

The joint study of political institutions and political elites provides insights about the actual functioning of political systems. This especially applies to liberal-democracies: here the power of institutional settings to circumscribe rulers' room of maneuver is higher than in other regimes, where political leaders enjoy more discretion *vis-à-vis* citizens (Müller-Rommel and Vercesi 2020). Moreover, the way in which democratic institutions work and structure the relationship between political elites and voters has significantly changed over time. In this context, we are urged to ask ourselves what are the consequences for elites and the role of political parties as connectors between state and society. The eventual outcome will be a better understanding of the democratic 'delegation-accountability' chain (Müller 2000; Strøm et al. 2003).

One of the most large-scale analyses of democratic change in the late 20th and early 21st century is probably Peter Mair's (e.g. Mair 2013). The essential thesis of Mair's contribution is that a detachment of parties from their once loyal electorates has been taking place in (Western) democracies since the end of 1970s/beginning of 1980s. Mass-party organizations have entered a crisis and turned to be cartelized within state institutions (Katz and Mair 2018), with governing as the primary goal rather than representing citizens' interests and preferences. The consequent void of representation has been gradually (re)filled (or, at least, there have been drives to) by populist parties and new political challengers. Three conflicting conceptions of democracy would be now at stake: traditional party democracy (based on responsible party government); constitutional democracy

(technocratic and output-oriented); and populist democracy (responsive and input-oriented) (Mair 2002, 2013). Caramani (2017) has also stressed that these three notions imply three different forms of representation: respectively, party mandate; trusteeship; and a disguised form of mandate, based on a stricter symbolic symbiosis between voters ('the people') and elites. Moreover, the crisis of mass parties has been paired by political personalization and the strengthening of political leaders at the expense of collective organizations (Poguntke and Webb 2005; Rahat and Kenig 2018). All these phenomena can have an effect on elites' profiles and strategies (e.g. Blondel and Thiébault 2010).

Against this background, this *Habilitation* aims to assess the functioning of political institutions, parties' responses, and elites' paths to power in times of change and consequent adaptation. I will focus on two institutional *loci*: political executives and parliaments. The choice is justified by the fact that these two arenas constitute – together – the institutional core of parliamentary (and semi-presidential) democracies, which ambitious politicians usually aim at (Blondel and Thiébault 1991; Kousser and MacKenzie 2014; Müller-Rommel et al. 2020). Although the focus is mainly on the national level of government, attention will be paid also to the sub-national level, which has more recently gained political prestige and effectiveness for policy-making (Stolz 2003; Edinger and Jahr 2015). For my purpose, I adopt a very broad definition of political elites, as 'defined by their influence on strategic (political) decisions that shape the living conditions in a society' (Hoffmann-Lange 2007: 910. See also Borchert 2003). I will try to answer the following questions: (1) what are the structural opportunities and constraints that political elites meet in the exercise of political power?; (2) how do opportunity structures change in times of party decline and political personalization?; (3) how do parties and politicians react to change?; (4) have criteria for successful political careers changed over time?

The investigation is essentially comparative. Reasons behind case selection and time periods are outlined chapter by chapter for relevant analyses. It is worth noting that the limitation to parliamentary and semi-presidential forms of government allows keeping the variability of some crucial institutional features relatively fixed, thus broadening the space for generalizations. In both systems, we are indeed confronted with a collective government made up of cabinet ministers (who can share their executive tasks with an elected president in semi-presidentialism), whose 'life' is dependent on the confidence of an elected parliament.

In this introduction, I will first provide a short overview of the challenges that political elites face in contemporary democracies as well as the possible strategies to cope with them. Subsequently, I will shortly discuss the theoretical bases of the *Habilitation*, which are encompassed in the notion of 'neo institutionalism'. Finally, I will present the three main research themes the *Habilitation* deals with, stressing the contribution of each chapter to the overarching framework.

2. Political Institutions and Elites in the Face of Democratic Change

According to Best and Vogel (2014), elite structures evolve from social structures. Political elites and societies coexist in a relationship of mutual influence. Political institutions shape and – at the same time – mirror this relationship (Acemoğlu and Robinson 2012). In democracies, political elites compete to be selected by (and accountable to) the society through elections (Best and Higley 2010), while parties function as transmission belts for candidacies and replacements (Blondel and Cotta 2000). Under these premises, socio-political changes can turn into challenges for the *status quo* of established elites. In this regard, Vogel et al. (2019: 4-5) have argued that challenges to elites' status can be either internal or external and might hit both elite autonomy (scope and political criteria of decision-making) and security (stability and political criteria for recruitment and selection). These challenges would arise when existing institutional arrangements cease to satisfy society's expectations and preferences. Established elites, in response, can decide either to stabilize institutional patterns to hinder counter-elites confrontationally or to reshape former strategies and alliances to absorb the challenges through cooperation.

Conceptually, internal challenges in contemporary democracies can be gathered under the terminological umbrella of 'crisis of representative democracy'. If one posits that political elites want to secure their position in the system, we can assume that growing electoral volatility, lower turnout, and decreasing party membership are indicators of challenged elites (Van Biezen et al. 2012; Krause and Merkel 2018). Moreover, one can list further indications such as lower political trust towards traditional elites, the rise of populist contesters, and poor decision-making (Verzichelli 2018b: 375; Norris and Inglehart 2019). In this regard, recent studies point out that lack of political professionalization and the success of 'political outsiders' can undermine elite stability in executive and legislative arenas: 'political parties are losing their ability to provide secure political careers to their

functionaries and members' (Vogel et al. 2019: 8). Overall, Verzichelli (2018a: 587) has suggested to categorize internal challenges as follows: 'changing nature of *elite selectorates*'; 'changing nature of *democratic governance*'; 'changing nature of *elite-mass relationships*' (emphases in the original). This *Habilitation* focuses mostly on the first two.

On the other hand, '*external* challenges emerge either from outside a representative democracy's territorial boundaries, or from outside the political realm' (Vogel et al. 2019: 8, emphasis in the original. See also Hutter and Kriesi 2019). For example, scholars have asked whether the erosion of representative institutions' legitimacy due to the economic and financial crises of the late 2000s has changed the gate-keeping role of parties and led to the development of more inclusive procedures of candidate selection (Coller et al. 2018).

But how do elites react to challenges? What is the impact on institutional dynamics? We can observe six main responding strategies. The first is the *closure strategy*: established elites pursue deeper intra-elite cooperation and higher levels of professionalization to resist to anti-elitist pressures (Levitsky and Ziblatt 2018: 220). In this respect, elites can follow new patterns of professionalization, which deviate from the classic ascending *cursus honorum*; for example, more flexible paths of multi-level careers and institutional turnover can appear (Vogel et al. 2019: 12). The second option for traditional elites is to open the system to populist and anti-system pressures (Hopkin 2020), by bringing counter-elites into governmental alliances and foster their moderation (*incorporation strategy*) (Taggart and Kaltwasser 2016). A third way is to 'democratize' party recruitment processes and increase descriptive and symbolic representation, so that possible new demands of inclusion can be satisfied (*democratization strategy*) (Vogel et al. 2019: 14). Fourth, traditional elites can decide to de-politicize the conflict, by relying on non-political experts for their governmental action and the production of policy outputs (*de-politicization strategy*). Besides increasing the number of technocrats in politics, this strategy can strength the position of executive elites, especially of those prime ministers and party leaders who select the same technocrats and will be consequently more autonomous *vis-à-vis* other party prominents (Costa Pinto et al. 2018; Verzichelli 2018b: 376; Vogel et al. 2019: 15). The strengthening of single actors at the detriment of party organizations is consistent with the aforementioned trends of personalization and presidentialization. These drives modify the way institutions work and are related to the fifth strategy: *retreat strategy*. In this case, leaders of weaker party organizations seek more frequently to enter governments as ministers. They can use the resources that executive offices provide for increasing their public visibility and promote

themselves; in other words, executive institutions, rather than political parties, work as platforms to influence political outcomes (Vercesi 2019). Finally, the scholarship has observed that, in periods of political turbulence, political elites are more likely to pursue broader constitutional reforms, whose outcome is meant to 'heal' losses of legitimacy and trust from citizens (*constitutional reform strategy*) (Bedock 2010).

The six strategies are nothing but possible responses to challenges in contemporary democracies and are not mutually exclusive. Moreover, the third and the sixth mostly affect the structural nature of political institutions, whereas the others impact on their contingent functioning. From different angles and with different gradients, this *Habilitation* addresses the actual adoption of these strategies in comparative perspective.

3. How to Study Political Institutions and Elites

This *Habilitation* is based on a neo institutionalist approach to the study of institutions and elites. There are varieties of neo (or new) institutionalism (henceforth, NI) (Hall and Taylor 1996). However, all share the view that political life and (individual or collective) actors' behaviors are deeply shaped by institutions. For NI,

> [a]n institution is a relatively enduring collection of rules and organized practices, embedded in structures of meaning and resources that are relatively invariant in the face of turnover of individuals and relatively resilient to the idiosyncratic preferences and expectations of individuals and changing external circumstances (March and Olsen 2008: 3).

At the core of the definition, NI thus understands institutions as stable rules, which are relatively independent by individual preferences *hic et nunc* and are kept together by a certain degree of organization. This means that institutions differ from organizations.[1] For example, political parties are organizations, but not all of them are institutionalized (Harmel and Svåsand 2019; Musella and Vercesi 2019). Executives and parliaments, on their turn, are 'political institutions' because they are *political* institutionalized bodies (Lane and Ersson 2000: 8). Important assumptions are that institutions produce order and predictability in political life, define expectations about roles, and are generally 'defended by insiders and validated by outsiders' (March and Olsen 2008: 7). The adaptability of institutions is put to the test when rules are no more (or less) defended or validated. Responses to challenges

[1] The idea that institutions are essentially rules is typical of rational choice institutionalism. Sometimes, organizations are seen as institutions in the sociological variant of NI (Lane and Ersson 2000: 26).

can lead to institutional change (or at least tentative adaptation) through single-actor design, conflict design, learning, or competitive selection (March and Olsen 2008: 11).

How does NI inform the study of institutions and elites? NI provides interpretative tools of elites' structure and behaviors. The institutional environment made up of formal and informal rules defines opportunities and constraints for elites. Rules regulate power resources, actors' responsibilities, recruitment procedures, and decision-making. It is an issue for debate whether political actors follow logics of 'expected consequences' or 'appropriateness' when they act (Goldmann 2005). Actors have exogenous preferences. However, scholars have also stressed the socialization effect of institutional-organizational structures on their orientations. In this sense, actors' motivations and priorities are remolded by the institutional setting (Moyson et al. 2018). It is no surprise that NI pays attention to individual characteristics of political elites, such as socio-demographic background and professional experience: under what institutional conditions do certain profiles are more successful in politics? (Goetz 2020: § 2).

Political actors can benefit from different types of resources, some formal and some informal, such as public visibility or 'leadership capital' (Bennister et al. 2017). The relevance of agency in institutionalist studies is highlighted by Goetz (2020). He points out that logics of consequentiality and appropriateness do not work in the same way for different actors in the same institutional setting. In fact, individuals have their own motivations and personalities; they can be more or less ambitious. But 'people and groups [do not] act for very different, and sometimes "irrational" reasons. Rather, […] specific institutional-organizational settings privilege some reasons over others or allow certain personality types to thrive, whilst frustrating and marginalizing others' (Goetz 2020: § 2).

As a final remark, it is worth noting that NI is affected by a couple of theoretical challenges, which should be taken in due consideration in the study of institutions and elites in contemporary democracies. First, unexpected crises can make established patterns of behavior dysfunctional and make rule-breaking a rational behavior, thus creating discrepancy between the alleged effect of institutions and consequent elite behavior. The inconsistency between existing institutional settings and actors' choices is particularly evident when change becomes structural. Second, trends of personalization and presidentialization make public offices more dependent on single politicians: individuals are less curbed by rules and this can undermine the explanatory potential of institutional factors for actual political outcomes. Finally, when political turbulence is combined with

powerful leaders who aim to break established rules, institutional stability can fail. Nonetheless, elites can react and new institutional structures can emerge as a result (Goetz 2020: § 3).

4. The Contribution to the Study of Political Institutions and Elites

This *Habilitation* is structured into three thematic parts. The first encompasses four chapters and deals with *cabinet government and executive decision-making*. After proposing a conceptualization of cabinets based on the notion of political resource, the third chapter provides the reader with the state of the art on executive decision-making processes in parliamentary democracies. Classifications, explanations, and suggestions of research outlooks are provided. The subsequent two chapters focus on intra- and inter-party conflicts and conflict management in parliamentary coalition governments. An integrated theoretical framework to study coalition politics is presented and later applied to both wider comparative analyses and deeper case studies. Particular attention is paid to the impact of personalization and presidentialization of politics on 'coalition governance' (Strøm et al. 2008), using Italy as representative case.

The second part keeps the focus on political institutions, but investigates *parliaments and elite-driven reforms* in turbulent times. Two chapters constitute it. The first presents a comparative analysis of the institutional strength of second chambers in Europe, based on an original quantitative operationalization. This is the foundation for accounting for elites' attempts to reform bicameralism in Europe as responses to the crisis of representative democracy.

Finally, the *Habilitation* concentrates on *elite representation and paths to power*. Chapter 8 provides a critical assessment of existing explanations of successful pathways to political elite and works as preliminary overview: epistemological, theoretical, and methodological lessons are highlighted. Two out of the three remaining chapters are inquiries into gender differences within political institutions. Chapter 9 systematically compares female and male prime ministers' socio-demographic background and professionalization in Europe over almost four decades. Chapter 10 is a case study. It looks at women in the Italian parliament and seeks to understand patterns of gendered appointments to parliamentary committees and persistent biases, in spite of contradictory pressures for inclusive representation. Finally, chapter 11 links the rise of new types of regional chief executives to the change of

the institutional opportunity structure. Italy is used as a textbook case to assess the impact of presidential trends and state regionalization on career choices and trajectories of ambitious politicians.

Over the past years, I met many people, who have made the accomplishment of my research goals easier. It is not possible to mention all of them, and I would probably risk forgetting someone. At this point, I would therefore like to thank all colleagues who have given most important advice in both academic and non-academic issues over the past years. I am also grateful to all the coauthors who worked with me, for their unevaluable collaboration. Moreover, I like to thank the students for whom I have taught in Italy, Germany, and the UK. They have pushed me to think of my research in a more critical way. Finally, very special gratitude goes to Ferdinand Müller-Rommel for being a constant source of academic inspiration and support. His extensive knowledge and professional experience have been crucial guidelines and points of reference for my development as researcher. He has been the one who prompted me to pursue a German *Habilitation*; my intellectual debt towards him is tremendous.

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PART I

CABINET GOVERNMENT AND EXECUTIVE DECISION-MAKING

Chapter 2

The Cabinet: A Viable Definition and its Composition in View of a Comparative Analysis

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The Cabinet: A Viable Definition and its Composition in View of a Comparative Analysis

This article is made up of two main parts. The first part points out two different definitions of cabinet – that is, functional and legal definitions. It also highlights the strong points and the shortcomings of both, proposing at the same time a new definition more suitable for a comparative analysis. In doing this, it puts forward some useful criteria with a view to establishing what a minister actually is, what a cabinet is and how it is made up. The second part provides an overview of the structures of governments in 38 countries, from core to junior ministers, on this basis.

THE MAIN AIM OF THIS ARTICLE IS TO OFFER A REASONED DEFINITION of cabinet for comparative purposes. First, we point out why the triadic legal conception of cabinet is a better starting point for a definition of cabinet than a functional definition can be. Subsequently, we provide some criteria that will allow us to define what a minister is, to single out the ministers who are cabinet members from the ministers outside the cabinet, and to classify the ministers on the basis of their roles. A comparative picture of 38 parliamentary and semi-presidential governments in terms of their actual structure will be offered to show the definition's appropriateness to the real world. We will highlight some features that are common to all governments, or, at least, to most, as well as the peculiar traits of a small number of executives.

Let us start with the more general task of finding a definition of cabinet. Two main definitions of cabinet stand out in the literature: a functional decision-making definition and a legal definition. The first defines the cabinet according to what it actually does or should do. The second defines it as the set of organs of which it consists,

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as well as their balance, or what the cabinet *should be*. We will use the latter in a descriptive and non-normative way, by defining the cabinet in terms of the actors that make it up. First we will look at why the first definition is not useful for our purposes.

THE FUNCTIONAL DECISION-MAKING DEFINITION

The first definition describes the cabinet on the basis of its functions and activities. This approach boils down to defining what the cabinet actually does. The cabinet is viewed in its basic capacity as the source of coordination of the governmental policy-making process. This path is followed with great conviction by Dunleavy and Rhodes (1990; Rhodes 1995). Rudi Andeweg has their work in mind when he says:

> in the functional approach to a definition, cabinet government is defined in terms of what it is supposed to accomplish. The function that is most often mentioned in this respect is that of *coordination* . . . It is not self-evident, however, why coordination should be the defining function of cabinet government, rather than functions such as the provision of democratic legitimation to government, or the creation of a channel for political accountability, or simply decision making: the 'authoritative allocation of values'. And even if we accept the subjective choice of 'coordination', it is not clear what is and what is not to be included in that term. (Andeweg 1997: 59**,** emphasis added; see also Andeweg 2003: 40)

Defining the cabinet on the basis of its functions can lead to some discussion about the singling out of the functions. However, there is another point we would like to make. Dunleavy and Rhodes (1990), by putting functions in the forefront, de facto reject the cabinet as an institution and as a proper research object. Only empirical research is in a position to ascertain the persons who exercise the function of coordination in policy-making: consequently, the cabinet turns out to be somewhat unwieldy as a proper research object. The two authors shy away from terms such as 'cabinet' and 'ministers', to avoid being trapped into prejudices as to who performs a certain government function. In order to do this, they resort to an expression such as 'core executive', which refers to 'all those organizations and structures which primarily serve to pull together and integrate central government policies, or act as final arbiters within the executive of conflicts between different elements of the government machine' (Dunleavy and Rhodes 1990: 4).

A question is selected, and an empirical research problem is submitted. Consequently, the object of the research remains necessarily unknown until the inquiry has completed. Leaving aside the interesting methodological questions that a similar definition raises, it is worth noting that it does not offer a defining stipulative *answer*,[1] but a *research problem*.

We have in mind a different aim. We are looking for a stipulative definition, namely, an approach that enables the researcher to somehow circumscribe the area of research and thus tackle the research object (the so-called cabinet) in a viably empirical way.

THE LEGAL DEFINITION

According to the legal definition, the cabinet is a complex body made up of a number of distinct organs: the prime minister, individual ministers and the council of ministers as a whole (Morbidelli et al. 2007: 412–14). Different constitutions bestow on the three organs relatively different influences by assigning them different functions in ways that are not always clear. However, in all the countries with the governmental makeup described above, the three parties share the functions of government, administrative duties and coordination of the processes required for both. There might be differences from one country to the next, but on the whole the three organs should aim at some kind of balance. In particular, there are three principles at work: (1) the monocratic principle (which underpins governability through the *reductio ad unum* ability); (2) the ministerial principle (which assigns value and power to the minister *uti singulus*); and (3) the collegial and collective principle (which asserts the necessity of a common action in order to have a proper cabinet).

Thus, the legal definition stresses what the cabinet must be, in a twofold sense: it prescribes the way the cabinet is composed and the way its three components ought to act; and it presumes an equilibrium is reached among the three organs, anointed with the teleological duty of making the three principles work harmoniously and in unison.

Most analyses of cabinets owe much to the legal tradition. They have embraced – more or less consciously – the idea that the government is a complex tripartite body. This is true even though the shift from the strictly legal perspective to political science brings changes to the terminology and the line of reasoning in terms

of models – that is, the collegial model, the prime ministerial model and the departmental model (Andeweg 1993; Aucoin 1999; Blondel 1989; Elgie 1997; Laver and Shepsle 1994; Mackie and Hogwood 1985a; O'Leary 1991; Rhodes 1995).

Rudi Andeweg (1993) was well aware of the issue, and others followed in his steps (Barbieri 2003). Broadly speaking, all models dealing with cabinet decision-making are nothing but ways of going beyond the legal principles triangle. They provide empirical research and models of power distribution with a view to getting as close as possible to what decision-making is actually like. No viable alternative to the legal definition of cabinet has been put forward, but the normative tendency is cast aside.

As a result, a number of questions are implicitly raised: (1) to what extent is a cabinet actually collegial? (Baylis 1989); (2) to what extent is the prime minister predominant? (Hefferman 2003); (3) to what extent are the departments and cabinet committees important for policy-making? (Laver and Shepsle 1996; Mackie and Hogwood 1985b).

The legal definition is a starting point to highlight some very important issues, including sophisticated theoretical and normative speculations, but comparative politics needs a more explicit, autonomous and comprehensive definition of cabinet.

WHAT A CABINET IS

Most government ministers are cabinet members; the cabinet is made up of ministers who are supposed to be major political actors and in a position to make (together) government decisions. In this respect, Jean Blondel (1999: 200) gives us an image of the cabinet when he talks about it as a 'club of ministers'. This notion implies the following: a positional definition of power (Mills 1956) – ministers are cabinet members because of their position at the apex of government; a decisional definition of power (Dahl 1961) – ministers are cabinet members because of their power to make government decisions; an idea about the power distribution among them, which is not hierarchical and basically diffused; and a certain idea of the decision-making process, which is, in any case, also somehow collective and collegial.

The existence of the cabinet does not rule out the possibility that other actors might intervene (even substantially) in decision-making.

It focuses only on actors belonging to a top political institution of a parliamentary system. All government decisions, no matter where they are actually taken, must eventually pass through the cabinet. Following this, we might choose to define the cabinet on the basis of which government political actors compose it. By focusing on the notion of club of ministers, we are undoubtedly on the path to defining the cabinet as a whole, complex though the investigation might turn out to be. How can we recognize club members? What is a minister? What are the indicators that best cover the concept of 'cabinet member', given that it means all the things we have said?

The question is harder than it might at first seem. There are senior and junior ministers, ministers with or without a department, some ministers with considerable power, others who have little power, some who regularly sit on the full cabinet, and some who do not. The term 'minister' itself is not universally used. Sometimes, for example, they are called secretaries of state and under-secretaries of state. The exact meaning of these titles may be different from one country to the other. We cannot sidestep the issue if we are truly interested in defining the concept of cabinet. We have to identify criteria by which to identify which government members are members of the club.

What is a Minister?

Appointment and Accountability. There are two traditional criteria that draw the line between politicians and mere executive administrators: only the former must be politically appointed and politically responsible to the parliament. Sometimes top civil servants might be politically appointed via the spoils system and accountable to some politician, but they still have no representative role. Besides, duties and activities (political versus administrative, political decision versus its implementation) are diversified, although, as is well known, this is only approximately and tendentially true.

From a strictly operational viewpoint, dealing with the two criteria (type of appointment and type of delegation) is far from easy, but the distinction is an inescapable starting point when it comes to government in its political sense. Powerful administrators may be very important from the viewpoint of the decision-making process, but they are not government members because they are not

politically responsible to parliament. The government is a political body. Its members are politically accountable.

All ministers are political individuals. The field of investigation must be more conveniently restricted in order to define the cabinet. The concept of a 'club of ministers' summons the image of actors gathered in a room. The notion of governmental political actors ranging from the chief executive to ministerial under-secretary seems too broad: *not all governmental political actors are cabinet members, whereas all cabinet members are governmental political actors.*

Full Ministers and Dependent Ministers. A minister's responsibility can be direct or indirect. When a minister depends on another minister, his or her political responsibility is indirect. These are dependent ministers. They are usually called junior ministers. Full ministers are ministers who do not depend on another minister. Dependent ministers are not normally part of the cabinet, but they are ministers in every respect. Their exclusion is justified by the fact that the cabinet is a top body in which the relationships are not hierarchical: *not all ministers are cabinet members, whereas all cabinet members are ministers.*

Marking the Borders of Cabinet by Identifying its Members

(a) To be Formally in the Council of Ministers with the Right to Vote. Many researchers are inclined to consider members of the 'club of ministers' to be those with voting rights in the full cabinet (for example, Müller and Strøm 2000; Strøm et al. 2006, 2008). The reason for this seems to be that the council of ministers is the most formal cabinet arena.

The council of ministers can be a decision-making arena, but its members can also meet there in spite of the fact that the actual decision-making has taken place somewhere else. Consequently, we are not always confronted with an assembly of deciding actors. Nevertheless, it is very unlikely that the main government ministers do not have a seat with full voting rights[2] in the council. Council ministers have a formal acknowledgement of their role, and this highly ritualized acknowledgement is there for all to see. Sometimes this acknowledgement is assigned to someone whose decision-making power is not great. Minor figures can sit in the council, being there to ratify decisions taken by others.

There are, then, junior ministers who regularly or occasionally attend the meetings.[3] Other governmental and institutional (see, for

example, Arian et al. 2002: 63; Arter 1987: 127–8, 133; Australian Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet 2004: 10–12; Blondel and Müller-Rommel 1997, 2001; Jain 2003: 155; Mulgan 2004: 80–1; Thiébault 1993: 80) or party (for example, Eriksen 1997: 216–17; Larsson 1997: 234) actors can also be regularly invited. The phenomenon of 'external' participants that enter into the core of governmental institutions is very interesting, and it is a topic deserving further research. However, these 'external' participants have no voting rights. Consequently, they must be viewed as actors with substantial power to exert political pressure at meetings, but not as proper cabinet members.

However, sometimes among the ministers in council with the right to vote are weak ratifying actors, and some powerful political heads of departments are excluded in those systems – from the British tradition – in which the two roles do not always coincide (see below). Although the first mistake is not so important (to include councillors, as we will label them: they are generally an exception), the second one is serious (to exclude some powerful ministers) and this forces us to make a correction.

(b) To be Head of a Department with Portfolio. Whether you can rely on a department or not does make a difference if you want to enter the decision-making process and develop your own policy-making. As a result, all else being equal, ministers without portfolio have far less power than colleagues who can rely on a department.[4] On the other hand, in some political systems, ministers can head a department without actually sitting in the council of ministers. In other words, the two conditions could occur separately, although they are generally combined.

The departmental resources that prime ministers hold are of a different type. The main difference lies in the degree of effectiveness of their support for two things: the development of centralized policy-making and the control of other executive members. Sometimes we find a full-blown departmental support (such as the German Kanzleramt) and sometimes a more political staff (the British case is the best-known example). Furthermore, there are cases in which there is a division between structures which directly serve the prime minister and those which serve the cabinet as a whole (as is the case in Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom), and cases in which the administrative apparatus for the support of the summit departs from the two aforementioned models

(Peters et al. 2000; see also Müller-Rommel 1993). To make it simpler, let us suppose that our prime ministers should, by definition, be provided with a department (barring the cases in which this is manifestly false[5]). However, it goes without saying that the prime minister is always in the full cabinet and has the right to vote.

According to the importance of the relevant department (and the issues at stake), the minister's influence varies. One department that gives its head a more prominent status within the cabinet is the ministry of finance. Indeed, as Larsson (1993: 207–8) points out, 'to an extent, the minister of finance can even be regarded as a second prime minister, since no other minister is involved in all the aspects of the life of the cabinet in the way the minister of finance is'. However, we argue that the two indicators (a) and (b) are necessary and sufficient to circumscribe the cabinet – that is, to single out its members without the danger of serious mistakes for the comparative research.

On the other hand, the understanding of what a cabinet is implies ideas that concern both the distribution of power within the 'club of ministers' and the way the decisions are made. These two aspects are dimensions from which the literature has analysed cabinets (Andeweg 1993; Aucoin 1999; Blondel 1989; Elgie 1997; Laver and Shepsle 1994; Mackie and Hogwood 1985a; O'Leary 1991; Rhodes 1995; Vercesi 2012a). Our work is merely a preliminary step towards this kind of analysis, which is only mentioned below; an inquiry into these issues is not the purpose of this article.

Distribution of Power and Decision-making Processes and the Party Leadership

Several indicators for the analysis of the two dimensions may be drawn from existing studies. For example, a monocratic model implies a strong prime minister. Among the indicators of his or her strength we find the power to select and dismiss his or her ministers and to reshuffle the cabinet. Inner cabinets are usually considered as indicators of oligarchical cabinets (Andeweg 1993: 28). With regard to the form of the cabinet decision-making, a high tendency to use cabinet committees (Mackie and Hogwood 1985b) is a sign of a segmented process. Frequent and long full cabinet meetings are indicators of a more collective process.

In the study of power within the cabinet, we cannot ignore the party resources of ministers. The amount of party resources a minister has is

a rough but nonetheless efficient indicator of a more powerful position inside the group of ministers (Jones 1991; Vercesi 2012b: 273–4). The status of being a party leader is a specific party resource. This indicator (being party leader) may be a good and simple way to distinguish those cases in which the parties 'strongly' enter the cabinets from the (exceptional) cases in which they do not enter at all (technical cabinets) or 'weakly' enter (cabinets without party leaders).

To make a distinction between ministers on the basis of party role is an operation as complicated as it is important. Ministers wield different degrees of party power. An indepth scrutiny is beyond the scope of this article; instead we suggest that focusing only on ministers who are party leaders is enough to investigate some structural features about the relationship between parties and cabinets, and the governmental role of ministers.

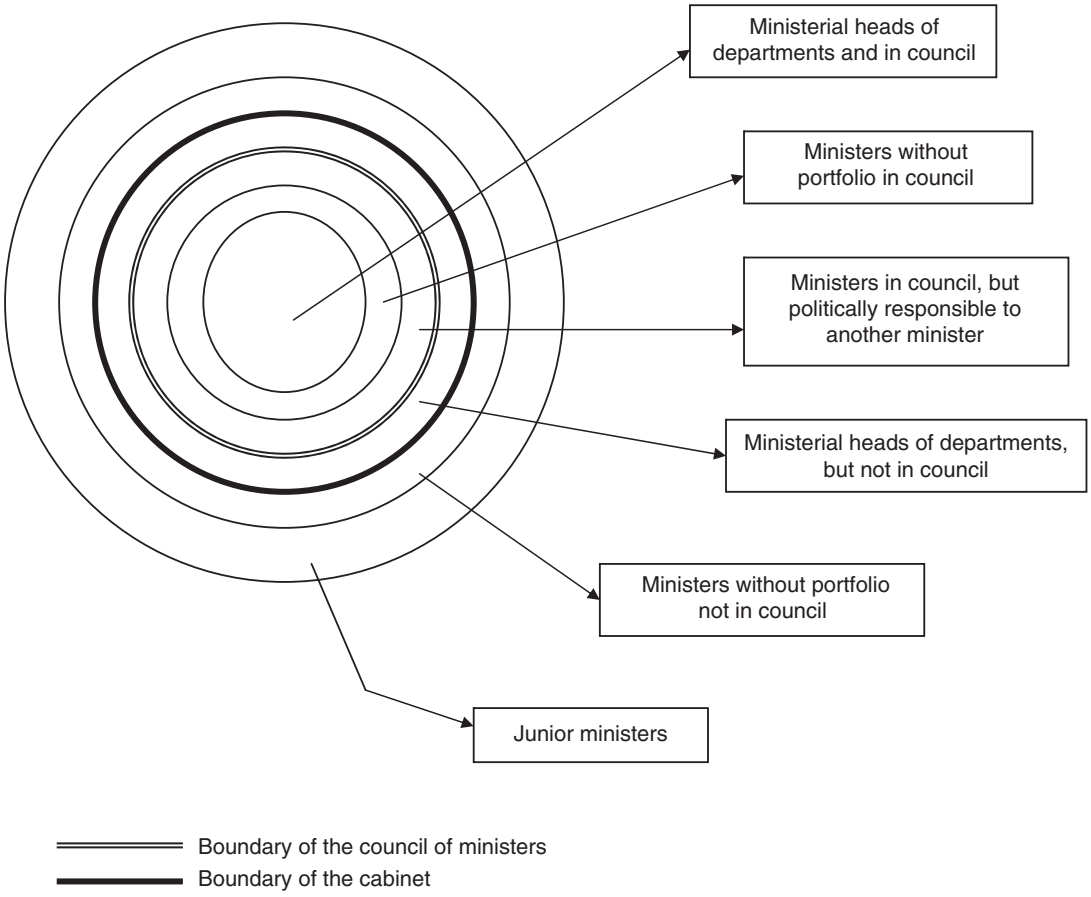
A notable case is that of deputy prime ministers. They are prominent figures in the cabinet because they usually represent the main coalition party that did not manage to win the presidency. Vice-premiers (there is often more than one within the same government) may or may not head a department. However, their political role is substantial. Vice-premiers, even those without portfolio, can be crucial just because of their party role.[6]

The Cabinet and the Way it is Made Up

Now we can give a definition of a minister; set up a list of types of ministers according to their roles; and give a definition of cabinet according to its ministerial *composition*.

(1) A *minister* is a governmental political actor. He or she is politically appointed and individually or collectively responsible to the parliament. His or her office is linked to the government's life.
(2) Ministers can be *full ministers* or *dependent ministers*. The latter are responsible to another minister.
    Ministers can enjoy one or more of the following roles:
    (a) *member of the council of ministers* with the full right to vote;
    (b) *head of a department*;
    (c) *party leader*.
(3) The *cabinet* is made up of the following types of ministers:
    super-ministers, who hold the three main roles: council member, department head, and party leader;

Figure 1
Government Layers: From Centre to Periphery



ordinary ministers, who hold both the council membership and the departmental head roles;

Some other types exist:

party ministers, who are full council members and party leaders;

councillors, who are ministers without portfolio, with the right to vote in the full cabinet;

second ministers, who are ministers who hold the right to vote, but are dependent ministers (accountable to another minister);

departmental ministers, who head a department but are not members (with the right to vote) of the council. They are quite isolated, but in the decision-making process they carry considerable weight in their field.

On the other hand, outside cabinet there are other types of ministers (see Figure 1): ministers without portfolio who are not members of the council of ministers, and junior ministers (ministers who depend on another minister and are not council members).

COMPOSITION OF CABINETS: A COMPARATIVE VIEW

Up to now we have provided a conceptual critical analysis of the notion of cabinet and proposed an analytical definition of it by focusing on its members and the roles they occupy. We have seen that the borders of cabinets can be more or less broad, depending on the types of ministers the government includes. Now we will look at the reality in order to demonstrate that the definition is appropriate. A deeper analysis of cabinets both across and within countries in order to answer questions about power distribution and decision-making modes is beyond the scope of our work. We are going to provide here just a general picture of the structure of cabinets in 38 parliamentary and semi-presidential democracies (17 in Western Europe, 15 in Central and Eastern Europe and six in non-European countries[7]) to gain an idea of the cabinet composition across the world. More exactly, we will examine the overall ministerial composition of the various executives, down to the junior ministerial layer. As far as possible we will try to focus on the regularities and traits specific to certain countries.

In choosing the countries, we have tried to cover almost all notable European parliamentary, and some semi-presidential, systems,[8] since Europe is the birthplace of cabinet government as well as the area of the world in which it is most widespread. We have also selected some countries from among the most important parliamentary systems outside Europe – those with a long tradition of cabinet government. The aim is to provide a general picture of reality that is as comprehensive as possible.

Council Members

All countries that have adopted a cabinet government show a formally collegial organ made up of a prime minister as well as a number of other ministers. The number of people involved can be large or small; it varies from one country to the other (see Table 1) and has varied diachronically within countries, sometimes according to specific regulations.

Regular council members with the right to vote are, by our definition, endowed with an important role. For some regular council members, such as the councillors, the right to vote is all they have. There are substantial differences from one country to the

Table 1
Number of Members of the Council of Ministers (Prime Minister Included) in the Relevant Countries (1 February 2012)

Councils of ministers with a high number of members (more than 28)

Government	*Members of the council of ministers*	*Government*	*Members of the council of ministers*
Canada (*Harper*)	39	Israel (*Netanyahu*)	30
India (*Singh*)	34		

Councils of ministers with a medium number of members (between 18 and 28)

Government	*Members of the council of ministers*	*Government*	*Members of the council of ministers*
Australia (*Gillard*)	22	Macedonia (*Gruevski*)	23
Bulgaria (*Borissov*)	18	New Zealand (*Key*)	20
Croatia (*Milanović*)	22	Norway (*Stoltenberg*)	20
Denmark (*Thorning-Schmidt*)	23	Poland (*Tusk*)	19
Finland (*Katainen*)	19	Romania (*Boc*)	18
France (*Fillon*)	18	Serbia (*Cvetkovic*)	20
Greece (*Papademos*)	20	Sweden (*Reinfeldt*)	24
Italy (*Monti*)	19	United Kingdom (*Cameron*)	25
Japan (*Noda*)	18		

Councils of ministers with a low number of members (17 and below)

Government	*Members of the council of ministers*	*Government*	*Members of the council of ministers*
Albania (*Berisha*)	16	Latvia (*Dombrovskis*)	14
Austria (*Faymann*)	14	Lithuania (*Kubilius*)	15
Belgium (*di Rupo*)	13	Luxembourg (*Juncker*)	15
Czech Republic (*Nečas*)	16	The Netherlands (*Rutte*)	14
Estonia (*Ansip*)	13	Portugal (*Coelho*)	12
Germany (*Merkel*)	16	Slovakia (*Radičová*)	14
Hungary (*Orbán*)	11	Slovenia (*Pahor*)	14
Iceland (*Sigurðardóttir*)	9	Spain (*Rajoy*)	14
Ireland (*Kenny*)	15	Ukraine (*Azarov*)	17

other regarding the importance of this kind of actor. In Italy, ministers without portfolio whose status is only as members of the council of ministers have generally been given a relatively high status, and there have been many such actors (see Verzichelli and Cotta 2000: 469–70). In Portugal, where their number has risen over time, they have turned out to be a 'reflection of [prime ministerial] power to influence others and control government' (Costa Lobo 2007: 276). In other countries, though, councillors are rare. In Belgium no such ministers have been appointed since 1968. In Finland none has been appointed since the 1950s. In Ireland only one was appointed, for the period 1939 to 1945, for the purpose of coordinating defensive measures. In Bulgaria only two councillors were appointed in the 10 years after the fall of the Communist regime, one in 1990 and one in 1995 (Blondel and Andreev 2001: 135). In Romania in 2001 there was only one councillor, in the last months of the Roman government (Blondel and Penescu 2001: 113). Historically, the United Kingdom shows a peculiar case: in December 1916 Lloyd George formed a war cabinet (Jennings 1959: 294–301; Mackintosh 1977: 371–9) made up of five members, all non-departmental ministers, except for Chancellor of the Exchequer Bonar Law.

Usually, council ministers are in charge of a department (in the strict sense of the word; see note 4), and they are ordinary ministers.

Super-ministers, however, are a common reality in all countries, even those where, in the past, party leaders seldom entered governments (such as Italy and the Netherlands). Deputy prime ministers, who are normally super-ministers in coalition governments, can be found in most countries (France is one exception). Sometimes they are representatives – together with prime ministers who are also leaders of their own party – of a cabinet oligarchy. This is the situation with the Belgian Kerncabinet, a true inner cabinet, and the 'dual leadership' of the Austrian chancellor and vice-chancellor (see also Andeweg 1993).[9]

Sometimes there are ministers who are not in charge of a specific department or who act in support of the prime ministers or the government as a whole,[10] but are in charge of agencies (as in Canada and Japan) or some other entity. Some examples of the latter are the president of the Canadian Treasury Board, or president of some committee under the Polish government headed by Buzek (1997–2001). In other cases, the guidance of one

department can actually be shared among a number of ministers. In Finland, for instance, it is an established practice to place more than one minister at the head of the most important departments, establishing a division of responsibility but not a hierarchical structure among the heads (Nousiainen 1997: 249). In Estonia, during the Ansip government, which took office in 2007, there were two ministers at the head of the Ministry of the Interior (the minister of the interior and minister for regional affairs).

Some ministers can be given honorific titles that confer on the holder a special, higher symbolic status. These symbols reflect reality, as is the case with the title of minister of state (*ministre d'état*) in France. This title is reserved for prominent or long-serving politicians (Kam and Indridason 2009: 49). In Portugal the same title (*ministro de estado*) is conferred on people who occupy a pivotal position within the cabinet, as is the case with the minister of finance (Costa Pinto and Tavares de Almeida 2009: 149). The British prime minister may name one secretary of state as first secretary. This determines precedence in the cabinet, and the first secretary can deputize for the prime minister in his or her absence (Bradley and Ewing 2007: 268).

Greece and Canada have unique ministerial groups in their full cabinet. In the Greek government there are so-called 'alternate ministers'. Despite the voting right and the specific responsibilities they have, they are still politically responsible to another minister (Trantas et al. 2008: 391–2). These ministers form a very peculiar ministerial category with several overlapping statuses. They are dependent ministers in the council, considered to be cabinet members, although of a particular and residual type, that of second ministers. Canadian ministers of state are quite similar. Appointed in the 1970s in order to help other ministers perform the duties of their portfolios, they are also quite active in a number of cabinet committees (Aucoin 1999: 116).

Full Ministers Outside the Council

It is only in a very few countries with a common tradition (Weller 1985) that some full ministers are not actually council members (Weller 1980).[11] These countries are the United Kingdom and a few others in which the British tradition was widespread (Australia, New Zealand and India), which are all in a class of their own when it comes to the creation of their governmental institutions.

In the United Kingdom ministers with a department can sometimes be somewhat isolated within the 'club of ministers'. Their jobs range from secretaries of state, who are senior ministers at the head of major departments, to lower rank departmental ministers, who are confined to the cabinet committees in which they participate (Biagi Guerini 1982: 147; Fabbrini and Vassallo 1999: 129). However, the departmental resources they have enable them to play a substantial role in the decision-making and the policy-making of the government (James 1999: 12). We believe they should be perceived as part of the cabinet.

The position of the full minister without traditional membership status appeared in New Zealand only in 1987. She or he is authorized to take part in the proceedings of the cabinet only by the prime minister's invitation, should this be required in the discussion of some specific issue. She or he is definitely a full-fledged minister in his or her own right, and may attend cabinet committee meetings regarding matters within his or her responsibilities.

Full ministers outside the council are also to be found in the Australian (Weller 1980) and Indian governments. In India, they are called ministers of state with independent charge. Unlike ministers of state, who are junior ministers, they are not accountable to any other minister for their specific duties.

Junior Ministers Outside the Cabinet

The junior minister is a minister, but not technically a cabinet member. She or he is a governmental political actor working in a department or in a structure in support of the prime minister,[12] that is, a dependent minister outside the council. Not all junior ministers have equal status. We can separate out two main types: that of junior ministers operating on the basis of some special power of proxy covering the specific field they are involved in, which gives them a very special status, and the type of traditional junior ministers without this special status.

The former type is only found in a few countries: France, India, Italy, New Zealand and the United Kingdom, all countries with specific traits of their own. In Italy in the 1990s a new figure was established: the deputy minister. She or he may sit on the full cabinet, but only by invitation, and without the right to vote. She or he belongs to an 'intermediate layer of junior ministers . . . in

between . . . ministers proper . . . and other ministerial Under-Secretaries, who are not appointed deputy-ministers' (Barbieri 2003: 146).[13] In major departments in the British government we can find ministers of state, who – unlike other junior ministers (under-secretaries and parliamentary secretaries) – are appointed by the monarch and not by the prime minister. In India this type of junior minister is called minister of state. In New Zealand the figure in question is called associate minister; in most cases, she or he has a ministerial portfolio in his or her own right (New Zealand Cabinet Office 2008: 22). In addition, in France you can find the term 'delegate minister' (*ministre délégué*), a minister who does not take part in the proceedings of the council of ministers, save for specific cases where his or her act of appointment provides otherwise.

There are junior ministers of the 'classic' type in all the countries dealt with so far,[14] with the exception of Denmark and Iceland. In Finland they have been introduced only recently.

In addition to the common junior ministers, it is possible to find so-called parliamentary secretaries[15] in four countries: Canada, Japan, India[16] and Latvia. Parliamentary secretaries maintain the links between their respective ministers and parliament. Unlike Canadian and Latvian secretaries, the Japanese ones are even closer to their minister and take part in planning policy in compliance with the instructions of the minister.[17]

CONCLUSIONS

In order to give a definition of cabinet that is useful for empirical comparative research, we must lay aside the functional perspective and start from the triadic legal definition of cabinet to highlight an analytical definition based on the composition of the cabinet. From this perspective, the cabinet is viewed as a club of ministers, and we define what criteria should be applied to classify them: political appointment, political delegation, degree of responsibility (direct and indirect) and three kinds of ministerial roles (voting right in the council, guidance of a department and party leadership). The criteria define who the ministers are, and enable us to mark the boundaries of the cabinet.

In most countries the cabinet tends to concentrate the three mentioned ministerial roles. In some countries, the ministerial roles are differentiated. The governments with a British tradition are the

most important exceptions. These often separate the roles of head of a department and member of the council with voting rights, creating two very different figures in the cabinet system. Other rare categories are councillors, ministers in the council without a department, and ministers in the council who are politically responsible to another minister.

A complementary exercise may be to group the countries on the basis of the internal distribution of power, according to the lines indicated by the literature. What was lacking here was an empirical definition of the 'ministerial club'. We have tried to provide one that will be useful in the future, to research further questions: (1) how can we classify the cabinets according to their decision-making processes? (2) how can we analyse the power distribution? and (3) how can we distinguish the cabinets according to their power patterns? Through this article we have tried to answer the question of what a cabinet is, as an empirical object for comparative studies, keeping in mind the most important questions raised by the literature.

In summary, our conceptual framework does not discard what has been done in the political studies of cabinet government, but it is an attempt to make a clearer starting point from which to trace research paths to help us understand the very widespread and intriguing system of cabinet government.

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NOTES

[1] A definition is stipulative when it has 'the nature of an agreement about the future uses of the language: it establishes that from now on, in a certain text, in a certain linguistic body, a certain expression, as well as the synonymous expressions, if they are admitted, will be used with a certain meaning . . . It can be . . . useful . . . in the scientific and technical languages freely communicating with the common language . . . , just to put in it, in order to satisfy particular needs, a new term, a new concept' (Scarpelli 1965: 12–13).

[2] Note that the right to vote must be extended to all possible discussions, and this excludes some cases: for example, the Latvian junior ministers (state ministers),

who can attend the full cabinet in the capacity of advisers and with the right to vote only on issues concerning their department (Usacka 1999: 142).

[3] Junior ministers usually attend the full cabinet by invitation only, and only for specific occasions. A peculiar case is that of France, during de Gaulle's presidency and between 1972 and 1974, when junior ministers regularly attended the full cabinet. In Austria, junior ministers attend the full cabinet in an advisory capacity.

[4] It is worth noting that ministers without portfolio often have departmental responsibilities and direct several civil servants and a budget. Even in those cases, however, they are not heads of entire administrative structures, but rather they are located within another structure (for example, Italian ministers without portfolio with responsibilities for a certain policy sector are located in the presidency of the Council of Ministers, the Prime Minister's Office). Therefore, we do not consider them as ministers with departmental resource because we 'assign' that label only to the head of the main administrative structure.

[5] For example, the Icelandic prime minister has no supporting office and staff to date.

[6] For the sake of simplicity we consider such deputy prime ministers as ministers without portfolio.

[7] Albania, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, India, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Macedonia, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Ukraine, the United Kingdom.

[8] We have not taken into account unstable systems, such as Moldova (Blondel and Matteucci 2001); Bosnia and Herzegovina because of its particular political situation (Blondel and Selo-Sabic 2001); and countries that recently gained independence, such as Montenegro and the Republic of Kosovo.

[9] For discussion of the Kerncabinet, see de Winter et al. (2000: 327). On Austrian oligarchy, see Müller (1994: 20).

[10] For example, the head of the Chancellery in Germany in those cases in which she or he is also a federal minister, specifically with special responsibilities (*Bundesminister für Besondere Aufgaben*), or (since 1966) the Japanese chief cabinet secretary (*naikaku kanbô chôkan*).

[11] In this category, as a rule, we find departmental ministers. However, at times, we could also find a few ministers without portfolio, as with the New Zealand Cabinet Office (2008: 21). In the United Kingdom, in the Eden government (1955–7) there was a minister without portfolio of this kind assisting with government business in the House of Lords.

[12] A particular case is that of the French autonomous secretaries of state (*secrétaires d'état autonomes*), created by President Valery Giscard d'Estaing (1974–81) and reappearing during the second Chirac government in 1986. The autonomous secretaries of state were governmental actors with the formal title of junior minister in charge of a ministry, but not linked to any minister in the exercise of their duties (and without full voting rights in the council). These figures were junior ministers because they remained under the oversight of a cabinet minister (Iacometti 1987: 679, 691).

[13] It is worth noting that in the Italian government a particular junior minister who is not deputy minister is very important because of a 'positional resource' – that is, being close to the premier. She or he is the under-secretary to the premier. She or he is the only under-secretary who takes part in cabinet meetings (as secretary of the council of ministers and without voting power). She or he 'plays a crucial part as the closest collaborator of the premier in preparing the work of the Council. She or he, instead of the prime minister, often conducts with ministers and with party representatives the complex negotiations that precede cabinet discussions' (Cotta 1997: 147).

[14] In Bulgaria, in 2001, although the constitution (article 108) mentions the possibility of their appointment, junior ministers have never existed (Blondel and Andreev 2001: 135).

[15] These actors are not to be confused with the common junior ministers who are sometimes called parliamentary secretaries. This is the case in Australia, Germany, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and Ireland (until 1977).

[16] Indian parliamentary secretaries are obsolete (see Jain 2003: 14, 27).

[17] In Japan, parliamentary secretaries (*daijin seimukan*) were introduced in 2001 with state secretaries (*fuku-daijin*), the other junior ministers. The position of state secretary replaced parliamentary vice minister, which had been the second-highest position for a politician in the ministry (Takenaka 2002: 928–39).

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Chapter 3

CABINET DECISION-MAKING IN PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACIES*

1. Introduction: The Research Field

This chapter focuses on the internal decision-making process of *national* cabinet governments. In particular, three aspects will be analyzed: (1) how cabinets and cabinet decision-making have been conceptualized; (2) how cabinet decision-making can take shape and its possible variations; (3) the main factors affecting cabinet decision-making procedures. Henceforth, cabinet decision-making means the process through which executive cabinets reach their final governmental outputs. What happens after an executive has taken a decision – for example in the parliament – is not taken into account.

Cabinet decision-making is a worthy research topic in a twofold sense. On the one hand, political outputs are crucial for the smooth functioning of any political system. Although trends such privatization, decentralization and globalization have 'hollowed out' governments' prerogatives, executives remain the most central institutions with the power to take authoritative decisions valid for all citizens (Andeweg 2003: 39-40). In this regard, cabinets stand out, since governmental final decisions eventually pass through it. The need for joint ratification – and not the assumption that all decisions are taken together – is the typical feature of cabinet government (Blondel and Manning 2002: 468). The second reason to investigate cabinet decision-making refers in particular to democratic theory. In terms of accountability, understanding how governmental decisions are taken and who is actually in charge provides heuristic shortcuts to evaluate elected politicians. These clues are especially valuable in case of coalition governments, when inter-party bargaining and compromises make the identification of political responsibilities harder (Martin and Vanberg 2008, 2014; Müller and Meyer 2010).

One of the most tackled issues in cabinet decision-making literature is the extent to which prime ministers or other actors are prominent and able to lead the process. Building on this and looking at the ways power is exerted, cabinets have been clustered into a few

* This chapter's version reproduces the accepted version cited in the Table of Contents, save for minor stylistic changes made to homogenize the different parts of this Habilitation. Moreover, original cross-references have been deleted.

models or types. While several theoretical and empirical researches have been made in this respect, there has been a relative paucity of systematic and multi-factorial explanations, although recent rational-choice analyses have partially filled the gap. As it will be argued in the following pages, several suggestions can be however found in the literature, with potential for more comprehensive explanatory studies.

For this chapter's purposes, the analysis is limited to parliamentary democracies (Samuels and Shugart 2010: 26-27). Here, democracy is understood as a political regime where rulers obtain political power through free and competitive elections *and* constitutional provisions (either written or unwritten) constrain the power of the same rulers (Dahl 1971).

In parliamentary systems of government, the cabinet is a collective political body, which comprises a prime minister and only a few apical ministers, usually called senior ministers. However, other figures are often involved in the cabinet decision-making process; Rhodes et al. (2009: 108) have for example suggested seeing cabinet decision-making 'as a set of expanding circles', where 'the prime minister is the core' and the borders extend beyond the full cabinet. For this reason, this analysis embraces the broader notion of cabinet system. As pointed out by Blondel (2001: 12), in this system the actions of the prime minister and senior ministers are intertwined with those of executive (either political or administrative) figures that are out of the cabinet – such as junior ministers and top civil servants – as well as of party prominents outside the government and personal advisers.

In the next section, the main concepts, questions, and debates that have characterized the scholarship on cabinet decision-making are presented. A review of how the literature has responded and of provided explanations follows. Before entering conclusions, Section 4 stresses the existing deficits and proposes outlooks for future research.

2. Concepts and Debates

2.1. *Definitions of Cabinet Government and Research Questions*

One major issue scholars have focused on is the conceptualization of cabinet government. In this regard, the perhaps most detailed account remains Weller (2003), where the author identifies five approaches in the literature, each based on 'a different set of assumptions

about the significant features of cabinet' (Weller 2003: 704). Legal traditions treats the cabinet as a focus where constitutional principles of ministerial responsibility and political accountability are (or should be) fulfilled. Public administration and public policy approaches see instead cabinets, respectively, as regulated administrative institutions and forums to take policy decisions. A more political science-oriented approach conceives of the cabinet as an arena for power struggles between political actors. Finally, cabinet can be considered as a system of government; in this case, the focus is not on cabinet proper, rather on the executive institutional web the cabinet is placed in (Weller 2003: 704-708). Moreover, a sixth interpretation presents cabinet government as a forum for the representation of different societal interests. In this regard, Rhodes et al. (2009: 109) have pointed out that these interests can be strictly political or territorial too, especially in ethnically and linguistically fragmented countries such as Canada.

Putting the contributions of these conceptual perspectives together, the cabinet results to be a set of institutional actors (political science approach), a set of structures performing given functions (legal, policy, and representational approaches) or a set of governmental procedures and arrangements (public administration and systemic approaches). Actor-centered perspectives differentiate between government members, based on held departmental and/or other political resources, and see the cabinet as a narrow political 'club' (Blondel 1999; Barbieri and Vercesi 2013). To some extent, this definition reminds of Bagehot's (1968: 9, 11) idea of cabinet as 'a committee' or 'a board of control' of prominent political personalities. In functional terms, the cabinet would be instead defined by the functions it performs: typically, implementation of rules (Almond 1960) and policy-making coordination (e.g., Rhodes and Dunleavy 1995). Andeweg (1997: 59, 2003: 40) has criticized such definition, by stressing its vagueness and the *a priori* choice of what is the main defining function. Moreover, one can argue that this way of proceeding does not provide a proper definition; rather it posits a research question, because only empirical investigation can tell who fulfils a given function (Barbieri and Vercesi 2013: 527-528). Finally, the third definition assumes that cabinets are different from other institutional branches because of their own specific working procedures. In this regard, it has however been observed that governmental institutions are 'multiprocedural' and that thus the concept is hard to be clarified in this way (King 1975: 179).

A further conceptual issue discussed by the empirical literature is concerned with the question of when cabinets' life starts and when it terminates. In this regard, Laver

(2003: 27) has observed that scholars often adopt definitions which are 'influenced by the availability of convenient datasets'. A widely accepted definition is that a cabinet terminates when: a general election occurs, the prime minister changes, and/or the cabinet party composition changes. An alternative common definition adds government (accepted) resignations as a fourth criterion (Laver and Schofield 1990: 145-147; Woldendorp et al. 2000: 10-11; Damgaard 2008: 302-303). In both cases the assumption is that cabinets end when there is a change in their bargaining environment. However, definitions of cabinet are 'not given; [they depend …] on […] choices made by the researcher that may well have a significant effect on results. And these choices will inevitably be conditioned by the theoretical concerns of the analyst' (Laver 2003: 26).

Over the years the afore mentioned conceptualizations of cabinet have led scholars to ask a few main recurring questions: (1) 'who decides?'; (2) 'how are decisions taken?'; (3) 'what does decision-making process depend on?'

2.2. *Prime Ministerial Government and Core Executive*

Usually, investigations of cabinet decision-making have been based on a certain idea of power distribution and/or resource allocation within the governmental institution at issue (however defined). A straightforward distinction is that between cabinets where the prime minister is prominent and cabinets where all ministers, prime minister included, are on an equal footing with respect to their say in the process. The foundations of the 'prime ministerial vs. cabinet government' debate were set in the 1960s by Mackintosh (1962) and Crossman (1963, 1972) for framing British politics. Their argument was that the cabinet as the materialization of the principle of collective government was not fitting anymore with the reality of modern executives. In contrast, a new form of prime ministerial government would have taken place, due to trends such as mediatization and political personalization: prime ministers would be the actors who actually set the agenda and steer cabinet decisions. By looking at several indicators of strength and political constraints, Jones (1964) scaled down the prime ministerial impact. Other scholars, such as Gordon Walker (1970), followed in his steps. As stated by Weller (2014: 491), 'the problem with the debate was that it often seemed to contrast prime-ministerial government with cabinet government, as though the two were polar opposites. They never were'. Prime ministers are embedded into cabinets and their 'tactics change to suit circumstance and personality' (Weller 2003: 712).

Between the 1990s and 2000s, the discussion about the increasing importance of prime ministers over cabinets was revitalized by the advocates of the presidentialization thesis. Prime ministers – this is the core argument – are becoming more similar to presidents in presidential systems in their freedom of action, although the institutional settings remain parliamentary. Prime ministers – in fact – would have acquired a greater control over ministerial careers and policy guidelines, backed by influential centralized staff. Moreover, they would be more prominent as leaders within their own parties and dominate electoral campaigns (Foley 1993, 2000; Poguntke and Webb 2005). As was with the former juxtaposition, this argumentation has stimulated harsh criticisms. Focusing on American, British, and German heads of government, Helms (2005: 259) has reached the conclusion that 'there is rather limited evidence of presidentialization', an empirical finding later recognized by Rhodes (2008: 328-329) in his account of parliamentary executives. Dowding (2013: 632) has put into question the very viability of the concept of presidentialization. 'There has been a growing centralization of policy and a growing personalisation of politics. These processes have been occurring in all countries […]. We should not mistake these institutional and social forces for presidentialisation'.

At least in its first phase, the debate whether prime ministers are (becoming) more important or not has been a domain of traditional – or 'old' – institutionalism. The focus has been on how governmental structures affect the role of prime ministers in parliamentary systems; analyses have been poorly theoretical and methodologically unsound. More recent contributions have extended the focus to the role of agency and incorporated lessons from 'new institutionalism', such as the broader notion of institutions comprising informal rules (Helms 2014: 198-199). For example, one can mention the attempts of modelling the connections between prime ministerial authority and cabinet's functioning of rational choice scholars (Dewan and Hortala-Vallve 2011; Dewan et al. 2015).

Dissatisfied with the rigidity of the 'prime ministerial vs. cabinet' framework and its incapability to promote advancements in the knowledge of cabinet governance, Dunleavy and Rhodes (1990) sought to provide a new conceptual framework for comparative studies in an article of 1990. Here, the two authors introduced the concept of 'core executive': 'all those organizations and structures which primarily serve to pull together and integrate central government policies, or act as final arbiters within the executive of conflicts between different elements of the government machine' (Dunleavy and Rhodes 1990: 4).

As a result, the attention shifted from the core ministerial group to a larger set of actors, whose borders can change contingently and depending on who performs given tasks, including civil servants and personal advisors. The conceptual boundaries were later even more blurred by Rhodes' (2013) concept of 'court politics',[1] which prompts to disentangle the everyday life of governmental networks by observing traditions, beliefs, and practices. Perhaps because older or because more able to travel across countries, the core executive notion has proved more successful than the court politics', at least in terms of number of applications for empirical analyses (e.g., Smith 1999; Wright and Hayward 2000; Marsh et al. 2001; Hayward and Wright 2002). In core executive studies, power relations are not understood as part of a static zero-sum game: power is relational and contingent and 'actors within the center are dependent on each other' (Smith 2000: 25). Within the core executive strand of literature, different sub-approaches developed (Elgie 2011). Some scholars have argued that specific institutional and party roles provide specific locational power resources (Heffernan 2003; Barbieri and Vercesi 2013). Finally, Helms (2017) has proposed keeping in the analysis of prime ministerial influence the concept of 'negative resource', that is, 'a constraint successfully transformed into a positive source that may benefit the status and performance of a leader' (Helms 2019: 274).

Although subject to different uses, core executive has become a *passe-partout* term for the study of government decision-making. The other side of the coin of this development has been that '[t]he debate about prime ministerial vs. cabinet government […] has been relegated to academic history' (Elgie 2011: 64).

3. Responses and Explanations

Empirical analyses have provided evidence of significant variations of cabinet decision-making procedures and styles in time and space. Scholarship offers either extensive historical reconstructions of single-country tendencies (e.g., Jennings 1959; James 1999; Weller 2007; Woodall 2014) or comparative (mostly single-chapter) studies (e.g., Blondel and Müller-Rommel 1993, 1997, 2001; Laver and Shepsle 1994a; Blondel et al. 2007; Müller and Strøm 2000; Strøm et al. 2003).

[1] However, the label can be found also in earlier works. Hayward and Wright (2002: 61) had employed it to depict the inner executive circle of French politics.

Information about empirical variabilities has been ordered by scholars through interpretative taxonomies and typologies of cabinet decision-making. While the former simply systemize – based on given criteria – the reality into models (Sartori 1975), the latter logically derive types from the intersection of analytical dimensions.

3.1. *Forms of Cabinet Decision-Making and Conflict Management*

The literature has mostly resorted to three classificatory criteria for isolating models of cabinet decision-making: the role of cabinet members; the *locus* of the process; and the presence of external political constraints.[2] The broadest academic consensus is perhaps on the possible existence of ministerial and bureaucratic governments, in addition to the classic prime ministerial and cabinet government models[3] (e.g., O'Leary 1991; Laver and Shepsle 1994b; Rhodes 1995; Elgie 1997; Keman 2006). The distinctive traits of ministerial government are that ministers are autonomous when they take decisions into their departmental jurisdiction and only limited inter-ministerial coordination occurs. The extreme version of this model is the well-known Laver and Shepsle's (1990: 888, 1996) idea of ministers as 'policy dictators' within their own policy field. On the other hand, the bureaucratic model provides for a decision-making process that develops peculiarly in civil servants' offices. Both Rhodes (1995) and Elgie (1997) have argued that the cabinet system may be organized around models of segmented government – when in the cabinet there is a functional division of labor according to policy areas – and models of shared power between a couple of prominent figures, being the prime minister usually part of. Laver and Shepsle (1994b) have also suggested that legislative governments are those constrained by the legislature, whereas party governments 'are subject to the discipline of well-organized political parties' (Laver and Shepsle 1994b: 7). Finally, Hallerberg (2004) has used the phrase commitment government for those situations in which written government programs are the source of constraint. It is interesting noting that, time before these classifications were put forward, other scholars had already distinguished between arenas of cabinet decision-making, thus focusing in particular on the second classificatory criterion (Mackie and Hogwood 1985; Baylis 1989: 145).

The first attempt to employ proper dimensions for the analysis dates earlier than these models. In a working paper of 1988, Blondel (1988) tried to isolate types of decision-

[2] A fourth criteria used is the decision-making style. Müller-Rommel (1988: 187-189) has related it to the type of decision; Campbell (1980: 85-86) and Weller (2003: 712-713) to the tactics of prime ministers.
[3] Sometimes, different authors use different labels for the same models.

making, based on possible combinations between the degree of (external) party control, the role of the prime minister, and the participation of ministers. Some scholars (Elgie 1997; Barbieri 2003; Vercesi 2012a) have criticized the inclusion of the first dimension, claiming that it is external to cabinets and that internal dynamics should be studied irrespective of institutional autonomy. One can see in the other two dimensions the embryos of those around which all the main subsequent typologies have been built: the *internal distribution of power* and the *centralization of the decision-making process*. Unlike taxonomies of decision-making, typologies keep these aspects analytically separated and conceive of them as continua (Andeweg 1997: 61).

A seminal systematization of these dimensions has been made by Andeweg (1993). The author has stressed that collegiality (i.e., equal say in the process) and collectivity (i.e., joint decision-making) are conceptually different and that different combinations lead to different types of decision-making. In particular, Andeweg (1993) has claimed that – based on who actually decides – a cabinet can be prime ministerial (or monocratic), oligarchical, or truly collegial; in this regard, an inner cabinet would be '[t]he indicator *par excellence* of an oligarchical cabinet system' (Andeweg 1993: 28). Secondly, he has argued that the decision-making process may be fragmented when decisions are taken within ministries; segmented if the process is carried on by smaller groups, such as cabinet committees; and collective, especially when decisions are taken in the full cabinet meeting. According to Andeweg (1993: 29-30), segmentation can be moreover distinguished in partisan and sectoral, based on the nature of the lines of divisions between groups. Twelve types ensue from this framework.

Direct or indirect references to the two dimensions may be found in several later theoretical and empirical works (e.g., James 1994; Burch and Holliday 1996; Andeweg 1997, 2003; Aucoin 1999; Helms 2005). It has also been observed that, by distinguishing between strong prime ministers, weak prime ministers, and heads of government with a medium degree of influence within the cabinet (King 1994; O'Malley 2007), oligarchies may be with prime minister or acephalous. Only in the former case, the prime minister is strong enough to be included in the leading circle, but not so strong to exercise a monocratic leadership (Vercesi 2012a).

Comparative evidence has highlighted that the full cabinet is only seldom a true decision-making arena. Rather, it operates as a 'rubber stamp' of decisions taken elsewhere or as a 'court of appeal' for unsatisfied ministers. Often, both formal and informal inter-

ministerial meetings are the main arenas for the decisive talks. In these venues, strong prime ministers can lead more collective discussions. In contrast, when the process is fragmented, monocratic leadership is exerted through bilateral meetings. Cabinets characterized by fragmented decision-making processes and dispersal of power, on their turn, approach the ministerial model. It should be observed that cabinets where the prime minister is a fully-fledged *primus inter pares*, the power distribution is collegial, and the process is strongly inclusive are the exception, rather than the norm. Finally, it is not uncommon that civil servants and personal advisers impact directly on the process, especially during phases of preparation and technical definition of the governmental outputs (Blondel and Müller-Rommel 1993; Blondel and Manning 2002: 458).

These typologies are tailored to purely parliamentary systems. However, they prove to be flexible enough to be extended to situations of presidential dominance in semi-presidential countries (e.g., Helms 2005). Overall, typologies of cabinet decision-making are heuristic devices for framing processes' variations and understanding why some modalities are more common in some cabinets, rather than others. Nonetheless, a disadvantage is that, while these frameworks provide pictures of the structural conditions that shape decision-making, they do not account for the dynamic aspect of the process' unfolding (Andeweg 2003: 48). Political conditions and decision-making mechanisms of coordination define the game-field for the settlement of policy disagreements and the accommodation of divergent preferences (Goetz 2003: 79). Deviations from smooth decision-making and the respective impact on cabinet dynamics have been the focus of the literature on intra-executive conflict management.

Presenting his typology of cabinets, Andeweg (1993: 39) underlined the importance of the internal level of conflict as a third dimension to understand cabinet decision-making processes. In this context, Marangoni and Vercesi (2015) have suggested distinguishing between four categories of conflicts, from the least to the most detrimental for smooth decision-making and cabinet stability (all else equal): intra-party conflicts; interdepartmental conflicts; conflicts between party and governments; and interparty conflicts. The dangerousness of interparty conflicts would be due to the fact that parties are what constitutes the coalition.

In particular from the 2000s, scholars have sought to pinpoint the structural mechanisms used to manage intra-executive conflicts in parliamentary systems. A framework for coalition governments has been put forward by Andeweg and Timmermans

(2008). These authors look at the arenas for conflict resolution and group them into three main classes (1) internal arenas, if only senior and junior ministers (and possibly their personal advisers) attend meetings; (2) mixed arenas, when both government and non-government members gather; (3) external arenas in case that only actors who are outside the government – e.g., external party leaders and civil servants – meet to manage the conflict. More than during times of uncontroversial decision-making, non-government actors enter the process (e.g., Müller and Strøm 2000; Miller and Müller 2010). Andeweg and Timmermans (2008) have argued that six arenas are at stake (inner cabinets; cabinet committees; coalition committees; committees of ministers and parliamentary leaders; meetings of parliamentary leaders; party summits). Further detected arenas have been the full cabinet and bilateral contacts, which can fall in all categories, depending on who is involved. In this respect, actors with a major role in the process are the prime minister; ministers; party leaders; leaders of party factions; parliamentary leaders. Overall, empirical data on Western Europe tells that usually conflict management occurs in more internal arenas and prime ministers have a significant impact on the process (Vercesi 2016).

3.2. *Explanations of Cabinet Decision-Making and Conflict Management*

The literature on cabinet decision-making has provided explanations of three broad related aspects: the structural and agentive conditions of the process; the potential for conflict of the process; the mechanisms and dynamics of conflict resolution.[4]

With regard to the first aspect, it is possible to find two clusters of explaining factors. One the one hand, scholars have focused on resources and styles of single actors; on the other hand, attention has been payed to idiosyncratic traditions and administrative 'cultures' of political systems (Müller-Rommel 1988, 2001: 198-201). The resource-oriented approach is especially used to explain the internal distribution of power within cabinets. As pointed out by Helms (2017: 2), the term resource can mean political-institutional resource or personal resource, being the latter some particular attributed or acquired trait. A prime minister is assumed to be stronger when he or she is also party leader, when only one party is in government, and when the cabinet can muster a disciplined party majority in parliament. Moreover, a prominent position in the largest party of the government coalition is a further possible source of strength (Vercesi 2012b: 273; Martocchia Diodati et al. 2018). It is also worth noting that a prime minister (or a head of state) can benefit from

[4] Explanations of outputs are here excluded.

the resources associated to his or her office, such as consequential supporting staff (e.g., Peters et al. 2000). Symmetrically, political actors may face power constraints. For example, a high level of party factionalization may undermine the ability of party leaders to set the guidelines in the party (Baylis 1989: 86). Alongside party constraints, Jones (1991) has argued that the dispersal of power between institutional levels of government limits the influence of prime ministers. Moreover, some personalities can hinder chances of prime ministerial impact over policy (Brummer 2016). Gender may be another variable. In this regard, empirical comparisons between male and female prime ministers have shown that being women can lead to higher instability in office (Müller-Rommel and Vercesi 2017). Some authors have suggested that prime ministerial power is the result of interplay between institutional resources and personal attitude towards the exploitation of these resources (Theakston 2002; Heffernan 2003; Kaarbo 2008; Bennister 2012; Strangio et al. 2013). In this sense, agency mediates structures' effect. These resource-oriented arguments mostly refer to prime ministers. However, they present logical implications about other executive members. Like in a system of communicating vessels, cabinet ministers will be stronger *vis-à-vis* the prime minister when the resources of the head of government are scarce. Power in cabinet system would be positional *and* relational, since the own actual clout ultimately depends on the contrasting clout of other members (Helms 2019: 272-273). Thus, collegial cabinets limit the individual room for maneuver (Blondel and Manning 2002); one can think of coalition governments where party leaders counterbalance each other and oligarchical distributions of power are likely to form (Barbieri and Vercesi 2013: 533-534). Coalitions are motivated to encourage ministerial autonomy, as far as departmental decisions fall within the bounds set by coalition partners. This 'constrained ministerial government' is expected to help compromise over unanticipated issues (Dragu and Laver 2019). However, coalition agreements can constrain ministers and increase prime ministerial oversight over cabinet's works (Moury 2013).

Party factors may foster or restrain the recourse to collective decision-making venues. Based on a cross-country survey of Western Europe, Frognier (1993: 70-71) has concluded that coalitions provide more opportunities for inclusive processes and that large coalitions are more prone to using formal arenas, rather than informal meetings. Thiébault (1993: 89) has stated that both intra- and interparty fragmentation leads to decentralized decision-making. However, the impact of the distinction between single-party and coalition cabinets is overall circumscribed (Blondel and Müller-Rommel 1993). It has been noticed

that ministerial autonomy may ensue from administrative traditions and/or intra-executive hierarchical interactions; at the same time, constitutional emphasis on the principle of collective ministerial responsibility is conducive to centralization (Thiébault 1993: 88-89). Comparing some Westminster and European continental systems, Andeweg (1997: 77-82) has found moreover that neo-corporatism and tight ministerial connections to interest groups facilitate cabinet decision-making departmentalization; symmetrically, the claim for representation of interests other than those of ministerial portfolios boosts centralized practices. This holds, for example, for territorial, ethnic and/or linguistic interests. A similar effect is played by the generalist character of ministers' competences. Finally, the search for policy coherence may call for collective decision-making as well (Rhodes et al. 2009: 102).

The so far reviewed explanatory argumentations refer to situations of 'normal' decision-making. The research strand on conflict management has provided specific explanations of cabinet strain and conflict resolution procedures. The focus is primarily on conflicts between coalition parties. The reason appears twofold: first, interparty conflicts are posited to be the most serious for cabinet survival; secondly, it is possible to extend – *mutatis mutandis* – findings' logic from coalitions to single-party cabinets. Indeed, intra-party politics can be understood as a 'coalitional game' between party factions (Laver and Shepsle 1999).

The emergence of conflicts in cabinets can modify the way in which cabinet members reach their joint decisions. A first finding is that coalition agreements do not prevent conflicts, but they restrict the area of the discussed issues (e.g., Timmermans and Moury 2006). Secondly, conflicts are supposed to emerge less over routine issues, which are usually handled autonomously by ministers within their own department (Blondel and Manning 2002: 467; Vercesi 2016: 180). From a broader perspective, Tsebelis (2002) has also argued that ideologically heterogeneous coalitions are more likely to be conducive to decision-making gridlocks. In a multidimensional political space of competition, indeed, coalition partners are veto players within the government, whose decisions needs unanimity. Policy change will be possible only if the *status quo* is external to the governmental Pareto set (the area circumscribed by the boundary that connects each party's ideal policy points) and if the change takes the *status quo* closer to the Pareto set itself. Policy stalemate can derive from the fact that intra-coalition polarization makes the Pareto set larger and thus increases the likelihood that the *status quo* is placed inside it. As a

matter of fact, empirical research has found that, when the number of coalitional veto players increases, even larger coalition partners loose decision-making influence (Green-Pedersen et al. 2018).

With regard to the salience of conflicts, Andeweg and Timmermans (2008: 276) have assumed that more serious conflicts are likely to occur when coalition partners have divergent preferences on the content of valued decisions. More specifically, it has been argued that this kind of disputes fosters rigid party behaviors, undermining the expected cooperation of joint decision-making. Radicalization, moreover, would be more pursued by those parties with a higher strategic strength within the coalition (Vercesi 2016). A study of Italian coalitions has shown that interdepartmental conflicts concern policy issues invariably. Conflicts involving parties are instead more likely to be related to cabinet structure and coalitional equilibria when the cabinet does not form in the aftermath of a general election. Moreover, this study has found that prime ministers with a programmatic electoral mandate play a more active role in the policy making than those who enter office after inter-term cabinet crises and new inter-party negotiations (Marangoni and Vercesi 2015: 26-27).

With regard to the analysis of conflict management processes in cabinets, an empirical inquiry of the determinants of resolution mechanisms is in the already cited Andeweg and Timmermans (2008). In their longitudinal comparison of Western European countries, the authors have resorted to both general statistical analyses and deeper case studies of Dutch and Irish governments. Overall, they have found that comprehensive coalition agreements, party fragmentation, parliamentary polarization, and negative parliamentarism increase the likelihood of the use of internal arenas. However, the externalization of the decision-making process has proved to be especially fostered by the high dangerousness of conflicts and – first and foremost – by the absence of party leaders in the cabinet. Party leaders seem to be the major players of conflict management and, thus, even the most serious conflicts will be taken to internal cabinet arenas when party prominents are ministers (see also Marangoni and Vercesi 2015). These results echo those of a pilot comparative research on Western Europe of the early 1990s: first, that prime ministers tend to be involved in more sensitive disputes; secondly, that coalition cabinets suffer more from the management of intra-executive conflicts than single-party cabinets; finally, that single-party cabinets internalize conflict management to a greater extent. The same study has shown also that inter-party conflicts last longer than intra-party disputes

(Nousiainen 1993). More generally, it has been claimed that the adoption of procedures for conflict management correlates with heterogeneous coalitions and shorter policy contracts (Bowler et al. 2016).

Based on in-depth qualitative examinations of interparty conflicts in Italian coalitions, attempts to account for dynamic variations during the process of conflict management have also suggested that (1) coalitions first seek to internalize the process and move to more external arenas if conflict radicalization increases. Secondly, (2) stronger prime ministers[5] centralize the process as long as the dispute is not too radical, while weaker prime ministers tend to use collective arenas since the very beginning; overall, (3) conflict radicalization leads to a more inclusive process. A fourth finding is that (4) weaker heads of government follow a more arbitrating approach, letting party leaders have more influence; in contrast, a strong prime minister is more activist. Finally, it has been observed that (5), when intra-party divisions in the prime minister's party overlap interparty conflicts, even stronger prime ministers tend to be arbitrators (Vercesi 2013, 2016: 205). This evidence matches the previous observation of Blondel and Nousiainen (2000) that cabinets are more active in the first phases of the process and supporting parties enter especially at a later stage.

To wrap up, the scholarship on conflict management and resolution in cabinet government tells that also the nature of the decision that is discussed concurs to define the form of the decision-making process. This is due to the fact that controversial issues modify the political climate of cabinets.

4. Where Are We and Where Do We Go?

4.1. *Conceptual, Theoretical, and Empirical Challenges*

The systematic study of cabinet decision-making is challenging because it refers to a process, which involves women and men, who coordinate themselves in non-public meetings. Not surprisingly, the relevant literature is affected by three consequent deficits: disagreements about concepts; lack of an integrated theory of the role of agency within changing contexts; lack of systematic and parsimonious empirical comparisons, based on precise theoretical expectations.

[5] Prime ministerial strength is operationalized as being coalition leader, leader of the largest coalition party, and benefiting from 'direct' electoral legitimation (Vercesi 2013).

With regard to the first point, the research field has been delimited by the denotative confines of the concept of cabinet government. In this regard, the scope of the dominant notion of core executive has been broadened, to the detriment of its connotative precision (Sartori 1984). However, the enlargement of the focus beyond the apical ministerial group can lead to definitional problems, when it comes to observe *cabinet* decision-making. A potential pitfall is conceptual stretching and this can jeopardize the clear-cut identification of the conceptual space of interest for the analysis.

Explanations, on their turn, have swung between structure and agency, without tending clearly to one side or the other. Structural factors are ultimately attributable to power resources as well as to institutional and cultural environments. It has been said that power is positional, but also relational because it refers to relationships between actors (e.g., Dowding 2008). However, the effective use of resources depends also on individual abilities and inclinations. As long as structures define incentives and limits of decision-making and an 'all else equal' condition[6] applies, then process' variations will be subsumable under agential effects. To use Elgie's (2012: 289) words, 'the impact of human agency [… is] the error term of a statistical equation, whereas the impact of [… structures] can be estimated directly'. Scholarship is still vague in this respect.

4.2. *Proposals for a Research Agenda*

From a conceptual viewpoint, the acknowledgement of the role of third parts in the making of governmental outputs does not imply that the cabinet as the main conceptual referent must not be isolated. Cabinet decision-making may be understood as a process typical of a restricted group of apical executive members. It will be then an issue for empirical research to see how much this process is permeable towards external actors (e.g., bureaucratic, party, legislative actors and/or interest groups). Thus, a stricter notion of core executive could be a steadier compass for the analysis. Moreover, any definition of cabinets' life time should take into account the conditions for the decision-making. As mentioned above, to decide when a cabinet forms and when it ends implies substantive theoretical considerations about the bargaining environment of cabinet actors. For this reason, it seems reasonable to see reshuffles of key cabinet portfolios as an additional (sufficient) condition for counting new cabinets. This approach has already been followed

[6] Also historical moments and events can be a further element to take in consideration (Stragio et al. 2013).

for example by Laver and Shepsle's (1996) model of portfolio allocation, which has been proposed to study the making and breaking of parliamentary governments.

With regard to theory development, the path to follow may be twofold. On the one hand, the overall picture of the explanatory factors needs to be better delineated, paying the due attention to both macro and micro aspects. On the other hand, the focus can be on the dynamic variations of the process and on how they relate to the channeling drives produced by the opportunity structure.

Several factors seem to have an impact on cabinet decision-making. However, it is not fully clear what matters more and when: impressionistic and scattered qualitative assessments and correlational analyses have shown that combinational effects and cross-country differences apply. For this reasons, a theoretical configurational approach could help systematize this knowledge. This approach leaves behind the notions of causal homogeneity and variables' net effects, while, at the same time, allows the extension of the explanatory logic of case studies for larger-N comparisons (Ragin, 2008). The structural explaining factors would be treated as conditions – not variables – for the emergence of different types of decision-making. These outcomes (i.e., the types) would be explained by combinations (or by the absence) of given necessary and/or sufficient conditions, across and within countries; case selection should be made based on already known outcomes, not on conditions. The integration of agency in the emerging picture would then follow. If all other conditions are equal, agency's impact will be assumed to be located – as said – within variations between outcomes. In-depth case studies could be used to assess better this 'added' effect of personal traits; if differences of personalities occur, they would work as reciprocal counterfactual analyses. The explanation of process' dynamic changes requires instead more fine-grained qualitative studies, guided by theory; cabinet minutes, newspapers, expert surveys, and elite interviews remain rich sources of information in this regard. Process tracing (Bennett and Checkel 2014) could prove to be a fruitful methodological choice for the modulation of theories and data.

To achieve these goals, systematic data collection is necessary. Information should refer to both conditions and forms of cabinet decision-making, so that broad comparative pictures can flank in-depth case studies' findings. Some information about the reviewed potential explaining factors is already available in databanks. One can think of those on cabinet party compositions (e.g., Woldendorp et al. 2000; Döring and Manow 2018) and personnel changes, such as the monthly *Chiefs of State and Cabinet Members of Foreign*

Governments Reports, issued by the US Central Intelligence Agency. Individual data on prime ministerial backgrounds and resources (e.g., Goemans et al. 2009; Baturo 2016; Müller-Rommel and Vercesi 2017; Vercesi 2019) also exist for comparative analysis. Even basic information on leaders' psychological traits can be found in large-N datasets (Ellis et al. 2015). This could be an aspect to insist on comparable data for the study of deviant cases. On the other hand, gathering systematic data on decision-making types in different countries across-time can prove to be a very demanding and time-consuming challenge. However, some promising studies already exist. For example, Häge's (2011) EUPOL dataset shows how information about decision-making practices and process duration can be used as proxies for understanding actors' role and decision-making complexity. Unfortunately, the 'hidden' character of many interactions within cabinets does not allow collecting data on every single decision. However, criteria to select the most significant decision-making episodes can be proposed. If this is done, participants of collective research enterprises could analyze them, relying on public records and various journalistic sources.

A final remark concerns countries and areas that future research could focus on. For obvious reasons, most studies focus on European and Anglo-Saxon countries. In the former case, attention has been payed to the impact of party-coalitional features on cabinet decision-making and ministerial autonomy. In the latter, scholars have variously stressed how favorable constitutional and party conditions affect the prominent role of prime ministers in Westminster systems as well as differences in rarer multi-party circumstances (Weller 1985, 2018; Bakvis 2001; Mulgan 2004; Stragio et al. 2013). Beyond these geographical areas, extensive analyses of government decision-making in parliamentary systems are hardly detectable, with some noticeable exceptions concerning Japan[7] and – to a lesser extent – other countries such as India (e.g., Jain 2003) and Israel (e.g., Arian et al. 2002; Kaarbo 1996). Future research could indeed try to fill this gap. Only by doing this, scholars will be able to assess more precisely to what extent our knowledge about European and Westminster systems can be generalized. Finally, it is worth mentioning that there is a relation between smaller population sizes and typical dynamics of party

[7] Japan is a non-European parliamentary system, which has relatively been investigated extensively by the international literature. In particular, scholars' attention has been attracted by the role of the prime minister. Overall, the Japanese prime minister has suffered from a weak position within the cabinet, in the context of severe intra-party competition. However, it has been also observed that the prime ministerial figure has become more central in the policy-making over the years (e.g., Hayao 1993; Elgie 1995; Shinoda 2000; Krauss and Nyblade 2005).

government (Veenendaal 2015). It would thus be interesting to investigate how cabinet government works in small polities, compared to larger and more studied countries.

In a nutshell, more research beyond traditional focuses is needed. As a matter of fact, the coverage of a larger number of countries and the collection of new data on cabinet decision-making would provide information about deviant cases, which can be similar in their structural features but differ in their functioning. This in turn, can provide important insights about agency's impact against general theoretical expectations in different contexts.

5. Conclusion

Over the years, cabinet decision-making has been a central topic of executive studies. First, it has mostly pertained to British politics. However, the number of covered countries has soon increased, up to the inclusion of extra-European parliamentarism and Central-Eastern European democracies. In 2003, Andeweg (2003) claimed that – after a phase of maturation – the research on governments was coming to its age. This opinion can be shared, when it comes to assess the achievements in the study of cabinet decision-making. A wealth of material has been provided and especially the studies on conflict management have heralded a welcome trend towards systematic empirical comparisons.

However, open questions remain. Building on what has been already done, new research strategies can bring fresh air in the field. A first benefit could be a genuine scientific accumulation of knowledge. Secondly, the reorganization of debates and discussions about cabinet decision-making could be the basis for further dialogues with close research areas. For example, both macro and micro elements concur shaping the process. One can seek to disentangle (if any) the impact of personal experiences, careers, and reputational capitals on the agential side of the coin. In fact, the topic has to some extent already been introduced by the literature on intra-cabinet principal-agent relationships (e.g. Berlinski et al. 2012). The issue appears particularly relevant if one considers the changing nature of elite structures in modern democracies (Vogel et al. 2019). It may well be that the modification of elite profiles and pathways to power are conducive to the change of cabinet decision-making modes. Findings from a few explorative studies are encouraging in this sense (e.g., Worthy 2016; Helms 2018). However, from this viewpoint the literature is still poor and new investigations would be welcome contributions. On the other hand, the existing literature could be completed by the

examination of the link between decision-making styles, personal performances, and governmental outputs. Cabinet decision-making is crucial for governments' activity. Further theoretical, methodological, and empirical contributions will help the advancements of executive studies altogether.

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Chapter 4

Coalition Politics and Inter-Party Conflict Management: A Theoretical Framework

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Coalition Politics and Inter-Party Conflict Management: A Theoretical Framework

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Inter-party conflict management is a typical coalitional problem in parliamentary governments. To study how and why conflicts in coalitions emerge and how parties cope with them can enhance our knowledge of coalition governance. Here, I propose a framework for comparative studies on the topic. The framework is based on the conception of coalition politics as politics of exchange. It looks at inter-party interactions, but also accounts for the impact of intra-party politics. Moreover, I provide a classification of inter-party conflicts in coalitions and point out when they are more likely. The process of conflict management is operationalized with two proxies—actors, and arenas—and a taxonomy of conflict terminations is presented. The viability of the framework is tested both by mapping coalition governments according to their modes of managing internal conflicts and, after deriving research hypotheses, through empirical inquiries of conflict management in diverse coalitions.

Keywords: Political Parties, Mapping Coalition Governments, Intra-Party Politics, Parliamentary Government Coalitions, Inter-Party Conflict Management, International Comparative Politics, Coalition Theory, Rational Choice Institutionalism, Conceptualizing Coalition Politics.

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El manejo de conflictos dentro de un partido político es un problema típico coalicional en los gobiernos parlamentarios. Entender cómo y por qué surgen los conflictos en las coaliciones y cómo lidian los partidos políticos con éstos puede mejorar nuestro conocimiento de la gobernanza de las coaliciones. En este estudio propongo un marco teórico sobre el tema para un contexto de política comparada. Este marco teórico se basa en la concepción de las coaliciones políticas como una política de intercambio. Se estudian las interacciones dentro del partido pero también toma en cuenta el impacto de las políticas interpartidarias. Además, se estipula una clasificación de conflictos intrapartidarios y se indica cuándo éstos son más propensos a suceder. El proceso de manejo de conflictos se estudia en dos dimensiones, actores y arenas, y se presenta una taxonomía de resoluciones de conflictos. La viabilidad de este marco teórico se pone a prueba identificando los métodos de manejo de conflicto de gobiernos los de coalición y a través de una investigación empírica del manejo de conflictos en diversas coaliciones.

The literature on coalition politics has shown that inter-party conflicts are very common in the life of parliamentary government coalitions; that some of them can pose serious threats to cabinet stability; and, consequently, that conflict management lies at the core of coalition governance (Andeweg and Timmermans 2008; Marangoni and Vercesi 2015; Müller and Strøm 2000a; Nousiainen 1993). In addition, as Kaarbo (2008, 59) has asserted, "what goes on in the life of the cabinet—how parties manage conflict and negotiate political and policy disagreements—is critical for a full understanding of coalition cabinets, their policy choices, and democratic stability and governance." This study contributes to the research field through a framework for the analysis of inter-party conflict management in parliamentary systems. Despite the importance of the topic, a framework of this type is to date absent in the literature. Thus far, works on conflict management have mostly focused on the mechanisms (i.e., procedures) that parties use for conflict resolution (e.g., Andeweg and Timmermans 2008; Miller and Müller 2010). However, it has been argued, an actual understanding of this phenomenon requires—as long as it is viable—a mix, on one hand, of quantitative studies on conflictuality (how many conflicts? Of what kind?) and *structural* mechanisms and, on the other, more qualitative analyses to unlock the *process* (Vercesi 2012b, 283-4). In a nutshell, systematic data should be enriched with new in-depth information on how parties behave.

The aim of this work is to provide an analytical tool for studying the topic of inter-party conflicts in a coherent and comprehensive way. The developed framework provides a new perspective on coalition politics and provides insights that are useful for compiling aspects of coalition politics that are usually scattered among coalition studies. Thus this article presents a reference for analyzing probably the most puzzling aspect of coalitional life (i.e., conflicts in a cooperative context) parsimoniously but exhaustively.

The next section briefly specifies the theoretical background of the framework, i.e., rational choice institutionalism. Subsequently, the conceptualization of political parties in coalitions and how intra-party politics affects coalition politics are addressed. Coalition studies frequently assume parties as unitary actors or neglect the importance of the conceptualization of parties as collective actors in explaining societal facts. Building on both types of studies, I provide an argument connecting intra-party and inter-party politics in which parties are considered the main units of coalition politics. In the following section, I first advocate the usefulness of the framework within the existing relevant literature and then propose a conception of coalition politics as a game characterized by exchange between partners. This conception stresses the cooperative facet of coalitions and simultaneously highlights the puzzling nature of intra-coalitional conflicts. Moreover, this conception functions as a platform to understand how and why conflicts emerge and why parties manage conflicts and attempt to solve them. Inter-party conflicts are then defined and categorized, and insights about the conditions that foster different types of conflicts are presented. The second part of the framework focuses on conflict management itself. As a first step, I define and operationalize the process by means of two proxies: actors and arenas. The second part of the framework therefore permits the phenomenon to be studied empirically. A first application is made by mapping Western European countries with a tradition of coalition formation and the cabinets within such countries based on their characteristic conflict management modes. I then provide a taxonomy of types of conflict management terminations, with some empirical examples. Finally, the article derives some hypotheses from the preceding argumentation and tests them preliminarily through both quantitative data and in-depth qualitative case studies drawn from Italian coalitions. This analysis allows us to focus on a country traditionally affected by a tendency toward intra-coalition conflict (Marangoni and Vercesi 2015). Existing works have been used as touchstones for comparative purposes. The findings are then discussed, and the conclusions presented, along with research outlooks and a brief summary.

Political Actors' Rationality and Theoretical Background

The framework assumes that political actors are rational and choose their actions rationally. I do not assume that individuals always adhere to such a principle in real life. Rather, I attribute this characteristic to social actors in its

ideal-type sense (Weber 1949). In particular, I assume that political actors have a "bounded rationality" (Simon 1957).

The theoretical background of the framework is rational choice institutionalism (Shepsle 2006). This strand is quite established in coalition literature. It takes individual preferences (and, broadly understood, human intentionality) into due consideration, and, at the same time, does not neglect the impact of institutions (Keman 1999, 251-7; Shepsle 1989). Following Shepsle (1989, 134), rational choice institutionalism goes beyond the "overly atomistic conception of political life" typical of classical rational choice theories.

The four main characteristics of such institutionalism have been presented by Hall and Taylor (1996, 944-5) as follows: (i) it posits that actors have a fixed set of preferences and aim to their maximization instrumentally; (ii) it conceives politics as a set of collective action dilemmas; (iii) actors behave in a strategic manner; and (iv) institutions structure the behaviors and can be both constraints and instruments to bring more benefits from cooperation. It is worth noting that the fourth point is particularly important for the study of political coalitions, where "cooperation is seriously threatened by distributive conflict over the choice among cooperative solutions (or over the allocation of the costs and benefits of cooperation)" (Scharpf 1989, 162).[1] The fact that coalition members are veto players (Tsebelis 2002) exacerbates the threat.

The Units of the Framework: Political Parties and Intra-Party Politics

The Concept of Political Party

I have said that the framework should be of service to study a typical coalitional problem, in which governing parties are involved. Before developing the argument, I need to make a short claim about how the word "party" is understood here. First, I consider parties as those organizations typical of modern politics, which channel participation (Huntington 1968), express societal interests (Neumann 1956), and fill government posts and produce public policy (Castles and Wildenmann 1986). Because the framework should travel across countries and different types of coalitions, I refer to them irrespective of their structuration and degree of institutionalization (Panebianco 1988). In the last decades, new parties with thinner and/or leader-centered organizations were born (Müller-Rommel 1998) and have been increasingly part of government coalitions (Deschouwer 2008). Often, they are not well institutionalized (Vercesi 2015). Furthermore, even traditional parties have moved from a more classic mass-party-based organization to lighter structures (Katz and Mair 1995). For all these reasons, I borrow the minimal definition of political party of

[1]Scharpf (1989, 152) defines institutions as "configurations of organizational capabilities (assemblies of personal, material and informational resources that can be used for collective action) and of sets of rules or normative constraints structuring the interaction of participants in their deployment."

Sartori (1976, 64), according to whom, "[a] party is any political group that presents at elections, and is capable of placing through elections, candidates for public office" (italics in the original).

After defining parties, we must conceive parties theoretically because parties can be viewed both as *collective actors*—as entities on their own—with a system for collective decision making (see Boudon 1981) and as a set of individual politicians behaving under the same label more or less coordinately. The relevant debate is well developed and cannot be avoided in developing this framework.

Parties, Factions, and Politicians: How Intra-Party Politics Affects Coalition Politics

In building a theory of coalition politics in parliamentary systems, one of the first decisions scholars face is who plays the coalition game (Laver and Schofield 1990), that is, the units of the theory. The framework I propose addresses interactions *between parties*, but this raises the unresolved question of whether parties should be treated as unitary actors.

Although often employed, the notion of parties as unitary actors has had to face growing criticisms, in particular from scholars focusing on American politics or, more generally, relying on rational choice theories and devoted to methodological individualism. According to them, coalition politics would be a two-level game (Putnam 1988), where the problems of collective action arise both within parties and between members of different parties. Sartori (1976) has focused on the meso-level of parties and underlined how parties are just a set of factions (or fractions, as he called them). Conversely, some have provided good empirical arguments for treating political parties as unitary actors, especially in parliamentary systems, where party discipline is "so much more the rule, rather than the exception" (Laver and Schofield 1990, 34-5; Müller and Strøm 2000b, 7). Studies on party switching, for example, provide some evidence. Some have demonstrated that the likelihood of switches is strongly dependent on the structure of constraints and opportunities and that politicians opt for this path, whenever it is more convenient, according to their personal policy motivations and ambitions (Di Virgili, Daniela, and Luca 2012; Heller and Mershon 2009; O'Brien and Shomer 2013). Landi and Pelizzo (2013) have shown that the more party competition becomes institutionalized, the more party switching decreases.

So what is the best choice? The answer is: no best choice exists; in fact, the appropriateness depends largely on the research question. Scholars who treat parties as unitary actors usually focus on a specific phase of the coalitional game: government formation (see Laver 1998; Vercesi 2012b, 234-47). As Laver and Schofield (1990, 17-24) have noted, "the initial outcome of the politics of coalition… tends to be brought about by legislative parties voting as unified blocks on the investiture of a government. However, it may still the case that

intra-party politics affects the politics of coalition." Furthermore, "parties only seem to be unitary actors because existing theoretical accounts do work with snapshots of the system at particular moments." This means that the unitary assumption can be a fruitful methodological principle as long as we look for the *outcomes* of party interactions at a given point in time. It works less well once we decide to study the *process* of conflict management: how and why coalition partners reach joint decisions.

A party that behaves as a united block in coalitional negotiations is not necessarily internally cohesive. Party cohesion is a product of the extent to which party members share preferences on different issues; party unity is indicated by how much party members, particularly legislators, coordinate their party behavior (Giannetti and Benoit 2009, 5). Party unity can originate from either an actual sharing of political viewpoints or effective party discipline. Krehbiel (1998) has argued that parties are only a set of politicians with their own preferences. According to Krehbiel (1993), genuine party behavior occurs only when party discipline forces party members to adhere to decisions that are not in harmony with their preferences. Following this argument, we should explain why individuals with divergent preferences often adapt their behaviors to arrive at a single "*party decision*."

In this respect, Laver and Shepsle (1999, 26-47) have proposed a heuristic model based on formal theory comprising five basic blocks that I use as a reference for my analysis. According to Laver and Shepsle, the model should consider the following: (a) the environment and the role of the party (in our framework, parties in coalition governments); (b) politicians' tastes "on issues that will certainly, or might conceivably, come up for decision by governments within the time horizons of the actors concerned"[2]; (c) factions of party members "with similar tastes in public policy;" (d) intra-party decision-making procedures (autocratic vs. majority vote); and (e) party discipline. Laver and Shepsle have argued that even party members with divergent interests and preferences have strong incentives to create factions and ultimately remain in an organization dominated by someone else because such activities augment their bargaining power. In this sense, losing autonomy is rational. Larger bargaining units, in fact, "are able to drag eventual government outputs on a wide range of issues closer to the ideal points of those subjecting themselves to the discipline" (Laver and Shepsle 1999, 29). Accordingly for these authors, party discipline is a "strategic force that binds factions together into larger and more effective players in the coalitional game" (46-47). Undermining this argument are institutional environments that provide incentives for creating factions and party splits and decrease the costs of disobedience (Ceron 2015; Sieberer 2006). However, parties remain attractive organizations overall for ambitious politicians. Even in electoral campaigns, parties (still) function as crucial devices for

[2]Italics in the original.

candidates who run under their labels and want to be elected (Dalton, Farrel, and McAllister 2011).

The degree of "factionalization" varies among parties, and Laver and Schofield (1990, 26-7) have defined four types. First, coherent parties most approximate actual unitary actors. The second type includes parties that are threatened by likely splits but have high discipline and thus can be treated *as if* they were unitary actors without serious theoretical and empirical pitfalls. The third type are considerably factionalized and rarely behave as one party. The fourth type comprises electoral coalitions.

Greater internal division within a party increases the difficulty of formulating final decisions that encompass—if they do—the requests of factions (and individuals) with divergent preferences. Party leaders make the final decisions or are at least the highest representatives of their own parties in the coalition game.[3] They must accommodate divergent positions and negotiate coalitional addresses with their counterparts. Luebbert (1986) has provided an explanation of the process, arguing that party leaders are primarily interested in remaining in office and that retaining their post significantly depends on the support they receive within the party. If we assume that those party members who are not part of the party leadership are more policy oriented than the leaders themselves, then leaders must take party fellows' policy positions seriously. In particular, party leaders should seek to uphold those requests that minimize intra-party dissent and do not weaken their position. What happens inside parties has important consequences for coalitional dynamics, both in terms of reaching an agreement and conducting credible negotiations. For example, Ceron (2014) has demonstrated that stronger leadership within a party enhances the bargaining strength of the party as a whole.

In summary, when we analyze inter-party conflict management in coalitions, we must consider intra-party politics to disentangle the process and the development of the process. Parties comprise factions (if any), and factions comprise politicians, who are the real-world actors who conduct the negotiations. I propose a framework for coalition bargaining that allows us to enter the black box of conflict management and provides coordinates for analyzing politicians' actions toward their own parties and toward the coalition. However, the framework remains a framework for studying *coalition* politics and hence treats parties as the main units of analysis and factions as their subunits. Coalition politics is the nesting game on which I primarily focus, whereas intra-party politics is the nested game within it (McCain 2010, 326; Tsebelis

[3]Following Müller (2000b, 317), I define party leaders "those who internalize the collective interest of the party and monitor the party's other office holders." Party leaders are assumed to be the key actors when it comes to take party decisions. The assumption is theoretically sustained by the principal-agent theory applied to democratic institutional settings, where party leaders, because of their central role in parties, are crucial figures of party politics. See the special issue on parliamentary democracy and the chain of delegation of the *European Journal of Political Research* 37 (3).

1990). Accounting for intra-party politics gives further sense to politicians' behaviors.

In the next section, I shift from intra-party politics to the upper level by proposing a conception of coalition politics as a particular game of strategic exchanges.

Coalitions and Coalition Politics: A Different Perspective

Relevance of Government Coalitions and Rationale for a New Framework

Party systems are the products of the sedimentation of centuries-old social cleavages and subsequent developments (Flora 1999). The more different cleavages pass through a polity, the more multi-party systems find fertile conditions to emerge. Moreover, the electoral system can limit or foster the developments of parties (Sartori 1994). Especially where elections are held with a proportional rule and there are no disproportional mechanisms, the electoral competition is likely to produce more fragmented legislatures and, eventually, the need to form coalition governments. Overall, this is a very common outcome (see e.g., Blondel, Müller-Rommel, and Malová, 2007, 102-4; Müller, Bergman, and Strøm 2008, 8), which scholars have studied from several perspectives (see Vercesi 2012b).

A very well-developed strand concerns studies on government formation, which aim to explain (and predict) what coalitions will develop under certain conditions. Two main research traditions exist. The first proposes deductive rational choice theories, whereas the second prefers an inductive approach that focuses on context as an explicative variable. Some classic theories have assumed that parties are office-seeking actors that, because coalition formation is a zero-sum game, are prone to form minimum winning coalitions (broadly understood) or, at least, coalitions with the lowest number of parties (Gamson 1961; Leiserson 1968; Neumann and Morgenstern 1947; Riker 1962). Others have added another principle: inter-party proximity in terms of policy preferences. In this sense, parties will seek to form more or less extended coalitions in which the heterogeneity of preferences is limited (Axelrod 1970; de Swaan 1973; Leiserson 1966). These studies all predict majority governments, and, with few exceptions, do not allow oversized coalitions. Some scholars have retained nomological-deductive approaches and instead discarded the size assumption to propose multidimensional theories, such as the core theory (Schofield 1993, 1995) and the win set theory (Laver and Shepsle 1996). Both theories argue that some parties have such a strong position in terms of their ideal policy positions in a Euclidean space that they cannot be excluded from any governmental alliances. Finally, inductive theories have focused on several variables that affect the outputs of government formation. To name a few: Luebbert (1986) has stated that minority governments are more likely in consensual systems, where the legitimacy of the system is higher. Strøm (1990) has noted that a strong opposition together with decisive elections foster such

governments. Bergman (1993) has shown empirically that also negative parliamentarism favors minority governments. According to Ieraci (1994), the institutionalization of the political system plays the major role: minimum winning coalitions should emerge where institutions are strong and the cost to exclude is lower. A further variable can be the role of the head of state in choosing the *formateur*: this position gives an advantage because the *formateur* can safeguard his or her party's entrance in government and propose coalitions, in accordance to his or her positions (Austen-Smith and Banks 1988; Baron 1991, 1993). The need to approve bills in two chambers, then, would force one to find coalitions with a majority in both houses of the legislature (Druckman, Lanny, and Michael 2005). In addition, the coalitions ratified through a pre-electoral deal would have more chances to enter the government (Golder 2006). Parties such as anti-system parties are typically parties that are out of government by definition (Budge and Keman 1990). Finally, Franklin and Mackie (1983) have argued that former experiences of joint government make parties keener to seek alliances with former partners, rather than with others.

Briefly stated, coalition studies have observed a great variety of possible outcomes and reasons behind coalitions and have validated the high frequency of coalition governments in a large number of countries. Coalitions are hence important phenomena because they are crucial for governing in many political systems. The literature has also stressed the impact of coalitions on the quality and sustainability of democracies. For example, Lijphart (2012) argued that those countries in which coalitions are the norm are "better" according to several quality indicators, such as female representation, political equality, participation, satisfaction toward democracy, and shorter distance between voters and government. By contrast, Sartori (1976) emphasized that not all coalitional systems are equally sustainable. A party system characterized by polarized pluralism is indeed doomed to function with "low performance" and risks downfall because of its inherent centrifugal drives.

Although extensively studied, coalitions have been categorized mostly from the perspectives of their formation, allocation of portfolios, and likelihood of terminating (Vercesi 2012b). Regarding coalition governance, the literature has focused mainly on governance mechanisms (Strøm, Müller, and Smith 2010) and cabinet decision making (Vercesi 2012a). For classification purposes, references to their functioning (if any) have been only indirect.[4] The aforementioned Sartori (1976) is an example. Another is Tsebelis (2002), who distinguishes coalitions based on the number and the nature of veto players and, consequently, their potential to change the *status quo*. Mair (1996, 2002) has stressed the importance of party systems in shaping the function of government. He has mapped party systems by examining party access to the cabinet and closure of the system. According to Mair, new structures of competition will affect electoral behaviors. In general,

[4]I acknowledge an anonymous reviewer for the suggestions on this point.

shifts in traditional patterns of government formation produce greater electoral uncertainty and a higher number of "coalitionable" parties. However, the insights in these studies are not sufficient to classify countries (and single coalitions within countries) according to how political actors behave within conflict management mechanisms and their impact on the management (and the solving) of intra-coalition conflicts. This gap is a serious weakness of the literature. Presumably, the conflicts that emerge and how governments cope with them are crucial issues for defining policy outputs and for system performance. Therefore, I propose a theoretical framework that permits the categorization of coalitions according to their performance—in terms of conflict management—in a more straightforward manner. This framework is constructed both from a general and more static perspective and by means of analyses of how the process is shaped in an ongoing basis within different coalitions at different moments. The framework, an original and informative research device absent from coalition studies, could add predictive power to existing studies by clearly indicating from a new perspective the coalitions that are more likely to perform in a certain manner.

Coalition Politics as Strategic Politics of Exchange

Broadly understood, government coalitions are unifications of political parties. Coalition partners have somewhat different goals but choose to converge on goals that are shared and cooperate in pursuit of these goals. Parties opt to enter coalitions when they cannot pursue these common goals on their own or if the pursuit of these goals is too costly (cf., Vercesi 2013a, 84). The interactions between coalition parties and their partners are the foundation of what we can label as coalition politics.

Political-institutional features, both exogenous and endogenous (Müller and Strøm 2000b, 4), structure coalition politics. Constitutional rules, party systems and other features of the political environment are exogenous. By contrast, coalition features (e.g., number of parties in a coalition, coalition ideological range, and coalition agreements) are endogenous.

Political parties in coalitions, represented by their party leaders (see above), aim to obtain the compliance of coalition partners. Both common coalitional goals and the goals of the party must be achieved. Parties in coalitions are dependent on each other, and coalition governance is a nonzero sum game in the guise of mutual exchange. "On the one hand, through the exchange of commitments, we aim to make the behaviors of others predictable, by constraining our own behavior. But, on the other hand, the more B is able to keep unpredictable—in the eyes of A—his or her (or its) own future behavior, the more the exchange will produce benefits for B" (Cesa 2007, 74-5). Parties seek to avoid the costs of coalition (Mershon 2002) as much as possible while maximizing their benefits (cf., Narud and Valen 2008; Rose and Mackie 1983). As long as the (actual or prospective) benefits are higher than the costs, parties will be very careful to avoid crossing the coalitional breaking point and to keep the alliance alive.

Coalition parties' decisions are interdependent, and parties must be strategic. Parties consider the environment and the past and party decisions are based on the foreseen actions of their allies. For Schelling (1980, 160), a strategic move "is one that influences the other person's choice, in a manner favorable to one's self, by affecting the other person's expectations on one's self will behave. One constrains the partner's choice by constraining one's own behavior." In other words, coalition politics is the politics of anticipation. Coalitional politics is the result of both offensive strategies (attempts to constrain) and defensive strategies (attempts to be "free") (cf., Crozier and Friedberg 1980).

Promises and threats are typical strategic moves and must be plausible to be effective. Moreover, threats should not be implemented because implementation can be viewed as the failure of the attempt to change the other's behavior. So, if implemented, threats become sanctions caused by a lack of compliance. However, such sanctions could also function as a warning for the future and increase the sanctioner's power to constrain (Stoppino 2001, 73-7). Overall, all moves have an informational function and are channels to communicate one's own values and, simultaneously, attempt to obtain informational advantages (Arielli and Scotto 2003; Schelling 1980).

The exchange of compliances may be more or less equal; the degree of inequality depends on the strategic strength of coalitional actors, that is, "for every single resource, a mix of the degree of control exercised by the holder and the degree of importance (in terms of the obtainable benefit) that others bestow to" the resource (Stoppino 2001, 167). Attempts to constrain allies are continuous bargaining and conflictual processes (195).

In government coalitions, the most important resources that parties hold (what parties "offer" for the achievement of the common goal) are (a) the share of parliamentary seats, and (b) the "position relative to the other parliamentary parties in policy space" (Müller and Strøm 2000b, 7).[5] The opportunity to gain in terms of coalitional pay-offs (office and policy) impels party actors to the investment and the use of these resources. However, parties must also confront two strategic problems: (a) forming and maintaining agreements with partners, while (b) satisfying actual and potential voters (Lupia and Strøm 2008). Divergences between party goals and a lack of information make the coalitional balance precarious and the relationship uncertain.

Conditions for Conflict Emergence

These factors all foster inter-party conflicts, that is, political relationships between coalition parties that mutually stop or threaten to stop

[5]Party position is not fixed; it changes in accordance to strategic behaviors and affects chances to get votes. The same votes, in turn, will become parliamentary seats (Adams and Somer-Topcu 2009).

cooperating with one or more allies to achieve their own party goals (Vercesi 2013a, 85-6). Parties will seek to avoid conflicts as long as remaining together appears convenient and attempts to resolve conflicts are made when they occur. Inter-party conflicts hinder the expected policy production of the government and often are ultimately detrimental for the life of the coalition. Conflict management is an unavoidable aspect of coalition governance empirically, if not theoretically. Although typical of coalition politics, conflicts vary both in terms of their own probability and in terms of seriousness: the threat posed to cabinet survival. The literature on coalition agreements reveals that even written inter-party deals do not prevent conflicts but rather circumscribe the area of conflict topics by functioning as political agendas (see e.g., Timmermans and Moury 2006). Luebbert (1986, 62-4) has noted that coalition partners can have convergent, tangential, and divergent preferences. By definition, convergent preferences do not produce disagreements on the content of decisions. At most, we can expect disagreements on procedures to affect the decision or timing, and disagreements can be safely treated as not overly dangerous for the coalition. Tangential preferences instead imply that parties confer different saliences to a specific issue. Finally, parties have divergent preferences when parties attribute the same salience to an issue but do not agree on the content of the relevant decision. For Andeweg and Timmermans (2008, 276), divergent preferences most likely foster the most dangerous conflicts. Concerning the likelihood of conflicts, we can argue that parties are more likely to enter conflicts if the parties consider the issue at stake important and, all else being equal, coalition partners have divergent preferences. This is a very intriguing point in regard to assessing the "work conditions" of a coalition: the more important an issue, the more parties will tend not to acquiesce in their attempt to obtain their *desiderata*. When preferences are deeply divergent, parties will exhibit rigid behaviors, and mutual agreements will be more arduous to obtain. Such conditions are conducive to more radical conflicts. Therefore, divisive issues are not only threatening *per se* but also tend to foster radical behaviors within coalitions, for which cooperation is assumed. In particular, the more a party wields a high strategic strength vis-à-vis its allies, the more it will be able to radicalize the conflict to achieve its goals. Andeweg and Timmermans (2008, 297) highlighted this relationship by stating that a high party's walk-away value increases the potential to "win" a conflict. According to the framework, party blackmail potential depends on both the party's ideological position within the coalition and the party system's configuration and competitiveness. The reliability of potential threats to leave the coalition decreases when the party has only a few or no possibilities to enter government in the future (cf., Mershon 2002).

After dealing with the conditions that foster and shape inter-party conflicts and arguing when a coalition is more likely to be conflictual, the framework notes the objects of these inter-party conflicts.

What Do Parties Struggle For? Office and Policy

From an ideal-type perspective, political parties in polyarchies struggle for political power and those public positions from which it is wielded (Stoppino 2001). They search for the necessary votes and produce policies as instruments to reach political power. As Downs (1957, 28) stated, "parties formulate policies in order to win elections, rather than win elections in order to formulate policies:" policies could be conceived of, then, as political investments. Often, parties have to face a trade-off between party goals (Müller and Strøm 1999; Sjöblom 1968) and the task of leaders is to choose the best strategy.

Office and policy are the two main objectives of inter-party conflicts in coalitions and the likelihood a party has to achieve its own goals depends on the distribution of the aforementioned resources. Two types of inter-party conflicts are therefore locatable as long as party goals are concerned: office conflicts and policy conflicts. It is worth noting that parties can be involved also in another type of conflict, whose objects are intra-coalitional procedures and relationships (Marangoni 2013, 98-108; Marangoni and Vercesi 2015, 25-6). However, the analytical level is different: procedural conflicts do not concern party goals. On the contrary, they are meta-conflicts concerning mechanisms to prevent and cope with office and policy conflicts.

Office conflicts can be "qualitative" (who gets what) or "quantitative" (who gets how much). They appear both during government formation or later. For example, sometimes parties struggle during cabinet reshuffles. In 1986, the Irish Fine Gael Taoiseach (prime minister) decided to move the Minister for Health, deputy leader of the Labour Party, to another department. The Labour Party firmly stood against the decision and threatened to leave the cabinet and, eventually, the Taoiseach was forced to desist (Mitchell 2000, 145). All conflicts over governmental policies are, instead, policy conflicts. They are more likely to focus on issues of "high" politics, such as significant financial reforms, denationalizations of public enterprises, military deployments, civil rights, and so forth. The reason is that "high" politics includes issues that characterize the performances of cabinets and define the policy profile of each party toward voters. Usually, "high" politics issues are discussed at the coalitional level, whereas "minor" routine issues are dealt with at the departmental level. The significance of decisions varies in accordance with the relevant policy field as well; some sectors are more important for the evaluation of governments (and for public visibility) than others.[6]

I have indicated the conflicts that are more likely to appear and the conditions that are conducive to more serious and radical conflicts. Party preferences often concern preferences on policy issues, but parties can also disagree on how to allocate offices. Laver and Shepsle (1996) have stressed the extreme

[6]The distinction between high politics and routine issues refers to what Nousiainen (1993, 260-1) has called vertical dimension of the policy space (policy level), whereas the distinction between fields to the horizontal dimension (policy field).

relevance of portfolio allocation in giving a party an opportunity to affect government policy, and patronage logics can enter the game. Decisions on portfolio allocation can be intertwined with policy preferences (see Vercesi 2012b, 250-2), but, nonetheless, inter-party office conflicts tend to emerge as long as the available posts are finite and the costs to compensate losses with other posts increase. Marangoni and Vercesi (2015) have studied the topic extensively with regard to Italian coalitions. In their analysis, they have demonstrated that office conflicts are more likely when government coalitions do not clearly stem from the elections and are the result of inter-party parliamentary bargaining. Such coalitions are forced to continually negotiate their power bases. By contrast, those coalitions that can rely on straightforward electoral legitimacy usually enter conflicts over policy issues because this type of government works under conditions of clearer party mandates and responsiveness. Marangoni and Vercesi have also demonstrated that the type of coalition also has an impact on the involvement of prime ministers. Chief executives tend to be more active in policy conflicts when governments have a programmatic mandate. Prime ministerial involvement introduces the topic of conflict management, which is discussed in the next section.

The Process of Inter-Party Conflict Management: Who Participates and How it Is Structured

Definition of Conflict Management

Inter-party conflict management is a process and a set of actions of two or more coalition parties (in conflict or outside the conflict) that aim to attenuate the effects of a conflict that is collectively evaluated as detrimental. Moreover, the parties aim to preserve the coalition and find agreement between all parties. Throughout the process, parties pursue their own best outcome by calculating the actual and prospective costs of the conflict. A mix of cooperative and bargaining aspects characterizes such processes. Although conflict and conflict management are analytically distinguishable, they are often intertwined in empirical terms. Via conflict management, parties demonstrate that they want to cooperate and reach an agreement.

The process develops within the coalitional game, and its outcome is affected by decision rules and (conflictual and/or cooperative) actors' approaches. Following these premises, the concept of inter-party conflict management can be essentially operationalized using two proxies: participants and arenas. Actors' preferences, characteristics, roles, and resources affect the interaction style. In turn, interactions occur inside arenas which structure the process and imply particular decision rules.[7]

[7]The latter point is highlighted by Andeweg and Timmermans (2008). The distinction between types of game, decision rules, and decision styles is drawn from Sharpf (1989), and rearranged for the purposes of the article.

Participants

As said above, the units of the framework are political parties; to put it differently, they are the units of the conflict because an inter-party conflict is a conflict between parties. Nevertheless, who concretely conducts the process—who meets and take decisions—are party politicians and government members. The process can be unlocked only if we focus on individuals and the relationships between them. The sense of single actors' behaviors is provided by their personal goals and by party goals, which are mediated by their institutional and party roles. In regard to entering the black box of conflict management, we must first identify the participants and understand what role they have in the process: are they crucial players or just "supporting actors"? Second, we have to observe their behavioral style toward others, whether they impose or mediate. Finally, we should detect their role within the party, the coalition, and in government.

Because the framework addresses government coalitions, a focus on prime ministerial actions is unavoidable. Prime ministers are chiefs of cabinet and, often, party prominents. They can be activists or arbitrators (Blondel 1988). An activist shapes the process of conflict management. Sometimes, his/her behaviors are sources of conflict, but he/she is powerful enough to solve that conflict. Contrariwise, arbitrators seek mediations. Typically, they try to avoid conflict. Prime ministers who are also party members can manage inter-party conflicts as government members or as party representatives. They have to balance party interests (especially when their own parties are parts of the conflict) and cabinet interests. If the prime minister's party is scarcely involved in the conflict, the chief executive will be similar to a third part (cf., Arielli and Scotto 2003, 168-70), able to solve the conflict or only to mediate. Similarly, senior and junior ministers sometimes behave as representatives of their own departments and sometimes as party actors. They can participate only as departmental actors when they are nonpartisan ministers.

The more the conflict develops along party lines, the more party leaders are expected to be involved in the management, *ceteris paribus*. Moreover, parties are ruled by more or less monolithic party elites, which can join the leaders and participate to the process. In factionalized parties, elite members can be factions' representatives. Factions can be in conflict on the same issue of the inter-party conflict. In this case, following what have been said above, party leaders will have to play a two-level game and be the turning points between factions' leaders and other party leaders. All party members can also be government members (prime ministers, deputy prime ministers, ministers). Whatever the role within the party is, the post of parliamentary leader provides more opportunities to enter the process. Parliamentary leaders are the bridges between extra-parliamentary party organizations and parliamentary groups, whose discipline is, in fact, necessary for the approval of several policies.

Overall, the degree of involvement and the impact of actors on conflict management vary across time and space. However, those mentioned can be supposed to be the major actors, on whom analyses should primarily focus.

Other individuals, such as simple members of parliament (MPs), civil servants, and personal advisers can back them up (Müller and Strøm 2000a). The gap between theory and facts is a matter for empirical inquiries. The next subsection addresses the arenas that individuals use during conflict management.

Arenas

Conflict management participants opt for several types of arenas. Here I present these arenas mostly by using the arguments of Andeweg and Timmermans (2008, 271-3). Some of the historical examples that follow—together with the relevant references—are drawn from this work. In addition to those presented by Andeweg and Timmermans, I consider two further arenas: bilateral contact and full cabinet. Within the arenas, the weight of participants and their impact depend on the political context and the issue at stake. Arenas can be formal or informal; they can gather a large or a small number of actors; their scope can be larger or narrower; they can be more or less open to nongovernment members. Following Andeweg and Timmermans, I subordinate the first three criteria to the fourth, on the basis of which a classification is proposed. The main distinction is between internal arenas (where only government members participate), mixed arenas (both internal and external actors), and external arenas (only nongovernment members). Internal actors are both senior and junior ministers (together with their personal advisers); civil servants are instead external (Barbieri and Vercesi 2013). However, all the arenas considered are internal with respect to the coalition and therefore arenas, such as parliamentary arenas—where members of the opposition attend—are excluded.

An arena that can be internal, mixed, or external is the bilateral contact. Cabinet decision making often relies on it (Vercesi 2012a). With regard to conflict management, a clear example of coalition that used it is the Irish coalition made up of Fine Gael and the Labour Party in 1982-87. More than one policy conflict was solved through private meetings between the two party leaders, who were cabinet members (Mitchell 2000, 140). Stable meetings of a small and very influential group of cabinet members are indicators of inner cabinets. Typically, inner cabinets comprise (at least) the prime minister and the deputy prime minister(s), and discussions can focus on any topic, depending on the moment. The Belgian *Kerncabinet* is a clear-cut example (De Winter, Timmermans, and Dumont 2000, 327). Other inner cabinets were the Italian Cabinet Council during the Craxi premiership (Barbieri 2001, 199-201) and the Dutch Pentagon of the Van Agt II cabinet (Andeweg 1988, 146). Cabinet committees are internal arenas as well (if civil servants or other external actors do not enter). Committees are formal or informal, sometimes *ad hoc*. Their importance varies across countries and on the basis of the circumstances. Usually, a higher number of individuals attend the meetings. Compared to inner cabinets, cabinet committees are less generalist. A formal committee was established by the Conservative-Liberal coalition, which entered office in 2010 in the United

Kingdom. The arena included senior government members from both parties and was co-chaired by Prime Minister Cameron and Liberal Democrat leader Clegg (Bennister and Hefferman 2012, 784). The most inclusive internal arena is the full cabinet.[8] In most cases, it is only a ratifying place, or, at most, a ministerial court of appeal (Thiébault 1993). Nonetheless, it is possible to find some cases of full cabinets working as arenas for conflict management, for example, in Luxembourg in the 1960s (Dumont and De Winter 2000, 417).

Often, parties opt for coalition committees for managing inter-party conflicts. They are mixed arenas and have broad competences. The participants are party leaders and other party prominents. The Italian Majority Summits (Criscitiello 1996) and the Austrian Coalition Committees in the 1950s and 1960s (Müller 2000a, 104) are part of this category. Committees of ministers and parliamentary leaders are similar, but in this case the external actors are always parliamentary leaders, who are sometimes joined by other MPs, as is the case with the Dutch "Turret consultations" (Timmermans and Andeweg 2000, 383). The German *Kressbronner Kreis* of the 1966-69 Grand Coalition (Helms 2005, 108-9) and the Round Tables of the French Fourth Republic (Andrews 1962) shared these features.

If, instead, only parliamentary leaders meet, the arena is fully external (other MPs may enter the arena, without changing its external nature). The German CDU/CSU-Liberals coalitions between 1961 and 1965 relied on it (Saalfeld 2000, 61-2). Years later, the parties of the Slovak Moravčík cabinet formed in 1994 followed this path, by establishing the Coalition Council (Malová and Sivakova 1996, 115). Finally, we may find party summits, which gather high party prominents who are outside the government. The Belgian coalition of the Tindemans IV cabinet used a party summit for managing a conflict over an institutional reform (De Winter, Timmermans, and Dumont 2000, 328).

Other arenas can be employed, but those listed are the most common. All arenas can be classified on the basis of the role that—in that specific moment—bestow the "right" to participate. Once more, the only way to assess the role is through an empirical inquiry.

Mapping Coalition Politics According to Inter-Party Conflict Management

The discussion of the process of inter-party conflict management allows coalition politics to be mapped according to the prevalent type of management by country and by coalition. Among proxy "participants," it can be useful to focus on those actors that have an important influence in the process. The literature has demonstrated that party leaders are very important across countries,

[8]Even if sometimes external actors attend the Council of Ministers with an important say (see Blondel and Müller-Rommel 1997, 2001).

without significant variations. Therefore, party leaders are the first variable in explaining the choice between internal and external arenas. Coalitions will opt for internal arenas as long as party leaders are cabinet members and will move to external arenas when party leaders are out of the government (Andeweg and Timmermans 2008; Marangoni and Vercesi 2015). Party leaders' participation can thus be considered relatively constant in conflict management, whereas we can assume greater variation in the role of prime minister (who may also be a party leader).

The literature on cabinet governance has repeatedly noted that powerful prime ministers have a pronounced impact on governmental decision making (see e.g., Poguntke and Webb 2005; Vercesi 2012a). Explorative studies have confirmed the importance of the power of prime ministers in conflict management as well (Vercesi 2013b). Consequently, I list government coalitions first on the basis of the strength of prime ministers. Second, I observe whether coalition governments mainly rely on internal, mixed, or external arenas for managing conflicts in general and for managing the most threatening conflicts in particular. For the sake of simplicity, I have narrowed the focus to Western Europe. Referring to secondary sources, I have covered the post-war period from 1945 to 1999. Empirical studies have highlighted that the coalitional nature of governments seriously constrains maneuvering by heads of governments (Jones 1991). Moreover, single-party cabinets tend to internalize the management of conflict more than coalition governments (Nousiainen 1993). We therefore require a set of countries characterized by a minimum level of homogeneity in the coalitional nature of their governments. For this reason, I have limited the set of countries only to those systems treated in Strøm, Müller, and Bergman (2003) in which, during the given period, at least 50 percent of all cabinets were coalition governments. The only exception is Ireland, whose pattern of government moved from a mainly single-party cabinet to a coalitional cabinet in 1989. Between 1989 and 1999—the period under consideration—only five coalitional cabinets ruled Ireland. France has been excluded because of its fully-fledged semi-presidential functioning (making France a deviant case).

Prime ministerial influence is operationalized by referring to the results of the expert survey in O'Malley (2007), which correlates well with similar measurements. Prime ministers are assessed on a scale from one (the weakest) to nine (the strongest). As for Ireland, in O'Malley (2007), the first government taken into consideration for the survey dates to 1982. This government was a coalition, and only one executive of the sample was a single-party cabinet. Therefore, the findings on Ireland should be reliable, even if our observations are limited to the period 1989-99. Second, I have used Andeweg and Timmermans' (2008, 274) data to establish which type of arenas characterized conflict management. Table 1 maps ten European countries according to these criteria. It also shows the cabinet "degree of cohesiveness" in each country. Numbers are drawn from Strøm and others (2003, 662-3), and specify "the

Table 1. Conflict Management, Coalitional Cohesiveness, and "Sensitivity" to Inter-Party Conflicts in Western Europe

Country	PM Influence	Most Commonly Used Arenas (%)			Arenas for Most Serious Conflicts (%)			"Cohesiveness" of Coalitional Commitment	Terminations Due to Inter-Party Conflicts (%)	Coalitions in Post-War Period	
		Internal	Mixed	External	Internal	Mixed	External			N	%
Austria	5.42	100			53	47		1.05	33.3	16	76.2
Belgium	6.05	100			32		68	2.65	53.1	28	84.9
Denmark	5.77	100			100			1.00	6.7	17	54.8
Finland	5.76	97	3		58	42		2.30	32.6	33	89.2
Germany	6.29		50	50		55	45	1.05	28.0	22	84.6
Iceland	3.75	100			100			1.85	32.0	22	84.6
Ireland	6.08		40	60			100	1.00	60.0	5	100
Italy	4.98		62	38		62	38	2.05	54.0	34	70.8
Luxembourg	6.50	50	50		50	25	25	3.00	26.7	16	100
Netherlands	6.09	61		39		48	52	3.00	27.3	22	100
Mean	5.67	61	21	19	39	28	33	1.90	35.4	22	84.5

Sources: Own revision of Andeweg and Timmermans (2008, 274); Mitchell (2000, 139); Mitchell and Nyblade (2008, 206); O'Malley (2007, 17); Strøm and others (2003, 662).

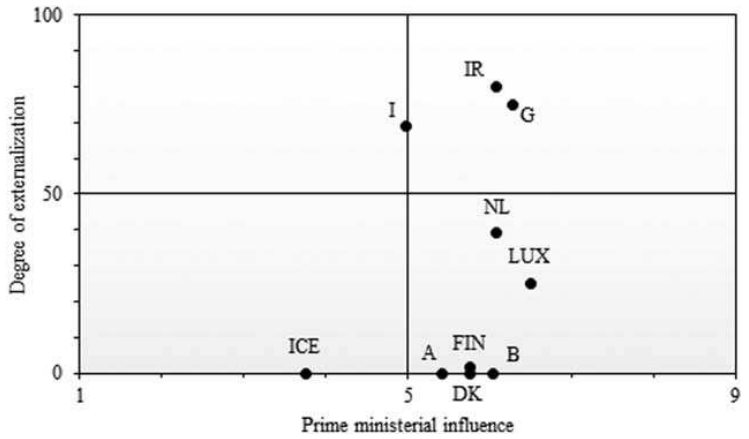
Notes: Irish cabinets are counted only for the period 1989-99. Data on cabinet type are calculated excluding nonpartisan cabinets and other cabinets that cannot be easily classified. Slight differences in the N of cabinets can occur between the sources. The percentages of arenas refer to the percentage of cabinets using those arenas. The "cohesiveness" of coalitional commitments was originally calculated for two periods: 1950-74 and 1975-99. In this table, the numbers are the mean between the two values. For Ireland, only the second period is taken into account.

coalition rules governing policy cohesion on a four-point scale, from the most comprehensive and committal (scored 1) to the most informal and partial (scored 4)." Policy cohesion is considered "as pertaining to ordinary legislation as well as to other parliamentary decisions" (663). Finally, I have indicated the percentage of cabinet terminations due to inter-party conflicts out of all government terminations. A change of cabinet is recorded when there was a new prime minister, a change in the cabinet party composition, or a general election.

We see that in some countries prime ministers have more influence in the process of conflict management, but none has a very strong prime minister. To a large extent, this stems from the fact that we are observing countries where cabinets were ruled mainly by coalitions. Germany ranks first regarding influent heads of government, whereas Italy and Iceland are at the bottom, in line with findings of single case studies (see e.g., Strøm, Müller, and Bergman 2003). Some countries, then, are accustomed to managing conflicts inside the cabinet, such as Austria, Denmark, and Iceland. Others bring the process to mixed or external arenas, as is the case with Germany, Ireland, and Italy. I reproduce graphically the map of countries in Figure 1. It refers to the management of conflicts in general, not only to the most serious ones. The vertical axis indicates the degree of externalization of conflict management. I have calculated it as the sum of the percentages concerning external arenas and the half of the percentages of mixed arenas. The figure clearly shows that most countries tend to have a management that tends to develop internally and within which prime ministers have a medium/strong impact.

However, each cabinet can have an own "placement" in terms of how conflicts are managed, and, hence, within-countries comparisons may be made as

Figure 1.
A Map of Coalition Governments in Western Europe by Conflict Management



Source: see Table 1.

well. For instance, Table 2 maps 56 West European cabinets on the basis of the same two proxies used for the cross-country analysis.

Information on prime ministerial influence has been drawn from O'Malley's (2007) appendix, whereas the arenas are those indicated in the respective chapters of Müller and Strøm (2000a). The type of coalition has been extracted from the Parliaments and Governments Database, edited by Döring and Manow (2015).[9] I have selected, among the countries listed in Table 1, all coalition cabinets for which data could be found in all the relevant sources. These cabinets are counted according to the three criteria already mentioned with regard to Table 1 (change of prime minister; change of party composition; general election). Overall, Table 2 shows that the main variations are those that occur between countries but also that even within countries different coalitions can rely on different ways of managing conflicts, as, for example, the German, Irish, and Italian cases witness.

Before moving to the qualitative analysis, the next section completes the presentation of the framework. As shown in Table 1, inter-party conflicts are very common sources of cabinet termination. However, these conflicts can end in many other ways, as analyzed in the next section.

Inter-Party Conflict Termination: A Taxonomy

The outcome of a conflict cannot be inferred from conflict features as far as the units are (potentially) willing to or, actually, manage the conflict. Indeed, any management process could be conducive to some agreements, which changes the *status quo* and cannot be unquestionably foreseen. Furthermore, coalition partners can always leave the coalition when this strategy is valued as most convenient. This type of opportunity is a source of greater uncertainty. However, it is possible to classify conflict management outcomes. Such a classification takes the shape of a taxonomy, as instructed by Sartori (1975), who defines a taxonomy as any hierarchical classification established on two or more criteria. The result is a set of classes and subclasses distinguished by *per genus proximum et differentiam specificam* analysis.

First, conflict management can end with a *nondecision*. Parties cannot agree on any change of the *status quo*, but they think that the conflict is too costly and/or that an unwanted cabinet termination is likely to occur. In brief, the parties think that the conflict is not worth the trouble. The parties can decide to maintain the *status quo* (although the conflict can appear again at a later time) or bring the issue to an extra-coalition arena (cf., Andeweg and Timmermans 2008, 294-5). For instance, in the early 1950s, the Australian Country Party, which was in coalition at the time with the Liberals, firmly stood against the proposed appreciation

[9]Available at www.parlgov.org

Table 2. Conflict Management in Western Europe by Cabinet

Country	Cabinet	Date in (Year)	Type of Coalition	PM Influence	Arena (Most Common)	Arena (Most Serious Conflicts)
Austria	Sinowatz	1983	MW	4.29	Cabinet committee	Inner cabinet
	Vranitzky I	1986	MW	6.14	Cabinet committee	Inner cabinet
	Vranitzky II	1987	MW	6.29	Cabinet committee	Inner cabinet
	Vranitzky II	1990	MW	6.14	Cabinet committee	Inner cabinet
	Vranitzky IV	1994	MW	5.71	Cabinet committee	Inner cabinet
	Vranitzky V	1996	MW	5.29	Cabinet committee	Inner cabinet
	Klima I	1997	MW	4.14	Cabinet committee	Inner cabinet
Belgium	Martens V	1981	MW	5.75	Cabinet committee	Inner cabinet
	Martens VI	1985	MW	5.13	Cabinet committee	Inner cabinet
	Martens VII-VIII	1988	S/MW	5.00	Inner cabinet	Party summit
	Dehaene I	1992	MW	6.33	Inner cabinet	Party summit
	Dehaene II	1995	MW	7.33	Inner cabinet	Party summit
Denmark	Schlüter II-III	1984	M	5.22	Cabinet committee	Inner cabinet
	Schlüter IV	1988	M	5.00	Cabinet committee	Inner cabinet
	Schlüter V	1990	M	5.33	Cabinet committee	Inner cabinet
	Rasmussen I	1993	M	6.10	Cabinet committee	Inner cabinet
	Rasmussen II	1994	M	6.20	Cabinet committee	Inner cabinet
	Rasmussen III	1996	M	6.30	Cabinet committee	Inner cabinet
	Rasmussen IV	1998	M	6.30	Cabinet committee	Inner cabinet
Finland	Sorsa IV	1983	S	5.92	Cabinet committee	Ministers and MPs
	Holkeri I-II	1987	S	4.42	Cabinet committee	Ministers and MPs
	Aho I-II	1991	S/MW	5.33	Cabinet committee	Ministers and MPs
	Lipponen I	1995	S	6.42	Cabinet committee	Ministers and MPs

Continued.

Table 2. Continued

Country	Cabinet	Date in (Year)	Type of Coalition	PM Influence	Arena (Most Common)	Arena (Most Serious Conflicts)
Germany	Schmidt III	1980	MW	5.17	Party summit	Party summit
	Kohl II	1983	MW	6.11	Party summit	Party summit
	Kohl III	1987	MW	6.83	Party summit	Party summit
	Kohl V	1991	MW	7.28	Party summit	Party summit
	Kohl VI	1994	MW	6.00	Party summit	Party summit
	Schröder I	1998	MW	6.35	Coalition committee	Ministers and MPs
Ireland	Fitgerald II	1982	MW	5.70	Party summit	Parliamentary leaders
	Haughey IV	1989	M	5.60	Party summit	Parliamentary leaders
	Reynolds I	1992	M	6.40	Party summit	Parliamentary leaders
	Reynolds II	1993	MW	6.10	Cabinet committee/ Other[a]	Parliamentary leaders
	Bruton	1994	M	5.10	Cabinet committee/ Other[a]	Parliamentary leaders
	Ahern I	1997	M	6.40	Party summit	Parliamentary leaders
Italy	Andreotti V	1989	S	3.71	Party summit	Party summit
	Andreotti VI	1991	S	3.82	Party summit	Party summit
	Amato I	1992	MW	5.76	Party summit	Party summit
	Ciampi	1993	MW	6.24	Coalition committee	Coalition committee
	Berlusconi I	1994	S	5.41	Party summit	Party summit
	Prodi I	1996	M	5.85	Coalition committee	Coalition committee
	D'Alema I	1998	MW	4.12	Coalition committee	Coalition committee
Luxembourg	Werner IV	1979	MW	7.50	Coalition committee	Coalition commitee

Continued.

Table 2. Continued

Country	Cabinet	Date in (Year)	Type of Coalition	PM Influence	Arena (Most Common)	Arena (Most Serious Conflicts)
	Santer I	1984	MW	5.50	Coalition committee	Party summit
	Santer II	1989	MW	5.50	Coalition committee	Coalition committee
	Santer III	1994	MW	5.50	Coalition committee	Coalition committee
	Juncker I	1995	MW	7.50	Coalition committee	Coalition committee
Netherlands	Lubbers I	1982	MW	6.67	Inner cabinet	Coalition committee
	Lubbers II	1986	MW	6.67	Inner cabinet	Coalition committee
	Lubbers III	1989	MW	5.60	Inner cabinet	Coalition committee
	Kok I	1994	MW	5.53	Inner cabinet	Coalition committee
	Kok II	1998	S	6.00	Inner cabinet	Coalition committee

Sources: Döring and Manow (2015); Müller and Strøm (2000a); O'Malley (2007).
Notes: [a]The arena named as "other" refers to meetings held prior to the full cabinet between junior ministers, personal advisers, and civil servants. MW, minimum winning coalition; M, minority coalition; S, surplus coalition. When the parliament is bicameral, the type of coalition concerns government's seats in the lower chamber.

of the Australian currency. After several debates, the liberal prime minister, Menzies, decided to avoid any decision regarding the issue (Costar 2011, 36-7).

The second type of conclusion is conflict resolution. In this category, we find (a) victories; (b) exchanges; and (c) compromises. The more party preferences are divergent, the more unlikely a resolution. There is a victory (of the "innovator") when the party or the parties that want to change the *status quo* achieve the goal fully, as defined at the beginning of the conflict. No agreement on any compensation occurs. The "loser" recognizes the defeat[10] and values it more highly than leaving the coalition. In May 1985, the Political Cabinet arena created by the Israeli national unity coalition was attempting to reach a decision regarding a dispute with Egypt about Taba's border. The cabinet soon split along party lines between those who wanted international arbitration and those who supported direct negotiations. Labor Prime Minister Peres, who supported international arbitration, threatened to take the issue to the full cabinet

[10]However, the "losers" could believe themselves to be able to make up for the defeat in the mid/long term.

and even declared his readiness to resign. The outcome was unanimous approval of the prime ministerial position (Arian, Nachmias, and Amir, 2001, 47-8). The exchange (cf., Arielli and Scotto 2003, 77-8) is instead a *do ut des*, which produces a mutual benefit. It can be one of the hardest solutions to attain because it can be (at least theoretically) the result of distinct processes of conflict management. The object of the exchange can be an office (or more), a policy (or more), or any other inter-party decision. Finally, compromise is the most complex outcome. Actors must modify their goals in the course of events and must enlarge their own ranges of accepted outcomes to obtain agreement and make the ranges meet (Arielli and Scotto 2003, 78), and the result must be more convenient than the conflict and any other expected outcome. The compromise is a suboptimal solution.

We may identify *cabinet termination* as a third type of conclusion (remind that I assume that a change in the party composition is an indicator of a change in government). One or more parties in conflict consider leaving the cabinet less costly than continuing the conflict (cf., Warwick 2012) or any other type of agreement. Consequently, the coalition is broken. Not all cabinet terminations are equal with respect to the damage to coalitional health. A termination conducive to the implosion of the coalition is more serious than a termination that is followed by a new government ruled by the same coalition but with a different prime minister. Similarly, the "survivors" of the coalition can decide, if possible, to continue governing without their former ally/ies. This scenario occurred in 2014 in Denmark after the withdrawal of the Socialist People's Party from the cabinet led by Helle Thorning-Schmidt.[11]

Making the Framework Work: Hypotheses Formation

So far, scholars who have explicitly focused on intra-coalition conflicts management from an empirical perspective have provided mostly "static" information. In addition to the findings mentioned earlier, one can think of those of Nousiainen (1993), according to whom inter-party conflicts tend to last longer than intra-party conflicts and several conflicts end with resignations of ministers. Andeweg and Timmermans (2008), for their part, have stated that the presence of party leaders in the cabinet is the crucial explanatory variable for the internalization of conflict management. However, they have found the seriousness of conflicts to be a concurring factor: the more a conflict is dangerous, the more it will be likely to be managed within external arenas. With regard to the conclusion of conflicts, Timmermans and Moury (2006) and Moury and Timmermans (2008) have shown that, usually, intra-coalitional

[11]The leader of the Social People's Party (Annette Vihelmsen) admitted intra-party divisions concerning the decision to sell part of DONG Energy to Goldman Sachs that was the reason for cabinet termination. See Wenande (2014).

conflicts end with a decision in line with previous coalition deals (if any) and that, if the issue is not in the agreement, a nondecision will be more likely.

All these (few) empirical studies lack a genuine focus on the "dynamic" facet of conflict management. The framework presented here, on the contrary, allows us to derive and to test some hypotheses in this respect. First, building on Andeweg and Timmermans (2008) and Marangoni and Vercesi (2015), we can translate the "static" findings on process externalization into a "dynamic" hypothesis and posit that:

> Hypothesis 1. The more parties spend time to settle the conflict (i.e., they become aware that it is hard to find a solution and the conflict is serious), the more the coalition tends to externalize the management.

With regard to the actors, the framework pays a particular attention to prime ministers. If we assume that junior coalition partners prefer mixed or external arenas because heads of governments are less dominant there (see Andeweg and Timmermans 2008, 298), we can state that:

> Hypothesis 2. Strong prime ministers will try to keep the process inside the cabinet and weaker prime ministers will be—all else being equal—less able to resist to externalizations.

Moreover, powerful prime ministers are those who mostly shape decision-making processes and seek to lead cabinets to their preferred decisions. To reach these goals, they need to be in control of the process as much as possible. So, according to the framework's premises regarding the types of prime ministers:

> Hypothesis 3_a. Activists will be keen to centralize the management, whereas arbitrators will choose more collective and consensual arenas.

As for other actors, I expect that:

> Hypothesis 3_b. Both government and party members will have a larger room for maneuver when the chief executive is weaker.

The same applies to the internal organization of coalition parties, within which:

> Hypothesis 4. The substantial involvement of party members other than leaders will decrease as the internal power centralization increases.

Finally, the framework provides insights with regard to the likelihood of different outcomes of conflict management. Connecting argumentations on coalition politics as exchange and the outcomes taxonomy, it is reasonable to argue that, all else being equal, the type of conflict conclusion depends on the

resources a party have used and how much parties have been able to employ these resources to overcome the partners. This means that:

> Hypothesis 5_a. Balanced strategic strengths will produce outcomes that are more "balanced," such as exchanges and compromises.

Conversely,

> Hypothesis 5_b. Victories (of innovators) and nondecisions (that is, victories of veto players) will be instead more likely when party resources are imbalanced in favor of one or more parties, which are able to "impose" their will on comparatively weak allies.

An extensive empirical analysis is beyond this study's scope. Nonetheless, I propose a preliminary test of the hypotheses, by relying on both quantitative data and two qualitative studies of inter-party conflict management.

Making the Framework Work: Empirical Analysis

Coalition Features and Conflict Termination

The hypotheses concern the *process* of conflict management, and qualitative analysis appears more suitable for precise tests. However, Hypothesis 5 in particular provides opportunity for quantitative analyses as well.

To determine if exchanges and compromises are more likely as conflict outputs when the strategic strengths of parties are similar to those of their coalition partners, I calculated several indicators of the distributions of strategic strength for a number of coalitions, as defined in this article. For the selection of cases, I relied on Moury and Timmermans (2008, 2013), who observed how 114 inter-party conflicts ended in 12 coalitions in Belgium, Germany, Italy, and the Netherlands between 1989 and 2009. Table 3 reports these data and provides information on the salient features of the coalitions.[12]

The column of critical parties indicates the numbers of parties whose withdrawal from the alliance would have transformed the coalition from a winning coalition to a minority coalition. Coalition dominance is the largest party's percentage of the total number of seats controlled by the coalition minus the respective value of the second largest party. In brief, coalition dominance reveals how much the largest coalition party "outdistances" the rest of the

[12]I have operationalized the concept of coalitions following Vercesi (2013b, 296) "as a group of political parties, in a legislature, that enjoys parliamentary confidence and staffs the executive. Each party must have at least one member in the cabinet (Council of Ministers) formally endorsed by the central body of the party." Two or more parties as above defined, which, after the election, "form, in at least one of the two chambers, a single parliamentary group (*Fraktion*) with its own distinctive identity and a specific name,. . . are to be considered as one party."

Table 3. Parties' Strategic Strength and Inter-Party Conflict Termination in 12 West European Coalitions

Country	Coalition	Period in Office	Number of Parties	Critical Parties	Coalition Dominance	Ideological Homogeneity
Belgium	Dehaene I	1992-1995	4	4	3.3	7.1
	Dehaene II	1995-1999	4	4	9.8	7.1
	Verhofstadt I	1999-2003	6	2	4.2	5.6
Germany	Schröder II	2002-2005	2	2	64.0	9.3
	Merkel I	2005-2009	2	2	0.8	7.3
Italy	Prodi I	1996-1998	4	-[a]	33.4	6.2
	Berlusconi II-III	2001-2006	4/6	2/2	22.1[b]	7.3[b]
	Prodi II	2006-2008	7	2	53.1	5.6
Netherlands	Lubbers III	1989-1994	2	2	4.8	7.7
	Kok I	1994-1998	3	3	6.5	6.3
	Kok II	1998-2002	3	2	7.2	6.3

Country	Coalition	Power Imbalance	Government Turnover			Inter-Party Conflict Termination (%)		
			Current	Expected		Victory	Exchange/ Compromise	Nondecision
				Partial	Total			
Belgium	Dehaene I	.0696	0	66.7	16.7	40	60	-
	Dehaene II	.0878	.039	66.7	16.7	29	43	29
	Verhofstadt I	.0641	.798	66.7	16.7	42	42	17
Germany	Schröder II	.0000	.044	33.3	6.7	100		-
	Merkel I	.0000	.414	33.3	6.7	100		-
Italy	Prodi I	.2507	1	0	100	18	45	36
	Berlusconi II-III	.2592	1[c]	0	100	21	71	7
	Prodi II	.3884	1	0	100	57	-	43

Continued.

Table 3. Continued

Country	Coalition	Power Imbalance	Government Turnover			Inter-Party Conflict Termination (%)		
			Current	Expected		Victory	Exchange/ Compromise	Nondecision
				Partial	Total			
Netherlands	Lubbers III	.0894	.476	68.8	6.3	33	67	-
	Kok I	.1398	.336	68.8	6.3	45	45	9
	Kok II	.1854	.119	68.8	6.3	22	78	-

Sources: Own elaboration with data from Döring and Manow (2015); Moury and Timmermans (2008, 2013).
Notes: [a]Prodi I cabinet was a minority cabinet.
[b]Mean value of the Berlusconi II (2001-05) and the Berlusconi III (2005-06) cabinets.
[c]From the Berlusconi II to the Berlusconi III cabinet there was a tiny turnover of 0.009.
All data refer to lower chambers. The labels of conflict terminations were modified to make them coherent with the framework. In the original works, "victory" corresponds with "imposition" and "exchange/compromise" simply with "compromise." The sum of percentages for conflict termination can be slightly under or above 100 because of approximations. As for the absolute numbers of conflicts, the more recent source (Moury and Timmermans 2013) is conflicting with Moury and Timmermans (2008) with regard to the Verhofstadt I and the Prodi II cabinets. In this case, I have relied on the absolute numbers of the more recent source, whereas I have kept the proportions within the "decisions" category (victory + exchange/compromise) of the more dated source, since Moury and Timmermans (2008) is more comprehensive.

coalition in terms of parliamentary votes. Third, ideological homogeneity was calculated by subtracting the coalition ideological range on a ten-point left (0)-right (10) scale from ten. The higher the value, the greater the homogeneity. Moreover, I have calculated an index of the extent to which coalition parties have similar weights within the alliance, based on their seats in the parliament. Following the argument of Strøm and others (2003, 667), I have opted to calculate the normalized Banzhaf (1965) Power Index for all parties and subsequently the average distance between the value of the largest party and each of its partners' values. In this case, higher values indicate an imbalance among the parties' bargaining powers. The Banzhaf index can be considered a proxy of a party's walk-away value (see Lupia and Strøm 2008, 63) or, in other words, its blackmail potential within the coalition. However, as stated, in the real world some coalitions are very unlikely for several reasons and, therefore, not all parties have the same potential opportunity to enter all theoretically possible alliances. Thus, even if a party had sufficient seats to enter alternative coalitions, specific political constraints could block the formation of some coalitions (e.g., the presence of anti-system parties). To include this aspect, I considered the degree to which switches among different coalitions and changes in governments are actually credible in the relevant party systems. Accordingly, I first provide an index of government volatility (Valbruzzi 2011, 309), which varies depending on both the party composition and the weight of the parties in the coalition. This index is equal to the sum of the gains in terms of weight in the government (based on parliamentary seats) of all parties with an increased weight and the losses in the same terms of all parties that have lost weight in the government. This sum, expressed in absolute numbers, is divided by two. The result indicates how much the coalition in office differs from the previous coalition. However, the behavior of party actors is also dependent on what they think will happen or is likely to happen. I distinguished between *partial* and *total* expected government turnover. Following once more Valbruzzi (2011, 326), these measures focus on the number of times that, through a general election, the cabinet party composition has partially or totally (i.e., total substitution) changed. For Belgium, Germany, and the Netherlands, I have examined all general elections from 1945 to the last before the government at issue, whereas for Italy, I have narrowed the analysis to the period subsequent to the breakdown of the former party system (1994 onward). Note that all information on coalition compositions, parliamentary seats, left-right placement, and general elections has been drawn from Döring and Manow (2015).

For the purpose of analysis, I dichotomized the types of conclusions into two categories: victory/nondecision and exchange/compromise. A nondecision is easier to obtain than a victory and simply requires that at least one actor is sufficiently strong to resist any change in the *status quo*. By contrast, a victory—as defined earlier—implies that party actors wield a sufficient amount of power that they can overcome resistance and change the *status quo* (cf., Zucchini 2013). In the latter case, political actors must do more than simply block

new policies. However, for simplicity, I consider victories and nondecisions as different facets of zero-sum outcomes: a victory is the victory of the "innovator," and a nondecision is the victory of the "conservative." Positive-sum outputs (exchanges and compromises) are more likely when no actors are sufficiently strong to impose their will and coalition partners have to come to terms.

A series of expectations can be derived from the framework. First, we can posit that a greater number of parties makes compromises between all coalition partners more difficult. Moreover, we can suppose that a greater number of critical parties increases the number of actors with the same possibility to credibly threaten to exit. Consequently, the coalition has to find compromises (and exchanges) to avoid conflict radicalization and partner withdrawal. Ideological proximity between allies, in turn, should foster the achievement of compromises. High values of coalition dominance and power imbalance within the coalition can be expected to increase the likelihood of "imposed" outcomes. In other words, there are actors with sufficient power (compared to the allies) to compel the coalition to follow their will. However, as stated previously, the probability of imposed outcomes depends also on the functioning of the party system. The greater the expectation of government turnover, the more likely parties may be to adapt their goals to stronger actors' goals because of fear that they will be unable to enter the government again if they make the cabinet fall or enter office in the subsequent term. However, one could also argue that the more the expectation concerns a partial turnover rather than a total turnover, the less afraid the parties will be of leaving the cabinet and the more likely they will be to harden their behaviors. Parties know they are more likely to enter another coalition with different partners, and therefore their walk-away value approaches that of the stronger allies. Such conditions lead to more positive-sum outcomes.

I have excluded from calculations the two German coalitions because detailed information on conclusions other than nondecisions are not available. The N of our sample is quite small but still permits interesting observations. Except for the number of critical parties, all listed variables correlate with the type of conflict conclusion in the expected direction. In particular, the correlations hold for the number of parties, coalition dominance, and ideological homogeneity.[13] However, these relationships do not indicate causality *per se*, and refer to the coalitions considered, and the impact of the variables can be

[13]In these cases, the correlation (.7, .7 and .6) is significant, respectively: for $p < .05$, $p < .05$, and $p < .10$. The variable "critical parties" presents a value of only .05, for example, a substantial absence of correlation. Throwing in the analysis also Germany, and hence concentrating only on nondecisions (without reference to victories), "number of parties" and "coalition dominance" lose significance, whereas "power imbalance" and "expected total alternation" become more correlated (.7), and significant for $p < .05$. "Current government turnover" (.6) becomes significant for $p < .10$.

intertwined, but the findings provide some important indications consistent with theoretical expectations.

Case Studies Selection

Although not built on the basis of the framework, the analysis in Vercesi (2013b) of the Italian Prime Minister Berlusconi's behavior during conflictual phases of his second coalition cabinet in 2001-05 can serve as a background for comparing other cases for hypotheses testing. Indeed, Vercesi (2013b, 301) provides insights summed as follows: Berlusconi was a key player in managing conflicts but was constrained by coalition partners, "especially when they refused to cooperate and opted for radical opposition leading to gridlock." Moreover, Berlusconi sought to lead the process through bilateral contacts, and "his power depended heavily on two very important political resources: leadership of the coalition and leadership of his party" (Vercesi 2013b, 302).

I have selected two representative cases of inter-party conflict management within two other Italian coalitions whose features concerning the prime minister's status, cabinet composition, and party leaders' roles are opposite or similar to those of the Berlusconi II cabinet. This comparison allows us to test the hypotheses and use the literature mentioned as either corroboration or counterfactual, strengthening the findings. The coalitions at issue are those supporting the Prodi I cabinet of 1996-98 and the Berlusconi IV cabinet of 2008-11. Similar to the Berlusconi II cabinet, the prime minister was the leader of a pre-electoral coalition and held "direct legitimation" from the voters. However, the coalition led by Prodi differed because the prime minister was not a party leader (and was nonpartisan) and because most party leaders were not cabinet members (see Marangoni and Vercesi 2015, 21). By contrast, the Berlusconi IV cabinet was very similar to the Berlusconi II in these respects but comprised parties, particularly the main party, that were deeply divided in (conflicting) factions (De Giorgi 2010).

Several factors make the three cabinets comparable for the purpose of this study. First, they were close in time: because the literature highlighted path dependent trends in the choice of arenas (Andeweg and Timmermans 2008, 287-8), this allows to exclude possible changes of "habits" of mid-to-long term. Scholars have also stressed that coalitional governance mechanisms, such as coalition agreements, affect the outputs of a coalition (e.g., Schermann and Ennser-Jedenastik 2014); the Prodi I, Berlusconi II, and Berlusconi IV cabinets adopted pre-electoral coalition deals (Conti 2015). The seriousness of managed conflicts is another variable I have kept fixed, by operationalizing conflict seriousness as in Vercesi (2013b), through newspaper content analysis. Following in that study's steps, I selected two cases of management of inter-party policy conflicts because this type of conflict is the most threating for cabinet survival (Müller and Strøm 2000c). Moreover, Nousiainen (1993) has argued that the most dangerous conflicts are those where the prime minister is involved; all the

cases at issue have this characteristic. Instead, I did not focus on the policy field of the conflicts because it has been argued that it is not relevant in shaping conflict management in coalitions (Andeweg and Timmermans 2008, 275).

The selected conflicts were disputes concerning a possible public withdrawal from the workers' *trattamento di fine rapporto*, a sum of money that Italian employers keep from the salary of an employee and that is returned once an employee leaves the job as an end-of-service payout (Prodi I). I also focused on a conflict on a possible cut of the tax on enterprise income in which the inter-party conflict was intertwined with an intra-party conflict (Berlusconi IV). The relevant processes of conflict management were traced by reading the issues of the most widespread nonpartisan Italian newspaper (*Corriere della Sera*) from March 1-30, 1997 (Prodi I) and from October 18-27, 2009 (Berlusconi IV), that is, the periods in which the conflicts occurred. Examining the process rather than only the outcomes revealed how the intra-party politics of coalition partners eventually affected the inter-party bargaining and coalition outputs. The framework inspired the reenactment of the crucial steps of the conflict management, and I have focused specifically on the actors and arenas, as defined earlier.

An Analysis of Two Processes of Inter-Party Conflict Management

Prodi I Cabinet

The Prodi I cabinet entered office on May 18, 1996, approximately one month after the general elections, and tendered its resignation on October 9, 1998 because of the withdrawal of the support of the Party of Communist Refoundation (*Partito della rifondazione comunista* [RC]). This party had been part of a pre-electoral coalition with—from largest to smallest in terms of parliamentary seats—the Democratic Party of the Left (*Partito democratico della sinistra* [PDS]), the People's Italian Party (*Partito popolare italiano* [PPI]), Italian Renewal (*Rinnovamento italiano* [RI]), and the Federation of Greens (*Federazione dei Verdi*). These parties formed a government coalition, whereas RC decided to provide only external support. This support was essential for the survival of the cabinet because the coalition did not have the absolute majority of seats in the lower chamber. At the time of inauguration, the cabinet comprised 17 partisan (nine from PDS, four from PPI, three from RI, one from the *Verdi*) and four nonpartisan ministers; prime minister Romano Prodi was one of the nonpartisans. Among party leaders, only Lamberto Dini of RI entered the cabinet, as minister for Foreign Affairs.

The conflict I consider emerged in the first half of 1997. After approving its first budget bill, the government was ready to decide further economic policies in March of that year to restore public finances in view of Italy's entrance in the Euro zone. One of the prospective policies was the aforementioned withdrawal from the funds of the *trattamento di fine rapporto* (Tfr). The deadline for approving the decision within the government was fixed at the end of

March. On March 20th, withdrawal from the Tfr appeared certain. In the evening, the prime minister had a secret talk with all party leaders (including the RC leader, Fausto Bertinotti).

The conflict appeared two days later, only five days before the full cabinet had to make the final decision. On that day, RI expressed its disagreement. Its leader, Dini, stated that the possible decision was useless for recovering state finances. His party colleague and minister for Labor, Tiziano Treu, confirmed the position. Prodi supported the policy and invited the main employers' representative association (*Confindustria*), which had a negative position toward the withdrawal, to propose effective alternatives. On March 23rd, PDS (and RC) replied to RI indirectly through the party member responsible for the topic of Labor, who stated: "I understand that, within the coalition, someone might be tempted to make a good impression at low cost, by saying only what should not be done. However, I think it will be quite difficult for that person to propose another policy measure, because the majority of the coalition would not approve it."[14] During a political meeting in Milan, Dini stressed that he did not want to propose any alternative because this was part of the duties of the cabinet, which had to present any alternative in the full cabinet. According to Dini, the government had to provide a credible decision and take it to the parliament, even without unanimity within the coalition.

On March 24th, more accommodating behaviors appeared. In particular, Prodi discussed at *Palazzo Chigi* (the building of the Presidency of the Council) a possible large down payment of future taxes with the ministers of Treasury (nonpartisan); Labor (RI); Education (PDS); Health (PPI); Industry, Trade, and Handcraft (PDS); and Defense (PPI). With regard to internal alliances, the PPI, pushed by its own leader Franco Marini, decided to support RI. On March 25th, Prodi met the economic ministers. The outcome of the talk was a proposal to block the Tfr of civil servants for that year and of a postponed payment in 1998. Moreover, the government opted to prepare the aforementioned down payment. The party leaders of the coalition partners and RC, Prodi, the deputy prime minister (PDS), and other ministers participated in the scheduled majority summit on March 26th, where the decision was made (small enterprises were excluded from the down payment). However, RI wanted other structural policy measures, and Dini stated that he wanted to review the decision in view of the full cabinet on the following day. The leaders of PPI and PDS expressed dissatisfaction, whereas the leaders of *Verdi* (and RC) approved the outcome. On March 27th, the full cabinet approved the decision with some changes. Dini, who had been about to leave the cabinet, stated that the decision lacked structural interventions (Prodi did not agree) and admitted that he approved only because he was isolated within the coalition and did not want to make the cabinet fall in view of more important coalitional goals concerning the entrance of Italy in the Euro zone.

[14]See Di Vico (1997, 4).

The process of conflict management ended with a compromise. Those who initially wanted the withdrawal, such as PDS, accepted a circumscribed policy measure, whereas RI had to modify its positions despite attempting to exercise vetoes during the process. The *status quo* was altered, although probably less than what would have been possible without the internal opposition of one of the coalition partners. The prime minister played the role of arbitrator.

Berlusconi IV Cabinet

After winning a general election on April 13-14, 2008, Berlusconi formed his fourth cabinet, which was sworn in on May 8th and resigned on November 12, 2011. The coalition was a minimum winning coalition comprising only two parties: Berlusconi's People of Freedom[15] (*Popolo della libertà* [PDL]) and the Northern League (*Lega Nord* [LN]), whose leader, Umberto Bossi, was appointed as minister for Federalism. Overall, PDL was represented initially by 18 ministers (including Berlusconi as prime minister), LN was represented by four ministers, and no nonpartisan ministers were appointed.

The first signal of the conflict analyzed here arose in the second half of October 2009. At that time, cuts in the Regional Tax on the Productive Activities, *Imposta regionale sulle attività produttive* (Irap), were discussed. This tax, which was established by the first Prodi cabinet, concerned enterprises and was proportional to their sales volume rather than their profit. Its main purpose was to finance the public health system. The spark occurred on October 22nd: during a national meeting of the Confederation for craftsmanship and small- and medium-sized enterprises (CNA), the junior minister to the presidency, Gianni Letta (independent but very close to Berlusconi), read a letter in which the prime minister promised a gradual cut of Irap and, eventually, its suppression. At that time, Berlusconi was in Russia and sent this announcement without a prior agreement with the powerful Finance minister Giulio Tremonti (PDL), who was severely adverse to any tax reduction because of the possible lack of solidity of public finances. Tremonti was the reference for the so-called *Tremontiani*, a faction that also included his Finance deputy-minister, Giuseppe Vegas.[16] After this event, Berlusconi attempted to reassure Tremonti in the evening by telephone. However, the tone of the conversation was very nervous. Tremonti threatened to leave the cabinet if the premier chose the line—close to the former AN's leader and speaker of the lower chamber Gianfranco Fini—of public expenditure. Finally, the two contenders decided to meet on the following day, immediately before the full cabinet, where positions should have been reconciled.

[15]The PDL was presented as an electoral cartel comprising the former Berlusconi's party Go Italy! (*Forza Italia* [FI]), the second largest center-right party National Alliance (*Alleanza nazionale* [AN]), and other minor lists; it became a formal party in 2009.

[16]See Bracalini (2011).

With regard to the coalition, most of PDL was against Tremonti's positions. The Minister for Economic Development, Claudio Scajola, considered Berlusconi's announcement positive. Meanwhile, the Senate was discussing the upcoming budget bill, and PDL senator Mario Baldassarri and other former AN members had presented proposals to cut Irap. A document was prepared for submission to the prime minister, who assessed it as "interesting."[17] By contrast, LN supported Tremonti; according to Bossi, the cabinet could not survive without him.

On October 23rd, the atmosphere appeared to worsen. Berlusconi, returning from Russia, did not show up for the scheduled meeting and went directly to his accommodation near Milan (in Arcore) to avoid breaking the relationship with Tremonti; Berlusconi's dissatisfaction was reported to Fini by Letta in a private talk. On the other side, Bossi visited Tremonti for a breakfast at the Finance department to discuss the controversial issues. Tremonti continued to ask for clarification of Berlusconi's stance against those positions, which, according to Tremonti, could make the international markets worry (such as Scajola's position on the reimbursement of the cut in Irap by *una tantum* funding). Despite the atmosphere of conflict, a new meeting between the prime minister and the Finance minister was scheduled on October 24th in Arcore. Moreover, Letta sent some conciliatory signals: during a meeting with the presidents of regions, he noted that the cut in Irap was only a goal and not a final decision.

The Arcore meeting lasted more than two hours and was followed by another four-participant meeting with Bossi and LN's minister for Simplification of Laws, Roberto Calderoli. Berlusconi asked for more flexibility, but Tremonti maintained an uncompromising position. Eventually, the Finance minister's position, supported by Bossi, prevailed. However, on the same day, Fini had a conversation with Berlusconi in which he asked Berlusconi to pay attention to the dangers of concessions. According to Fini, these concessions could have brought a "compulsory administration" of the prime minister. Furthermore, the PDL's minister for Transport, Altiero Matteoli, emphasized that the controversy was quite unusual because the cut in Irap was in the government agenda.

To overcome both intra-party and inter-party divisions, on October 26th, Berlusconi summoned a talk with the three PDL's national party coordinators, which resulted in Berlusconi returning to the position of the party's majority. The participants agreed that the Finance minister could not completely have free room to maneuver, and the prime minister stated that he was ready for Tremonti's possible resignation. According to the prime minister, his minister had put himself "out of the party"[18] by using LN as a shield. For these reasons, the prime minister proposed more collegiality within the party to settle

[17]See Verderami (2009, 11).

[18]See Galluzzo (2009, 6).

economic policies. Baldassarri's proposal on the cut in Irap was still considered appropriate for discussion. Inside the party, Berlusconi's change was appreciated by, for example, the other party prominent, Fini.

The situation did not undergo any substantial change the following day. Indeed, Berlusconi and Tremonti met once more for more than half an hour, but, overall, the divergences on the same positions persisted. Berlusconi emphasized that the cut was in the program and would be achieved as soon as more information on prospective revenues became available. PDL was therefore legitimated in continuing to search for ways to reach this goal.

The new proposal was first to prepare the cut only for those enterprises with less than 50 employees, provided that they would have maintained their own workers. However, Vegas reaffirmed that the necessary collaterals were not yet available, in line with Tremonti's prudent line. Reconciliation of the two conflicting positions appeared impossible again, despite an attempt at mediation by Bossi. Even after a meeting in Arcore between Tremonti and Berlusconi on October 30th, Tremonti did not change his opinion. The coalition remained blocked in gridlock until November 5th, when Tremonti, during a meeting with the coalition's parliamentary leaders, showed openness for a reduction of Irap for small enterprises, although Vegas had expressed doubts about the usefulness of such a reduction the previous day. Moreover, in mid-November, the deputy minister again highlighted the absence of sufficient resources, while Berlusconi officially reminded that the cut was a primary goal of the government.

On November 19th, there was a small crack in the PDL's majority side. Scajola sent a letter to Berlusconi and Tremonti, proposing the reduction of Irap at least for those enterprises at a loss. The decisive day was November 25th. The first meeting of the recently created PDL's Committee for Economic Policy, led by Tremonti and also attended by party coordinators, the speaker for the budget bill in the lower chamber and the party parliamentary leaders, brought an agreement within the party. Eventually, Tremonti's position prevailed, and no cuts to Irap were planned. On the following day, the Finance minister met LN, and the coalition found common agreement.

This second inter-party conflict (intertwined with an intra-party conflict) therefore ended with a nondecision. The majority of the main party was unable to overcome the resistance of the strong minister for Finance, who could rely on the support of the other coalition partner. In particular, he could threaten to leave the cabinet and continue to advocate the decision to avoid any cut of the disputed tax. The prime minister, who was aware of the dangers of making the cabinet fall, was pushed to accept the *status quo*, and his party eventually followed him.

Discussion of the Findings

The analysis of the explorative case studies under the lens of the framework provides interesting findings, particularly in comparison with those of Vercesi

(2013b) on the Berlusconi II cabinet. The findings confirm that coalitions first tend to internalize the conflict before moving to more mixed or external arenas when the conflict becomes radical, that is, when the conflict threatens cabinet survival. However, differences between the cabinets have been observed. Berlusconi, who wielded more power resources within the coalition, centralized the process as long as possible, that is, until the conflict was not too radicalized. By contrast, Prodi preferred more collective arenas from the very beginning. Within his coalition, cabinet committees were used mostly to prepare polices that had to be discussed later in contexts with higher degrees of partyness (i.e., arenas in which attendees participated mainly as representatives of their own parties). In the Berlusconi governments, the same function was fulfilled by bilateral contacts between the prime minister and the relevant minister or between the minister and party leaders. Overall, party leaders handled the issues, particularly when the management became complicated, and coalition committees were the arenas employed for the crucial steps of the process. The full cabinet was instead a ratifying chamber.

During conflict management, both prime ministers were forced to "enlarge" the number of participants during the most radical situations. However, in contrast to Berlusconi (particularly in his second cabinet), Prodi did not seek to push the decision. It was more arbitrator than activist, and thus other party leaders had a greater say in the process. However, even Berlusconi had to move toward the arbitrator ideal-type when confronted with a conflict that was not only an inter-party conflict but also (and mostly) a dispute within his own party. The tight alliance between his powerful finance minister and the coalition partner partially deprived Berlusconi of his opportunity to rely on a cohesive party. Therefore, he was forced to mediate to preserve both the party and the coalition. On the other hand, the Prodi I and Berlusconi II cabinets were characterized by very cohesive parties, which allowed the party leaders to concentrate on bargaining with allies.

Concluding Remarks

The framework that I have presented is an alternative tool for studying coalitions. Coalition studies usually focus on coalition formation, portfolio allocation, and coalition termination. Some scholars have instead dealt with coalition governance but have looked at mechanisms and outcomes and have not entered the process (with the notable exception of studies on cabinet decision making). By contrast, the present analysis provides insights on the study of crucial coalitional problems, that is, conflict and conflict management, by firmly grounding the argument in the existing theoretical literature as well as revisiting it from a new perspective. The framework lays theoretical bases for a theory of coalition politics as an exchange in which parties are the units of the game but the relevance of intra-party politics in coalition politics is not discarded. These bases facilitate the explanation of conflict and conflict

management. I have operationalized conflict management by not only examining management mechanisms (as in the literature) but also introducing the aspect of the behavior of actors. The first advantage is the possibility of mapping countries and cabinets according to their style of managing conflict. To further validate the viability of the framework, I have provided quantitative data as well as in-depth empirical inquiries of episodes of conflict management under the lenses of the framework. The analysis has corroborated the hypotheses with valuable information, thus increasing the strength and reliability of the theoretical argument. The variations among cabinets and the findings ensuing from the qualitative inquiries strengthen the applicability of the framework for comparative studies. Indeed, the results demonstrate that the framework can be applied to research on coalitions with different features in term of party composition, cabinet membership, prime ministerial power, and executive and party actors' impact, suggesting that the framework can be extended to other cabinets outside Italy.

As demonstrated throughout, the framework can be used to enrich the literature on coalitions in a constructive manner by formulating new hypotheses. One possible research outlook is the connection of the theory of party mandate (Louwerse 2011) with the theory of coalition governance and conflict management. One could seek to observe whether different modes of conflict management enhance or undermine the opportunities of a government to fulfill its pledges when coping with conflicts. In addition, future studies could focus on conflict management proper in a twofold manner: horizontally, by comparing countries and coalitions and explaining differences; and vertically, by studying in-depth single countries with a history of coalition politics. Variations across time and even in the same coalition could be observed (and accounted for).

Years ago, in a classic piece on party government, Sjöblom (1986, 109) stated that specifications and distinctions—to be useful—should foster a better understanding of the topic and allow to formulate research problems and propositions more precisely than one could do without them. The content of this article aims at that.

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Chapter 5

The Government and Its Hard Decisions: How Conflict Is Managed within the Coalition

1 The government and its hard decisions

How conflict is managed within the coalition

Francesco Marangoni and Michelangelo Vercesi[1]

Introduction

Conflicts are intrinsic in the nature of coalitions. Government parties, in fact, are allies but, at the same time, they are organizations competing (with one another) for maximizing votes in the electoral arena (Panebianco 1988). Individual components of the executive, ministers above all, are agents of the whole cabinet, in their respective departmental policy domain, but they are also (at least some of them) representatives of their own party within the government (Andeweg 2000). A tension between centripetal and centrifugal drives, therefore, is inherent in the very nature of coalition executives: something that might be conducive to more or less frequent and serious conflicts among partners.

If intense enough, conflicts might weaken the basis of the alliance and challenge the stability of the executive. Even when less threatening, in terms of risks for government survival, intra-coalition conflicts can undermine cabinet decision-making and government performance.

It stands to reason, therefore, that conflict management is an essential commitment for coalition governments. Coalition governance, indeed, is supposed to be a matter of conflict avoidance, even more than conflict management. Coalition agreements, discussed in depth by Conti in Chapter 3, are supposed to be crucial mechanisms in this regard (Andeweg and Timmermans 2008). Unforeseen, or deferred, issues of conflicts, however, might always arise during the government *life cycle* (Strøm *et al.* 2008) and need to be addressed by government partners.

The analysis of conflict management, from this point of view, has proved to be a precious perspective for observing internal dynamics of coalition governments[2] and, in this respect, Italy is a very intriguing case to study. Before the 1990s, it was traditionally ruled by often conflictual and ineffective (in most of the cases coalition) governments (Di Palma 1977; Spotts and Wieser 1986). In the absence of any real chance of alternation, fragile governing coalitions were constantly formed around the Christian Democratic party (DC), which traditionally controlled the prime-ministership and the most influential cabinet portfolios (Verzichelli and Cotta 2000). On the one hand, resulting government majorities used to be fragmented and internally divided (as far as the main policy preferences are concerned). On the other, governments used not to be based on formal coalition agreements (Moury and Timmermans 2008). The attitude of Italian First

Republic governments to rely largely (if not exclusively) on arenas of conflict management and resolution that were external to the cabinet, therefore, is perfectly coherent with the arguments raised by the most advanced comparative literature on this issue. The common hypotheses, in fact, postulate that conditions like the fragility of coalitions, the bias in favor of one of the governing parties (as in the case of the DC) and the absence of any prior policy agreement among coalition partners, make government members more likely to resort to institutions that are external to the cabinet (such as a committee of parliamentary party leaders), or mixed arenas, open to both cabinet and non-cabinet actors (such as the renowned Italian 'majority summits' between ministers and party leaders), rather than to internal (and closed) arenas (i.e., the cabinet) for conflict resolution (Andeweg and Timmermans 2008).

The analysis of intra-coalitional conflicts (and of conflict management) during the Italian Second Republic, therefore, promises to be interesting and valuable. Not only because, as said, it will provide a precious empirical perspective for the observation of the government internal dynamics in an era, as emphasized in the introduction of this volume, of profound (but also uncompleted and even contradictory) transformation of the Italian political system. From a broader comparative perspective, it will also serve as a dynamic test of the same bulk of hypotheses on coalition governments and conflict management mentioned above.

It is true, on the one hand, that the evolution of the Italian political (and institutional) system between the First and the Second Republic has proved largely incomplete (Ceccanti and Vassallo 2004; Almagisti *et al.* 2014), and that traditional features (and problems) of the Italian governments have remained substantially unaltered (or become even worse) as a result. Fragmentation and heterogeneity have continued to plague government coalitions that were assembled to win the elections and to defeat the 'opposite pole', but were also unable to govern (Diamanti 2007) and to produce stable executives (Pasquino and Valbruzzi 2011). Coalition fragility and cabinet instability, moreover, have opened the way to frequent government crises and, sometimes (as in the case of the executives formed after the crisis of the Prodi I government in 1998), to more traditional – First Republic-like – patterns of government formation and coalition governance: i.e., pure parliamentary (not electoral) legitimation of majorities, no pre-electoral coalition deals and policy agreements, subordination to partisan actors outside the cabinet. Under these premises, we could hardly expect to find evidence of a diminishing intra-coalitional conflictuality.

On the other hand, however, the structure of Italian governments has experienced some evident changes in the last 15 years, that we expect to have had an impact on mechanisms of intra-coalitional conflict handling. To say the least, the new bipolar electoral competition between center-right and center-left pre-electoral coalitions (Golder 2006) has led to executives (and prime ministers) with a more direct electoral derivation (and legitimation). The new (for Italian governments) habit of drafting coalition agreements focused on policies with constraining implications on coalition governance (Moury 2012), and the increased cabinet

membership rate of party leaders who, instead, used not to sit in the executive during the First Republic (Verzichelli 2009) are two of the main corollaries of this 'majoritarian turn' in Italian politics.

Drawing from the already quoted study by Andeweg and Timmermans (2008), who have found that when governing parties have prior coalition policy agreement to rely on, and when party leaders take a seat in the executive, conflicts tend to be solved within closed and internal arenas, we should expect conflict management by the Italian governments of the Second Republic to be somehow 'internalized' within the cabinet.

With the aim of verifying these general expectations, the next pages are organized as follows. We first present some basic features of Second Republic governments, with particular focus on the composition (and fragmentation) of the supporting coalitions, as these same characteristics are expected to have an impact on the dynamics of conflict occurrence and management. Intra-coalitional conflictuality is then measured for each single government (by means of an extensive newspaper analysis), as regards to both *quantity* (the number of conflicts that occurred) and *quality* (the objects of conflicts and their 'seriousness' in terms of the risks they posed to cabinet survival). Third, we provide some information about the role and the involvement of prime ministers in conflicts. The decision-making and conflict management arenas are finally examined (again using newspaper analysis as the main source of information) with particular regard to their openness or closure to actors outside the cabinet.

Government coalitions between 1996 and 2011

The starting point of the empirical investigation presented in this chapter is 1996. While we already have access to sufficient knowledge about intra-coalition conflicts and conflict management during the First Republic (Nousiainen 1993; Criscitiello 1996; Verzichelli and Cotta 2000), no systematic studies regarding more recent years are available. At the same time, we decided not to consider the period immediately following the crisis of the First Republic in 1992, as this was characterized by extreme instability of the Italian government system, and it was ruled, almost entirely,[3] by non-partisan, technocratic or quasi-technocratic executives (Fabbrini 2000).

Between 1996 and 2011 four politicians alternated as prime ministers and six coalition governments were appointed. For the sake of simplicity we treat as a single executive two governments following one another, without any change in the prime-ministership and without a general election occurring in between. According to these criteria, the six cabinets are Prodi I; D'Alema I–II;[4] Amato II;[5] Berlusconi II–III;[6] Prodi II; Berlusconi IV. Only the Amato II and Berlusconi II–III cabinets did not terminate prematurely; and only the latter lasted for the entire legislative term.[7] Table 1.1 indicates the first day in office, the date of resignation of each government, and the duration (in days) with full powers[8] of these executives. The four prime ministers, with the exception of Berlusconi, were not leaders of their own parties when in office.[9]

Table 1.1 Italian cabinets, 1996–2011

Cabinet	*Date in (sworn in)*	*Formal resignation*	*Days in (with full powers)*
Prodi I	18 May 1996	9 October 1998	874
D'Alema I–II	21 October 1998	19 April 2000	546
Amato II	25 April 2000	31 May 2001	401
Berlusconi II–III	11 June 2001	2 May 2006	1786
Prodi II	17 May 2006	24 January 2008	617
Berlusconi IV	8 May 2008	12 November 2011	1283

With regard to the party composition, we consider as coalition members all parties explicitly supporting the cabinet in parliament, whether or not they have any representative in the Council of ministers, or any of their members appointed as junior minister.[10] Table 1.2 reports the party composition of the coalition supporting each government, together with a measure of coalition fragmentation, computed as the number of parties that were strictly necessary to hold the absolute majority in both the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate (i.e., parties with veto power). Some coalitions were oversized, but the number of parties that were necessary to hold a majority was actually smaller.

Table 1.2 Party composition of government coalitions (at time of inauguration), 1996–2011 (including parties giving external support)

Cabinet	*Coalition*[a]	*"Necessary" parties*
Prodi I	PDS-PPI-RI-VER-*RC*	5
D'Alema I–II	DS-PPI-VER-RI-PDCI-SDI-UDR	6
Amato II	DS-DEM-PPI-VER-RI-PDCI-UDEUR-SDI	8
Berlusconi II–III	FI-LN-AN-CCD/CDU-NPSI-PRI	4
Prodi II	DS-DL-RC-RNP-PDCI-IDV-VER-Indip./PD-UDEUR-*SVP*	10
Berlusconi IV	PDL-LN-MPA-DC	2

Notes: Parties giving only external support in parliament in italics.

a Even if other very tiny parties sometimes gave external support to cabinets, only the main coalition members are indicated.

Party names: AN, National Alliance; CCD/CDU, Christian Democratic Centre/United Christian Democrats; DC, Christian Democracy; DEM, The Democrats; DL, Democracy is Freedom – the Daisy; DS, Left Democrats; FI, Go Italy (*Forza Italia*); Indip./PD, Independents for the Olive Tree; LN, Northern League; MPA, Movement for Autonomies; NPSI, New Italian Socialist Party; PDCI, Party of the Italian Communists; PDL, People of Freedom; PDS (former DS), Democratic Party of the Left; PPI, Italian People's Party; PRI, Italian Republican Party; RI, Italian Renewal; RC, Communist Refoundation; RNP, Rose in the Fist; SDI, Italian Democratic Socialists; SVP, *Südtiroler Volkspartei*, People's Party of the South Tirol; UDEUR, Union of the Democrats for Europe; VER, Greens.

Source: Marangoni (2013), revised.

Taken as a whole, data in Table 1.2 confirm that complexity and fragmentation have characterized Italian government coalitions (also) during the Second Republic. There are some variations among governments, but there is not any clear pattern toward simplification of government teams. On the contrary, the most fragmented coalition was the rather recent center-left alliance supporting the 2006–2008 Prodi II executive (ten necessary parties). As we will also discuss in the following pages, even the more homogeneous coalition supporting the Berlusconi IV cabinet (only two necessary parties) experienced significant troubles, due to an increasing level of internal conflictuality during the life of this government (ending up with an early dissolution of the executive).

Another aspect to be taken into careful consideration, because it is expected to have a significant impact on the attitude of governments toward conflict management, is the presence of party leaders within the cabinet. We find quite significant differences among the governments under scrutiny on this regard. Overall, the 'majoritarian' governments (those led by Prodi and Berlusconi) form a group on their own compared to the more First Republic-like governments (led by D'Alema and Amato), with the exception of the first Prodi government. Indeed, only one party leader entered this latter cabinet. On the contrary, more than half of the parties represented in the Berlusconi II–III and IV and Prodi II cabinets had their own leaders inside the (senior) ministerial group (Table 1.3).

Intra-coalitional conflictuality and conflict management

The level of conflictuality

In our effort to measure government conflictuality, we have first defined the concept of 'conflict' as any quarrel or explicit disagreement between two or more executive members and/or coalition (individual or collective) party actors.

Table 1.3 Number of party leaders in cabinet by government, 1996–2011

Cabinet	*No. of coalition parties with cabinet representation*	*No. of party leaders in cabinet*
Prodi I	4	1
D'Alema I–II	7	1
Amato II	8	1
Berlusconi II–III	4/6[a]	3[b]
Prodi II	9	5
Berlusconi IV	2	2

Notes

a NPSI and PRI obtained a representation in the cabinet only after the reshuffle of 2005.

b Initially, the cabinet comprised the leaders of FI, AN and LN. CCD and CDU merged into UDC (Union of Christian and Center Democrats) in 2002 under the leadership of Marco Follini, who entered the cabinet in 2004. The leader of LN, Umberto Bossi, had left his ministerial post some months before.

The number of (so defined) conflicts is the first indicator (rough) of the level of conflictuality a given government coalition has experienced. In this regard, we used newspaper reports as a source of information to detect single episodes of conflicts among coalition partners. Technically speaking, we operated a systematic keywords search[11] through the digital archives of two of the most relevant Italian national newspapers, *Il Corriere della Sera* and *Il Sole 24 Ore*, on all the articles (at both title and text level) published between May 1996 (the inauguration of the Prodi I executive) and November 2011 (premature end of the Berlusconi IV executive). Once we had collected the articles presenting at least one of the selected keywords, we went through a more in-depth analysis of the content of each piece, in order to find the commentaries effectively covering conflicts within government coalitions (excluding all other conflicts) and to isolate single episodes of conflicts.

At the end of this process, as reported in Table 1.4, we were able to observe more than 850 conflicts in the entire period under analysis: almost five conflicts per month, on average. Table 1.4 disaggregates data by individual governments. Interestingly, the absolute degree of conflictuality seems to vary quite independently from (or, better, not exclusively as a consequence of) coalition fragmentation and internal heterogeneity. The quite homogeneous (at least initially, before a split within the party of the prime minister) Berlusconi IV's coalition, for instance, experienced quite a high level of conflictuality (almost six conflicts, on average, per month). This was even higher than the level shown by the more fragmented Prodi II supporting coalition (on average, 4.7 conflicts per month).

As already said, however, the number of conflicts is only a rough indicator of the real level of intra-coalitional conflictuality. In fact, we cannot assume that all conflicts present the same (potential) risks for cabinet survival and for an effective and smooth functioning of government decision-making. Simply speaking, indeed, some conflicts are more 'dangerous' and serious than others. A coalition might frequently have to cope with minor internal disagreements or, vice versa, be affected by few, but very threatening conflicts. The simple observation of the frequency of conflicts can, therefore, be a good point of departure, but it is not enough for a detailed and reliable picture.

The seriousness of conflicts, therefore, needs to be carefully analyzed: a problem that we decided to consider, coherently with the literature on the topic

Table 1.4 Absolute and monthly average number of conflicts by government

Cabinet	*No. of conflicts*	*Monthly average*
Prodi I	168	5.6
D'Alema I–II	122	6.4
Amato II	57	4.1
Berlusconi II–III	186	3.2
Prodi II	98	4.7
Berlusconi IV	220	5.6
Total	851	4.7

(Nousiainen 1993; Müller and Strøm 2000; Andeweg and Timmermans 2008), by referring to the actors involved in the conflicts and the roles they perform within the government arena.

The actors in conflict

All else being equal, intra-party conflicts are commonly considered to be relatively less risky for government survival. This kind of conflict, indeed, does not directly affect the interparty cooperative basis of the coalition, unless the object of intra-party disputes is precisely the support for the government, or if internal conflicts result in party splitting (with one component leaving the majority). In these cases, even intra-party conflicts might lead to cabinet termination (Damgaard 2008; Saalfeld 2009).

Three different types of conflict do not involve (only) actors belonging to the same party: these are interdepartmental conflicts; party–government conflicts and interparty conflicts. As one might note, these different types are ordered according to the increasing involvement of partisan actors (the 'partyness' of conflicts): from conflicts where parties are not directly involved (interdepartmental conflicts) to conflicts between partisan actors (interparty conflicts). The same classification is also ordered according to increasing risks they cause to cabinet stability, as the partyness of conflicts is commonly considered a critical factor in determining the seriousness of conflicts (Huber 1996; Andeweg and Timmermans 2008).

The actors of interdepartmental conflicts are individual ministers acting as heads and in the interests of their departments, and not (purely) as representatives of their own party within the cabinet.[12] Conflicts between party and government are, instead, characterized by the actions of a coalition party (or some components of it) against the policies (even a ministry) or the overall trajectory of the government. Clearly, the prime minister is the most prominent among possible government members who can be involved in conflicts (Vercesi 2013).

The partyness of conflicts reaches its maximum strength in interparty conflicts. 'The most serious conflict in parliamentary systems generally (. . .) lies between parties (. . .) that are represented both in the government and the parliament' (Huber 1996: 270). Their dangerousness can be explained by the fact that the struggle occurs between two (or more) constitutive parts of the coalition, that is, the parties establishing a pact for government.

Each conflict in our dataset has, therefore, been classified in one (and only one) of these four categories.[13] Figure 1.1 presents the relative distribution of the episodes of conflict by type and by executive. As a whole, interparty struggles, which we mentioned as being potentially the most risky type of conflicts, cover the larger area of the figure: almost 36 per cent of the conflicts we detected can be classified in this category. Rather interestingly, we noted an exceptionally high level of interparty conflictuality with the D'Alema I–II and Amato II executives (respectively, about 56 per cent and little less than 46 per cent). These data are coherent with our expectations and can be explained when one considers the origins of these two cabinets based, like the governments of the First Republic, on

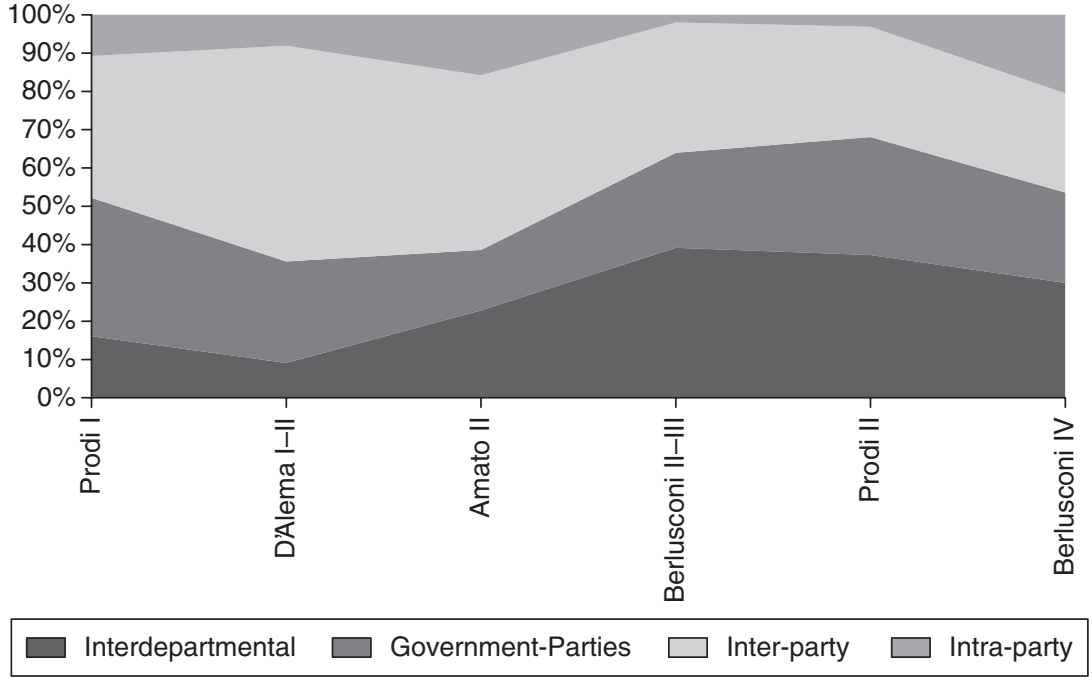

Figure 1.1 Percentage distribution of conflicts by actors involved

complex and fragile interparty bargaining and compromise in parliament after the crisis of the former executive and so under emergency conditions, rather than on electoral legitimation or a clear post-electoral agreement.

This pattern changes quite substantially with the new 'majoritarian' executives, as we define those governments resulting from pre-electoral coalitions and popular legitimacy in a context of bipolar competition (i.e., Prodi I; Berlusconi II–III; Prodi II and Berlusconi IV). The interparty conflictuality area shrinks, while conflicts progressively move into the cabinet. Interdepartmental struggles, in fact, rise from 17 per cent during the Prodi I government to almost 40 per cent during Berlusconi II–III and Prodi II governments and about 30 per cent during the Berlusconi IV.

It has been argued (Marangoni 2013) that this might be due to the relevance of the decisions taken by the executives of the Second Republic, given the tighter constraints of the EU on the Italian government and due to the fact that policy stagnation cannot be a rewarding strategy in the alternation system of the Second Republic (Curini 2011).[14] On the other hand, one might read this data as indicating the consolidation of these executives as the *locus* of party leadership. As already noted (contrary to the First Republic), in the 'majoritarian' executives the leaders of the coalition parties usually took office in the cabinet,[15] hence some interparty frictions might have boosted the interdepartmental conflicts.

The attempt by the 'majoritarian' executives of the Second Republic to play a more autonomous (from parties) and active role in the decision-making process can probably explain the high percentage of government–parties conflicts (27 per cent). At the same time, although a sign of their leadership, this type of conflict destabilized the same executives. The early termination of the Prodi I

and Prodi II governments, for instance, was the consequence of open conflicts between the executive and some party components of its supporting coalition.

Naturally enough, government–parties and interparty conflicts might end up nourishing one another. The opposition of a coalition member to a given government decision can easily lead to conflicts between the former and the other party components of the majority (those more aligned with the executive). In other terms, in this kind of situation, the same government acts could become the target of interparty conflicts. This was the case, for instance, of the formal crisis ending with a reshuffle of the Berlusconi II government in April 2005 (Vassallo 2005).

An important consideration here relates to the relatively high percentage of intra-party conflicts during the Berlusconi IV government (20.5 per cent). We assumed this type of conflict is, in general, not too risky for government survival. However, sometimes intra-party conflicts can be severe enough to threaten the stability of the coalition as a whole. The Berlusconi IV executive is a perfect case in point. The increasing tensions within the People of Freedom party that ended with the decision of Gianfranco Fini (one of the founding fathers) to abandon the party[16] and to give birth in parliament to a new party (Future and Freedom) that did not support the executive, weakened the majority coalition and opened the way to a crisis in the government and to its resignation in 2011.

The objects of conflicts

Conflicts do not only differ from one another according to the actors involved. Quite evidently, the issues at stake can be of a very different nature, entailing different dynamics and risks for the government. We suggest, in this regard, classifying the issues of conflicts into three macro-categories: policy issues, structure of the cabinet, and coalitional equilibria. This latter category refers to struggles over the basic rules keeping coalition partners together: contrasts over the leadership of the coalition or on the strategies and goals to be followed by the executive are typical examples of conflicts falling in this category. Policy conflicts involve the decisions to be implemented (in terms of public policies) by the executive (the focus, therefore, is on the outputs of the government activity). Conflicts on cabinet structure are typically disagreements on the division of labor and prerogatives within the executive (starting with portfolio allocation).

Data in Table 1.5 show that, on the whole, the majority of conflicts (almost 63 per cent) concern policy issues (note that the few conflicts we have not been able to unequivocally classify into one of the three categories have been excluded). On the one hand, once again, this seems to confirm the relevance of the policy decisions the Italian executives have been called to deal with in the last two decades. On the other hand, however, these same data suggest that reaching a compromise over the policy measures to be implemented is still a difficult (and sometimes ineffective, as Conti demonstrates in Chapter 3) exercise for the Italian government coalitions.

Disaggregated data by executive are really interesting on this regard. We note, in fact, a significantly smaller percentage of policy conflicts during the D'Alema I–II and the Amato II executives (about 36 per cent and 48 per cent, respectively).

Table 1.5 Percentage distribution of conflicts by main issue (and by executive)[a]

Cabinet	*Policy issues*	*Coalitional equilibria*	*Cabinet structure*	*No. of conflicts classified*
Prodi I	62.7	23.4	13.9	158
D'Alema I–II	35.3	30.3	34.5	119
Amato II	47.9	20.8	31.3	48
Berlusconi II–III	70.8	9.4	19.9	171
Prodi II	76.1	8.7	15.2	92
Berlusconi IV	68.6	7.7	23.7	207
Total	62.5	15.5	22.0	795

Note
a Conflicts that are not unequivocally classifiable have been excluded.

This is very unlikely to be due to the more homogeneous nature of their supporting coalitions, or to their capacity to hold larger and more solid agreements (and a smoother decision-making process). The exact contrary is, instead, true. The rather composite nature of the majority coalitions, and the limited time (and policy) horizon of these two governments prevented more relevant and conflictual policy issues entering the government agenda.[17] Conflicts over the coalitional equilibria and the structure of the cabinet, somehow (numerically) residual under most 'majoritarian' executives (with the partial exception of the Prodi I), have largely characterized the life of these two governments (they make up about 65 per cent and 52 per cent of the episodes of conflict, respectively), a phenomenon echoing the typical nature of conflicts in the First Republic (Nousiainen 1993).

At this point in the analysis, we are able to combine information on the actors and issues of conflicts to produce a more complete picture of the dynamics that characterize the internal life of Italian executives, notably of the kind of relationships between different tiers of government. Interdepartmental conflicts, like those involving the cabinet (the executive inner circle) concern almost exclusively policy issues (about 89 per cent of cases), with no significant variation among governments. Quite remarkably, parties–executive (66 per cent) and interparty conflicts (53 per cent) increasingly concern policies, another sign of the relevance of policy decisions to be taken by the governments of the Second Republic. Within this context, the 'First Republic-like' D'Alema I–II and Amato II governments diverge from this general pattern, with coalition governance and executive structure and organization being more frequent issues of (extra-cabinet) conflicts between allies (in 71 per cent and 53 per cent of the cases, respectively) or between one (or more) coalition parties and the government (62 per cent and 67 per cent of this kind of conflicts, respectively).[18]

Conflicts and the internal life of cabinets: the involvement of prime ministers

In our analysis of actors and issues of intra-coalitional conflictuality a special focus is devoted to the chief executive. The Italian prime ministers were commonly

considered comparatively weak by the literature on the First Republic (Hine and Finocchi 1991). However, in recent years some changes have been introduced in the role of this office with a relative strengthening of its power (O'Malley and Cavatorta 2004; Campus and Pasquino 2006; Calise 2007; Musella 2012). Our analysis of the involvement of prime ministers in intra-coalitional conflicts could contribute to shed light on this process of change and demonstrate to what extent this political figure has become more influential within the context of Italian politics.

According to our data, almost 25 per cent of all conflicts that we were able to detect involved (directly or indirectly) the prime minister, with little or no variation among governments. More than the quantity, it is the type of conflicts (particularly their contents) involving prime ministers that is of a particular interest here. Table 1.6 shows a distribution of conflicts in which prime ministers took part, by issue and cabinet. Two models seem again to emerge. On one hand, during the D'Alema I–II and Amato II executives, the conflicts involving the prime minister only rarely concerned policy issues (in no case during the Amato II government, in about 21 per cent of cases during the D'Alema I–II cabinet). The high percentage of chief-executive-engaging conflicts related to coalitional equilibria and cabinet structure suggests that these two prime ministers, deriving their legitimation from pure interparty bargaining in parliament and not from an electoral mandate (exactly like First Republic prime ministers) played primarily the role of guarantors of office allocation and balance of powers among coalition partners.

'Majoritarian' prime ministers, on the contrary, building their legitimation on electoral (programmatic) mandate, tried to play a more active role in guiding government decision-making, even where this implied disagreement (over specific policy issues) with one or more components of the government.

Managing conflictuality: internal or external arenas?

Governments, in particular coalition governments, 'cannot survive long in an atmosphere poisoned by incessant conflicts: it is therefore important that these conflicts be resolved quickly' (Nousiainen 1993: 273).

Table 1.6 Percentage distribution of conflicts involving the prime minister (PM) by issue (and by executive)[a]

	Policy issues	*Coalitional equilibria*	*Cabinet structure*	*No. of conflicts involving the PM*
Prodi I	67.5	25.0	7.5	40
D'Alema I–II	20.9	44.2	34.9	43
Amato II	–	75.0	25.0	8
Berlusconi II–III	41.7	29.2	29.2	48
Prodi II	75.0	5.0	20.0	20
Berlusconi IV	62.5	14.6	22.9	48
Total	48.8	27.5	23.7	207

Note

a Conflicts that are not unequivocally classifiable have been excluded.

The recent comparative analysis of conflict management processes by coalition governments has mainly focused on the closure or openness of these same mechanisms to (individual and collective) components outside the cabinet. We referred to this general distinction to classify the conflict management arenas that appear to be more frequently employed by Italian governing coalitions in the period under analysis. In particular, we adopted a simplified version of the typology suggested by Andeweg and Timmermans (2008)[19] distinguishing between: interdepartmental summits between two or more ministers (internal arena); committees of ministers and leaders of the majority parliamentary groups (mixed arena); committees of ministers (usually prime ministers and other relevant ministers) and majority party leaders who do not hold any office within the executive (mixed arena); committees of parliamentary majority group leaders (external arena); interparty committees among party leaders outside the cabinet (external arena).[20]

In the same way as for measuring conflictuality, we relied on an extensive newspaper analysis to find single occurrences of the various types of conflict management arenas. We were able to isolate 261 committees and summits during the 15 years under analysis. As is reported in Table 1.7, about 66 per cent of the cases could be classified in the (mixed arena) ministers-party leaders category. These are, indeed, the so-called 'majority summits' which had already proved to be crucial decision-making arenas during the First Republic (Criscitiello 1996). About 10 per cent of the cases are ministers-parliamentary leaders committees that typically perform a 'technical' role, dealing with the parliamentary process of government bills. In almost 14 per cent of cases, the participants to the committees were non-governmental actors: the leaders of parliamentary groups (3 per cent) or majority party leaders who did not hold any office in the cabinet (more than 10 per cent).

External (and mixed) arenas, therefore, have continued to play an essential role in coordinating actions and managing conflict within government coalitions. At the same time, however, we found some evidence of the increasing importance of internal arenas for conflict management. As we show in Table 1.7, the participants to the committees were (exclusively) ministers (sometimes junior ministers) in about 11 per cent of the cases.

Quite interestingly, the latter kind of arena appears more relevant under 'majoritarian' governments (and purely external arenas not including members of the cabinet were only residual) and not under the D'Alema I–II and Amato II governments. In these two cases, on the contrary, coalition members largely resorted to external arenas, in particular interparty committees outside the cabinet: almost 27 per cent and 50 per cent of the conflict-resolution committees during the D'Alema I–II and the Amato II executives allowed as participants only those party leaders with no office in the cabinet.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have analyzed the degree of conflictuality that has characterized Italian government coalitions during the Second Republic and the mechanisms they have developed for management of conflicts.

Table 1.7 Percentage distribution of arenas by executive

	Interdepartmental summits	*Committees of ministers and parliamentary leaders*	*Committees of ministers and party leaders*	*Committees of parliamentary leaders*	*Committees of party leaders (not holding office in the cabinet)*	*No.*
Prodi I	4.2	16.7	62.5	6.3	10.4	48
D'Alema I–II	–	15.8	55.3	2.6	26.3	38
Amato II	–	–	43.8	6.3	50.0	16
Berlusconi II–III	20.8	3.1	72.9	1.0	2.1	96
Prodi II	9.5	9.5	76.2	–	4.8	21
Berlusconi IV	11.9	14.3	66.7	4.8	2.4	42
Total	11.1	9.6	65.9	3.1	10.3	261

We relied on extensive newspaper analysis to first detect single episodes of conflict occurring among different (individual and collective) cabinet and coalition components during the life cycle of each of the six executives in office in the period under analysis:[21] from the inauguration of the Prodi I government (May 1996) to the (early) end of the Berlusconi IV government (November 2011).

From a purely quantitative point of view, with more than 850 conflicts that we were able to identify, the high level of conflictuality confirms the complexity of government coalitions as an enduring trait of the Italian political system.

We tried, indeed, to measure intra-coalitional conflictuality not only in terms of *quantity* of conflicts, but also looking at the type of conflicts: in relation to the risks they entailed for the survival of the executive, and also to their content. As far as the first dimension is concerned, we classified single episodes of conflict into four different categories depending on the coalition (individual or collective) components who were in conflict with each other: intra-party conflicts (involving two or more actors of the parliamentary majority belonging to the same party, or two or more ministers of the same party in conflict for reasons related to the internal affairs of their own party); interdepartmental conflicts (between two or more ministers, acting as representatives of their respective departments and not as delegates of their own parties); government–party conflicts (involving one or more party components outside the cabinet and one or more members of the executive, in relation to decisions to be taken by the government); interparty conflicts (between two or more actors, belonging to two or more majority parties and not holding any office in the executive, or involving cabinet members acting in the exclusive interest of their own party).

As far as the content of conflicts is concerned, we distinguished between: policy issues (decisions and measures of public policy to be implemented by the executive); coalitional equilibria (issues related to the division of power and responsibilities among allies); and cabinet structure (issues concerning the organization of work within the cabinet).

Our results demonstrate that interparty conflicts, very often related to the 'power bases' of the coalition (that is, coalitional equilibria and cabinet structure) and the most risky ones for coalition governments according to comparative analyses, have surely characterized the life of the Italian executives during the Second Republic. Nonetheless, we also found some evidence of a process of progressive shifting of conflictuality into the cabinet and toward policy issues. This happened, in particular, during those executives that we have defined as more 'majoritarian': they were formed after the general elections on the basis of pre-electoral coalitions and their legitimacy stemmed primarily from the electoral arena.

These executives were able to claim, and partially to play, a more autonomous role with respect to their supporting parties than in the First Republic (also because, more than in the past, party leaders held ministerial responsibilities in these executives). On the one hand, the relatively large percentage of interdepartmental conflicts (mostly involving policy issues) also demonstrates the strengthening of the cabinet as a privileged arena where crucial and binding decisions

are taken. On the other hand, this same percentage, together with the relatively high rate of government–parties conflicts, proves the difficulty encountered by the Italian governing parties in governing together, even when they make pre-electoral agreements.

Then, we moved the analysis to mechanisms for conflict resolution. Drawing from the most recognized comparative analyses in the field, we decided to focus our attention on the arenas mostly used by governing coalitions for conflict management. For this purpose, we relied again on newspaper analysis in order to isolate the cases of conflict management in the period that we considered. We found 261 cases that we could classify, along Andeweg and Timmermans' lines (2008), as internal (only cabinet members as participants), external (only participants who did not hold an office in the cabinet), or mixed (where both cabinet members and party actors not holding office in the executive participated) arenas.

Andeweg and Timmermans, in their comparative analysis of conflict management by coalition governments in Western Europe, further argued that

> the construction and the use of external or mixed arenas imply additional costs for the parties compared to internal arenas, and that, all else being equal, parties tend to prefer internal decision-making arenas. They will resort to external institutions when the coalition is fragile or the bargaining environment complex, when they have no definitive prior policy agreement to fall back on, or when the internal environment is likely to be biased in favour of one of the parties.
>
> (Andeweg and Timmermans 2008: 296)

Their argument can well explain the preferential (or, better, almost exclusive) employment of external and mixed arenas of conflict resolution by the governments of the First Republic (Criscitiello 1996; Verzichelli and Cotta 2000). Following the same argument, our expectation was that processes of conflict management by the coalition governments of the Second Republic would be more internalized within the executive. More precisely, we expected that: (1) a stronger (and more autonomous from parties) popular legitimacy of the government; (2) a larger presence of party leaders within the cabinet; and (3) a more articulated and formalized pre-electoral agreement of the government coalition[22] should determine greater internalization of conflict management by the executive. Our results largely confirm these expectations. In particular, we found 'majoritarian' governments to rely, much more than in the past, on internal conflict management arenas. Conflict resolution (and avoidance) processes, however, were often open (also) to actors outside the cabinet: that is, they often took place in mixed arenas. Purely external arenas, indeed, were more extensively employed by those governments (like the D'Alema I–II and Amato II executives) that proved more similar to the First Republic model of governance (Fabbrini 2000): having not a direct electoral derivation but being the result of a compromise reached in parliament by parties after the crisis of former executives, they also proved less autonomous and more party-dependent. In this sense, our analysis shows that the use of the cabinet as an

arena for managing conflicts depends largely on the attitude of (governing) party leaders to be part of the executive.

In the Introduction to this volume, Conti and Marangoni question whether the advent of alternation has transformed the Italian political system toward an *outputs* democracy. Governments (and governing parties) in this new scenario face the urgency to provide and implement policy decisions, since they are fully accountable to voters. An urgency that the blocked (without alternation) governments of the First Republic did not really experience. The analysis of intra-coalitional conflicts seems to corroborate this argument. Policy decisions have become increasingly important as issues of conflict within government coalitions. On the one hand, this is an indicator of the pro-active attitude of governing actors with respect to policy-making during the Second Republic. On the other hand, the same high level of conflictuality demonstrates that Italian coalitions still encounter considerable problems in joint decision-making.

Notes

1 Michelangelo Vercesi is responsible for the first and second sections, Francesco Marangoni for the third to fifth sections, while the Introduction and Conclusion were written jointly by the two authors.
2 Although there are only a few comparative empirical studies of government conflicts, Nousiainen (1993) and the already quoted Andeweg and Timmermans (2008) are probably the two most important exceptions. But see also Miller and Müller (2010).
3 With the exception of the brief parenthesis of the first Berlusconi government between May and December 1994.
4 We count the two consecutive executives guided by Massimo D'Alema (October 1998–December 1999 and December 1999–April 2000) as a single government.
5 The first Amato cabinet was in office from 1992 to 1993.
6 We count the two consecutive executives guided by Silvio Berlusconi (June 2001–April 2005 and April 2005–May 2006) as a single government.
7 Although, as said, passing through a formal crisis.
8 I.e., not considering the period between formal resignation and formation of the new executive.
9 Massimo D'Alema resigned as national head of the left-wing party *Democratici di Sinistra* (DS – Left Democrats) soon after entering office as chief executive.
10 It is worth noting that in Italy executives need an explicit confidence vote from an absolute parliamentary majority (both at the Chamber of Deputies and at the Senate).
11 The keywords we used (in appropriate combination through Boolean operators) are: 'contrast'; 'conflict'; 'disagreement'; 'struggle'; 'against'; 'government'; 'minister'; 'majority'; 'parties'.
12 This distinction is not always easy to make. We relied, however, on a careful analysis of newspaper reports to include in this category only conflicts that have developed along interdepartmental lines.
13 As one might easily imagine, this kind of classification is not always easy or unproblematic. Some difficulties arise from individuals cumulating different roles, as in the case, for instance, of two ministers who are also leaders of their own parties. Any time these two ministers entered into conflict with each other, we distinguished whether they were in disagreement for interdepartmental reasons or, rather, they acted as leaders (and in the interests) of their parties, and then we classified single episodes of conflict accordingly.
14 On the impact of the (absence of) alternation on the agenda power and the effectiveness of Italian governments, see also Zucchini (2011).

15 With some variations among cabinets, as discussed above.
16 Formally, Gianfranco Fini was expelled by the National Steering Committee of the PDL.
17 Previous analyses, on this regard, have shown that these two governments fall significantly below the other executives of the Second Republic as far as their attitudes and capability to present significant bills to the parliament are concerned (Marangoni 2013).
18 Interestingly enough, the Prodi I executive seems closer to this model than to the other 'majoritarian' executives, in particular as far as interparty conflicts are concerned (involving extra-policy issues in more than 50 per cent of the cases). The peculiar nature of the coalition supporting this executive (with the Communist Refoundation party that was not part of the cabinet, but gave only its external support) and the fact that this government represented a first experiment of an unprecedented (and, as such, in search for some equilibrium) center-left alliance might explain this phenomenon.
19 Andeweg and Timmermans counted two different arenas for each of the three types (internal; mixed; and external). On the contrary, we grouped internal arenas into one category: the summits between ministers, irrespective of the type of the meeting.
20 It is important to note that all these different arenas might sometimes work as conflict-avoidance, rather than conflict-resolution mechanisms. In other words, they can work as decision-making arenas intended to reinforce compromise and agreement among the different components of the coalition.
21 As we mentioned above, we adopted counting criteria that differ from the official government numbering (in that we counted a new executive only when there was a change in the prime-ministership or a general election occurred).
22 See Chapter 3 on this aspect.

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PART II

PARLIAMENTS AND ELITE-DRIVEN REFORMS

Chapter 6

What Kind of Veto Player Is the Italian Senate? A Comparative Analysis of European Second Chambers

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What kind of veto player is the Italian Senate? A comparative analysis of European second chambers

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ABSTRACT

The literature finds evidence that the presence of strong institutional veto players correlates with policy gridlocks. In recent years, in several European countries the rationale of parliamentary second chambers as veto players has been called into question. With regard to Italy, in 2016 the parliament approved a broad constitutional reform, later rejected by a referendum. According to the proponents, this reform would have made Italian institutions more functional in a comparative perspective. Did voters actually block some sort of functionality? To answer this question, this article presents a systematic comparison of second chambers in the European Union. The theoretical framework is based on three dimensions of strength, operationalized by means of quantitative indicators and a comprehensive index of strength. The article ends with a discussion of the findings and a proposal for further research outlooks.

KEYWORDS Constitutional reform; Italian parliament; second chambers; legitimacy; bicameralism; representation

Introduction

Several scholars have found a positive relation between strong veto players and policy gridlocks (e.g. Krehbiel 1996; Kreppel 1997; Tsebelis and Money 1997; Tsebelis 2002; Kastner and Rector 2003; Tsebelis and Chang 2004). Moreover, for political scientists, 'too much policy stasis disallows governments to adapt to an ever-changing world' (Tsebelis 2017, 96). In his well-known theory of political institutions, Huntington (1968) argues that an institution that is not able to adapt itself to a modified external environment is a weak institution. However, evidence of positive or negative effects of policy inertia is not straightforward. A distinction between policy stability and system stability is thus necessary. Regarding recent economic crises, Tsebelis (2017, 97), for instance, summarizes Angkinand and Willett's (2008) findings stating that 'while many veto players disallow a government from adequately responding to a crisis, too few veto players may create

instability that undermines consumer/business confidence' (Tsebelis 2017, 97). Hence, negative outcomes resulting from inertia may not depend on the presence of a strong veto player *per se*, but may rather depend on its very nature.

In recent years in several European countries, the nature – if not the very rationale – of parliamentary second chambers as veto players has been called into question (e.g. Avram and Radu 2009; Musella 2010; Russell 2012; MacCarthaigh and Martin 2015; Harguindéguy, Coller, and Cole 2016). In Italy, the parliament approved a constitutional reform on 12 April 2016, where the core provisions were the end of symmetrical bicameralism, the setup of a second chamber representative of sub-national institutions, and the recentralization of prerogatives from regions to the state (e.g. Lupo 2015; Peterlini 2016; Tsebelis 2017; Vercesi and Pansardi 2016). However, the reform was vetoed by a referendum on 4 December 2016.

This study aims both to observe the Italian parliamentarism in comparison and to assess the Italian institutional scenario after the referendum. In particular, I propose a comparative analysis based on three dimensions and systematic measurements. To my knowledge, there are no similar analyses in the literature. Often, research on parliaments, for comparison's sake, focuses only on lower chambers (e.g. Bergman et al. 2003). If any, comparative works on second chambers address few cases and specific facets of these institutions (Swenden 2004). Others account for myriad aspects but without any integrated analytic setting (Baldwin and Shell 2001; Norton 2007). Finally, some scholars have aimed to make praiseworthy generalizations about the strength of second chambers, but they have resulted either in undefined schemes (Coakley and Laver 1997; Neiva 2008) or in partial analyses (Russell 2012).

In the next section, I place the recent Italian constitutional reform in the context of the Italian history of missed reforms and define the present research questions. Subsequently, I present a theoretical framework for the study of bicameral legislatures in parliamentary and semi-presidential democracies. The fourth section addresses the relevant variables and indicators, whereas the fifth focuses on operationalizations and methodological issues. The following empirical analysis compares Italy with other European democracies. The conclusion section discusses the findings and proposes further research outlooks.

The 2016 Italian constitutional reform

The Renzi cabinet's attempt to reform Italian parliamentarism was anything but one of a series. The Italian legislature comprises a directly elected lower house (Chamber of Deputies) and a directly elected second chamber (Senate), with equal powers and functions, being 'the last of the identical [*paritari*] bicameral parliamentary systems' (Pasquino 1992, 18).[1] Since the very first moment, this parity has been highly disputed in public debate. According to Barbera (2004, 37), Italian bicameralism is 'one of the unsolved cruxes of the Constitution', while for

Russell and Sandford (2002, 81), the Italian case proves that redundancy is useless if the two chambers are based on the same representative principle. Gallagher, Laver, and Mair (2011, 61ff.) even argue that the Italian bicameralism could be considered an example of how not to design institutions. It is not surprising that Italian politicians 'are supportive of bicameralism in principle, but want a second chamber with a more distinct composition and functions' (Russell 2001b, 454).

In the republican period (1946 onwards), parliamentary bicameral committees attempted to revise the Italian institutional arrangement in 1983–1985, 1993–1994, and 1997–1998. However, none of these attempts was successful (Pasquino 2002, 74–75; Bull 2015). In 2005, the parliament approved the replacement of the Senate with a 'federal chamber'; however, the reform was rejected via a popular referendum in 2006 (Bull and Pasquino 2007). In 2013, then-Prime Minister Enrico Letta asked a group of experts (10 'wise men') to propose a broad institutional reform, but the reforming process was blocked by inter-party disagreements (Bull 2016). When then-Prime Minister Matteo Renzi was sworn in in February 2014, he presented the abolition of the symmetrical bicameralism as one of the distinctive goals of the new cabinet (Marangoni and Verzichelli 2014).

According to the proponents, such reform would have fostered a smoother and faster political decision-making process; the parliament would no longer have been an institutional *unicum*, and simultaneously, the government would have been able to cope with contemporary challenges more effectively. For Renzi, the reform was a sign that 'the most unstable [country] of Europe … [was becoming] the most stable' (*La Stampa*, 12 April 2016). Then-Foreign Minister and later Prime Minister Paolo Gentiloni even claimed that 'for too long, Italy has been too slow to confront its problems and too hasty to change its governments. … There is no question that amendments to our constitution are necessary in order to make our institutions more efficient'. Moreover, constitutional change 'is not just about a few tweaks to the workings of the country's institutions. The stakes are much higher than that and they concern the whole of Europe' (*Financial Times*, 29 November 2016).

These statements led to concerns about whether the referendum's results would actually maintain a parliament that, compared with those of European partners, would be less well equipped to confront contemporary changes. To what extent is the Italian Senate a powerful veto player? How strong are second chambers in the European Union? To what extent does the Italian institutional setting distance itself from those of its European partners? This article seeks to address these issues.

A framework for the study of upper chambers

Bicameralism and upper chambers' functions

The Italian legislature is bicameral. Modern European bicameralism emerged to moderate the democratic element of the elected chamber (lower house)

through an aristocratic chamber (upper house), which comprises hereditary or appointed members (Shell 2001; Barbera 2004). Today, the presence of second chambers seems especially likely in large and decentralized states, where the members usually represent territorial interests (Patterson and Mughan 1999; Russell 2001a; Taagepera 2003). However, the range of interests advocated in contemporary upper houses varies largely, from those of linguistic minorities in Belgium to the interests of the Church in the United Kingdom and those of vocational categories in Ireland (Borthwick 2001, 22–23). Second chambers are veto players in the policy-making process and constitutional watchdogs given that they are allowed to intervene in constitutional revisions (Schmitt 2014, 98).

Comparative legislative studies focus on bicameral parliaments from two main viewpoints: functional and structural (Blondel 1973; Polsby 1975; Mezey 1979; Mattson and Strøm 1995; Mastropaolo and Verzichelli 2006; Pasquino and Pelizzo 2006). On the one hand, it is argued that second chambers fulfill (or should fulfill) a couple of basic functions; on the other hand, the extent to which these functions are fulfilled depends on the structure and formal prerogatives of the upper house (Norton 1998, 205).

Leaving aside typical functions (Russell 2001b), scholars generally agree that second chambers share with their institutional siblings three broad functions. The first is the representative function. Representation can be conceived of as morphological (representation of groups or communities), sociological (reflection of voters' socio-demographic characteristics), and political (reflection of voters' ideological and party orientations). The other two functions concern legislative activity and control of the government (Cotta, Della Porta, and Morlino 2001, 318–326; Battegazzorre 2011).

Ultimately, the assessment of the effective fulfillment of these functions results in the observation of chambers' actual activities. This holds even for the representative function. As Battegazzorre (2011, 447–448) notes, the concept of representation implies in fact the idea of the active promotion of interests. In empirical research, thus, 'the representative function loses distinctiveness, fading into the … control function, and eventually turning out to be absorbed' (see also Andeweg and Thomassen 2005).

Insofar as the parliamentary branch is able to perform its functions against external resistances, one can depict the very same chamber (and thus bicameralism) as strong.

Dimensions of upper chambers' strength

The literature proposes three dimensions for the assessment of the strength of bicameralism. In his well-known study of democracies, Lijphart (2012) suggests focusing on two structural facets. The first is connected to the *formal powers* of the second chamber compared with the lower house: similar or even equal constitutional powers make second chambers stronger. In addition, the

author mentions the *compositional incongruence* between the two parliamentary branches. In this regard, he refers to the overrepresentation in the upper house of small territorial unities or minorities. However, in modern democratic parliaments, party divisions usually overcome these differences in terms of shaping MPs' behavior (Tsebelis 2002). Hence, any analysis of this second dimension cannot avoid the consideration of political divisions.

The third dimension is the perceived *legitimacy* of the second chamber within the relevant polity. The need to introduce this concept has been especially stressed by Russell (2013). According to this author, a lack of legitimacy undermines the ability of a veto player to use its institutional powers, while deep legitimation can be exploited to condition the political process and counterbalance the paucity of formal power. However, if 'there are no serious legitimacy concerns about the second chamber, the first two dimensions will in practice determine de facto bicameral strength' (Russell 2013, 386). In this sense, Russell seems to employ Barker's notion of legitimacy as connected to the justification of actions (Barker 1990, 23). This notion particularly holds when Russell (2013, 375) argues that legitimacy can be associated with the inputs, procedures, or outputs of an institution.

One of the major problems in addressing this concept for an empirical analysis is its normative and elusive nature. To escape the pitfalls of normative analysis, Russell (2013, 375) proposes operationalizing perceived legitimacy as 'social support'. However, even this operationalization does not seem useful: it either does not allow precise measurements or requires extensive and time-consuming surveys to capture public opinion's variations over time. It is no coincidence that Russell's cited work puts forward impressionistic empirical applications of only three cases (United Kingdom, Canada, Australia).

In her comparative study of institutional veto players, Heeß (2017) addresses these challenges and proposes to handle the issue by employing certain measurable proxies. According to her argumentation, a legitimate veto player in democracies can be posited as an institution that fulfills given democratic functions, where representation is the most prominent. Since the level of representativeness may be easily operationalized based on different criteria (e.g. Schmitt 2014), legitimacy can be assessed with a range of clear-cut indicators. Another positive consequence of this approach is that it allows one to conceptually distinguish between the mere instrumental support of an institution as an efficient or effective tool to achieve given goals (whatever its legitimation may be) and its (perceived) legitimacy. Legitimacy is *not* a necessary condition for support.

It is worth noting that the three presented dimensions belong to two different analytical levels. Formal powers and compositional incongruence are inherent features of second chambers, which own or do not own given characteristics. Perceived legitimacy, however, is something that is 'bestowed' from the outside, from the relevant polity; a second chamber is deemed – not is – legitimate.

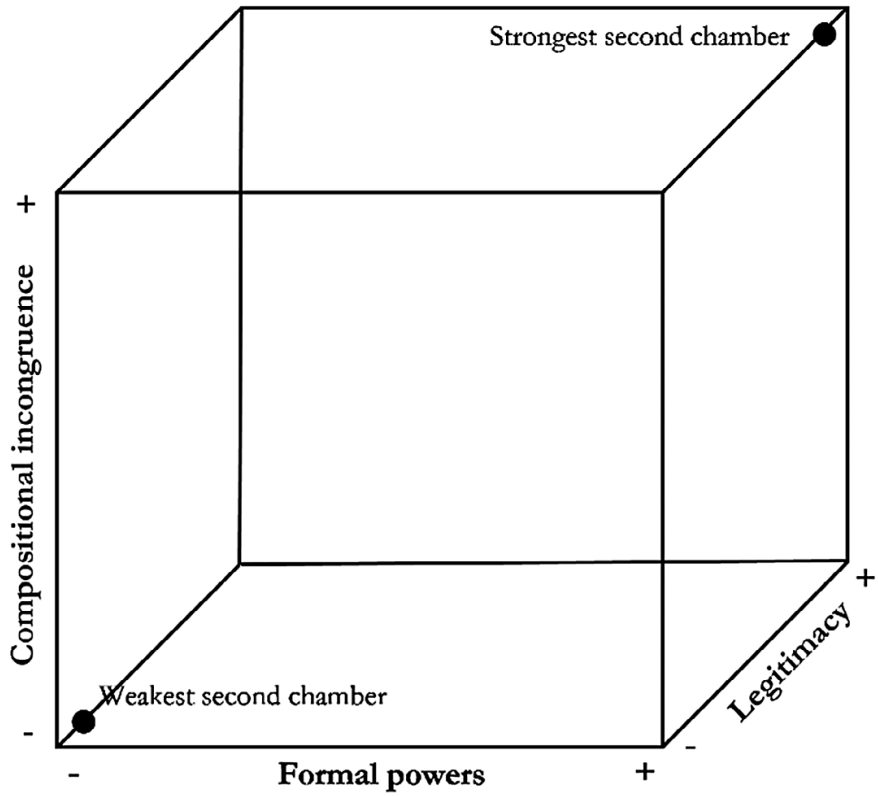

Figure 1. Three-dimensional space of the strength of second chambers.

Nevertheless, I argue that for a full assessment of bicameral legislatures guided by my research questions, the three dimensions must be considered together, as I am interested not in the origin of power resources but rather in the potential impact of these resources (if used) on the role of second chambers in the decision-making process.

Thus, upper houses can be located within a three-dimensional space, based on their strength.[2] Each dimension is a continuum, which goes from the lowest possible position to the highest. In the upper-right corner, the strongest chambers are presented, whereas in the lower-left corner, the weakest are presented. The cubic space encompasses all the possible types of second chambers (Figure 1).

Indicators

Formal powers are powers that originate from both constitutional and other statutory prerogatives. In this analysis, I focus only on the former, since they define the borders within which the latter may be exercised: they are logically antecedent and, ultimately, more important in terms of defining the scope of institutional actions. In particular, I am interested in the dialectical relationships both between the two parliamentary chambers and between the executive and legislature in the policymaking. Accordingly, I examine the formal power of control of the government *sensu stricto* and the formal power to affect the legislative process directly.[3]

Except Cyprus, all European member states are democratic countries ruled by cabinets that are accountable to an elected assembly (Samuels and Shugart 2010, 30–34). In these systems, the most prominent oversight power with which legislatures are endowed is the possibility to withdraw the confidence to the executive. As a rule, only lower chambers are responsible for no-confidence motions (Patterson and Mughan 2001; Bergman et al., 2003, 119). If a second chamber shared such a prerogative, it would be, all else equal, a stronger branch.

Regarding legislative prerogatives, the literature distinguishes between types and fields of intervention. When not merely consultative (e.g. in Slovenia), the intervention of second chambers in policymaking is threefold: these houses can introduce, amend, or veto legislation (Money and Tsebelis 1992; Tsebelis and Rasch 1995). Vetoes potentially have the greatest impact on the legislative process, since they can block the entire decision-making process. For this reason, in this article I focus only on this type of intervention. Vetoes are either suspensive or absolute. However, although even delay powers can significantly affect the decision-making process,[4] I account exclusively for final vetoes. In fact, only these powers allow upper houses – in the bill approval process – to be on an equal footing with their parliamentary siblings. I consider both amendments that cannot be rejected by the lower house without further modification and the unlimited delay of legislation to be forms of absolute veto.

Second chambers can usually block legislation only within a narrower number of policy fields. One of the most common prerogatives is the power to intervene in constitutional issues. When endowed with this power, second chambers play a crucial role in providing stability to the political system's institutions (Schmitt 2014, 7). Regarding the other fields, second chambers are often excluded from budgetary decisions (Money and Tsebelis 1992). The control of the budget is a prominent source of influence for parliaments (Heller 1997; De Giorgi and Verzichelli 2008). Indeed, many legislative provisions depend on the availability of financial resources; therefore, an upper house with this resource is, all else equal, a stronger chamber. Finally, parliamentary bills can fall within the residual category of ordinary legislation. In this case, second chambers' prerogatives can concern all or only part of ordinary legislation. For example, the German *Bundesrat* and the South African National Council of Provinces enjoy greater powers on regional matters. An exceptional case is the UK's House of Lords, which is endowed with a veto power only on Lords-initiated legislation (Russell 2012, 121–123).

The second dimension that I examine is the *compositional incongruence* between lower and upper chambers. Unless I observe the membership of each chamber in which I am interested in terms of time and space, I cannot directly assess this dimension. To make generalizations, I need to rely on proxy indicators. Focusing on variations in the partisan composition of parliamentary branches, Tsebelis and Rasch (1995, 368) propose, first, the temporal discordance between the renewal of chambers' membership and, second, the existence

of two different selection methods of MPs. Moreover, Heeß (2017) suggests considering the difference between representational principles. Indeed, if the representative references (e.g. the people, territories, and interest groups) of the chambers differ, the outcome of the selection process will also likely vary.

Third, *legitimacy* 'rests upon various factors both in relation to … composition and … competences' (Schmitt 2014, 115). For example, Lijphart (2012) stresses the role of the democratic legitimation granted by the direct election of MPs. However, this is only one factor of the list. Second chambers representing territorial entities – directly or indirectly elected – are usually highly legitimate, especially in federal countries such as the United States and Germany. In addition, legitimation can ensue from the representation of other particular groups within society. This especially holds for ethnic, religious, and linguistic minorities or other marginalized groups (Krook and O'Brien 2010; Heeß 2017). Indeed, second chambers can be legitimate as arenas for the protection of such minorities against the majority of the population represented in the first chamber. Moreover, vocational categories may be represented, e.g. in Slovenia and Ireland. Finally, upper houses can benefit from the legitimation provided by the high profile and expertise of their members, such as in the United Kingdom or in Ireland, with the representatives of universities. This representative principle is probably the most disputed in modern democracies; however, it may counterbalance the lack of other forms of legitimation to some extent (Schmitt 2014, 12).

Operationalizations and indices

I resort to multiple indicators (Pennings, Keman, and Kleinnijenhuis 2006, 69–70) to operationalize seven variables. Following an established approach in the comparative literature (Döring 1995; Poguntke, Scarrow, and Webb 2016, 677), I create countries' rank orderings from weak to strong for each variable.

The first dimension (formal powers) encompasses two variables: confidence power and power to veto bills. It is worth noting that in case of negative parliamentarism (Bergman 1993), the parliamentary investiture for a new cabinet is implicit, and no formal vote is required. For this reason, I operationalize the confidence power as the power to issue a no-confidence motion against the incumbent cabinet. It is worth stressing that some second chambers are allowed to issue no-confidence motions on their own, while others need the joint approval of their lower counterparts. Regarding legislative powers, I distinguish – from the most to the least significant policy field – between constitutional power, budgetary power, and power over ordinary legislation (i.e. on all other issues, even 'organic laws'). I treat constitutional and budgetary powers as dummy variables, while I further distinguish between total or partial power over ordinary legislation. Table 1 shows the possible scores of second chambers according to their formal powers.

Table 1. Indicators and power scores of formal powers.

Oversight of government	Score	Final veto on legislation	Score
Power to issue a no-confidence motion	2	On all legislation	11
Power to issue a no-confidence motion, but the consent of the lower house is requested	1	On constitutional and budgetary matters as well as some ordinary legislation	10
Not allowed to issue a no-confidence motion	0	On constitutional and budgetary matters	9
		On constitutional matters and ordinary legislation	8
		On constitutional matters and some ordinary legislation	7
		On constitutional matters	6
		On budget and ordinary legislation	5
		On budget and some ordinary legislation	4
		On budgetary matters	3
		On ordinary legislation	2
		On some ordinary legislation	1
		No veto power	0

The compositional incongruence dimension is operationalized through three variables: the timing of selection, method of selection, and the variation in the representative principle. For each of them, I distinguish between complete difference, partial (predominantly or not) difference, and no difference. If the chambers are directly elected, I consider different electoral systems to be two different methods of selection.[5] The possible scores are summarized in Table 2.

Finally, I analyze the third dimension (legitimacy) by relying on two variables. The first variable is related to the source of democratic legitimation *par excellence*, that is, the direct popular election of the MPs. In this regard, I refer to a slightly modified scheme of Russell (2012, 120) to identify the various possible combinations between direct election, indirect election, appointment, and hereditary office. I posit that these scenarios are ordered from the most to the least legitimizing, as far as modern liberal democracies are concerned. However, as said, there are other significant forms of legitimation, particularly in terms of representing specific interests or groups. Thus, the second variable distinguishes among (from the most significant to the least significant) territorial representation, representation of minorities,[6] representation of interest and vocational groups, and representation of personal distinction and deep expertise (Table 3). It is worth noting that, unlike others, the categories applied to the representation of interests are not mutually exclusive. Therefore, a second chamber can represent more than one type of interest.

For each dimension of analysis, I cluster the scores for each relevant variable to obtain an index of strength. The three indices – formal powers, compositional incongruence, and legitimacy – are calculated as normalized additive indices. To put it differently, the indices result from the sum of the scores obtained for each relevant rank ordering, divided by the hypothetically highest total score achievable. In formal terms,

Table 2. Indicators and power scores of compositional incongruence.

Timing of selection	Score	Method of selection	Score	Representative principle	Score
Wholly selected in a different moment	3	Different method between the chambers	3	Wholly based on a different principle	3
Majority selected in a different moment	2	Different method, majority	2	Majority based on a different principle	2
Minority selected in a different moment	1	Different method, minority	1	Minority based on a different principle	1
No difference	0	No difference	0	No difference	0

Table 3. Indicators and power scores of perceived legitimacy.

Direct election	Score	Representation of interests	Score
Wholly directly elected	10	The chamber represents territorial entities	4
Majority directly elected, minority indirectly elected	9	The chamber represents minorities	3
Majority directly elected, plus indirectly elected, appointed* and hereditary	8	The chamber represents interest groups and vocational categories	2
Majority directly elected, minority appointed	7	The chamber represents high-profile figures and expertise	1
Wholly indirectly elected	6		
Majority indirectly elected, minority appointed	5		
Majority appointed, minority indirectly elected	4		
Wholly appointed	3		
Majority appointed, minority hereditary	2		
Majority hereditary, minority appointed	1		
Wholly hereditary	0		

*I consider co-opted MPs as appointed. Those who become MPs by office are considered appointed as well.

$$I = \frac{\sum_i v_i}{n_v}$$

where I is the index, v is the value assigned on the i^{th} rank ordering, and n_v is the highest additive score obtainable. The three indices range from 0 (very weak) to 1 (very strong). The overall strength of a second chamber is finally calculated as the simple mean between the three normalized indices.

Comparing European bicameralisms

Case selection

In this section, I compare second chambers in the European Union. To limit variations of other possible intervening variables, I seek to keep the set of compared countries as homogenous as possible in terms of the (at least potential) decision-making weight within the European Union. However, I also try to provide a group of cases that are representative of the different regions of the European

Table 4. The 10 largest parliamentary and semi-presidential democracies in the EU, 2015 (thousand).

Country	Population
Germany	81,413.15
France	66,808.38
United Kingdom	65,138.23
Italy	60,802.08
Spain	46,418.27
Poland	37,999.49
Romania	19,832.39
Netherlands	16,936.52
Belgium	11,285.72
Czech Republic	10,551.22

Source: World Bank Open Data (data.worldbank.org).

Union. For comparison's sake, I focus on countries with similar parliamentary institutional settings. For this reason, I exclude the only European presidential republic (Cyprus) and select among countries with bicameral legislatures. European membership is observed for the year 2016.

The literature highlights a relation between population size and polities' institutional and cultural features (Veenendaal 2015, 27–34). In his comparison of 36 democracies, Lijphart (2012, ch. 13) refers to 10 million inhabitants as a threshold to distinguish between countries. Following the same path, I find 10 bicameral European member states with a 10 million or higher population size[7] (Table 4). These countries score eight points or more on the Polity IV -10/+10-point scale of democracy (Marshall, Gurr, and Jaggers 2017) for the year 2015.

According to the official classification of the Multilingual Thesaurus of the European Union (EuroVoc), there are five Western countries (Belgium, France, Germany, Netherlands, United Kingdom), three Eastern countries (Czech Republic, Poland, Romania), and two Southern countries (Italy, Spain).

Findings

The three indices provide mixed evidence (Figure 2). In particular, there is large cross-country variation for the first two dimensions. In contrast, upper houses have similar values along the legitimacy dimension. Not surprisingly, the House of Lords is the exception, as it is the least legitimated chamber according to modern democratic principles. This finding indicates that second chambers endowed with a lower input democratic legitimation (direct election) tend to compensate for such a deficiency through morphological representation and vice versa.

Regarding formal powers, most upper houses approach the medium value of 0.5. Again, the House of Lords is an exception, in that it has almost no formal powers. On the side of the co-equal chambers are Italy, the Netherlands, and Romania. However, the placement of the Dutch Senate is due to the specific operationalization in the analysis. Unlike the Italian and Romanian cases, the

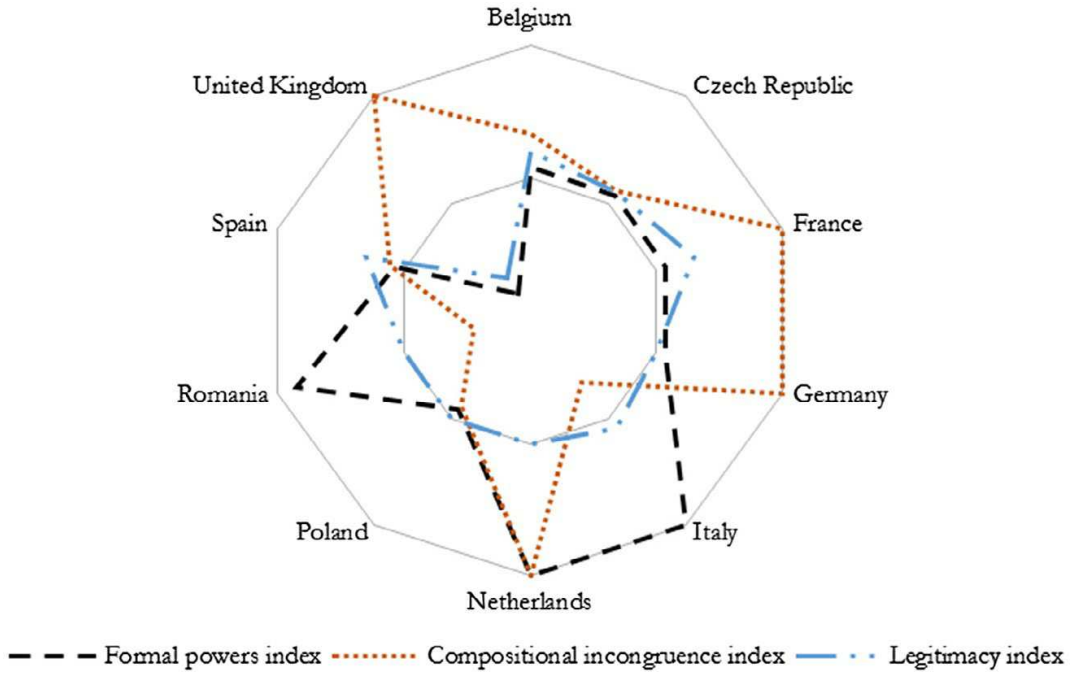

Figure 2. Indices of second chambers' strength in 10 EU countries by dimension.
Sources: Chiaramonte (2015); Inter-Parliamentary Union (www.ipu.org); International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (www.idea.int); Krook and O'Brien (2010, 257–258); Money and Tsebelis (1992, 36–39); Patterson and Mughan (2001); Russell (2001a, 2012); Schmitt (2014).

Dutch parliamentarism is not in fact symmetrical. The Dutch second chamber is allowed neither to introduce legislation nor to amend bills. Moreover, 'although the [… Senate] has the same powers of governmental oversight …, it concentrates almost exclusively on legislation' (Andeweg and Irwin 2009, 149). Nonetheless, the powers to hold the cabinet formally accountable and to vote binding bills' rejections formally make the Dutch second chamber a veto player endowed with powers that are usually bestowed on lower houses only.

Third, four chambers are particularly likely to have an incongruent membership in comparison with their institutional siblings (scoring 1). These chambers – in France, Germany, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom – are the only ones that are fully selected with different timing. Moreover, they are fully selected with a different method (directly in France, Germany, and the Netherlands; appointed and through hereditary ways in the United Kingdom). Finally, none of their members enters office based on the principle of the democratic representation of the overall population: in France, MPs represent territorial unities and expatriates' minorities, whereas in Germany and the Netherlands, they represent territories. In the United Kingdom, they represent high-profile figures and expertise within the society (see the Appendix for details).

Overall, Italy is similar to other countries only with respect to the degree of legitimacy, whereas it is a deviant case with respect to formal powers and compositional incongruence. Only Italy and Romania have high scores on the formal powers dimension and simultaneously low levels of incongruence.

Table 5. Pearson correlation coefficient between dimensions and variables in 10 EU countries.

	Formal powers	Compositional incongruence	Legitimacy				
Formal powers	–	–0.4062	0.4759				
Compositional incongruence	–0.4062	–	–0.2779				
Legitimacy	0.4759	–0.2779	–				
	Oversight	Final veto	Timing	Method	Representative principle	Election	Interests
Oversight	–	0.7557**					
Final veto	0.7557**	–					
Timing			–	0.4771	0.4400		
Method			0.4771	–	0.2498		
Representative principle			0.4400	0.2498	–		
Election						–	–0.4209
Interests						–0.4209	–

**$p < 0.05$.

However, Italy is a unique case since it associates co-equal formal powers with some kind of differentiation in the timing of selection of some members of the upper house.

A further aspect to investigate is whether Italy is dissimilar with regard to the balance between institutional features. In other words, I should look for empirical regularities in the internal design of bicameralism in Europe. For this purpose, I calculate the degree of correlation of placements both on different dimensions and between variables related to the same dimension (Table 5).

Our N (10) is too small to draw statistical significant conclusions. However, intriguing insights emerge. First, formal powers show a moderate negative correlation with compositional incongruence. A similar correlation associates formal powers and legitimacy – but in the opposite direction. This result could mean that institutional designers have tended to compensate high formal powers with homogenous memberships between chambers. Concurrently, they have tried to 'justify' these high powers by legitimating second chambers. In this sense, Italy does not appear to be a deviant case.

Second, I find a strong positive correlation between the power to issue a no-confidence motion and the power of final veto on legislation. Moreover, I observe a medium positive correlation between different timings of selection and both different methods of selection and variations in the representative principles. Third, direct election is quite negatively correlated with the representation of interests other than the representation of the overall population. Once more, Italy follows the main path.

Figure 3 provides an overview of the strength of second chambers based on the mean of all three indices.

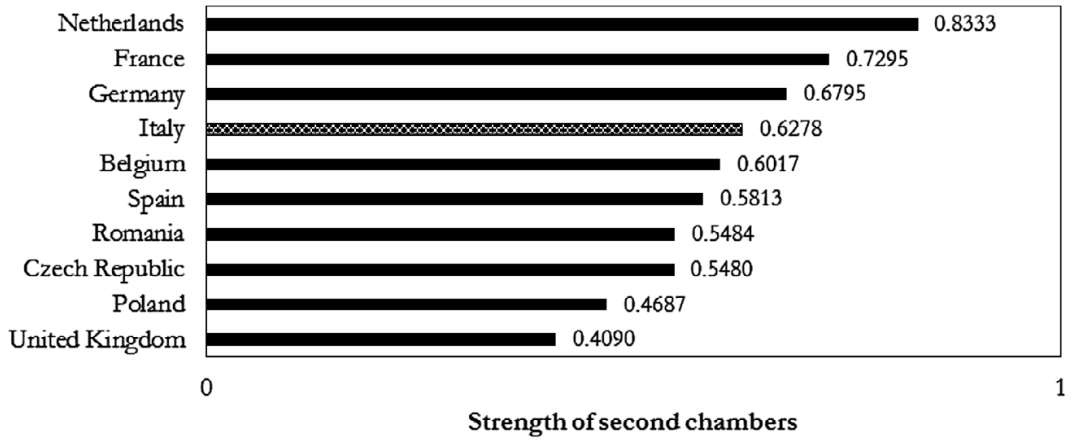

Figure 3. Strength of second chambers in 10 EU countries.

Notwithstanding the exceptional powers of the Italian Senate, Italy ranks only fourth. The Italian second chamber comes out as one of the strongest in the sample, but it is surpassed by the Dutch and French Senates as well as the German *Bundesrat*. Together with the aforementioned findings, this evidence confirms the exceptionality of the Italian case. Some countries have chosen to establish a very strong second chamber to counterbalance the democratic majoritarian principle embedded in the lower house. However, this path has been followed by granting to the first chamber a formal pre-eminence in formal powers, whereas second chambers have been particularly endowed with other legitimizing representative functions. In this way, these countries rely on authoritative veto players, which are nevertheless not ultimately able to block the political process (if not under very specific conditions). Italy, in turn, has correlated these features in the other way round: the Italian Senate draws its high power from formal prerogatives. As in other large democracies, redundancy is linked to strength, however not functional differentiation. The Italian second chamber fulfills the control function mainly by replicating the lower chamber. However, compared with the other main example of symmetrical bicameralism (Romania), Italy presents even stronger powers with regard to the compositional incongruence and legitimation. This situation also holds for the Netherlands; however, as I have shown, other constitutional provisions and political practice downgrade the Dutch Senate to a fully fledged second chamber.

Discussion and research outlooks

I have provided an empirical comparison of parliamentary second chambers in the European Union, with the aim of understanding the extent to which and in which sense the Italian Senate is an outlier. Overall, the analysis has shown that the institutional rationale of the Italian second chamber diverges from the rationale both of weaker and stronger second chambers in comparable European countries. Among the five countries with the strongest upper

houses, Italy is the only one with a chamber whose strength derives primarily from formal powers and not from some sort of compositional incongruence of the represented entities or differentiated sources of legitimation. Even when powerful, other second chambers seem more inherently suitable to fulfill what Norton (2007, 7) calls 'reflection'. They are equipped with resources to persuade or even constrain first chambers, but they do so from a different position and cannot ultimately block the political process similarly to the Italian Senate.

In this article, the focus has nevertheless been on the formal rules and traits of European second chambers. To have a more detailed picture, it is necessary to consider other intertwined factors. In particular, the impact of the party system is worth mentioning. Zucchini (2013) has noted that political stalemates and a lack of policy change have been typical features of the Italian Republic. According to his analysis, these features have especially arisen from both the ideological heterogeneity of government coalitions and – when it has been the case – the lack of alternation. As long as the two chambers have been congruent, the Senate has not exacerbated the effects of these two variables. However, electoral reforms in the 1990s and 2000s have paved the way to more incongruent houses (i.e. with dissimilar distributions of policy preferences). In this regard, a test of some empirical hypotheses has shown that this situation 'slows down … the decision-making process and negatively affects … the scope of [policy] change' (Zucchini 2013, 111). Low intra-party unity (Giannetti and Benoit 2009, 5) may also play a role. In fact, the effect of the same incongruence can stem from the inability of parliamentary parties to coordinate their own MPs between (and within) the two chambers (Zucchini 2008).

Further studies can thus go forward along these lines and systematically extend the analysis of formal institutional resources to party behaviors within parliament. In addition, a venue for research may be to broaden the focus to the investigation of national executives and first chambers' own power resources *vis-à-vis* second chambers in relation to the variables considered in this article. Finally, future research can enlarge the range of variables included in this article concerning second chambers, for example by considering bills' introduction, amendments, suspensive vetoes, and further powers of oversight on cabinets.

Notes

1. Hine (1993, 189–190) speaks of 'perfectly co-equal bicameralism'.
2. A second chamber could be strong, according to my dimensions; nonetheless, it may be unable to be effective in decision making because of contingent factors or adverse structural conditions that impede the chamber from acting as a cohesive institution (e.g. a fragmented party system). This does not imply that the strength of second chambers cannot be compared, all else equal. Moreover, although the possession of given power resources can be insufficient for effectiveness, it is likely that it is what – in the QCA (Qualitative Comparative Analysis) language – is called the INUS condition. In other words, an 'insufficient but necessary part

of a condition which is itself unnecessary but sufficient for the result' (Schneider and Wagemann 2012, 79).

3. A detailed analysis of legislative powers that are not considered in this article may be found in Martin and Vanberg (2011, 44–51), where the authors build an index of the 'policing strength' of parliamentary committees. Specific references to the Italian case are found in Pansardi and Vercesi (2017).
4. See Russell (2012, 125) for a review.
5. Electoral systems are classified as proportional, majoritarian, and mixed according to the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) (Electoral System Design Database, http://www.idea.int/themes/electoral-system-design) and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) (Parline Database on National Parliaments, http://www.ipu.org/parline-e/parlinesearch.asp) (both accessed 4 January 2017).
6. In operational terms, I consider the existence of quotas for ethnic, religious, and/or linguistic minorities to be a sign of representation of minorities. Moreover, I consider quotas for other specific groups within society, which fall into categories of neither interest and vocational groups nor experts. Gender quotas are also excluded. I do not consider party/political minorities. Information on quotas is drawn from Krook and O'Brien (2010).
7. In 2015, Greece was the only member state with more than 10 million inhabitants and a unicameral parliament.

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Appendix. Countries' scores of strength

Table A1. Countries' scores on strength dimensions by variable.

		Formal powers		Incongruence			Legitimacy	
Country	**Name of chamber**	**Var1**	**Var2**	**Var3**	**Var4**	**Var5**	**Var6**	**Var7**
Belgium	*Sénat-Senaat-Senat* (Senate)	0	7	0	3	3	5	7
Czech Republic	*Senat* (Senate)	0	7	2	3	0	10	1
France	*Sénat* (Senate)	0	7	3	3	3	6	7
Germany	*Bundesrat* (Federal Council)	0	7	3	3	3	6	4
Italy	*Senato* (Senate)	2	11	1	1	1	7	4
Netherlands	*Eerste Kamer der Staten-Generaal* (Senate)	2	11	3	3	3	6	4
Poland	*Senat* (Senate)	0	6	0	3	1	10	0
Romania	*Senatul* (Senate)	1	11	0	1	1	10	0
Spain	*Senado* (Senate)	0	7	1	1	3	9	4
United Kingdom	House of Lords	0	1	3	3	3	2	1

Note: In Spain, 208 senators out of 266 are directly elected. The elections of the Senate have been considered as simultaneous with those for the first chamber, since they have always coincided so far. However, according to the constitution (Art. 115), the prime minister can advise the king to call the elections only for one chamber. The same applies to Italy. The 'natural' term of both the Italian chambers is five years; although the constitution (Art. 88) allows the head of state to dissolve either both or one chamber, in the praxis the Chamber and the Senate have been always dissolved simultaneously.

Chapter 7

Democratic Stress and Political Institutions: Drives of Reforms of Bicameralism in Times of Crisis

REPRESENTATION
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Democratic Stress and Political Institutions: Drives of Reforms of Bicameralism in Times of Crisis

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ABSTRACT

Traditional patterns of political participation and party representation in Europe have been put to the test by the so-called crisis of representative democracy: mainstream parties have been perceived as more unfit to govern; the level of electoral participation has decreased; and voters have shown increasing dissatisfaction with representative institutions. In several cases, these changes have pushed governing elites to (seek to) redefine the 'rules' of the political process, in response to the challenges posed by new party contesters. In particular, in different European countries political actors have stressed the need to undermine the role of second chambers as veto players. This article focuses on both successful and failed attempts of reforms of bicameralism between 2006 and 2016 in seven EU countries (Belgium; Germany; Ireland; Italy; Romania; Spain; UK). It tries (1) to understand if political elites in Europe have pursued parliamentary reforms as a reaction to 'democratic stress' and (2) to single out the circumstances of success and failures. A discussion of the detectable trends of institutional reforms during democratic crises and some tentative explanations are finally provided.

KEYWORDS

Second parliamentary chambers; party democracy; constitutional reform

1. Introduction

This article deals with reform processes of bicameral parliaments in times of democratic crisis. It aims to highlight the main conditions for institutional reforms, involved actors and their motivations, and tries to generate new conjectures about the variation of empirical outcomes in Europe in recent times.

Representative democracy has been experiencing a 'stress', at least in the form it has developed after the Second World War. This phenomenon has been especially pronounced in the European Union, where the growing importance of supranational institutions has eroded powers and room for manoeuvre of member States as sovereign actors. On the one hand, mainstream parties have lost support in favour of new challengers. On the other hand, people's dissatisfaction with representative institutions has increased (Mair, 2013; Plescia & Eberl, 2019). These phenomena have translated into both higher electoral volatility and lower turnout rates.[1] Voters have become more critical towards governing elites and have demanded new forms of participation (e.g. Hutter, Kriesi, & Vidal, 2018, p. 12).

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This article starts from the assumption that 'there is a link between the erosion of political support and the reforms of the democratic institutions' (Bedock, 2017, p. 9). In particular, it seeks to connect 'democratic stress' to the notion of 'institutional stress', focussing on parliamentary second chambers. Since the 2000s, several attempts to reform bicameralism in Europe have been made, contesting the institutional *status quo*. An up-to-date and systematic investigation of these reforms is lacking in the literature (Russell & Sandford, 2002). This is surprising in light of the vibrant political debate on the current functionality of upper chambers.[2] Second chambers may prove to be strong institutional veto points and sources of policy stalemates (Binder, 2003; Muthoo & Shepsle, 2008). Scholars have stressed both their potential benefits for institutional balance (Norton, 2007; Rogers, 2001) and their negative effects on policy performance 'in the course of the globalization process' (Vatter, 2005, p. 195); on government budget deficits (Heller, 1997); and as functionally redundant institutions (Cutrone & McCarty, 2006). In spite of many criticisms, second chambers have proved to be very resistant to changes (Russell & Sandford, 2002, pp. 87–88), thus raising a puzzle about the discrepancy between theoretical premises and empirical patterns.

I seek to answer three main questions: 'did European political elites advocate (or oppose) reforms of second chambers in reaction to "democratic stress"?'; 'in which direction did reforms' supporters encourage institutional change?'; 'under what circumstances were these attempts (not) successful?'. The article is structured as follows. First, it presents the main concepts and theoretical background, linking 'democratic crisis' and institutional reform. Secondly, it operationalises the dimensions of analysis and provides a justification for case selection. The subsequent part deals with the empirical investigation, based on an in-depth comparison of eight reform processes. Finally, the article discusses the findings and proposes outlooks for future research.

2. Accounting for Reforms: Conditions, Strategies, and Propositions

The main premise of this article is that democratic stress is conducive to what we can name *institutional stress*. I define institutional stress as a mismatch between a given (political) institution's features/functions and the preferences/expectations of political actors in the political system. This relative gap can be placed at the elite level or at the mass level and it can be affected by both structural and contingent factors. In democracies, political institutions are expected to be enough adaptable to societal changes (Huntington, 1968) and to create equilibrium between masses and elites' preferences (e.g. Acemoğlu & Robinson, 2008). The more political actors consider an institution dysfunctional, the more the institution will be 'stressed'.

In her extensive work on institutional reforms in Western Europe, Bedock (2017) suggests that the determinants of reforms are the result of interplay between exogenous and endogenous factors. Based on the previous literature on institutional change, the author classifies political crisis and citizen dissatisfaction as *conditions* for reform proposals. In particular, the attention is on shifts in political competition (e.g. increasing electoral competition) and party system changes.[3]

Favourable exogenous circumstances do not always lead to institutional change in the expected direction. They do it only when other endogenous factors make their causal potential spring (e.g. Koß, 2018). An example of endogenous factor is the change of

preferences of traditional elites, consequent to the emergence of political challengers. In this regard, Shugart (2003) concludes that reforms are put on the agenda only when governing parties recognise that, given modified conditions, they have an interest in changing institutions. Based on this, I argue that reforms are proposed when a specific interaction between 'structural' and 'contingent' conditions occurs: this combination is the *trigger* for institutional reform. The causal logic behind this explanation is configurational, rather than correlational (Ragin, 2008): we have conditions that, *per se*, would not account for changes; on the contrary, it is their conjunction that leads to the (proposal) of reforms. This means also that causation is asymmetrical, since the same conditions could be conducive to different outcomes. Exogenous factors are necessary, but insufficient conditions, which can interact with a variety of endogenous factors and agents' responses.

Renwick (2010) distinguishes between 'elite-majority imposed' reforms and 'elite-mass' interactive sources of change. According to Jacobs (2011), governing elites advocate major reforms only when they are the initiators. In contrast, elites would defend their positions in the system when pressures to reform come from masses. The process of reform that develops is not deterministic; political actors have to manage a series of barriers and opportunities along the path (Bedock, 2017, p. 46). For example, the presence of more veto players can undermine the likelihood of change (Tsebelis, 2002). The success of a reform can be affected also by shifts in the power balance between 'reformers' and 'conservatives' along the process and their strategic responses (e.g. Mahoney & Thelen, 2010).[4]

With regard to agents' motivations, Pilet (2008) suggests that political actors do not behave only as self-maximizers of the own preferences, but they can also – rationally – pursue risk-avoidance (assuming they want to maintain or enhance their influence in the system). Similarly, Ware (2002) claims that elites can pursue institutional reforms to avoid broader changes, which can jeopardise their status in the system. Bedock (2017, p. 53) shows 'that cooperation accounts for the outcome […] as much as political competition, especially when [… proposals] contain consensual reforms'. Political interactions are even more important than institutional constraints in explaining institutional democratic reforms:

> the main logic behind reforms of the core democratic rules is *political*. [… P]olitical elites react to changes to their electoral environment. The short-term […] factors (rise of volatility and alternation) provide a decisive push, by fostering a favourable context and decisive opportunities to adopt reforms. (Bedock, 2017, pp. 111–112, emphasis added)

This prompts us to observe the processes of reform in detail.

For the reasons mentioned in the introduction, second chambers are an interesting focus to assess the validity of these theoretical arguments, especially in light of the fact that several reforms were proposed after the fully-fledged breakthrough of the 'erosion of political support' in Western democracies in the 2000s (Dalton, 2004). In this regard, reforms of second chambers can either disperse or concentrate power. In Europe, a common trait has been the inclination of elites to facilitate governmental decision-making to the detriment of power balance, suggesting a nexus between the need to have a faster policy-making and the choice of upper houses as reform targets (Bedock, 2017, p. 70). Because of their status as veto points, upper houses can be major targets for those elites who pursue change as a reaction to modified environmental conditions. My first proposition is that (1) *in times of 'crises', political elites try to weaken second*

chambers, framed as inefficient institutions. Moreover, if we posit that reforms can be conceived of as strategic responses of political actors – who are risk-averse – to the challenges posed to their position in the system, the second proposition is that (2a) *governing elites can advocate institutional reforms to try to preserve their power and (2b) they try to preserve their power* vis-à-vis *new contesters*. At the same time, *(3) challengers can advocate reforms, if they deem the (potential) outcome as beneficial for their position in the system* vis-à-vis *governing elites*. Finally, we know that consensual reforms and inclusive reform processes are more likely to be conducive to successful outcomes (Bedock, 2017, p. 250). However, the loss of legitimacy of traditional parties, the misalignment between elites and voters, and the demands for new forms of participation have resulted in the decline of mainstream parties' electoral support, in increasing party fragmentation, and lower levels of citizens' support for party decisions. My fourth proposition is thus that (4) *democratic stress pushes elites to pursue reforms.*[5] *However, the phenomena that define this stress also make reforms harder to accomplish*. This happens because the democratic stress creates conditions, which are unfavourable to broad consensus and supermajorities.

3. Operationalisation, Case Selection, and Method

Second chambers fulfil three main functions: representation, law-making, and governmental control. Comparative scholarship tells that the extent to which these functions are fulfilled effectively depends on the strength of second chambers (e.g. Lijphart, 2012). Strength is a multidimensional concept and three dimensions are particularly important to study the reforms of second chambers: formal powers, compositional incongruence, and legitimacy (e.g. Lijphart, 2012; Russell, 2013a; Vercesi, 2017). These three aspects cover the main features of upper houses. Reforms can be understood as attempts to modify chamber's position on one or more of these dimensions; several indicators can be used to assess the direction and scope of reforms.

First, reformers can try to modify the formal powers of the chamber. On the one hand, these powers can be especially undermined if the two parliamentary branches are equal and reforms want to diminish veto points in the system. On the other hand, reformers can aim to increase these powers, if they are in a subordinated position in the system and want to use the upper house as an institutional access to power and/or a device to contrast the competitors, who are favoured in the first chamber. In parliamentary systems, the main formal powers are the power to issue no-confidence motions and the final veto on legislation, either as binding amendment or unlimited delay. Veto power can refer to constitutional issues, budgetary measures, and ordinary legislation. The second dimension of strength is the degree of compositional incongruence between the two chambers. Common proxies are the different timing of selection, different methods of (s)election, and different representative principles between the branches (Lijphart, 2012; Tsebelis & Money, 1997). Finally, legitimacy can rest upon the representation of the (majority) of the electorate as a whole or the representation of specific interests within the society, for example of territories, minorities, vocations, and expertise (Vercesi, 2017).

The literature provides indexes to measure the strength of second chambers on each of these dimensions (Vercesi, 2017). Empirical findings show that European second chambers are similar in terms of formal powers and that the lack of democratic legitimation is usually counterbalanced by other forms of representation. Moreover, formal powers

correlate positively with both compositional homogeneity and higher legitimation. The major source of strength for second chambers is often their role as chambers that represent specific sectors of the society.

By using this scheme, we can systematically define the characteristics of second chambers before the attempt of reform and the direction and the outcome of the same reforms. For case selection, I follow a 'most similar systems design' (Przeworski & Teune, 1970). In line with our configurational assumptions about causality, cases are selected on the outcome of interest. I select those European cases where an attempt to reform the second chamber along one or more of the dimensions of analysis were made and try to observe whether or not the theoretical link between actors' reaction to democratic challenges and reform applies. The limitation to Europe allows dealing with a more socio-economically and politically homogenous area. We have argued that the 2000s are the years in which the 'democratic stress' mostly develops (e.g. Chiaramonte & Emanuele, 2017; Conti, Hutter, & Nanou, 2018). For this reason, I use 2000 as the starting watershed to select the case studies. I then focus on those countries with a bicameral parliament where we can find a proposal of reform, whose scope can be defined substantial according to the criteria of Bedock (2017). The final selection is based on the 18 countries covered by Bedock's analysis (Bedock, 2017, Appendix 1). Overall, we find eight attempts of reform in seven countries, from 2006 to 2016 (year of the final decision). Figure 1 presents second chamber's characteristics in each country by dimension of analysis. Strength is calculated based on the aforementioned indices and increases from 0 to 1.

The second chambers at issue have (potentially) a medium/high impact on the political process. The German Federal Council (*Bundesrat*) and the Italian Senate (*Senato*) are the outstanding cases. In Germany, the upper house is endowed with limited formal powers, contrary to the Italian case. However, the *Bundesrat* derives its strength especially from compositional incongruence and legitimacy (see Vercesi, 2017). Romania is almost

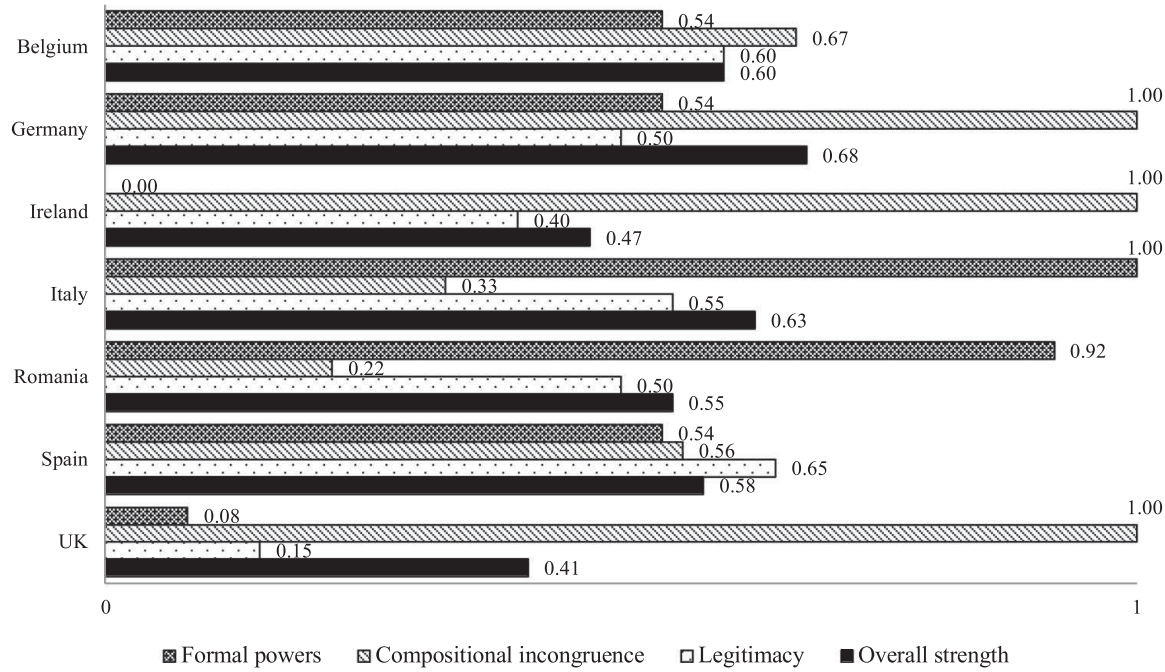

Figure 1. Second chambers' characteristics in seven European countries by dimension, 2016. Note: the overall strength is the mean of the scores on each dimension. Source: Vercesi (2017, p. 617, 623), own update.

equal to Italy with regard to formal powers. Spain is the only case with a high level of legitimacy. Here, territorial representation coexists with both directly and indirectly elected members. Finally, the two Westminster systems – Ireland and the United Kingdom – show low levels of both formal powers and legitimacy, with very high levels of compositional incongruence.

Table 1 shows the direction of the reforms and their outcomes.

Overall, out of eight attempts to reform (or to abolish) second chambers, only two were successful. It is worth noting that in all but two cases (Spain and the UK) reformers wanted to undermine the formal powers of chambers, while, in some cases, they tried to differentiate the house from its parliamentary sibling and to increase its legitimacy in the system. These trends are in line with our argument about 'democracy under stress': reformers try to create a more efficient political environment, while they positively redefine the representative and inclusive capacity of institutions.

In the following section, I provide in-depth analyses of both successful and failed processes against the provided theoretical background. I connect the main assumptions about the role of different political actors to the intended goals of the reforms, by referring to our three dimensions of analysis. The investigation is explorative rather than theory-testing oriented. As suggested by the literature on comparative methods, I use case studies to generate new conjectures, given the paucity of systematic theoretical knowledge on our specific topic (Seha & Müller-Rommel, 2016, p. 423).

4. A Comparison of Eight Reform Processes in Europe

The empirical analysis compares groups of countries, based on the outcomes of the reform processes. Building on the theoretical framework, I highlight who supported the reform and who opposed it, their main arguments to justify their actions, and the specific aspects to reform. Three main 'challenges' are taken in consideration, as signals of the 'democratic stress': conflict between mainstream parties and new challengers or inter-institutional conflict; political parties' loss of support in the society; public dissatisfaction with established representative procedures and institutions. The first signal is operationalised as both the level of support for the two largest parties and the fragmentation of the party system in terms of votes. Inter-institutional conflict coincides with 'divided government', while the overall level of support for political parties is operationalised as the level

Table 1. Reforms, reform directions, and outcomes by country.

Case	Reform	Reform direction*			Outcome**
		Powers	*Incongruence*	*Legitimacy*	
Belgium	Change of selection method	–	+	–	Y (2011)
Germany	Powers reduction	–	No change	No change	Y (2006)
Ireland	Abolition		--		N (2013)
Italy/1	Powers reduction/representative change	–	+	+	N (2006)
Italy/2	Powers reduction/representative change	–	+	–	N (2016)
Romania	Abolition		–		N (2009)
Spain	Change of selection method	No change	+	+	N (2006)
UK	Representative change	No change	+	+	N (2012)

*- means a decrease of strength on the dimension, + an increase and -- a full cancellation.
**Y indicates the success of the reform and N the failure. Between brackets, there is the year of the final decision.
Source: see Figure 1, own elaboration.

of electoral turnout. Finally, I use data about the level of trust in national institutions to assess the institutional dissatisfaction of citizens (Table 2).

Indicators in the table refer to exogenous factors and measure the level of 'democratic stress' in the political system. The first two indicators (two-party index and effective number of parties) are to be read jointly. Higher fragmentation together with lower support for the two larger parties can be considered as a proxy of an overall lower support for traditional elites and the emergence of new parties and contesters. In this regard, the table shows that only in the Spanish case the two largest parties could get more than 66% of votes together; especially in Belgium and Italy, party system fragmentation was associated to relatively low support for mainstream parties. A 'divided government' indicates instead that potential veto players do not share the same policy orientations, making political stalemate more likely. It is interesting noting that in all cases, less than half of the population tended to trust the national government, the parliament, or the political parties. This can be read as a signal of institutional dissatisfaction and, eventually, of institutional stress.

The following qualitative analysis highlights the endogenous factors of the reform processes, based on the theoretical framework. Reform processes are tracked from the emergence of the reform proposal to the final decision.

4.1. Failed Reforms

Six reforms between 2006 and 2016 ended with any change of the *status quo*. This raises concerns about both the reasons of failures, despite the premises, and the differences with the two successful cases. Ireland and Romania are two 'outliers' among the countries with failed reforms, as reforms' advocates campaigned against the very existence of the second chamber, while in the other cases bicameralism *per se* was not put into question.

The Irish debate dates back to October 2009, when the then *Fine Gael*'s leader Enda Kenny announced – with no previous disclosure – that he would work for the abolition of the Senate (*Seanad Éireann*), a useless institution for the system's need of a smooth decision-making in critical times.[6] The announcement was made during an internal

Table 2. Indicators of 'democratic stress' in seven EU countries.

	Decline of mainstream parties		Inter-institutional conflict	Participation	Institutional dissatisfaction
Case	*Two-party index (%)*	*Effective number of parties*	*Divided government*	*Electoral turnout (%)*	*Trust in national institutions (%)**
Belgium (2010)	31.1	10.0	No	89.2	22-28-20
Germany (2006)	62.0	4.5	No	77.7	28-36-18
Ireland (2011)	55.6	4.5	No	69.9	42-39-9
Italy/1 (2005)	46.0	6.3	No	81.4	29-35-20
Italy/2 (2014)	52.2	5.1	Yes	75.2	17-14-6
Romania (2009)	65.5	3.9	Yes	39.2	17-17-11
Spain (2004)	81.6	3	Yes	75.7	42-41-22
UK (2011)	65.1	3.7	No	65.8	32-29-18

*Numbers refer to, respectively: tendential trust in the national government, national parliament, political parties.

Note: numbers refer to votes for party lists and the 'two-party index' is the sum of the votes gained by the two largest parties. Where applicable, 'divided government' indicates that the party majorities of the two parliamentary chambers differ and/or that the party majority in the first chamber differs from that supporting the elected head of state (see Elgie, 2001). Between brackets there is the year in which the reform was put on the public agenda and discussed. Data about votes and trust refer to the closest previous general election or the closest survey available.

Sources: Chiaramonte (2015); Döring and Manow (2018); Eurobarometer surveys; own calculations.

party meeting. *Fine Gael*, which was in opposition, agreed and put the reform in the party programme, in view of the upcoming 2011 general election. During the electoral campaign, both the Labour Party and *Sinn Féin* agreed on the necessity of abolishing the second chamber. *Fianna Fail* instead argued in favour of bundling the abolition with a broader parliamentary reform. In 2013, the government coalition made up of *Fine Gael* and the Labour Party approved the reform. However, a referendum was called, as provided by the constitution. *Fine Gael* stressed the benefits of the reform in terms of cost saving and reduction of MPs, depicting the change as the only actually viable. In contrast, the opposers campaigned for a reformed upper house. According to them, the abolition would be nothing but an attempt to distract citizens from economic problems. University senators played an important role within the opposing side: this is not surprising if one thinks that the Irish Senate comprises 11 senators appointed by the prime minister plus 49 indirectly elected members, of whom six are university representatives chosen by the University of Dublin and the National University of Ireland. Finally, on 4 October 2013, voters vetoed the abolition, with a ratio of rejections of 51.7% (the turnout was 39.2%).

The Romanian case presents an overturned situation. Over the years, citizens have perceived the strong Senate (*Senat*) as a redundant and inefficient second chamber (Avram & Radu, 2009). In 2009, the then elected Romanian president Traian Băsescu called a referendum to make the bicameral legislature unicameral; the referendum was held together with the first round of the presidential election, for which Băsescu was running for his second mandate. The campaign was characterised by the conflict between the president and the parliament (Chiva, 2015, pp. 208–209), which opposed the reform. Eventually, the referendum on 22 November 2009 provided a clear-cut victory for the president and the party that was supporting him: the turnout was 50.9% and 88.8% of valid votes asked for the abolition of the Senate. However, this result has had no binding consequences for the parliament, which has the final say. Thus, the boycott of the legislature and its parliamentary groups has been conducive to a dead-end for the pending reform project (Apahideanu, 2014, p. 81).

In the Spanish case, the nature and role of the Senate (*Senado*) have been discussing since when the current constitution was drafted in the 1970s (Varela Suanzes-Carpegna, 2006, pp. 149–152). The Spanish upper house is 'the maximum expression of the participation of the Autonomous Communities in the central bodies of the autonomous Spanish State' (Vírgala Foruria, 2013, p. 65). However, it remains a mostly elected chamber, with 78% of senators directly elected in provincial constituencies and 22% of members elected by Communities' parliaments. The hiatus between the functions and the representative principle (in this case, mostly input-oriented democratic) has made the Senate a much-criticised institution, leading to several failed attempts of reform. During his investiture speech as prime minister on 15 April 2004, the Socialist leader José Luís Rodríguez Zapatero proposed a constitutional reform: one of the pillars was the transformation of the Senate in a fully-fledged chamber for territorial representation. The following public debate focussed primarily on the composition and functions of the second chamber (Varela Suanzes-Carpegna, 2006, pp. 161–162). In particular, Zapatero asked the Council of State[7] to prepare a report on some proposals; this would have served as the basis to draft the possible reform. The Council suggested providing for a fixed number of seats for each Autonomous Community, to be increased according to population and

size. In parallel, it was proposed the direct election of all senators simultaneously with the elections for Communities' legislatures. This would enhance the chance of having a Senate reflecting political divisions of single Communities. The report was finally approved by the Council in 2006, but no official reform project was drafted (Vírgala Foruria, 2013, pp. 70–73). It is worth noting that the main opposing party, the conservative *Partido Popular*, has often advocated an increase of Senate's veto powers on regional issues. However, recent surveys have shown that only 9% of Spaniards would opt for this solution. In contrast, most citizens would abolish the second chamber, while 28% would leave the Senate as it is. Only 11% would be supportive of the reform outlined by the Council's report in 2006 (Harguindéguy, Coller, & Cole, 2017, pp. 534–537).

The British debate on the reform of the House of Lords concerned both the composition and the type of legitimation. In 2010, the then in office Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition announced its intention to 'democratise' the second chamber. The main proposal included in a white paper of 2011 was the introduction of more directly elected members (Russell, 2012, p. 117). Eventually, the reform project suggested to settle a chamber with 80% of members directly and proportionally elected, based on regions and with non-renewable 15-year terms (in thirds). The remaining 20% would have been appointed and non-partisan, including 12 bishops (Russell, 2013b, p. 262). The proposal seemed to attract the appreciation of all the main parties. Before issuing the project, the Conservative had indeed supported the introduction of a mainly elected second chamber, and the Liberal Democrats (and the Labour alike) were inclined towards a fully elected house (Barber, 2014, p. 123). During the reforming process, the Lib-Dem leader Nick Clegg advocated the change. In its second reading on 10 July 2012, however, the bill passed with the opposition of 91 Conservative MPs; Labour agreed in principle, but the party decided to hinder the reform as a move against the government's programme motion. For these reasons, the government considered keeping on focussing on the project as too risky; Clegg soon declared that the reform attempt was failed (Russell, 2013b, pp. 265–266).

The reform of the second chamber has been a recurring issue also for Italian politicians and experts, who have often criticised the high level of symmetry between the two parliamentary branches (e.g. Vercesi, 2017). From 2006 to 2016, voters were asked twice to decide on broad reforms of bicameralism. In both cases, reformers pursued changes along all our three dimensions. In 2005, the then governing centre-right coalition supported the modification of the very nature of the Senate. In the same year, the parliament approved a constitutional reform, providing for a federal upper house. Reformers introduced the direct election of senators simultaneous to regional elections. The Senate would have lost the power to issue no-confidence motions; moreover, the upper house was endowed with the power to approve unilaterally bills concerning issues of concurring competence between the central State and regions. However, a popular referendum in 2006 rejected this package and the Senate remained in its original form. A centre-left government attempted a similar reform in 2016. Once again, it was claimed that a Senate without no-confidence powers was necessary. More than in 2005, the main rationale was to make the Italian institutional setting more adaptable to cope with new political and economic challenges in a faster way (Vercesi, 2017). The main political forces also wanted to reduce the coalitional blackmail potential of their opponents (Ceccarini & Bordignon, 2017). The Senate's power to approve legislation would have remained only for a

limited range of issues and however to be exercised together with the lower chamber. The new senators would have been indirectly elected by regional and local institutions (Pedrazzani, 2017, pp. 143–144). The project was supported by the coalition parties and was approved by the parliament. However, all the opposition parties strongly criticised the reform, especially the populist Five Star Movement and Salvini's League (Blokker, 2017). On 4 December 2016, more than 65% of citizens expressed their opinion in the constitutional binding referendum; almost 60% voted against the reform. Interestingly enough, data has shown that one of the most important motivation behind the vote was the desire to punish the governing parties (Bianchi, 2017; Draege & Dennison, 2018).

4.2. Successful Reforms

The first of the two successful reforms is the reduction of formal powers of the German *Bundesrat* of 2006. This reform aimed to redefine the German model of federalism (Burkhart, 2009), creating clearer divisions of competences between the central State and regional *Länder*. In the previous 35 years, the German system had been often depicted in the public debate as inclined to political gridlocks; in the late 1990s, the country was seen by the public opinion as no more able to cope with contemporary challenges (Woelk, 1999, p. 218). As underlined by Musella (2010, pp. 579–580), the most substantial step for reforming German federalism after the reunification was made by a bicameral parliamentary committee in 2003. Overall, the represented political parties agreed on the resulting project; however, the attempt temporarily failed because of an inter-party disagreement on education policy. The eventual deal of 2006 was reached by the then in office CDU-SPD Grand Coalition and came rather unexpected. In a contingent climate which was favourable to majoritarian practices, the government presented the reform as a way to modernise federalism in Germany. According to the main parties, the reform was necessary to lower citizens' discontent down and to block the potential rise of populist parties. Unlike the left-wing *Die Linke* and Greens, the Liberal Party (FDP) supported the plan (Burkhart, 2009, p. 341; Heinz, 2010; Musella, 2010, p. 591). The reform endowed *Länder* with a higher number of autonomous competencies, restricting at the same time *Bundesrat*'s formal veto powers on legislation. The reform gave the upper house veto power only on those institutional bills and laws that concern the relationship between the centre and the regions (Musella, 2010, p. 587). Overall, the reform limited substantially the *Bundesrat*'s power to block federal legislation.

The second successful reform was attained five years later in Belgium. The country went through a political crisis between 2007 and 2011, characterised by increasing federal disloyalty from the side of language communities and their consequent drifting apart from each other (Hooghe, 2012). In June 2010, Belgian citizens voted for the new parliament. However, the party system soon became stuck and parties reached an agreement for a new cabinet more than one and a half year later only. The impasse ensued from both ethno-regionalist divides and socio-economic challenges. Simultaneously, parties negotiated for more than one year a new constitutional reform (Sixth State Reform), reaching an agreement on 11 October 2011. The leader of the Socialist Party and later Prime Minister Elio di Rupo led the bargaining process. The main parties were involved, with the exception of the populist right-wing New Flemish Alliance – because of its refusal to participate in the debate – and the regionalist Francophone Democratic Federalists, who were

Table 3. Rationale, actors, and conclusion of reform processes of second chambers in the EU (2006–2016).

Case	Justification	Challenges*	Proponents	Support from main opposition parties	Conclusion of the process
Belgium	Misrepresenting	1; 3	Parties	Mostly	Inter-party agreement
Germany	Inefficient	All	Executive	Partial	Majority win
Ireland	Inefficient	3	Executive	No	Referendum
Italy/1	Inefficient	3	Executive	No	Referendum
Italy/2	Inefficient	1; 3	Executive	No	Referendum
Romania	Inefficient	All	Head of State	No	Parliamentary boycott
Spain	Misrepresenting	1; 3	Executive	No	Inter-party disagreement
UK	Illegitimate	3	Executive	No	Inter-party disagreement

*1=(*expected*) conflict between mainstream and new parties/inter-institutional conflict; 2=(*expected*) decreasing support for political parties; 3=(*expected*) institutional dissatisfaction.

Note: inefficiency comprises cases where the second chamber is considered a source of detrimental gridlocks for the decision-making, a not justified institution as it is, or even a useless chamber.

not satisfied with the compromise (Reuchamps, 2013, p. 386). The reform affected the method of selection of the Senate. Prior to the change, senators represented territorial communities: 40 were directly elected, 21 selected by territorial assemblies, and 10 were co-opted. The reform reduced the number of members and introduced 50 senators indirectly elected, based on electoral results in regional elections. Moreover, it was decided to leave 10 members, who have been co-opted by peers, according to the electoral results for the first chamber. Secondly, reformers harmonised the timing between general and regional elections, leaving however the freedom to regions to decide the length of the own legislative term and the date of their internal elections (Goossens & Cannoot, 2015, pp. 38–40; Reuchamps, 2013, pp. 386–387). The new Senate, whose modification came into force with the 2014 general election, turned to be a chamber with legislative powers, which are circumscribed to institutional matters. Overall, the constitutional reform was conducive to a shift of powers from the centre to the federated entities (Goossens, 2017; Goossens & Cannoot, 2015).

5. Discussion

The analytical overview of the reform processes of bicameralism in Europe suggests some tentative interpretations, based on the theoretical arguments about the linkage between 'democratic' and 'institutional stress'. Table 3 summarises the picture.

We can cluster the main arguments used by the advocates of the reforms into three types of justification. Only in the British case, the target was the legitimacy of the chamber, which does not match modern democratic ideas about representation. Where divisive debates about cultural-ethnic cleavages exist (Belgium and Spain), the rationale of the second chamber (i.e. representation of territorial units) was not put into question; rather the goal was a more straightforward representation of regions. However, in most of the cases, the criticism pointed to the inefficiency of the chamber. Overall, we thus have two goals: to lower down the power of second chambers as veto points and to reshape their representative capacity. This is in line with our theoretical premises.

In all cases, at least one of the three main challenges to the political system was present. Institutional dissatisfaction may well be present also when democracy does not experience 'stress' (at least, as it is defined here). If we exclude this condition, we however find that in

more than 50% of the cases the reform was put in agenda by traditional elites under the threat of new party contesters or in context of conflict between institutions. Moreover, in Ireland the emergence of the debate about the institutional inefficiency of the Senate seems to be related to the specific moment of 'stress' experienced by the country. This differentiates Ireland from Italy/1, Spain, and the UK, where the reform of bicameralism had been a recurring topic in the public debate also before the change of conditions of the 2000s. It is also worth noting that in all but one case, the executive (either the PM/cabinet or the president in the semi-presidential Romania) called for the reform; in Belgium all traditional parties agreed to cooperate to overcome a deep political stalemate. Eventually, most parties in opposition supported the reform project only in the two successful cases (Belgium and Germany), leading to a less conflictual process. This applies especially to Belgium, where the 'stress' of the system was at its peak. This corroborates the idea that consensus is a crucial element for institutional reform bundles.

Unlike in Belgium, German reformers had the chance to reach their goal simply with the agreement of the grand coalition majority. Inter-party (and intra-majority) disagreement made the reform fail in Spain and the United Kingdom. Where the constitution provides for a binding popular referendum, voters ultimately vetoed the reform. Romania is an exception moving the other way round (inter-institutional conflict blocked voters' approval). A further finding is that a general agreement on the necessity to reform bicameralism prior to the discussion could be generally found even in those countries where the debate was more divisive and where the reform failed.

With regard to our propositions, we have mixed evidence. The first proposition seems corroborated. In all but the British and Spanish cases reformers tried to weaken the second chamber at least along one dimension, especially in terms of formal powers. In the two federal countries (Belgium and Germany), this was accompanied by a reorganisation of the state, which strengthened regional territories. However, chambers' veto power was a major target and in most cases the chamber was depicted as an 'out-of-date'/inefficient institution in context of serious political conflict. In five cases, the second chamber was deemed inefficient against the goals of the system; in two cases, reformers argued that, if not the chamber *per se*, the method for selecting MPs was ineffective if valued against the chamber's representative function. Except for Germany, we can only speculate that governing elites proposed reforms to preserve their position in the system. However, the compresence of crucial exogenous conditions and the behaviour of mainstream parties are overall in line also with the second proposition.

Seldom contesters of mainstream parties agreed on the reform. Our cases suggest – according to the fourth proposition – that the relative instability of the party competition in the 2000s were detrimental when it came to find broad inter-party consensus. This especially holds in those cases where governing elites had to face the opposition of new/populist parties. The failures of Irish and Italian referenda could be indicators of the difficulty met by mainstream governing parties to mobilise voters. Even the successful referendum in Romania can be interpreted as the result of the misalignment between voters and parties, inasmuch as voters decided to support the monocratic president against the parliament. Overall, it seems plausible that in 'stressed' democracies ruling elites are keener to reform upper houses, in particular by targeting their veto power. However, the same factors that make a democracy 'stressed' put the system in a vicious circle of contestation and difficult adaptation.

This observation leads to a final remark about the connection between the concept of 'democratic stress' and the outcomes of the reform process. As said in the second section, this 'stress' is likely to increase the demand for institutional reforms. However, proposers can be moved by different motivations, depending on their role in the political system. The stress that representative democracies are witnessing can be observed through given phenomena, such as the crisis of mainstream parties and the lower support for governing elites, lower levels of political participation, and a generalised voters' dissatisfaction with existing representative institutions. These factors have been depicted as exogenous. In other words, they create the conditions for reform to be proposed. However, the same factors do not account for the outcome (success or failure), at least not on their own. What they are likely to explain is rather why reforms are put on the agenda. Moreover, they trigger reform processes mostly when they work jointly, and not as single variables with an own net effect.

The outcome of the reform process, on its turn, seems to be mostly explainable through contingent (endogenous) factors. This applies in particular to the cases of failed reforms, where, in spite of favourable conditions, reformers could not achieve their goals. These contingent factors are related to party strategies; to the emergence (or absence) of windows of opportunity for reaching broader consensus within the political system; as well as to the nature of the proposed reform itself. A systematic assessment of the effects of these factors is out of the scope of this article. However, some interesting clues about the relationship between contingent factors and structural conditions have been provided: the stress experienced by traditional forms of representative democracy seems to increase the likelihood of parliamentary reforms (in line with our previous knowledge), but this stress cannot account *per se* for the success of reforms. Only an analysis that relates contingent party behaviours to the content of reforms can complete the picture. The structural indicators of democratic stress should be seen as tendentially sufficient (but not necessary) conditions for reform proposals. However, they are not sufficient for the reforms to be adopted.

6. Conclusion

As stated in the first part, this article has been exploratory, rather than explanatory, and directed towards hypothesis-generation. The eight case studies helped gather systematic empirical information, based on the existing knowledge on the linkage between democratic crisis and institutional reform. They provide material for pursuing a fruitful back-and-forth process between theory and data.

One puzzle of the findings is that, despite political willingness and favourable premises, most reform processes failed. This contrast is indicative of the democratic 'stress' this special issue focuses on. Democracies can pursue reforms to catch up with public demands, but reform outcomes are often unable to meet the initial expectations. The literature provides some sparks for further discussion. Long-lasting institutions are unlikely to be largely modified due to path-dependent increasing returns (Pierson, 2000); Spain is a case in point (Harguindéguy et al., 2017, pp. 537–539). Moreover, 'where constitutional reform must be passed by referendum, it is considered unlikely that changes of […] significance can be made' (Russell & Sandford, 2002, p. 83).[8] This would explain Irish and Italian failures, along with more contingent factors. In Ireland, several voters did not

vote for the referendum due to a lack of interest, for practical reasons, or lack of understanding. In contrast, those defending the *Seanad* felt pushed to vote. Dissatisfaction with the government was another major factor accounting for rejection (MacCarthaigh & Martin, 2015). A similar motivation moved many Italian voters in 2016 (Ceccarini & Bordignon, 2017). The Italian case shows that reformers' strategic mistakes and party conflicts can jeopardise reforms, even those for which a large consensus in principle exists (Bianchi, 2017; Draege & Dennison, 2018). In the UK, the conditions appeared favourable for change (Russell & Sandford, 2002). However, intra-coalition divisions took the reform to a dead-end, with the Prime Minister Cameron defining the project a 'third term issue' (quoted in [Russell, 2013b, p. 265]). Overall, the lesson is that environmental incentives and political goodwill are not sufficient. In Belgium and Germany, party leaders could take advantage of very specific windows of opportunity created by critical political phases and reach wider agreements. Moreover, the Romanian case tells that public support is not enough. Inter-institutional consensus matters. In fact, Belgian and German reformers found consensus in the system at large, reviewing the distribution of competencies between levels of government.

This article has contributed to the debate on the renewal of participatory channels and practices in Europe. The nature of bicameralism provides us insights about the level of institutional flexibility of democracies and their ability to absorb democratic stress. Further research could add theoretical, methodological, and empirical material to the discussion. Theoretically, the theme of second chambers' strength could be connected to the specific analysis of executive's prerogatives or to the interplay between central and sub-national institutions in multi-level systems; in this regard, this article suggests that these factors are likely to affect reforms and outcomes in different contexts. Secondly, explanatory mechanisms linking democratic stress, institutions, and agency could be investigated through a deeper focus on a fewer illustrative cases. Scholars should pay attention to longitudinal dynamics: in this regard, process tracing could be useful (Bennett & Checkel, 2014). Finally, empirical fresh data can be generated through cross-sectional comparisons with those extra-European systems where political actors have recently called for reforms (e.g. Australia, Canada); a further path would be to compare recent reforms with analogous previous attempts. In this way, analyses could benefit from the introduction of a crucial factor such as the change of the opportunity structure. This would improve our knowledge, by integrating the preliminary findings we have been provided with in this article.

Notes

1. See data in IDEA's *Voter Turnout Database* (www.idea.int/data-tools/data/voter-turnout).
2. Following comparative literature, henceforth upper chamber is used as synonym of both second chamber and upper house.
3. Bedock (2017, p. 112) highlights the reinforcing effect that the 2008 economic crisis could have had on the impact of the more general 'crisis of representative democracy'. In other words, reforms' political determinants could be shaped by economic crises. This article posits economic conditions as fixed environmental background, which is not a direct determinant of reforms.
4. The nature of the institution to reform may count too (Bedock, 2017, p. 47). In our case, however, we can assume this aspect as given (or at least to vary only a little), since we focus on reforms of the same institution across systems.

5. As Bedock (2017, p. 257) points out, 'low political support triggers democratic reforms, in a context where [… discontented voters] flourish'. The empirical evidence gathered in her book shows that the causal link between these factors is indeed 'strong, statistically significant [… , and] negative'.
6. The analysis of the Irish case is based on MacCarthaigh and Martin (2013).
7. The Spanish Council of State is a consultative body of the Spanish government.
8. Given the narrow focus of this article, I have not stressed the institutional mechanisms that in each country allow altering institutional powers. But future investigations could add this. With regard to our cases, there is however little variation. Only the UK allowed changes with the approval of an ordinary parliamentary majority, while the other systems are characterised by constitutional rigidity. Ireland and Italy ask for a binding popular referendum, if the modification is voted by an ordinary majority. Belgium and Spain required a 2/3 (or equivalent) majority, while Germany and Romania reach the highest level of rigidity, requiring a qualified majority of more than 2/3 (Lijphart, 2012, p. 208; Roberts, 2006).

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PART III

ELITE REPRESENTATION AND PATHS TO POWER

Chapter 8

Approaches and Lessons in Political Career Research: Babel or Pieces of Patchwork?

Approaches and lessons in political career research: Babel or pieces of patchwork?

Enfoques y lecciones en la investigación sobre carreras políticas: ¿Babel o piezas de un mosaico?

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Abstract

Political careers are a classic subject of elite studies. Scholars have sought to understand what affects political profiles and career patterns' formation. However, political career research is characterized by a variety of approaches and explanations, which often do not communicate each other. A framework that integrates existing contributions is lacking, and this undermines the process of accumulation of knowledge. A comprehensive assessment of the literature is necessary in view of this potentially welcomed undertaking. After a conceptual introduction, I provide here a general overview of the approaches used in political career research, classifiable into two main schools. It is stressed their theoretical arguments, methodological strategies, and deficits. The note will provide bases for developing further the research field, by underling epistemological, theoretical, and methodological lessons.

Keywords: political elites, political careers, theoretical approaches, pathways to power, political recruitment.

Resumen

Las carreras políticas son un tema clásico en los estudios de las elites. Los investigadores han intentado entender qué influye sobre los perfiles políticos y la formación de los patrones de carrera. Sin embargo, la investigación sobre las carreras políticas se caracteriza por una variedad de enfoques y explicaciones que con frecuencia no se comunican entre sí. La falta de un marco que integre las contribuciones existentes mina el proceso de acumulación de conocimiento. En vistas de asumir esta tarea, es necesaria una evaluación comprensiva de la literatura. Después de

una introducción conceptual, se ofrece aquí un panorama general de los enfoques utilizados en la investigación sobre carreras políticas, que pueden clasificarse en dos "escuelas" principales. Se subrayan sus argumentos teóricos, estrategias metodológicas, y carencias. Esta nota de investigación proveerá bases para el futuro desarrollo de este campo de investigación, subrayando lecciones epistemológicas, teóricas y metodológicas.

Palabras clave: elites políticas, carreras políticas, enfoques teóricos, caminos hacia el poder, reclutamiento político.

INTRODUCTION

Political elites' career pathways are one of the oldest and discussed topics in the social sciences. Over decades, this field has been characterized by several theoretical, methodological, and empirical debates (Best and Higley, 2018). This is no surprise. Investigating why and how politicians reach power provides insights, on the one hand, about political recruitment mechanisms. On the other, it is a prerequisite to know how individual profiles affect public reputation, performances, and leaders' roles in political systems. The outcome may be a better understanding of channels of political representation.

However, elite studies are still scattered into diverse schools and approaches, whose defining traits are blurred and whose ability to communicate with one another remains low. This is detrimental for a genuine advancement of knowledge in the field. I assume that a better definition of the state of the art is a necessary condition to refine and integrate different approaches, in view of a cumulative framework for the analysis as well as for refreshed theory-guided empirical researches. Here, I aim to give a contribution.

It has been observed that "[t]he concept of political career is […] a fundamental pillar of the contemporary literature on elite transformations" (Verzichelli, 2018: 585). I consider a career as political inasmuch as it results in the achievement of a political office, irrespective of the "politicalness" of the previous trajectory, and I focus on political careers as dependent variables or outcomes of interest. I conceive of a career as a set "of [educational and] work-related activities and adventures that an individual experiences, perceives, and acts on during lifetime" (Gerber *et al.*, 2009: 304). In this conceptualization, time plays an important role. According to Arthur *et al.* (1989: 8) as well as Jahr and Edinger (2015: 17), careers should be studied as chains of moves informed by dynamic interactions over time between individuals and environment. Following in Jahr and Edinger's (2015: 12-13) steps, I buy the distinction between an objective dimension of political careers (encompassing occupations and offices held) and a subjective dimension (referring to individual decisions, attitudes, and goals). The career steps of the former dimension can be understood as "career positions" (Martocchia Diodiati and Verzichelli, 2017: 10).

This note deals with political careers in general, without distinguishing between the political offices individuals can reach. This is why explanations of political careers provide some basic theoretical arguments that can be applied to different situations.

The idea, for example, that personalities or institutions affect career outcomes holds both for elected and non-elected political offices; what changes is probably the way they do it, given the position of interest. However, because of the disparity of attention to different political positions, most of the literature refers to national and sub-national MPs and ministers, with some exceptions, such as works dealing with national executive leaders and supranational institutions (e.g., the European Parliament).[1]

Two "schools" of political career research stand out: "actor-" and "context-oriented" (Jahr and Edinger, 2015: 13-14). While the former focuses on individuals, the latter stresses the role of contexts as explaining factors. In the next two sections, I critically review the relevant literature. Subsequently, I try to wrap up the main epistemological, theoretical, and methodological lessons we can draw for integrating existing insights. The final part stresses the points of contacts from where to start for further developments and possible research outlooks.

AGENCY AND POLITICAL CAREERS: ACTOR-ORIENTED APPROACHES

The most classic approach is perhaps the *biographical account*. The underlying idea is that the reasons of success can be detected in previous personal experiences. The roots of leaders' achievements have often been assumed to lie in the childhood or in primary socialization periods.

Biographies' reliability is by definition limited, due to the role that subjective interpretation plays. However, "biography works by analogy and inference rather than empiricism alone" (Walter, 2014: 317). Some biographical studies provide both heuristic typologies and theoretically informed accounts of political careers: in this regard, psychobiography plays a significant role (Post, 2013; Walter, 2014: 320-321). At the intersection between psychology and political science, some scholars have sought to find nexuses between family histories and political achievements (Hudson, 1990; Andeweg and Van Den Berg, 2003).

An empirical weakness is that it is hard —if not epistemologically mistaken— to draw generalizations from individual experiences (Haslam *et al.*, 2011: 11-12). Moreover, we are forced to deduce that unsuccessful careers are simply consequences of a lack of experience or personal traits (Haslam *et al.*, 2011: 14). The personality approach has tried to go beyond this pitfall, addressing Greenstein's (1969: 47) question about "actor dispensability": "[u]nder what circumstances do different actors (placed in common situations) vary in their behavior and under what circumstances is their behavior uniform?".

1. In this work, the literature on career steps outside politics, such as in bureaucracy will be mentioned only in case it provides argumentations to explain future achievements of proper political offices.

The *personality* approach posits that individuals' own personalities affect career paths. Jahr and Edinger (2015) have traced back the origins of the personality approach to Machiavelli. However, this approach entered the age of scientific maturity only in the twentieth century, especially with Lasswell's writings (Lasswell, 1948). Later comparative works have clustered personality's characteristics into trait factors, while typologies have been used as heuristic tools (Caprara and Silvester, 2018).

The personality approach presents the problem of how to measure personal traits. One option is survey analysis, while diagnoses and theory-based ratings based on biographical analysis play a prominent role as alternative methods. A third research strategy is content analysis of speeches, interviews, and documents (Winter, 2013: 429-431). Whereas the difficulty of coping with at-a-distance analyses of single politicians can be the main methodological concern (e.g., Greenstein, 1969: 127-139; Schafer, 2014), the potential un-contextual nature of the investigations on personalities is an issue of theoretical relevance (Haslam *et al.*, 2011: 13). Attempts to combine psychological attitudes and social context are pursued by the ambition theory approach.

The first systematization of *ambition theory* is path-breaking Schlesinger's (1966) *Ambition and Politics*. In his monograph, Schlesinger claims that politicians are ambitious social actors, who aim at particular political offices. One can find "order in the careers" and "reasonable expectations for national advancement are not scattered at random" (Schlesinger, 1966: 36). Black (1972) suggests that personal ambitions are susceptible to changes, depending on the followed career path. This means that ambition is not only a by-product of politicians' psychologies, but it also depends on the institutional role they perform. Further bricks to the theory have been added for example by Nicholls (1991), Herrick and Moore (1993), Hall and van Houweling (1995), Lawless (2012), and Öhberg (2017).

A first empirical strategy is to use actual behavior as a proxy of ambition. Politicians' ambition is measured or simply classified by observing the positions individuals have held in their careers up to a certain point. The assumption is that differences ensue from different ambitions. A major problem is that ambitious people who have decided not to run or have not achieved the hoped office for whatever reason are not counted in the analysis. Direct surveys and interviews are alternative strategies that can limit this problem (Maestas, 2003; Lawless, 2012). Nonetheless, "we cannot be sure to what extent the attitudes [… interviewees] state are actually translated into behavior. Furthermore, these measures suffer from the usual problems of […] surveys" (Sieberer and Müller, 2017: 30-31). Both methodologies suffer from the difficulty of generalizing, based on actual behaviors or circumscribed samples (Hibbing, 1993: 120-121). Finally, Jahr and Edinger (2015: 15-16) observes that it is hard to take for granted that there is always an evident hierarchy of offices and that politicians do not aim at lower positions, even for rational/instrumental reasons.

By positing that similar backgrounds and socializations are likely to lead to similar career outcomes, the *social background and socialization* approach considers psychology as a fixed or secondary factor. The main independent variable becomes the

individual background, not specific personal traits. As a result, the room for maneuver for generalizations grows.

The approach posits that "the chances of reaching a political office […] are not spread equally across various strata of society" (Jahr and Edinger, 2015: 16). Individuals (may) move from their current position to another, once they have reached a certain amount of resources of expertise (*ibid.*: 17). On the one hand, the approach tells that certain types of socio-economic status and/or career trajectory are likely to affect further career steps. For example, political elites are traditionally male, with a higher socio-economic status, and well-educated (Putnam, 1976; Bovens and Wille, 2017; Gaxie, 2018). Moreover, they are used to reach higher political offices after acquiring some political expertise at lower levels and following paths of political professionalization (Blondel and Thiébault, 1991; Allen, 2013; MacKenzie, 2015; Müller-Rommel and Vercesi, 2017). On the other hand, family environments, political organizations and political institutions where individuals "learn and live" politics affect politicians' preferences and attitudes towards career paths (Searing *et al.*, 1973; Mughan *et al.*, 1997; Scully, 2005; Beauvallet-Haddad and Michon, 2010; Pilet *et al.*, 2014; Daniel, 2015).

Data are mostly gathered through official documentation and interviews; however, the range of knowledge is circumscribed. Surveys can help to overcome the problem, but they are usually limited in their scope and do not highlight elite networks (Hoffman-Lange, 2007). Network analyses observe previous individuals' relationships with other politicians or people in other public and private sectors. This allows getting insights about elites' internal cohesion and differentiation; moreover, one can speculate about the effect of networks on prospective career chances. A more formalized method is sequence analysis. By clustering political careers based on sequences of held positions, this method distinguishes between career patterns and provides information about the impact of different trajectories on the achievement of political offices. Sequence analyses take in consideration also the duration and order of services in each career position (e.g., Real-Dato and Alarcón-Gonzáles, 2012; Jäckle, 2016; Ohmura *et al.,* 2018). Two main deficits have been highlighted: (1) the effect of overlapping jobs is hard to disentangle; (2) the test of third explanatory variables is not as viable as it is with (deductive) longitudinal regression models (Jäckle and Kerby, 2018).

Whatever the methodology is, the social background and socialization approach misses the fact that

> a considerable number of people from […] even lower social strata manage to reach political top positions. […] Second, the focus on social background completely ignores the individual as the "architect" of his or her own career, who at some point decides whether to opt for the political career track or not (Jahr and Edinger, 2015: 17).

Actors' freedom of choice is taken into account by the *selection and deselection* approach. This approach rearranges biographical data for deductive —rather than inductive— theories. The core of the argumentation is the reason why party and

institutional gatekeepers select specific figures to occupy political posts, with a shift from the "personal" to the institutional role one occupies. The selection and deselection approach is, thus, a kind of theoretical bridge between actor- and context-oriented approaches. It is based on the principal-agent theory of political relations and the impact of agency on political outcomes is derived from some basic assumptions about the nature of individuals' political role (e.g., Searing, 1991). The theory posits that political positions are filled by principals who select prospective agents for this; agents are supposed to behave as the principal wants. Principals may screen agents before (*ex-ante* screening) and after (*ex-post* screening) the selection (Dowding and Dumont, 2015). What is particularly interesting for career research is the *ex-ante* screening process, as shown for example by the pioneering Hubert and Martinez-Gallardo's (2008) study on ministerial stability. Principals could prefer an agent with a specific experience rather than others. In addition, institutional factors may affect the choice (Dowding and Dumont, 2009; Samuels and Shugart, 2010; Grimaldi and Vercesi, 2018). The overall assumption is that, all else equal, different individuals occupying similar political offices will select (and deselect) individuals with similar professional profiles, irrespective of their own personal preferences. A common measurement of experience and performance in office is individual tenure (e.g., Berlinski *et al.*, 2012; Fischer *et al.*, 2012; Bright *et al.*, 2015).

If one excludes a few QCA exceptions (Fisher *et al.*, 2006), the selection and deselection approach is mostly related to event-history and duration models. These methods are well-equipped for statistical tests of explanatory variables' net effects, more than sequence analysis. However, a major problem is that these methods are relatively static and can only account for single career passages (Jäckle, 2015; Jäckle and Kerby, 2018); in other words, these models focus on events and not on career trajectories. They account for "how the duration spent in one social state affects the probability some entity will make a transition to another social state" (Box-Steffensmeier and Jones, 1997: 1414). A more general deficit is that contextual factors are taken in consideration only in terms of expectations about party and institutional roles, without paying the due attention to other structural factors.

Before moving to the next section, table 1 summarizes the main points I have addressed.

STRUCTURE AND POLITICAL CAREERS: CONTEXT-ORIENTED APPROACHES

The *opportunity structure* approach posits that ambitious politicians assess career opportunities when they choose a career path rather than another. Theoretically, this leads to an overturning of the causal arrow: structures affect individual decisions, not vice versa. According to Borchert (2003), the opportunity structure is determined by the availability (how many), accessibility (how much easy they are to reach), and attractiveness (what they provide in terms of prestige, material benefits, skills, etc.) of

Table 1.
Theoretical arguments, methodologies, and deficits of actor-oriented approaches

Approach	Independent variables/ conditions	Argument	Explanation	Methods	Deficits
Biography	Personal life experiences	Early personal experiences pave the way to leaders' success. Childhood and primary socialization periods are crucial	Exogenous	• Descriptive narrative • Heuristic typologies • Theoretically informed accounts	• Subjective: limited reliability • Low level of generalization • One's biography as the only sufficient and necessary condition for his or her own success
Personality	Own personality traits	Personalities affect personal choices and, thus, career steps	Exogenous	• Surveys • Diagnoses and ratings based on biographies • Content analysis • Multivariate analysis	• Difficult measurements • At-a-distance analyses of single subjects • Un-contextual
Ambition Theory	Own ambitions	Politicians are office-seeking and pursue different careers, based on the own type of ambition and within a structure of opportunity	Exogenous	• Inference from previous career trajectories • Surveys	• Ambitious unsuccessful individuals are not counted • Discrepancy between ambitions and behaviors • Unrepresentativeness • Not always there is a clear hierarchy of political offices
Social Background and socialization	Socio-economic and professional resources	People of different social strata have different chances to be successful in politics. Certain offices can be reached only once certain expertise is acquired	Endogenous	• Inference from documentation • Surveys • Network analysis • Sequence analysis	• Incompleteness and limitedness of information • The effect of simultaneously positions are hardly disentangled • The effect of third explanatory variables is underestimated • Deviations from rules and individuals' impact are mostly neglected
Selection and deselection	Social backgrounds and professional experiences	Principals select and deselect individuals (agents) to fill political roles, judging their reliability and based on agent's previous experience	Endogenous	• QCA • Event-history models • Duration models	• Static analysis • Only single career passages are accounted for • Unobserved heterogeneity of models • The number and prestige of offices are not considered

Note: the dependent variable/outcome of interest is individuals' political career.
Source: Own elaboration.

political offices. Scholars from the opportunity structure approach argue that career paths in multi-level systems adhere to a few ideal-type models (Botella *et al.*, 2010; Borchert, 2011; Stolz, 2001, 2003, 2015; Stolz and Fischer, 2014; Grimaldi and Vercesi, 2018). Scholars also stress the role of electoral rules in defining political posts' accessibility (Siavelis and Morgenstern, 2008; Jun and Hix, 2010; Carreras, 2012).

The approach is characterized by either single-country studies (e.g., Stolz and Fischer, 2014; Grimaldi and Vercesi, 2018) or small-N qualitative comparisons (e.g., Botella *et al.*, 2010; Stolz, 2010). However, truly comparative assessments under a common analytical framework have been provided (e.g., Borchert and Stolz, 2011; Edinger and Jahr, 2015).

A potential pitfall is highlighted by the literature on educational and career choices: determinism. Hodkinson and Sparkes (1997: 39-40) underline that career decisions are taken within structural contexts and based on on-going interactions. These authors conceive of career developments as sets of turning-points, whose predictability can vary according to structural constraints and personal room for maneuver. Between turning-points, there are "routine" periods, during which individuals can change their own career identities and prospective. This is important to explain why similar previous goals and political experiences can result in different future career decisions. A second deficit is the lack of attention for the internal procedures of political organizations and institutions.

In this regard, the *intra-organizational* approach focuses on the organizational drives that channel career patterns. Organization and management studies tell that organizational features limit individuals' options and steer career choices within narrower ranges (e.g., Dalton, 1989: 94): "organization type may moderate the relationship between the […] external career concerns and the employment of networking tactics" (Zanzi *et al.*, 1991: 230). While the opportunity structure approach looks at structural conditions from a systemic viewpoint, the intra-organizational one focuses on single organizations and their internal life. In other words, attention is payed to how formal and informal organizational rules and procedures affect career choices, given broader career opportunities provided by the political system as a whole. Intra-organizational features would have an impact on role expectations (Abrutyn 2014: ch. 4).

Several scholars underline the impact that party organizational forms and intra-party behavior may have on career trajectories (e.g., Thurber, 1976; Hazan and Rahat, 2010). Norris (2006: 92) claims that the breadth of career choices is shaped by three factors: (1) the centralization of the internal nomination process; (2) the level of participation in nominations; (3) the scope of the decision-making process. Based on these, ambitious politicians change career strategies and perceptions of the own political role (e.g., Dudzińska *et al.*, 2014). Additional works falling into the intra-organizational category may be found among legislative studies, according to which the internal division of labor of modern parliaments fosters MP's specialization and the development of different professional skills (e.g., Judge, 1981; Hall and Grofman, 2014). Moreover, bureaucratic studies have stressed that variations in the

organizational features of bureaucratic apparatuses are conducive to different material and non-material incentives for those interested in pursuing a career in politics. This means, for instance, that people with similar ambitions can be pushed to make different strategic choices, based on existing appointment methods in bureaucracy (Peters, 2010: 82-85, 97-107).

In addition to descriptive statistics, intra-organizational studies employ regressional analyses: organizational rules, procedures and structures are the main independent variables.

These methods are functional to answer the relevant research questions. However, the approach is too narrow to study career trajectories from broader perspectives. The effects of structural features are studied only as long as people are parts of the organizations at issue, and external networks and features of political systems are neglected. If, on the one hand, the opportunity structure approach is sometimes too generic, the intra-organizational approach suffers from the opposite shortcoming, being too specific. In addition, empirical studies do not look at different concurrent organizational memberships. It is also worth noting that the empirical evidence highlights that broader contextual factors are more important than intra-organizational factors in shaping politicians' careers (Grimaldi and Vercesi, 2018: 144). For large comparative studies, the opportunity approach thus seems more fruitful. Nonetheless, the choice ultimately depends on the own research question and the focus of interest. However, an explanatory aspect that both approaches overlook is the interplay between the availability of potential politicians and the actual societal demand.

The *supply and demand* approach primary looks at individuals. Yet, it can be classified as a context-oriented approach because it deals with people and social behaviors in macro terms, as aggregates, and observes those social tendencies that constrain individual behaviors. The question is why some sectors of the society enter political offices more than other. We have seen above that, in the selection and deselection approach, the focus is on the relationship between principals and agents, who are understood based on their institutional role (for example, why does a prime minister prefer some ministerial profiles in the own cabinet?). The idea is that an agent is selected because of his or her reliability and loyalty. The supply and demand approach is different: scholars are interested in detecting structural trends and variations in the representation of social groups. In this case, attention is especially paid to barriers to enter given political posts. Usually, scholars study women's political representation; however, the basic arguments can be easily extended to other societal segments (e.g., Norris and Lovenduski, 1995; Carnes 2016; Gouglas *et al.*, 2018; Pansardi and Vercesi, 2017). Krook (2010: 708) summarizes the approach's assumptions by describing political careers as a step-by-step process. First, from the larger number of eligible people to the smaller portion of those who want to get a political office; second, from ambitious people to a smaller group of selected by gatekeepers; finally, from selected people to the narrow circle of citizens who actually reach political offices. Successful careers would be the result of the interaction of the supply of individuals, which determines the passage from the first to the

Table 2.
Theoretical arguments, methodologies, and deficits of context-oriented approaches

Approach	Independent variables/ conditions	Argument	Explanation	Methods	Deficits
Opportunity structure	Systemic structure of opportunity	Career trajectories are affected by the availability, accessibility, and attractiveness of political posts	Exogenous	Single case studies Small-N qualitative comparisons	Wide comparisons hard to be made Determinism The nature and internal features of organizations and institutions are not considered
Intra-organizational	Internal rules, procedures and structures of organizations	The features of organizations formally and informally define members' room for maneuver and steer career choices	Exogenous	Descriptive statistics Regressional analyses	Valid only as long as individuals remain within a given organization External networks and characteristics of the political system are neglected
Supply and Demand	Resources, motivations, and preferences	Career steps are affected by the interaction of the supply of individuals in specific social sectors who want to become politicians and the demand from political gatekeepers of individuals from those sectors	Endogenous/ exogenous	Analysis of biographical information Surveys	Weak assumption about the efficiency of the "political market" Institutional stability and representative biases are not taken into account

Note: the dependent variable/outcome of interest is the individuals' political career.
Source: Own elaboration.

second step, and the demand of prospective politicians, which shapes the passage from step two to step three. According to Norris and Lovenduski (1993), supply depends on (material and intangible) individuals' resources and motivations, whereas elites' preferences work as gatekeeping factors.

In the studies of the supply and demand approach, the dependent variable is usually operationalized as the numerical presence of people from a certain social (often a minority) group occupying political offices. Proxies of motivations and resources are, instead, socio-economic characteristics, political ambition, personalities, dispositions and political experience (e.g., Norris and Lovenduski, 1993). Data on gatekeepers' preferences can be collected by means of the submission of surveys. Information is then processed through both descriptive statistics and regression analyses (e.g., Norris and Lovenduski, 1993).

Krook (2010) underlines that supply-demand studies implicitly posit that political careers develop within an efficient "political market", where the outcome is provided by the match of supply and demand. However, this assumption cannot account for the presence of recurring patterns of under and overrepresentation of certain groups in different societies. Institutional stability is indeed likely to lead to self-reinforcing patterns, irrespective of societal changes; moreover, cultural traditions can create distortions between the two sides of the "market". Thus, Krook (2010) proposes understanding representational biases as the combination of systemic, practical, and normative institutions. "Institutionalism may […] offer new tools for capturing dynamics of continuity and change and […] help structure […] findings in a way that better highlights their contributions" (Krook, 2010: 717).

Table 2 provides an overview of the context-oriented approaches.

TOWARDS AN INTEGRATED APPROACH? LESSONS FROM THE LITERATURE

At first glance, the picture emerging from this broad review looks like a chaotic set of approaches, methodologies and findings, which are hardly connected or even in conflict with one another. However, a painstaking granulation process of the insights can reveal much more than this. The multiplicity of approaches in career research provides different perspectives to read the same reality. These perspectives are not mutually inconsistent, rather they are complimentary. In particular, I claim that scholarship provides several useful lessons that could be followed in view of new and more comprehensive approach.

Between the wrinkles of the uneven literature I have analyzed, it is possible to find tentative but fruitful suggestions to study paths to power within a new general framework. The lessons we have learned may be distinguished between "positive" and "negative". While the former refer to those achievements that we should not discard, the latter basically concern the main deficits of the various approaches. Moreover, we can

group these lessons into three main categories: epistemological; theoretical; and methodological.[2] I summarize them, following this sequence.

Epistemological Lessons

The main epistemological lessons concern the type of causal effects that given factors have on political careers and the possibility to make inferences and generalizations from a set of observations.

A first remark is that we should avoid any deterministic conclusion, when it comes to investigate pathways to power. Structural factors, for example, can be very important in establishing the constraints and opportunity people face along their career. However, the room left for maneuvering is large enough to grant prospective politicians the necessary freedom to define their career steps through their own decisions. To put it differently, individuals with similar ambitions and operating in the same environment can be more or less successful, because of different personal choices and strategies. Here comes the debate about the determinants of individual choices. In this regard too, determinism can be an epistemological pitfall. Especially naïve biographical and personality-based studies risk concluding that politicians' paths to power are inscribed within the very nature of the individual politician. However, we have seen that personalities are made up of several traits; how these traits mix and interact with circumstances and unpredicted events can lead to alternative outcomes, given equal starting points. Different contextual factors can make the destiny of two or more individuals with similar ambition and resources diverge. Symmetrically, personal orientations and aims may decide the success or failure of different politicians within the same opportunity structure. Several factors seem to be likely to shape political careers at the same time; moreover, none of them looks definitely overwhelming compared to others. This leads to a further crucial observation. If we accept these statements, then we will have to admit that careers are to be explained as the outcomes of a configurational "twist" of factors. Some of these factors can be more or less important, depending on variations of third conditions (e.g., Baumgartner, 2009).

The second issue to touch upon is the hurdle one meets when s/he wants to generalize, based on a few individual experiences, especially on lives of prominent leaders. I have mentioned Greenstein's idea of "actor dispensability". This can be a key to overcome the problem. Generalizations would come by looking at the degree of variation of personal behaviors and experiences —which can be translated as the variation of career choices and steps— within the same socio-political context.[3] In this way, we

2. Due to this note's perspective, I do not mention possible empirical lessons. This would require a further analysis of literature's findings, which is out of the scope of this work.
3. When it comes to study only successful politicians, it is not possible to assess possible mistakes of evaluations in the strategies of 'failed' ambitious individuals. As the opportunity structure

could generalize about how individual factors can have an impact on careers, given an opportunity structure. The hoped result would be both the avoidance of structural deterministic argumentations and a due focus on agential influences, without falling into insidious micro-level explanations (e.g., Hodgson, 2007).

To summarize, the first two lessons are as follows. (1) Agency does matter and its impact should not be discarded. However, individuals should be conceived of as social actors constrained by environmental structures. This would happen in a non-deterministic way and within configurational combinations of systemic and practical conditions. (2) Generalizations can be made by recognizing the explicatory priority of contextual factors over agential forces. However, agency plays a significant role in determining career choices and advancements within the maneuver margin left by structural conditions.

Theoretical Lessons

Once assessed the epistemological standpoint that is more useful to tackle the distinction between structure and agency,[4] we can now extract more specific theoretical lessons about their actual interplay. Personality and ambition theory approaches tell us that personal psychological inclinations can affect personal choices. One assumption I buy is that politicians are ambitious social actors. If one deals with top politicians, it can be assumed, for example, that the actors at issue are rational office-seeking politicians with a progressive ambition. This would solve the aforementioned methodological problem of how to measure ambition of successful politicians, in comparison with those who have not achieved the hoped office: simply, this goes outside the horizon of the scope of possible researches on prominent political figures.

One very important implication of the ambition assumption is that careers are not shaped by chance. There is a certain order behind them, since individuals with similar ambitions would tend to behave in similar ways, if put in similar contexts. However, we have also learned that personal attitudes towards power are not fixed; rather, they can change during life time, depending on the fulfilled institutional roles and the organizations one operates in. Institutions shape the choice of the sequence of career steps. Both public and private sectors can be of service to reach the political office of destination. The consequence of this reasoning is that significant variations among possible routes to power are likely to occur, even if all eventually lead to a given

approach implicitly suggests, we can easily assume that prospective or current politicians are rational actors when they take their decisions along their career paths. In this case, the assumption would not refer to their actual nature; rather it would operate as a methodological indicative principle.

4. I do not enter any thorny discussion about the ontological considerations that are implied in this dualism (e.g., Archer, 2003). I simply refer to the bases of explanations, not to the 'nature' of reality.

position. In a nutshell, there is more than one rational option available to obtain the same outcomes. This is not to say that some educational and professional backgrounds are not more valuable to reach a post; however, the way and the gradients in which these personal resources combine may vary. Finally, one could notice that the studies based on the ambition theory stress that personalized contexts push people to pursue personal visibility.

As I have already noted, considerations about personal traits and experiences at aggregate level prompt to contemplate individuals as holders of specific formal or informal roles. This perspective helps build deductive theories about the relationship between the supply of ambitious politicians (an aspect that can be considered fixed in particular comparative studies) and the demand made by principals.

However, how do structural factors impact on these processes, according to the literature? The basic arguments of the opportunity structure approach provide potentially insightful suggestions. Ambitious politicians and personal networks are favored or constrained by environmental conditions. Thus, we can use actor-oriented explanations to account for variabilities in similar contexts, only *after* assessing the structural conditions of the picture. The scholarship argues that politicians are aware of the structural limitations they have to cope with along their paths to power. These limitations can take the shape of systemic career opportunities as well as of rules and procedures in organizations and institutions; the former logically forerun the latter. Organizational and institutional drives can lead eventually to some forms of specializations rather than others.

Finally, important theoretical lessons from the supply and demand approach are that in different societies there can be a tendency to value more some personal backgrounds compared to others. However, changes over time are possible; in this respect, an institutionalist perspective can be an appropriate lens to read the drives behind this phenomenon.

Overall, we have therefore been told that (1) systemic opportunities (macro-level) define the picture within which individuals —rational, ambitious, and office-seeking— take career decisions and value certain profiles (micro-level). Organizations and institutions (meso-level) impact on individual strategies, by mediating between macro and micro forces. (2) The range of alternatives about the selection of politicians is limited by the contingent context. Selection biases tend to reproduce themselves over time; however, more or less sudden changes can modify the situation and lead to inter-elite circulation.

Methodological Lessons

Career research employs a variety of methods. These oscillate from strictly qualitative to strictly quantitative methodologies, proposing several research tools and heuristic devices. I have already assessed their goodness for the pursued goals of each approach. Here, I do not need to go back to the whole debate. On the

contrary, I try to highlight only a few guiding suggestions that can be useful for further analyses, according to the aforementioned epistemological and theoretical considerations.

One very basic reflection based on the difficult generalization of some actor-oriented studies is that large-N comparisons —either longitudinal or cross-sectional— can be a valuable way to reach sturdier results. The need of higher numbers of individual cases for the analysis is well displayed —for example— by the scholarship on women executives: the more women have attained authority positions, the more scholars have been able to provide stronger findings and more convincing theoretical arguments (e.g., Jalalzai 2013).

Needless to say that independent variables and conditions to explain political careers stem from the chosen theoretical perspective and the very topic of interest. However, the outcome at stake —that is, pathways to power and politicians' profiles— is given. The question, thus, becomes how to operationalize it, but also how to treat it methodologically. We have seen that political careers can follow very different tracks; they can be informed by myriad combinations of career positions and by several possible sequences of steps. In this regard, the literature has compellingly shown how the construction of a few ideal-types is a fruitful way to systematize differences. The social background and socialization approach is perhaps the clearest contributor in this respect, being the distinction between political insiders and outsiders nothing but one major example of such shortcuts. However, even biographical and personality-based accounts have, for example, resorted to typologies to classify politicians. Overall, grouping politicians we are interested in into some theoretically derived types based on career profiles seems a viable solution to deal with careers' complexity in view of explanatory investigations.

I have mentioned that career types are often associated to the employment of sequence analyses. However, I have also claimed that this research strategy does not account, on the one hand, for the effects of third variables other than career steps and, on the other hand, for the possible additive impact of the concomitant occupation of two or more job positions. Similarly, we have seen that event-history analyses can pay the due attention to career modifications from time to time only, without any integration in a less fragmented framework. In contrast, one could seek to broaden the perspective, including encompassing considerations of careers over longer time, especially when it comes to explain politicians' career trajectories on the whole. I think that the acknowledgements of these shortcomings can be considered as further lessons to start from to develop a methodological setting useful for career research. This does not mean discarding the potential benefit of classic regression arguments to explain the selection of prominent politicians or the connections between specific offices and subsequent career steps. Rather, the insights could be placed within broader structural considerations of opportunities and constraints.

I try to sketch some suggestions: (1) the multiplicity of potential paths to power can be fruitfully summarized and reshaped into a limited number of politicians' types, derived by their educational and professional profiles; (2) large-N samples can help

both have reliable validations of the correspondence between ideal-types and real world cases and provide ground for sturdier generalizations; (3) we should aim at a methodology that allows combining accounts of personal career changes with holistic explanations of the relationship between structures and individual behavior in aggregate terms.

CONCLUSIONS

We have seen that several strands of the literature argue that individuals do matter and, therefore, we should avoid deterministic structural views. Moreover, we have seen that, for the sake of generalization, the focus on agency should be on institutional roles, rather than individuals *per se*. In this regard, the selection and deselection approach provide a viable conceptual background. A third observation is that there are good reasons to assume that pathways follow stable patterns and institutionalized logics. However, we know "that a lengthy phase of elite stability […] is now over and that many factors capable of accelerating the pace of elite circulation are emerging in traditional Western democracies, as well as in other and newer democratic contexts around the world" (Verzichelli, 2018: 585-586).

A new comprehensive approach for the explanation of political careers should account for deep social changes. This could imply combining pathway stability with the role of gatekeepers in the reshape of patterns during junctural modifications of representational channels. Political careers could be affected by path-dependent dynamics. However, these drives could be likely to change in periods of broader societal renewals. The approach could be also a viable way to address some open issues in political career research, such as the juxtaposition between institutional and goal-driven perspectives on careers or the development of multi-level careers, which I have only touched upon. Indeed, "[t]he first task of a […] theory of [political] careers [… remains] to identify interests and to explore how and why they have come to be defined as they have" (Pfeffer, 1989: 392). Multi-level settings, on their turn, would be nothing but further sources of opportunities and constraints strategic actors with own interests respond to (Jahr and Edinger, 2015: 9-10).

In this regard, a further element could be introduced in future comparative analyses: the conditional role of country factors and regime types. I have only mentioned this issue briefly because my interest was to focus only on causal directions and nexuses, broadly enough to provide lessons able to travel across time and space. However, country-oriented elite research on European countries (e.g., Herzog, 1975; Birnbaum, 1977; Cotta, 1979; Fettelshoß, 2009,) and other areas (e.g., Vommaro and Gené, 2018) have shown that the same democratic elites can follow distinct paths to power, depending on the political system where they are formed. Moreover, recent data about political leaders' profiles in democracies and autocracies have been collected. It has been observed that democratic leaders differ from leaders in autocratic regimes and

that there are also significant variations between autocracies (Baturo, 2016). These findings eventually prompt us to include country factors in explanations of political careers, yet within the approach I suggest here.

The literature on political career research offers several sparks for a more integrated approach. Rather than impervious to mutual talks, the analyzed approaches look like pieces of a more general picture, each focusing on specific aspects and neglecting others. The next step could be to try to put these pieces together. As said in the introduction, I am confident that a critical overview of the existing contributions will be able to facilitate this intellectual operation.

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Chapter 9

PRIME MINISTERIAL CAREERS IN THE EUROPEAN UNION: DOES GENDER MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

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Prime ministerial careers in the European Union: does gender make a difference?

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ABSTRACT

This article presents empirical findings on two questions: what are the 'political stepping stones' on the way to the prime ministerial post? Are there any differences between female and male prime ministers on their way to the chief executive? These questions are primarily linked to the literature on women's recruitment in top political offices. The data for this analysis stem from unique biographical records of 76 prime ministers in those 10 member states of the European Union where women have been in prime ministerial positions from 1979 to 2015. Consistent with theoretical expectations, the empirical findings show that there is indeed a gender difference in the pathways to the prime ministerial post. Female prime ministers are predominantly recruited in centre-right parties. They have more political experience in parliament and cabinet than their male counterparts, but a shorter duration in office once becoming prime minister.

KEYWORDS

Gender; political careers; prime minister; political professionalization; representation; women and politics

1. Introduction

Prime ministers are major political players in parliamentary democracies. Although there is considerable knowledge on the role, function, and performance of prime ministers (Helms, 2005; Jones, 1991; Peters, Rhodes, & Wright, 2000; Rose & Suleiman, 1980; Strangio, 't Hart, & Walter, 2013; Weller, 1985), hardly anything is known about their pathways to power from a comparative viewpoint (see Müller & Philipp, 1991 and Musella, 2015 for exceptions). The paucity of research is most surprising since prime ministers are the most important members of cabinet governments. They are the architects and agenda setters of policies and the drivers of cabinet decision-making. Furthermore, they are usually well known in public and expected to exercise public leadership in the interests of the citizens (Strangio et al., 2013, p. 1; Weller, 1985, p. 1).

In this article, we want to tackle the political careers of prime ministers from a 'gender' perspective. The literature provides evidence that women who want to achieve high political offices face a different structure of opportunities and constraints than men. Gendered distributions of political posts can depend on several factors, such as regime institutional arrangements (Bego, 2014; Jalalzai, 2013); different institutional selection procedures

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(Kunovich & Paxton, 2005; O'Brien, 2012); previous women's appointments (Jalalzai, 2013; Krook & O'Brien, 2012); ideological orientation of parties (Claveria, 2014) as well as party strategies (Kostadinova & Mikulska, 2015; Murray, Krook, & Opello, 2012) and the electoral performance of the own party (O'Brien, 2015). Moreover, some have argued that societal cultural attitudes towards gender equality (Inglehart & Norris, 2003; Reynolds, 1999) and own previous personal political experiences (Heath, Schwindt-Bayer, & Taylor-Robinson, 2005) can affect women's chances of recruitment. Overall, the literature indicates that there seems to be a clear gender bias in the recruitment of leading politicians (Arriola & Johnson, 2014; Jacob, Scherpereel, & Adams, 2014).

These studies usually account for differences in the level of representation between women and men. Others have focused on the paths women follow to reach apical political positions. Overall, research on political careers of female politicians in national parliaments and cabinets is well-established (Davis, 1997; Escobar-Lemmon & Taylor-Robinson, 2016; Genovese & Thompson, 1993; Lovenduski & Norris, 1993; Matland & Montgomery, 2003; Reynolds, 1999; Siaroff, 2000). Furthermore, some scholars have dealt with the socio-demographic and political profiles of female chief executives (Hoogensen & Solheim, 2006; Jalalzai, 2004; Jensen, 2008; Skard, 2014). Yet, a systematic comparison of women and men's routes to prime ministerial position is still lacking in the literature, although the literature has pointed out that – to detect gendered routes to power – 'the ideal scenario would [… be] to compare women's and men's [… careers]' (Tremblay & Stockemer, 2013, p. 524). Our article claims to fill this gap by answering two questions: what are the 'political stepping stones' on the way to the prime ministerial post? Are there any differences between female and male prime ministers on their way to office? Thereby, the analysis will focus on prime ministers in the member states of the European Union (EU) from 1979 to 2015.

Firstly, we review the theoretical debates on the recruitment of women in politics and specify our expectations. Secondly, the case selection is introduced. Thirdly, we introduce the empirical findings on the career patterns of both female and male prime ministers under comparative perspective. Finally, we discuss the empirical results and provide suggestions for further research.

2. Gender and political recruitment

Research on female and male politicians' profiles and careers focuses on four topics: competences and skills; party affiliation; prestige of political positions; and tenure in political offices. In these fields, substantial differences between women and men have been highlighted.

Regarding the first point, the literature underlines the challenges that female leaders have to cope with when it comes to achieve their political positions. Bloksgaard (2011) has for instance argued that traditional values foster the vision of power wielding in public sphere as a typical male activity. This would create 'gender-segregated' societies, where women are seen as more 'appropriated' for the private sphere and for 'caring' activities. Furthermore, it is argued that women will need to have extended political experience if they want to reach leadership positions (Murray, 2010; Sczesny, Bosak, Neff, & Schyns, 2004). Even female career politicians would be subjected to such gender stereotypes

(Sykes, 2013). Jalalzai and Krook (2010, p. 19) claim that 'politics is still largely viewed as a "man's world".'

Focusing on female candidates for parliamentary seats, scholars have shown that women need higher average profiles to overcome barriers to entry (Milyo & Schosberg, 2000). Matland (2003, p. 326) has pointed out that in Eastern Europe party gatekeepers have been interested in candidates with high education levels and socio-economic status. Moreover, previous experience in political institutions and in the party seems to be an asset. However, he has pointed out that 'the bar was set higher for possible female candidates' and that, 'to be considered a man's equal, women had to be more than a man's equal.' Bego (2014) has indeed observed that in Central–Eastern Europe female enrolment in tertiary education significantly increases women's chances to be appointed in ministerial positions. Similarly, according to Escobar-Lemmon and Taylor-Robinson (2009), women may have to show higher educational and professional credentials than men to reach the same ministerial offices (see also Fischer, Dowding, & Dumont, 2012). Moreover, O'Brien, Mendez, Peterson, & Shin (2015, p. 713) state that, even if the number of female party leaders is increasing, women remain less likely than men to be selected for high political positions. In order to become party leaders, women would play a more demanding 'game.' To reach the same positions of men, they have to be 'extraordinary politicians' (O'Brien, 2015, p. 1023). Schwindt-Bayer (2011) has noticed that female leaders are guided by the same motivations of their male counterparts, and the differences in their paths to power may ensue from the stricter set of formal and informal rules that women has to comply with. With regard to European political executives (prime ministers and presidents), Jalalzai (2014, pp. 578, 582) has argued that women have to follow 'limited routes to power' and that 'professional backgrounds prove important to securing posts.' Nearly a quarter of women achieved power through activism in political movements. However, they had 'the added burden of amassing formal experience' (Jalalzai, 2014, p. 586).

Thus, our first hypothesis states that

> H_1: *women prime ministers who have entered prime ministerial office have achieved higher qualifications than men*.

Secondly, it has been argued that leftist ideologies and leftist voters are more 'sensitive' to the issue of gender equality. On the contrary, conservative parties would be keen to preserve a traditional view of female roles in the society (Rule, 1987). Christmans-Best and Kjær (2007, p. 103) even claim that the success of a left-wing party is 'the strongest predictor of women's level of inclusion in a political life.' In fact, left-wing parties promote more women for parliamentary seats (Caul, 1999; Wängnerud, 2009) and for cabinet positions (Claveria, 2014; Reynolds, 1999).

Assuming that this also holds true for chief executives, we expect that

> H_2: *the ratio of prime ministers affiliated to centre-left parties has been higher among women than among men*.

Third, research on women's parliamentary experiences has shown that female MPs are usually appointed to stereotypically 'feminine' and less prestigious parliamentary committees (Barnes, 2014; Heath et al., 2005; Pansardi & Vercesi, 2016). Furthermore, women hold fewer ministerial posts and, if they do so, they are found in less important positions, such

as in the ministries of Youth, Family, and Education (Davis, 1997; Escobar-Lemmon & Taylor-Robinson, 2005, 2009; Krook & O'Brien, 2012; Sykes, 2009; cf. Tremblay & Stockemer, 2013).

Accordingly, we hypothesize that

H_3: women prime ministers who have entered prime ministerial office have hold lower prestige ministerial portfolios more than men.

Finally, empirical research shows that the tenure of women in top political positions is more precarious than men's. Looking at mayors in Italy, Gagliarducci and Peserman (2008) have proved that the likelihood of early terminations in office is higher among female mayors. In a comparative study of West European ministers between 1945 and 2011, Bright, Döring, and Little (2015) have concluded that women ministers have a lower rate of survival than their male counterparts. Moreover, women are subjected to stricter evaluations when they reach leadership positions, which traditionally are in the men's hands (e.g. Eagly, Makhijani, & Klonsky, 1992). For instance, O'Brien (2015, p. 1035) has shown that the tenure of female party leaders is more dependent then men's on the electoral performances of their own party organizations. Women would have greater chances to stay in office as long as the party performs well. Furthermore, '"winning women" may stay in the post precisely because they have overcome especially high barriers to entry and/or rehabilitated poorly performing parties.' However, on the other hand, higher evaluation standards produce for women 'a greater likelihood of leaving the post when their parties lose seat share.' This makes women's tenure more precarious, all else being equal.

Extending the argument to prime ministers, we assume that

H_4: *women prime ministers have stayed in office for shorter periods than men.*

In the following, we will systematically compare female and male prime ministers with regard to socio-demographic backgrounds and political expertise; party affiliations; types of ministerial portfolios held prior to entering office; and duration in office as prime minister. If prime ministerial careers in Europe have indeed been gendered, we shall identify differences between female and male prime ministers in their personal profiles, their political experience, and their career length.

3. Case selection and women's representation

Our data are based on biographical records of 76 prime ministers who have led one or more governments for a minimum of 1 month in 10 member states of the EU from 1979 to 2015.[1] Data for all female and male prime ministers were collected until 31 December 2015. The selection of cases is limited to the EU member countries that have been governed by female and male prime ministers (Croatia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Latvia, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, and United Kingdom). Thus, we deal with the *total population* of prime ministers in all ten countries, starting with the appointment of the first woman prime minister in 1979.[2]

The focus on the EU member states allows us to deal with a region that, in spite of the disproportionally lower representation of women in executive posts, has outperformed other world regions with respect to female representation in top political positions (Jalalzai, 2014, p. 278). Moreover, these countries are all democratic countries that grant

substantial decision-making power to the prime minister. These countries also have a fairly homogeneous culture and a good socio-economic performance (UNDP, 2015). This reduces the variation of possible configurational effects that regional factors might have on women's political recruitment (e.g. Krook, 2010). Furthermore, our regional 'medium-*N*' focus ($N = 10$) has the potential to avoid the idiosyncratic pitfalls of single case studies. Our findings are therefore only valid for the ten European member states under consideration. It may well be that the pathways to political executives of female and male prime ministers might follow different patterns in other regions and countries. Yet, our approach might lead to a broader comparative assessment of gendered pathways to top executive power.

Our analysis starts in 1979, after the first female Prime Minister, Margret Thatcher, has been appointed within European member countries. Prime ministers from Central–Eastern Europe are included since 1990/1991. We have only included prime ministers from those Central–Eastern European countries that score five or higher on the Polity IV democracy scale (Marshall, Gurr, & Jaggers, 2014). Therefore, prime ministers from Croatia are considered only from 2000 onwards (see Appendix). The data are taken from a larger original database on the 'political capital' and the 'power structures' of prime ministers in European democracies since 1945 ($N = 324$).[3]

On the basis of this definition we have identified 63 male and 13 female prime ministers in European countries from 1979 to 2015. Among the latter, seven come from Central–Eastern countries. Half of the remaining female prime ministers from Western Europe come from Nordic countries, which indicates that the 'Scandinavian effect' of female representation in parliaments and cabinets might also hold true for prime ministerial posts (Putnam, 1976, p. 33; Siaroff, 2000, p. 199).[4]

Overall, Table 1 shows that women in European member states are clearly underrepresented in prime ministerial positions (17 per cent, i.e. 13 out of 76 of all prime ministers). Furthermore, there is no difference between Western Europe and Central–Eastern countries with regard to their representation in prime minister's posts. In both areas, women have held 17 per cent of the total positions. However, the number of women prime ministers has increased substantially over the past ten years (see Appendix). While only three women prime ministers have been in office between 1980 and 1993

Table 1. Prime ministers by gender and country (1979–2015).

Country	Women	Men	All
Denmark	1 (20%)	4 (80%)	5
Finland	2 (22.2%)	7 (77.8%)	9
France	1 (7.7%)	12 (92.3%)	13
Germany	1 (33.3%)	2 (66.7%)	3
United Kingdom	1 (20%)	4 (80%)	5
Sub-total Western Europe	*6 (17.1%)*	*29 (82.9%)*	*35*
Croatia	1 (25%)	3 (75%)	4
Latvia	1 (8.3%)	11 (91.7%)	12
Poland	3 (23.1%)	10 (76.9%)	13
Slovakia	1 (20%)	4 (80%)	5
Slovenia	1 (14.3%)	6 (85.7%)	7
Sub-total Central–Eastern Europe	*7 (17.1%)*	*34 (82.9%)*	*41*
Total	13 (17.1%)	63 (82.9%)	76

Source: Databank *Political Careers and Political Power of Prime Ministers in Europe (1945–2015)*, Center for the Study of Democracy, Leuphana University Lüneburg, own calculations.

(Thatcher in the United Kingdom, Cresson in France, and Suchocka in Poland) the number increased up to ten female prime ministers between 2002 and 2015 (Jäätteenmäki in Finland, Merkel in Germany, Kosor in Crotia, Kiviniemi in Finland, Radičová in Slovakia, Thorning-Schmidt in Denmark, Bratušek in Slovenia, Straujuma in Latvia, and Kopacz and Szydło in Poland). In particular, there has been a pronounced increase of eight female prime ministers since 2009. Among them, six have been appointed in Central–Eastern European countries. The data also show that the number of female prime ministers in each country is rather low (only seldom above one). Obviously, women share substantial difficulties in accessing top political executive posts across Europe.[5]

4. Prime ministers' careers by gender differences: four dimensions of analysis

The aim of this section is to identify similarities and differences in career patterns between women and men in chief executive offices across member states of the EU. Thereby, we shall focus on the comparative analysis of the socio-demographic background and political experiences; party affiliations; types of ministerial portfolios; and the duration of female and male prime ministers in office.

4.1. Socio-demographic backgrounds and political expertise

An initial examination of the socio-demographic background of female and male prime ministers allows to see that there is no gender bias in the age of prime ministers when entering office. They are predominately recruited as senior politicians (average age among women 51 and among male 48 years). Second, we also find that both women and men prime ministers share a fairly high educational background: 97 per cent of

Table 2. Occupation of prime ministers in ten EU countries by gender (1979–2015) (in percentages).

	Women ($N = 13$)	Men ($N = 63$)
First occupation		
University teacher, lecturer, professor, or equivalent	23	31.7
Civil servant	15.4	11.1
Full-time politician	15.4	11.1
Cadre/engineer/technician	15.4	3.2
Legal profession (lawyer/judge)	7.7	9.5
Journalist/media/artist	7.7	4.8
Political consultant	–	6.3
Teacher	–	6.3
Blue collar employee	–	4.8
Industry/business	–	4.8
Capital market/banking	–	3.2
Full-time union official	–	1.6
Other	15.4	1.6
Occupation when entering office as prime minister for the first time		
Full-time politician	92.3	90.4
Industry/business	7.7	1.6
Civil servant	–	3.2
University teacher, lecturer, professor, or equivalent	–	3.2
Political consultant	–	1.6

Source: see Table 1.
Note: Where not specified, the information is to be meant 'prior to becoming prime minister.'

men and 100 per cent of women obtained a university degree before becoming prime ministers. Third, the majority of female (23 per cent) and male (32 per cent) prime ministers started their careers as university teachers. The second largest group of both female and male prime ministers came from diverse occupations in the political and public sector (e.g. civil servants and legal profession). Only with regard to qualified technicians we find a clear difference between female (15 per cent) and male prime ministers (3 per cent). Finally, the data also show that about 90 per cent of all prime ministers (female and male) in European member countries have been full-time politicians before entering the chief executive for the first time (Table 2).

Regarding the political expertise of prime ministers, scholars have argued that a 'normal' career is defined as having served in parliament, in cabinet and as national party leader before entering office as chief executive (Blondel, 1980, pp. 137–138; Rose, 2001, p. 72). Taking this definition into account, the data in Table 3 show some marginal differences between female and male prime ministers: nearly all women prime ministers (92 per cent) have held a seat in national parliament (compared to only 83 per cent among men). Furthermore, female prime ministers have more political experience as cabinet minister than men (63 per cent among women and 54 per cent among men). Yet, the difference is not as obvious regarding their experience as party leaders: 54 per cent of female and 56 per cent of male prime ministers have been head of their national party organization.

One way for assessing the degree of professionalization is to evaluate the number of political posts that women and men held before entering the prime minister's office (Bakema & Secker, 1988). Following this approach our analysis focuses on all three major political positions that prime ministers usually hold before entering office (member of parliament, cabinet member, and party leader). In a nutshell, we argue that prime ministers who have held all three positions have gained *high* political expertise; those prime ministers who have held two of these positions (irrespective of the type) are considered as having *medium* political expertise. Yet, those prime ministers who held only one position are defined as politicians with *low* political expertise. Finally, those who have not covered any of the three positions before getting into the executive office are perceived as having no political expertise. Thus, we measure the level of professionalization as the degree of accumulated political expertise in different political positions.

The degree of political expertise among women and men prime ministers is summarized in an 'index of professionalization,' whereby *high/medium* political expertise is defined as 'professional' and *low/none* political expertise as 'unprofessional' (see Figure 1).

Overall, Figure 1 shows that two thirds of all female and male prime ministers are professionals according to our definition. There is no single female prime minister and only

Table 3. Number of prime ministers in political offices in ten EU countries by gender (1979–2015).

Political office	Women ($N = 13$)	Men ($N = 63$)
Member of parliament	12 (92.3%)	52 (82.5%)
Member of cabinet	9 (62.9%)	34 (54%)
National party head	7 (53.8%)	35 (55.6%)

Source: see Table 1.
Note: All the information is to be meant 'prior to becoming prime minister.'

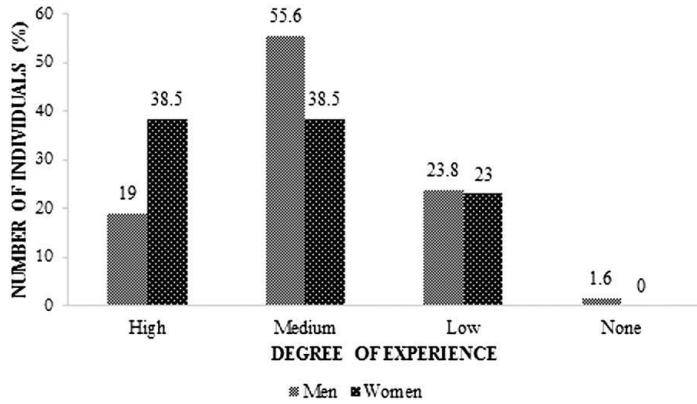

Figure 1. Level of professionalization among prime ministers in ten EU countries by gender (1979–2015). Source: see Table 1.

one male prime minister in the EU countries without any political expertise in one of the three major political posts. However, the distribution of women is clearly more skewed towards high levels of professionalization. Thus, we can observe that about 39 per cent of women in chief executive positions have held all three political positions during their political career while this is true for only 19 per cent of their male counterparts.

Yet, looking only at the numbers of political positions ignores an important aspect of the professionalization, which is the time that a prime minister spends in any of these political positions. It is well known that a longer duration in office leads to a deeper knowledge of the respective political arena. Hence, the duration of women and men in political offices before becoming prime minister stands as a further indicator of professionalization. We assume that the longer the duration in parliament and cabinet, the higher the degree of professionalization.

The data in Figure 2 clearly indicate that the duration of female prime ministers in both institutions is higher than among their male counterparts. On average, the parliamentary experience of women is 115 months that is 19 months longer than among male prime ministers. Furthermore, women held ministerial positions nearly 1 year longer than men (48 years and 37 months, respectively).

4.2. Party affiliation, ministerial portfolios, and duration in office

Between 1979 and 2015**,** nearly all prime ministers held a party affiliation at the time when gaining their first premiership. According to our data, one-third of all male prime ministers have been members of a centre-left party, whereas 63 per cent have been affiliated with centre-right parties.[6] Among the female prime ministers, 85 per cent have been members of liberal, Christian democratic, conservative, or right-wing and nationalist parties.[7] More precisely, female prime ministers such as Suchocka and Kopacz in Poland, Jäättenmäki and Kiviniemi in Finland, and Bratušek in Slovenia were appointed as members of liberal parties. Three women prime ministers (Thatcher in the United Kingdom, Radičová in Slovakia, and Straujuma in Latvia) came to power as member of the conservative party. Moreover, Kosor in Croatia and Szydło in Poland entered office while they were affiliated to a right-wing and nationalist party. One female prime minister (Merkel in

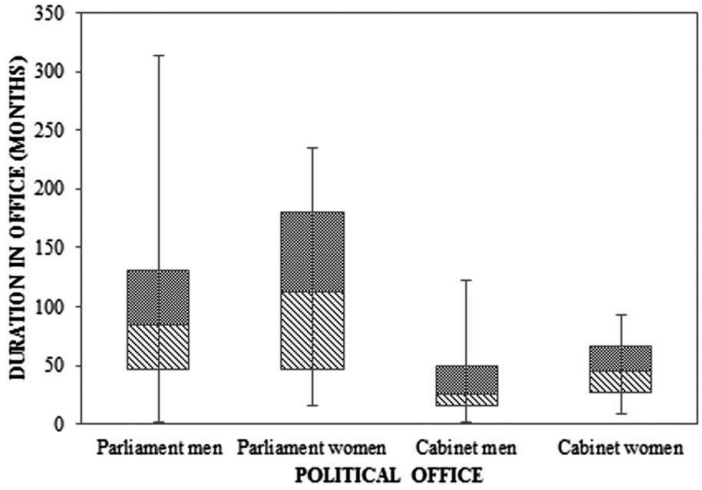

Figure 2. Distribution of female and male prime ministers by duration in parliament and in cabinet before entering office in ten EU countries (1979–2015). *Mean:* Parliament men 96.1; Parliament women 115.2; Cabinet men 36.7; Cabinet women 47.8. *Median:* parliament men 85; parliament women 113; cabinet men 26; cabinet women 45. Source: see Table 1.
Notes: Only individuals with the relevant experience included. An incompatibility between parliamentary seats and ministerial posts exists in Croatia, France, Slovakia, and Slovenia. In Latvia there is no incompatibility, but an MP has the right to give up the mandate during the term as member of government. S/he may renew the mandate once s/he resigns as member of government.

Germany) has been member of a Christian democratic party. Finally, only two female prime ministers (Cresson in France and Thorning-Schmidt in Denmark) have been members of the centre-left and the social-democratic parties.

Secondly, our data confirm previous research on portfolio allocation among women cabinet members that has stressed the disproportional underrepresentation of women in high-prestige ministries. In our analysis, we follow Krook and O'Brien's (2012) classification of portfolios by policy areas. This 'classification has the merit of being built upon established literature on societal gender divides and portfolios rankings as well as of being suitable for comparative research' (Pansardi & Vercesi, 2016). Moreover, we agree that access to financial resources and visibility define the 'prestige' of ministerial portfolios (Escobar-Lemmon & Taylor-Robinson, 2005).

The data in Table 4 show that all female prime ministers had cabinet experiences albeit only in low- or medium-prestige ministerial departments. Yet, none of them held high-prestige portfolios before entering office. Among their male counterparts 62 per cent served as cabinet minister in high-prestigious portfolios.

The range of ministerial portfolios held by women prime ministers before entering office shows a large variation: Agriculture (Cresson and Straujuma); Education and Science (Thatcher); Environment and Safety of Nuclear Reactors (Merkel); European Affairs (Cresson); Family/Veterans/Inter-Generational Solidarity (Kosor); Foreign Trade/Tourism/Industrial Redeployment/International Development (Cresson and Kiviniemi); Health (Kopacz); Justice (Jäätteenmäki); Labour (Radičová); Public Administration/Local Government (Kiviniemi); Women/Youth (Merkel).

Finally, our data show that the degree of professionalization is not linked to the overall duration as prime minister: women stayed shorter in office than their male colleagues (34

Table 4. Portfolios and duration of prime ministers in ten EU countries, by gender (1979–2015).

	Women	Men
Type of portfolio held (only cabinet members)		
High-prestige portfolio (*N*, per cent)	–	14 (41.2)
Medium/low-prestige portfolio (*N*, per cent)	9 (100)	13 (38.2)
Both (*N*, per cent)	–	7 (20.6)
Experience in office		
Total duration as prime minister (months)	34.5	45.9

Source: see Table 1 .

Notes: Where relevant, all the information is to be meant 'prior to becoming prime minister.'

High-prestige portfolios comprise Finance/Treasury; Economy; Foreign Affairs; Defense; and Interior. Medium/low-prestige portfolios comprise all the others (see Krook & O'Brien, 2012, p. 846).

The calculation of the total duration as prime minister includes only concluded terms in office. We define a new term in office when there is a change of prime minister; a change of cabinet party composition; a general election; and/or a cabinet resignation followed by a new formal investiture.

compared to 46 months, respectively). These are fairly low figures given the fact that legislative terms in European countries usually last between 48 and 60 months. Yet, if the longevity of prime ministers in office 'provides something like a proxy for effectiveness' (Baylis, 2007, p. 84) or an 'ability to develop and implement policies' (Müller & Philipp, 1991, p. 149), then we find women prime ministers to face more obstacles in this respect.

5. Discussion

This article presents seven major empirical findings: *first*, the absolute number of female prime ministers is higher in Central–Eastern Europe than in Western Europe. *Second*, we find more female prime ministers in semi-presidential than in parliamentary systems (22.5 and 14.8 per cent, respectively). These results support Jalalzai's (2008, 2014) view who claims that the fairly large proportion of women prime ministers in Central–Eastern Europe is not due to more gender equality in Eastern societies, but dependent upon the existence of a dual executive structure in these new democracies. Another possible explanation for this phenomenon is the rise of new parties and party systems which has modified the configurations of the former political systems in Central–Eastern Europe and thereby created new opportunities for women to be selected for the chief executive (van Biezen & Rashkova, 2014; Galligan, Clavero, & Calloni, 2007; Kostadinova & Mikulska, 2015). Moreover, Jalalzai's (2014) has argued that regime transitions foster temporary executives and that the instability of political executives provides an opportunity structure for women to reach apical political posts (see also Montecinos, in press). Thus,

> temporary appointments are […] an important route to office for women since they are able to bypass traditional mechanisms. […] In fact, women aiding in times of electoral transformation may be viewed positively precisely because they are women and, as such, not seen as tainted with their own political ambitions. (Jalalzai & Krook, 2010, p. 15)

The career path of former Polish female Prime Minister Hanna Suchocka is a good case in point. During the transition phase from communism to democracy, Poland implemented a semi-presidential system. At the same time the party system was extremely volatile, the parliament was highly fragmented and cabinets were short-lived. When, in 1992, a further government formation process went into gridlock, party

leaders decided to rely on Suchocka, who had a long standing parliamentary performance (Jensen, 2008).

Our findings also support Beckwith's (2015) view that a successful political career of female prime ministers in Western Europe is related to favourable conditions within their own political party. More precisely, she argues that women meet higher chances to become party leaders and then prime ministers when an intra-party crisis occurs. The consequent removal of incumbent male party leaders seems to be a necessary condition to open access to women for top leadership positions. This situation usually occurs after critical events within their own political party, such as scandals or electoral failures. We therefore find a higher opportunity for women to become prime ministers after an intra-party crisis because

> junior men, with less experience and cabinet credentials, will remain in the potential eligibility pool; [… but they] will anticipate that the party will not do well […] following a scandal or electoral defeat and hence will wait for a better opportunity. (Beckwith, 2015, p. 726f)

The cases of Thatcher and Merkel's rise to the premiership within their own party are consistent with this argument.[8]

Third, the socio-demographic background of male and female prime ministers is fairly similar. All women and nearly all men started their careers with a higher education. Later on, both groups gathered substantial life experience before entering office, with an average age of about 50 years. Furthermore, the majority of all women and men prime ministers started working in academia or in political administration. Finally, and most importantly, more than 90 per cent of all female and male prime ministers were full-time politicians when entering the chief executive for the first time. These findings clearly show that European prime ministers are part of a 'special group' (Müller & Philipp, 1991, p. 151) from the 'upper class' (Blondel & Müller-Rommel, 2007, p. 822) with an own elite configuration in terms of social and occupational backgrounds (Dogan, 2003; Phillips, 1995). We can therefore conclude that women do not need to have a different social status or be part of a different social class in order to become prime minister.

Fourth, we found substantial differences among the level of political expertise between female and male prime ministers. Our data confirm that women prime ministers have clearly stockpiled more experience in parliament and cabinet before entering office than their male counterparts. This indicates that women need more credentials than men to reach the same political posts. However, we have also observed that – compared to their male colleagues – fewer female prime ministers have been party leaders before entering the chief executive. This is consistent with O'Brien's (2015, p. 693) interpretation that there is a 'men's traditional dominance as party leaders.' Moreover, our findings reiterate Escobar-Lemmon and Taylor-Robinson's (2009, p. 695) observation that women (in cabinet) 'tend to have fewer party credentials than men, suggesting that experience and connections in other areas are more useful for them in securing […] appointments.'

Fifth, the analysis has also shown remarkable differences regarding the party affiliation of female and male prime ministers. Most unexpectedly we found a very high ratio of women prime ministers from centre-right parties. This is particularly true for Central–Eastern Europe where all female prime ministers have been recruited within this party family. Bego (2014) explains this by the less developed inter-party ideological differences

in Central and Eastern Europe. Our results also support Wiliarty's (2008) general view on the recruitment patterns of the centre-right parties. Based on the German case, she argues that the internal structures of European centre-right parties are more favourable to the promotion of women to top political positions. In other words we cannot confirm the argument that left-wing parties tend to promote more women to political positions (Siaroff, 2000). Rather, it seems as if centre-left parties are more likely to select women for lower prestige political offices than for top executive positions.

Sixth, all women prime ministers in Europe have gained ministerial experiences in medium- or low-prestige portfolios while most of their male counterparts held high prestigious cabinet posts prior to becoming prime minister. In the literature, we find no convincing explanations for this phenomenon. Following Müller and Philipp (1991), the recruitment pattern of female prime ministers is an 'uncommon path' to power while Jacob et al. (2014), have observed a relation between 'symbolic portfolios' and female representation in cabinet. According to authors such as Escobar-Lemmon and Taylor-Robinson (2009), Krook and O'Brien (2012), and O'Brien et al. (2015), this tendency might rapidly change over the next years. They expect a higher representation of female ministers in prestigious cabinet portfolios because of the increasing presence of women in the top party, parliamentary and cabinet positions. However, – as our data show – we find (at least until now) no empirical evidence for this prediction.

Seventh, a high level of professionalization is not associated with a long duration of female prime ministers. This finding supports O'Brien's (2015) view that women are subjected to a stricter evaluation once they occupy top positions which might then lead to an 'early loss' of their prime ministerial post. Another argument for the lower duration of professional female *vis-à-vis* male prime ministers is linked to the party-internal decision-making processes. Following Beckwith (2015), we can argue that those women who get the prime minister's post as a replacement for their male counterpart might be pushed by the party to leave the office once a political crisis is solved and politics go back to 'normality.' A case in point is Prime Minister Édith Cresson who was selected in 1991 by President Mitterand to attract female voters. Yet, a year later, after her decreasing reputation among mass public and her defeat as candidate of the French Socialist Party during local elections, Mitterand forced her to resign (Jensen, 2008, p. 49f).

6. Conclusions

This study has analysed the political careers of female and male prime ministers in 10 member states of the EU over a period of 35 years. In sum, we can draw 3 major conclusions: first, female prime ministers have ruled in only 10 out of 28 members' states of the EU. This finding demonstrates that not even half of all EU member states have accepted women in prime ministerial positions. This assessment is somewhat surprising in light of the often discussed increasing 'emancipative values' in Western societies and its impact on the increasing participation of women in politics (Alexander & Welzel, 2015; Inglehart & Welzel, 2005). Second, although the number of female prime ministers is increasing, little empirical research is available on the gendered dynamics of political careers for the prime ministerial position, particularly under comparative perspective. Third, prime ministerial careers are indeed gendered in terms of the degree of their professionalization. Our data suggest that once entering the 'prime ministerial game,' women

have to follow a 'harder road' to the chief executive. Women need to have higher political qualifications before entering and maintaining the prime ministerial office. In addition, we argue that the remarkable underrepresentation of women in top executive positions in EU countries is probably still a consequence of demand-side rather than supply-side factors (Norris & Lovenduski, 1995). Currently, the majority of prime ministerial positions are still in the hands of men. Thus, the gendered nature of the pathway to the political executive might still be indicative of an 'unfriendly' gate-keeping role of male-dominated party politics.

Future research on this issue should be more comprehensive. First of all, we need systematic cross-national data on the political careers of all prime ministers in all parliamentary and semi-presidential systems across the world. Second, these data should be collected on a longitudinal basis. Third, complementary to these quantitative data we need in-depth qualitative studies in order to identify and explain country specific recruitment patterns of prime ministers. Finally, we need to link these empirical findings to theoretical concepts in the field of elite recruitment and elite circulation in order to predict the stability and instability of prime ministers in democratic regimes.

Notes

1. Caretaker governments are excluded from the analysis. Four women led caretaker cabinets in current EU member states in the period considered: De Lourdes Pintasilgo in Portugal (1979–1980); Reneta Indzhova in Bulgaria (1994–1995); Irena Degutienė in Lithuania (1999); Vassiliki Thanou-Christophilou in Greece (2015).
2. This has both remarkable epistemological and methodological implications. In his discussion of not-repeatable data, Jackman (2009, p. xxxi) has pointed out that recollecting cross-national data for defined populations cannot yield to different information, but rather to the same dataset (safe for coding or other types of errors). Thus, '*there is no uncertainty due to variation in repeated sampling from a population*: the data available for analysis exhaust the population of substantive interest' (emphasis in the original). The logic of common statistical significance tests barely holds in these cases. In fact, statistical tests tell whether variations within a (random) sample are likely to be due to chance. If not, we have enough evidence to reject such scenario and expect that similar variations are systematic and likely to be found in different (randomly) generated samples drawn from the same population (e.g., Blaikie, 2010; Garson, 1976; Pennings, Keman, & Kleinnijenhuis, 1999; Sirkin, 2006; Stevens, 2009). Significance tests can be technically calculated even for not-repeatable data. However, since the assumptions are violated, 'the […] use of statistical tests renders meaningless significance levels' (Pennings et al., 1999, pp. 81–82, 162). One could rebut that a population is anything but 'one of many possible data sets that could have been generated if "history were to be replayed many times over".' Yet, this argumentation does not hold, since the 'sampling mechanism' of the history we observe is inherently unknown (Jackman, 2009, p. xxxii). For all these reasons, our data and our goal do not allow (at least without contradicting their assumptions) the use of significance tests. We do not thus provide inferential findings, but descriptive statistics.
3. These data have been collected by the authors and are available upon request.
4. Our dataset comprises both parliamentary (Denmark, Germany, Latvia, Slovakia up to 1998, and United Kingdom) and semi-presidential systems (Croatia, Finland, France, Poland, Slovakia since 1998, Slovenia) (Elgie, 2011). Institutionally 'weak' women prime ministers, opposed to 'dominant' female prime ministers, have been appointed in two semi-presidential systems: France and Poland (Jalalzai, 2014, p. 589).

5. With regard to presidencies, in the countries of our dataset, only one woman – Vīķe-Freiberga in Latvia (1999–2007) – was selected head of state in parliamentary systems. In semi-presidential countries, two female presidents were elected: Halonen in Finland (2000–2012) and Grabar-Kitarović in Croatia (2015–).
6. One male Prime Minister, Ivars Godmanis from Latvia, entered office as member of the Popular Front of Latvia, a movement created to lead Latvia out of the transition from the Soviet Union.
7. We counted communist, social-democratic and green parties as centre-left parties. On the other hand, we included in centre-right parties liberal, agrarian, Christian democratic, conservative, and right-wing and nationalist parties.
8. While writing this article, a new case confirmed the interpretation. In July 2016, Theresa May became the new prime minister of the United Kingdom after becoming leader of the Conservative. This contest followed the resignation of the former leader and Prime Minister David Cameron due to the defeat in the 'Brexit' referendum and the crisis within the conservative party including the withdrawal of men from the competition for the prime minister's position. See 'Theresa May to Become New PM' (2016).

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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Appendix. List of prime ministers

Country	Name of PM	Sex	Period in Office
Croatia	Račan, Ivica	Male	2000–2003
Croatia	Sanader, Ivo	Male	2003–2009
Croatia	**Kosor, Jadranka**	**Female**	**2009–2011**
Croatia	Milanović, Zoran	Male	2011–2016
Denmark	Schlüter, Poul	Male	1982–1993
Denmark	Rasmussen, Poul N.	Male	1993–2001
Denmark	Rasmussen, Anders F.	Male	2001–2009
Denmark	Rasmussen, Lars L.	Male	2009–2011, 2015–
Denmark	**Thorning-Schmidt, Helle**	**Female**	**2011–2015**
Finland	Holkeri, Harri	Male	1987–1991
Finland	Aho, Esko	Male	1991–1995
Finland	Lipponen, Paavo	Male	1995–2003
Finland	**Jäätteenmäki, Annelli**	**Female**	**2003**
Finland	Vanhanen, Matti	Male	2003–2010
Finland	**Kiviniemi, Mari**	**Female**	**2010–2011**
Finland	Katainen, Jyrki	Male	2011–2014
Finland	Stubb, Alexander	Male	2014–2015
Finland	Sipilä, Juha	Male	2015–
France	Mauroy, Pierre	Male	1981–1984
France	Fabius, Laurent	Male	1984–1986[a]
France	Rocard, Michel	Male	1988–1991
France	**Cresson, Édith**	**Female**	**1991–1992**
France	Bérégovoy, Pierre	Male	1992–1993
France	Balladur, Édouard	Male	1993–1995
France	Juppé, Alain	Male	1995–1997

(*Continued*)

Appendix. Continued.

Country	Name of PM	Sex	Period in Office
France	Jospin, Lionel	Male	1997–2002
France	Raffarin, Jean-Pierre	Male	2002–2005
France	Villepin, Dominique de	Male	2005–2007
France	Fillon, François	Male	2007–2012
France	Ayrault, Jean-Marc	Male	2012–2014
France	Valls, Manuel	Male	2014–
Germany	Kohl, Helmut	Male	1982–1998
Germany	Schröder, Gerhard	Male	1998–2005
Germany	**Merkel, Angela**	**Female**	**2005–**
Latvia	Godmanis, Ivars	Male	1990–1993, 2007–2009
Latvia	Birkavs, Valdis	Male	1993–1994
Latvia	Gailis, Māris	Male	1994–1995
Latvia	Šķēle, Andris	Male	1997
Latvia	Krasts, Guntars	Male	1997–1998
Latvia	Krištopans, Vilis	Male	1998–1999
Latvia	Bērziņš, Andris	Male	2000–2002
Latvia	Repše, Einars	Male	2002–2004
Latvia	Emsis, Indulis	Male	2004
Latvia	Kalvītis, Aigars	Male	2004–2007
Latvia	Dombrovskis, Valdis	Male	2009–2014
Latvia	**Straujuma, Laimdota**	**Female**	**2014–2016**
Poland	Olszewski, Jan	Male	1991–1992
Poland	**Suchocka, Hanna**	**Female**	**1992–1993**
Poland	Pawlak, Waldemar	Male	1993–1995
Poland	Oleksy, Józef	Male	1995–1996
Poland	Cimoszewicz, Włodzimiers	Male	1996–1997
Poland	Buzek, Jerzy	Male	1997–2001
Poland	Miller, Leszek	Male	2001–2004
Poland	Belka, Marek	Male	2004–2005
Poland	Marcinkiewicz, Kazimierz	Male	2005–2006
Poland	Kaczyński, Jarosław	Male	2006–2007
Poland	Tusk, Donald	Male	2007–2014
Poland	**Kopacz, Ewa**	**Female**	**2014–2015**
Poland	**Szydło, Beata**	**Female**	**2015–**
Slovakia	Mečiar, Vladimir	Male	1992–1994, 1994–1998
Slovakia	Moravčík, Jozef	Male	1994
Slovakia	Dzurinda, Mikuláš	Male	1998–2006
Slovakia	Fico, Robert	Male	2006–2010, 2012–
Slovakia	**Radičová, Iveta**	**Female**	**2010–2012**
Slovenia	Drnovšek, Janez	Male	1992–1996
Slovenia	Bajuk, Andrej	Male	2000
Slovenia	Rop, Anton	Male	2002–2004
Slovenia	Janša, Janez	Male	2004–2008
Slovenia	Pahor, Bohrut	Male	2008–2012
Slovenia	**Bratušuk, Alenka**	**Female**	**2013–2014**
Slovenia	Cerar, Miro	Male	2014–
United Kingdom	**Thatcher, Margaret**	**Female**	**1979–1980**
United Kingdom	Major, John	Male	1990–1997
United Kingdom	Blair, Tony	Male	1997–2007
United Kingdom	Brown, Gordon	Male	2007–2010
United Kingdom	Cameron, David	Male	2010–2016

Note: Female prime ministers in bold.

[a]Jacques Chirac was prime minister of France between 1986 and 1988. However, he is not included in the sample since he became prime minister for the first time before 1979.

Chapter 10

Party Gate-Keeping and Women's Appointment to Parliamentary Committees: Evidence from the Italian Case

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Party Gate-Keeping and Women's Appointment to Parliamentary Committees: Evidence from the Italian Case

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In this article, we investigate whether and how political parties function as gate-keepers in determining gender differentiations in committee appointments by using the Italian parliamentary committee system from 1994 to 2013 as a case study. Committee membership provides individual MPs with direct influence in a specific policy area as well as with visibility and expertise, thus affecting MPs' political careers. Accordingly, to study women's appointments to committees' positions is eventually to say something about women's chances to have an actual effect in the political process. After presenting the theoretical framework, three hypotheses are proposed. Our findings show that women tend to be appointed to committees dealing with stereotypically 'feminine' and 'less prestigious' issues, and that left-wing parties reproduce this pattern less than right-wing parties, but not when it comes to the appointment to more prestigious and influential positions. Moreover, we found that no significant longitudinal trends towards more unbiased distributions can be detected. A discussion closes the article.

Keywords: Italian parliament, Parliamentary appointments, Parliamentary committees, Party gate-keeping, Women and Politics

1. Introduction

Despite the wide attention devoted by scholars to women's representation in national assemblies, the role of women within political institutions is still an under-studied topic. Quite recently, we have witnessed the development of a fast-growing literature on women's cabinet appointments, also motivated by the numeric increase in female ministers worldwide. However, fewer studies have concentrated on the positions occupied by women within national parliaments. Just like ministerial posts, committee positions provide a degree of influence in policy-making.

Accordingly, to study women's appointments to committees' positions is eventually to say something about women's chances to have an actual effect on the decision-making process. Moreover, committee positions constitute a stepping-stone (O'Brien, 2012) for improving individual MPs' chances of political careers, by allowing them to gain visibility and expertise on a particular policy area. Membership of more influential or prestigious committees is thus a scarce resource in a parliament, and competition may arise among parties' representatives for the allocation of particular posts (Heath *et al.*, 2005, p. 421). Political parties are the gate-keepers (Norris and Lovenduski, 1995) for accessing political offices and play an exclusive role in determining committees' assignments. Accordingly, they can be considered as the actors responsible for promoting or hindering gender equality in the selection of committee members. In this article, we investigate whether and to what extent parties' assignments to parliamentary committees exhibit a model that reflects gender inequality. We focus our investigation on the Italian case. The Italian committee system shares many of the characteristics, in terms of structure, appointment procedures and powers, of the majority of Western European committee systems. In this sense, our study is particularly significant in virtue of the representativeness of the Italian committee system, but also in virtue of the paucity of literature on gender and politics in the Italian case.

Following the general trend in Western European democracies, in the last two decades, the number of women in the Italian Parliament has appreciably increased, moving from 15.8% in 1994 to 31.4% in 2013.[1] Far from reaching equality in representation of men and women in the parliament, however, Italy seems to have finally moved towards a more inclusive environment for women's representation. This result is even more compelling by virtue of the fact that Italy, unlike other European countries, lacks formal instruments for gender quotas at the national level, and that only one of the political parties which participated to the 2013 elections, the *Partito Democratico* (PD), introduced voluntary gender quotas.

In this article, we propose an analysis of women's appointments to Italian parliamentary permanent committees between 1994 and 2013 (XII–XVII legislative terms), and we investigate its evolution over time by focusing on the role played by political parties on women's committee assignment. After briefly reviewing the literature on the topic, we introduce the theoretical framework of our research

[1] It is worth noting that the 1994 elections were held on the basis of a gender quota rule introduced by art. 1 of Law n. 277 (4th August 1993), which was later declared unconstitutional and abrogated by the Constitutional Court in 1995 (Guadagnini, 2005, p. 141; Palici di Suni, 2012, pp. 382–384). The electoral results for 1994 are thus affected by the presence of the quota rule, as is shown by the immediate decrease of female representatives in the successive elections, where the percentage of women elected fell to 11.1% in 1996 and to 9.8% in 2001 (see Section 5).

and we present our research question. Subsequently, we highlight the characteristics, in terms of structure and allocation mechanisms, that make the Italian committee system a relevant case study for our purposes. Lastly, we posit three original research hypotheses and we present the relevant findings, which are discussed in the last section of this article.

2. Women in parliamentary committees

Findings from the literature on women appointments to parliamentary committees indicate that women MPs tend to be generally under-represented in influential positions, and there is a tendency to assign committee posts along traditional gender lines (Thomas, 1994; Towns, 2003; Heath *et al.*, 2005; Wängnerud, 2009; Coffé and Schnelleke, 2013; Barnes, 2014). Accordingly, women seem to be more likely to be excluded from more prestigious committees whose policy area is seen as traditionally related to male interests and characteristics, and more likely to be assigned to committees whose policy area is more 'feminine', in the sense that reflects stereotypical ideas about women's role in the society. In general, women seem to be under-represented in committees such as Economics, Foreign Affairs and Finance, while they are over-represented in committees such as Education, Health, Welfare and Family (Heath *et al.*, 2005, p. 434).

Factors that are generally described as responsible for a gendered distribution of political offices include cultural factors, like the diffusion of the value of gender equality in a society (Reynolds, 1999; Inglehart and Norris, 2003; Paxton and Kunovich, 2003; Krook and O'Brien, 2012; Jacob *et al.*, 2014); institutional factors, like the selection procedure (O'Brien, 2012); party-level factors, like party ideology (Heath *et al.*, 2005) and the presence of women in leadership positions within the party organisations (Krook and O'Brien, 2012); and individual level factors, like previous experience in the parliament (Heath *et al.*, 2005).

Placing our findings in the context of this literature, our research aims at investigating whether and in which way Italian political parties have worked to promote gender equality in positions of power, or, in contrast, whether they have worked to marginalise female representatives to less influential positions. Our analysis is led by a theoretical framework based on the neo-institutional *partisan approach*. According to the partisan approach, committees are both vehicles of specialisation and arenas of partisan co-ordination (cf. Strøm, 1998, p. 27). Following this perspective, committees can be seen as instruments that political parties employ to reach their various goals (Cox and McCubbins, 1993). Committee members are the agents of their own party, which have the final say in the composition of the parliamentary sub-arenas. Party leaders, through the party organisation, by deciding on appointments have the chance to limit parliamentarians' drifts and to reduce the likelihood of an agency loss in the principal

(party)–agent (MP) relationship.[2] More generally, parties are the ultimate gatekeepers for the promotion of their members, and, hence, of women as a group to positions where power can be exerted, specific decisions taken and connections to constituencies and interest groups nourished. The extent to which a given committee system is 'gendered', accordingly, says something about how much political parties foster or inhibit gender equality in politics.

3. A text-book case study: structural and procedural features of the Italian parliamentary committee system

The crucial role that parliamentary committees play for the functioning of democratic legislatures is well summarised by Woodrow Wilson's famous statement: 'Congress in session is Congress on public exhibition, whilst Congress in its committee-rooms is Congress at work' ([1885], 2002, p. 79). While Wilson refers specifically to the American Congress, the validity of the statement extends to many assemblies (Mattson and Strøm, 1995) and unquestionably includes the Italian parliament.

Two aspects are relevant in making the Italian case particularly appropriate for this study: the strength of the Italian committee systems in terms of its impact on the decision-making process and the primary role played by political parties in committee appointments.

The literature has indeed stressed the impact that Italian parliamentary committees have on the legislative process (Della Sala, 1993; Capano and Giuliani, 2001), so confirming the conventional claim that among Western countries Italy is a representative case of a strong committee system (e.g. Shaw, 1979, 1998).

The *strength* of a given committee system depends on some of its structural features, such as the committee type, the number, the size and the jurisdiction (Martin and Vanberg, 2011).[3] In Italy, three *types* of committees are present: permanent committees, *ad hoc* committees and investigative committees.[4] While permanent committees have a fixed membership, specific jurisdiction and last for the entire

[2]We assume that politicians are career politicians interested in keeping or improving their position and that parties are the most efficient tools to achieve that.

[3]Needless to say, this is not the whole story, but only what we are interested in for the paper's purposes. Committees can be more or less strong depending on their formal powers in the legislative process (Strøm, 1998, pp. 47–55) as well as on the institutional environment they operate in (Martin, 2014). In particular, Döring (1995) contends that the wider the government's agenda-setting power, the weaker the committees are. As empirical analyses show, Italian governments have been traditionally bestowed with only a limited agenda-setting power, save some steps towards a strengthening of such power subsequent to the appearance of government alternation over the last 20 years (Zucchini, 2011).

[4]A further type of committees are bicameral committees, which are joint committees gathering MPs from both Houses.

legislative term, *ad hoc* committees are created for a special task and dissolve once it has been fulfilled; lastly, investigative committees are special committees with a limited life span devoted to conducting an inquiry into a particular issue. Permanent committees are the most relevant for the legislative process (Pasquino and Pelizzo, 2006, p. 51) and are those we focus on.

The Italian legislature is characterised by a symmetrical bicameralism, that is, by two chambers with identical functions and powers, directly elected, and with the same legislative term of five years. This substantial equilibrium between the two branches allows us to deal with only one of two branches without any big danger of bias selection. We thus focus on the committees in the Lower House of the assembly, the Chamber of Deputies. In the period of this study, the Chamber of Deputies had 14 permanent committees (13 up to 1996). Although this *number* is not the highest among Western legislatures, it is still quite considerable (Mattson and Strøm, 1995, pp. 261–263). Smith (1980, p. 167) has posited an inverse relationship between the number of parliamentary sub-groups and their power in the political process: 'the greater the number of small groups, the less amenable to government control they are than a single, large one' (quoted in Strøm, 1998, p. 30).

A small committee *size* allows for more internal specialisation and endows the members with informational advantages and possibilities of gate-keeping expertise (Mattson and Strøm, 1995, p. 268). If restrictions on multiple membership exist, then a higher number of committees implies a smaller *size*. In Italy, the Chamber of Deputies is made up of 630 MPs and each committee comprises about 50 individuals (Di Ciolo and Ciaurro, 2013, p. 337). The members, who must be selected from the range of parliamentarians, can only be included in one committee, except when they substitute for other members who have been appointed as ministers or junior ministers. Moreover, since each committee membership should reproduce the proportions of party seats in the whole Chamber, double appointment is allowed when a parliamentary group's size is smaller than the number of committees.

Italian committees are characterised by a high degree of specialisation. Each committee has exclusive competency over its own policy *jurisdiction* and is accordingly endowed with the power to affect decisions falling within its respective field. The substantial correspondence between permanent committees' jurisdictions and ministerial sectors (Pasquino and Pelizzo, 2006, p. 54) is a component of their power (see, for example, Martin, 2011, p. 358). Indeed, 'such an arrangement facilitates oversight and law-making as well as the formation of issue networks involving legislative, administrative and interest group specialists' (Shaw, 1998, p. 230).

However, as mentioned above, the structure of the Italian committees is not the only dimension that makes them an interesting case study for our purposes. Explored in light of the aforementioned partisan approach, Italy matches the ideal-type of a case *under party control*: decisions on committee appointments are the monopoly of political parties.

Different procedures are at place for the selection of committee chairs and of single members. The position of committee chair has an inherent significance due to its formal pre-eminence and symbolic function and it grants some procedural prerogatives (De Micheli and Verzichelli, 2004, p. 173). Moreover, a committee chair often plays the functional equivalent of watchdog over junior ministers (Thies, 2001) in coalition governments (Kim and Loewenberg, 2005). In Italy, committee chairs belong to one of the parties in government,[5] and, whilst formally elected by the House, parties are the major actors in the selection process, making party bonds the decisive factor for the choice, rather than seniority or other factors (Hazan, 2001, p. 38).

However, the selection process where the party control is more easily detectable concerns the role of simple *members*. In Italy, committee assignments are made on the basis of a proportional representation among party groups and thus reflect the relative strength of the parties in the parliament.[6] Political parties decide on the distribution of posts and, as pointed out by Hazan (2001, p. 37): '[n]omination to committees is [...] solidly under party control, and each party works according to its own style'. Curini and Zucchini (2014, p. 529) have further suggested that 'it is reasonable to presume that party leaderships have always attempted to satisfy the preferences of MPs as far as possible, as it is also in the interest of the party as a whole to do so'.

The structural and procedural features reviewed so far converge in picturing the Italian committee system as particularly suitable for the inquiry we aim at.

4. Research hypotheses

Italy is generally depicted as a society still marked by strong gender inequalities. Gender inequalities manifest themselves in the labour market, where women employment rates remain low, especially in the Southern regions, and where, despite the number of women with university education exceeds the number of men, men tend to earn higher salaries and gain more significant positions (Barbieri *et al.*, 2007; World Economic Forum, 2014). Despite the introduction of some relevant normative changes, like the Golfo-Mosca Law No. 120/2011 on gender quotas in the boards of companies listed in the Stock Exchange, gender inequalities in the

[5]Unless the government party composition changes over the legislative term and no reshuffle occurs. With regard to this, art. 20 of the Regulations of the Chamber of Deputies states that committees' membership is renewed (and members can be confirmed) every two years after the first formation.

[6]Moreover, art. 19 of the Regulations of the Chamber of Deputies states that '[t]he President of the Chamber, according to parliamentary groups' proposals, allocates [...] among the Committees [...] the deputies who have not been assigned [... after the first allocation] as well as those who belong to Groups whose size is lower than the number of Committees'.

economic sector are still one of the most striking aspects of Italian society. Relevant for the interpretation of these inequalities is the cultural background in which they are embedded. Italy remains a patriarchal and familistic (Ruspini, 2009) society, where women stereotypes are reproduced and favoured both at the private and the public level. The traditional vision of the family also reinforced by the strong influence of the Catholic Church (cf. Rule, 1987, pp. 481–484; Lilliefeldt, 2012, p. 196; Valiente, 2008, p. 127) tends to favour the relegation of women to subalternate positions and specific areas of the job market.

In light of this cultural and socio-economic background, it is easy to assume that societal values play a major role in determining women's chances of access to political power. Social attitudes towards women affect both the supply and the demand side of women's political participation: on the supply side, they may affect women's decisions to run for offices or positions of power; on the demand side, they may have an effect on voters' support for female politicians, thus influencing parties' support for female candidates (Paxton and Kunovich, 2003; see also Norris and Lovenduski, 1995). In a society where traditional expectations about the 'appropriate' role of women are still in place, and where women's socio-economic status is still low, it is possible to expect that gender differentiations will reproduce themselves in the political sphere and that political parties will not act to promote female candidates.

4.1 The gendered division of labour

Traditional values imply a gendered differentiation of roles in a society, where the difference between women's and men's 'appropriate' spheres of action is often described in light of the private/public divide. In the economic sphere, this results in the common acceptance of the traditional norm according to which men tend to specialise in paid work in the market, while women tend to specialise in unpaid work within the home environment. Within the job market, traditional gender differentiations result in considering women as more apt for jobs which fit the stereotypical idea of women as 'caring' and 'nurturing'. The so-called 'gender segregation' (Bloksgaard, 2011) in the labour market, however, goes along two different dimensions. Horizontal segregation refers to the distribution of men and women in different professional sectors and job functions, in line with the idea that certain jobs are more related to men's ascriptive characteristics while others to women's (Bloksgaard, 2011, p. 6). Vertical segregation refers to a hierarchical distribution of roles between men and women within a same professional sector and implies 'the fact that women will typically rank lower in the hierarchy concerning pay, opportunities for promotion, mobility and chances to enhance qualifications in their jobs than men' (Bloksgaard, 2011, p. 6).

International literature on women in politics has highlighted a similar trend in the appointment to political offices (Bækgaard and Kjær, 2012; Coffé and Schnelleke, 2013). Single-case and comparative studies have shown that the distribution of ministerial posts and committee seats are in line with a gendered—both horizontal and vertical—division of labour. In Italy, where socio-economic gender inequalities are even more striking than in other Western countries,[7] we expect that political parties operate the selection of committee members in a way that reproduces traditional gender differences. On the basis of this, our first hypothesis is:

H1: *The division of labour hypothesis*. Women are over-represented in committees dealing with 'feminine' issues and in less prestigious committees and are under-represented in 'masculine' and more prestigious committees.

4.2 Party ideology

Left-wing parties are generally considered as more concerned with issues like equality and minority rights than conservative parties, which, on the other hand, seem to preserve a more traditional view of women's role (Rule, 1987). Both leftist parties' ideology and their traditional electoral body are more inclined to support the ideal of gender equality and the elimination of gender stereotypes. This results, as shown in a number of studies (Caul, 1999; Christmans-Best and Kjær, 2007; Wängnerud, 2009), in left-wing parties promoting more women candidates for parliamentary seats. The introduction of voluntary quotas in the PD in 2013 would testify to such trends also in the Italian case. However, a party's commitment to gender equality is expected not only to turn into a larger rate of female MPs, but also into the assignment to women of positions of power. This leads to our second hypothesis:

H2: *The ideology hypothesis*. Leftist parties are more inclined to assign to women seats in traditionally masculine or high prestige committees than rightist parties.

4.3 The gender-equality contagion

In the last few decades, the promotion of gender equality has achieved a prominent role in the international debate about social justice and has been included in the official proposals of a number of supra-national decision-making bodies. International attention to gender issues has grown considerably after the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1979 and the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA)

[7]The Global Gender Gap Report 2014 of the World Economic Forum lists Italy only at the 69th place in the world in terms of gender-equality, followed only by Greece, Malta, Hungary, Czech Republic and Romania among EU countries (World Economic Forum, 2014).

in 1995, where gender equality was placed at the centre of the global policy-making agenda.

The promotion of gender equality at the political level is testified by the progressive introduction of gender-quotas worldwide and by the increase in the percentage of female MPs in national parliaments and cabinets. Jacob *et al.* (2014, p. 323) show that the international recognition of a 'gender-balanced decision-making norm' has increasingly affected women's appointment in formal positions, although this seems to be more evident in the appointment to (low prestige) cabinet positions than in an increase in parliament representation. The growing consideration for women interests and empowerment at the international level and the widespread emergence of women politicians in Europe and worldwide may have led political parties of culturally more traditional countries to see the promotion of women to positions of power as at least an electoral resource (e.g. Jalalzai and Krook, 2010; cf. Campbell *et al.*, 2006). Although left-wing parties may be more likely to incorporate this trend, it is possible to suggest that the influence of international opinion may have an impact on all parties in the political spectrum in light of the *contagion effect* (Matland and Studlar, 1996), according to which: 'one party in a multiparty system stimulates other parties to adopt their policies or strategies' (Matland and Studlar, 1996, p. 708). On the basis of this, in recent years we may expect a less 'gendered' distribution of committee positions between different parties:

> **H3:** *The gender-equality contagion hypothesis*. From 1994 to 2013, equality in the distribution of committee seats in terms of gender and prestige increased along the entire political spectrum.

5. Findings

As anticipated, we looked at the composition of all permanent committees in the Italian Chamber of Deputies in the period 1994–2013 (XII-XVII legislative terms), that is, during the long transition subsequent to the breakdown of the so-called First Republic (Almagisti *et al.*, 2014). For our purposes, this time span is quite interesting: overall and compared with the former republican period, it witnessed a substantive increase in the rate of women in the parliament, that in 2013 reached the thresholds usually indicated as needed for a critical mass (Studlar and McAllister, 2002), as well as the larger increase in the number of women ministers, which moved from one in 1994 to seven in 2013.

To test our hypotheses, we distinguish Italian permanent committees between masculine-neutral-feminine committees and between high-medium-low prestige committees according to their field of competence. Information regards all the posts' allocations up to the final committees' formation excluding subsequent

changes occurred during the legislative term.[8] Previous literature on women's committees assignment does not distinguish between a committee gender and prestige type, implicitly assuming that 'masculine' committees are the most prestigious, and vice versa (see Heath *et al.*, 2005; Coffé and Schnelleke, 2013; Barnes, 2014). However, if the prestige of a committee is defined on the basis of its visibility and access to resources, gender and prestige type classifications do not completely overlap: differences in terms of prestige may be found among both 'masculine' and 'feminine' committees. To solve this analytical blur, we follow Krook and O'Brien's (2012) classification of cabinet ministers by policy area in classifying Italian committees by both gender and prestige types. This choice is supported by the fact that Italian committees are, to an extent, mirrors of ministerial areas. When a committee deals with more than one policy area, we classify it according to the prevalent type. Krook and O'Brien's classification has the merit of being built upon established literature on societal gender divides and portfolios rankings as well as of being suitable for comparative research. Whereas the 'gender' of a committee is defined, in line with feminist literature, on the basis of the traditional and symbolic association of its field of competence to one gender or the other, the 'prestige' of a committee is defined on the basis of its access to financial resources and visibility (see Escobar-Lemmon and Taylor-Robinson, 2005, p. 833; Krook and O'Brien, 2012, pp. 844–845).

5.1 The division of labour hypothesis

To test the presence of a gender bias, we show the presence of a pattern in the distribution of specific committees seats. In Table 1, we analyse women's representation in committees distinct by gender type.

We put in bold the values above the percentages referring to the whole Chamber. A pattern emerges: certain committees are constantly characterised by a degree of female representation that is higher than the general value of the Chamber, whereas others are always or almost always below the threshold. Two out of the three committees with a greater proportion of women in all the legislative terms fall in the so-called feminine domain. On the other hand, only three committees have always shown a percentage below the Chamber's value, and they belong to the masculine type. Moreover, if we take all the legislative terms and consider all the committees over the years, we see that only 22.2% of the masculine committees exceed the Chamber's value (12 times

[8]This means that we counted all the appointments, irrespective of the fact that some MPs left the post after being appointed to government posts. More specifically, for each legislative term we took into consideration the allocations up to: XII, 25 May 1994; XIII, 4 June 1996; XIV, 21 June 2001; XV, 6 June 2006; XVI, 22 May 2008; XVII, 7 May 2013. Henceforth, this applies to all the data presented.

Table 1 Percentage of women by committee gender type and by legislature, 1994–2013

	Legislative term					
	XII	**XIII**	**XIV**	**XV**	**XVI**	**XVII**
Chamber of Deputies	15.1	11.1	9.8	17.3	21.3	31.4
Committee type						
Masculine						
Constitutional, Presidency of the Council of Ministers and Interior Affairs	12.5	10	9.8	**22.4**	**26.5**	29.8
Foreign and European Community Affairs	13.2	9.2	**11.5**	10.6	14.6	**32.6**
Defence	12	**12.3**	6.1	12.2	10.9	20.9
Budget, Treasury and Planning	5.7	5.9	**10.6**	14	8	16.3
Finance	12.2	10	6.1	12.5	8.2	15.5
Transport, Post and Telecommunications	4	3.8	2.1	2	10.6	24.4
Economic Activities, Trade and Tourism	11.5	8	2.1	14.9	19.6	19.6
Public and Private Sector Employment	**18.4**	**18**	**10.4**	**31.1**	**34.7**	**50**
Agriculture	9.8	2	0	14.9	17.8	28.6
Neutral						
Justice	**16.7**	10	**12.5**	**20.4**	**26.7**	**32.5**
Environment, Territory and Public Works	**18.4**	8.5	**17**	13	19.1	26.1
European Union Policies		**13**	**10.2**	16.7	12	**36.4**
Feminine						
Culture, Science and Education	**37**	**24.5**	**28.3**	**29.8**	**46.8**	**51.1**
Social Affairs	**17.3**	**22.4**	**34.8**	**35.5**	**46.9**	**46.7**

Sources: Own calculation with data from IPU (2015) and the websites of the Chamber of Deputies storia.camera.it and www.camera.it. *Note:* Entries in bold refer to percentages above the Chamber's value.

out of 54);[9] in contrast, the numbers raise up to 58.8% in the case of neutral committees and eventually to 100% for feminine committees.

Table 2 describes the distribution of female MPs distinguishing the committees according to their prestige. Data show that women are under-represented in high prestige committees and over-represented in low prestige settings. Only 20% of times when a high prestige committee is formed, was the rate of women above the Chamber's value, whereas it occurred 81.8% of times with regard to low prestige committees. Medium prestige sub-groups are placed in the middle with a value of 45.2%. Even looking only at those committees where women are over-represented, feminine and low prestige committees have the lion's share of female representation.

Data about women's appointments to Italian parliamentary committees thus confirm our *division of labour hypothesis*: in the period under scrutiny, women have been assigned to feminine committees sensibly more than to masculine committees, and to low prestige committees more than to high prestige committees. Women are 'better' represented in neutral and, especially, feminine committees,

[9]The percentage falls to 12.5% if the exceptional case of the Labour committee is excluded.

Table 2 Percentage of women by committee prestige type and by legislature, 1994–2013

Committee	Legislative term					
	XII	**XIII**	**XIV**	**XV**	**XVI**	**XVII**
Chamber of deputies	15.1	11.1	9.8	17.3	21.3	31.4
Committee type						
High prestige						
Constitutional, presidency of the council of ministers and interior affairs	12.5	10	9.8	**22.4**	**26.5**	29.8
Foreign and European community affairs	13.2	9.2	**11.5**	10.6	14.6	**32.6**
Defence	12	**12.3**	6.1	12.2	10.9	20.9
Budget, treasury and planning	5.7	5.9	**10.6**	14	8	16.3
Finance	12.2	10	6.1	12.5	8.2	15.5
Medium prestige						
Justice	**16.7**	10	**12.5**	**20.4**	**26.7**	**32.5**
Environment, territory and public works	**18.4**	8.5	**17**	13	19.1	26.1
Transport, post and telecommunications	4	3.8	2.1	2	10.6	24.4
Economic activities, trade and tourism	11.5	8	2.1	14.9	19.6	19.6
Public and private sector employment	**18.4**	**18**	**10.4**	**31.1**	**34.7**	**50**
Social affairs	**17.3**	**22.4**	**34.8**	**35.5**	**46.9**	**46.7**
Agriculture	9.8	2	0	14.9	17.8	28.6
Low prestige						
Culture, science and education	**37**	**24.5**	**28.3**	**29.8**	**46.8**	**51.1**
European Union policies		**13**	**10.2**	16.7	12	**36.4**

Note: See Table 1.

with the significant exception of the Public and Private Sector Employment (Labour) committee (Tables 1 and 2). Women's appointments to Italian parliamentary committees reproduce the pattern of both a horizontal and a vertical division of labour highlighted by international studies.

5.2 The ideology hypothesis

We now observe variations across party families. We classified parliamentary groups (1994–2013) into two broad ideological categories: left and right parties. Since the used left-right scale goes from 1 (extreme left) to 20 (extreme right), we put those parties with a (mean) scale value ranging 1 to 10.5 in the first category and those higher than 10.5 in the second.[10]

[10]We refer to Benoit and Laver (2006); Giannetti and De Giorgi (2006); Curini and Iacus (2008); Di Virgilio *et al.* (2015) for party placement. The groups are composed as follows, from left to right: *left*—PRC, SEL, PDCI, *Verdi*, Progressive/DS, *Ulivo*/PD, RNP, M5S, PPI/*Margherita*, RI, IDV; *right*—UDEUR, NPSI, SC, CCD/UDC, FI, PDL, AN, FDI, LN. Only groups formed at the start of each legislative term are taken into account. Mixed groups, namely, those groups made up of MPs who have not entered any party parliamentary group in the legislature at issue are excluded.

First, we looked at committees' chairs. From 1994 to 2013, only 9 out of 83 (10.8%) chairs were women, with no particular variations across legislative terms.[11] Six women belonged to the left (*Ulivo*/DS; PD and PPI), and three to the right (FI and PDL). The only committee that has been chaired by a woman in more than one case is Justice (three cases); all the others (Constitutional, Presidency of the Council and Interior Affairs; Defence; Culture; Environment, Territory and Public Works; Social Affairs; European Union Policies) have been chaired by a woman only once. Furthermore, the only two women chairing a masculine and high prestige committee belonged to leftist parties (*Ulivo* and PPI).

Second, we analysed the overall distribution of women in committees. In this respect, we observed the distribution, *within left and right*, of women appointed by committee type for the whole period under analysis. We compared the resulting percentages with the percentage of women who should be in each type *if* they were appointed without any (positive or negative) gender bias ('unbiased distribution').[12] In both cases, the percentages refer to the rate of women appointed to a committee type over the total of female MPs. The results are pictured in Figures 1 and 2.

The findings are not straightforward, but they allow us to infer some (cautious) conclusions. Left-wing parties have somehow acted in contrast to the general trend of women representation in parliamentary committees as far as feminine and low prestige committees are concerned, which goes against the expectation regarding in

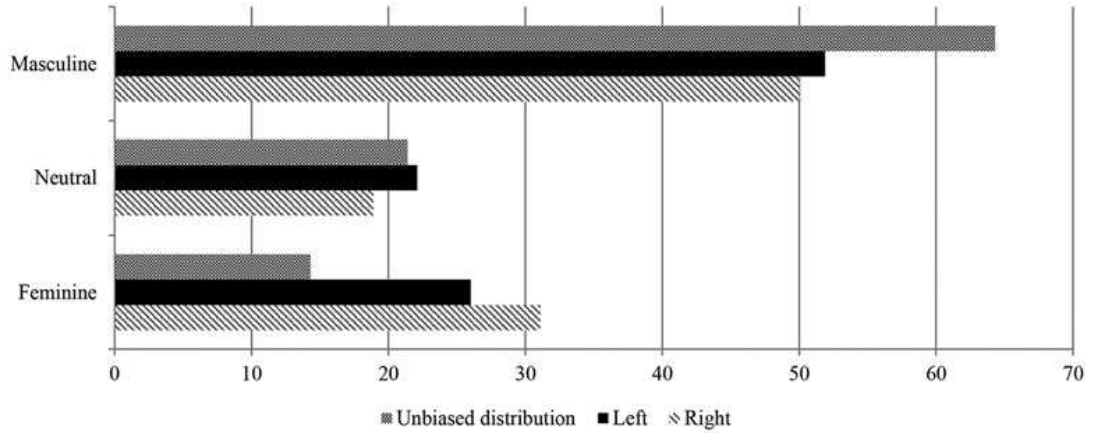

Figure 1. Percentage distribution of women by gender committee type and ideological group. *Sources*: Own calculation with data from storia.camera.it and www.camera.it

[11]The highest number is three in the XIII and the lowest 0 in the XIV.

[12]The unbiased distribution hypothetically assumes that female MPs are distributed to committees in a way proportional to the size of each committee type. We then calculate the percentage of committees (over the total of committees in the Chamber) for each type. For the sake of simplicity, in Figures 1 and 2 we counted 14 committees also for the XII legislative term and irrespective of the number of members of each committee in each legislature, assuming they are exactly the same.

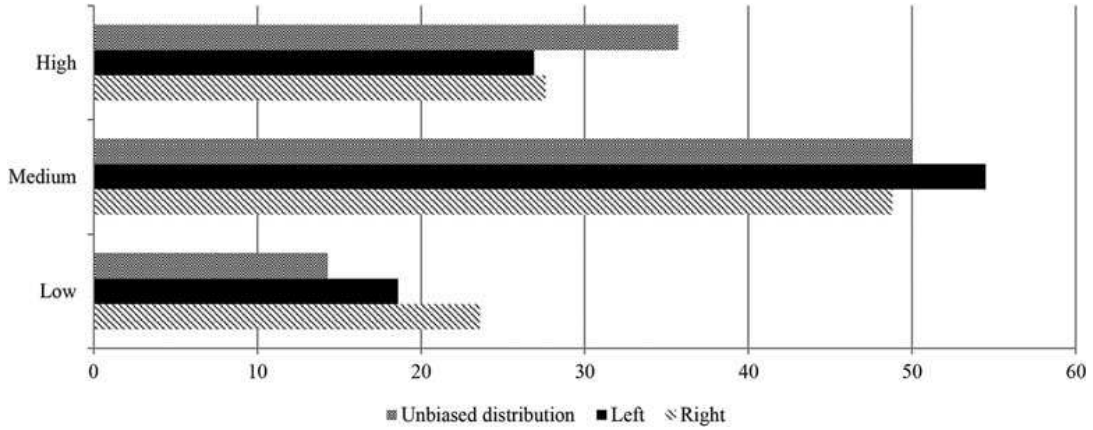

Figure 2. Percentage distribution of women by prestige committee type and ideological group. *Sources*: See Figure 1

particular high prestige committees. In this case, right-wing parties seem to promote their female MPs slightly more than left-wing parties. It is also worth noting that differences between ideological groups sensibly shrink with respect to masculine committees. Finally, when it comes to appoint to 'mid' committees (neutral and medium prestige), the two groups approximate the hypothetical unbiased representation with regard to both types, with some significant exceeding's on the part of the left in medium prestige committees.

5.3 The gender-equality contagion hypothesis

In order to observe variations in committee appointments in Italy over the last 20 years, we disaggregated the data of Figures 1 and 2 for each legislative term and we aggregated the data of the two ideological groups. Once again, we calculated the hypothetical 'unbiased distribution' for each legislative term.[13] The more the percentage rate of women appointed to a type over the total of female MPs approximates to the relevant 'unbiased distribution' line (see above), the less the allocation is gender biased.

Quite interestingly, the graphs show a certain trend towards a gender-neutral allocation in the current legislature as far as gender type is concerned (Figure 3). Indeed, an increase in the percentage of women appointed in traditionally masculine domains goes together with a decrease in the number of posts allocated to feminine committees. However, values do not follow the same trajectory with regard to prestige types, and low prestige committees in particular (Figure 4); however, the percentage of women in low prestige committees had not been distant from the

[13]Since the total number of committees and the committees distribution into types are fixed for the whole period, with the exception of the XII legislative term, the 'unbiased distribution' lines are almost entirely flat over time.

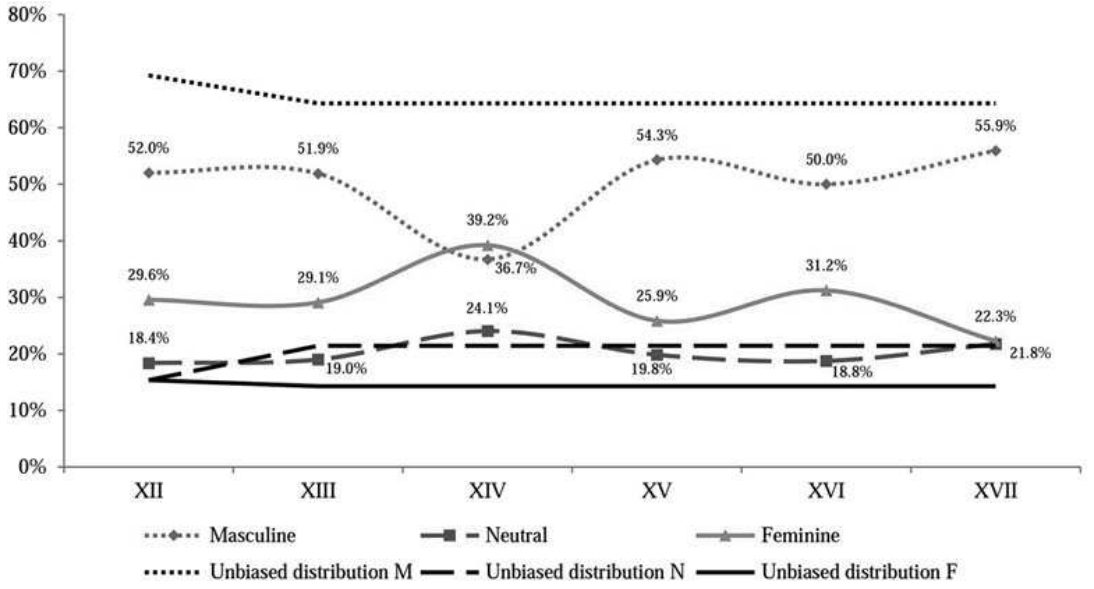

Figure 3. Percentage distribution of women by gender committee type and legislature, 1994–2013. *Sources*: See Figure 1

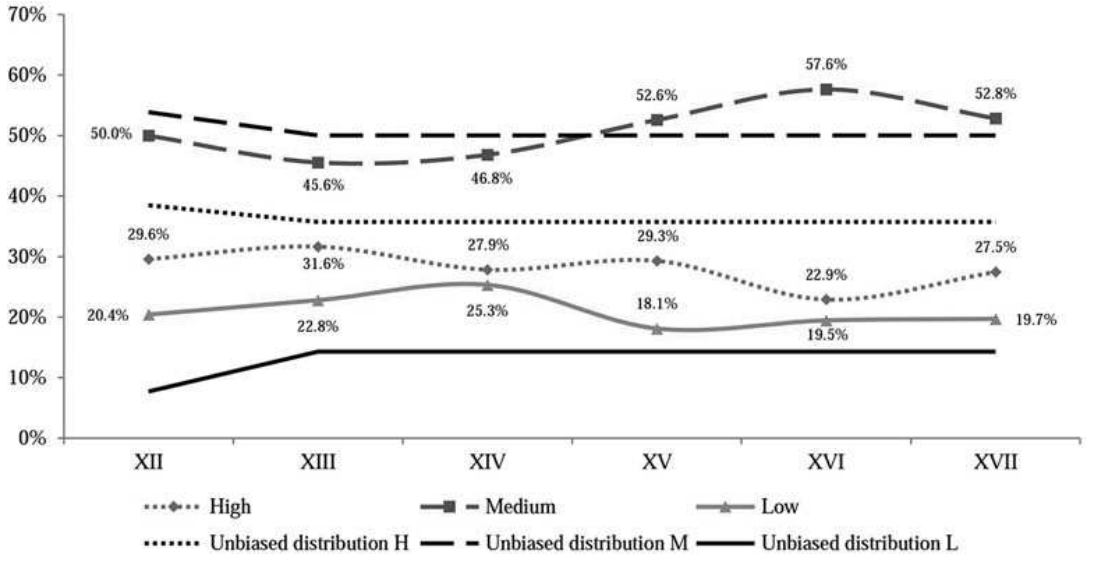

Figure 4. Percentage distribution of women by prestige committee type and legislature, 1994–2013. *Sources*: See Figure 1

respective 'unbiased distribution' since the XV legislative term. Moreover, if one looks at the fluctuations over time between committee gender types, it is possible to point out that the two legislatures in which the disproportion in terms of female representation between feminine and masculine committees have been the greatest are those characterised by a centre-right majority and a centre-right government (Conti and Marangoni, 2015): accordingly, the egalitarian trend could be only temporary and could depend on the parliament's party composition (see ideology hypothesis with regard to gender types) and not on some general

'ungendering' process. Overall, the trends are not straightforward and the contagion hypothesis cannot be unquestionably confirmed.

6. Discussion and conclusion

The analysis of the Italian case confirms the presence of a gender-biased selection of parliamentary committee members. Italian female MPs tend to be appointed to committees dealing with stereotypical 'feminine' and 'gender-neutral' policy areas in higher proportion than their male counterparts—with the significant exception of the Public and Private Sector Employment Committee, in which female presence remains high along all the six legislatures under scrutiny—as well as to be over-represented in low and especially medium prestige committees. The vertical and horizontal 'division of labour' that characterises the Italian socio-economic structure is thus reflected in politics, where committee assignments made by parties are led by stereotypical attitudes towards women.

In contrast to our expectations, party ideology does not show a clear effect on the extent to which horizontal and vertical marginalisation are limited or reproduced. Leftist ideology and the explicit party commitment to social equality play a role in the distribution of women in committee seats in terms of committees' gender type: leftist parties appointed women to masculine committees in a slightly higher degree than rightist parties, and, more prominently, assigned women to feminine committees in a significantly lower degree than rightist parties. However, quite surprisingly, rightist parties score slightly better than leftist parties in promoting women to high prestige committees, although showing also a higher degree of women appointments to low prestige committees.

Longitudinal analysis shows that no significant change has occurred in the course of the six legislatures under scrutiny, and that differences in the assignment of committee seats continue to be reproduced along traditional gender lines. Accordingly, political parties' decisions on committee assignment seem not to be generally affected by a form of international 'contagion' about the promotion of women equality in politics. Rather, variations in the allocations of women to committees posts seem to be affected by the party composition of the government: in the presence of centre-right majorities (XIV and XVI legislative terms in particular), inequality clearly increases in relation to gender type, thus indirectly confirming our ideology hypothesis. Less straightforward results, however, are present when comparing right-wing and left-wing legislatures for women's appointments to committees by prestige type.

In sum, the analysis of the evolution over time of gender differentiations in the assignments of committee positions does not allow us to identify a clear variation in favour of a more unbiased selection. Although in 2013 women's representation in 'masculine' and 'feminine' committees reaches, respectively, its highest and its

lowest points, a similar trend does not occur with regard to prestige type. This result may be explained, following Jacob *et al.*, (2014), by assuming that the effects of the societal diffusion of the value of gender equality is reproduced in politics only for what concerns more *symbolic* aspects, like in the appointment of women to (low prestige) ministerial posts, and, in our case, in the attenuation of the horizontal 'division of labour' in committees appointments. In contrast, gender inequalities are maintained for what concerns less visible, although influential, political appointments. This assumption may be supported by the increase in the percentage of women ministers in the two Italian governments (Letta, 2013; Renzi, 2014) that have followed the 2013 elections (Marangoni and Verzichelli, 2014), to which no significant change in the pattern of allocation of high prestige committee seats corresponds.

Another possible explanation of the absence of a trend in favour of an unbiased selection in committees appointments can be drawn from Heath *et al.*'s theory of 'newcomers marginalisation', according to which 'as representation to women in a chamber increases, they become a growing threat to male domination' of scarce political resources (2005, p. 423; see also Barnes, 2014). As supported by Heath *et al.*'s results, an increase in women's presence in the parliament may lead to further segregation to low prestige committees posts. Accordingly, newcomers marginalisation theory may suggest that the increase of female representatives in the Italian parliament may also result in further marginalisation, thus mitigating the effects of the international gender-equality contagion with particular reference to high prestige committee membership. Moreover, newcomers marginalisation theory may explain also differences at the party level. Parties with higher numbers of female MPs may experience a sort of 'newcomers effect' in higher degree than parties where the representation of women remains low, thus containing the effects of the gender equality contagion. In the Italian case, a higher percentage of women MPs is traditionally located within left-wing parties, while right-wing parties generally exhibit percentages of women below—and, in certain cases, considerably below—the Chamber's value. Accordingly, right-wing parties may experience the newcomers effect in a less intense degree than left-wing parties, and thus be less inclined to consider women as a group as a possible threat to access to positions of power. This interpretation may explain to an extent the only partial confirmation of our ideology hypothesis, based on the higher degree of women's representation in high prestige committees for right-wing parties in comparison to left-wing parties.

Our study has shown that gender bias in the selection of committee members is currently an enduring characteristic of Italian politics. It is worth noting, however, that only in the last elections women in the national parliament have surpassed 30% and have reached the proportion generally considered necessary for the presence of a critical mass. Future data will show whether the increase in women's

representation will confirm Heath *et al.*'s (2005) hypothesis, showing a further marginalisation of women in committee assignment; or whether the persistence of a high rate of women in the legislature may induce permanent changes in favour of less biased party selection of committee members. To put it in Barnes' (2014, p. 136) terms, it will show whether 'women's access to legislative committee appointments changes as women learn to navigate the legislative arena'. Future studies, moreover, may focus on an assessment of the differences between male and female MPs' committee appointments in light of their area of competence, investigated on the basis of their previous political career and professional background, following, for example, in the steps of Zucchini's (2001) study on Italian parliamentarians and of studies on female ministers' careers such as Taylor-Robinson and Escobar-Lemmon (2014). Lastly, studies aiming at investigating female MPs' preferences prior to committee appointments (Bækgaard and Kjær, 2012) may offer further assessment of parties' style in membership selection.

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Conflict of interest

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Chapter 11

POLITICAL CAREERS IN MULTI-LEVEL SYSTEMS: REGIONAL CHIEF EXECUTIVES IN ITALY, 1970-2015

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Political careers in multi-level systems: Regional chief executives in Italy, 1970–2015

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ABSTRACT
This article focuses on Italian regional chief executives and aims to investigate if and how the Italian regionalization process has affected regional chief executives' career trajectories. Our analysis is based on an original dataset on political careers of regional heads of government in Italy from 1970 to 2015. After presenting our two research expectations, we find that the direct election of regional presidents and the decentralization process have gone hand in hand with the selection of more regional political outsiders and visible politicians as well as with a higher integration between institutional levels in terms of career paths

KEYWORDS Regional presidents; career paths; decentralization; presidentialization; elite circulation

Introduction

The goal of this article is to study the political recruitment and career trajectories of regional chief executives in Italy. The literature to date has focussed on legislators' careers both at national (Verzichelli, 2010) and regional level (Vassallo and Cerruto, 2007), but has neglected regional executive roles. However, executives' careers are different from those of MPs, and the way in which heads of government are elected has significant implications for the quality of mandate representation and democratic accountability (Samuels and Shugart, 2010).

According to the literature, the pathways to power are affected by factors that can be grouped into two main categories: (micro-level) individual motivations and (macro-level) contextual factors. The candidates' political ambition, which impacts their strategic choices and consequentially their career paths, is the most clear-cut example of an individual factor (Schlesinger, 1966; Nicholls, 1990; Sieberer and Müller, 2017). On the other hand, new-institutionalist

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approaches (Hall and Taylor, 1996) have posited that these individual choices are constrained by the structure of competition of the political system in question. The idea is that '[t]he rules and procedures of political systems structure behaviour, attitudes and opinions in predictable orderly ways' (Dogan, 1989; Norris, 1997: 9). Borchert (2003) has argued that the opportunity structure is defined by the (1) availability, (2) accessibility and (3) attractiveness of political offices.

Our theoretical framework clearly relates to the new-institutionalist approach, since we aim to understand the potential impact of electoral rules and institutional arrangements on the career trajectories of Italian regional chief executives.

From this point of view, Italy is an interesting case study. In the early 1990s, the party system moved from extreme pluralism (Sartori, 1976) to bipolar competition (Bardi et al., 2013); moreover, the proportional electoral system was replaced by a quasi-majoritarian rule (Chiaramonte and Tarli Barbieri, 2007). At the regional level, the model of government moved from a parliamentary to a presidential model.[1] Finally, the regionalization process that started in the mid-1990s gave regional governments more powers and thus made the office of the regional chief executive more attractive. The Italian case is therefore useful to assess – *ceteris paribus* – the effects of constitutional formats on regional chief executives' career paths; indeed, it allows consensual and majoritarian patterns within the same political system to be compared, an extremely rare example of quasi-experimental research conditions (e.g. Grilli di Cortona, 2011).

This article presents original data (Grimaldi and Vercesi, 2017) on the heads of government of ordinary regions from these regions' establishment in 1970–2015. Information covers not only institutional experience but also party backgrounds, which received little consideration in previous studies on regional elites. The modification of the rules to elect regional executives and the state decentralization process that took place in Italy between the 1990s and 2000s make it reasonable to assume that dramatic changes have taken place in the opportunity structure. In fact, we have observed relevant changes in the profiles and career patterns of regional chief executives. In particular, from 1970 to 1995 regional heads of government were mostly party agents and political climbers (Martocchia Diodati and Verzichelli, 2017) and the career models that prevailed were alternative and unidirectional from local to centre; however, after 1995 the number of outsiders and the so-called high-flyers increased as did those following an integrated model, which implies moves between levels of government in any direction without hierarchy and based on variable opportunities (Borchert, 2003, 2011). As a consequence, we have empirical support to argue that the opportunity structure influences the profiles of the prominent members of the subnational Italian political elite.

In the following section, we analyse the literature on the impact of institutional settings and party competition on political careers and we put forward our expectations. Subsequently, we outline the changes in the Italian political structure of opportunity that are of relevance to the analysis. Thirdly, we operationalize the variables and specify practical and methodological issues. Finally, we present and discuss our findings and offer our preliminary conclusions.

Institutional settings and political careers

Electoral rules and political careers

Electoral systems and the type of party competition significantly affect personal profiles and pathways to power (Best and Cotta, 2000; Borchert and Zeiss, 2003; Jun and Hix, 2010). According to Eliassen and Pedersen (1978: 289), 'electoral variables occupy a central position as intervening variables in any realistic model of the transformation of the […] elite'.

In this respect, Samuels and Shugart (2010) have noted that different electoral rules and electoral campaigns matter not only with regard to MPs' profiles, but also because they give rise to distinctions in the types of chief executive. The two authors have pointed out that the different electoral logics of parliamentary and presidential systems push political parties towards distinct forms of organization and the selection of different types of candidates for executive office. The argumentation is based on the principal-agent theory of party delegation (Strøm, 2003). Political parties would be principals that fill public offices with their own agents; parties seek to avoid prospective agency losses by screening *ex-ante* the experience of candidates. When the executives stem from the legislature (as is the case with the parliamentary ideal-type), parties are more likely to select a 'reliable' agent as chief executive and, therefore, to minimize adverse selection.

In contrast, when chief executives originate separately from legislatures (presidential ideal-type), the candidates need different skills: 'vote-drawing ability and an appealing […] public image' come first (Samuels and Shugart, 2010). In other words, candidates should be visible and well-known to the broad electorate and, ultimately, able to win elections as voters' agents. These traits outweigh the importance of 'reliability' as a party agent (e.g. Curtice and Lisi, 2015). Parliamentary systems are hence more likely to recruit political insiders. Unlike an outsider, a political insider has stronger ties with the party organization and a broader experience in the party and in representative institutions (Samuels and Shugart, 2010: 65ff.).

Building on these insights, we extend the argumentation from national to regional heads of government. However, some caveats must be addressed. At the sub-national level, the same reasoning applies to the parliamentary type of election, without significant differences. If regional chief executives are

chosen from the regional assembly according to a parliamentary logic, it is probable that they are party agents, thus party members, with leadership experience at the local level. Moreover, they are likely to be political climbers (Martocchia Diodati and Verzichelli, 2017) who have followed an ascending *cursus honorum*, moving from sub-regional institutions to regional assemblies and regional governments before entering the office (e.g. Botella et al., 2010). On the other hand, directly elected regional presidents are more likely to be outsiders, since previous experience as party agents at the local and regional level is less important to obtaining the post. Parties have to redefine their strategies and find candidates with new skills and profiles. In particular, the personalization and the mediatization processes that have affected all Western democracies (Karvonen, 2010; Esser, 2013) imply that candidates must be more recognizable in the eyes of voters; and the national arena is the most visible showcase. Hence, the direct election of the chief executive is likely to increase the access of outsiders and politicians with high public visibility and, conversely, to limit that of politicians with low public visibility**,** albeit with a steady party or institutional career.

If this is true, we have to take into account not only outsiders but also 'high-flyers'[2] (Martocchia Diodati and Verzichelli, 2017), namely politicians who enjoy some nationwide visibility. For example, candidates with no connection to the territory but who have acquired political experience jumping to the national or supranational level; or local candidates who have become popular leaders at the national level, such as mayors of large cities. The decline of traditional party representative models (Dalton and Weldon, 2005; Mair, 2013) would further support such a conjecture: indeed, national party figures become more prominent.

By means of the electoral reform of 1995 (plus the constitutional change of 1999), Italy has moved from a fully-fledged parliamentary model for the election of heads of regional governments to a presidentialized model based on the direct election of regional presidents. Therefore, our *presidentialization expectation* is that:

> When the institutional framework is presidentialized, a larger ratio of regional presidents will be political outsiders or 'high-flyer' politicians with high public visibility.

We assume that changes in electoral procedures imply changes in the opportunities to enter office. Hence, testing this expectation allows us to focus on the accessibility issue,[3] conceived of as the chance someone has to take office (see Borchert, 2011).

State decentralization and political careers

In addition to the change in the institutional setting, the literature has stressed the role of state structure in shaping political careers and has resulted in an

increasing number of studies on multi-level careers (Pilet et al., 2014). More precisely, the territorial structure of the state clearly does influence career opportunities since there are more offices at stake in federal or regional states than in centralized **s**tates (Borchert 2011). Along with the wave of regionalization (Keating, 1998), the opportunity structures have probably been broadened dramatically by the EU level of government.

Based on a comparative approach, Borchert (2011) has identified three models of multi-level careers. The first is the unidirectional model: the typical pathway follows the organization of the state from the local to the regional and then to the national level (see also Hibbing, 1991). Secondly, according to the alternative model, there is no pre-determined hierarchy and sub-national and national careers are separate. This is a more likely pathway if there is a high degree of separation between levels of government and if the composition of constituencies differs significantly (Borchert 2011). Thirdly, politicians can move from one level to the other and vice versa and follow an integrated career model. Here boundaries between levels of government or types of institution are more porous as there is no clear-cut hierarchy, so the number of opportunities is likely to increase and movement is encouraged. This framework has been elaborated for the study of parliamentarians, but its extension to chief executives seems useful. In fact, here we are interested in relationships between institutional layers in multi-level systems and the potential impact of the decentralization process on these relationships, irrespective of the type of public office. However, these features probably interact with other recruitment dynamics that are specific to executive offices, which are highlighted by our first expectation.

All else equal, decentralization and the prestige of sub-national political offices would determine which career model is likely to prevail. For example, Stolz (2001) has pointed out that state decentralization can facilitate territorial differentiation between sub-national and national elites. The higher the territorial distinctiveness, the less local and regional politicians are socialized within national institutions. An empirical study on regional prime ministers in France, Spain and the United Kingdom (Botella et al., 2010) has confirmed this expectation. Moreover, the authors of this study have shown that the higher political value of the regional level in these three countries has been conducive to specific territorial pathways to power: from less attractive local positions to regional premiership. These changes have been paralleled by a decline in the national institutions' role in regional leaders' careers. Similarly, Stolz and Fischer (2014) have found that top regional politicians in a polity with powerful sub-national units such as the German *Länder* tend not to exploit the sub-national level as a springboard, but rather to pursue separate regional careers. On the other hand, Cazzola et al. (1988) have shown that when regional institutions are weak, moves between sub-national and national levels (if any) go from the former to the

latter and seldom in the opposite direction. Stolz (2003: 244) has provided evidence that decentralization processes in conjunction with the growing institutionalization and professionalization of regional units can foster centrifugal moves from the centre to the sub-national level, especially in strong and highly autonomous regions. This, in turn, can lead to integrated yet not hierarchical career trajectories, as has been the case in Wallonia in Belgium and Catalonia in Spain (Stolz, 2003: 240).

All these studies thus suggest that the greater attractiveness of regional offices fosters the attractive force of the sub-national level and the formation of centrifugal drives in the paths to power. This can result either in alternative careers or patterns that are more integrated. In contrast, lower attractiveness pushes local and regional politicians to seek higher offices unidirectionally.

Between the 1990s and the 2000s, Italy moved from being characterized by very weak sub-national authorities (Massari, 2013: 313) to a decentralized system with autonomous and strengthened regions (Fabbrini and Brunazzo, 2003). These changes gave regional presidents more power resources, especially in forming their own government team (Wilson, 2016). Moreover, the personalization of the presidential office (Musella, 2009) and direct election contributed to the consolidation of presidents' executive powers, political visibility and public legitimacy (Wilson, 2016). In a nutshell, the regional presidential post has become very attractive due to its political benefits. For our purposes, these benefits can be traced back to two main features. On the one hand, the post of regional chief executive has sensibly gained in terms of political prestige. Regional presidents have become the central figures of the electoral campaigns; their public figure has become more prominent *vis-à-vis* party organizations; and their chances to build their own political capital (Bennister et al. 2017) for further career steps – at least in principle – have been expanded. On the other hand, the higher attractiveness of the office has been a consequence of the increase of competences and powers that institutional changes granted to the Italian regional governments between the 1990s and 2000s. This process has been conducive to a larger room for manoeuvre for regional presidents in their action as policy-makers and policy-changers.

In this regard, Massari (2013: 315) has underlined that the Italian regionalization process has been conducive to a situation where 'there is no centre anymore, because every local joint of the state is centre itself'. This means that the prestige of the state and regions is now more similar. Consequently, rational ambitious politicians can alternatively target the centre or the region, based on the circumstances and their own strategies. Building on this literature stream, we want to use the Italian case to observe whether the unidirectional model really prevailed from 1970 to 1995, namely when the regional institutions were quite weak, and whether it was subsequently replaced by the alternative or the integrated model when these institutions

became more attractive. In particular, we infer from the general literature's argument and we limit our focus to the office of the regional presidency.

Accordingly, our *career model expectation* is that

> When the state is decentralized, a larger ratio of regional presidents will follow a career path based on the alternative or the integrated model.

The regionalization process in Italy

The 1948 Constitution defines Italy as a unitary state made up of 20 regions: 15 ordinary regions and five special regions with a higher level of autonomy. Special regions are characterized by specific territorial identities and/or ethno-linguistic differentiations, such as German, French or Slavic minorities, repressed under Fascism. Italian scholars usually study special regions as a separate group (Caciagli and Corbetta, 1987; Baldi, 2003; Bolgherini and Loughlin, 2006), since these territories rely on a different constitutional status and came into being soon after the WWII, long before ordinary regions. For comparison's sake, we follow the same approach**,** given that the number of past legislative terms in special regions is higher than in ordinary regions and the election of chief executives follows a different electoral calendar.

Regionalization in Italy has been in constant flux (Leonardi, 1992). Although the Constitution made reference to ordinary regions from the outset, they were only established in 1970. Even after being established, ordinary regions had relatively little autonomy from the centre during the so-called First Republic (1948–1994), and parties controlled the entire political process from the national level. In the early 1990s, the re-emergence of the centre-periphery cleavage (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967; Vercesi, 2014: 283–285) and the growing electoral importance of the Northern League party – advocating the need to tackle the 'Northern Issue' – gave decentralization great impetus. Moreover, this issue was pursued at the European level through the Treaties of Maastricht, Amsterdam and Nice as well as through the creation of the Committee of the Regions (Bolgherini, 2006). As a result, important provisions were introduced at the end of the decade to improve the autonomy of ordinary regions, in line with federalist thought.

From an institutional viewpoint, the first attempt to reinforce the role of ordinary regions was made in the Law No. 59/1997, which acknowledged EU indications on the subsidiarity principle. Subsequently, two constitutional reforms were introduced (CL No. 1/1999 and No. 3/2001). The most important novelties were the direct election of regional presidents and the possibility for each region to decide autonomously about both their own Statute (the regional 'Constitution') and electoral law, based on a mixed-majoritarian system introduced by the central state in 1995 (Law No. 43/1995) (Vassallo and Baldini, 2000; Chiaramonte and Tarli Barbieri, 2007). The new rules –

overturning the former provisions – stated that regions would have legislative competencies on all topics other than those carried out exclusively by the state; in other words, they acquired a major policy role in healthcare, agriculture, environment, economic development and professional training (Baldi, 2003). Moreover, ordinary regions won more fiscal autonomy. As a result, whereas the authority of ordinary regions increased from 2001, particularly with reference to self-rule, shared-rule remained limited (Hooghe et al., 2008). Overall, institutional reforms produced major changes both in the *vertical* distribution of power and the *horizontal* distribution of power, strengthening the executive leader *vis-à-vis* the legislature (Fabbrini and Brunazzo, 2003, Wilson, 2016)

If we look at the dynamics of party competition, the regionalization process in Italy can be analytically divided into two periods (1970–1995 and 1995 onwards), which correspond to two important electoral phases. The first period (five legislative terms of five years) corresponds to the concretization of constitutional provisions, when the ordinary regions started functioning. During this period, regional elections and party systems usually mimicked those at the national level. The proportional system introduced by the state Law No. 108/1968 and polarized pluralism (Sartori, 1976) led to the regions experiencing the same 'problems' as the national political system, government instability being one of them. In the 1990s, a political earthquake gave rise to the collapse of the national party system and the sudden disappearance of the most important ruling parties (Christian Democracy and Italian Socialist Party). These changes also had an impact at the regional level. The beginning of the second period (from 1995) was characterized by a new majoritarian law for regional elections (Law No. 43/1995). The majoritarian turn was further boosted by the constitutional reform of 1999. This reform formalized what had already actually existed since 1995, that is, the direct election of regional presidents by voters. These changes fostered both greater government stability and a lower turnover of regional chief executives. Moreover, in the mid-2000s, the Law No. 65/2004 introduced the limit of two consecutive mandates for regional presidents.

If we look at the total number of legislative terms in all regions until 31 December 2015, we have 159 terms in the first period and 83 in the second.[4] Of these, 53.5% and 23.5%, respectively[5] ended with an early interruption, that is, any interruption not due to a scheduled election according to the normal legislative term of five years. The average duration in days of the *only concluded terms* of regional governments is 850 from 1970 to 1995 and 1548 afterwards. These numbers are lower than the total tenure of each head of government. In fact, each head of government stayed in office 1155 days on average before 1995 and 2239 days from 1995 onwards. The presidential turnover – calculated as the ratio of chief executives to the total number of terms – is 73.6% in the first period and 71.1% from 1995.

Even though variations among regions increased (Massetti and Sandri, 2013) and vote orientation seems to have become more region-centred since the 1995 election (Magone, 1998; Mazzoleni, 2002), party systems at regional level still resemble the national system. The recent changes at the national level that were seen in the 2013 general election (Chiaramonte and De Sio, 2013) can also be detected at the regional level with the emergence of a tripolar competition (Bolgherini and Grimaldi, 2016, 2017).

The percentage of heads of government in office one or more times is similar for the two periods under analysis (Table 1). However, there are striking differences in chief executives' party membership. In fact, during the first phase only a small proportion of heads of government belonged to a minor party (8%), whereas this quota increased considerably in the second phase (31%), when structured parties started losing their grasp on the electorate. Moreover, in the first phase, there was a clear and constant voting orientation in most regions towards heads of government either from Christian Democrats and its allies (Socialists and Republicans) or from Communists,

Table 1. Turnover and party affiliation of Italian regional chief executives by time period.

	Re-elected individuals (once)		Re-elected individuals (twice or more)		Individuals from minor parties** or independents		Dominant party by individuals' affiliation***	
Region	1970–1995	1995–2015	1970–1995	1995–2015	1970–1995	1995–2015	1970–1995	1995–2015
Abruzzo	3 (37.5)	-	1 (12.5)	-	-	3 (5.1)	DC	A
Apulia	2 (16.7)	1 (25.0)	-	-	1 (0.9)	2* (3.4)	DC	A
Basilicata	-	1 (25.0)	1 (25.0)	-	-	2* (3.4)	DC	C-L
Calabria	3 (37.5)	-	-	-	1 (0.9)	2 (3.4)	DC/PSI	A
Campania	3 (30.0)	1 (20.0)	-	-	-	2 (3.4)	DC	A
Emilia-Romagna	1 (16.7)	-	1 (16.7)	1 (25.0)	-	-	PCI	C-L
Lazio	2 (15.4)	-	-	-	1 (0.9)	3 (5.1)	PSI	A
Liguria	1 (9.1)	1 (25.0)	-	-	3 (2.6)	1 (1.7)	A	A
Lombardy	2 (28.6)	-	1 (14.3)	1 (50.0)	1 (0.9)	1* (1.7)	DC	C-R
Marche	-	2 (66.7)	3 (50.0)	-	-	1* (1.7)	DC/PSI	C-L
Molise	1 (11.1)	1 (25.0)	1 (11.1)	1 (25.0)	1 (0.9)	1* (1.7)	DC	A
Piedmont	1 (16.7)	1 (25.0)	-	-	-	-	DC/PSI	A
Tuscany	3 (60.0)	2 (66.7)	-	-	-	-	PSI/PCI	C-L
Umbria	2 (40.0)	2 (66.7)	1 (20.0)	-	-	-	PCI	C-L
Veneto	2 (28.6)	1 (50.0)	1 (14.3)	1 (50.0)	1 (0.9)	-	DC	C-R
Total	*26 (22.2)*	*13 (22.0)*	*10 (8.6)*	*4 (6.8)*	*9 (7.7)*	*18 (30.5)*		
Mean (N)	2	1	1.3	0.8	0.6	1.2		

*In these regions, the same chief executives were first members of a minor party and then of a major or another minor party. We consider these chief executives as two distinct cases.

**We consider major parties Christian Democracy (DC), Italian Republican Party (PRI), Italian Communist Party (PCI), Italian Socialist Party (PSI) (1970–1995), Democratic Party of the Left (PDS), Left Democrats (DS), Democratic Party (PD), *Forza Italia*, People of Freedom (PDL) (1995–2015); minor parties all the others (Green, AN, CDU, Daisy, LN, PPI, SEL, SDI, RC, UDR).

***Letter 'A' means 'Alternation'. Since major parties often changed their names between 1995 and 2015, we refer to centre-left (C-L) and centre-right (C-R) coalitions.

Note: Percentages between brackets.

Source: own data.

depending on the region. On the other hand, the second phase is characterized by increasing alternation between presidents from the centre-left and the centre-right throughout the Italian territory. The only exceptions are the regions with 'red' (Emilia-Romagna, Tuscany, Umbria, partly Marche) and 'white' (Veneto and partly Lombardy) sub-cultural legacies.[6] In these regions, the same coalitions won the presidency in five consecutive elections.

Operationalization

Our study is built on two potential *sources of variation*: the rules for the election of regional chief executives and the state decentralization.

We operationalize the first of these by distinguishing between the cases in which a legislature mediates the relationship between voters and the executive and those in which this relationship is direct or quasi-direct (see Sartori, 1994: 84–85). In our case, from 1970 to 1995 the functioning logic of regional systems was strictly parliamentary: voters elected a legislature, which, in turn, nominated the regional cabinet. In contrast, the aforementioned 1995 electoral reform bestowed – as a matter of fact – on regional chief executives the direct legitimation of the electorate. The prospective regional chief executives were indicated on the ballot and linked to party lists; a majority-assuring electoral system was introduced. The constitutional reform of 1999 completed the passage by formally introducing the direct election of presidents and the executive-legislative *aut simul stabunt, aut simul cadent* bond[7] (Rubechi, 2013).

As argued above, the introduction of new electoral rules in 1995 was also the first step in the regionalization process. For this reason, we also use 1995 as the key date to operationalize the second condition.

Our expectations also imply two *outcomes of interest*. The first refers to the profile of Italian regional heads of government, in terms of their 'outsiderness' or their nationwide visibility *before entering office*. We check this against politics in general, parties, and institutional levels. Thus, a first indicator is the lack of political experience at all levels: we consider political outsiders those individuals with neither party nor institutional experience prior to becoming regional heads of government. Moreover, for the above theoretical reasons, we also use the experience in national and supra-national party and institutional positions that generally imply greater popularity before entering office as an indicator of nationwide visibility. With regard to this, we also use the experience as mayor of a capital municipality before entering office, since several studies demonstrate how presidentialization and personalization at local level (Legnante, 1999) lead to such popularity of mayors that they become leading characters of national politics in Italy (Baldini, 2002; Di Virgilio, 2005). Thus, we operationalize 'high-flyers' as those regional chief executives with experience in the national party executive, in supra-regional institutions (national and European) or as mayors of capital municipalities.

We measure party experience as: party membership; leadership of the local party; provincial party leadership; leadership at the regional level; and membership of the national party executive. As for institutional experience, we examine: experience as mayor (non-capital and capital municipalities); as president of the province; in the region (MP and minister); in the national parliament (deputy or senator); in the national government (senior or junior minister); as European MP.

Our second outcome of interest is the chief executives' career model. To our knowledge, Botella et al. (2010) is the main study systematically focusing on this subject with regard to regional heads of government. In their research, the authors limit the analysis to the career steps prior to entering office. However, a fully fledged understanding of the career models requires the observation of career steps in institutions both *before and after being in office*. For this purpose, we take an additional step and apply the above-mentioned indicators of institutional experience to both phases to test our *career model expectation*. More specifically, the typical unidirectional model implies a movement from local to regional to national or European level; the alternative model implies that regional and national careers are clearly separate and that there is no movement from regional to national or European level. Finally, the integrated model implies that there is no hierarchy among territorial levels and, thus, movements from the European or the national level to the regional level are more likely. Party experience is excluded from this analysis since the career model framework only concerns the occupation of institutional positions.

Data and methodology

This study deals with all chief executives of ordinary regions from the year in which these institutions were established (1970) to 31 December 2015. We have not counted those who were appointed only as acting heads of government. Overall, our dataset comprises 173 individuals.

However, our units of analysis ($N = 242$) are single terms and not single chief executives ($N = 159$ between 1970 and 1995; $N = 83$ between 1995 and 2015). This is because we are interested in the profiles of the elected individuals, *when they have been elected*, irrespective of whether or not they had already been regional heads of government. The same head of government can be elected more than once, but s/he brings a different kind or level of experience to the executive office each time s/he is elected. *Mutatis mutandis*, the same applies to post-mandates. We want to observe career steps after each term in office. An individual can have further experience at the regional level or move towards another institutional level. Henceforth, this applies to all our analysis. Our approach provides a better picture of the degree of elite circulation and gives clearer insights into the integrated character of

sub-national and national careers. Moreover, the same approach has recently been used to assess ministerial circulation (Martocchia Diodati and Verzichelli, 2017).

We present aggregate data for each indicator comparing two periods. By aggregating data, we can detect possible career patterns before and after 1995. For comparison's sake, we provide both absolute and percentage frequencies, and the significance of results is statistically tested through chi-squared tests.[8] In addressing possible missing values, we follow an available-case approach with a pairwise deletion (Peugh and Enders, 2004). This means that slight differences may be found in the sums of absolute frequencies in the tables due to variations in missing values for each variable.

There is almost no official information on Italian sub-national party elites that is systematically available (Ignazi, 2013). For this reason, we relied on different sources for data collection. When available, we drew data from the 'Registry of Local and Regional Administrators' of the Italian Ministry of Interior, which provides data from 1985 onwards. In addition, we consulted the official websites of the two Italian parliamentary chambers, the regional governments and assemblies, the sub-regional institutions, and the European Parliament. Other sources were the historical archives of political parties (e.g. the Archive of the Regional Committee of the Communist Party for Emilia-Romagna) and historical archives of Italian newspapers. The Openpolis database – an online database to monitor Italian politicians' activities – provided further data. We also referred to the database of Worldstatesmen.org, an 'extremely reliable' source according to the comparative literature (Elgie, 2011: 57), as well as that of Worldleadersindex.org. We also looked at websites on the history of political parties (e.g. www.storiadc.it) and publications on the history of Italian regions and politicians' personal webpages. All the information was double-checked against general informative websites. Finally, Wikipedia was used as an indicative source to steer the search further.

Findings

Presidents' political experience before entering office

According to our *presidentialization expectation*, we should see more outsiders and 'high-flyers' after 1995. Numbers in Table 2 refer to the ratios of chief executives with party experience and/or institutional experience.[9]

We see that the typical path to power has passed through both party and institutions. However, the percentage of chief executives who followed this pathway has declined by almost 10 percentage points in the recent period. At the same time, that of individuals with no political experience moved from 0% to 9% after 1995. This finding is in line with our expectation.

Table 2. Type of political experience of regional chief executives before entering office by time period (%).

	Time period	
Type of political experience	1970-1995	1995–2015
Party experience only	2.6 (4)	3.7 (3)
Institutional experience only	0.7 (1)	2.4 (2)
Experience in party and institutions	96.7 (148)***	85.4 (70)***
Total with political experience	*100 (153)****	*91.5 (75)****
Total with no political experience	*-****	*8.5 (7)****

Differences are statistically significant for: *$p < .10$; **$p < .05$; ***$p < .01$.
Note: Absolute frequencies between brackets.
Source: see Table 1.

With regard to party experience only, heads of government with previous party membership declined 10 percentage points between the two periods (99.4% until 1995 and 89% from 1995) (Table 3). The ratios of local and regional party leaders remained substantially the same (5.8% and 7.8% and 18.8% and 18.5%, respectively), but there was a fall in the proportion of provincial leaders (from 34.9% to 16.9%). This is probably due to the fact that during the regionalization wave in the 1990s, both parties and interest groups tried to revise their internal organization, where the provincial level played an important organizational role, according to the traditional Italian pre-republican territorial divisions. Such organizational setting, however, soon appeared particularly dysfunctional and it is no surprise that the provincial level lost importance for party life (Mattina, 2010; Ignazi, 2013). For our purpose, it is particularly worth noting that the percentage of members of the national party executive increased dramatically, from 12.6% to 41.6%.

In Table 4, we present data on institutional experience.

Findings about institutional experience follow the same pattern. The percentage of chief executives who had also been mayors did not decrease significantly; however, there is an interesting inversion trend as there were more mayors of capital municipalities after 1995. This is consistent with 'presidentialization', since the strengthening of the mayoral office in Italy following the introduction of the direct election of mayors in 1993 (Fabbrini, 2011;

Table 3. Type of party experience of regional chief executives before entering office by time period (%).

	Time period	
Type of party experience	1970–1995	1995–2015
Party member	99.4 (156)***	89.0 (73)***
Local party leader	5.8 (6)	7.8 (6)
Provincial party leader	34.9 (36)***	16.9 (13)***
Regional party leader	18.8 (24)	18.5 (15)
National party executive member	12.6 (14)***	41.6 (32)***

Differences are statistically significant for: * $p < .10$; ** $p < .05$; *** $p < .01$.
Note: Absolute frequencies between brackets.
Source: see Table 1.

Table 4. Type of institutional experience of regional chief executives before entering office by time period (%).

	Time period	
Type of institutional experience	1970–1995	1995–2015
Mayor		
Non-capital municipality	20.3 (29)	13.3 (11)
Capital municipality	10.5 (15)**	21.7 (18)**
Both	-*	2.4 (2)*
Total mayoral experience	*30.8* (*44*)	*37.4* (*31*)
President of province	15.0 (23)	8.4 (7)
Member of regional institution[a]		
MP	48.2 (67)**	31.3 (26)**
Minister	-*	2.4 (2)*
Both	47.5 (66)**	31.3 (26)**
Total regional experience	*95.7* (*133*)***	*65.0* (*54*)***
Member of national parliament		
Deputy	2.5 (4)***	32.5 (27)***
Senator	1.9 (3)	1.2 (1)
Both	-**	3.6 (3)**
Total parliamentary experience	*4.4* (*7*)***	*37.3* (*31*)***
National minister		
Senior	-***	9.6 (8)***
Junior	0.6 (1)***	9.6 (8)***
Both	-	2.4 (2)
Total ministerial experience	*0.6* (*1*)***	*21.6* (*18*)***
Member of European Parliament[b]	-***	13.3 (11)***

Differences are statistically significant for: *$p < .10$; **$p < .05$; ***$p < .01$.
[a]First terms of 1970 excluded.
[b]Calculated only for chief executives chosen from 1980.
Note: Absolute frequencies between brackets.
Source: see Table 1.

Baldini, 2002) exposed several capital municipality mayors to stronger public and media attention (Legnante, 1999). On the other hand, not only did the number of former presidents of province decrease**,** but there was also a lower percentage of chief executives with previous experience in the region. Meanwhile, the data on experience in national institutions is straightforward. While only 4% of regional chief executives elected between 1970 and 1995 had already been members of the European Parliament (MPs), 37% of their later counterparts had had this kind of experience. Moreover, in the first period we find no former senior ministers and only 1% of junior ministers. After 1995, 9% of presidents had been senior ministers before entering office and 9% had been junior ministers. Among former ministers, 2% had occupied a position in both layers. Finally, the percentages of former members of the European Parliament (MEPs) provide additional empirical evidence. No individuals in the first period had been MEP prior to becoming regional chief executive, whereas 13% of presidents after 1995 had held this post (however, it should be noted that the post only became available in 1979).

To summarize, the figures support the scenario of our *presidentialization expectation*. After 1995, the new figure of political outsiders has appeared,

while it was absent at all in the previous period. Moreover, a larger number of 'high-flyers' were appointed as regional presidents. To be precise, full outsiders have moved from zero to 8.5%. Party 'high-flyers' (i.e. members of the national party executive) have increased by almost 30%, from 12.6% to 41.6%. With regard to institutional experience, the increase has been of 11.2% for capital municipalities; of 33.1% for the national parliament; of 21% for the ministerial experience; and 13.3% for the European parliament. The tables show that all the changes between the two periods have been highly statistically significant, with a slight weakening with regard to (capital) mayors. Among those with political experience (still the large majority), overall the ratio of individuals with a sub-national experience decreased. At the same time, the national stage (at both party and institutional level) became a more common step along the pathway to the regional presidency.

Presidents' career paths

With regard to the career model of the Italian regional chief executives, the numbers thus far presented tell us that, between 1970 and 1995**,** the trend to achieve regional executives from below (sub-national level) was stronger than the trend from above (national level). This could be interpreted as a sign of either a unidirectional model from region to centre or an alternative model. Meanwhile, data on regional presidents from 1995 to 2015 indicate that the trend in this period points more to a movement from the centre, implying an integrated model.

To assess which model prevailed in the two periods, we need to observe post-mandate career steps. In other words, we have to look at what regional chief executives did after leaving their job. Our information covers both subsequent jobs and positions held after a period of time since holding the regional leadership. We present relevant data of institutional experience in Table 5.

First, we see that in 11% of all cases between 1970 and 1995 regional heads of government climbed down the institutional ladder and became mayors. No presidents in the second period followed a similar path. No significant variations can be detected with regard to the post of national minister (senior and/or junior) or MEP. On the other hand, we can observe a decrease over time in the ratio of chief executives who remained in regional institutions. Nonetheless, there is a high percentage of regional heads of government who stayed in the region after being in office in both periods (74% in 1970–1995 and 66% in 1995–2015). Finally, data show a marked decline in the ratio of regional chief executives with a post-mandate career in the national parliament (38% in 1970–1995 and 18% in 1995–2015).

Table 5. Type of institutional experience of regional chief executives after being in office by time period (%).

	Time period	
Type of institutional experience	1970–1995	1995–2015[a]
Mayor		
Non-capital municipality	5.3 (8)*	-*
Capital municipality	6.0 (9)**	-**
Both	-	-
Total mayoral experience	*11.3* (*17*)***	-***
President of province	-	-
Member of regional institution		
MP	59.4 (92)	65.7 (44)
Minister	-	-
Both	14.2 (22)***	-***
Total regional experience	*73.6* (*114*)	*65.7* (*44*)
Member of national parliament		
Deputy	21.0 (33)	14.7 (10)
Senator	11.5 (18)***	-***
Both	5.7 (9)	2.9 (2)
Total parliamentary experience	*38.2* (*60*)***	*17.6* (*12*)***
National minister		
Senior	5.7 (9)	8.8 (6)
Junior	8.9 (14)	7.4 (5)
Both	1.9 (1)	1.5 (1)
Total ministerial experience	*16.5* (*24*)	*17.7* (*12*)
Member of European Parliament	8.3 (13)	7.3 (5)

Differences are statistically significant for: *$p < .10$; **$p < .05$; ***$p < .01$.
[a]Only concluded terms.
Note: Absolute frequencies between brackets.
Source: see Table 1.

Overall, these findings – together with those presented above – suggest, as expected, that a common career model in the first period was unidirectional from region to centre. In fact, before entering office a large proportion had been mayor and/or president of province and almost all had had some kind of regional experience as MPs or regional ministers. Moreover, a large proportion went on to the national Parliament after being regional chief executives. However, it is worth mentioning that many former regional heads of government decided to spend their career at the regional level as MPs; thus, contrary to our expectations, the alternative model seems to be the other main option followed between 1970 and 1995. From 1995, the typical models changed and moved towards a deeper integration between institutional levels. In particular, we observe new drives towards a movement from centre to region. In other words, the comparison provides further evidence for our second expectation: the ratio of moves from the centre to regions considerably increased and, therefore, the integrated model became more frequent. However, even in the second period many former regional presidents seemed to prefer to stay within regional institutions rather than moving towards national ones. As a consequence, the alternative model was also a major option from 1995 onwards.

Our dataset shows that the ratio of chief executives with prior regional experience decreased by 30 percentage points from 1995. At the same time, the percentage of regional chief executives with subsequent national experience fell by 20 percentage points. As a result, the pathway of the unidirectional model from region to centre no longer predominates. Finally, we found a large increase in the ratio of cases with neither regional experience *ex-ante* nor national experience *ex-post*. This finding further not only shows that the sub-national level has become less important as a step towards the regional presidency, but also highlights the decline of the regional level as a springboard to the national stage, at least as long as the regional presidency is concerned.

For a better assessment of the increase in the integration between the levels, we looked at the national institutional experience of regional heads of government both before and after being in office (Table 6).

The frequency distributions are congruent with our expectations, although some caveats apply. From 1995 to 2015, 23% of presidents moved from the centre to take office and they did not subsequently go back. This holds for only 3% of the heads of government-appointed between 1970 and 1995. The positions are reversed with regard to those with only a post-mandate national experience: 37% in the first period and 19% in the second. Results about regional chief executives with national institutional experience both before and after are clear-cut**,** with the percentage rising from 1% to 16% over time. Fourthly, we found that the ratio of regional chief executives with no national political experience – neither before nor after being in office – fell 18 percentage points, from 59% to 41%.

In a nutshell, between 1970 and 1995 two main models stood out: the alternative model (58.6%) and the unidirectional model (36.9%). Only 4.5% of regional heads of government followed an integrated model. In the second period, the distribution became more equilibrated. The unidirectional model was the least followed (19.1%), while similar percentages of regional presidents may be found for the alternative and the integrated model

Table 6. National institutional experience of regional chief executives before and after being president by time period (%).

	Time period	
Sequence of posts in national institutions	1970–1995	1995–2015[a]
Only before	3.2 (5)***	23.5 (16)***
Only after	36.9 (58)***	19.1 (13)***
Both	1.3 (2)***	16.2 (11)***
Total national experience	*41.4 (65)***	*58.8 (40)***
No national experience	*58.6 (92)***	*41.2 (28)***

Differences are statistically significant for: * $p < .10$; ** $p < .05$; *** $p < .01$.
[a]Only concluded terms.
Note: Absolute frequencies between brackets.
Source: see Table 1.

(41.2% and 39.7%, respectively). As argued, the higher ratio of the unidirectional model between 1970 and 1995 can be explained by the Italian regions' extreme weakness and dependence on the centre before the mid-1990s. The regional level was often subordinated to the centre and the only 'contacts' went from the latter to the former. On the other hand, the unexpected decrease in the percentage of regional chief executives following an alternative model after 1995 could be linked more to the functioning of the electoral rules rather than a greater separateness acquired by the regional level. In fact, whereas the parliamentary form of government secured the possibility of being elected for more than two consecutive terms in the first period, a **s**tate law explicitly banned this possibility for directly elected regional presidents in the second period. As a consequence, the permanence of presidents within the regional level is visibly greater from 1979 to 1995 than after 1995 when they were more likely to try to politically compete on other territorial and institutional levels, especially at the end of their second term approached. Finally, the significant increase in the ratio of chief executives who moved in both directions (integrated model) indicates that the degree of preference for the national over the regional level decreased over time. Overall, the greater variability of patterns in the second period may be explained by the strengthening of the regional level: ambitious politicians recognize the regional level as a viable and worthwhile option like the national level.

Conclusions

Our analysis of the career paths of regional chief executives in different party and institutional conditions provides interesting results. The choice of the Italian case is particularly stimulating because Italian regional political systems underwent profound changes between the 1990s and the 2000s. First, they moved from a pure parliamentary logic, in which where regional chief executives were chosen by regional assemblies, to a presidential logic whereby a new electoral law and a constitutional provision established a direct link between voters and regional presidents. At the same time, regional governments have become more autonomous from the centre and more powerful political arenas. Accordingly, regional executive offices have become considerably more attractive. This study reveals some interesting implications about regional elite circulation also from a comparative perspective.

Our empirical findings are in line with expectations, but with insightful mixed evidence. The first finding is linked to the personalization of politics and the growing demand for public visibility which determines the emergence of a number of outsiders without political background and of 'high-flyers' recruited for their popularity. In other words, after 1995 a larger

percentage of chief executives had no political experience, came from the national level, or had previously been mayor of a capital municipality.

The second finding is linked to the previous one. It refers to the change in the career structure of opportunity for top regional politicians: the selection for the highest office within the regional government is less based on the traditional pathways of political-party professionalism, and careers are less unidirectional. The careers of regional chief executives now may also follow an integrated model. This to some extent contradicts the findings of Botella et al. (2010), namely that the increase in the importance of the regional level goes together with a lower number of regional prime ministers with previous national experience. It can be speculated that this difference is due to the type of election. Botella et al. (2010) focus on chief executives who are not directly elected. However, Italian regional heads of government are now directly elected and thus need high public visibility to run elections; therefore, experience at the national level can be a crucial asset. Finally, recent political personalization and strengthening of regional presidents do not explain why regional chief executives were more likely to follow an alternative career model in the first period rather than in the second. We argue that the change of electoral rules connected with the duration of tenure is more likely to explain this result.

Our study does not provide a fully fledged causal account of the relationships at stake; however, it presents – supported by theoretical arguments – evidence that institutional settings and competition logics can be deeply related to the change of the profiles and experiences of political elites. Moreover, it suggests that they also have an impact on the circulation of these elites within the political system and across institutional layers. This, in turn, sheds light on the level of integration between national and sub-national elites. Overall, we found that a restructuring of electoral rules can modify party behaviours and recruitment at the sub-national level just as it does at the national level. Moreover, we show that when the political resources of the institutional levels are similar, this offers ambitious politicians more differentiated but overlapping routes to power.

We are aware that, from an empirical viewpoint, a larger set of explanatory factors may be acting simultaneously in shaping the outcome of interest. This is particularly relevant to the Italian case as many features of the political system changed in the mid-1990s (Morlino, 2014). Future research could broaden the number of variables and seek to evaluate their net effect through regression analyses, using the present empirical evidence as groundwork for theory building (cf. Timmermans and Tavory, 2012). Further analysis is also required to test whether the changes we have observed are connected to a more general trend of decreasing party-driven political professionalization in Western democracies at different levels of government (Borchert, 2003). Finally, any potential intervening impact of intra-party dynamics could be a subject for inquiry.

Scholarship on sub-national political elites predominantly looks at members of regional assemblies. However, decentralization processes across countries and the growing relevance of regional executive elites for decision-making processes indicate the need **also** for research on who governs at the sub-national level.

Notes

1. More precisely, we can speak of neo-parliamentarism or semi-parliamentarism (Duverger, 1986): the chief executive is directly elected by voters and there is a confidence relationship between parliament and government, based on the *simul stabunt vel simul cadent* principle. Therefore, the termination of executive government always leads to the dissolution of the assembly and to new elections.
2. This label – as well as that of climbers – has been used by Martocchia Diodati and Verzichelli (2017) with regard to Italian ministers' profiles and it is here re-adapted to regional presidents. Thus, we do not consider technocrats with specific policy expertise, but politicians with skills more in line with the personalisation of politics and in particular with nationwide visibility. Similarly, we take into account leaders without territorial links, who simply jump to the fore. The operationalization of this concept is provided in the fourth section.
3. On this point, it is worth making a further clarification. Here, we are specifically interested in how general electoral rules shape the profile of successful politicians, *under an 'else equal condition*.' It may well be that parties can select different profiles, depending on open or closed selection procedures (e.g. Sandri et al., 2015b). Nonetheless, studies on how parties organize in different institutional settings (i.e. parliamentary vs. presidentialized) have provided evidence that institutional patterns come first and party variables are at most likely to foster or hinder systemic effects (Siavelis and Morgenstern, 2008: 10; Passarelli, 2015). The major effect is thus likely to go from electoral rules to intra-party procedures, rather than the other way round. This is confirmed by studies on party primaries, such as Sandri et al. (2015a). Moreover, Samuels and Shugart (2010) have claimed that, whatever the role of internal factors, different parties (arguably characterized by different intra-party selection rules) tend to propose similar politicians' profiles, due to institutional pressures. Based on this literature, we want to observe (if any) the overall effect on regional chief executives and, therefore, we will not consider intra-party procedures in our analysis.
4. We count a new government where there is a (1) change of chief executive; (2) change of regional cabinet party composition and/or (3) regional election.
5. Only concluded terms are considered.
6. White-Catholic and Red-Communist subcultures were deeply rooted in the North-East (Veneto, Friuli-Venezia Giulia, and Trentino-Alto Adige) and in the Centre of Italy (Emilia-Romagna, Tuscany, Umbria), respectively (e.g. Caciagli, 1988).
7. From 1995 to 1999, this principle was valid only for the two first years of the legislative term. Indeed, in three regions (Calabria, Campania, Molise), there was a change of executive within the same legislative term after this threshold. Nonetheless, we take 1995 as the general watershed, since it has been shown that in hybrid systems the 'presidential' facet of institutional setting is likely to

'contaminate' the parliamentary one, and thus shape the career paths of all chief executives (Samuels and Shugart, 2010: 70).

8. It is worth noting that we deal with the total population for the considered period. This could lead to epistemological and methodological pitfalls when it comes to use statistical significance tests. These tests rely on the assumption that the units of analysis come from a random sample, which could be representative of the whole population. In our case, we are instead confronted with non-repeatable data. However, we can claim that our *N* is likely to be representative of further observations, made under similar contextual features. For a discussion and relevant references, see Müller-Rommel and Vercesi (2017: 257).
9. We also tested differences with regard to socio-demographic background indicators, such as age, level of education and occupation. However, findings did not reveal substantial differences between the periods in question.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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12. Conclusion

LESSONS LEARNED AND FUTURE OUTLOOKS

1. Change and Continuity of Political Institutions and Elites: Key Findings

In the last decades, democratic governance and elite recruitment have displayed signals of substantial change. Yet, elements of persistence are visible. When does change prevail on inertia?[1]

First, this *Habilitation* has suggested that a resource-oriented conceptualization of cabinet government is the best-suited option for systematic assessments of elite behavior in government and relevant longitudinal variations. By sorting potential combinations of definitional criteria related to ministerial responsibility and role, five types of members of the council of ministers have been detected: super-ministers (the only endowed with the voting right in the council of ministers, heading a department, and being party leaders); ordinary ministers (with voting right and a department); party ministers (party leaders who are simply council members); councilors (ministers without portfolio with voting right); second ministers (in council, but dependent on another minister). In contrast to the existing literature, it has been argued that the concept of 'cabinet' is denotatively larger than the concept of 'council of ministers'. Indeed, the former includes a sixth additional type of minister (typical of the British tradition): departmental ministers, who head a department and are not voting members of the council. These ministers should be treated as part of the cabinet because of their departmental resource and the consequent decision-making clout. In addition, two extra-cabinet ministers have been detected: ministers without portfolio outside the council and junior ministers.

An important contribution to the study of inter-ministerial relationships in multi-party governments has been the theorization of coalition politics as strategic game of mutual exchange of commitments and compliance and attempts to break free from coalitional constraints. Coalition politics is understood as a sequence of strategic moves with

[1] The following findings should be also read against the four main research questions listed in the Introduction: what are the structural opportunities and constraints met by political elites in the exercise of political power and how do they change in times of party decline and personalization?; how do political parties and politicians react?; have criteria for a successful political career changed over time?

informational functions; coalition politics' game 'nests' the lower-level intra-party game within itself. The theoretical framework has worked as a tool to classify parliamentary governments according to the processual facets of coalition governance.

Moreover, we have observed that executive decision-making results from a combination of structural mechanisms of coalition governance (e.g. decision-making arenas) and relational dynamics between executive actors. The distribution of power resources and actors' strategic motivations are powerful explanatory factors of both aspects. In this regard, the personalization and presidentialization of politics intrinsically reshape intra-elite relationships; as well-known, they favor individual actors with pronounced leadership skills over collective groups. Therefore, ambitious politicians might see the acquisition of individual leadership resources as the primary goal of their career choices, in context of a self-reinforcing learning process of adaptation. In contrast, the management of government remains anchored to classic patterns of collective decision-making when political actors do not follow trends of leaderization and resist to novelty (closure strategy). The empirical analysis has pointed out – consistent with literature's suggestions (e.g. Verzichelli 2009; Costa Pinto et al. 2018) – that especially phenomena of presidentialization tend to be accompanied by a larger recourse to policy experts (de-politicization strategy) and the repositioning of the decision-making barycenter from parties to executives (retreat strategy). In a nutshell, personalization and presidentialization modify the type and distribution of crucial power resources among executive actors. A 'resource-oriented' approach thus appears as a fruitful choice to account for variations across time and space of (rational) elites' goals and strategies in government. In particular, it provides sound explanations of changing relational dynamics and decision-making outcomes, such as consensual achievements of policy compromises or prime ministerial impositions.

Second, the *Habilitation* has proposed a multidimensional index to measure the strength of parliamentary second chambers. The index is based on three dimensions (formal powers, compositional incongruence, and legitimacy) and seven indicators (oversight of government, legislative veto, selection timing, selection method, representative principle, impact of direct election, and type of interest representation). The index has been used to rank 11 second chambers in Europe and to understand when and how political elites seek to increase or decrease chambers' institutional strength in turbulent times. The investigation has stressed that – when their status is (perceived) jeopardized – traditional elites are more likely to react to the threat by incentivizing faster policy-making through the reduction of the

number of parliamentary veto points. At the same time, traditional elites might try to enhance second chambers' legitimacy, by increasing their potential as *fora* of morphological representation (constitutional reform strategy). From a theoretical viewpoint, the concept of democratic stress has been connected to the concept of institutional stress (i.e. mismatch between institutional features and actors' preferences and expectations): democratic change can be conducive to institutional stress. However, only a specific combination of structural conditions (e.g. the modification of patterns of party competition) and contingent conditions (e.g. the modification of elites' preferences) triggers institutional reforms, whose success is undermined by the same phenomena that push political elites to pursue change. This is because new fragmented and polarized scenarios often hinder the necessary intra-elite consensus-building. This recognition raises concerns about the ability of democratic institutions to conform to new demands and confront decreasing levels of trust.

Third, in spite of the challenges they face, political parties are still essential gate-keepers. Both institutional and party career experiences linger as valued proxies of political reliability, even in times of personalization and individualization. However, caveats apply. By focusing on possible diachronic movements towards more descriptive representation and less gender inequality within political institutions, the investigation has found that women still face a different (toughest) opportunity structure along their paths to power. Extensive political professionalization characterizes female and male prime ministers alike, but the former tend to follow more demanding paths before entering office. Moreover, political parties reproduce gender differences in the allocation of parliamentary responsibilities, even when the ratio of female MPs increases. In particular, women tend to be relegated to traditionally female policy domains, irrespective of procedures for more balanced gender representation adopted by some parties. The findings are consistent with other studies', which stress the limited contagion effect between parties in terms of methods of personnel selection (e.g. Reiser 2018). Harder pathways to power of 'female elites' can be indicators of the limited substantive and symbolic representation of women (Alexander et al. 2018). This limitation can favor the detachment of large portions of the society from parties, which are expected to act as representative agencies.

Finally, democratic change can be conducive to a profound restructuration of career patterns within and across levels of government. The analysis of the Italian regional chief executives has revealed a considerable increase of the ratio of political outsiders and publicly prominent personalities as a result of the institutional presidentialization of the political

office. Although the overwhelming majority of chiefs of government still fit with the model of the professional politician, empirical evidence suggests that more presidentialized environments lay the foundation for the (partial) break of traditional recruitment patterns. Parallel to this, traditional models of ascending careers from the local to the national level of government lose centrality to the benefit of a broader range of alternatives. The investigation reveals that political professionalization keeps on mattering, but new patterns of acquisition of political experience emerge.

Overall, the evidence is that resistance of traditional elites (closure strategy) prevails over 'capitulation', notwithstanding 'physiological' innovations. An interpretation is that, rather than through fully-fledged renewal or abrupt twisting, political elites respond to democratic challenges through adaptive and incremental change. Moreover, continuity probably makes room for change only when the alternative (inertia) is too costly. Traditional political elites thus appear reactive to challenges, rather than proactive and anticipatory.

2. Implications for Liberal-Democracy

The *Habilitation* contributes to three broad debates of the literature: the effects of personalization and presidentialization on institutional dynamics; the challenges faced by traditional elites, which originate from the establishment of new party competitors; and the gendered nature of political institutions and recruitment. The picture appears symptomatic of the strategic dilemmas met by political elites when it comes to responding to change. The findings can be read as harbingers of future developments in liberal-democracies.

Contemporary democracy is strongly dependent on political parties (Dalton et al. 2011). In many situations, parties remain the most convenient vehicles for ambitious politicians to reach public office. However, chief executives and party leaders have become relatively stronger as aggregators of preferences, policy-makers, and communicators. This strength is detectable in their greater autonomy *vis-à-vis* governmental and party colleagues. It has been said that the other side of the coin is the vulnerability due to the increased dependence on the oscillating moods of the public opinion. In a nutshell, chief executives and party leaders are more prominent, but also more unstable in their capacity to wield political power (Webb and Poguntke 2005: 352-353). Volatile forms of control over the members of the highest echelon of political elites are likely to make inroads: 'modern democracies are moving towards a fusion of elitist and plebiscitary models of democracy.

While leadership power grows, it is supposedly legitimated and checked through the plebiscitary elements of modern media democracy' (Webb and Poguntke 2005: 354. See also Manin 1997).

This trend is not confined to the executive arena. The relationship between government elites and parliaments too is likely to be substantially affected. Presidentialization can be conducive to a gradual detachment of chief executives from parliamentary parties, with a consequent decrease of the capacity to control parliamentary majorities. The post-Brexit referendum scenario in the UK suggests that this holds even in systems traditionally characterized by cabinet dominance over parliament. However, several factors make executive elites more autonomous from third national institutions. For example, the growing internationalization of politics gives chief executives leeway to bypass parliamentary dissent (Poguntke and Webb 2018: 188).

In the electoral arena, campaigning is personalized and individual candidates catalyze media attention. Ambitious politicians need to develop self-images characterized by closeness to voters (e.g. Garzia 2011). This has implications for the professional status of political elites. Poguntke and Webb have stated that '[p]residentialization feeds into populism' (emphasis in the original), by weakening ideological identities: 'voters are "set free" from the old loyalties and may become available for populist' (Poguntke and Webb (2018: 196). In this regard, Blondel and Thiébault (2010: 255) argue that 'populism characterises "outsiders" rather "insiders"' and outsiders often enjoy more intense support in personalized and presidentialized democracies.

These political processes modify the internal organization of political parties and the nature of elite selection (Samuel and Shugart 2010; Webb et al. 2012; Salvati and Vercesi 2018). On the one hand, the decline of parties as intermediate structures between leaders and societies favors the shift of the origin of party leaders' legitimacy from party bodies to the electorate; the introduction of more democratic and inclusive methods of intra-party selection are testifiers (Hazan and Rahat 2010; Pilet and Cross 2014). This trend may benefit outsider politicians. On the other hand, parties are more likely to be inherently dependent on their leader; this especially applies to populist parties (de Beus 2009). Party rank-and-files who want to climb the ladder need to prove even more to be loyal to the leader, rather than to party collective bodies. Therefore, personal loyalty becomes the crucial criterion for political recruitment, feeding the plebiscitary tendencies of contemporary democracies. Political professionalization does not vanish, but it is paired by relationships of personal

dependence. Eventually, lower tiers of party organizations cease to be for citizens venues to voice their preferences and to produce bottom-up pressure towards leaders in the guise of articulated demands. Citizens remain confronted with two options: either 'buying' the policy programmatic packages proposed by leaders and sanctioning them when they are not (deemed) enough responsive through the withdrawal of support; or activating forms of participation other than party's. Finally, it is worth noting that, when outsiders have better chances to emerge and parties are weaker, private resources can become more important for political success (Musella 2018; Casullo 2019: 63-64). The less clear divide between public and private in politics has been pointed out by Lowi (1985: 100), when he stated that the empty space that weaker parties leave between leaders and citizens is likely to be filled by private interest groups in relation with the leaders themselves.

Final remarks concern implications for gender (in)equality. Some scholars have argued that populism is often associated to masculine political models of action (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2014: 384-385). If this is true, the observed gender differences in the composition of executive and parliamentary elites will be more likely to persist, in spite of higher public sensitivity for balanced representation and the actual increase of women's ratio in institutions.[2] In fact, the introduction of more equal recruitment rules such as gender quotas have proved to reduce imbalance, but only to a limited extent (Krook 2010; O'Brien 2015; O'Brien and Rickne 2016; Aldrich and Daniel 2019). The scholarship finds a reason in the gendered nature of political institutions (e.g. Krook and Mackay 2011). Political institutions shape the behavior of political actors. If they reflect discriminatory ideas about women and men's social roles, formal rules of gender equality promotion are less consequential. This should be taken into consideration by those interested in reducing substantial gender differences in politics: 'the effects of [introducing equality policies or] abolishing discriminatory or anti-women regulations is (sic!) inevitably undermined if sexist norms and discourses remain unchained' (Lowndes 2019: 19).

[2] The syllogism rests on the assumption that populism is actually destined for (a relative) success (at least in the near future), as some of the arguments about the decline of party democracy suggest. There is empirical evidence, which sustains this thesis (e.g. Albertazzi and McDonnell 2008). Besides academic literature, data showing the increasing support for populist parties is available, for example, in Lewis et al. (2018).

3. Research Outlooks

Overall, the *Habilitation* suggests that further research should concentrate on at least four topics. The first calls for investigations about democratic change and the notion of democratic representation. The legitimacy of democratic governance rests on the ability of the system, on the one hand, to endow elites with institutional devices to be (responsible and) responsive and, on the other hand, to allow citizens to keep rulers accountable. Different institutional arrangements provide different incentives to choose the focus (whom) and the style (mandate, trusteeship, etc.) of representation. In turn, the degree of congruence between voters' preferences and policy outputs is affected by these incentives (Weßels 2007: 846). Future works can try to link citizens' detachment from parties and individualization of societies to the ability of political elites to adapt to the new contexts, paying attention to these aspects of representation: how do the focus of representation, the style, and the congruence between preferences and policies change? To what extent? To this end, data about voters and parties has to be collected. Possible theoretical and empirical sparks to develop the discussion can be found in recent research on the degree of responsiveness of populist parties, compared to their traditional counterparts. Interestingly enough, preliminary clues tell that there is a potential discrepancy between populists' representative function and behavior in office (e.g. Plescia et al. 2019). This research venue looks promising to assess to what extent new party challengers tend to be similar in office to traditional parties over time.

The second research path is directed towards the change of party organizations. Leader-centered parties are relative less institutionalized and struggle to survive when leadership changes (Vercesi 2015). Possible research questions are: does the level of party institutionalization affect the strategies that party elites adopt to respond to democratic change? Do parties in contemporary democracies converge upon similar organizational models? When do traditional elites follow alternative models and when do counter-elites imitate traditional models? Conceptually, scholars – to answer these questions – can refer to the extensive literature on party elite-level and base-level institutionalization (Bolleyer and Ruth-Lovell 2019); the diffusion of personal types of party leadership (Pasquino 2014); populists' approach to liberal-democratic rules when in government (Albertazzi and Mueller 2013). In this regard, in-depth comparative case studies appear as a viable research strategy to generate new hypotheses.

Third, a research outlook is the analysis of the relationship between elite profiles and performance in office. In particular, this can be a way to study the impact of recruitment

patterns on the throughput and output legitimacy of political institutions (Schmidt 2013). For example, it has been observed that higher turnover rates of institutional personnel reduces elites' ability to run efficient policy-making (Perez and Scherpereel 2017). Do political outsiders perform 'worse'? Is the quality of deliberation and policy outputs affected? A conjecture can be that 'unexperienced' elites slow down decision-making and produce poorer policy outputs. This, in turn, can undermine the strength of a given political institution *vis-à-vis* other institutions. The literature on EU politics suggests that too much of personnel turnover implies three types of perils: amateurism; poor-quality policy; disunity (Scherpereel and Perez 2015). The actual threat of these three perils can be assessed through systematic analyses, where personal profiles are linked to variables such as length of the policy-making process, number of policy conflicts; and outcomes of conflicts between institutions (for example, executive and parliament or the two parliamentary chambers) with different levels of internal expertise.

Fourth, one can choose to broaden the interest of the investigation, by taking the supra-national level of government into account among others. This especially applies to European democracies, where the European Union is a further source of both opportunities and constraints for political careers and decision-making. Do different levels display similar trends? Are new personalized parties with thin organizations poorer at linking institutions and citizens at the sub-national level, compared to traditional parties with grassroots structures? With its attention paid to the increasing interaction between levels of authority, the multi-level approach can be a source of conceptual and theoretical inspiration (e.g. Piattoni 2010). Moreover, the literature on the increasingly weak grasp of parties on local communities (Reiser and Holtmann 2008) or on party behaviors' congruence between levels of government in federal systems (Albala and Reniu 2018; Gross and Krauss 2019) are further research lodes to start with.

The *Habilitation* also hints at future methodological outlooks. Contemporary research on political institutions and elites has mostly focused on a neo institutionalist perspective. The basic assumption is that political institutions shape actors' choices and actions. The distribution of power resources, the institutional setting, and the systemic opportunities for ambitious (and rational) politicians durably define (although not in deterministic way) actors' room for maneuver in office and along their career paths. Organizations such as parties 'mediate' between macro and micro levels. To improve our ability to decouple the impact of both structure and agency in the study of political institutions and elites' responses to

democratic change, case-study logic should be extended to larger-N analyses, especially for the analysis of institutional internal dynamics. This should be done through a configurational explanatory approach, which allows treating structural and agential factors as necessary or sufficient (or both or none of the two) conditions. Outcomes (for example, decision-making and conflict management) would be accounted for as the result of systematic combinations or absence of given conditions. The assumption is that causation is asymmetrical. This means that the same outcome does not always correlate with the same conditions and that an outcome's explanation does not imply the explanation of its absence (Schneider and Wagemann 2012). This approach helps generalization without losing empirical depth and accuracy. Moreover, qualitative yet analytical methods, such as process tracing, can be used to investigate more 'wider' and 'deeper' deviant cases of processes' outcomes.

It would be interesting to observe how behavioral factors affect the functioning of institutions over time. For example, an increasing lack of intra-party unity can undermine the structural potential of political institutions, because agreements are harder to reach and policy stalemate more likely. It is also worth noting that the integration of personal background and career experience into the set of conditions can provide a more accurate account of the impact of agency.

Moreover, longitudinal changes of career patterns have occurred and future research should improve our ability to account for them. A suggestion is to study the modification of career paths as the result of a combination of exogenous (conjunctural) socio-political changes and the endogenous redefinition of the role of (party) gate-keepers (Norris 2006; Capoccia 2016). As outlined above (chapter 8) the sequence analysis and event-history analysis of career studies need to be further developed. Current research still underestimates the effect of third variables besides career steps. It also neglects the impact of the simultaneous occupations of more positions and lacks attention to long-term change of stable career patterns. To overcome these pitfalls, the investigation of elite recruitment and paths to power in changing democracies needs to integrate the study of individual careers to holistic explanations of the relationship between structures and agency. The recognition of the relevance of this relationship and the awareness of its modification (more or less incremental) would enrich of significance the findings of classic regression analyses about elite (de-) selection and career steps' interconnection

More cross-national data on political elites and systematic information about democratic developments in parliamentary systems are necessary. Over the past years, some

scholars have built pioneering large-N datasets about politicians' profiles (e.g. Gerring 2019). However, they neither link personal background variables and political skills to the performance of politicians in office nor do they systematically connect politicians' profiles with the observed changing democracies. Only by applying this combination of data, the linkage between political institutions and elites in contemporary liberal-democracies can be precisely disentangled. In practical terms, information about elites' performance in office and variations over time can be drawn from either surveys (e.g. Grotz 2019) or the observation of 'hard data', such as salience, duration, and workload of decision-making processes (e.g. Reh et al. forthcoming). To collect and combine this information we need resource- and time-consuming efforts. So far, these efforts have been mostly made for European and major Anglo-Saxon countries. Future research should produce comparable data for other well-known parliamentary systems – such as Japan, India, and Israel – and for smaller insular democracies worldwide, which are often characterized by personalized politics (Corbett and Veenendaal 2018).

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