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Latvian government resigns as economic recession deepens

„Latvia’s four-party coalition government, facing the steepest economic decline in the European Union and plunging public opinion ratings, resigned after two parties called for Prime Minister Ivars Godmanis to step down... The deepening economic crisis has sparked the worst street violence since independence, when hundreds rioted in Riga’s old city on Jan. 13, smashing windows and battling police after a peaceful anti-government demonstration of about 10,000 people had dissolved.“

(BBN-The leading Estonian Business News Channel, February, 20. 2009)

Introduction

A story of an Estonian newspaper about yet another government failure in Latvia points out the importance of continuous research of cabinet stability. Regardless of the fact that Latvia’s cabinet under the prime minister Aigars Kalvītis has managed to maintain itself for full three years (2004 – 2007), which has been the longest cabinet in Latvia since its independence from the Soviet Union in 1990s, it seems that the cabinet of Ivars Godmanis regained the attribute “the most unstable” in the post-Communist region to the Latvian politics. On the other hand, the cabinets in Hungary have so far been the most stable in region. The incumbent cabinet of Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsány of Hungary invested in September 2004, faced with the similar deteriorating economy, however, offered his resignation and the investiture of the new cabinet under the new Prime minister, which breaks the pattern of Hungary’s history of the most stable cabinets in terms of its duration. The cases of cabinet life in Latvia and Hungary are the most extreme in the post –Communist region and there are many countries that can be grouped either in the box with Latvia, or in the box with Hungary, while many others stand somewhere in between, having experienced periods of stable and unstable cabinets. For example, Slovak Republic experienced more stable cabinets after the investiture of Meciar’ cabinet in December 1994, followed by the appointment of Mikulas Dzurinda as the prime minister in both October 1998, and in 2002.

From the brief survey and some empirical observations the puzzle follows. Why have countries like Hungary, Czech Republic, and Slovenia had cabinets that lasted for the duration of their constitutionally designated mandates, whereas cabinets in Latvia, Romania and Estonia failed after less than a year? Further, why have some countries had cabinets that had periods of stable cabinets and periods of unstable cabinets, like Slovakia or Bulgaria, for example? Finally, why do some cabinets faced with similar challenges, like for example ongoing financial crisis, withstand the challenges and maintain themselves in the office, while others do not? This is that despite the similar socio – economic context in terms of post-Communist legacy post – Communist countries demonstrated great differences on the outcome side of the polity governance. As rightly pointed out by Blondel and Muller - Rommel¹ in terms of institutional building they did benefit from the experiences of Western European countries by adopting Western like Constitution to design the operation of their political systems, however, the patterns of the duration of their governments have varied significantly.

A systematic comparative analysis of the cabinet stability in post –Communist countries that would adequately assess the achievements of countries compared to others is so far lacking. First, my research will focus on the institutional setting of a specific country. Namely, I want to establish a Constitutional setting in which cabinets function, party system operates, and leadership style is developed. More specifically, I am interested in the relationship between the executive and the legislature as is designed by the Constitution and the effect that has on the cabinet stability.

Literature Review

¹ Blondel, Jean and Ferdinand Muller – Rommel. *Cabinets in Eastern Europe*. New York. Palgrave Publishers. 2001

Most of the field research focused on Western parliamentary democracies. Variables and ways on how to measure them abound, and throughout decades three dominant approaches became predominate; the structural approach that looks at the cabinet structure, random events approach that sees “external” shocks as potential destabilizers of the cabinets, and legislative approach that looks at factors in cabinets’ parliamentary environments. There have been scholarly attempts to extend the debate to the post-Communist region, mostly by Blondel and Muller Rommel. But these attempts have so far neither been able greatly in replication of Western literature, nor to develop a framework that would apply to post-Communist Europe. I will briefly survey structural approach provided for the Western democracies, the literature on the type of the political system, literature on the party systems in post-Communist countries and on the style of leadership in post – Communist governments. The literature review is very inconclusive, however, and the part on the style of leadership is for now missing.

Structural Factors

The earliest variables devised in the literature that were thought to have an impact on the stability of cabinets are structural factors. These are factors that are known at the time of cabinets’ formation and it is believed that these factors will help cabinets stay formed. One of such cabinet factors is the status or type of cabinet and it refers to the number of seats the cabinet controls in the legislature. Studies on Western democracies found that the majority status of the cabinets tends to be more stable than minority ones. Minority cabinets can be easily brought down by the opposition in the parliament. Along the same lines, minimum winning coalitions are expected to last longer than surplus coalitions. Minimum winning cabinets are more difficult to defeat in the legislature as they are composed of “just enough” parties required to control the majority in the legislature. Contrary to that, surplus cabinets have extra members and can maintain control of the legislative majority even if surplus

members are lost.² When looking at the case to case basis in Western democracies majority and minimum winning coalitions were found to be more stable than minority and surplus cabinets. Belgium seems to be an outlier here with minimum winning cabinets being a norm, but of a short lasting, perhaps a result of its fragmented party system, as literature suggests.³

The original thesis that majority cabinets are expected to last longer than minority cabinets comes from Blondel and was later confirmed by Taylor, Sanders and Herman.⁴ Further, Dodd found that minimum winning cabinets are more durable than oversized and undersized cabinets. Dodd argued that the stability of cabinets is the degree to which cabinets deviate from minimum winning status.⁵ Dodd also argued that cabinet stability is influenced by the type of coalition that is a result of fractionalization and stability of party systems.⁶ Other studies however, refuted Dodd's hypothesis and have demonstrated that minimal winning cabinets are longer lasting in countries with two or three parties and in countries where they are a norm, as opposed to the countries in which minority cabinets are longer lasting and in which minimal winning cabinets are rare.⁷

Another assumption made in the literature is that ideological compatibility of coalition members matters. It is argued that ideologically compact coalitions are more likely to form and are expected to be more stable. Their members will find an agreement more easily and withstand strains once it comes to policy implementation later on. Still, research carried out failed to demonstrate any serious correlation between the ideological compactness and cabinet

² L.C. Dodd. *Coalitions in Parliamentary Government*. New Jersey. Princeton University Press. 1976. pp. 150-152

³ Ibid. P. 154

⁴ J. Blondel. „Party Systems and patterns of Government in Western Democracies.“ *Canadian Journal of Political Science*. 1. 1968. pp. 180-203, D. Sanders and V. Herman. „The Stability and Survival of Governments in Western Democracies.“ *Acta Politica*. 3. 1977., pp. 346-377.

⁵ L.C. Dodd. *Coalitions in Parliamentary Government*. New Jersey. Princeton University Press. 1976.

⁶ Ibid. P. 28.

⁷ B. Grofman. „The Comparative Analysis of Coalition Formation and Duration.: Distinguishing Between Country and Within Country Effect.“ *British Journal of Political Science*. 19. 1989.

duration, which on its face value comes surprising.⁸ One of the first findings on this issue came from Axelrod and later Laver who found that cabinets that are less ideologically diverse are expected to be more durable.⁹ However, later studies found that ideological variables are less important in terms of cabinet stability than are the “non ideological ones.”¹⁰

Some scholars argue that the role of the prime ministers and relationships among cabinet members are important and will have an effect on the cabinet duration. Relationships within the cabinet are twofold; those among ministers and different parties they represent on the one hand, and between the ministers and prime minister on the other. One of the principal assignments of the prime minister is to achieve some degree of cohesion, particularly in coalitions in terms of collegiality regarding policy making and homogeneity regarding the coordination between departments.¹¹ This variable was devised by Woldendorp, Budge and Keman referring to the power of prime minister within the cabinet. The issue here is whether the prime minister is equal to his or hers ministers, or he or she has the initiative in policy making and is fairly independent when it comes to hiring and firing of his ministerial staff. What is also important here is if the prime minister is primarily responsible to the parliament. In case the prime minister has an equal role with his or hers ministers than the role of the prime minister is not dominant, otherwise his or hers role is dominant. Naturally, there are “in between” cases in which the role of prime minister is neither dominant nor not dominant. In these cases prime minister has a more decisive role on some issues and gives substantiate amount of leverage to the ministers regarding some other issues. This variable is not easily

8 D. Sanders and V. Herman. „The Stability and Survival of Governments in Western Democracies.“ *Acta Politica*. 12. 1977. pp. 346-377., P. Warwick. „The Durability of Coalition Governments in Parliamentary Democracies.“ *Comparative Political Studies*. II. 1979. pp. 465-498

9 R. Axelrod. *Conflict of Interest*. Markham Publishing Co. 1970. M. Laver. „Dynamic factors in Government Coalition Formation.“ *European Journal of Political Research*. 2. pp. 259-270.

10 For more details see E.C. Browne, J. P. Frensdreis, D. Gleiber. „The process of Cabinet Dissolution: An Exponential Model of Duration and Stability in Western Democracies.“ *American Journal of Political Science*. Vol. 30, No 3. (August, 1986). Pp. 628 – 650. P. Warwick. „The Durability of Coalition Governments.“

11 See J. Woldendorp, I. Budge, H. Keman. *Party Government in 48 Democracies (1945-1998)*. p. 65

operationalizable and includes subjectivity; however it may help in determining cabinet performance in terms of performance and durability.¹²

The Type of the Political System

Ghinder has offered a theory of institutional determinants arguing that a type of political regime (parliamentary, semi-presidential, and presidential) is a central determinant of cabinet survival.¹³ More specifically, Elgie and McMenamin examine Semi-presidentialism in which a directly elected president operates alongside a prime minister who is responsible to the legislature. There is an academic consensus that semi-presidentialism is a problematic regime type. And many Eastern European countries like Poland, Romania, Albania and those in the Balkans, Macedonia, Croatia have at least initially introduced that type of the political regime. However, within the population of semi-presidential countries, there is wide institutional variation. The most common way of capturing this variation is to distinguish between president-parliamentarism, where the president has the power to dismiss the prime minister, and premier-presidentialism, where the prime minister is responsible only to the legislature. On the basis whether the president has the power to dissolve the legislature they identify two sub-types of president-parliamentarism and two sub-types of premier-presidentialism. In relation to cohabitation, prime ministerial turnover and the incidence of non-partisan prime ministers they suggest that certain types of semi-presidentialism are less prone to the problems of semi-presidentialism commonly identified by the scholarly community.¹⁴ This

¹² A. Lijphart. *Patterns of democracy*. New Haven. Yale University Press. 1999.

¹³ Ghindar, A. "Making Democracy Work: Presidential Powers and Cabinet Stability in Central and Eastern Europe" *Paper presented at the annual meeting of the The Midwest Political Science Association, Palmer House Hilton, Chicago, Illinois*

¹⁴ Elgie, Robert. and McMenamin, Iain. "Variation within semi-presidentialism: Cohabitation, Cabinet Stability and Non-Partisan Prime Ministers" *Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political*

debate on the type of the political regime should move away from debate which system type works better, but to examine the concrete relationships between the executive and the legislatures and link those to the stability of cabinets. Moreover, it should look into how does the certain political regime link to the strength or weakness of prime ministerial leadership and link that to the stability of cabinets.

The Stability of Party Systems

Perhaps one of the most favorite variables in the literature on the cabinet stability is *party system* (Powell, 1982, Browne et. Al., 1984, Strom, 1985, Mair and Smith, 1989, Budge and Keman, 1990, Warwick, 1994, Gallagher et. Al., 1995.) The size of the party system refers to the “effective number of parties” in the system. Indexes for the effective number of parties were devised, but only for Western democracies.¹⁵ Further, presence of the so-called anti-system parties, which are assumed to have destabilizing effect,¹⁶ as well as the degree of polarization or “cleavage conflict” is assumed to have negative effect on the cabinet stability.¹⁷ Another factor found to have an impact on the cabinet stability is the influence of the opposition through the committee systems.¹⁸

In terms of cabinet stability and size of the party system the literature is ambiguous. While it was shown that systems that tend to have shorter cabinets also have higher number of parties, and those that have longer cabinets have smaller party systems; changes over time have shown that these results are doubtful. On country – by - country basis it was noticed that cabinet duration was even more likely to rise than to fall when the size of the party system increased. Predictable value of the correlation did not prove correct in most of the Western

Science Association, Hyatt Regency Chicago and the Sheraton Chicago Hotel and Towers, Chicago, IL, Aug 30, 2007

¹⁵ See M. Laver and N. Schofield. *Multiparty Government. The Politics of Coalition in Europe*. p. 148.

¹⁶ G. Sartori. *Parties and Party Systems : A Framework for Analysis*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press. 1989.

¹⁷ L. Dodd. *Coalitions in Parliamentary Government*.

¹⁸ K. Strom. *Minority Governments and Majority Rule*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press. 1989.

democracies, with the exception of Belgium, Sweden and Denmark when looking at the period from 1945 until 1987. In all other cases, it was found that when the size of the party system went up the stability of cabinets went down and vice versa. In countries in which the size of the party systems went down the stability of cabinets did not increase as expected.¹⁹

In developing a unified approach to study cabinet stability, King et al. found that fragmentation and polarization of party systems are the most strongly correlated to the cabinet stability in terms that the more fragmented and more polarized the party system is, the shorter the cabinet life will be.²⁰ In sum, besides the increase and improvement in terms of including new variables and in reconceptualizing new measures, the explanation in the variance on the dependent variable has not improved significantly.²¹

As Kitschelt points out configuration of party systems and their stability profoundly influences the effectiveness and popular acceptance of democratic order.²² Intuitively, we would expect that the stability of party systems plays a role in the subsequent formation and cabinet maintenance. Research on the party systems in Central and East Europe has moved forward split into two groups, one arguing for the general commonality of party systems (Kitschelt, 1992), and the other trying to uncover that not all sub regions of post-Communist Europe followed the same path and that there are some traceable patterns in some countries' party systems that push them toward a more stable, as opposed to less stable party systems (Agh, 1998). In broad terms, literature concludes that at least in early stages of transition the instability of party systems was high especially in countries with broad opposition movements

¹⁹ For more detail see M. Laver and N. Schofield. *Multiparty Government. The Politics of Coalition in Europe.* pp. 147-150. This study measures cabinet stability with the average duration in months only and would perhaps get different results if stability indexes were employed like those devised by Blondel and Rommel for the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. In those indexes cabinet duration, duration of ministers and prime ministers are computed and make one single index.

²⁰ Ibid. P. 853.

²¹ E.C. Browne, J. P. Frenreis, D. Gleiber. „The process of Cabinet Dissolution: An Exponential Model of Duration and Stability in Western Democracies.“ P. 630

²² H. Kitschelt. „The Formation of Party Systems in East Central Europe.“ *Politics Society.* 1992.

(IDEA, Report, 2007). Once this opposition movement disintegrated, new parties emerged and at times entered the parliament.²³ But, as Enyedi points out party system (in)stability has not been uniform thorough the whole region, but party systems in Hungary, Slovenia and Czech Republic have been fairly stable.²⁴ On the other hand, party system in Latvia, for example is very unstable. At times, parties that have not existed in previous elections emerge in the interelection period and win the next elections, electoral volatility high and voters shift support between parties frequently, party politics is very personalized and candidates are well known personas that have previously not associated with party politics.²⁵ While looking at Blondel and Muller – Rommel cabinet stability indexes, there is almost 1:1 correlation between stability of party systems and stability of cabinets.

Hypothesis

My research fits within the structural – functional framework/theory that is proposed by Blondel and Muller – Rommel.²⁶ I can only devise some tentative hypothesis from the literature at this point. To generate hypothesis I would like to get more familiar with my concrete cases to see how my independent variables affect the outcome. From the review of the literature it is visible that there are many hypotheses constructed so far, none of them firmly being able to account for the variance on the dependent variable. As a result, what needs to be done is, careful examination of cases, and longitudinal analysis to see if there are any strong causality that can explain different outcomes. Despite the vast efforts and

²³ IDEA Report. Political Parties in Central and Eastern Europe. In Search of Consolidation. 2007.

²⁴ Z. Enyedi. "Party Politics in Post-Communist Transition. 2005.

²⁵ IDA Report, 2007. p. 54

²⁶ Blondel, Jean and Ferdinand Muller – Rommel. *Cabinets in Eastern Europe*. New York. Palgrave Publishers. 2001. Only a proposed structural – functional framework is available and it is indeed not a theory since no testable hypotheses were yet developed according to this framework.

numerous attempts to develop and test cabinet stability hypothesis, all of the variables so far used seem to have at least some impact on the cabinet stability, yet none of them, independently or combined together is able to explain for the great variance in the cabinet stability phenomenon at least in Western democracies, for which research has been predominately carried out for.

Here are some possible hypotheses:

1. The weaker and the more fragmented the parliament, the more unstable the cabinets.
2. The more the balance of power tilts towards the executive and frequent intervention of the President of the cabinet affairs, the less stable the cabinets.
3. Regardless of the ideological composition of the cabinet, the more consensual style of the prime minister regarding the decision – making in the cabinet, the more stable the cabinet is.
4. The more stable the party system and less institutionalized the parties are, the less stable the cabinets are.

Scope Conditions, Case Selection and Concepts, Variables

The scope conditions of my research are post –Communist countries that embraced parliamentary system of governance. More specifically, the scope of my research applies to the post-Communist countries in which the executive is derived from the parliamentary majorities, and in which the parliament invests the cabinet into the office with the vote of confidence, or can vote the cabinet out of the office by the vote of no confidence. Further, the research applies to the countries which have adopted the electoral laws of proportional representation and accordingly, only the cabinets that have been invested after the adoption of such a system will be taken into the account. Also, only the countries that score as “Free” on the Freedom House list will be included in the research, which means that only cabinets that were invested in the year or after the country scored “Free” will be included into the scope of

the research. By doing so, I believe I can control for the intervening variables such as the similar levels of democracy, economic development, respect for civil liberties, freedoms of the media and press and independence of the judiciary. Moreover, controlling for the mentioned variables will demonstrate that despite all these similarities there are great differences in terms of cabinet stability.

In the table below I propose a list of countries from which I will draw my cases (cabinets) by grouping them into three categories; unstable, stable and mixed. From each country I am planning to select two cabinets, but I have not yet developed firm criteria for that. The possible option is to select one cabinet that was of the shortest lasting and the one that was of the longest lasting to account for the within country variance. One other viable strategy could be to select two cabinets that were led by the same prime minister, if applicable, and by doing so to see how does has the role of prime minister changed, if at all, and what impact that has had on the overall duration of the cabinet, if any. In the Appendix I demonstrate how I plan to proceed in collecting my data. The choice of Ukraine and Latvia is random, however.

Countries that are the focus of my study

STABLE	UNSTABLE	MIXED IN(STABILITY)
Hungary	Lithuania	Slovakia
Czech Republic	Estonia	Bulgaria
Slovenia	Romania	Poland
Croatia	Latvia	Ukraine
	Moldova, Freedom House scores problematic (Partly Free as of 2008)	Macedonia, Freedom House scores problematic, Partly Free as off 2008)

Countries are grouped into the three categories according to the cabinet stability indexes developed by Muller – Rommel and shown in the table below by focusing on the scores in the first column.

Table 6: Cabinet Stability Index for CEE (1990-2003)

Country	Average Duration in Years			Rank order
	CAB (rank)	PM (rank)	MIN (rank)	Mean Rank CAB, PM, MIN
Slovenia	1,65 (3)	5,16 (1)	2,54 (1)	1,3
Czech Republic	2,38 (2)	3,31 (2)	2,35 (4)	2,6
Hungary	3,00 (1)	3,00 (4)	2,37 (3)	2,6
Slovakia	1,62 (4)	3,25 (3)	2,41 (2)	3,0
Estonia	1,31 (8)	2,09 (5)	1,90 (6)	6,3
Poland	1,23 (6)	1,58 (7)	1,67 (7)	6,7
Bulgaria	1,62 (5)	1,62 (6)	1,45 (10)	7,0
Romania	1,01 (9)	1,35 (10)	1,93 (5)	8,0
Lithuania	1,22 (7)	1,43 (9)	1,55 (9)	8,3
Latvia	0,93 (10)	1,55 (8)	1,61 (8)	8,7
TOTAL	1,60	2,43	1,98	

Source: F. Muller-Rommel. “Types of Cabinet Durability in CEE.” Paper posted at the eScholarship Repository, University of California Irvine. 2005.

I understand cabinet to be the national executive that is derived from the parliament and enjoys the majority support in the parliament. Also, I understand a cabinet as a collective body composed of prime minister and ministers. Regardless of scholarly efforts there is still ambiguity as to what does the cabinet stability really mean and how it relates to its duration. Usually, cabinet duration is used as an indicator of cabinet stability in terms of its effectiveness and the stability of democratic regime. To some extent, there is a vagueness of the term “stability” still not fully resolved in the literature. It can be both used as an indicator of longevity of the cabinet, but also as an indicator of the viability of political regime. Arendt Lijphart was among the first to start the debate on what exactly does the term “stability” mean arguing that durability, if it stand for anything, it is the executive dominance in the executive

–legislative relations.²⁷ One of the critical attempts to measure cabinet durability comes from Lijphart who finds that out of most often used measures in the literature (change in the parties composing it, a change in its coalitional status, a change of prime minister, a cabinet resignation, or a parliamentary election) changes in the party composition in the cabinet yield the best results²⁸ The rest of the literature agrees that cabinet ends in case there is a change in party composition of the cabinet, if the cabinet resigns, if the prime minister changes, and in case new elections are held.²⁹ One of the most obvious reasons for termination of the cabinet are regular elections stipulated by law or constitution, resignation of the prime minister that is either voluntary or a result of death or sickness. Voluntary resignation is considered to be non-political, however, it is difficult to discern whether it is a cover up for a faction dispute within a party or cabinet. As a result, these are usually taken on their face value and may pose a problem when it comes to the reliability of data. Also, dissension within cabinet can be the reason for termination and can cover situations in which, either coalition breaks up without external pressure, or when there are visible disputes between the coalition members. Another reason for termination is a vote of no confidence in parliament and lastly, broadening of the coalition, which includes instances of termination of the existing cabinet coalition to allow for the inclusion of new parties.³⁰

Here are some preliminary ideas on how I plan to conceptualize reasons for cabinet termination, which is a cut off point at which cabinet loses its stability and is being replaced by a new cabinet (and in the perspective of this research is a new possible unit of analysis). I will not consider caretaker cabinets regardless of the reasons they were constructed. I shall not

²⁷ A. Lijphart. "A Note on the Meaning of Cabinet Durability." *Comparative Political Studies*. (17; 163). 1984. pp. 163 - 166

²⁸ A. Lijphart. „Measures of Cabinet Durability: A Conceptual and empirical Evaluation.“ *Comparative Political Studies*. 17:2. 1984. pp. 265-279, L. Dodd. *Coalitions in Parliamentary Government*. New Jersey. Princeton University Press. 1976.

²⁹ For more details see M. Laver and N. Schofield. *Multiparty Government. The Politics of Coalition in Europe*. New York. Oxford University Press. 1990. pp. 145-147

³⁰ For more details see J. Woldendorp, I. Budge, H. Keman. *Party Government in 48 Democracies (1945-1998)*. Kluwer Academic Publishers. The Netherlands. 2000. p. 93

look at cabinets that were composed before the democratic constitution was adopted, for which data are available by Muller – Rommel. I shall consider that cabinet has terminated if new elections were held, in case there was a vote of no confidence in parliament, in case cabinet voluntarily resigns, in case an irreconcilable dispute between head of state and the cabinet occurs and cabinet has to resign, and in case a cabinet coalition breaks apart. I will not consider termination of cabinet if there is a change of portfolios but the membership stays. However, there is a new stream of research now working in direction that focuses on individual turnover within cabinets, which means new variables into the field of study.³¹

I will consider that the cabinet ends in case there is a change in membership, either a new prime minister comes or new ministers that are joining the cabinet are members of different parties from those they are replacing. Finally, I shall construct a certain percentage of “change” in party membership that will be counted valid enough to be coded as terminated. Say, a cabinet has thirteen ministers, each of them holding one portfolio and fourteenth member being the prime minister. In case say five ministers are replaced and new ones are coming from different parties I will code that as a termination. Another possibility I have in mind is to rank order ministers according to their “importance” and to only count as termination if there is a change in the “most important” ministries.³² I understand that my list of possible reasons for cabinet termination needs to be further examined and justified so that it best fits this research design and hypotheses once they are firmly constructed.

The dependent variable for my research is cabinet stability that I will measure by duration of cabinet and the reason for its termination. My independent variables are; Constitutional settings in which cabinets are formed and operate that I will operationalize by

³¹ This stream of research focuses on individual turnover in cabinets and how the most talented people are selected. Huber, John and Cecilia Martinez Gallardo. „Cabinet Turnover in Parliamentary Democracies.“ Paper presented at the American Political Science Association in Philadelphia. 2003

³² Research has found that in post –Communist Europe not all ministers were equally important as opposed to those in Western democracies. In post – Communist Europe ministers of justice were more important than ministers of finance, as a result of a huge amount of new legislation that was to be implemented. See Blondel, Jean and Ferdinand Muller – Rommel. *Cabinets in Eastern Europe*. New York. Palgrave Publishers. 2001.

executive – legislative relationship. Further, the degree of party system fractionalization and institutionalization will be measured as the “effective number of parties” and other party system characteristics that may affect the duration of cabinets. Finally, I will measure the leadership style of prime ministers based on their role regarding the implementation of cabinet policy goals. If their role is arbitrary, meaning they are not so much involved in policy proposals and will want to move the cabinet towards the acceptable solution, there is a great prospect that arrangements are made behind the scenes, which will reduce the collective decision making. On the other hand, if they are more “activist”, there is a greater chance they will be interested in particular policy proposals and push those through the cabinet, but there is a greater chance that there will be tensions within the cabinet.³³

Data and Methodology

Multivariate statistical analyses have been most often used in the cabinet research and that mostly for Western democracies. They either worked with „structural“ factors that can be detected ex ante, or „events“ variables - factors that are not known in terms of their timing and magnitude at the time cabinet forms.³⁴ „Unified“ model devised by King and al. attempted to capture both groups of variables in order to try and settle both streams, one favoring structural approach and others favoring events approach. Both statistical and mathematical models have been devised and were constantly improving in order to facilitate the integration of time-dependent and time-independent factors.

Grofman and van Roozendaal contribute to the methodological debate with their insistence of the importance of political actors when it comes to cabinet dissolution, because, they argue that after all, a decision to dissolve the cabinet, regardless if the decision is prompted by structural causes or events approach causes, it is always up to the political actors

³³ See Blondel, Jean and Ferdinand Muller – Rommel. *Cabinets in Eastern Europe*. New York. Palgrave Publishers. 2001. p. 200.

³⁴ Browne, Eric, John Frendeis and Dennis Gleiber, “An Events Approach to the Problem of Cabinet Stability”. *Comparative Studies*, Volume 17 (1984): 167-9

that will decide to end the government, which in case of parliamentary system is legislature with its vote of no confidence. In what I agree with Grofman and van Roozendaal, is that cabinet stability field needs to devise a theory that will be able to offer explanation of mechanisms linking variables to causes of dissolution, rather than just theories that are able to explain the variance as theoretically useful. What is needed in this field is distinction of factors that will explain variance between countries/cases and those that will account for within country variations.³⁵

My project will move forward in light of Grofman and Rozendaal's proposal, that is it will move away from trying to explain variance across cases. For visualization of this statement, we can look back at the cabinet stability indexes from Muller - Rommel and construct our thinking in terms of moving away from trying to explain „how much“ cabinets in Hungary were more durable than those in say Latvia. But, we can start thinking which factors are at stake that will link cause to the outcome in a particular case (cabinet). That means that we should try to explain what has caused that cabinets in Hungary had been more durable than those in Latvia. Once this task is done, the results may also be able to account for the variance across cases, as well as the variance within cases. Move towards the specific case analysis that would resolve mechanism problems, I think will contribute to the explanation of the cabinet stability.

My research will fall into mid - N analysis with tentatively 20 cases (cabinets). The research will follow the most similar and most different design. However, I will apply Boolean method, as a method that stands „in between „statistical regressions and small N research that I think can overcome the shortcomings of the methodological problematic so far detected in the cabinet research field. Regression analyses have not been able to explain the

³⁵ Grofman, B. „The Comparative Analysis of Coalition Formation and Duration.: Distinguishing Between Country and Within Country Effect.“ *British Journal of Political Science*. 19. 1989.

workings of the cause – effect mechanism. Too many variables have been employed and, independent of each other, they have only shown an average impact on the outcome, but were not able to establish cause – effect relation. On the other hand, small N research would not be able to tell us much about the cross-cabinet stability variation. Say we undertake one case study; in the end we can only conclude, like the Western literature did for the case of Italy that in case of say economic swings the cabinet failure is more likely. That does not allow us to make statements cross sectional.

I think that Boolean method, if successfully employed can contribute to methodological shortcomings encountered in the research and can also establish firm cause to effect mechanisms as Grofman and Rozendaal suggested. By applying the logics of Boolean algebra complex data structures would be simplified. Cross national studies in the cabinet duration field are vague and provide only few general conclusions. With Boolean approach I can analyze cases in terms of intersections of condition („multi causal conjunction“), and will be able to see which of the several combination of conditions may produce an outcome (cabinet stability). Boolean method, I think can be an alternative approach to the so far used multivariate statistical analysis. It is a method that can address questions about outcomes resulting from multiple and conjunctural causes where different conditions combined in different and at times contradictory ways produce the same or similar outcomes.³⁶

I will collect data in two phases. In the first, preliminary phase I will collect general data on the Constitutional configurations of post-Communist countries to detect the relationships between executive and legislatures. These data are available from various sources (Comparative Constitutions Project) and can be pooled from various citations in the literature or from the data made available by various organizations like, Inter – Parliamentary Union, International Institute for Electoral Assistance, IDEA reports, The Polity data,

³⁶ C. Ragin. *The Comparative Method. Moving Beyond Qualitative and Quantitative Strategies*. Berkley. University of California Press. 1989.

Comparative Political Data Set III 1990-2006 devised by Klaus Armingeon et. Al., and J. Woldendorp et. al. I will also, if permissible study the Constitutions in their original version provided by each country that is object of my analysis. Further, I will collect data on the party systems in each country and how they scored on the issues of high or low institutionalization, and low or high fractionalization. Finally, I will collect data on the leadership of prime ministers that head the cabinets I will incorporate as the units of my analysis. For the cabinets that I select as my final cases I will need to acquire data on their composition (set of parties) and reasons for their termination (resignation, vote of no confidence, etc) that will help me to start off the project. I will need to have a composition of cabinet parties for every cabinet I will study so that I can calculate the change in their members. These data are available by J. Blondel and F. Muller – Rommel.

In the second data collection phase, I will start collecting another set of data that will be more country specific and will relate to the issues of strength or weakness of leadership (prime ministers), the relationship between executive and legislature as Constitutionally designed and formally practiced, impact of the role of the president. This last set of data may be somewhat more problematic since this is a new field of research, at least geographically, and data are not readily available from websites. I may have to consult political newspaper in the countries, government archives, prime minister's speeches, and also consult the rules that conduct the decision making within the cabinets.

Contribution and Importance of the Research

My research will refocus the study of the cabinet stability field geographically and move the research agenda to the area of post – Communist parliamentary democracies. Also, my research is innovative in terms of independent variables, especially in terms of incorporating the executive – legislative relationships and style of leadership to measure the cabinet stability in post – Communist countries. So far, data have been collected on the

duration of cabinets and political actors in post-Communist Europe, however there has been no attempt to delve deeper into the problem and to account for the causal mechanisms that will explain why we get so different outcomes in terms of cabinet stability in post – Communist Europe. Some replication studies were initiated mostly by Blondel and Muller – Rommel but their research is mostly data collection on the duration of cabinets, prime ministers, and ministerial staff with the descriptive analysis of post-Communist cabinets assessed in the general setting within which they have operated. They describe the structure, main aspects of cabinet life and their decision making procedures. However, there is no common approach to analyze these cabinets that is offered. My research will follow the structural – functional framework in an attempt to explain how the characteristics in cabinet structure under which cabinet develop and form, and once in office what do the cabinet elites do in order to maintain themselves and prolong their stay in the office. While the first part focusing on the structure under which cabinet forms will be somewhat static, since more or less the same Constitutional rules, unless changed will apply to all cabinets in one country, whereas the second part will be more dynamic and will discern how does the party system and leadership style cooperate and what do they do to the stability of cabinets.

I will elaborate few points here that were developed in the scholarly debate on the importance of cabinet stability relating to the effectiveness of the policymaking, representation and accountability. I will conclude with my own contribution. On the one side of the argument there are scholars that do not recognize the link between cabinet stability and political performance (Linz (1978), Powell (1982) and Strom (1990), and on the other side there are scholars that think there is a direct link between cabinet stability and political performance like Lijphart (1984), Sartori (1994), Taylor and Herman (1971). The first group of authors argues that short lived cabinets are ineffective policy makers and lack sufficient time to organize themselves, develop coherent policies, and their power to carry out these

policies is to a large extent undermined by the frequent legislative interferences. On the other hand, longer lasting cabinets are more effective with greater internal cohesion and better control over placing policies on parliamentary agenda.³⁷

I favor stream of argument that deems stability of cabinets important for the overall functioning of the parliamentary democracy. The “survivability” of cabinets affects their ability to govern. If I find the causal mechanism that would link cause to the effect (cabinet stability) our understanding of the overall performance of parliamentary democracies will be advanced. Cabinet governments in parliamentary democracies derive their mandate from the parliament through the principles of delegation. Thus, cabinet governments are accountable to voters through the parliament. Once cabinets are formed they should maintain themselves and make good policies for their countries, because this is where their accountability to voters is important. The original compositions of cabinets should not change much after their formation because through their maintenance the representation of voters is preserved. Cabinets should be persevered as much as they can in their original composition and should only change in case such preference is linked to the wishes of the voters in the interelection periods. As argued in the literature, short lived cabinets reflect governmental incapacity to effectively respond to the aspirations and grievances of citizens in democracies.³⁸ On the other hand, if cabinets are lasting long we should observe a better control of cabinet over legislative appointments and a more effective impact on the setting of the parliamentary agenda. Furthermore, it was shown that longer lasting cabinets are less conflict oriented in the decision making process (Frogner 1993:48). A more dynamic take on

³⁷ A. Lijphart. “Measures of Cabinet Stability. A conceptual and Empirical Evaluation.” *Comparative Political Studies*. Vol. 17 No. 2 (Jul., 1984) 265-279, A. Lijphart. “A Note on the Meaning of Cabinet Durability.” *Comparative Political Studies*. Vol. 17 No. 2 (Jul., 1984) 163-

³⁸ Mueller-Rommel, F. “Types of Cabinet Durability in Central Eastern Europe.” Paper posted at the eScholarship Repository, University of California Irvine. 2005.

the issue would allow for frequent cabinet changes in case cabinets are not able in implementation of policies they promised to implement. What is really “better” for the governance of the country, whether unstable cabinets like those in Italy or in Poland, or stable cabinets like those in Hungary who were at times “too stable” and protests against those were also taking place at some points, I leave open to other scholars for further debate. I am interested in explaining the causality that lies behind the cabinet stability. Both groups of countries, those with stable, and those with unstable cabinets can learn from my project in terms of better structuring and better functioning of the executive in parliamentary democracy.

APPENDIX

Country: Ukraine

Cabinet: Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko

Time in office: December 2007 – present (based on September 2007 elections)

Party Composition: BYT (Block of Yulia Tymoshenko, 7 seats), OU-PSD (Our Ukraine-People's Self-Defense Bloc, 6 seats), Independent, 12 seats

Reason for Termination: Not available

Background:

Political System: Parliamentary since 2004 electoral reform (took effect in 2006) following the election of President Viktor Yushchenko

Electoral system: PR, since 2006 electoral reform

Constitutional framework: After the 2006 reform, the parliament has the authority to both nominate and approve the Prime Minister. However, the official nomination of the candidate for the parliamentary approval is still made by the President; there is an ambiguity whether the President may turn down the candidate suggested by the parliamentary coalition. The President can dissolve the parliament and call new elections.

The Prime Minister nominates other members of the Cabinet (19 ministers) for approval by the parliament, except for the Minister of the Foreign Affairs and one of Defense, who are both nominated by the President

Sources: Polity IV Country report Ukraine, Government portal of the republic of Ukraine, <http://www.kmu.gov.ua/control/en>,

Country: Latvia

Cabinet I: Ivars Godmanis, Prime Minister

Time in office: December 2007 – March 2009

Party Composition: N/A

Reason for termination: Resignation

Cabinet II: Aigars Kalvītis, Prime Minister

Time in office: December 2004 – December 2007

Party Composition:

Reason for Termination: Resignation

Cabinet III: Andris Šķēle, Prime Minister

Time in office: February 1997 – August 1997

Party Composition: N/A

Reason for termination: N/A

Background:

Political system: Parliamentary

Electoral system: moved from two-round majority system to list PR, electoral threshold raised from 4 to 5 % in 1995

Constitutional framework: President elected by the parliament and the PM is appointed by the president with the approval. Cabinet ministers are responsible to the parliament. Parliamentary vote of confidence is required.

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