

COALITIONS OF THE UNWILLING? POLITICIANS AND CIVIL SERVANTS IN COALITION GOVERNMENTS

Edited by

B. Guy Peters, Tony Verheijen, Laszlo Vass



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THE NETWORK OF INSTITUTES AND
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IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

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Coalition Governments and Senior Career Officials: A Case of Incompatibility?

Tony Verheijen¹

Introduction

The impact of coalition governments on the development of stable and professional civil service systems remains a relatively rarely discussed issue. Whereas there is extensive literature on the effectiveness and democratic significance of coalition versus single party governments (Lijphart, 1999) and the electoral and party systems that create them (Taagapera and Shugart, 1998), the impact of coalition management on civil service development is a question that until recently attracted little political and academic interest. This was due to the relative stability of systems of politico-administrative relations in both parts of Europe, and because the question of whether they had coalition governments or not was not considered a key factor in the development of civil service systems. In many ways, this was a correct assessment until two decades ago, but events may have overtaken the assumptions that underlie that assessment.

It is true that most western and southern European states with a long tradition of coalition government had well established institutional and managerial rules and procedures to mitigate the impact of coalitions on the stability and professional development of the civil service. These factors ranged from institutionalized mechanisms to manage and contain the demands of political parties who wished to reward loyal supporters with posts in the administration, as in, for instance, Belgium (see Brans *in* Peters, 1995 and Hondeghem *in* Van der Meer, 2001), to a relatively strict separation of politics and top level civil service appointments, as in the Nordic States and the Netherlands. In the latter systems, politically motivated appointments were kept to an absolute minimum as a form of self-restraint by politicians.

It is also true that patterns of politico-administrative relations in states with coalition governments as the predominant mode of governance showed relatively little difference from those in states where single party government was the rule. Stability in the senior civil service in the UK, managed by single party majority governments, was not significantly different from the Netherlands or the Nordic States. Patterns of top level appointments through cabinets were introduced in similar ways in Belgium, France, Greece and Italy,² regardless of the type of gov-

1 World Bank, Washington D.C., USA

2 Though the type of officials appointed to cabinet posts was different, with public servants such as university professors predominant in Italy while in Belgium and France career officials would be more likely to hold political posts

ernment they had in place, while Germany (Derlien, 2001) and Spain used the introduction of official political posts in the administrative hierarchy as a way to manage political influence over appointments.

Finally, the political systems in place in central and eastern Europe (CEE) did allow for coalition governments, and formerly these existed in many of the states concerned. However, under the primacy of the Communist Party, coalitions were little more than a formality, and did little to alter the nature of civil service systems at the time. Whereas mitigation of the impact of coalitions was the underlying principle of systems of politico-administrative relations in one part of Europe, institutionalized politicization prevailed in the other.

The relatively stable models and traditions in managing politico-administrative relations described above have undergone fundamental changes during the last two decades. Academic literature has not, however, responded adequately to these changes. This volume attempts to analyse and interpret the new realities in the development of politico-administrative relations, and explores the degree to which new patterns of coalition government and management have started altering traditional systems and notions of politico-administrative relations. The case studies presented here give particular attention to CEE states, as the majority of them have developed political systems favoring the emergence of coalition governments. The question of how the creation of a new style and category of coalition governments affects civil service development is important. The issue in these countries is especially interesting given that the tasks of building political democracy and building stable and professional civil service systems are being undertaken simultaneously. Without the right checks and balances, coalition governments could well aggravate the already fragile condition of civil service systems in the region. However, changes in political management are not limited to CEE states. Changes in the notion of permanent civil service systems, under the influence of New Public Management, have challenged traditional perceptions of politico-administrative relations (Peters and Pierre, 2001; 2004). This study provides both an inventory of shifting realities in coalition politics and its impact on civil service development, and poses the question of how a new equilibrium between changes in the mode of political governance and the quest for stability in civil service development can be found.

Changing perceptions of politico-administrative relations

As discussed above, the stable and seemingly permanent notions of politico-administrative relations in European states have faced serious challenges in the last decades. Three main factors can be distinguished that have generated this challenge: 1) the impact of New Public Management, which has led politicians to question the existing 'balance of power' between politics and administration; 2) the emergence of a new form of coalition government in

central and east European states in the 1990s and its implications for civil service development; and 3) the unfreezing of some of the traditional systems of management of politico-administrative relations in states such as Belgium, where traditional arrangements were no longer seen as acceptable by both politicians and citizens.

The first factor affecting relationships between politicians and administrators is the influence of New Public Management, which challenged traditional conventions of administrative self-management in the UK and other, mainly Northern European states. New Public Management emphasized the separation of political and administrative functions. On the one hand, NPM emphasized the primacy of elected politicians over appointed officials in making policy, and thus legitimated a much more hands-on involvement of politicians in making policy, de-legitimizing the civil service as a source of policy advice.

On the other hand, NPM emphasized the role of management, and to some extent argued that politicians should not attempt to influence the day-to-day management of organizations. Politicians were held responsible for actions of public organizations – especially autonomous agencies – while having few controls over those organizations. This, in turn, led to attempts to find new mechanisms of control. The shifts in thinking associated with NPM are not linked to the issue of coalition government per se, but it is nevertheless one of the driving forces in the debate on the management of top level appointments, and has had its influence well beyond English-speaking countries. The more hands-on approach of politicians in top level appointments in general can be at least partially explained by NPM influences.

The second factor is the emergence of coalitions as a dominant form of government in the new democracies of Central and Eastern Europe. The development of new systems of public administration and civil service in these states has been fraught with difficulties. The development of a culture of professional and impartial civil service after a prolonged period of institutionalized politicization of every aspect of political life has proven to be a tremendous challenge. This challenge is exemplified in the failure of even the new EU Member States to stabilize civil service systems; such failure continues to pose a serious potential problem for their effective participation in EU decision-making. The plight of CEE states in building new civil service systems is well documented,³ and the use of traditional European solutions to the problem of managing politico-administrative relations has so far not brought the desired results. The emergence of coalition governments, built on still fragile political party systems, has exacerbated the already deep-seated problems in public administration systems and has sparked increasing interest in the academic com-

3 See Verheijen, T. (ed.) (2001), *Politico-administrative Relations – Who Rules*, Bratislava, NISPACE for an extensive discussion of the subject.

munity. The question here is whether a new equilibrium between politicians and the emerging civil service can be found and if so, how much this will differ from the traditional models in the 'old' Member States.

Finally, attempts to mitigate the impact of coalitions on politico-administrative relations in states such as Belgium – under one of the most comprehensive administrative reform efforts seen in the last decades – have further fuelled the debate on how peaceful coexistence between frequently changing coalitions and presumably permanent senior officials can be assured. Belgium is to some extent a specific case, as a number of scandals (such as the Dutroux case) rocked its political elite in the late 1990s and created a momentum for political change. However, in a less fundamental way, other European political and administrative systems also faced adaptation pressures, in particular the more peripheral states such as Ireland and Finland. Particularly in Ireland, the emergence of some more unusual coalitions, such as the Bruton government in the mid-1990s, posed questions concerning the relevance of traditional governance structure in the state, and as a consequence also raised the issue of the need to modernize the civil service. Similarly, the Rainbow coalitions in Finland have limited the internal coherence of those coalitions, and perhaps have created a need for more political control over administration within each department. Whereas in each case conditions and driving forces were different, the question of how political changes affect notions of administrative governance is highly relevant.

The underlying volume will deal mainly with the latter two elements of reforming politico-administrative relations in Europe and assesses the relevance of coalitions as a factor in determining the nature of politico-administrative relations and, as a consequence, of civil service development.

Coalition management and civil service development in Central and Eastern Europe: Looking for a mode of coexistence

The emergence of coalitions as a predominant mode of government in CEE states has had serious implications for civil service development. Civil service development in post-Communist governments has been problematic from the start of the transition. The predominance of neo-liberal approaches in economic management in the early 1990s combined with the general aversion of the new elites in CEE states to anything related to 'the state', exemplified by public administration, made administrative reform a much neglected issue,⁴ leading in several states to a virtual collapse of administrative systems in the mid-1990s. Whereas the acceleration of the European Integration process combined with a change in perception of the relevance of professional and

4 For a more elaborate discussion on this issue, see Verheijen in Pierre (2003).

impartial civil service systems put public administration reform on the agenda in the latter half of the 1990s, progress has in many states continued to be slow and piecemeal with few exceptions.

One of the main questions posed in this study is to what degree the difficulties in coalition management in the region have been a cause of the slow progress in civil service development and if so, whether the type of coalition government in place is a factor that matters.

The consolidation of the political party system in CEE states has led to a gradual 'normalization' of political governance structures around alternative coalitions. Even though these often still revolve around competition between 'former regime' and 'former opposition' parties, voters have in most instances a relatively clear choice between groups of parties. At the same time, the type and character of coalitions in CEE states has differed significantly between countries. Coalitions range from fragile alliances of convenience against a common 'enemy'⁵ to ideologically coherent multi-party majority governments, often with a small number of parties. The main examples of the former model discussed in this volume are Romania (1996-2000), Serbia (2001-2003) and Slovakia (1998-2002). Croatia between 2000-2003 also fits this pattern. The latter model includes virtually all coalition governments in Hungary as well as the Lithuanian coalition government (2001-2004) and the current Latvian coalition. Other states, such as Poland and the Czech Republic, have seen numerous minority coalition governments, those in the former case often resulting in political instability. The current government in Serbia (since March 2004) also fits this pattern.

One of the questions discussed in this volume is whether the type of coalition government matters. One assumption we make is that coalitions that are alliances of convenience are more likely to seek to create checks and balances between parties, as levels of mutual trust between parties in such governments are often low. Some of the more straightforward checks and balances include political appointments in the civil service that would combine political management from one party with senior civil servants from different parties. Such arrangements are obviously detrimental to the idea of developing a professional civil service. The expectation would be that countries ruled by coalitions that fit this profile would make less progress on civil service development than states ruled by ideologically coherent coalitions, especially if these hold a parliamentary majority.

A second question is how frequent turnover between governments and changes in the nature or composition of coalitions affect civil service development and politico-administrative relations. Slovakia, for instance, went from a broad coalition of convenience (1998-2002) to an ideologically coherent coalition

5 The broad coalition against Meciar's HZDS in Slovakia in 1998, the broad coalition of opposition movements against Iliescu in Romania in 1996 and the coalition against Milosevic rule in Serbia in 2000 are some of the main examples.

(2002 – present). Hungary has as a rule interchanged left-leaning with right-leaning coalitions. Romania moved from a coalition of convenience to a more coherent but minority coalition. We assume that change and turnover will influence the chances of successful civil service development. Frequent changes in the political orientation of coalitions would be expected to stall the professionalization of the civil service and reduce stability. This in particular is likely to impact on civil service development in CEE states, as voters have, with very few exceptions, shown a tendency to interchange between government and opposition at virtually every election.⁶ Changes in the composition of coalitions would be expected to have a positive impact only if coalitions become more coherent and hold a majority.

Finally, the question arises whether coalition governments have used ‘traditional’ European mechanisms to manage politico-administrative relations, including under-coalition governments, or whether they have found their own approach. In this respect, it is important to see whether the introduction of the checks and balances between coalition partners has led to increased politicization and instability in the civil service, or whether governments have gradually moved towards a system of self-restraint.

The ‘old’ EU member states: Any real change?

Whereas the discussion on CEE states is really a discussion on the emergence of new political systems and how these impact the civil service systems, and raise questions as to whether European models work under these conditions, the analysis of ‘older’ European systems mainly assesses whether public management innovations and changes have affected the way in which countries mitigate the potentially politicizing nature of coalitions. Dissatisfaction with the performance of government combined with modernization challenges as a result of globalization and integration have also affected smaller as well as peripheral states in Europe. It is, therefore, of particular interest to review governance changes in these states, and analyze their impact on civil service development.

Belgium, Ireland and Finland, the three main cases discussed in this volume, are all cases of previously ‘frozen’ structures of both political and administrative governance. Social, religious and linguistic cleavages determined the governance model in Belgium, impacting both on the mode of coalition government and on the appointment system in the civil service. The Irish political system was also determined by political polarization, though contrary to the Belgian case, the response in terms of civil service management was one of strict separation between politics and the civil service. Finnish political reality was frozen as a result

⁶ Even if there was some continuity in the political orientation of government, like in Slovakia in 2002, there were still significant changes in the composition of the coalition. There are almost no examples of continuity in government in CEE states, except in the Czech Republic and, to some degree, in Latvia.

of proximity to the USSR and the resulting constraints in political choice. All three states faced significant pressure of adaptation to new economic and political realities. In addition, both Belgian and Irish political elites were rocked by a series of corruption and criminal scandals in the 1990s, which posed questions regarding the suitability of the system of governance. Political changes have been significant in all three states, challenging traditional notions of coalition government and at times creating new coalitions across previously entrenched political boundaries. The main question addressed in this volume is how deep changes in political reality have affected systems of politico-administrative relations. To what extent has civil service modernization taken root? How has the change in nature and approach in politics affected the interaction between politicians and senior officials? Most of all, has political change generated civil service reform and, if so, in what direction?

Coalitions and civil service development: Towards a new model?

Traditional notions of impartiality and professionalism in civil service development may be facing their most serious challenge in many decades. So far there does not seem to be a clear alternative to enhanced politicization, even 'Americanization' of civil service models in many of the states in central and eastern Europe. This poses questions about whether traditional European approaches of managing politico-administrative relations will ever take root in the new EU member states. At first glance, coalition governments and their management appear to have deepened the problems in managing relations between politicians and civil servants in this part of Europe. The analysis of the different cases in this volume will bring out whether this is indeed a trend and if so, where central and eastern European states are heading in terms of the development of their administrative systems. The same question can be posed for many other European states. When political and administrative systems are unfrozen, as they have been in a number of states in the last decade, what models will crystallize when the dust settles, and how will coalition management affect this? The case studies in this volume will attempt to answer this question. Finally, the question of what trend we will see in Europe as a whole needs answering. We know that the European Integration process can generate a certain degree of convergence in administrative practice across Europe, but the question will be: Convergence to what kind of model?

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Section I
Central and Eastern European
Countries

Politico-Administrative Relations under Coalition Government: The Case of Estonia

*Georg Sootla*¹

1. Institutional Structure of Governance in Estonia

1.1 General context

Estonia is a parliamentary republic, with political institutions structured to promote rather liberal and competitive politics. At the same time, the social context of politics remains corporatist, with limited individual mobility channels. This feature of institutional structures was partly caused by the liberal-democratic mood in Estonia after the restoration of independence. But partly it was caused by the Constitution adopted at the 1992 referendum. That was considered legally consistent with the Constitution of pre-war Estonia² which was largely a pre-modern liberal state. Today, the governing institutions are politicised³, whereas political competition is largely considered as a zero-sum, even as a negative-sum game. This basic contradiction eases understanding the specifics of politics and policy in Estonia.

Analysis of the relative weight of legislative and the executive powers in the constitutions of four CEE countries⁴ revealed that the Estonian Parliament was relatively more powerful than the government (Klaas 2002), and in Hungary the imbalance is even more so. For instance, in the Slovak republic and especially in Poland the balance was more clearly towards the executive (*ibid.*). Factions and individual members of the Estonian Parliament have been active in preparing and presenting the bills, whereas in 1996 – 97 only around 40 percent of them had been adopted. The government has initiated almost the same amount of legislation (46 percent) of the bills, with 89 percent being adopted (Sootla and Kadakmaa 2001).

The legal context regulating government roles and activities is inclined otherwise. According to the Constitution and the Government of the Republic

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2 This impact of past on governance structures in 1990s was rather paradoxical because the Constitution of 1937 was adopted and adapted to the authoritarian regime of K. Päts and his associates.

3 Here the concept of politics as partisan competition for majority power is opposed to politics as the public interest to be achieved as optimal policy outcomes. This antinomy has been analysed in different contexts as the difference between instrumental and substantive politics (Elster 1997), between aggregative and integrative political processes (March, Olsen, 1989), and the difference between distributive and collective power (Mann, 1987) in the analysis of governance systems. See also Jenssen 2001.

4 The distribution of authority in 11 dimensions was analysed in the scale – 2 (completely dependent on other institutions) to +2 (completely dominates over other institutions).

Act (GRA, 1995), the government is considered the top of state administration, whereas its roles as a policy-making or political body are not explicitly defined. The only indirect definition of the policy-making role in the Constitution was the government's right to present bills (including the draft state budget) to Parliament. In GRA, the term "policy" is not mentioned. Therefore, the politico-administrative dimension of the Estonian government is not normatively defined. The only exception was the first (1992) version of GRA which defined normatively the formal configuration (Guy Peters, 1989) of roles of the minister and the top administrator at the ministry. This definition did not, derive from deliberate design of new politico-administrative relations, but rather two basic exogenous or temporary variables caused this configuration (Sootla, 2001). First, the new coalition (the first cabinet of M. Laar) (over) emphasised the concept of legal consistency transferred from the pre-war Republic of Estonia. Second, the coalition was formed by new parties and politicians who had no previous executive experience. Their election slogan was "Purge the office", and they presumed that civil servants, most of whom had worked under the Soviet regime, would restrain their radical reforms.

There were also other legal norms which had impacted the evolution of politico-administrative dimensions at the government. The Constitution did not consider parties as subjects of elections, and the term "coalition" was not defined in the Constitution. The members of the government, i.e., the ministers, could not be members of Riigikogu in Estonia. The number of ministers and the list of government departments (i.e., ministries) were exactly defined in the GRA. This makes political manoeuvres and rearrangements of the formal context of governance rather difficult.

1.1.1 The roles of the president in coalition formation.

The president of the Republic has the authority to select or nominate candidates for the principal officials; thus the president could be (and actually has been) a veto point in this process. The prime minister does not have a right to dissolve Parliament or to initiate a vote of no-confidence in the government to discipline coalition partners. Although the Law of Election of Riigikogu is constitutional law (i.e., the amendment needs the majority support of members of Riigikogu), the rules of coalition making were changed several times. For instance, the right to form electoral unions was abolished just before the election of 1999. On one hand, the rules regulating the government as the basic political institution were primarily designed to reduce the political activities of the government. On the other hand, there was a substantial flexibility in the development of institutional configurations that might promote intensive politicisation and changes in the coalition logic. The government as a political institution is the least elaborated concept in the Constitution and in Estonian legislation.

1.1.2 Formal procedures of government formation.

After elections or the resignation of a prime minister, the president nominates a new prime minister within 14 days. According to the Constitution (§ 89), the candidate for prime minister must present the new government to the Riigikogu within 14 days after receiving the mandate to form a new government. After that, the Riigikogu decides, without debate and by an open vote, whether to accept the candidate for prime minister. Having received this authority, the prime minister presents within seven days the membership of the government to the president of the Republic, who must appoint the government to office within three days.

The Constitution is vague concerning nomination procedures and the role of the president. The president has the right to select his own candidate for prime minister. In 1999, President Meri nominated the leader of the party that did not win the elections and decided which coalition would be formed. In 1994, the president used his formal power to nominate (as proposed by the prime minister) members of the government, but he did not agree with the two candidates presented by Prime Minister Laar. Another ambiguity concerns the potential failure of the president to appoint the candidate for prime minister within 14 days. A similar gap appeared with appointments of several higher officials, where the president has the authority to nominate the candidate who needs the approval of a Riigikogu majority. In May 2000, President Meri twice refused to appoint the president of the Bank of Estonia proposed by the Council of the Bank. In June 2000, the seven-year term of the Legal Chancellor ended, and it took eight months before the president could propose a candidate acceptable to the Riigikogu⁵. The most delicate involvement of the president occurred in summer 2000, when Meri arbitrarily dismissed the Commander-in-Chief of the Defence Forces, although it was the role of the Riigikogu. The coalition favoured the president's decision, and later the Riigikogu officially approved the dismissal by a one-vote majority.

1.2 The Parliament

Estonian parliament, the Riigikogu with its 101 members, has the key role in steering and maintaining coalition politics. The coalition in the Riigikogu is primarily responsible for passing draft legislation prepared by the government, but is far from being a rubber stamp. Most governing coalitions have had either a tiny majority or were minority cabinets, supported by semi-loyal oppositions. For small majority coalitions (four out of eight), the floor had to work intensively to achieve party discipline. In the minority coalition (three of eight), the main task has been consultations with the opposition to pass certain legislation. In stable majorities, the coalition usually behaves as a steamroller and has few incentives

5 The first candidate, whom he proposed, failed a ballot in the Riigikogu. It was the clear signal that the president would need to find additional support. The two next candidates were rejected by the coalition. Finally, after more than a half-year trial, the suitable candidate was found in February 2001.

to take the opposition into account. In minority coalitions, the parties in power must choose flexible tactics and avoid proposals that might cause clear conflicts. In this purely political role, Riigikogu coalitions have relied on different coordination mechanisms and policy-making styles, resulting in differences in the roles of standing committees.

Leadership positions in the standing committees are distributed according to party strength in the Riigikogu. Because of a tiny majority or a even minority of the coalition and the small number of members in committees (ten committees with about ten members each), the coalition usually prefers to retain a firm majority and leadership in the most important standing committees. In less important committees, or in the areas with more consensus (e.g., defence, rural affairs) the leadership is given to the opposition.

We observed considerable differences in committee behaviour across different coalitions. In coalitions with a small majority, the coalition members of committees defended coalition positions, and ministers attended committee meetings more often than in other kinds of coalitions. The meetings were short, rarely more than an hour. Coalition members in committee focus on fine-tuning draft bills and work together with commission experts and civil servants from ministries and other professionals invited to the meetings. The coalition also uses various tools for blocking proposals from the opposition. First, all bills not presented by the government need government approval within six weeks but, as a rule, the government did not approve the proposals initiated by the opposition. Second, the leading committee itself could make a proposal not to include the proposals that came from outside of coalition on the Riigikogu agenda at the first reading, and to propose to stop discussions of the bill at other readings as well as withdrawing the bill from the agenda. This could happen, however, only after a majority approve these proposals. Third, the proposed opposition amendments could be voted down either at the meeting of the leading committee or, if the opposition insists, by a majority vote on the floor.

But these tools are not sufficient to ensure success of coalition policy at the Riigikogu for a minority coalition, and committees assume somewhat different roles. For instance, they become arenas for supplementary bargains if there is no clear majority. Committee meetings tend to be at least twice as long, and consultations between ministry officials on the one hand, and committee members and especially support staff on the other are intense. These consultations may start even before the draft bill is presented. Therefore, the role of civil servants in policy coordination increases considerably in minority coalitions.

2. Party System and Coalitions

2.1 Emergence and development of political parties

Coalition-building in Estonia in the 1990s was largely determined by pre-independence political development. The first policy stream derived from the semi-official opposition in the stagnant Soviet regime, constituting the core of the Popular Front. Later on, this stream split into two branches both relying on principles of democratisation and market development. One branch was composed of parties representing population segments who incurred losses in the market economy or whose status was reduced by social changes – call them losers. The Central Party represented the interest of middle-level white-collar workers. The Popular Union, which bound together the majority of rural parties before elections in 1999, mainly represents the rural population. Parties representing the Russian-speaking population would also be deemed losers.

The parties that represented popular interests that had some obvious gains from democratisation and development of market economy formed the second branch – the winners. These were intellectuals whose gains derived from democratic freedoms. Their various groups and parties formed through numerous amalgamations into the Peoples Party Moderates. Representatives of new business elites and associated intellectuals formed the libertarian Reform Party in 1995. The first stream also included one party located in the middle of the winner-loser continuum, the Coalition Party. Initially, they behaved as a party of losers because their middle-manager members had lost substantial influence and status after independence. But later, as privatisation and redistribution of property succeeded, one group made gains and left politics. The party became internally fragmented and finally dissolved in 2001. The second stream emerged from the non-compromising opposition – dissidents from the Soviet era – with the Estonian National Independence Party (ENIP) at the core. At the end of the 80s and in the beginning of the 90s, they played a very important role in defining basic values for transition, insisting on legal consistency with the pre-war Republic of Estonia. They were also the central actors in the Constitutional Assembly in 1991 – 1992, but by the mid-90s had completely declined. One group of them joined with parties of third stream, first Pro Patria and thus became part of winner's spectrum. The other part, disappointed by the unjust and dirty (by their definition) power games, left politics in 1995.

The third stream of winners came from another generation of intellectuals from the period of stagnation (the late 70s and early 80s). They have anti-system attitudes, tried to avoid conflict with authorities, had no illusions about power games and were able to adapt to independence. Initially, they formed numerous parties (Christian Democrats, Republicans, Conservatives, etc.) and participated in the 1992 elections as an electoral union. After the elections of 1995, they formed Pro Patria, relying on democratic values and stressed nationalism. During

the first part of 90s, they were radical libertarians and nationalists. According to Kitschelt, they could be considered a pathology of logic of post-Communist traditions, combining market universalism and nationalist particularism (Kitschelt 1992). Later it was demonstrated (Bunce 1999) that this combination was the only democratic configuration for consolidating nationalist politics. Since the mid-90s, when the political relevance of independence was shrinking and the European Union became part of the political agenda, Pro Partia started to move towards the centre. Currently, their electorate has become rather similar to those of the Central Party and the Popular Union. This demonstrates that the division between winners and losers has started to decline in Estonian politics, and pre-conditions for catch-all parties are rising (Ruutsoo 2002).

2.2 Characteristics of party politics

The main characteristic of party politics during the 90s in Estonia was strong antagonism between the coalition and the opposition, coinciding with the division of winners and losers. A strange pattern emerged: political configurations of coalition and opposition mirrored each other more or less completely, and the space for coalition games was rather narrow. Both winners and losers were able to form only one type of coalition to achieve a tiny majority. The winner parties refused to form a coalition with the Centre Party. Results of successive elections confirmed our hypothesis (Sootla 1996) that the dualism of the party spectrum restrained party institutionalisation. The rise of parties at elections has been proportional to the fall of them at the next elections unless winners and losers disappear. For instance, winners of elections in 1992 (Pro Patria and ENIP got 39 seats) were heavily defeated at the next elections in 1995 when they got only eight seats (Appendix 1). Similarly, the winner of the 1995 elections was the KMÜ (41 + 1 seats), but at the next elections 1999, they got only 14 seats. The same trend continued. Triple Union got 53 seats in the 1999 elections, but in 2002, only three parties could pass the five percent threshold. Two leaders in the support – the Centre Party and Reform Party – formed the coalition.

However, there were two exceptions that did not completely fit into this picture: the Centre Party and the Reform Party. The Centre Party developed from the Popular Front after numerous groups splintered off and formed separate parties. In 1995, after the political scandal and failure of the coalition with the Coalition Party, the Centre Party splintered. One stream – the Development Party – continued to support the coalition and even got one position in the government (a minister without portfolio). The other stream reconstituted itself and partially redefined its identity. As a result, the Centre Party ceased to use the rhetoric of the past and started looking for traditional ideologies, first of all, liberalism. On the other hand, they intensively started to pursue a new electorate among youth and built a strong party hierarchy. In other words, the Centre Party started to consoli-

Table 1
Distribution of winners and losers in the party spectrum in Estonia

Winners		Losers	
Main objective	Parties	Main objectives	Parties
Conservative, looking to future through the lenses of past (legal consistency), particularism		Conservative, looking towards past, or particular social segment	
Free nationhood (nationalism)	Pro Patria, ENIP, Estonian Citizen	Agricultural and rural decline, provincialisation of Estonia <i>vis a vis</i> Capital city	Estonian Popular Union (as the result of amalgamation of small parties)
Radical liberals, universalism, ethical values, social capital		Radical liberals and people with social-democratic orientation, social capital	
Human rights and freedom (intellectuals)	Moderates Rural-central party, Democratic party etc.	Declining status and income of white collars (teachers, nurses, clerks)	Estonian Central Party
		Currently: professionals who met mobility ceilings, unethical games at the public sphere	Res Publica
Libertarians and rightist liberals		Liberals, professional freedom	
Free enterprise (business)	Reform Party	Professional and managerial cadres at Soviet enterprises, sciences, ministries	Former Coalition Party
		Currently: national business after privatisation	Res Publica (partly)
Still without ideological commitment, looking towards the past, particularists			
		Russians as language group	Russian parties
		Russian business and young Russians with positive perspectives	
		Russians who cannot integrate	Russian's party in Estonia

Arrows describe the evolution of the attitudes of the electorate that were partly statistically confirmed in the survey in 2001 (Golovko, 2002).

date through several crises and splintering as a catch-all party (Hagopian 1993), with more or less equal support in most of segments of the population.

The other was the Reform Party, which was established in 1994 before the elections in 1995, and at the beginning relied on the clearly defined and rather stable electorate. This was the party without references to the past and with a clear identity. At the end of 2001, the Triple Union coalition failed and the new coalition of the Centre Party and Reform Party was developed (also called Dual Union). The Reform Party's ability to collaborate with the Centre Party made the Reform Party the winner of the breakdown of the Triple Union. This was the coalition that broke the dead end in Estonian coalition politics. It was seemingly the combination of ideologically different parties. Actually, this coalition involves parties with a similar type of electorate (trend to catch-all party) and with well-developed structures, especially at the grassroots level, and with a rational pragmatic policy-making style.

2.3 Electoral rules and coalition formation

Electoral rules have a minor impact on coalition formation. To avoid the extreme splintering of the parties, the five percent threshold at Riigikogu elections and the minimal number of members in each party (1000) were established in Estonia. Since independence, there have been three general elections in Estonia: 1992, 1995 and 1999. Eight parties elected in 1999 are currently represented in the Parliament (Appendix 1). So far, none of the parties has won enough seats to transform the Estonian splintered party system into a moderate multi-party system with a dominant coalition party. The ideological distance between the parties and inherently adversarial traits of coalition politics contribute to the party system's splintered nature (Hagopian 1993).

Up to the general elections of 1999, small parties were permitted to form electoral unions, contributing to the emergence of new parties and the splintering of existing ones (Pettai and Kreuzer 1999). In 1995, 30 parties competed in the parliamentary elections, and there were 12 factions in the Riigikogu (Toomla 1999). Amendments to the Riigikogu Electoral Act abolished electoral unions and only political parties and independent candidates could take part in 1999 elections. Likewise, forming factions inside a parliamentary party was prohibited. This innovation in the rules had two effects. First, party factions become more stable and the number of independent candidates (the "swamp") decreased dramatically. On the other hand, the forceful amalgamation of parties made them internally incoherent. In our opinion, these measures play an important role in the rearrangement of the party spectrum described above. In Estonia, the mixed system of closed party lists has been applied, where seats are distributed simultaneously at the level of districts and at the national level. In the re-distribution of

seats at the national level, the modified D'Hondt system favours parties with the largest support.

3. Coalition Structures in the Government

3.1 Types of coalition cabinets in Estonia

Since the restoration of independence in 1991, Estonia has had eight cabinets, with rather different coalition patterns (cf. Appendix 2). Prior to the last coalition in 2002, there were three more or less different types of coalitions and cabinets. To a large extent, their patterns determined the characteristics of politico-administrative relations. In the identification of types of government coalitions, we try to rely on two typologies: the typology developed by Dunleavy and Rhodes in their seminal article in 1990, and the typology developed by Blondel (Blondel 1982, 1990).

The first type of coalitions were formed by winners and led by M. Laar in 1992 and 1999 (the Triple Union). These governments contained parties with large ideological distances. Therefore, they primarily tried to develop the devices of collegiality in order to neutralise internal political conflicts through emphasizing devices of political coordination. They were at the first period politically rather efficient. But if one takes into account all politico-administrative relations, they remained closer to the ministerial cabinets and spontaneously developed in the direction of the prime ministerial clique cabinet, where the prime minister was surrounded by non-elected officials and external interests that isolated him from the rest of cabinet. In 1994, this caused the resignation of Laar. In December 2001, Laar stopped this process and resigned on his own.

The second type of coalition cabinet was established by T. Vähi, and was characteristic to three consequent cabinets where the Coalition Party formed the core of the coalition (with some exception of the M. Siimann cabinet). These are segmented cabinets, where the prime minister plays a more or less central role in a few strategic areas. Individual ministers could have substantial autonomy, but intensive mutual consultation mechanisms were developed between the ministers and their departments.

The third type of coalition cabinet could be called Christmastide cabinets; they initially emerged at the end of 1994. These were coalitions that developed with the aim of ensuring the consistency of government policy before the upcoming elections. Policy-making in this type of coalition has a strong element of professionalism and neutralism. These cabinets openly distanced themselves from the conventional party competition. In Central and Eastern European countries, the best known example of this kind of cabinet was the government of J. Tosovsky in the Czech Republic.

As we are considering the typology at the level of ideal types, we must note the actual picture is much more complicated. For instance, the minority coalition chaired by M. Siimann has strong similarities with the third type of cabinet coalition. It was the first coalition in Estonia which explicitly promoted consensual and politically neutral policy. Hence, the politically non-affiliated ministers played an important role in this coalition. The cabinet currently in office (chaired by S. Kallas) also shares similarities with the Christmastide cabinet, although the characteristics of the segmented cabinet are clearly observed.

One of the questions to be answered in our analysis will be why the relatively coherent coalitions have regularly failed after having been in office for around two years, resulting in the emergence of Christmastide-type of coalitions. Our analysis will focus mainly on the comparison of first two types of government.

3.2 Coalition formation practices

As the rules and legal norms that regulate the political roles of coalition government are absent in Estonia, the ad hoc arrangement and rules of game have been developed. The policy-making styles and structural configurations of the core executive under various governments have been quite different, especially from the viewpoint of coalition performance. These issues will be considered in the fourth chapter and illustrated with empirical examples from two different coalitions. In this section, we are considering the formal aspects of coalition logic, particularly the distribution of portfolios, and devices of integration of coalition.

Government portfolios were distributed in coalitions not necessarily in accordance with the proportion of parliamentary strength of the party (Roopalu 1999). The main two variables influencing the distribution of portfolios are the weight of ministerial portfolios and bargains about the distribution of other positions (such as Chairman of Riigikogu). Once the portfolios are distributed, it is under the discretion of coalition parties to choose the ministers. There can be exceptions as when, for instance, personal background and professional capabilities become a subject of discussion. It was the reason for under-representation of rural parties in the KMÜ cabinet (cf. Appendix 3), and the over-representation of the Reform Party in the Dual Union coalition in 2002. In the latter case, the Centre Party was forced by the objection of coalition partner to reconsider its decision on the nomination of the minister of finances. In the coalition, every party forms a clearly identifiable group in the cabinet level, and members of some party groups even have regular meetings. But these groups or factions and their leadership are not formally institutionalised.

The number of ministers, who are formally the only political appointees after the coalition change, is strictly limited (GRA) and there are no other positions subject to coalition bargaining except few higher officials. As a result, the political logrolling and patronage concerns other types of appointments; first of all, top

officials in administration who by definition ought to be neutral career civil servants. But these appointments are out of the direct reach of the coalition.

Party discipline has been the central question of coalition behaviour during the last decade. It has two interrelated dimensions: the behaviour of individual members and the emergence of factions inside parties. As we already demonstrated, the parties in Estonia are not yet well institutionalised from the viewpoint of electorate, identities and values. The winner of the 1992 elections was actually the electoral union, *Pro Patria*, consisting of five parties. Most developments in the party landscape were concerned with the amalgamation of small party “clubs” into the larger parties that were able to cross the five percent threshold. As recently as before the elections of 1999, two amalgamations took place: Estonian People’s Union joined with the Moderates, and another was the amalgamation of small rural parties. The presidential elections held in September 2001 revealed considerable tensions inside the *Pro Patria*. Thus, most parties are still rather factional. Parties have been more or less able to control the coalition behaviour of their members in critical situations, but they are far less able to follow consistent policy lines across time and policy sectors.

In the beginning of the 90s, the fragility of cabinets could be partly explained by a small proportion of professional politicians; that is, because of the low level of political responsibility of newcomers who often preferred to set their personal preferences above the interest of the party and the coalition. While the role of professional politicians gradually increased over the years, the number of parties in coalition decreased. Still, as late as 1997, Prime Minister Siimann nominated four ministers who were not members of coalition parties and two other ministers who were not professional politicians. These appointees were clearly identified as representatives of powerful interest groups. However, the internal integration of the cabinet did not decrease. Vice versa, the Siimann’s cabinet was more collegial than the Triple Union coalition. Therefore, we are suggesting that besides integrity of parties and party discipline there are also other factors which play important role in the coalition logic.

There is no rule or tradition that the party leader will take the ministerial post. In the coalition of the Triple Coalition, two of the three party leaders were members of the government. The leader of one party was simultaneously the head of the Coalition Council and leader of the parliamentary faction. In the Dual Union coalition formed in 2002, the (unanimous) leader of the Centre Party is even not the leader of the parliamentary faction. Instead, he holds the position of Mayor of Tallinn. It means that the party leadership of coalition partners could be spread across various institutions. This would increase the problems in coordinating coalition politics. It could reduce the ability of the party to control and direct the actions of its members at the cabinet. There have been very few cases when party factions and coalition partners forced

their own ministers to resign due to loss of confidence. Maybe the best known is the 1995 resignation of the leader of the Centre Party, E. Savisaar, due to a political scandal. The other trend would be even more pronounced: before the regular elections, parties have difficulties in staffing ministerial posts. In 2002, the Coalition Party nominated young and/or inexperienced members to the ministerial posts who could not play appropriate roles in coalition politics. Therefore, the position of the minister is not that highly valued and the threat of resignation as the tool of party discipline would probably not work very effectively in Estonian coalitions.

The remedy against loose contacts between individual members of the cabinet and the party has been the nomination by political advisors to the minister. As a rule, these advisors are young and politically dependent on the party hierarchy. Their main role has been mediation between the members of government and the party: they ensure the smooth flow of information between them.

We have to differentiate between the party discipline and coalition discipline in Estonian coalition politics. It was particularly clear in the coalitions of M. Laar. Party discipline played a substantial role during the early phase of the coalition when parties could promote their electoral promises and fulfil their specific political aims. Similarly, party discipline was also important before the collapse of the coalition, when the crisis inside the coalition became obvious. In between, the actors retained a strong sense of coalition discipline but could get their proposals through by logrolling with coalition partners. Coalition discipline would also defend individual ministers in cases of serious policy failures, although ultimately, these failures only added to tensions in the coalition.

We could not observe a clear logic in the distribution of positions across policy sectors on the basis of the party's identity and ideology. In the current coalition, for instance, the liberal Reform Party controls the Ministry of Culture, and the Ministry of Environment. The somewhat left-oriented Centre Party controls the Ministry of Finances and Ministry of Defence. Due to the strategic decision to become a member of NATO, the budget of the Ministry of Defence has increased the most. But too narrow a space of political manoeuvring could distort the ideological face of parties because of the need to follow the power balance among parties in the distribution of seats in the cabinet.

3.2.1. Devices of coordination and conflict management

Coalitions in Estonia have several devices of coordination and conflict management that have been formally present in all coalitions: Coalition Agreement, Coalition Council, and informal consultations, primarily the Cabinet Meeting. Actually the character and role of these devices has varied enormously across the coalitions. These variations reflect the overall logic of coalition behaviour in

the policy process. (The detailed overview will be given in Chapter 4.) Here, we provide some general observations.

There are three different types of coalition agreements that could be described in continuum: “agreement on principles of conduct” versus “agreement on full-scale policy program”. From the character of the coalition agreement, different types of Coalition Council could be derived. The latter could be described in continuum: “the cabinet-centred” versus “the parliament-centred council”. The cabinet-centred coalition council is actually the inner cabinet, where not only conflicts are settled but also where the most important political deals are made. The parliament-centred coalition council primarily functions as the binding link between the government and the Parliament.

Cabinet meetings are informal forums for the filtration of issues that will be developed into decisions approved at government sessions. These meetings are held weekly in the government residence on Tuesday afternoons⁶. The purpose and working practices of this coordination mechanism have been shaped rather differently by various coalitions. On one hand, they have been used to discuss politically sensitive issues and to settle controversies between coalition partners. On the other hand, we could identify a different pattern of participants and a different style of discussion at the cabinet meetings, especially if the government of M. Siimann and M. Laar are compared. For instance, under the coalition chaired by Siimann, the cabinet meetings were open forums where substantial issues of government policy were discussed by a wide array of participants from various constituent groups. In the Triple Union coalition, conversely, these meetings were highly confidential and the access was restricted.

Apart from meetings of politicians, another filtration meeting was set up on Mondays before the regular government session met on Tuesday mornings. It was a fine-tuning meeting of secretaries general, where the final details of disagreements between the ministries were solved. Here, the discussion had a professional undertone; for instance, around the legal and technical matters of drafts of bills.

3.3 The Logic of Appointments

The development of civil service and the definition of roles of politicians and civil servants in the GRA (1995) has been so controversial that no stable configuration of politico-administrative dichotomy emerged during the 90s (Sootla: 2001). The definition of roles of civil servants vis a vis the ministers depended on coalition logic and on the policy-making style of the government. The debates

6 The Triple Union Coalition held the cabinet meetings in the Government Residence in the outskirts of Tallinn. The Dual Coalition uses the main government building (Stenbock House) in Tallinn.

pro and contra the open position system and the closed career system of civil service has created controversies between different sectors of government but not along the party lines.

Formally speaking, only the minister's staff (that is, political advisors, public relations specialists, etc.) could be politically appointed and only by the minister personally. They must leave the office after the resignation of the minister. This formal arrangement could not explain the logic of appointments neither in the government administration nor in the public agencies out of the direct administrative hierarchy. The absence of formal rights for political appointments in the context of rather complicated and volatile coalition has actually increased politicisation of appointments in Estonia during the 90s.

As stated above, the formal roles of the minister and secretary general were initially defined negatively in order to avoid the capture of politicians by experienced state employees⁷. The GRA, adopted in 1995, makes interrelations of these roles even more confusing. The long list of responsibilities of the minister mirrored the list of responsibilities of the secretary general. In this formal context, a weak minister could easily become an official who ratifies decisions prepared by the ministerial administration. Likewise, the top officials under a strong minister would become administrative assistants to the minister. The position of the secretary general changed also because the procedure of appointment changed. Previously, the secretary general was appointed by the minister on the proposal of state secretary as the highest civil servant. It looked like a promotion of career civil servants. But according to the GRA, the secretary general was appointed by the government on the proposal of the relevant minister. Besides, the GRA introduced a new position of deputy secretary general (DSG), who was appointed by the minister. What is significant is that these positions were not a subject of open recruitment. DSGs actually functioned as deputy ministers (accountable directly to the minister) with the responsibility to steer some sub-field or to coordinate some central issue (for instance, the EU affairs). So, the coalition has no significant role in these appointments. It is difficult to estimate the impact of the party on these appointments. We may only guess that it might depend on the position of the minister in the party.

Such definition of formal roles and appointments lead to de facto political appointments. As the dominance of civil servants in politico-administrative relations under the KMÜ coalition was obvious, the procedures appointments contributed to the politicisation of civil servants in the sense of their active involvement in the policy-making process. For this reason the appointment of non-partisan ministers as highly professional managers in the area of ministry was a rather logical development.

7 "The change of the cabinet /.../ should not be the reason of the resignation of the Secretary General" (GRA, 1992, art. 36)

The Triple Coalition stated clearly before the elections of 1999 (PHARE seminar: 1998) that they would increase the role of the minister as the political manager of the policy area, and reduce the role of top officials in the policy process. There were several more or less successful strategies to achieve it.

First, the “purge of office” (a slogan of *Pro Patria* in the elections of 1992) was actually practised as late as the end of 90s. Around half of the secretaries general to the ministry was replaced after the elections of 1999. In some cases, the coalition faced extreme difficulties in firing the top officials, and court cases followed. The Triple Union Coalition revised the draft of the Public Administration Arrangement Act⁸ which was intended to separate political and administrative roles. According to the new version, the minister acquires a right to fire the secretary general (as well as the director general of the Government Agency, and the County Governor) if the minister finds that the latter was not efficiently cooperating with the minister⁹. Some of the ministers were successful in making political appointments. In the Ministry of Finances, nearly all the top positions (from the head of department upwards) were changed in 2001. Political appointments also reached the lower managerial level and even the level of leading experts. But other ministers were less successful. Ministerial staff in the ministries with a previous high turnover of ministers and secretary generals (such as the Ministry of Education and in the Ministry of Social Affairs) was already politically affiliated to different parties, dependent on the time of appointment (coalition in office) (Ernits: 2002).

Second, according to the coalition agreement adopted in 1999, the political role of the minister was intended to increase through the extension of political support structures of the minister. This ministerial cabinet-like structure did not have, however, any formal authority in the existing legal context. The political support staff was young, without experience and definitely less professional in comparison with the civil servants.

The third strategy has been the open recruitment of staff members by the minister. The Minister of Environment staffed many managerial positions and started to hold regular meetings of the party caucus at the ministry.

The logic of political appointments has actually reached much further than to ministerial civil servants. The Estonian governmental system has been intensively decentralised, and in 1999 the New Public Management was announced as the official reform strategy. There are two kinds of organisations where politically-appointed persons could hold partisan control. First, the independent public institutions were steered by the supervisory boards appointed by the govern-

8 <http://www.riigikogu.ee/ems/plsql/motions.show?assembly=9&id=474>

9 This is from the version of the draft bill which dates from 09.05.2000. In the version of 04.04.2000, the reason of firing was formulated even more strictly: “absence of willingness to cooperation”.

ment and staffed by politicians and members of interests groups (for instance, public broadcasting). Second, the control over governmental enterprises and other private organisations (for instance, foundations) established by the government, but also enterprises where the government has a share. Control is not only possible via the supervisory boards which are nominated by the individual minister, but also by the nomination of top managers of these enterprises and foundations. Sometimes these boards may apply the open competitive selections (as was the case with Estonian Energy), but sometimes it is highly politicised (Port of Tallinn).

According to a commonly accepted view, the nomination and behaviour of politicians and representatives of party sponsors has not always been committed to the better promotion of public interest and contributed to efficiency in managing these organisations. Participation in some of these boards is not only a substantial source of income for politicians (as in the Board of Bank of Estonia, Sick Fund, Estonian Energy and so on), but also an important resource for parties to increase their power basis and ensure sufficient financing for elections. As a result, the partisan appointment principles have even reached hospital boards and managerial positions in hospitals.

The devolution could be, and has been, well-used for increasing direct political control and command over huge public resources. Still, these appointment games don't have explicit rules on the coalition level. The individual minister and his or her party are the main decision-makers. It does not mean, however, that coalition partners with the aim of getting the biggest possible representation in these bodies did not bargain these appointments.

3.4 Development of the Civil Service System

Development of the civil service system is good proof of how strategically important institutions which did not attract enough political attention could not stabilize because of the absence of clear and legitimate political choices (see also Verheijen: 2000). The Public Service Act was prepared as a set of technical rules and norms to regulate the status of the state employees vis a vis the government. Later on, it became clear that the implementation of this law would cause many controversies; for instance, concerning the career and promotion patterns that developed into the serious political tensions. These controversies exploded in 1997 – 98, not between parties that still considered it a politically non-sensitive issue, but between the different sectors of government. This was a vivid indication that cleavages between parties were not always the most important, and in the framework of certain policies, the conflicts between the ministers of the same party could be considerable. For instance, the cabinet could not manage controversies if the sectoral interests were dominant.

The State Chancellery (which is responsible for coordination of training and evaluation of civil servants) and the Ministry of Finances (responsible for civil servants' salaries) insisted on the development of an open civil service system with an emphasis on effectiveness and competitiveness. This approach was in accordance with the New Public Management (NPM) ideology. The NPM presumed the clear separation of politico-administrative roles. But the development of an open system resulted in a high turnover of civil servants, especially at the ministries (17.1 percent per year in the end of 1998) and in the politicisation of the civil service. In contrast, the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Interior supported the development of career civil service because the majority of civil servants in their sector were organised according to the logic of this system. So the non-partisan roots of the conflict did not make the clear choices up to the present day.

Government bureaucracy was one of the few governance institutions that was inherited from the previous regimes. Hence, in the first part of 90s, all the main constituencies that could determine political choices (politicians, emerging business elites and citizens) had mostly negative attitudes towards government bureaucracy and civil servants. Citizens' dissatisfaction was caused by the ineffective work of civil servants, which was to large extent caused by intensive restructuring of government administration and fluid legal-normative context. Emerging business elites aimed to capture the governance structures as much as possible to ensure advantageous results of privatisation and favourable business regulation. Neutral civil service was obviously the obstacle to that aim, and the negative image of the civil service developed. Most of the shortcomings of government actions were explained with prejudice by the inefficient, unethical, and unprofessional civil service. The archetype that obviously originated from the past found fertile soil during the transition to democracy; that is, politicians per se were a much more legitimate subject of the new policy that were civil servants.

This objective context influenced the attitudes of politicians and civil servants towards each other. Civil servants did not trust the professional ability and sincerity of politicians in defending public interest. Politicians considered civil servants as a conservative force ready to cheat in the distribution of power resources. In 1997, 51 percent of civil servants believed that they could express and defend the interest of the government better than any other subject in society, whereas only 23.7 percent thought that this could be done by political elites (cf. Sootla and Roots 1999 for the survey). In defining the most important variables of good strategic decisions, as many as 51 percent of civil servants thought that largest societal groups should be involved, whereas only 4.8 percent thought that decisions should be outcome of competition between political parties and interest groups (ibid.).

Coalitions have had different attitudes towards the civil service. In the spectrum of winners, civil servants were traditionally considered a possible threat to radical innovations. The central role of civil service in the policy process was not accepted. The politico-administrative dichotomy was interpreted in the terms of absolute separation of these roles. But ultimately, the configuration wherein top officials became extremely dependent on the politicians emerged. Conversely, representatives of the loser parties considered the professional dimension in the policy process more important than the political one. Therefore, they expected to cooperate with civil servants in the policy-making process.

Civil servants themselves also perceived their roles and status rather differently. There were four clearly separate groups among civil servants. The first group valued authority; the second group saw the civil service as their only possible employment opportunity and did not support privatization. The third group thought that public office offered the best possibilities for self-realisation and career; this was the largest group that identified themselves with the values of civil service. The fourth group consisted of opportunists who enjoyed benefits accompanying their position. Most (52 percent; 18 percent strongly) civil servants supported the negative sum game in honest competition. Sixty-six percent of respondents expected that civil servants should be primarily neutral, whereas only 6.3 percent strongly supported mission-driven civil servants. Generally, the opinion of public officials could not give serious reasons for the attitude that politicians should consider the civil service as a threat to their positions. Obviously, the politicians departed from a liberal-majoritarian interpretation of public interests and goods, whereas the civil service clearly expressed corporatist attitudes. The basic contradiction in the 90s Estonian political system between the liberal institutions and the corporatist institutional environment (discussed in Chapter 1) tended to be reproduced at the level of politico-administrative dichotomy. This hypothesis fits well with the emerging politicisation of public service and public offices. Here, we have a conflict on the level of subcultures that could not be eliminated by normative arrangements.

Estonia is a good case for demonstrating how the politico-administrative dichotomy that developed under New Public Management started to evolve towards the unbalanced hybrid form in which civil servants become personally dependent on their political principals (Hood: 2000). According to the rational choice approach, the dichotomy between the principal and the agent could stabilise and, respectively, the prisoner dilemma game would develop into the assurance game (John: 2000) where participants self-impose a set of institutional restraints. From the viewpoint of normative institutionalism, stable institutions emerge if the members of the institution accepted certain commonly accepted values as the normative basis for action. These institutional restraints or values would develop mutual trust and predictability (rational choice perspective), and

also generate a clear and fixed understanding of the roles of actors in the framework of institutions (the logic of appropriateness). If interrelations between these roles were subject to permanent revision or if the participants of this game use the hidden agenda to achieve more advantageous positions, the preconditions of institutionalisation would not emerge. In other words, if participants in this game choose the cheating strategy, they could achieve only sub-optimal results that will produce permanent zero-sum game and unstable configurations of politico-administrative relations. In that case, participants in public institutions started to behave as completely private subjects. The actual division of politico-administrative roles becomes more like an ad hoc private deal.

In countries undergoing radical transition, the civil service could not institutionalise coherent and stable values. These values (neutrality, impartiality, professionalism, etc.) would help avoid ad hoc individual deals between civil servants and politicians. If the institutionalization of the civil service is weak, a civil servant is in a disadvantageous position in comparison with politicians who are organised in parties. Besides, the losses of politicians in case of the policy failure in Central and East European (CEE) countries are substantially smaller than in the developed countries. The reason is that mechanisms of political accountability are still not functioning appropriately here. Thus, there are strong variables pushing toward an unbalanced hybrid of politico-administrative relations in CEE countries with the radical reform policy. The impact of that trend on the logic of coalition and to the politico-administrative dichotomy is demonstrated below.

4. Politico-administrative Relations in the Policy-making Process

4.1 Methodology of analysis of politico-administrative dynamics at the coalition governments

The existence of coalition cabinets depends on its ability to combine two inter-related tasks. On one hand, the coalition cabinet must ensure effective political coordination of decisions; i.e., to ensure the sufficient legitimacy of decisions among coalition partners to retain unity and stability of the coalition. Moreover, the government should ensure the legitimacy of its decisions and overall conduct of executive roles among their political “sponsors”: coalition partners in the Parliament, important pressure groups (who usually also sponsor parties), public media, etc.

On the other hand, the cabinet must command issues and policies: deal with numerous piecemeal issues, develop sophisticated policies and manage policy sectors. This is the ability to ensure effective administrative coordination of decisions (Blondel and Golosov 1999). By the administrative dimension we do not mean the activity of the administrative leaders at ministries or agencies, although

relations between members of cabinet and their administrative apparatus would be important for the politico-administrative dichotomy¹⁰.

The analysis of the administrative dimension of this dilemma should focus, first of all, on the the roles and the activities of support structures of the core executive (Dunleavy and Rhodes 1990), such as various types of committees, cabinet offices, prime minister's staff (or other structures where the cabinet decisions are made), but also government agencies as far as they ensure the coordination of policy-making at the core executive. For further development of the methodology, we would like to make the distinction between four forms of coordination, where politics and administration at the level of core executive are already in the complex mutual penetration (Peters 1998). Besides, there is a need to identify the causal links between the character of the coalition and those forms of political-administrative coordination.

Table 2

Types of policy coordination as variables shaping the politico-administrative configurations.

Type of co-ordination	Focus of activity	Style of decision- making	Basic support structures	Type of decisions	The aim of coordination
Political	Gaining political support, justifying actions	Bargain, logrolling	Advisors to the government as brokers, <i>ad hoc</i> commissions	Politically sensitive, conflictual	To retain in power through retaining the legitimacy
Policy	Conceptual fit of policy programs	Rational technical	Government support structures, <i>expert</i> commissions	Political priority, consultations	To ensure the consistent policy strategy
Policy process	Smooth interaction of different parts of policy process	Calculated advantages/ disadvantages parts	<i>Inter-ministerial</i> commissions, working groups	Politically and administratively feasible; instrumental	To avoid conflicts inside executive branch, to ensure the feeling ownership for civil servants
Policy outcomes	Balancing interests of recipients of policy outcomes	Compromising	Commissions with intensive involvement of constituents	Participative and deliberative	To avoid tensions and conflicts inside society, to ground legitimacy of democratic governance

Political coordination focuses on the development of devices of harmonisation of decisions with the main "sponsors" as well as among the members of the cabinet. In order to avoid overload, this form of coordination relies primarily on permanent cabinet committees or, alternatively, on political advisors. It presumes the important role of detailed coalition agreement (or government program) and separation of politically sensitive issues from the other issues that are either too

¹⁰ For instance, in the case management of policy sectors the politico-administrative dimension could be presented via roles the minister play as the cabinet member and the minister; i.e., whether the minister uses its political authority and political means to manage its policy sector (via political appointments, policy changes, including structural changes, guidelines, various forums and discourses), or he/she prefer administrative interventions (like administrative appointments, issuing directives, making operational decisions, etc.).

technically complex or politically more neutral and therefore, decided outside of the cabinet.

Policy coordination focuses on fine-tuning the policy program and on the compatibility of various sectoral policies. This type of coordination does not presume special structural devices because policy programs themselves function as coordination devices. Hence, these cabinets can rely on the relatively independent and neutral expert commissions. Effective political coordination would be achieved in-house and mostly informally, and coalition agreements should contain basic binding principles and policy aims. Policy coordination has two dimensions. The first focuses on the input of governance (or implementation) issues at the stage of policy formulation. These inputs could be characterised through content (whether by governability (Kooiman: 1993) or capability (Weaver & Rockman 1993)), or from the viewpoint of the actors in the policy process. The latter viewpoint could be characterised as “policy ownership”, introduced by Pollitt (Pollitt & Bouckaert 2000). It refers to whether those who ought to promote the policy process up to the outputs have appropriately internalized policy aims and means.

The second dimension of coordination focuses on the feedback and corrective devices of the policy implementation; i.e., whether the policy adopted is adequately implemented, whether the controversies between the different policy sectors that could emerge in the course of implementation could be effectively solved, and whether the devices of adaptation and correction could work and retain enough political leadership of the core executive. This dimension of coordination does not mean that the core executive has delegated all the coordination authorities to the civil servants or to the external networks. Their burden could extend considerably as the coordination needs permanent working arrangements.

Here, effective coordination presumes either a stronger position of the prime minister or strong permanent structures of coordination at the cabinet level. Examples of these powerful support structures include the government office or the prime minister’s office with the extensive capacities of policy coordination. These structures were identified by Goetz and his associates (Goetz and Wolmann 2001) as a specific variable to ensure effective coalition politics also coordinated administratively. Coordination of policy outcomes means that government policy could balance the interests of different constituencies in the final policy outcomes. For coalition logic, it presumes the existence of intensive participation channels that the coalition is able to manage in order to define priorities and impose losses in case some interests clearly dominated (Weaver and Rockman 1993). Coalition politics are not so much focused on policy content as on the development of intensive state-society relations; i.e., channels and forums

of discussion. This is another side of the legitimacy of coalition policy. In addition, the political dimensions of coordination also play an important role.

Consecutively, the first and the fourth type of coordination emphasise the political dimensions of the policy-making in the cabinet but in a different way. The first form focuses on ensuring the short-term unity and survival of the cabinet. The second focuses on long-term legitimacy and the capability of government to develop its priorities independently as public interests. Similarly, the second and the third type focus on the administrative dimension. The second type would achieve administrative efficiency through influencing the specific content of policies, and the third type would put emphasis on the structures and mechanisms of policy-making. The politico-administrative balance as the normative aim of effective governance could be achieved through the balancing of all these four types of coordination in the policy process.

In further analysis, characteristics of coalitions are independent variables, and emerging configurations of politico-administrative dichotomy are dependent variables. The main problem to be analysed is how the certain patterns of coalition promote or restrain the emergence of certain combinations of coordination in the policy process. Our main concern is understanding the possible effect of the certain coalition patterns on policy-making. For the sake of simplicity, we do not presume the existence of additional variables such as policy type (Lowi 1972, Wilson 1973) or policy sector (John 2000), although different types of policy obviously presume various configurations. In this way we avoid the need to describe complicated and multi-variable causal links between the dependent and the independent variables. The only variation considered is the difference between politically sensitive and insensitive issues under different coalitions.

The analysis is based on both qualitative and quantitative data. The qualitative data was primarily collected through semi-structured interviews with ministers and their advisors. In the interviews of senior civil servants, the life history method was used. The data collected through the interviews was supported by the documents of informal cabinet meetings. The latter gave explicit information about the agenda of the discussion and the participants. The quantitative study relied on analysis of government sessions, using 16 classes of indicators. These indicators were developed along three main lines: (1) what was decided; i.e., the content of decisions; (2) how it was decided; i.e., procedures of decisions and; (3) who decides; i.e., the actual membership in decision-making. Altogether, 120 government sessions of the coalition cabinets of M. Siimann (1997 – 1999) and M. Laar (1999 – 2001) were analysed. Ca. 3,600 decisions were codified, and as a result the data matrix consisting of 50,000 entries was analysed with SPSS by the research team chaired by E. Sootla.

4.2 Politico-administrative relations under the cabinets of M. Laar

4.2.1 *Politico-administrative dichotomy and the decision-making in the coalition*

Parties of “winners” established two coalitions chaired by M. Laar. Actually there were no serious alternatives to the majority coalition when these coalitions were formed. In 1999, the coalition of united opposition was announced even before the election. A lack of alternative choices in coalition formation facilitated political integration and coordination inside the coalition. The ideological distance between coalition partners was large and forced them to pay overwhelming attention to political coordination from the beginning. But the other reason for such special attention to politics was caused by the pronounced top-down style of policy-making. The coalition parties intended to inhibit probable resistance or simply inertia of administration and constituents to the radical and well-targeted policies defined in the coalition agreement. The coalition developed specific devices for developing radical top-down implementation of coalition politics.

The doors of main decision-making loci were closed to civil servants (except some employees of the State Chancellery) and other constituencies. In this way, the clear borderline between the political and the administrative roles of support staff was drawn. Government session as an official decision-making forum did not play a coordination role. Instead, it became the forum for the ratification of decisions which were already made somewhere else. For instance, under the cabinet of M. Siimann, the average time at government session spent on one decision was 8 – 10 minutes. The second government of M. Laar spent only 2 – 3 minutes on average on one decision.

The central decision-making arena was the cabinet meeting. It was an informal meeting with very restricted access and no minutes. Besides the members of the cabinet, the prime minister’s advisors, the heads of Riigikogu factions, and the Secretary of the State with her advisor participated. Sometimes influential interest group representatives were invited. Although it was rare when more than ten issues were discussed, the meetings routinely lasted a minimum of four hours. The agenda of cabinet meetings contained mainly two types of politically sensitive issues. First were issues that cabinet ought to scrutinise without the intervention of external actors that could restrain or influence political choices of cabinet members. Some of these issues concerned ad hoc distribution of resources, citizenship or urgent situations. Most of these issues were included in the agenda by individual ministers who wanted political advice or support before launching the policy. Some issues and decisions that could cause political controversy originated from these meetings. The second type of politically sensitive issues were those that had already caused conflicts between cabinet members or parties, but could not be harmonised between the ministries. The cabinet was the specific device for relaxing emerging tensions because it created a rather informal atmosphere

where personal dimension played a decisive role. Cabinet meetings could thus maintain collegiality and collective responsibility, and apply majority pressure without risking open conflict. In cases where the tensions or disagreements were not solved, an ad hoc reconciliation group was created and issues could come back to the cabinet meeting only when consensus had been achieved. Therefore, the structure where the most important decisions were made was purely a device of political coordination, where the administrative dimension as an obstacle to fast political decisions was almost completely eliminated. For instance, issues concerning substantive harmony of policies or feasibility of implementation did not arise in cabinet meetings. Still, only a minor part of issues which the government should make was decided at cabinet meetings.

Most policy decisions are assigned to individual ministers. These were politically non-sensitive policies and issues, at least at that moment, that could not influence the political integrity of the cabinet. Coordination of these decisions has usually been achieved through inter-ministerial harmonisation where secretaries general played the crucial roles. This device of coordination was prone to political conflict and substantially increased the role of civil servants. It was also the device of possible alliances and logrolling between individual ministers outside the accepted loci of political decisions. Hence, inter-ministerial harmonisation could contradict political coordination that was the cornerstone of the coalition policy style. Therefore, the cabinet tried to abolish veto points at this stage as much as possible, and disagreements of neighbouring ministers were not serious obstacles for proposing an issue for the government session. Additionally, the right of the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Finance to veto proposals of line ministries was also abolished¹¹. The Department of Legislation at the State Chancellery retained some authority to coordinate the technical-normative dimensions of proposals as well as the implementation of secondary legislation of individual ministers. In this way administrative coordination was further reduced to ensure effective top-down policy-making style.

Hence the power and discretion of an individual minister in his area of governance considerably increased. Likewise, the influence of the cabinet on the basic behaviour patterns of the individual ministers weakened. It meant that the minister could freely choose his or her role which could vary from a hardworking administrator to a political solo-player. The latter could use the ministerial policy as a tool for promoting his or her party, interest group or even individual political interests. At the latest stage of the Triple Union coalition, this behaviour of individual ministers and of the prime minister started to erode the legitimacy of the coalition even more substantially than did the internal controversies of the coalition.

11 The former was abolished by the Riigikogu in 1998, under the minority cabinet of M. Siimann after the strong pressure of opposition.

4.2.2 *Politico-administrative dichotomy at the level of government support structures*

Support structures of coalition government can determine politico-administrative relations. In the first Laar coalition (1992), coordination structures that did not correspond to the logic of policy-making were redesigned. The most important changes concerned the prime minister's office and the State Chancellery. Changes in the prime minister's office started in 1992 by abolishing advisory staffs that mirrored ministerial structures. Previously, this structure facilitated policy coordination prior to cabinet decisions and also in implementation. This configuration improved feedback from key officials of ministries without permanent mediation of either the prime minister or the relevant minister. For Laar, it would result in excessive bureaucratisation of cabinet decision-making which had been oriented too fast and radical decisions.

Instead, a new structure of advisors was developed to ensure more effective political advice to the prime minister who aimed, first of all, to better coordinate the policy proposals that came to the cabinet. These advisors also functioned as the channels in communication between the prime minister and the powerful interest groups. This change implicitly relied on the presumption that the government alone has a right to form the policy, and administration has full responsibility for its implementation.

A second change was the redefinition of the mission and roles of the state chancellery as the government support structure. Previously, the main role of the State Chancellery was steering cross-sectoral administrative functions such as the civil service, local and regional government, statistics, real estate, archives, databases, etc. As the structure of the State Chancellery has similarities with the structure of ministries, its role was coordinating implementation. The strategy of the Laar coalition was to transfer those cross-sectoral functions and coordination of the implementation by relevant ministers. As a result, the State Chancellery lost most of its coordinating functions and retained mainly technical functions of assistance of the government. These changes were initiated with the aim of increasing the power of individual ministers and decreasing the administrative capacity of the prime minister to make it the first among equals.

The role of government commissions¹² in creating politico-administrative balances has been less studied (Sömmer 2002). The first Laar coalition relied on the task-oriented Commissions of Ministers, which often included key members of Riigikogu. Inter-ministerial commissions and expert commissions. They were mainly advisory and not able to harmonise different policies between each other, nor could they coordinate policy implementation. This inability did not derive

¹² Formally, there are three kinds of government commissions: the commissions on ministers, inter-ministerial commissions and expert commissions.

from any weak capacity of participants (as can be seen in Table 4 below), but from their insufficient formal roles in policy-making. The implementation failures deriving from weak representation of affected constituencies in the policy-making process were rather characteristic of this type of coalition.

Obviously there were arguments for decreasing the role of administrative coordination (Sootla 2001). This trend was also consistent with the intentions of the Laar coalitions to promote activist-reformist policy-making in the main institutions of governance (de Vries: 1999). But the emergence of deep gaps in administrative coordination at the cabinet level was also obvious for the premier himself. During the first coalition, Laar personally contributed to dismantling administrative coordination mechanisms in cabinet, and started developing his own informal advisory board of politicians, key civil servants, and representatives of interest groups. This body started to play a more substantial role in cabinet policy-making and caused the crisis that resulted in the resignation of Laar's government. The development of the so-called backdoor cabinet could be explained by the inexperience of the prime minister, and by deep social and economic crises during 1992 – 1995 that required concentration of authority by the prime minister. However, this experience was taken into account in the second Laar government. After forming the coalition in 1999, several strategic roles such as the EU integration, public administration reform and national security were re-allocated to the government office, and hence to the prime minister. But it was not enough for the effective administrative coordination of policy-making even at the coalition of M. Laar where priority was given to political dimension in coordination devices.

Table 3 demonstrates some role differences of the prime minister as well as cabinet members at various coalition cabinets. On one hand, we see extremely strong roles of the PM (M. Laar – 1550) in initiating decisions (in comparison with M. Siimann – 144) in cabinet. More careful analysis revealed that the prime minister was actually forced to concentrate some supplementary powers of ad hoc administrative coordination at the cabinet level to ensure minimal efficiency of policy-making. In the name of the government¹³, he started to issue orders with ad hoc assignments and implementation targets to individual ministers and to government. On the other hand, we found considerably less intensive debates and expression of opinions by individual ministers concerning other ministers' affairs in the Laar cabinet. This does not mean that ministers under the Laar cabinet were more autonomous as members of a coalition. We would argue that the absence of horizontal communications in decision-making indicates that the individual minister is, in this logic of coalition, much less capable in promoting its sectoral interests in cabinet. Actual decision-making at the cabinet level looked like bilateral negotiations between individual ministers and the prime minister.

¹³ The PM has no right to issue secondary legislation, but the individual ministers do.

Table 3

The level of activity in the government sessions: shows to what extent the members of the government and other officials involve into others' policy areas.

The Prime Minister: Mart Siimann								
	Did not involve into discussion	The Speaker	Questions and comments	Total activity	Total	Activity as a speaker %	Activity as a commentator %	The level of activity %
Prime Minister	801	144	2483	2627	3428	4,2%	72,4%	76,6%
Minister of Finances	1971	271	1186	1457	3428	7,9%	34,6%	42,5%
Minister of Economics	2019	954	455	1409	3428	27,8%	13,3%	41,1%
Minister of Interior	2395	417	616	1033	3428	12,2%	18,0%	30,1%
Minister of Environment	2451	256	721	977	3428	7,5%	21,0%	28,5%
Minister of Justice	2555	202	671	873	3428	5,9%	19,6%	25,5%
Secretary of the State	2584	195	649	844	3428	5,7%	18,9%	24,6%
Minister of Social Aff.	2677	299	452	751	3428	8,7%	13,2%	21,9%
Minister of Agriculture	2685	300	443	743	3428	8,8%	12,9%	21,7%
Minister of Education	2711	84	633	717	3428	2,5%	18,5%	20,9%
Minister of Transport	2784	3	641	644	3428	0,1%	18,7%	18,8%
Minister of Foreign Aff.	2790	171	467	638	3428	5,0%	13,6%	18,6%
Minister of Defence	2838	129	461	590	3428	3,8%	13,4%	17,2%
Legal Chancellor	2840	40	548	588	3428	1,2%	16,0%	17,2%
State Auditor	2935	0	493	493	3428	0,0%	14,4%	14,4%
Minister of Population	2985	207	236	443	3428	6,0%	6,9%	12,9%
Minister of Culture	3041	133	254	387	3428	3,9%	7,4%	11,3%
Minister of Regional Aff.	3168	38	222	260	3428	1,1%	6,5%	7,6%
Total	46230	3843	11631	15474	61704	6,2%	18,8%	25,1%

Table 3 (Continuation)

The Prime Minister: Mart Laar									
	Did not involve into discussion	The Speaker	Questions and comments	Total activity	Total	Activity as a speaker %	Activity as a commentator %	The level of activity %	
Prime Minister	538	1550	1882	3432	3970	39,0%	47,4%	86%	
Minister of Finances	2148	1126	696	1822	3970	28,4%	17,5%	46%	
Minister of Economics	3162	304	504	808	3970	7,7%	12,7%	20%	
Minister of Interior	3168	504	298	802	3970	12,7%	7,5%	20%	
Minister of Environment	3236	508	226	734	3970	12,8%	5,7%	18%	
Minister of Justice	3249	271	450	721	3970	6,8%	11,3%	18%	
Secretary of the State	3408	83	479	562	3970	2,1%	12,1%	14%	
Minister of Social Aff.	3410	299	261	560	3970	7,5%	6,6%	14%	
Minister of Agriculture	3578	237	155	392	3970	6,0%	3,9%	10%	
Minister of Education	3600	180	190	370	3970	4,5%	4,8%	9%	
Minister of Transport	3609	214	147	361	3970	5,4%	3,7%	9%	
Minister of Foreign Aff.	3614	247	109	356	3970	6,2%	2,7%	9%	
Minister of Defence	3651	218	101	319	3970	5,5%	2,5%	8%	
Legal Chancellor	3692	0	278	278	3970	0,0%	7,0%	7%	
State Auditor	3770	0	200	200	3970	0,0%	5,0%	5%	
Minister of Population	3836	37	97	134	3970	0,9%	2,4%	3%	
Minister of Culture	2889	27	54	81	2970	0,9%	1,8%	3%	
Minister of Regional Aff.	3926	22	22	44	3970	0,6%	0,6%	1%	
Total	58484	5827	6149	11976	70460	8,3%	8,7%	17%	

In these forums, the PM had numerous experts and some support structures (for EU issues). The individual minister entered the debate without such extensive expertise, mostly due to the reduced role of civil servants at the cabinet level.

4.3.3 Impact of specific politico-administrative configuration on the outcomes of policy-making

The rather specific but clear logic of politico-administrative relations was determined by the structures and practices of coalition. On the level of cabinet decision-making we observed an integrative and effective political coordination of the policy process. The other aspects of the policy-making process were almost completely pushed to the realm of executive administration, where the cabinet could not easily influence the behaviour of the ministers. The coalition almost completely neglected the administrative dimension of coordination and therefore did not succeed in achieving expected results in the policy implementation. In addition to the internal controversies, the coalition lost much of its integrity and faced policy failures because of the selfish and non-coordinated actions of individual ministers.

But what was the actual outcome? Because of effective political coordination, the government was able to get a fast start and launched policies that interested all coalition members. The coalition agreement was used as a basis for consistent policy. Gradually competition among coalition parties, and then ministers, started to develop into a game where all players tried to include their own issues on the overloaded government agenda. As the formal harmonisation procedure at the level of ministries (i.e., before cabinet) no longer enabled effective veto points, the consideration and adoption of proposals started to depend on power balances in the coalition. Decisions that did not find enough political support were postponed. This generated competition that one interviewee called “scoring”; i.e., competition over how many issues the party or individual minister was able to include into the agenda. Initially, coalition parties retained strategic unity in the scoring game. As the competition became more intense, “scoring” between the individual ministers started. New alliances emerged not only according to party lines, but also according to the aims of individual actors. It is hard to make generalisations about the motives of the players, to determine whether they promoted certain policies or were representatives of selected interests or simply worked from individual self-interest¹⁴. As the game became more individualistic, the more cabinet decision-making opened to the selected interests, even in secondary questions. That is, the more political coordination concentrated decisions at one point and the more closed arenas of policy-making emerged, the easier it was for selected interests to capture government.

14 All these motives persisted in case of the development of the Sick Fund as a public corporation (cf Sootla 2001)

This game of bidding surely raised obstacles to effective political coordination that was the strongest aspect of that coalition. Although growing internal tensions caused numerous scandals and resulted in unpopular decisions, these were consequences of, not reasons for, cabinet dissolution. As long as the government postponed a majority of decisions – as the games become more complicated – the number of unresolved policy goals and promises reached critical levels and made the cabinet gradually coalesce. Members of coalition were no longer able to use the coalition to achieve their policy aims, and the coalition dissolved

Finally we should reconsider the role of coalition agreements in that type of coalition. The coalition agreement at coalition with large ideological distance could be neither the coherent strategy nor the definition of basic principles and values. It was obviously a garbage can, a spontaneous collection of statements and visions of parties that could not only fit with each other but generate intensive controversies. But authors of the coalition agreement tried to consider it as the consistent and rational strategy. The sooner the coalition partners (or individual minister) started to understand this miscalculation, the more successful they became in promoting their partisan interest at the coalition.

To summarise: the combination of characteristics of the coalition logic, such as the large ideological distance, activist policy-making style, role of the coalition agreement and the specific role of coalition committee, determined the specific policy-making style of the coalition. The devices of political coordination overwhelmingly dominated and the devices of administrative coordination were separated from the cabinet structures. At the same time, the autonomy of the individual ministers brought about further politicisation of administration and public management.

4.4 Politico-administrative relations at the cabinets of KMÜ

4.4.1 Politico-administrative dichotomy and the decision-making dynamics of the coalition government

T. Vähi formed his cabinet with the losers' parties, although the limited electoral support (41 percent) made other coalitions possible. The Coalition Party negotiated with the Rightist electoral union which had been disappointed by the politics of the winner's spectrum and initiated dissolution of the Laar coalition in 1994. The Centre Party was willing to form the coalition with the Coalition Party, but the latter did not invite the Centre Party into the coalition. The leader of the Centre Party entered the complex political game and formed a "grand coalition" (informal) of four parties for the election of the chairman of the Riigikogu. The speaker who was a representative of the Reform Party was elected from this temporary coalition; this was a signal for the Coalition Party that they could lose the office. As a result, the coalition composed by the electoral union KMÜ and Centre

Party was formed. But at this moment there were several potential configurations for coalition formation.

The electoral union of KMÜ contained parties and electoral unions¹⁵ that were themselves internally fragmented, although the ideological distance between them was small. The core of the Coalition Party, chaired by a strong personality, T. Vähi, was able to integrate these fragments into a balanced centre-right party. The other coalition partner (Centre Party) was a well-structured centre left party with the largest membership and strong leadership. The initial coalition structure was hierarchical and without clear ideological cleavages. Therefore, the coalition was less prone to internal conflicts than the other type of coalition described above. The advantage of the coalitions chaired by M. Laar was the external pressure for integrity as there were no alternatives to the coalition. The Vähi coalition did not have those external pressures, but it had internal devices for integrity with a balanced ideological composition.

The first Vähi government was paralysed within five months by scandal. The libertarian Reform Party replaced the Centre Party in the coalition; that lasted 13 months. It was clear that the ideological distance in the coalition restrained policy-making. The core of the coalition (KMÜ) emphasized policy coordination and coordination of outcomes, and tried to promote a consensual style. The Reform Party tried to demonstrate its specific goals and insisted on new radical steps. The coalition was dissolved largely by the Coalition Party because it did not accept the style of the Reform Party. The third Vähi government was a minority coalition, and after the resignation of Vähi in spring 1997, M. Siimann became PM. Although Siimann's minority coalition did not have a majority support, it found ad hoc support for its policy initiatives thanks to a new consensual policy-making style.

The KMÜ developed a specific and rather different policy-making style for the three reasons: First, the coalition declared that its main aim would not be initiating new reforms and substantial revision of existing reforms. Instead, fine-tuning implementation and balancing different policy outcomes, already launched by the former cabinet, was seen as the central purpose.

Second, the coalition intended to become more open. The cooperation between parties of winners and losers, promotion of mutual trust between politicians and civil servants, and involvement of constituent groups into the policy process¹⁶ were declared policy aims. The coalition intended to rely in the policy process on the balances of participants who had been were withered away by the style of the previous coalition.

15 The Coalition Party, Estonian Rural Union, Estonian Rural Peoples' Party, Farmers' Union and the Union of Pensioners and Families.

16 The electoral slogan of the KMÜ was "professionalism, cooperation and patience".

Third, the selection of issues to be considered and settled at the cabinet was also different. The KMÜ coalitions did not focus only on politically sensitive issues, and devices for political reconciliation were not concentrated at the cabinet level as was true for the Laar governments. In KMÜ coalitions, the cabinet extended its role and paid more attention to debating and developing strategic decisions that were not politically urgent, but important in a longer perspective for realising overall government goals. Besides, the focus on implementation and policy outcomes became an important part of government priorities.

These strategic purposes were more or less successfully followed by all the coalitions where the Coalition Party played the central role. Hence, we could conclude that these coalitions (excepting perhaps the coalition with the Reform Party) were minimally-connected winning coalitions, which emphasised the coordination of policies and policy outcomes. The coalitions collapsed mainly because of external political and even moral pressures (scandals). T. Vähi was the first Estonian prime minister who resigned because of moral considerations.

4.4.2 Politico-administrative dichotomy at the level of coalition support structures

The first coalition (Vähi 1995) introduced new coordination devices by combining the Coalition Agreement and the Coalition Council. As opposed to the cabinet of Mart Laar, where the Coalition Agreement was a full-scale set of policy programs, the Coalition Agreement of the KMÜ and partners was a collection of general principles and values that coalition members should follow. After forming the coalition, the cabinet elaborated the comprehensive government program, with top civil servants and experts involved. The Coalition Council was developed into the inner cabinet which initially included four official members. It provided enormous power to the already strong party leaders (Vähi) and increased the hierarchical features of the cabinet. This was specifically analogous to M. Laar's backdoor cabinet that also caused a crisis in coalition.

Decision-making forums retained their previous formal status but their role in the policy process changed substantially. The first and most important difference was that decision-making forums became very open. Civil servants were invited as partners and experts to government sessions and cabinet meetings. The government sessions lasted much longer, and the cabinet members were involved in intense debates. Hence, the government session was not purely an official meeting for ratifying decisions but also a forum for debates, policy initiation and conflict resolution. Moreover, the cabinet meeting was opened to external constituencies and developed into the forum of policy coordination, where long and often vague discussions were held. One interviewee commented that it rather looked like an academic workshop. Even in the permanent commissions of ministers (such as the Public Administration Development commission), ab-

senteeism of individual ministers increased and they were gradually replaced by senior civil servants. Partly it was due to the work overload, and partly because the debates at commissions became rather technical and professional and politicians had neither knowledge nor time for those discussions.

Table 4
Changes in the composition of the Government Commission of Sustainable Development.

Participant	The proportion of participants in commission: government of T. Vähi (12.11.96) [%] (Losers)	The proportion of participants in commission: government of M. Laar (05.10.99) [%] (Winners)
Minister	8,0	27,5
Political advisor	4,0	0
Politician from the Parliament	16,0	9,1
Top officials	20,0	18,2
Civil servants	0	4,5
Interest groups	0,0	13,6
Target groups	12,0	9,1
Professional	40,0	18,2

Table 4 reveals two important changes. First, under the government of Vähi, the ministers had a minor role in this commission whereas politicians dominated it under the coalition of M. Laar. Besides, ministers of KMÜ cabinet attended the meetings of commissions only rarely; instead, civil servants represented the ministers. Second, we also noticed the substantial role of experts in the commission of T. Vähi, whereas in the commission of M. Laar powerful interest group representatives replaced them. The commission took a quick start at the coalition of M. Laar and intended to develop from a forum of speeches to a forum of decisions. At the end of coalition, the commission did not meet any more, and problems of sustainable development were relocated into the category of politically insensitive issues.

Although ministers delegated much of their work to civil servants and experts, the government workload increased, and government sessions could last the whole day. Nevertheless the government, as a decision-making body, was no longer able to manage the overload, and elaboration and initiation of policy was delegated to different forums. The role of these forums (especially inter-ministerial committees) increased tremendously. The policy-formation cycle from initiation to the presentation at the government session became longer. Some commentators defined these changes as the politicisation of civil servants in the policy process. Others argued that the government relied more on the admin-

istrative dimensions of coordination in the policy process than on the political dimension. As the first interpretation has been the most accepted, especially by the Estonian press, we consider it thorough.

With the increasing importance of administration in the policy process we cannot observe increased autonomy of individual ministers. Many issues, which under the Laar coalition were left to the discretion of individual ministers, were discussed in KMÜ coalition forums including the government session. But we could not say that individual ministers had lost their autonomy either, and ministerial interventions into the area of another minister did not become acceptable. However, policy coordination increased considerably both from the viewpoint of policy content and implementation.

The process of inter-ministerial harmonisation and consultation before the cabinet stage was more intensive and focused on substance. The same could be observed at the government sessions where debates between the individual ministers were more frequent and longer. The importance of inter-ministerial coordination was reflected in the growing role of the regular meetings of secretaries general of the ministries. In 1998, there was even a proposal to establish the Council of Secretaries Generals. This council would have the right to approve issues, which were harmonised between the ministers. This device could be seen as the most powerful for administrative policy coordination. The proposal did not succeed because it would have increased the power of the secretaries general even against the coalition.

4.4.3 Impact of specific politico-administrative configuration on the outcomes of policy-making

The developments discussed above resulted in gaps in political coordination. An increasing number of policy proposals were defeated during government sessions, and in Parliament. This was a clear signal of weak political coordination. But equally we could speak of poor administrative coordination. Policy formation became too long and inefficient even for consensual decision-making. In Laar coalitions, effective political coordination ultimately broke the coalition due to the absence of balanced politico-administrative relations. A similar pattern emerged for KMÜ cabinets that favoured administrative coordination. In other words, it paralysed the policy process, because of non-reliance on appropriate coordination devices.

Commissions and other forums alone cannot provide legitimate policy proposals if they lack enough political support. The coalition without a substantive ideological distance and with strong leadership (the case of the first coalition of Vähil) would not need such extensive devices for political coordination. What they would have needed were efficient structures for policy coordination. Neither cabinet meetings nor inter-ministerial commissions were to provide this coordination. The Laar coalition abolished devices of administrative coordination at the cabinet level in order to achieve more active policy-making. This was a rather wise strat-

egy at least at the first stage of the coalition. The coalition of T. Vähi¹⁷ had to rely on devices of politico-administrative coordination at the government level (State Chancellery) and in the prime minister's office. But the role and mission of these structures were not revised after the 1995 elections. In this context, the strategy of M. Laar to rely on the State Chancellery (1999 – 2000) was a perfect step towards improving policy coordination¹⁸ but the structures developed to fit the needs of the Laar cabinet (1992 – 94) did not support other coalition styles during the KMÜ coalitions. It is impossible to re-design institutional structures after each coalition change. Developing certain traditions and values for policy-making that will be followed by all types of coalitions is a more desirable strategy.

5. Conclusions

We can conclude that there are rather different models of coalition politics and also specific configurations of politico-administrative dichotomy from the viewpoint of the policy process. Table 5 summarises our findings. However, Estonia is very close to the emergence of a new type of coalition (an example is the Dual Union coalition formed in January, 2002). Their time in office, however, is still too short to analyse their policy-making style and innovations in the development of new politico-administrative configurations at the level of the core executive.

Table 5
Styles and structures of the Cabinet

Indicator	Coalition of Coalition and Rural parties	Coalition of M. Laar
Main channel (type) of coordination	Coordination of policy outcomes	Political coordination
Decision-making style	Consensual and de-politicised	Oriented to bargains
Openness, closeness	Extremely open for all in the formal and informal arrangements	Extremely closed for majority in formal and informal arrangements
Policy – politics dichotomy	Orientation to policy development, avoidance of win-lose situation	Overly politicised, win-lose strategy among coalition partners
Role of government session	Arena for solution of controversies	Purely the ratification
Access to the main decision-making locus for	Top officials, professionals	selected interests and party leaders
Effectiveness	Decision-making becomes slow and reactive	Fast decisions increase tensions in coalition and controversies between policies

17 The government of M. Siimann was in the same situation.

18 A similar conclusion was reached by Goetz et al. in the comparative study of other CEE countries.

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Public Administration under Coalition Government: Some Lessons of the Hungarian Case

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This paper, based on a survey of Hungarian Coalition Governments after 1990, is intended to reveal the forms, structures and reconciliation mechanisms of the coalitions. One of the foci has been the study on the impacts of the coalition form of government on the governance and the work of the administration. The methods were the analysis of the related documents and professional literature, as well as structured interviews with government and political leaders. Interviews were done with the former Prime Ministers, the heads of the Prime Minister's Office, cabinet ministers, heads of the Prime Minister's Cabinets and the presidents of government coalition parties. The following parties are available to participate in any coalition government in Hungary, and will appear in numerous places in the following discussion:

- Alliance of Young Democrats – Hungarian Civic Party – Fidesz
- Alliance of Free Democrats – SZDSZ
- Hungarian Democratic Forum – MDF
- Hungarian Socialist Party – MSZP
- Independent Smallholders' Party – FKG
- Christian Democratic People's Party – KDNP
- Hungarian Democratic People's Party – MDNP

1. General Political Experiences of Coalition Governments in Hungary

The reality of the party system determines whether the one-party or coalition government, minority or majority governance does emerge in a country. In Hungary, majority and coalition governments have been formed during the last decade. The general political characteristics of the Hungarian political system from the aspects of the coalition government (Körösényi, 1998.) are as follows: In the last ten years the ability of coalition-making became the starting condition for forming government. The rule of minimal coalition requirement is being dominated in coalition-making by the political left-right dimension.

Political parties are the key players in politics; therefore, the technical or depoliticized understanding of coalition government is misleading. In fact, there has not been any political party in Hungary in the last ten years which was seriously considered a minority government or even a minimal government. The

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winners in elections have aimed immediately at forming coalitions for an effective majority in Parliament. There is a general agreement that minority government has no chance in Hungary. One important reason is the permanent opportunity for opposition parties to make coalitions and to gain a majority against the government. Minority government needs support from an opposition group in the Parliament in order to legislate. Therefore the supporting party might claim such a higher price for support than would be possible inside a coalition. The other reason is the pressure of the so-called “two-thirds majority” requirement for legislation on the most important topics listed in the Constitution.

The real political limits for the government and the Prime Minister are established, first by their own party or by the coalition partner, not by the opposition. The relations between the government and the opposition are regulated in the Parliamentary House Rules, but the operation of the coalition is not regulated by any legal staff, while the consequences of tensions and conflicts in the coalition usually have impacts on the work of the government. One important political finding is that in one-party governments the power is concentrated in the hands of the Prime Minister, but in a coalition the power is dispersed among the partners. It is not necessarily true that coalitions inherently weaken the political efficiency of the government. A one-party government may have troubles because of the competition among the leading politicians or factions in the government party.

Some authors (Kéri, 1994) state that coalition reconciliation, the complicated organizational and personal relations within the coalition and the slower decision-making threatens the effectiveness of the governance. It is true that one-party governments appear to be more unified and have fewer obstacles to retard their actions. A coalition government requires more considerations, compromises and mixed programs, but it does not necessarily mean lower political effectiveness and acceptance in the society. On the contrary, the coalition makes possible greater flexibility in following the changes in the support of the parties between the elections, and also the coalition may force corrections in government policies in the face of internal conflicts. Experiences in the last ten years demonstrate that the convergence in coalition government has dominated over the partisan debates. The partners have strongly preferred to keep the coalition working instead of dividing and risking the loss of government power.

2. Coalition-making

The basis of a coalition is an agreement about the common responsibilities in the governance of society. This development is not only a single act but rather is a wish for more permanent collaboration. In order to maintain the collaboration, the partners should establish a disciplined mechanism for decision-making and conflict resolution among themselves. Principally, the concept of coalition government may be one of the following two:

“**Common governance**” is based on the common decision-making process. The institutional realization may be the establishing of so-called mixed ministries (1990 – 1994) or a special policy reconciliation mechanism for the coalition partners (1994 – 1998). “Mixed ministry” means that the political leaders (minister and political deputies) of a ministry are coming from different coalition parties. If the ministries have leaders from same party, the government may have Deputy Prime Minister (s) from the coalition partner (s). The Hungarian Constitution does not allow this solution because of the strong Prime Ministerial governance. One other option may be the formal creation of a “small cabinet” within the government, including representatives of the coalition partners, charged with the task of reconciliation before final government decisions. A (constitutionally) more dangerous option is the establishment of a coalition reconciliation mechanism outside of the formal government. Such a political institution easily involves a duplicated structure in the government decision-making process and may weaken democratic control over the governance.

In the framework of the current Hungarian Constitution exists another possible special solution for the common governance. The SZDSZ raised this idea, but the MSZP finally resisted accepting it because the junior coalition partner gets the position of minister of finance. This might be a right of veto, because every government decision has financial consequences requiring the agreement of the minister of finance.

“**Joint governance**” is based on the distribution of power. This type of the coalition is built on a minimal community of the partners. The governments’ party factions vote together for the budget and tax laws; otherwise, they follow their own principles in controlling their policy fields.

The experiences of the socialist-liberal government suggest that the joint governance involved serious conflicts. The Orbán government drew lessons from that experience and established not only the distribution, but also a certain separation of the positions. The senior coalition partner limited the competence of the junior partner onto its portfolios. The partners respect each other’s competencies; that is, “they do not disturb the other’s circles”.

One ministry is controlled by only a single party in this coalition model. The distribution and the separation of the policy fields among the partners makes control difficult for the Prime Minister over the portfolios belonging to the coalition partner. The critical question is the policy coordination and coherence of the governance, despite the junior partner having no chance to revise the decisions of the Prime Minister – who is representing the senior party.

The Fidesz – FKGP – MDF coalition represents a very special way of operation. The head of government is the Prime Minister, but it seems to be two governments same time. The senior party controls the larger part of the respon-

sibilities; the junior party the smaller ones. Neither interferes with the other's business. This practice limits the power of the Prime Minister. Note that the limit has not been set by the Constitution, and real danger exists that the rule of law has been weakened.

Obviously, political rationality is behind the acceptance of this model. The consequences may be opposite of the professional rationality. In January 2000, the minister of the Prime Minister's Office wanted to reorganize the system of coordination among the ministries in order to improve the quality of the government decision-making. The president of the coalition partner party efficiently blocked this project, because he did not want the partner to inspect the work in his ministry. It was particularly revealing of the fundamentally political nature this relationship has between the coalition partners and how the professional points of view are pushed into the background.

3. Coalition Bargain

The crucial element at stake in the coalition bargain is the distribution of the government positions among the partners. The numerical balance is an important but not exclusive objective. (Numerical balance suggests that the proportion of the government positions reflects the proportion of the Parliamentary mandates.) The parties may prefer certain portfolios because of special reasons. In 1994, for example, the Socialist Party offered the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Justice to the Free Democrats instead of Ministry of Interior. (Kóczyán et. 1996)

The tactics of the senior coalition party in the bargain usually had the these main points:

- Not offering those positions which are vital for the efficient control over the main resources of power to the partner;
- Offering the most conflictual policy fields to the partner;
- Offering a ministry which is heavily dependent upon the state budget to a partner;
- Offering also a ministry that is very much desired by the partner.

During the last ten years, the coalition bargains did not concern the administrative state secretary positions. The politicians formally respected this civil service status. In practice, however, ministers have considered this position as confidential, and they have never hesitated to change the administrative state secretaries like political appointees. Today, the minister, the administrative and the political state secretary positions are handled equally as political positions. Unfortunately, the politically motivated appointments do not stop at this level. The deputy state secretaries and even the directors should learn that their positions are no longer protected.

The media and the citizens do not value the importance of the political state secretary positions. The parties cannot make others understand the deal if they get five political state secretary positions instead of one ministerial position. Nevertheless, in the first round of the coalition bargain, the share of ministerial and political state secretary positions is agreed upon. In the second round, the coalition parties agree on the political appointments controlled by the government: ambassadors, heads of central offices (privatization –, tax –, media-related). In the third round, the partners agree on the lower level appointments, which are definitely non-political issues by principle (deputy state secretaries, executive managers for state-owned companies, heads of administrative offices). Experience shows that professional requirements have not been ignored, but that loyalty also, played a central role. This level is the place for cultivating clientele for the party.

The second and third round changes are not finished at the time of the coalition agreement. On those levels, changes are made step-by-step during the term of the government, but the coalition partners pay attention to maintaining the balance among parties. The partners may make the appointments on the basis of a careful mutual agreement or on the basis of the separated, individual responsibilities. The governments have established ministerial positions without portfolio in order to compensate the less-satisfied coalition partners.

4. Coalition Agreement

Politicians and political analysts are usually agreed that a written coalition agreement is a useful and valuable thing. In spite of it, the interviewed leaders and the most critical political scientists say that there is no sense in making a written agreement. (Körösényi, 1995) Mutual trust among the partners is much more important than any formal agreement. Moreover, the written agreement can create even more tensions between the partners if they want to follow closely the written norms.

In sum, those elements of the coalition agreement concerning government personnel affairs and institutional settings are very important. But the coalition agreement is political document, and any interference with the Constitution is not acceptable.

5. Coalition and Central Public Administration

The ten-year history of the Hungarian coalition government made the actions of the ministries a center of attention. At the first government, the mixed ministry (defined as politicians and senior civil servants coming from different political parties) was generally preferred.

Number of the non-mixed ministries in the three governments

1990-1994	2
1994-1998	6
1998-	9

The Prime Minister handled every issue as common issue for the coalition. The members of the first government were not experienced politicians; therefore, the Prime Minister wanted to control them professionally and politically as well. This is why the Prime Minister appointed political state secretaries to the coalition partners' ministries from his party.

The second government established mixed ministry only in special cases. The mixed ministry might become a victim of coalition competitions, and the relation between the minister and the political state secretary could directly influence the professional work of the apparatus. In sum, the mixed ministry has more disadvantages than advantages. Finally, the current government has discarded the idea almost completely. As a side effect, the power of the Prime Minister in appointments has also been reduced at the case of the coalition partner's ministries.

6. Coalition and Policy Process

Political scientists raised the next set of questions in connection with the impact of the coalition on the governance (Köröseyi, 1998):

- How does the coalition influence the work of the government?
- Does the coalition stabilize or destabilize the government?
- Does the coalition improve the efficiency of the governance?
- Is transparency and accountability increasing or not in the coalition government?

The coalition government has a wider political background than a one-party government. If the coalition can employ this advantage, its effectiveness in governing may increase. Also, the professional interests and supporters of the coalition parties are different which can be useful in making the policies more sensitive. The key question is how the coalition partners can enrich the policy reconciliation process through the mobilization of their special resources and support bases.

The first government played a pioneering role in establishing a new policy-making process in the government system. The Prime Minister concentrated policy preparation in the government center, and the Prime Minister's Office compensated for the weaknesses of the junior coalition partners in the policy-making process. The policy decisions were made at government meetings where the Prime Minister controlled the coalition partner ministers. The administrative

state secretaries played the most important professional role in policy preparation, carried on in a unified and coherent process before the government meetings. The collegiality was very strong in the coalition, and most of the conflicts could be solved in informal ways. The practical work of the second government is discussed in a case study at the end of this paper.

The senior party of the current government has carefully studied the experiences of the previous governments and made some crucial changes in the policy-making mechanisms. The Prime Minister's Office has been reorganized, and become the real political and professional center of governance for Hungary. The minister of the Prime Minister's Office principally coordinates not only the cross-ministerial issues but also the preparation of the Parliamentary work of the coalition. Unfortunately, this institutional change could not balance the negative effects of the lack of the coalition cooperation in policy coordination. The rigid separation of the policy fields in the current form of the coalition government results in the blocking of cross-cutting issues rather than a cooperative resolution. The generation cleavage between the Fidesz and the Independent Smallholders' Party also deepens coordination problems.

7. A Coalition Case: 1994 – 1998

In the post – 1945 political development of Hungary, coalition governments occurred only between 1945 – 1947, and then for a couple of days during the revolution of 1956. Afterwards, in the framework of the Soviet Empire, a single-party party-state arrangement prevailed during the period of state socialism. A multi-party system emerged in 1988 – 1989 again, and the period of the coalition government began in 1990. After systemic change and the first free elections, a quasi-coalition government was formed and in power between 1990 – 1994. The government consisted of three parties – the Hungarian Democratic Forum, the Independent Smallholders Party and the Christian Democratic People's Party. This was only a quasi-coalition because each of the three parties largely depended on the Prime Minister (the leader of the senior party of the coalition) and the leadership of the other parties could not have a significant impact on the head of the executive.

We argue that the first real coalition government was formed only after the second democratic election in 1994. The Hungarian Socialist Party was the senior member of the coalition with 54 percent of the parliamentary seats and the Alliance of Free Democrats was the junior partner with 18 percent of the seats. The Hungarian Socialist Party had two reasons to establish a coalition. First, since it had the stamp of post-Communism both in Hungary and abroad in political commentaries, the coalition was a means to increase its legitimacy. Second, it needed a stable parliamentary majority to manage the economic crisis. This explains why the Socialists invited their former and strongest critic to join

the government. The Alliance of Free Democrats accepted the unusual invitation because as a governmental actor they would have the opportunity to implement liberal economic policies. Moreover, they did not have any other political partners at that time. These general political considerations made the coalition possible, while some constitutional regulations made it necessary as well. Only a two-thirds majority – 66 percent – in Parliament is needed to legislate many important topics. Thus, a majority with 72 percent of parliamentary seats was formed, but it consisted of two parties only.

The aim of this article is to introduce political-governmental techniques, encompassing all the coalition ones as well as the role of the Prime Minister in the given coalition period, rather than to analyze the performance of the government. With the help of internal information we attempted to reveal how the demand for unified governance was formed in the cooperation between the coalition partners.

Coalition Reconciliation

The Coalition Reconciliation Council was a unique institutional development: it became the organization of government and non-government leaders of the two coalition partners. Since non-government actors also participated in its activities, and since they had the right to participate and to block decisions, we can argue that party leaders (without government posts) captured the Prime Minister and other government leaders.

Indeed, the governmental decision-making mechanism became stabilized only by the second half of the 1994 – 98 government period. Political debates and the nature of coalition reconciliation between the Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP) and the Alliance of Free Democrats (SZDSZ) were different in the first half and in the second half of the governmental term. For external onlookers, the activity of the coalition government became smoother and the debates between the coalition partners were less frequent – though more intense. In parallel with this change, the role of the Coalition Reconciliation Council (CRC) was also transformed: it ceased to be the forum to prepare government decisions or consult about political issues among coalition partners. While in the first two years the CRC met fairly often, particularly with the aim of legitimizing separate opinions, the CRC sessions later became infrequent and largely focused on developing consensus. Thus, initially the CRC served as a legitimate forum to express differences and distinctiveness of the two parties. Only later did it become a special forum of appeal the partners could turn to when and if they could not accept a government decision.

The CRC dealt only with themes that had been referred to it by the individual partners. Both partners transferred cases that had been largely debated in the usual governmental mechanism and remained undecided, as well as politi-

cal cases that had emerged in non-governmental areas. Since the CRC sessions always had the aura of political conflict around them – at least this was the impression for the wider public – the coalition parties became less eager to convene the CRC, particularly in 1997 and 1998. Nevertheless, the written, detailed and long coalition agreement as a system of guarantees for cooperation between the coalition partners remained in existence throughout the entire period. In the process of the smoothing coalition activities, however, the degree of undertaking and accepting conflicts and the management of these conflicts became first dependent on power relationships and interdependence of the coalition partners. Naturally, the conflicts arising from common governance also resulted to some degree from learning and understanding each other. Thus, the participants acquired routine means to weigh the importance and the actual risks of antagonism and avoided superfluous debates. The onlooker can rightly conclude that fewer conflicts came to the light in the second half of the governmental term than before. Despite this, the pre-election period in 1998 intensified debates in the context of the campaign.

The reconciliation procedures were used most frequently and dramatically in Spring, 1995. At that time government unity was a must, due to the stabilization program named after the Minister of Finance, Lajos Bokros. (The program was similar to the one introduced in Poland by Balcerowicz – and Jeffrey Sachs.) The need for unified action made the relationship between the coalition partners more balanced, indeed increased their mutual blackmail potential. Afterwards, the conditions changed substantially. With the resignation of party leader of the SZDSZ (Iván Pető), the Minister of the Interior and coalition vice premier, Gábor Kunze, became the new leader of the junior coalition partner. As a result, the circle of leading politicians participating in the reconciliation process became smaller and responsible actors concentrated in the government ranks. The need to convene the CRC also decreased for a practical reason: the new leader of the SZDSZ, as a member of the government, was able to weigh the conflicts that emerged in the decision-making process and immediately act accordingly.

In addition to different personality features of the former and new leader of the SZDSZ, the diminishing importance of the movement wing in both governing parties contributed to simplified conflicts in maintaining the coalition. The power relationship between the government and movement wings of the party changed in the MSZP as well, and the government wing was certainly strengthened. Moreover, in its government behavior the MSZP sought to realize its power position rooted in its 54 percent majority.

In a coalition government (particularly under the given distribution of parliamentary seats that has prevailed in Hungary) the communication between top politicians is of great importance. When they face each other and stick to a particular controversial point knowing that this might be the end game of the

coalition, they should be able to sense and understand each other's position. (The meaning of this position will be clarified later in the context of government decisions.) This, of course, does not imply that the Prime Minister and the coalition Vice Premier determined exclusively the most important government affairs, but certainly it means that the coalition Vice Premier had a big share in the decision-making process.

After a time, the government politicians of both parties could proceed with the daily routine of governance without the continuous control of their own party. On the other hand, in case of a coalition conflict within the government it could have been decided on the spot whether the SZDSZ accepted its defeat in a given issue or terminated the coalition cooperation. The same was also true about the MSZP: it could have stepped back from its original proposal in order to keep the junior partner in the coalition. (There were several high profile issues during the four years: for example, the plan to establish a top economic ministry and the potential candidate for the post; the formation of a central coordinating organ against crime; the agreement with the Vatican; the function of the Prime Minister's Office; and the framework contract on the Bős-Nagyymaros dam on Danube.) For pragmatic government politicians whose major concern is governmental success, it might seem a superficial waste of time and energy to involve their parties or the public in negotiations concerning the details of a decision. It is a common experience in parliamentary democracies that a dividing line is formed in governing parties between the movement wing of the party and those with government positions. Moreover, the weight of politicians in leading government positions is growing in parallel with the length of time in government posts. Politicians rooted in the movement wing and with movement-like political characteristics gradually leave government positions. At the same time, politicians in government posts will have the means to defend against emerging criticism in the movement wing of the party by referring to the need for government stability.

After a proper consideration of the power relationship between the coalition partners, the stronger party generally uses its position to its own advantage while the junior party must decide which point it is willing to give up in its position. In harmony with international experiences, the more pragmatic and smooth the collaboration between the partners had become, the more the adjustment of details had been withdrawn from party channels. The limits of cooperation broadened but became more rigid at the same time.

Informal but well working fora of adjustment play an important role in the political decision-making processes of the coalition government. At these occasions the coalition partners learn each other's position, their standpoint and develop a compromise. The Presidium of the MSZP and the body of Spokespersons in the SZDSZ regularly formed their opinion about important plans in

advance, and the party presidents had the opportunity to consult with the most influential decision-makers in their respective parties on the politically sensitive proposals. Initially, the coalition parties systematically discussed every single important governmental issue at the regular (mainly Monday) meeting of the GRC. Afterwards, the occasions of reconciliation became more fragmented and more personal. Thus, the importance of the process of direct adjustment between the Prime Minister and his coalition Vice-Premier has grown, similarly to the connections between the coalition party leaders and their respective parties.

Decision-making in the MSZP – SZDSZ Government

The concrete tasks of the government emerge from the government program, the demands channeled through the Parliament and government parties, and also from the social tensions sensed by the governmental system. Wherever we find the source of the task, however, the ministry that has authority over the given area will be the starting point of the decision-making process. The state secretary of public administration is personally responsible for the preparation of a related document or proposal.

Ministers, as the political and professional leaders of the ministries, transfer the political demands and expectations that emerge from their party and primarily from the government to the ministerial apparatus.

The ministries should adjust the proposals they prepare for the government with other ministries from professional perspectives. It is a high priority for the government that in addition to professional adjustment the proposals should respond to the demands of the coalition partners – and, in case of a parliamentary proposal, to a necessary degree even of other parliamentary party groups – from a political perspective as well. Thus, it is the interest of the ministries to have good professional contacts with the parliamentary party groups. Although a set pattern does not prevail, the ministries generally consult the coalition party groups and occasionally even the opposition parliamentary parties on topical issues. Parliamentary committees are informed as well. This usually occurs through personal contacts with parliamentary representatives or occasionally through formal participation at the meetings of the parliamentary parties or the committees. In certain cases (such as laws that require a two-thirds majority vote or the budget law), preliminary adjustment is a particularly sensitive issue. In these cases, the ministers often go themselves to the coalition party groups' meetings, and pursue a more extended consultation process with the experts of the parliamentary parties including the opposition representatives. The ministries tend to involve the coalition parliamentary parties and their diverse working groups into the legislative process (which, of course, is based on mutual grounds), and in this way they seek to attract able and reliable members of Parliament for the representation of

professional issues. In this process, some MPs will acquire a high profile, and they will become the experts of a particular ministry.

Between 1990 – 1998 virtually all the ministries used the opportunity to amend a bill in the parliamentary stage of the legislative process with the help of coalition MPs. Coalition MPs who were also loyal to the interests and preferences of a certain ministry often proposed amendments to correct a bill after it had already passed the government session. Indeed, within the government the ministry is the strongest lobby group of a policy field.

The regular meetings of administrative state secretaries were the most important professional forums in the process of governmental decision-making between 1994 – 98. These forums represented the final stage of professional adjustment while they also had a filter function: inhibiting the occasional overflow of political demands on strict professional grounds or simply warning that a certain political intention cannot yet be translated to the ‘language’ of public administration. The forums occurred every Monday, and the preparation of the next government session (in principle the one that should follow next week) was also on the agenda. However, the proposals were often placed in front of the government on the same week. This shortened time frame naturally made the preparation of the other ministers and experts of the coalition parties more difficult.

The administrative state secretary of the Prime Minister’s Office chaired the regular meetings of administrative state secretaries. Being aware of professional alternatives as well as of the standpoint of the Prime Minister, he was able to determine whether a given proposal that was tabled for the forum could be finalized and placed in front of the government or needed further adjustment. The minister’s interest is to reach consensus on their proposal before the government meeting and thus avoid debate.

The so-called Economic Cabinet (EC), presided over by the Minister of Finance, played a significant role in the adjustment process before the government meeting. The EC analyzed the proposals from financial and macro-economic perspectives. In principle, all the proposals were to go through this filter. Since all proposals have certain financial consequences, the EC Wednesday meetings represented a kind of government session concerning economic and financial policies. The more the EC deployed broad and general perspectives in the discussion and evaluation of proposals, the more the government accepted its opinions and suggestions in given affairs. In the case of particularly important issues, the coalition Vice-Premier also participated in the activity of the EC, thus giving extra weight to the standpoint and interests of his party in the debate.

Other bodies (like the Cabinet on European Integration, the National Security Cabinet, the Inter-Ministry Council on Information Technology, the Co-ordination Committee for Youth Policy, the Council of the Affairs of the Retired

People) had similar professional functions, but due to their lesser weight they played a smaller role in the decisions regarding their respective areas.

The standard adjustment process within the public administration also brought information to the surface. Information was accumulated in the hands of the administrative state secretary of the Prime Minister's Office, who controlled the final and most important stage of the adjustment process. If a proposal got stuck or the procedure was paralyzed, he had to mobilize the process. Due to his position he was able to notice if the quality of a proposal did not meet the standards or if political problems emerged. He could then take the necessary steps for improvement or draw the Prime Minister's attention to the problem. Then the Prime Minister, as a kind of governor-manager, used his authority to solve the issue. His habit was to invite the main actors – ministers, other government people, leaders of interest representation bodies – of a debated 'problem case' to his office to settle the issue with the exclusion of the public. He often said: "You cannot leave the room until you make a compromise."

The administrative state secretary of the Prime Minister's Office had an important role in determining the schedule of the government and in determining its agenda. As a last stage in the preparation for the government meeting the coalition, the Vice-Premier met with the ministers of his own party while the Prime Minister consulted with public administration and political state secretaries of the Prime Minister's Office on the morning of the government meeting. Late Wednesday afternoon or Thursday morning, the other ministers also overviewed the most important issues and prepared themselves for the government meeting. Ministers' colleagues with important positions also participated in these preparations: state secretaries, vice-state secretaries and one or two persons from the ministerial staff. After this, but still before the government meeting (taking place at 10 o'clock), the last forum of adjustment occurred: the cabinet of the government had a session. This cabinet consisted of the Prime Minister, the Minister of the Interior, the Foreign Minister and the Minister of Finance, while the administrative state secretary and political state secretary of the Prime Minister's Office (the latter being the manager of the cabinet) were regularly invited.

Eventually these sessions finalized which proposals that would get in front of the government on that day would require further discussion before their acceptance, and which embodied final and consensual viewpoints of the government.. Occasionally, in the absence of a political agreement, these sessions decided to postpone certain proposals or referred them for further adjustment process. The working style of the cabinet of the government was very personal. No minutes or formal records were prepared. Memorandums were occasionally issued, but they were not made public.

The ministers and the Prime Minister made their position explicit at the meetings of the cabinet of the government and the government itself. The posi-

tion, in our view, is not simply the personal or political viewpoint or opinion of the given politician but represents his/her power as well. By introducing his/her position, the member of government might indicate the preferences that he/she would not give up even in case of a different government decision. In the background of a determined position one can often find a mandate from the party, which would occasionally but inevitably lead to a coalition reconciliation process.

At meetings of the cabinet of the government different positions were carefully considered. The prospects of the proposals could be envisaged and the solutions of emerging conflicts could be planned for the government meeting. The style of discussion was both personal and political. If afterwards, at the government meeting, the Prime Minister announced that "We discussed the issue at the cabinet of the government session and a particular solution was outlined", the message was clear to all ministers. (The political solution was then summarized and put into a professional format for the government decision by the administrative state secretary.)

The government session regularly lasted about two or three hours. Nevertheless, occasionally several dozen (though sometimes as many as 40 or 50) and on average 24 points appeared and were fulfilled on the agenda. The decisions of the government were made either without debate or after a debate; in the latter case either with or without a vote on the given issue. Points on the agenda that were planned to go undoubtedly might have triggered discussion if a member of the government initiated it and his ideas were built on solid grounds. Some topics were planned to be debated so as to increase the responsibility and personal commitment of the decision-makers – particularly concerning issues with high political or economic profiles. Occasionally – indeed, very rarely – the government made a different decision than had been originally planned at the forum of the administrative state secretary or the session of the cabinet of the government. No issue was determined as final before the government session. Debates were always practice-oriented and not 'philosophical': the debating partners briefly presented their proposal and position.

The Prime Minister, who had the final word in every issue, always chaired the government session. The participants agreed that 'at the end of a debate anybody would know and sense what the decision could be'. The Prime Minister made his decision on the basis of the proposals and even more so on the basis of the positions. He referred for further adjustment those cases he did not find acceptable or that had not been fully and properly elaborated from the public administration-professional perspectives. A vote did not necessarily mean a decision which always resided with the Prime Minister. A vote might have served to test different positions. (When in a vote, the SZDSZ ministers remained in minority the party did not veto when the decision was made.)

The administrative state secretary had a major role in the professional organization of the government meetings, and sometimes he himself presented the proposals. In addition, he prepared the professional summary before a decision and established the final form of a decision.

The Role of the Prime Minister

The above analysis already suggests that the Prime Minister is the key person and the main actor in the coalition government in Hungary. At the government sessions, dividing lines might have emerged during the discussion. The divisions in most cases followed the party distribution of the ministers (political differences are always related to the affairs of the coalition), but sometimes the differences of standpoints did not reflect the party distribution of the coalition. The minister who presented the proposal might have been voted down; if so, he had to accept the Prime Minister's decision which was based on the majority position. Although a minister could ask for a vote, it was the exclusive right of the Prime Minister to order a vote. The Prime Minister could have avoided a vote when the expected result was in contrast to his own position (although in a minor affair, it happened once that the Prime Minister voted with the minority and then accepted the majority decision). The Prime Minister had several possibilities to erase proposals from the agenda during the process.

Although all ministers received the proposals (24 on average) in advance and could prepare for the meeting, in practice the ministers generally knew their proposal the best, acquired information about debated ones on the agenda or non-debated ones connected to their own field, but they only rarely had the time to review the others. The Prime Minister was well informed about all the important elements of each proposal. We can argue that generally only the Prime Minister was aware of the significant points and complexities of a proposal to the degree as the proposing minister.

Indeed, both the processes of preliminary adjustment and the decision-making procedures within the government justify the thesis about the strength of the Hungarian Prime Minister. This strength is due not only to the constitutional foundations and regulations, but derives from the personal leadership qualities of the Prime Minister as well as the mechanisms inherent in the activities of the government. The particular demand towards the institutionalization of a chancellor-type governmental system was demonstrated when issues such as youth, religious and ethnic affairs, and public administration development were absorbed by the Prime Minister's Office. In addition to that, the head of the Prime Minister's Office should have been allocated a ministerial post already in the 1994 – 1998 governmental period. (Eventually, a minister was nominated to the position in 1998.)

The Prime Minister was helped in his activities by the apparatus of the Prime Minister's Office. Based on the work of professional departments, the administrative state secretary of the PMO informed him about alternative solutions formed by the ministry and other so-called independent experts on given issues; the head of the cabinet-state secretary, using resources of the Cabinet Office, informed him about political issues or political connotations of certain proposals (party related issues, requests of members of Parliament, the management of special programs such as the contract with the Vatican, etc.); and the leader of the Prime Minister's Secretariat provided information coming through the personal connections of the Prime Minister. Although these three areas are officially and practically separated, the information provided by them was not firmly divided. Since these areas are closely tied to the Prime Minister and leaders and staff members in both the Cabinet Office and Prime Minister's Secretariat, they naturally were confidential positions.

The Prime Minister (and party leader) had several other possibilities for acquiring information in addition to the official governmental channels. His viewpoints were affected by party events and meetings with the constituency while his personal relations and consultants might also have transferred effects that might have had an impact on how he handled certain governmental issues. The importance of consultants has increased over the years, another sign for the need to have a chancellor-type governmental system. All these impacts had been efficiently built into governmental decisions. The new elements of governmental decisions or those that seemed unusual for the state administration very often originated from these sources.

Party Proportions in the Hungarian Coalition Governments

(In the times of Changes in the Personnel Composition of Governments)

Antall – Boross-Government

Time	Party	Parliament		Government			
		Mandates	%	Positions	%	Ministers	%
1990.05.23	MDF	165	71,7	21	65,62	12	70,58
1990.05.23	FKGP	44	19,1	7	21,87	4	23,52
1990.05.23	KDNP	21	9,13	4	12,5	1	5,88
30.May	MDF	165	71,7	22	64,7	12	70,58
30.May	FKGP	44	19,1	8	23,52	4	23,52
30.May	KDNP	21	9,13	4	11,76	1	5,88
18.July	MDF	164	71,61	21	63,63	12	70,58
18.July	FKGP	44	19,2	8	24,24	4	23,52
18.July	KDNP	21	9,17	4	12,12	1	5,88

23.July	MDF	164	71,61	22	64,7	13	72,22
23.July	FKGP	44	19,2	8	23,52	4	22,22
23.July	KDNP	21	9,17	4	11,76	1	5,55
15.Sept	MDF	164	71,61	23	65,71	13	72,22
15.Sept	FKGP	44	19,2	8	22,85	4	22,22
15.Sept	KDNP	21	9,17	4	11,42	1	5,55
20-21.Dec	MDF	163	71,49	24	64,86	15	71,42
20-21,Dec	FKGP	44	19,29	8	21,62	4	19,04
20-21.Dec	KDNP	21	9,21	5	13,51	2	9,52
31.Dec	MDF	163	71,49	23	63,88	15	71,42
31.Dec	FKGP	44	19,29	8	22,22	4	19,04
31.Dec	KDNP	21	9,21	5	13,88	2	9,52
1991.01.16-17	MDF	163	71,49	23	63,88	15	75
1991.01.16-17	FKGP	44	19,29	8	22,22	3	15
1991.01.16-17	KDNP	21	9,21	5	13,88	2	10
01.March	MDF	163	71,49	24	64,86	15	75
01.March	FKGP	44	19,29	8	21,62	3	15
01.March	KDNP	21	9,21	5	13,51	2	10
09.Dec	MDF	161	70,92	23	63,88	14	73,68
09.Dec	FKGP	45	19,82	8	22,22	3	15,78
09.Dec	KDNP	21	9,25	5	13,88	2	10,52
17.Dec	MDF	161	70,92	24	64,86	15	75
17.Dec	FKGP	45	19,82	8	21,62	3	15
17.Dec	KDNP	21	9,25	5	13,51	2	10
1992.01.23	MDF	160	70,79	23	63,88	15	75
1992.01.23	FKGP	45	19,91	8	22,22	3	15
1992.01.23	KDNP	21	9,29	5	13,88	2	10
27.Jan	MDF	160	70,79	24	64,86	15	75
27.Jan	FKGP	45	19,91	8	21,62	3	15
27.Jan	KDNP	21	9,29	5	13,51	2	10
29.Febr	MDF	160	74,76	24	66,66	15	78,94
29.Febr	FKGP- EKGP	33	15,42	8	22,22	3	15,78
29.Febr	KDNP	21	9,81	4	11,11	1	5,26
01.June	MDF	159	73,95	23	65,71	15	78,94
01.June	EKGP	35	16,27	8	22,85	3	15,78
01.June	KDNP	21	9,76	4	11,42	1	5,26
19.June	MDF	159	73,95	24	66,66	15	78,94
19.June	EKGP	35	16,27	8	22,22	3	15,78
19.June	KDNP	21	9,76	4	11,11	1	5,26
18.July	MDF	159	73,95	24	64,86	15	75

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18.July	EKGP	35	16,27	8	21,62	3	15
18.July	KDNP	21	9,76	5	13,51	2	10
1993.02.11	MDF	158	73,14	23	63,88	14	73,68
1993.02.11	EKGP	36	16,66	8	22,22	3	15,78
1993.02.11	KDNP	22	10,18	5	13,88	2	10,52
22-23.Febr.	MDF	157	73,02	22	64,7	12	70,58
22-23.Febr.	EKGP	36	16,74	7	20,58	3	17,64
22-23.Febr.	KDNP	22	10,53	5	14,7	2	11,76
24.Febr	MDF	157	73,02	23	65,71	13	72,22
24.Febr	EKGP	36	16,74	7	20	3	16,66
24.Febr	KDNP	22	10,23	5	14,28	2	11,11
21.Dec	MDF	136	69,38	23	65,71	13	72,22
21.Dec	EKGP	36	18,36	7	20	3	16,66
21.Dec	KDNP	24	12,24	5	14,28	2	11,11
1994.05.08	MDF	136	69,74	22	68,75	12	80
1994.05.08	EKGP	36	18,46	6	18,75	2	13,33
1994.05.08	KDNP	23	11,79	4	12,5	1	6,66

Horn-Government

Time	Party	Parliament		Government			
		Mandates	%	Positions	%	Ministers	%
1994.07.15	MSZP	209	74,91	20	74,07	12	85,71
1994.07.15	SZDSZ	70	25,08	7	25,92	2	14,28
17.nov	MSZP	209	74,91	21	75	12	85,71
17.nov	SZDSZ	70	25,08	7	25	2	14,28
01.Dec	MSZP	208	74,82	20	74,07	12	85,71
01.Dec	SZDSZ	70	25,17	7	25,92	2	14,28
1995.03.01	MSZP	209	74,91	21	75	13	86,66
1995.03.01	SZDSZ	70	25,08	7	25	2	13,33
15.March	MSZP	209	75,17	22	75,86	13	86,66
15.March	SZDSZ	69	24,82	7	24,13	2	13,33
17.March	MSZP	209	75,17	21	75	12	85,71
17.March	SZDSZ	69	24,82	7	25	2	14,28
31.March	MSZP	209	75,17	21	75	12	85,71
31.March	SZDSZ	69	24,82	7	25	2	14,28
03.ápr	MSZP	209	75,17	22	75,86	13	86,66
03.ápr	SZDSZ	69	24,82	7	24,13	2	13,33
01.June	MSZP	209	75,17	23	76,66	13	86,66
01.June	SZDSZ	69	24,82	7	23,33	2	13,33
1996.09.06	MSZP	209	75,45	22	75,86	12	85,71

1996.09.06	SZDSZ	68	24,54	7	24,13	2	14,28
30.Sept	MSZP	209	75,45	22	78,57	12	85,71
30.Sept	SZDSZ	68	24,54	6	21,42	2	14,28
16.Oct	MSZP	209	75,72	21	77,77	11	84,61
16.Oct	SZDSZ	67	24,27	6	22,22	2	15,38
29.Oct	MSZP	209	75,72	22	78,57	13	86,66
29.Oct	SZDSZ	67	24,27	6	21,42	2	13,33
01.nov	MSZP	209	75,72	23	76,66	13	86,66
01.nov	SZDSZ	67	24,27	7	23,33	2	13,33
30.nov	MSZP	209	75,42	22	75,86	12	85,71
30.nov	SZDSZ	68	24,54	7	24,13	2	14,28
16.Dec	MSZP	209	75,42	23	76,66	13	86,66
16.Dec	SZDSZ	68	24,54	7	23,33	2	13,33
1997.05.01	MSZP	208	75,63	23	79,31	13	86,66
1997.05.01	SZDSZ	67	24,36	6	20,68	2	13,33
15.May	MSZP	207	75,54	23	76,66	13	86,66
15.May	SZDSZ	67	24,45	7	23,33	2	13,33

Orbán-Government

Time	Party	Parliament		Government			
		Mandates	%	Positions	%	Ministers	%
1998.07.09	Fidesz	148	69,48	13	72	13	72
1998.07.09	FKGP	48	22,53	4	22	4	22
1998.07.09	MDF	17	7,98	1	6	1	6
1998.07.09	MDNP	0	0	0	0	0	0
14.July	Fidesz	148	69,48	22	59,4	13	72
14.July	FKGP	48	22,53	7	18,9	4	22
14.July	MDF	17	7,98	5	13,5	1	6
14.July	MDNP	0	0	3	8,1	0	0
31.Dec	Fidesz	148	69,48	22	61,1	13	72
31.Dec	FKGP	48	22,53	7	19,4	4	22
31.Dec	MDF	17	7,98	4	11,1	1	6
31.Dec	MDNP	0	0	3	8,3	0	0
1999.01.01	Fidesz	148	69,48	24	63,15	13	72
1999.01.01	FKGP	48	22,53	7	18,42	4	22
1999.01.01	MDF	17	7,98	4	10,5	1	6
1999.01.01	MDNP	0	0	3	7,9	0	0
24.May	Fidesz	147	69,33	23	62,16	13	72
24.May	FKGP	48	22,96	7	18,9	4	22
24.May	MDF	17	8,01	4	10,8	1	6

24.May	MDNP	0	0	3	8,1	0	0
20.June	Fidesz	146	69,19	21	60	13	72
20.June	FKGP	48	22,74	7	20	4	22
20.June	MDF	17	8,05	4	11,4	1	6
20.June	MDNP	0	0	3	8,6	0	0
31.Dec	Fidesz	144	69,23	21	60	13	72
31.Dec	FKGP	48	23,07	7	20	4	22
31.Dec	MDF	16	7,69	4	11,4	1	6
31.Dec	MDNP	0	0	3	8,6	0	0
2000.01.01	Fidesz	144	69,23	21	60	13	72
2000.01.01	FKGP	48	23,07	7	20	4	22
2000.01.01	MDF	16	7,69	4	11,4	1	6
2000.01.01	MDNP	0	0	3	8,6	0	0
31.Jan	Fidesz	144	69,23	22	66,6	13	72
31.Jan	FKGP	48	23,07	7	21,2	4	22
31.Jan	MDF	16	7,69	1	3	1	6
31.Jan	MDNP	0	0	3	9,2	0	0
01.Febr	Fidesz	144	69,23	25	69,4	13	72
01.Febr	FKGP	48	23,07	7	19,4	4	22
01.Febr	MDF	16	7,69	1	2,7	1	6
01.Febr	MDNP	0	0	3	8,3	0	0
07.Febr	Fidesz	144	69,23	26	70,2	13	72
07.Febr	FKGP	48	23,07	7	18,9	4	22
07.Febr	MDF	16	7,69	1	2,7	1	6
07.Febr	MDNP	0	0	3	8,3	0	0

Positions: Number of positions includes the Prime Minister, ministers, and political state secretaries.

Ministers: Number of ministers includes the Prime Minister and ministers.

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Politico-Administrative Relations in Poland under Coalition Governments in the Period 1989 – 2002

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1. Political – Constitutional Backgrounds of the Coalition Governments

In autumn 2001, three days before the national election, prime ministerial candidate Leszek Miller, announced the proposed composition of his government, the first non-coalition government in Poland since the fall of Communism. However, election results showed the over-optimism of Miller and especially of Belka, his appointee Finance Minister who had proposed harsh and unpopular economic reforms. On 10 October 2001, Leszek Miller formed the ninth coalition government since 1989. Despite the distinctive nature of each of the nine governments, certain general trends in coalition-making in Poland can be distinguished. Rydlewski (2000) the Secretary of State in the Office of the Council of Ministers (URM) and the chief of Prime Minister's Chancellery in the period 1994 – 1997 and chief adviser to the prime minister in the current government, mentions two issues of primary importance: first, the lack of a parliamentary majority and second, the predominance of historical political division over political agendas.

In Poland, historical factors are crucial. In this section, the importance of historical political divisions will be used to present similarities and differences among Polish governments. Four main periods can be distinguished: first, the post-Solidarity period with its frequent changes of government (1989 – 1994) each lasting for about a year; second, the post-Communist period (1994 – 1997) also with relatively frequent changes of government. In 1997, a constructive no-confidence motion was written into the Constitution. Thus, the post-Solidarity government of Buzek formed in 1997 lasted the whole four-year term, although it was a minority government for over a year. The last period started in 2001 when the post-Communist government of Miller was formed.

The fact that under socialism opposition was illegal influenced divisions between the post-Communist and post-Solidarity opposition. In post-Communist Poland, this division has been deeper than in the West where opposition is a natural part of politics. Therefore in Poland, the origins of parties remain decisive in selecting coalition partners and Polish parliaments have been divided on two sides: the post-Communist left and the post-Solidarity right. These historical factors led to coalitions being formed by parties that have substantial political differences. The primary role of historical factors in the coalition-making proc-

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ess also influenced the size of these coalitions. They have been relatively “narrow coalitions” because they did not wish to increase their parliamentary majority any further than absolutely necessary if it would mean even deeper internal differences. This historical division between post-Solidarity and post-Communist has been weakened in the current Parliament because of new populist parties: Self-Defence and the right-wing League of Polish Families.

1.2 ‘The string of post-Solidarity governments: 1989 – 1993

In Poland, the transition to democracy began with roundtable talks (6 Feb–5 April 1989). The Solidarity opposition became legal, the institutional arrangements were defined (establishment of an upper chamber, the Senat, redefinition of relationships in the bicameral Parliament, and introduction of a presidency) and a procedure (semi-democratic parliamentary elections in which the opposition would be allowed to stand for a limited number of posts) was laid down. The Communists preserved their dominant position, but during the semi-democratic parliamentary elections held on 4 June 1989 support for Solidarity was much greater than the authorities expected, and the institutional arrangements negotiated during the roundtable talks became insufficient to guarantee their power. On 24 August 1989, the first non-Communist Prime Minister, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, was elected by Parliament. His government lasted for just over a year (12 Sept. 1989–14 Dec. 1990) being cut short by the conflict with Wałęsa, who, under socialism, had been the unquestionable leader of Solidarity, but after the formation of the government was unexpectedly left aside. Wałęsa decided to demand a shortening of President Jaruzelski’s term in office and in order take over his position. He began his populist presidential campaign by attacking Prime Minister Mazowiecki for preserving the roundtable agreement and slow reforms.

The next three post-Solidarity governments were: Jan Krzysztof Bielecki (12 Jan. 1991–5 Dec. 1991), Jan Olszewski (23 Dec. 1991–5 June 1992) and Hanna Suchocka (July 1992 – May 1993). In the aftermath of Wałęsa’s success in his bid for the presidency in December 1990, he appointed Bielecki as prime minister. Bielecki represented the tiny Liberal-Democratic Congress, (KLD) which was not well-known and lacked wide political backing; his appointment guaranteed Wałęsa more direct control over government. As Wałęsa opposed the roundtable agreement, the natural consequence was the early election of a fully democratic Parliament.

In September 1991, free parliamentary elections took place, but as a consequence of adopting a proportional representation (PR) electoral law without any threshold the newly-elected Parliament was extremely fragmented. Twenty-nine parties entered the Sejm (lower chamber), but 11 parties had just one seat. The argument for adopting the PR was that though it was the most democratic procedure and best reflected preferences, it would lead to political instability. After the

elections, the president favoured a prime minister from the largest post-Solidarity party, the Democratic Union (UD). However, the possibility of a government led by a UD prime minister raised fears among other post-Solidarity parties that they could be marginalized (Dudek 2002: 230). At that time, the ambitious Centre Alliance (PC) leadership began working on making their representative, Jan Olszewski, Prime Minister. By successfully bargaining in Parliament they formed a coalition, despite Wałęsa's trying to prevent its formation. As a result, the coalition left the two largest parliamentary parties, the post-Communist SLD and the UD outside government. The new government of Olszewski was formed by the PC: two Christian parties and the post-Solidarity peasant party, PL. The new government was a minority, and thus its natural priority was enlarging the coalition.

Olszewski was convinced that the composition of the Sejm meant that an alternative government coalition was not possible, and despite conducting negotiations with potential partners, he would not compromise. However, this was not true and in the aftermath of the sudden dismissal of the government an alternative coalition, led by Suchocka, was formed. This government, created from the eight post-Solidarity parties, is an illustration of Rydlewski's argument about the importance of historical factors leading to parties with opposing political and economic agendas coalescing. Despite their common historical past and all the diplomatic efforts of Suchocka to integrate the various political agendas, it proved not to be viable. The internal conflicts ran so deep that even if this government did not collapse as a consequence of a no-confidence vote, its fate was decided at its formation.

The coalition governments were not successful in reforming administration. Nunberg and Barbone argue that Poland's "impressive economic turnaround and its fundamental overhaul of political institutions had not been matched in the administrative realm" (1990: 7). However, the successful transition of the country after 1989 and its effective functioning afterwards depended on the capacity to formulate and implement policy. Despite the delay of that administrative transition, attempts to transform the administrative system and introduce a civil service were started directly after the collapse of Communism.

Izdebski and Kulesza (1999: 219-220) argue that forming the Polish civil service was important from the beginning of the transition. In November 1990, the National School of Public Administration was formed, modelled on the French *École Nationale d'Administration*. The school intended to train senior administrative personnel in a two-year post-graduate course. However, in 1991, the school admitted only 40 students and since 1992, 60 students each year have entered the school. Thus, its effect on the civil service has been limited. However, the largest achievement of Mazowiecki was establishing local government. To adapt the functioning of the state to its new role in a democracy, decentralisation of the administrative structure was required to break with the Socialist legacy. In

Poland, as a consequence of the extreme centralisation of power and distortion of territorial structure under socialism, the reform of central administration and the civil service must be seen as part of the reconstruction of the whole administrative structure. Central administration reform could only be successful if it were preceded by devolution of power and finances. In the situation of the roundtable agreement, the central level was the stronghold of Communist power and thus it was natural to start reform by decentralising.

Izdebski and Kulesza (1999: 219-20) indicate that intensive work on civil service and administrative reform began early, and the Bielecki government in 1991 prepared a set of reform bills. A team of 37 experts was established and divided into three groups. One dealt with a new territorial organisation of the country, another with reform of central administration, and the third with the formation of a ministry of public administration and the Chancellery of Prime Minister and Civil Service Act. The group on central administration compared the structure of central administration to those in western countries and concluded that radical reforms were needed. The new role of the state demanded public administration that would be more flexible and have stronger inter-ministerial cooperation. Especially important was the attempt to reform the super-ministry: the Office of Council of Ministers which managed administrative issues. It was to be replaced by the Chancellery of the Council of Ministers, and some of its functions were to be transferred to other central administrative institutions. The group also proposed the clear division of political and administrative functions in ministries. There were to be two deputy ministers, one political and one administrative. In addition, a ministerial cabinet was to be formed for political advisers (Izdebski 1996: 307).

In September 1991, Bielecki, fearing fragmentation of the future Parliament, proposed an amendment to the Constitution that would strengthen the position of government versus parliament and president by hindering the parliamentary procedures to call for the no-confidence vote. The post-Communist (SLD) and Peasant Party (PSL) MPs voted against it, arguing that this Parliament should not make the decision, but rather leave it to the next fully-democratically elected Parliament. Similar arguments were raised to explain their rejection of the reform of the Chancellery of the Prime Minister and the creation of a Ministry of Public Administration. In the event, as the Sejm rejected two parliamentary proposals, the third was not proposed, work on the civil service was not continued. This was the first of two Civil Service Acts prepared by post-Solidarity governments but work on them was abandoned or they were rejected. The fate of these two documents illustrate the wider phenomenon – that despite efforts to introduce comprehensive administrative reforms, none of them was launched due to political instability caused by frequent changes of governments and parliaments.

The next government (Olszewski) created the Team for the Reorganisation of Public Administration to integrate administrative reform efforts. In the docu-

ment, *The Preliminary Premises for the Restructuring of Public Administration*, it was assumed that the prime minister and the government would be restructured from the Socialist division into branches, and their case-by-case management would be replaced by concentration on policy-making. Work on the modification of administrative structure in ministries was also advanced in order to distinguish political sections, the ministerial cabinets being modelled on French structures. Ministers' positions were to be defined as political and administrative sections with permanent employment of personnel. A prime ministerial cabinet and Chancellery of the Council of Ministers were to be established too (Izdebski 1996: 310 and Rydlewski 2002).

Comprehensive administrative reform was presented in *The Premises and Direction of Reform of Public Administration* (December 1992) appointed by Suchocka's Plenipotentiary for Public Administration Reform. The document was largely based on previous projects but the accents changed. For example, the "concept of permanent core" of government and ministers, which were to enhance coordination among ministers or within a ministry, was emphasised. The new reform also proposed reorganisation of the government and the prime minister's office; liquidation of the Office of Council of Ministers and formation of General Secretariat of Government was proposed. There was also a continuation of the work on the Civil Service Act. Izdebski and Kulesza (1999: 218) also emphasise the high quality of Suchocka's government projects which drew on the experience of the previous post-Solidarity governments, especially the team for the Reorganisation of Public Administration working during Olszewski's government. After approval by the government in September 1993 they were sent to the Sejm.

1.2 Substantial parliamentary majority – post-Communist rule 1993 – 1997

On 19 September 1993, the early parliamentary election took place as a result of post-Solidarity squabbling. This led to a no-confidence vote for Suchocka's government and caused Wałęsa to decide to dissolve Parliament. The new electoral law preserved the PR system but introduced a five percent threshold. Post-Solidarity parties, unable to integrate were, in the majority eliminated. (As a result, in the new Sejm, 34.6 percent of voters did not have representation). The number of parties in Parliament decreased significantly from 24 to six in 1991. The fragmentation of Solidarity as well as the discipline of the post-Communist SLD caused it to be awarded additional seats, for despite just receiving one-fifth of the votes, it gained one – third of the parliamentary seats. As a consequence, the new coalition built with the Polish Peasant Party (PSL) was much more stable. There were three governments based on this coalition. In the first, after the parliamentary elections in 1993, power went to the leader of the junior coalition partner Waldemar Pawlak (26 Oct. 1993–1 March 1995) as the post-Communists tried to stay in

the shadow, but after his collapse, power went Józef Oleksy (4 March. 1995–26 Jan 1996) and finally to Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz (15 Feb. 1996–31 Oct. 1997).

The parliamentary elections in 1993 and the shift of power to post-Communist governments started the next stage of administrative transition. The comprehensive vision of transformation of the entire administrative system was limited to central administration although it was assisted by the introduction of the Civil Service Act. The second prominent feature was the introduction of a pool of spoils (investigated in detail in section 3.2).

The shift of power in the post-Communist government meant the end of certain visions of administrative reforms. The most evident example is the abandoning of the concept of the necessity of further territorial reform of districts and regions as the prerequisite of the transformation of the central administration. Also, the work on civil service status assumed modification of the 1982 Socialist bill on employees of administration instead of continuation of earlier post-Solidarity projects (Izdebski 1996: 312–313). The continuation of work on the Civil Service Act resulted in the creation of the Civil Service Act on 5 July 1996 under Prime Minister Cimoszewicz (Izdebski and Kulesza 1999: 218). At the same time, Pawlak began purges of the administration, with the former apparatchiki returning to prominence. However, the shift of power to the post-Communist coalition meant more stable and stronger governments despite differences in policies between the SLD and the Peasant Party (PSL), with the latter able to conduct its policies despite difficulties of cohabitation with the president.

The conservatism of Prime Minister Pawlak and the PSL was in contrast to the policies of the next government of SLD Prime Ministers, Oleksy and Cimoszewicz, which worked on the central administration reform that was introduced in 1997. Prime Minister Oleksy proposed a reform of the “economic centre of government” despite the earlier territorial reform being seen as a precondition of central administration transition. The second reform had to be abandoned, however, as it was a divisive coalition with the PSL threatening to leave it. This “economic centre of government” reform was aimed at redesigning central institutions to make them more rational so they could concentrate on long-term economic agenda rather than day-to-day management as it used to be under Socialism. In the more advanced stages, Oleksy’s reform became the reform not only of its economic ministries but of the entire central administration. During work on this reform its scale extended, and it was decided to form the Chancellery of Prime Minister as well as a Ministry of Public Administration as the institution responsible for territorial administration. In November 1995, the project was accepted by the government; work on it started in the Sejm in March 1996 after the sudden collapse of the government. Prime Minister Cimoszewicz proposed some changes in the reform; for example, a merger into one Ministry of Internal Affairs and Administration.

On 1 January 1997, the reform of central administration was introduced. Six ministries were merged into two: economy, and internal affairs and administration. In addition, the position of the prime minister was substantially strengthened. Finally, despite a few earlier attempts, a super-ministry – the Office of the Council of Ministers – was finally transformed and the division of political and administrative positions became much clearer. Its tasks were transferred to the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Public Administration and the Chancellery of the Prime Minister. The Chancellery has a clearly distinguished political section with political advisers forming the political cabinet, and the administrative section which organises the work of the prime minister and the whole council of ministers. In September 1997, the law on organisation and functioning of the Council of Ministers was adopted. This was another important break with the Socialist legacy as a more flexible approach to ministerial structure was adopted. The procedure regulating the number of ministers by parliamentary bills was abandoned, and the prime minister received the competencies to adopt the ministerial structure to his needs. (However, despite its great importance, the law did not become effective until 1999). As part of the central administration reform, the Civil Service Act was then introduced (more in section 3.8).

The 1996 reform also defined which positions in administration are political. In the early stages of transition in the 1990s, some politicians were employed in managerial administrative positions and their tasks were clearly political: to formulate for example, government policies or to advise the prime minister or other members of government. However, the trend was to define fewer positions as political. Secretaries and deputy secretaries of state; secretaries and deputy secretaries; and in regional administrations, voivodes and deputy voivodes (around 200 officials) were defined as political. It was further decided that they would automatically resign with the collapse of a government although the new prime minister would not have to accept their resignations. Director generals in ministries and in voivodship (regional) offices became the highest administrative positions which remained unchanged despite of changes in government (Izdebski and Kulesza 1999: 146). In addition, the Constitution of 1997 forbade uniting the functions of MPs or senators with positions in public administration excepting governmental positions of ministers, prime ministers and secretaries of state. Since 1996 these positions, as mentioned above, have been defined as political, not administrative (Rydlewski 2000: 84).

1.3 The long-lasting government – Post-Solidarity government of Buzek 1997 – 2001

The elections on 21 September 1997 saw five parties entering the Sejm. Two parties achieved the largest number of votes. First was the Solidarity Electoral Action (AWS), the loose bloc of post-Solidarity parties with a prominent position in the Solidarity Trade Union, whose chairman Krzaklewski became the leader

of the AWS and, second, the post-Communist SLD. Despite the fact that the SLD gained six percent more votes than in the 1993 election, the appearance of the AWS – the widely-integrated post-Solidarity bloc (which in consequence gained mass social support, that for a few years none of the post-Solidarity party alone could achieve) – meant that it would be the AWS, in coalition with another post-Solidarity partner, that would form the next government. The electoral arithmetic made the UW the natural partner and as a result, they achieved 66.7 percent of votes at the beginning of the coalition. Buzek's government was an ambitious one, introducing a set of unpopular but necessary reforms after the collapse of Communism. At the same time, it was one of the weakest governments driven not only by the conflict between the coalition AWS and UW partners, but also by the opposition to government within the AWS (the senior coalition partner) in the final years of its existence as a minority government in a state of political disintegration. One of the most important reforms of Buzek's government was territorial, with mergers between 49 weak voivodships that created 16 much stronger regions. Moreover, his tenure was a continuation of the pool of spoils system at both the central and regional level. Finally, the new Civil Service Act of 1998 was introduced in response to the act of 1996 which was rejected as being biased towards post-Communists.

1.4 Miller's government 2001 – present – change or continuity?

In the parliamentary elections on 23 Sept. 2001, the Alliance of the Democratic Left, (SLD) received the best result since the collapse of Communism in 1989. This was caused by two factors: economic hardship and the disintegration of the AWS bloc. However, replacing the Sainte Laguë electoral method with d'Hondt, which was more favourable to small and medium-sized parties, weakened the post-Communist SLD. Despite their ambitions, they were not strong enough to form their own government. As a consequence, the SLD had to look for a coalition partner. Its first partner was an electoral coalition partner: the tiny Labour Union (UP), which in the previous parliamentary election of 1997 did not pass the five percent threshold and as a result was seriously endangered. The third partner was the Polish Peasant Party, with whom the SLD formed a coalition in the period 1993 – 1997. However, the low electoral result of the PSL could be seen as important despite its substantially weakened bargaining power when the SLD began negotiations for the potential coalition (Dudek 2002: 505).

2. Role of the President of the State

Since 1989, the institution of the presidency and the politicians occupying the office of president have had significant political influence on government formation, its composition and its policy-making process, meriting closer examination of the issue. In the period under investigation there have been three presidents:

Wojciech Jaruzelski (1989 – 1990), Lech Wałęsa (1990 – 1995) and Aleksander Kwaśniewski (1995 – present). These three presidencies are quite distinctive due to the evolution of the institution (which under Wałęsa had the widest powers and was re-curtailed by the 1997 Constitution), but also due to a considerable extent to the different personalities of presidents, their different visions of their role and their cooperation or confrontation with governments.

2.1 President Wojciech Jaruzelski – Passive cooperation (19 July 1989 – 31 Dec. 1990)

The first of the three presidents was General Wojciech Jaruzelski. His presidency was the shortest at a year and half. However, the re-creation in 1989 of the presidential institution that existed during the inter-war II Republic was done bearing in mind that General Jaruzelski, who at that time had been the Communist leader, was the obvious candidate for this position. During the roundtable negotiations, the institution of the presidency, equipped with wide political powers, was created to balance the concession made to Solidarity over the number of seats for which they could compete in the semi-democratic parliamentary elections. Thus, the formation of the new government after the June 1989 parliamentary elections was preceded by the election of the president, General Jaruzelski, as the guarantor of political stability and in recognition of the geopolitical conditions which existed in 1989.

Nevertheless, the Solidarity victory, which exceeded the expectations of the Communists, raised questions about Jaruzelski as President and the position of the Communists. During the presidential elections, General Jaruzelski had been humiliated as he was elected only with the support of Solidarity MPs. President Jaruzelski, who led the reformist section of the Communist party which opted for compromise with the opposition by agreeing on the roundtable negotiation, accepted the first non-Communist government and did not obstruct Mazowiecki's government. His attitude to the radically changed political situation was cooperative, but also somewhat passive. The formation of the non-Communist government by Mazowiecki and the earlier difficulty gaining parliamentary support to elect Jaruzelski shows that the balance of power at the roundtable negotiations was quickly becoming obsolete.

2.2 President Lech Wałęsa – maximalisation of presidential power (1990 – 1995).

Among central European countries, Poland's presidency has been the strongest. The direct popular election of Wałęsa (unlike Jaruzelski, who was elected by a semi-democratic Parliament) and his wide range of competencies as president made Poland a semi-presidential system. The president has a significant role in the legislative process. He can introduce legislation and can also veto parliamen-

tary bills including the budget or refer them to the Constitutional Court. The presidential veto can be rejected by the Sejm with a two-thirds majority (lowered in 1997 to three-fifths), (Fitzmaurice 1998: 74). However, government coalitions have not generally had a sufficient majority to override a veto. Thus, the veto was, for both Wałęsa and Kwaśniewski, an important source of power.

On 1 August 1992, Parliament ratified the Small Constitution, designed to clarify government relations with the president and Parliament. The Small Constitution further strengthened presidential powers by giving him the power to appoint the prime minister and form the government proposed by the prime minister. (However, his power was limited since the Sejm had 14 days to accept presidential nominees for prime minister). Moreover, the president supervised defence, state security and foreign policy, and he had the right to give his opinion on three so-called “presidential ministers”: those for defence, foreign affairs and internal affairs. The president did not believe his powers were not strengthened sufficiently. However, some MPs felt differently. The Small Constitution’s attempt to solve the issue of the relationship between government, President and Parliament brought only limited results, and an unclear definition of the division of competencies between the government and the president was often used by Wałęsa to increase his powers. Thus, the five-year long presidency of Wałęsa was driven by his ambition to maximise his power and his term was punctuated by a string of conflicts with five successive governments.

Walesa’s most direct influence on government was that he had just after his election formed a presidential government, based on the support of the president rather than a parliamentary majority. Walesa not only chose Bielecki as Prime Minister, but also selected his government and controlled his policy. (It should, however, be noted that the weak position of Bielecki resulted from the lack of a parliamentary majority rather than personal weakness). The fundamental factor defining the role of this government and its relationship with the president was that the government was “temporary”, expected to last just a few months until the next completely democratic parliamentary elections. (Nevertheless, the parliamentary majority was successful in postponing the election from spring until autumn.)

However, in the next two governments the prime ministers were selected by coalitions in Parliament although the president wished to play a decisive role. Olszewski was disliked by the president from the start, although poor relations between the government and president, in addition to personal conflicts, resulted from unclear divisions of competencies in defence, foreign and internal affairs. Dudek (2002: 253–254) believes that the lack of efforts by the prime minister to limit the conflict with Walesa, along with Defence Minister Parys’ effort to eliminate Walesa’s influence over the army, not only harmed democracy but was suicidal for his minority government. The relationship between the president

and Suchocka's government, the last post-Solidarity government, was generally correct, although Walesa's personality was a source of conflict. However, Prime Minister Suchocka favoured increased presidential power and during her tenure the Small Constitution was ratified by Parliament. Nevertheless, President Walesa's attitude towards Suchocka was mixed. On the one hand, he conducted actions aimed at strengthening the government – for example, meeting with Krzaklewski, chairman of the Solidarity Trade Union, to form the coalition of Solidarity pro-reformist forces. On the other hand, the president also provoked serious conflicts with the government. For example, on the appointment of the minister of culture he declared that the ability of the government to function effectively had ended as Parliament was too divided and that early elections should take place (Kowalska and Żmigrodzki 1998: 113-114).

Łabędź (2002: 278) argues that after the arrival of the post-Communists in 1994, the conflicts could have been worse. The President himself had earlier supported Pawlak for prime minister. As a result of Pawlak's nomination by Walesa, the political influence of the PSL was substantially strengthened. After the post-Communist parliamentary victory, Pawlak became the candidate of the post-Communist coalition for prime minister and Walesa, in response, decided to become their most staunch opponent, not accepting the fact that they had come to power as a consequence of the democratic choice of voters. The second or maybe even the primary source of conflict was Walesa's desire to extend his presidential powers.

The president's conflict with Pawlak's government was so intense that the government was at risk of dissolving due to Walesa's accusation of failure to meet the deadline for presenting the budget bill to Parliament. (The actual cause of delay was Walesa's actions: vetoing it, then sending it to the Constitutional Tribunal.) Despite the internal conflicts between coalition partners, they were able to integrate knowing that they could not count on compromise with Walesa. Thus, the government's 65 percent majority of votes in Parliament was especially important during this time of cohabitation (Rydlewski 2000).

The dominant role of the president on government policy and survival of governments was evident in the attack by President Walesa on Prime Minister Józef Oleksy which culminated with his dismissal. Oleksy was accused of collaboration with Soviet and Russian intelligence. On 19 December 1995, a few days after Walesa lost his presidency to Kwaśniewski, the Minister of Internal Affairs indicated an investigation in the military court as state security was endangered. On 21 December 1995, Minister Milczanowski officially accused the prime minister. Oleksy denied these accusations and interpreted them as political provocation. In January 1996, political tension over the formation of the new SLD-PSL government intensified and the prime minister resigned.

2.3 President Aleksander Kwaśniewski – preserving the powerful position of president (1995 – present)

On 22 December 1995, Aleksander Kwaśniewski, the chairman of the post-Communist SdRP (the main party of the SLD political bloc) replaced Wałęsa as the third president of Poland since 1989. On 8 October 2000, he was re-elected. During his long presidential tenure, Kwaśniewski has cooperated with both post-Communist governments: Cimoszewicz (1996 – 1997) and Miller (2001 – present) and cohabited with the post-Solidarity government of Buzek (1997 – 2001). In general, his presidency has been much more cooperative in relation to successive governments, although during the cohabitation with the post-Solidarity government the differences between president and prime minister were clear.

The relationship with Cimoszewicz's government seems to have been the most peaceful and cooperative. Probably the cooperation was also strengthened by the new Constitution of 1997 that limited an important source of conflict: the president's competence to influence the composition of government. The new Constitution redefined the division of power between president, prime minister and Parliament. The position of president was substantially weakened as he lost power in several crucial areas; for example, his right to dissolve the Sejm was curtailed and applied only when the Sejm rejects his nominee for prime minister and fails to elect another candidate. The president also lost the power to appoint ministers of defence and internal and external affairs. The president kept the veto but the right to reject the veto was lowered from two-thirds to three-fifths in the presence of half the MPs. Also, the previous experience of often-changing governments caused the constructive motion of no-confidence, meaning that no-confidence vote in a prime minister has to be accompanied by the appointment of a successor. Finally, Sejm was strengthened in relation to the Senat, as Senators' amendments to the parliamentary bills could be rejected with a simple majority, not a (2/3) majority as it used to be (Mikołajczyk 2001: 297 and Fitzmaurice 1998: 74).

With the formation of Buzek's government, president Kwaśniewski's cohabitation with post-Solidarity began. The presidency of Kwaśniewski was much less confrontational than that of Wałęsa. However, the main challenge to the relationship was that the ambitious reforms proposed by this government were dependent on his goodwill. President Kwaśniewski, enjoyed wide popularity due to his foreign policy success, but the majority of his decisions were similar to those of the SLD. Nevertheless, when necessary, this skilful politician was able to distance himself from the SLD and avoid unpopular decisions.

The formation of the post-Communist Miller government in 2001 began the second period of cooperation of the post-Communist prime minister and president. The same political origins seem to suppress publication of conflict between these two leaders, but a careful observer can notice a few conflicts. Thus, different

visions of the prime minister and government roles by Miller and Kwaśniewski have begun to crystallise. Miller shows a rising tendency towards re-centralisation and extending government control of the public sphere. These tendencies can be illustrated by the conflict over the position of the National Bank of Poland (NBP) and its supervisory board the Monetary Policy Council (RPP), with the president supporting its independence and Miller advocating government influence on the council.

3. Coalition Structures in the Government

3.1 The unexpected rise to power of Solidarity and the early administrative transition

A. Tadeusz Mazowiecki

With victory in the parliamentary elections in June 1989, power unexpectedly shifted to Solidarity, which was completely unprepared to create a government. First, Solidarity lacked its own political and administrative cadres, and there was only a gradual recognition of the need to develop a personnel policy as a means to preserve political power. In addition, the Solidarity camp was fragmented and political parties formed only gradually which substantially hindered political cooperation and caused government instability. This, in consequence, led to changes in senior administrative positions with each new government. Formation of a non-Communist government with a parliamentary majority was not only possible due to electoral success but also liberalisation of the former satellite parties, the United Peasants Alliance (ZSL) and Democratic Party (SD), which rejected the Communist candidature of Gen. Kiszczak (Dudek 2002: 70-71). Bentkowski (ZSL MP) observed that the collapse of Kiszczak's efforts to form a government showed that Solidarity had become a kingmaker – “too small to form a government on its own, but strong enough to reject any other in which it would not participate” (Chmaj 1998: 33).

In the 24 – member Mazowiecki non-Communist government the Solidarity Parliamentary Club (OKP) had 12 ministers, the ZSL had four, the SD three; one, the foreign minister, was a non-party member. The Communist party (PZPR), although not a member of a coalition, had four ministers. Among them, two had been ministers in three previous Communist governments: General Kiszczak, Minister of Internal Affairs, had served in this position since 1981 and Defence Minister General Siwicki had served since 1983. Mazowiecki was acutely aware that the PZPR and its political heirs controlled the army and security forces, and that geopolitical factors also had to be taken into consideration. Consequently, confrontation with them was seen as dangerous. In the case of the PZPR, it was obvious that their candidates would be ministers of defence and internal affairs. The main difficulty in government formation was to limit the

personnel demands of the PZPR and ZSL. ZSL was demanding six ministries altogether. The most intense conflict was over the foreign affairs minister as the ZSL aspired to this position. As a result of compromise, the non-party member, Professor Skubiszewski, was appointed and his first deputy, the secretary of state came from the PZPR. For resigning from the ministry of finance, the PZPR received the portfolio of ministry of foreign cooperation, and received a promise that the candidature of Baka as chairman of the Polish Central Bank would be supported during in the Sejm. They also lost the position of the chairman of the TV and Radio Committee (Dudek 2002: 77). As Minister of Finance Solidarity candidate Leszek Balcerowicz, who also became a deputy prime minister, was appointed but only after several candidates approached by the prime minister rejected the post. Nevertheless, this decision had far-reaching consequences as he had a comprehensive vision of economic transition and a group of competent colleagues, who took senior positions in the ministry. Similar circumstances surrounded other Solidarity ministerial appointments due to the lack of Solidarity cadres. In fact, the opposition was just as surprised by the unexpected formation of a non-Communist government, and the lack of administrative experience came to be seen as a virtue.

SEMI-DEMOCRATIC ELECTION: 4 June and 18 June 1989										
(1) Tadeusz MAZOWIECKI (12 Sept. 1989 - 14 Dec. 1990)										
President Wojciech Jaruzelski (19 July 1989 - 22 December 1990)	NAME OF PARTIES	No. of Ministers		% of Ministerial positions		No. of deputy prime minister	% of deputy prime ministers	Proportion of seats % in Sejm and Senat		
		June 1989	Dec. 1990	June 1989	Dec. 1990			Sejm		Senat
								July 1989 % of seats	Dec 1990 % of seats	
1	Solidarity ('S')	12	16	50%	66,6%	1	25 %	OKP - 35%	OKP - 33,7 %	OKP -99%
2	The Polish United Working Party (PZPR)	4	----	16,6%	---	1	25 %	PZPR - 37,6%	PZPR - 0 % PKLD - 22,7% PUS - 8,9% KNP - 2,2 % KPW - 1,5 total - 35,3 %	1 % (formally non party member although tied to the communist camp)
3	The United Peasant Alliance (ZSL)	4	3	16,6%	12,5%	1	25 %	ZSL - 16,7 %	PSL - 15,9 % PSL-Mikołajczyk. 0,9%	-----
4	The Democratic Alliance (SD)	3	3	12,5%	12,5%	1	25 %	SD - 5,9%	SD - 4,8 %	-----
5	non-party member	1	2	4,1%	8,3%	-----	-----	-----	others 4,6 %	-----
TOTAL		24		100%		4	100 %	OKP, ZSL, SD =57,4%		OKP = 99 %

A year later in December 1990, 18 out of 24 ministers had kept their positions as a result of two types of changes, institutional-mergers and formation of

new ministries (for example, a ministry of privatisation) and personnel. The first personnel change was the appointment of Senator Kozłowski, as deputy minister in the ministry of internal affairs. In the next two months, there were 38 more appointments of ministers, deputy ministers and director generals of ministries: nine from the PZPR, one from ZSL and one from SD. The rest were non-party members, but most had Solidarity affiliations. These 38 new appointments were result of only 25 dismissals with 13 newly established positions. Mazowiecki, in his inauguration speech in the Sejm, where he presented the framework of his policy, said that he had not planned to conduct revolutionary changes. He used the famous phrase “the broad line” which meant he wanted to divide the past and present with such a line and concentrate on the current situation to solve the economic crisis in Poland. However, this concept was often used against him politically as it was interpreted primarily as a cautious approach to Communism. Nevertheless, this policy was also prompted by the wish to preserve legal order and to prevent aggression against, and persecution of, Communists.

Mazowiecki was criticised for being overly cautious in personnel changes, which is surprising in a period of transition. Dudek (2002: 102-103), for example, criticises the limited changes in the army among the Polish generals, which he believes was caused by both fear and belief in the legal order. There were not even individual changes in the promotion of young army officers. Also, the formation of completely new intelligence forces was rejected by Mazowiecki as impossible due to the lack of Solidarity cadres. This limited personnel change aimed at erasing the division between the former nomenklatura and Solidarity opposition was only partially successful. Instead, it caused deep divisions within the Solidarity movement, with Wałęsa leading demands for radical elimination of Communists from politics and administration. A more positive evaluation of Mazowiecki's personnel policy is presented by Roszkowski (2001: 408-409) who focuses on his putting an “end to the police state”. In November 1989, the voluntary Police Service was dissolved and political monitoring of personnel took place in the Police Forces and State Security, renamed the Office of State Protection. Gradual personnel changes also took place in courts and attorneys' offices. In the army and police, a law forbidding party membership was introduced, but according to Roszkowski personnel change remained gradual.

B. Jan Krzysztof Bielecki

Bielecki's government represented continuity as eight of 19 ministers came from Mazowiecki's government among them Balcerowicz, the Minister of Finance. The PC was against Balcerowicz as Finance Minister but Wałęsa demanded that he remain; there was also Western pressure as he was seen as a guarantor of reform. Five post-Solidarity parties forming Bielecki's government represented diverse politics. On one side was the prime minister and the tiny Liberal Democratic Congress, representing liberal policy as well as the Central Alliance (PC), de-

manding a break with the roundtable agreement and “collaboration” with Communists. On the other side was the Christian National Union (ZChN). Finally, Bielecki’s government contained the Democratic Union party formed around former Prime Minister Mazowiecki and the Democratic Alliance (SD); each had one member. According to Dudek (2002: 168-169), Bielecki’s government was dependent on Wałęsa. Other governments had a better situation with parliamentary backing, even a minority. Instead, Bielecki had to rely on Wałęsa and the unstable Solidarity Parliamentary Club.

Formation of this government was again hindered by the lack of Solidarity cadres (Chamj 1998: 52), with 11 non-party members. In reality this was a presidential government. After the post-Solidarity parties lost the 1993 parliamentary elections, Balcerowicz recollected that not only was reform important but so too was the creation of cadres as a guarantee of continued reform. Thus, personnel in post-Solidarity governments had revolutionary types of careers: first, they were usually outsiders who had no contact with politics or administration before 1989; second, there were no clear requirements to enter administration; third, there were no barriers excluding certain groups – for example, party membership.

Bielecki’s government conducted limited personnel changes. For example, 12 new voivodes and 17 deputy voivodes were appointed (Frydrykiewicz and Reszka *Rzeczpospolita* 16 July 1996). In central government, Minister of Industry Zawisłak, was replaced by Bochniarz and the second dismissal was Wójtowicz, of the chairman of the Polish Central Bank, due to his insufficient supervision of Art-B company, which was the centre at the largest corruption scandal of that time.

(2) JAN KRZYSZTOF BIELECKI (12 Jan. 1991 – 5 Dec. 1991)							
	NAME OF PARTIES	No. of Ministers	% of Ministerial positions	No. of deputy prime minister	% of deputy prime ministers	Proportion of seats % in Sejm and Senat	
						Sejm (Feb 1991)	Senat
1	Non -party members	11	55 %	1	100 %	others 4,6 %	-----
2	The Liberal-Democratic Congress (KLD)	4	20 %	-----	-----	OKP 24,1%	OKP - 99%
3	The Centre Alliance (PC)	2	10 %	-----	-----		
4	The Christian National Union (ZChN)	1	5 %	-----	-----		
5	The Citizens’ Movement -Democratic Action / The Democratic Union (ROAD/UD)	1	5 %	-----	-----		
6	The Democratic Alliance (SD)	1	5 %	-----	-----	4,8 %	-----
	TOTAL	20	100 %	1	100 %	38,9% - ‘presidential government’	99 %

C. Jan Olszewski

The shift of power to smaller parties was apparent before the formation of the new government, when these parties took positions on the boards of the Sejm and Senat, and excluded the largest parties: the Democratic Union (UD) and opposition post-Communist SLD. This is an exceptional case in the history of Polish parliamentarism after 1989, especially since the division of the boards of the Sejm and Senat, according to electoral representation in Parliament, was introduced in 1989. In addition, the post-Communist MPs were isolated by all other parliamentary parties. Not only would nobody consider going into coalition with them, but their isolation was so great that there was even conflict over who was to sit next to them.

The Centre Alliance (PC) had most influence in Olszewski's government with four ministers and the prime minister himself; the Christian National Union (ZChN) had three members, the Peasant Alliance (PL) two ministers and the Party of Christian Democrats (PChD) had one minister. The remaining ten ministers were non-party members. However, Olszewski was not able to form a loyal and integrated government. There are two main features of the composition of this government: the lack of a deputy prime minister position, an exceptional feature compared to other governments; and the bargaining over the ministry of finance. The main achievement of Olszewski was the elimination of Balcerowicz as Finance Minister but he was not successful in finding a viable successor (Dudek 20002: 236-37). There were two other cases of ministers' dismissals: the Minister of Defence, Parys, was dismissed as a consequence of the conflict with the president, and Balzs a minister without portfolio, was also sacked. The important feature of this government was the formation of the Advisory Committee of the Prime Minister composed of his closest advisers.

Regular election 27 Oct. 1991							
(3) Jan Olszewski (23 Dec. 1991 - 5 June 1992)							
President Lech Wałęsa (22 December 1990-22 December 1995)	NAME OF PARTIES	No. of Ministers	% of Ministerial positions	No. of deputy prime minister	Proportion of seats % in Sejm and Senat		
					Sejm	Senat	
	1	Non-party members	10	47,6 %	no deputy prime minister position – this position was used as the main attraction for other post-Solidarity parties during constant negotiations to widen this minority government	-----	13 %
	2	The Center Alliance (PC)	5	23,8 %		9,57 %	9 %
	3	The Christian National Union (ZChN)	3	14,2 %		WAK – 10,87 %	WAK – 9 %
	4	The Peasant Alliance (PL)	2	9,5 %		6.09 %	7 %
	5	The National Christian Party (PChD)	1	4,7 %		0,87	3 %
	Total	21	100 %	27.4 % (minority government)		41 %	

Some ministries were liquidated; in others, the prime minister planned to appoint directors instead of ministers. This had serious consequences for ministerial policies because directors were not allowed to conduct independent administration agenda; they concentrated on current issues which were the responsibility of that unit of administration (Patyra 1998: 82). This situation applied to four ministries; the Ministry of Territorial Economy and Construction; the Ministry of Telecommunications; the Ministry of Ownership Changes; and the Ministry of Industry and Trade. Three of these directors were non-party members and one belonged to the PC.

The PC leader, Kaczyński, initiated the formation of the cabinet and selected the candidate for prime minister, but there was no place for Kaczyński himself. He was now in open conflict with Wałęsa, who had earlier supported him. As a result of conflict within the PC, the ZChN gained a disproportionate influence over the government agenda (in comparison to a number of ministers). The radicalism of this party also made it difficult to attract other potential coalition partners. In February, (three months after formation of the government) two UD deputy ministers in the ministry of defence were dismissed. This move showed a new feature of personnel policy – dismissal not only of post-Communists but also other members of the post-Solidarity camp. Dudek (2002: 247) also mentions that the UD demanded personnel changes of its representatives in ministerial administration end as a precondition for talks to enlarge the coalition. In his initial speech, the Prime Minister was not only very critical of the post-Communists but also two earlier post-Solidarity governments, and he vowed to break with the policy of previous governments.

Personnel changes also took place in regional administration. In a January 1992 meeting with the regional governors, the new director of the Office of Ministers Council, Włodarczyk, who was responsible for regional administration, declared that in his appointments of new personnel, “political sympathies will not be taken into consideration, although senior administrative officials cannot be completely apolitical, as each government has its own political base”. According to Lipszyc and Wielopolska (*Rzeczpospolita* 16 October 1993), this declaration started demands for changes of voivodes by PC regional politicians and also other temporal-formed regional political coalitions. Nevertheless, there were relatively few changes – he dismissed eight voivodes and six deputy voivodes (Frydrykiwicz and Reszka *Rzeczpospolita* 16 July 1996) – especially when compared with the pool of spoils system introduced after 1993.

D. Hanna Suchocka

Compared with previous governments, Suchocka’s government was highly politicised from its formation. Only three ministers were not party members and five portfolios were held by both the UD and ZChN (after half a year, one more ZChN

minister was appointed). The UD was also supported by four KLD ministers reflecting its domination of personnel and policy. ZChN MPs often criticised and protested this domination. Some influence was held by the PL, which had four ministers, while three other parties, the PChD, PPG and SLCh, which had only one minister, each playing a minor role.

President Lech Wałęsa (22 December 1990-22 December 1995)		(4) Hanna SUCHOCKA (July 1992- May 1993)						
		NAME OF PARTIES	No. of Ministers	% of Ministerial positions	No. of deputy prime minister	% of deputy prime ministers	Proportion of seats % in Sejm and Senat	
							Sejm (May 1993)	Senat
1	The Democratic Union (UD)	5	20 %	----	-----	13,4 %	21 %	
2	The Christian National Union (ZChN)	6	24 %	1	50 %	10,6 %	WAK 9 %	
3	The Liberal-Democratic Congress (KLD)	4	16 %	----	-----	8 %	6 %	
4	non -party members	3	12 %	----	-----	2 %	13 %	
5	The Peasant Alliance (PL)	4	16 %	----	-----	3,9 %	7 %	
6	The National Christian Party (PChD)	1	4 %	1	50 %	1 %	3 %	
7	The Polish Economic Programme (PPG)	1	4 %	----	-----	2,8 %	-----	
8	The Alliance of the Christian Democrats (SLCh)	1	4 %	----	-----	2 %	-----	
TOTAL		25	100	2	100 %	43,7 %	59 %	

In the situation of the fragmented post-Solidarity coalition the influence of Wałęsa was enhanced, as shown in the conflict around the candidacy of Minister of Internal Affairs Balasz (SLCh), which was resisted by a small coalition (UD, KLD and PPG). The decisive voice belonged to Wałęsa, who favoured keeping Milczanowski. For a long time, the ministry of culture was vacant as Wałęsa rejected the candidature of Klajnert from the ZChN, accusing him of incompetence. However, in reality Wałęsa wanted to increase presidential power. Yet, according to the constitution Wałęsa did not have the right to influence the minister of culture but in the end the ZChN gave in (Dudek 2002: 276-8).

After the formation of Pawlak's government, Suchocka declared that she hoped that over a period of time voivodes would become apolitical civil servants. However, during her tenure, the position of voivode was highly politicised and several of them and their deputies stood in parliamentary elections (though none were elected). At that time, the longest tenured voivode was Bohadnowicz from Łódź who had been appointed by Mazowiecki in 1989. There were also three deputy voivodes of longstanding who had been appointed under Socialism, one in 1984 (Lipszyc and Wielopolska *Rzeczpospolita* 16 October 1993). Suchocka dismissed eight voivodesin including two belonging to the PC, both of whom were MPs and who, together with the PC parliamentary club, voted against the govern-

ment budget. This was seen by Suchocka as a “drastic infringement of voivodes’ duties” (Frydrykiewicz and Reszka *Rzeczpospolita* 16 July 1996).

3.2 Post-Communist government and the pools of spoils system

A. Waldemar Pawlak

With the arrival of the post-Communists in 1993, the revolutionary period of spontaneous government functioning ended and formal arrangements were introduced. The coalition agreement defined the composition of government. There was to be a democratic division of positions of the chairmen in the parliamentary commissions among all parties represented in the Parliament. In the coalition agreement, it was decided that a representative of the Polish Peasant Party (PSL) would become the prime minister. The obvious candidate was Waldemar Pawlak, chairman of the party. Under the agreement it was also decided that a representative of the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD) would become spokesman of the Sejm and a representative of the PSL would do the same in the Senat. Moreover, the main criteria in appointing ministers were supposed to be competence and ethics of the candidates and acceptance of government policy irrespective of their party. The “spoils system” was to be applied only to some ministries (undefined in the document). Moreover, the coalition agreement also declared that personnel changes would be minimized and the central administration would become an apolitical civil service.

Extraordinary election (19 Sept. 1993)								
President Lech Wałęsa (22 December 1990-t)	(5) Waldemar Pawlak (26 Oct. 1993- 1 March 1995)							
	NAME OF PARTIES	No. of Ministers	% of Ministerial positions	No. of deputy prime minister	% of deputy prime ministers	Proportion of seats % in Sejm and Senat		
	1	The Democratic Left Alliance (SLD)	9	42	2	66 %	37. 17 %	37 %
	2	The Polish Peasants' Party (PSL)	8	38	1	33 %	28. 69 %	36 %
	3	non party member	4	19	-----	-----	-----	4 %
Total		21	100	3		65.86 %	77%	

The second striking difference in comparing this government and next two post-Communist governments with the previous post-Solidarity one was the radical reduction in the number of coalition partners. The SLD had nine ministers and the PSL eight. Participation by non-party members was minimal – four ministries, of which three were appointed by the president. There were three deputy prime ministers two from the SLD, Borowski and Cimoszewicz, and one from the PSL, Łuczak. The three ministers – Milczanowski, Internal Affairs; Kolodziejczyk, Defence; and Olechowski, Foreign Affairs – were recommended by President Wałęsa. Fitzmaurice (1998: 74), commenting on presidential minis-

tries during the post-Communist tenure, 1993 – 1997, called them cuckoos in the nest for the government. What was evident during government meetings was that they were alien to the rest of the government.

There is only fragmentary data on deputy ministers' changes in individual governments. Pawlak's government is representative of post-Solidarity coalitions. At that time there was just one deputy minister (in finance) who had started work before 1989, and the majority of deputy ministers had worked around two years (Lipszyc *Rzeczpospolita* 28 Oct 1993). However, after ten months of Pawlak's rule and the personnel policy of his new chairman of the office of council of ministers, Strąk, the administrative changes overcame "all the achievements" of four years of post-Solidarity governments. Most voivodes and half the senior administrative personnel in ministries were replaced – around 50.

Many of the new appointees belonged to the PSL or were acquaintances of the prime minister. For example, in the office of the council of ministers, two deputy ministers were formally members of the PSL, but another eight were non-party members who were political sympathisers. The PSL had one deputy minister each in the ministries of culture, justice, foreign affairs and health; and two in the ministries of education, privatisation and the central planning office, nearly everybody in the ministry of agriculture and 16 out of the 27 new voivodes. In addition, PSL people dominated the Bank of Food Economy and the state insurance national company (PZU), and powerful state agencies such as the Agency of Development and Modernisation of Agriculture (Groblewski and Lipszyc *Rzeczpospolita* 20 July 1994). After shifting power from the post-Solidarity government, one could expect that the most intensive personnel changes in administration took place but maybe even more intensive were conducted later, after the post-Communist SLD took over the prime minister's position and before the parliamentary election in 1997. Rydlewski (2001: 83-4) emphasised that frequent changes of government produced such unstable administrative cadres that it was criticised by foreign experts, e.g. the European Commission in November 1998.

The SLD concentrated on the economy, aware of popular resentments towards post-Communists. Thus, the SLD decided to resign the prime minister's office and instead gained control of the economic ministries, for which the PSL had insufficient cadres (Dudek 2002: 356). However, their influence on the economy was substantially decreased when the prime minister replaced nine of 12 officials on the committee responsible for selecting candidates for state company boards (Sokół 1998: 149). Among the most controversial appointments was that of the chairman of the National Tax Office, Sekuła, who was a minister in the last Communist government and who had been sacked by Oleksy for corruption (Roszkowski 2001: 429-30). The chairman of the office of council of ministers openly declared: "In reality, the former officials are returning ... During the past four years, the young angry men introduced reform, which could not be done without the former offi-

cial. Now these are returning to new structures and adjusting everything”. (Strąk quoted in Dudek 2002: 364 from *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 23 October 1994).

Strąk declared that voivodes’ were political, not administrative. This was contrary to proposals for the legislative regulation of voivodes’ positions which evolved during the post-Solidarity period. He also radically changed the philosophy of relations between political and administrative spheres. For the first time, a significant increase in political appointments were proposed. This meant extensive personnel changes accompanying each change of government, with demands that voivodes, their deputies and other senior civil servants, would automatically resign. Strąk justified this policy by declaring it was modelled on France where, according to him, after each change of government about 60 percent of prefects are changed. (Frydrykiewicz and Reszka *Rzeczpopolita* 16 July 1996). Prime Minister Pawlak ensured that the PSL gained 19 voivode posts while only two went to SLD supporters. This was against an earlier agreement dividing voivode positions within the coalition according to whether the PSL or the SLD won the parliamentary election in a particular voivodship.

B. Józef Oleksy

The incompetence and corruption scandals of Pawlak’s government enabled the SLD to gain power during negotiations on the formation of a new government. As one of their three candidates for the position of prime minister, the PSL proposed Oleksy (instead of the natural candidate Kwaśniewski, chairman of the SdRP, who was thinking about the presidency). The offer was accepted by the post-Communists, and power shifted to the senior coalition partner. Wałęsa also accepted this candidature. (This decision indicates that the president was not such a staunch anti-Communist as Łabędź (2002: 278) claimed, and his priority could have been, according to Dudek, the use of this fact in his presidential campaign for re-election.) In 1995, for the first time since the collapse of Communism, power shifted to former Communist party members. The new prime minister was the former senior apparatchik, the first Communist secretary of Bielsko-Biała region; as his adviser, he nominated Ankiewicz, a senior Security Forces official (Roszkowski 2001: 434). The second person in the PSL, after Pawlak, Zych, became the spokesman of the Sejm.

		(6) Józef OLEKSY (4 March 1995- 26 Jan 1996)						
		No. of Ministers	% of Ministerial positions	No. of deputy prime minister	% of deputy prime ministers	Proportion of seats % in Sejm and Senat		
President Lech Wałęsa (22 December 1990-...)	1	The Democratic Left Alliance (SLD)	11	50 %	1	33 %	37. 17 %	37 %
	2	The Polish Peasants’ Party (PSL)	7	31 %	2	66 %	28. 69 %	36 %
	3	Non-party member	4	18 %	-----	-----	-----	4 %
	TOTAL		22	100 %	3	100 %	65.86 %	77%

In the new government the SLD had 11 representatives, among them former apparatchiki. The PSL had seven ministers and two deputy prime ministers as a concession for handing power to Olesky. The dominance of the SLD was also evident in changes of deputy ministers and director generals where, after more than half a year's rule, 48 had been replaced compared to 67 changes conducted during the more than year-long Pawlak government in the group of 145 senior officials (Henzler and Olszewska *Polityka* 25 Aug – 2 Sept 1995). Among them were five voivodes and seven deputy voivodes (Frydrykiewicz and Reszka *Rzeczpospolita* 16 July 1996). Moreover, an attempt to gain control over television and radio was made public. This probably explains why, in the second version of the coalition agreement signed before the formation of the new government, the move to make the civil service apolitical was abandoned as that would have been a double standard. After Wałęsa lost the second round of the presidential election in November 1995, his “presidential ministers” (internal affairs, defence and external affairs) resigned. This was a watershed, for since then all ministers have been chosen by the prime minister.

C. Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz

After his poor results in the presidential campaign, Pawlak was not able to regain the position of prime minister for the PSL. The leader of the third coalition government became Cimoszewicz, from the SLD. The PSL accepted the liberal Kaczmarek and he preserved his position of minister of privatisation. However, a supplement was added to the coalition agreement, stating that decisions on privatisation would be taken by the whole government. Only six of 20 ministerial positions changed place (Dudek 2002: 435). Although in this government the PSL and SLD had the same number of ministers, the SLD dominated because the prime minister and crucial ministers were SLD. Finally, there were three deputy ministers: Kołodko (formally a non-party member but suggested by the SLD), and from the PSL, Jagieliński, and Pietrewicz. The preservation of the prime minister's position in the hands of the SLD was also related to the fact that the PSL was divided over selection of one alternative candidate strong enough to challenge the one proposed by the SLD.

President Aleksander Kwasniewski (22 December 1995-present)	(7) Włodzimierz CIMOSZEWICZ (15 Feb. 1996 - 31 Oct. 1997)						
	NAME OF PARTIES	No. of Ministers	% of Ministerial positions	No. of deputy prime minister	% of deputy prime ministers	Proportion of seats % in Sejm and Senat	
1	The Democratic Left Alliance (SLD)	9	45%	1	33%	37.17%	37%
2	The Polish Peasants' Party (PSL)	9	45%	2	66%	28.69%	36%
3	Non-party member	2	10%	-----	-----	-----	4%
TOTAL		20	100%	3	100%	100%	65.86%

The reform of central administration strengthened the position of the SLD in government. The PSL proposed Pawlak for the ministry of internal affairs and

administration, but he lost to the SLD's Miller. Also, they did not manage to appoint their candidate in the treasury; a liberal minister was appointed instead. For resigning from the treasury, the PSL became chairman of the Government Centre of Strategic Research and chairman of the civil service. In February 1997, the PSL proposed Jan Szachulowicz, a retired academic of the University of Warsaw, as chairman of the Civil Service. Rokita suggests that probably the PSL did not have any other candidate. However, after some time, Szachulowicz moved over to the side of the stronger SLD (*Subotić Rzeczpospolita* 22 Feb. 1997).

Nevertheless, the PSL still preserved a certain influence as they were able to delay the reform of territorial administration; their main argument was the electoral arithmetic, that the formation of new regions would change the shape of constituencies and weaken them as they had their main backing in the countryside. The PSL lost its fight to increase its influence but could not be completely ignored. Personnel changes also took place in television. The chairman of the television board, Walendziak, was dismissed and the PSL and SLD dominated the board, with PSL candidate, Miazek becoming chairman (Dudek 2002: 434-7). As in the case of the two previous post-Communist governments, the nomenklatura cadres were regaining senior positions: for example, in March 1997, Gen. Szumski, who, during martial law, had pacified the Szczecin Shipyard, became the chairman of the General Army Headquarters. The personnel restoration was assisted by numerous corruption scandals, which, however, did not lead to the post-Communists losing public support in the opinion polls (Roszkowski 2001: 436).

Before the parliamentary elections there were two serious personnel changes of deputy prime ministers, Kołodko and Jagieliński. First, Kołodko, who often presented publicly controversial opinions and was in conflict with Cimoszewicz, was dismissed for being seen as an electoral liability. He was followed two months later by Prime Minister Jagieliński. The PSL, which before the election was taking the populist stance, demanded the dismissal of their own Prime Minister, Cimoszewicz, for a long time. He tried to ignore the PSL, but in February the PSL authorities officially withdrew their recommendation and the Prime Minister had no choice (Dudek 2002: 443).

The new Civil Service Act, adopted in 1996, applied only to public administration employees, since local government administration employees had their own separate regulations since the beginning of the transition (introduced in 1990 and with amendments after district and regional reform in 1998 to adapt to the new situation). Also, the 1997 Constitution re-confirmed that the concept of the civil service corps is limited to public administration. The Constitution, in article 153, also declared the apolitical character of the civil service as "for the aim of guaranteeing of professional, reliable, neutral and apolitical fulfilment of state tasks in the administrative offices acts the civil service".

Moreover, in contrast to the civil service in France (where the civil service accounts for about 2.5 mln officials) and in Britain, where the number of its employees is much smaller (600,000), the Polish model, according to 1996 act, was distinctive as it covered only some of the administrative officials (Każmierski *Rzeczpospolita* 16 Oct. 1997). Two categories were present; first, employees of public administration; and second, “nominated” officials, who went through the procedure of nomination by the chief of the civil service after going through the examination procedures by the civil service commission for qualifications. In addition, the civil service commission, acting as an advisory body, was established, like the chief of civil service, as a direct subordinate of the prime minister, with the consequent danger of politicisation. Four categories of civil servants were established.

The 1996 Civil Service Act closed the most senior positions to people who did not have seven years’ work experience in administration, so that excluded everyone who had not worked in administration before the collapse of Communism. In 1997, selection procedures for civil servants nearly excluded anyone who was not a supporter of the SLD or (to some extent) the PSL. Meanwhile, Miller, Minister of Internal Affairs and Administration prior to the autumn election of 1997, had appointed a whole new set of director generals (48 out of 49), as this position was to be defined as administrative and therefore to be preserved after the change of government (Roszkowski 2001: 436). Among the new director generals, 11 belonged to the PSL, four to the SDRP and the rest were non-party members. However, appointment to this position demanded non-party membership, so they had to either withheld or resigned from their party membership. Nevertheless, PSL politicians argued that the statistics were false, that current non-party members were all sympathisers of the post-Communists as they were former senior Communist apparatchiki (Wróbel *Rzeczpospolita* 21 Jan. 1997 and Subotić *Rzeczpospolita* 22 Feb. 1997). These appointments of formally apolitical civil servants raised strong protests from the PSL who did not pretend that they did not threaten them as pools of spoils (Czackowska and Kieszkowski *Rzeczpospolita* 24 Feb. 1997). Thus, the mixed evaluation of central administration reform is that it closed fast-track on the advancement of opportunities to graduates of the National School of Public Administration while enhancing the likelihood of promotion of previous area apparatchiks (Nunber 1999: 45 and Dudek 2002: 437).

3.8 Jerzy Buzek – continuing the spoils system

On 17 October 1997, President Kwaśniewski designated Prof. Jerzy Buzek as Prime Minister. Though not widely known in politics, he was one of Krzaklewski’s closest advisers. The fact that the chairman of the senior coalition partner stayed outside government seriously obstructed government decision-making. The leader of the junior coalition party, Leszek Balcerowicz, became Deputy

Prime Minister and Finance Minister. However, his powerful position in Buzek's government also resulted from his being the founding father of the economic transition initiated by Mazowiecki's government. The composition of Buzek's government shows the strong position of the AWS as 72 percent of ministers were from this party. Also, the fact that there were two deputy prime minister positions was also aimed at weakening UW influence. When comparing the division of posts within the SLD-PSL coalition in the period 1993 – 1997 and that of Buzek's government, one can see that the PSL – the junior coalition partner – had at the beginning a more prominent position than the UW. The Freedom Union in the majority received only “deputy-type positions”: deputy prime ministers, deputy spokesmen of the Sejm, and Senat. In contrast, the PSL had spokesman in the Sejm, Józef Zych, and Waldemar Pawlak even achieved the position of Prime Minister. This was most of all caused by the social unpopularity of SLD when they came to power in 1993).

Compared to previous post-Solidarity governments, this one is striking for the fact that it was formed by only two coalition partners. However, this observation can be a bit misguided as the AWS itself was a highly fragmented structure. Thus, in analysing the division of positions within the coalition government it is necessary to mention the fluidity and complexity of the AWS electoral bloc. In 1996, when the AWS was formed, it was composed of several political parties. In 1999, the Solidarity Trade Union was still preserving its dominant position, and only the limited crystallisation of political parties was observable as four main parties were formed (RS AWS, SKL, ZChN and PPChD). It is not possible to present more details on the AWS parties' representation in Buzek's government, as the AWS structure, despite certain integrative action, was still in flux. After the AWS came to power, the domination of trade unions within the bloc became dysfunctional. This problem illustrates the example of the trade unionist demonstration against the policy of government headed by Krzaklewski, who wished to preserve his position within the Solidarity TU by these populist actions (despite him being the founder and *éminence grise* of this coalition). Krzaklewski's attempt to solve this conflict of interest in December 1997 was to emanate out of trade union cadres his own political party, the RS AWS which would preserve the dominant position within the AWS bloc (Dudek 2002: 466).

The difficulty of division of posts in government and differences in the political agenda between coalition partners was also caused by the fact that even the smallest AWS grouping demanded representation. This is illustrated by the case of Ryszard Czarnecki, chairman of the Committee of European Integration. Although the ZChN can be defined as a medium-size AWS party, the appointment of a representative of this party, which showed rather serious reservations towards EU policy in government much more Euro-enthusiastic was unfortunate. Furthermore, even in May 1988, after Czarnecki was accused of incompetence due to poor preparation of PHARE programmes by his committee which cost

Poland 34 mln Euro, he could not be dismissed. Finally, after much bargaining, the ZChN maintained its representation in government as he became a minister without a portfolio.

President Aleksander Kwaśniewski II term in office (22 December 1995- present)	REGULAR ELECTION 21 Sept 1997						
	(8) Jerzy BUZEK (31 Sept. 1997- Nov. 2001) till June 2000 coalition government afterwards minority government of AWS						
	NAME OF PARTIES	No. of Ministers	% of Ministerial positions	No. of deputy prime minister	% of deputy prime ministers	Proportion of seats % in Sejm and Senat	
	1	The Solidarity Electoral Action (AWS)	15	72 %	1	50%	43,7 %
2	The Freedom Union (UW)	6	28 %	1	50%	13 %	8 %
	TOTAL	21	100 %	1	100 %	56.7 %	64 %

The expectation of possible conflict within the coalition meant that, since the beginning, attention was paid to coordination of government policy that should be conducted by party leaders in Parliament, and by chairmen and boards of parliamentary clubs of the AWS and UW. Moreover, their regular meetings should precede parliamentary debates and voting on government reforms.

A more extensive description focuses on personnel. Special attention had been paid to it in the coalition agreement, and it was defined in details not seen in any other post-Socialist governments since 1989. Despite the attention designed to eliminate possible doubts over the division of spoils, this government was unsuccessful in coordinating this policy and it was one serious factor in the break-up of the coalition government. The main assumption was that the personnel policy should reflect the will of the population which could be measured in the number of votes cast for each of the coalition parties. It was written in the coalition agreement that the prime minister would be from AWS but accepted by the UW, and that the deputy prime minister would be from UW and accepted by the AWS. In addition, detailed division of ministerial posts was decided.² Moreover, the rule was that if the minister was from one party, his deputy (secretary of state or deputy secretary of state) would be represented by the second coalition partner and these appointments should also be discussed on the government side by the prime minister and minister. Detailed regulations were put in place in

2 AWS – education, economy, telecommunications, agriculture and food production, labour and social policy, state treasury, internal affairs and administration, environment and forestry, health and social protection, and three ministries without portfolios, chairman of the Committee of Scientific Research and minister – Chairman of Government Centre of Strategic Research
UW – finance, culture and art, national defence, foreign affairs, justice, transport and sea economy. In addition, it was decided that in the case of the creation of new positions of ministers or deputy prime ministers, the appointment of a new minister or dismissal of a minister demands acceptance of both sides of the coalition

relation to regional administration – the AWS proposed candidates for voivodes and the UW for their deputies. In 12 out of 49 regions, the opposite situation should take place as UW voivodes were to be appointed with AWS deputies.³ It was also added that two candidatures for every position should be proposed and the prime minister would make the final choice.

The coalition agreement also defined the division of chairmen's posts in the Sejm and Senat. The AWS would have spokesmen in the Sejm and Senat and the UW would have one deputy in each chamber. Also, the representatives of the opposition – the SLD, the second main political party in the Parliament – had its representative appointed. This raised strong protests among radical AWS MPs as they wished to eliminate opposition from all managerial posts, despite this being against the parliamentary code of conduct and the tradition existing since 1993 of the democratic representation of all parties in the parliament boards (Mikołajczyk 2002: 304). In addition, AWS and UW MPs would become chairmen and deputy chairmen of parliamentary commissions only in proportion reflecting the general election results so other parties represented in Parliament would have their own chairmen of commissions. This meant that the AWS would have chairmen in 14 commissions, the UW in five, and the opposition in six (SLD, five and the PSL one). Moreover, the chairman of a commission should be from a party different from the minister supervised by this commission.

As mentioned earlier, in reference to the coalition agreement, Buzek's government paid special attention to personnel policy. Thus, it is not surprising that its first decisions were aimed at extensive replacement of cadres in central and regional administration, beginning with the replacement of deputy ministers of foreign affairs, defence, internal affairs and administration and the State Protection Office, but quickly spreading to all ministers and boards of state-owned companies and security forces (Roszkowski 2001: 448 and Dudek 2002: 455-6). As Dudek comments, change of personnel with an incoming government is natural behaviour, but the scale of these changes varies in different countries. In Poland, a tendency to extreme politicisation of appointments appeared which seems to mirror the socialist nomenklatura system, under which appointments require political approval.

During the electoral campaign of the AWS, Kaczyński referred to the coexistence within AWS political groupings of contradictory political aims – starting with conservative liberals and ending with radical trade unionists standing in election together for pragmatic reasons, suggesting that the main integrating force was “now it is f***** time for us to come to power”. This vulgar phrase quickly gained popularity in society, which was convinced of its truth (Mikołajczyk 2002:

3 After reform, AWS predominance increased even further. The UW failed all sixteen first deputy voivodes positions, half (eight) the second deputy voivode positions, but none of the voivode positions (Rydlewski 2000: 55).

305). Krzaklewski openly declared that “the cancerous Communist tissue” has to be cut out (*Rzeczpospolita* 27 Sept 1997). This meant that about 200 senior positions in administration were seen as a pool of spoils for the AWS. In consequence, long-term trade union activists took over the senior positions in state institutions. As Dudek comments, this was due to both the pressure of its echelons, but also a lack of its own well-qualified and trustworthy cadres. As an example of these bad appointments, Alot, became director of the pension scheme office, “The Office of Social Security”, and only after a media campaign was he finally dismissed. The last month of the AWS minority government showed the full scale of incompetence and corruption within the AWS. The minister of sport, Dębski, was killed in mafia-related business, and Wiczerzak, chairman of the State Insurance Office (PZU) *Życie* was arrested on corruption charges (Dudek 2002: 464–465 and 496). The only area where the SLD-PSL influence was preserved was the television board, where the PSL’s Miazek was replaced by Kwiatkowski, former adviser to Kwaśniewski.

Comparing the PSL-SD coalitions in the period 1993 – 1997 with the AWS-UW coalition which was not able to survive the whole term, the striking difference was the ability of the SLD-PSL to change its leaders when necessary to preserve the coalition as in case of Pawlak and Olesky. This was not possible in the AWS-UW case. Krzaklewski was not able to consolidate the AWS bloc, and during negotiations preceding the UW walking out of the coalition, was not able to decide to replace Prime Minister Buzek and negotiate the candidature of a new prime minister.

The introduction of a constructive vote of confidence, helped this government last the entire four-year parliamentary term (though for a year and a half as a minority government). However, this new regulation could not guarantee preservation of confidence in the minority government nor the AWS, which was falling apart as a result of not believing that it could counteract the rising social support for the SLD. The weakness of Buzek’s government shows the political affiliation of his ministers. In June 2001, before the expected September national election, there were three election committees in government, one of them the ROP which used to be a staunch critic of the government. Paradowska (*Polityka* 9 June 2001) mentions the serious negative consequences, the fact of the division of government into three different committees (despite the fact, that all of them had post-Solidarity affiliations) as ministers used their positions in their campaign. She underlines her opinion that there should be different styles of conducting politics; that is, if you choose a different political option you should be able to vacate ministerial positions.

After seven months of minority government, the UW preserved certain positions in administration; for example, Kuczyński, worked as an adviser of Buzek. Moreover, the prime minister did not exert pressure for dismissal of the

deputy ministers and in the ministries of education, finance, justice, labour and agriculture. In each, there was one UW deputy minister and the UW had twenty deputy voivodes (Waszkiewicz *Rzeczpospolita* 21 Jan. 2001). This relatively strong UW representation in minority government indicates that when “the necessity of the AWS to fight over the pools of spoils with the UW passed”, the qualification of UW cadres began to be better appreciated and the AWS modified its personnel policy.

One of the first decisions of Prime Minister Buzek was to withhold examination procedures and nomination of civil servants, despite the fact that out of 105,000 employees of the administration in 1997 only 100 of them passed the examination and received a civil servant nomination (Wróbel *Rzeczpospolita* 1 July 1999). On 18 December 1998, the new Civil Service Act replaced the 5 July 1996 Post-Communist Act, which the new coalition saw as highly politicised. Before the new Civil Service Act was introduced, there was serious discussion about which of two models of civil service should be introduced: the classical model of civil service based on the administrative civil service corps or more managerial assuming flexibility of personnel policy, which has advantages in the face of constantly changing needs of the market. The latter is similar to solutions adopted in New Zealand.

However, the constitution of 1997 used the phrase “civil service corps” which suggests the traditional approach to administration should be adopted. Moreover, Izdebski and Kulesza (1999: 218-9) mentions that in countries where a managerial approach to administration has been introduced it was after the time when the classical model was applied over a certain period of time. Thus, in Poland, such managerial models can be considered later after consolidation of civil service and democracy. In Poland, adaptation of the managerial approach after more than 50 years of lacking a civil service could lead to the politicisation of administration. Moreover, in Poland, ministerial positions are usually taken by people who are seen as specialists in certain sectors and not politicians; this blurs the border between what is political and administrative. According to Izdebski and Kulesza (1999: 218-9), the act adopted in December 1998 fulfils the requirements of building the classical model where political and administrative positions are clearly distinguishable. The civil service corps is made up of officials in the prime minister’s Chancellery in ministries, other central administration institutions and regional offices.

The Act assumes an administrative apprenticeship for the people who start work in administration. However, graduates of the National School of Public Administration are exempted (at that time about 350 graduates). The act established nine grades of civil servants. After nomination, the highest grade is awarded. Employees with two years’ apprenticeship, a master’s degree and knowledge of at least one foreign language can apply for nomination, and the nomination has to

be preceded by fulfilling certain examinations and procedures. Separate regulations are applied to around 2,500 senior (managerial) civil servants; which in the Act are defined as the secretary of the council of ministers, director generals of an office, directors of departments and their deputies in ministries and central offices, directors of departments and their deputies in regional offices. Appointment to these positions takes place as a result of competition procedure. They are made by the prime minister after the recommendation of the chief of Civil Service and after consultation with the relevant minister or director of the central office or voivode (Leoński 2000: 220).

After the introduction of the new 1998 Civil Service Act, the problem was what to do with individuals who passed the examination regulated by the 1996 Act as there were new examination requirements. It was decided that employees who had passed the examination in 1996 and received their nominations would be kept (115 civil servants) but would receive the lowest administrative grade (Rydlewki 2001: 36). If they wanted to be employed in senior positions they would have to stand in the competition (Wróbel *Rzeczpospolita* 26 March 1998). However, those who passed the examination but did not receive a nomination due to the change of government had to reapply according to the current criteria for nomination. (Wróbel *Rzeczpospolita* 1 July 1999). As Rydlewki (2001: 36) emphasised in the 1998 Act, in contrast to 1996 competition became the main method of appointing senior civil servants. However, the increase in nominations is not only limited by political bargaining related to changing government, but also to the limited number of personnel who fulfil the qualifications; for example, knowledge of a foreign language, and also the costs of reform: the cost of recruiting procedures, and rising salaries of those nominated (20 percent after nomination), which cause the option of limited evolutionary increase of those who are nominated civil servants is favoured by politicians.

Article 69, Point 2 of the Civil Service Act repeats the constitutional declaration of an apolitical civil service and introduces several obligations to guarantee the apolitical nature of the civil service. Its members cannot publicly declare their political attitudes, they cannot be party members or trade unionists, and finally, they cannot be local or regional government councillors. However, as Leoński (2000: 219) mentions, civil servants are selected by their supervisors who were themselves selected by political criteria. This makes it dubious or even impossible in reality to conduct tasks while preserving neutrality. The politicisation of decisions also indicates Pastwa as the Council of the Civil Service – the advisory body is highly politicised with eight members appointed by the prime minister while the next eight are representatives of political clubs in Parliament. The fact is that nomination procedures are conducted by the chairman of the civil service who, due to his five-year term, is relatively independent (Wróbel *Rzeczpospolita* 1 July 1999). In 1999, the position of political adviser of prime minister was enhanced,

and six topic groups were formed: social, economic, media, security, foreign politics and European integration (Rydlewski 2002: 84). The division between political and administrative units began to be more and more distinguishable. With the organisation of political units redeveloping at the same time, the structure began to be more flexible as the new bill on ministerial departments, which came into force in 1999, gave the prime minister the opportunity to move certain competencies between ministers.

3.9 Leszek Miller

The structure of the present coalition government is shaped by the “iron” personality of Leszek Miller, with some positive effects, especially compared with his predecessor, Buzek. First, his strong personality led to his being seen as the unquestioned candidate for prime minister. Second, his strong rule led to the quick creation of a government which is the smallest yet – the prime minister and just 15 ministers. In a period of economic hardship, this style of government formation was an important declaration of the prime minister’s efficiency. Miller should also be praised because his government was formed without writing an extensive coalition agreement defining in detail the “division of spoils”. The government is not riddled with internal personnel conflicts among coalition partners, and this is reflected in the popular belief that the government will last the four-year tenure (Subotić *Rzeczpospolita*, 4 – 5 May 2002). Moreover, Miller’s declaration that if a minister dares to conduct his own policy it will mean his dismissal is very convincing. He has also been successful in introducing discipline among coalition MPs when voting on government proposals

President Aleksander Kwaśniewski II term in office (22 Dec. 1995–present)		REGULAR ELECTION 23 Sept 2001					
		(9) Leszek MILLER (26 Oct. 2001 - present)					
		NAME OF PARTIES	No. of Ministers	Percent of Ministerial positions	No. of deputy prime minister	Percent of deputy prime ministers	Proportion of seats % in Sejm and Senat
1	The Democratic Left Alliance (SLD)	11	69 %	1	----	SLD-UP-46 %	SLD-UP- 75 %
2	The Labour Union (UP)	1	6 %	1	33,3 %		
3	The Polish Peasants' Party (PSL)	2	13 %	1	33,3 %	9,1 %	4 %
4	Non party member	2	13 %	----	33,3 %	-----	2 %
TOTAL		16	100%	3	100 %	56 %	81 %

Third, the formation of such a small government shows Miller’s ability to limit the demands of the regional echelons of his party, instead appointing ministers who are seen as mostly high-class professionals rather than members of the SLD leadership: Jerzy Hausner as Minister of Labour and Social Policy; Danuta Hübener as Deputy Minister responsible for European integration; and apolitical

professionals, especially Barbara Piwnik as Minister of Justice; and Prof. Michał Kleiber as Minister of Science. However, the necessity to form a coalition led to his plans to appoint only one deputy prime minister being withdrawn. Instead, three positions were created with the leaders of all three coalition parties being represented. For the SLD, it is Marek Belka, as Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister; for the PSL, Jarosław Kalinowski, as Deputy Prime Minister and Agriculture Minister; and for the UP, Marek Pol, as Deputy Prime Minister and Infrastructure Minister. However, the appointment of the leaders of the coalition parties caused the decision-making centre to be located within government.

The composition of this government shows the heavy domination of the SLD (69 percent) over the PSL's 13 percent and the UP's 6 percent, and reflects the election results. For example, during the second round of negotiations, the PSL did not have any demands (Mazur, *Wprost* 21 Oct 2001). Moreover, Kalinowski's plans to be Deputy Prime Minister without portfolio were rejected, and he also took for the Ministry of Agriculture, what meant responsibility for Polish negotiation with the EU over agriculture. In addition to two ministers, the PSL also has 10 secretaries of state and 11 deputy voivodes (even less than the UW in the previous coalition, which had deputy voivodes in each of the 16 regions) Bentkowski is the Chairman of State of the powerful agency for restructuring and modernisation of agriculture, and Pietrewicz is Chair of the Government Centre of Strategic Studies (Gajewski and Siennicki *Wprost* 1 Sept 2002).

The composition of this government with the small number of PSL ministries and rather limited influence in administration also shows how the position of the PSL changed after 1993 when, although it was the junior coalition partner, it took the position of prime minister, with Pawlak. This weakening of the PSL has had a positive influence on decreasing conflicts within the coalition. However, recent signals after nearly a year of this government are much less optimistic. In March 2002, Miller's promotion of "the cheaper and less bureaucratic state" led to the abolition of 13 central offices by moving their competencies into existing ministries. Paradowska (*Polityka* no. 27 April 2002) interpreted this as centralisation and politicisation of administration, since these central offices had been aimed at decreasing politicisation. Moreover, the administrative reorganisation did not produce a cut in the number or personnel but rather it was seen as an opportunity to make appointments based not on party membership but on belonging to certain business circles.

4. Coalition-Related Specialities in the Policy-Making Process

4.1 The string of post-Solidarity governments: 1989 – 1993

The change in policy-making by post-Solidarity governments and politico-administrative relationships during the period 1989 – 1993 must be interpreted as revolutionary, as the sudden and unexpected rise to power of Solidarity in 1989

meant that government policies only then began to be formulated. Dudek (2002: 99-100) writes that neither Prime Minister Mazowiecki nor anybody else in the camp had a vision of the political and administrative transition of the state, and there was no coherent vision about how to destroy the Socialist structures and policies of government. The exception was the appointment of Balcerowicz as Minister of Finance and Deputy Prime Minister, which led to the radical and comprehensive economic reform. In addition, in the Ministry of Finance, which he entered with a team of close collaborators, a dynamic vision of economic transition was prepared. In December, a whole set of parliamentary bills necessary for economic reforms was ready, and it gained overwhelming parliamentary approval despite its radicalism and high social costs.

The second feature of the revolutionary period of Mazowiecki's government was the lack of well-defined roles. Old roles became dysfunctional while new roles, procedures and institutions were only emerging. The clearest example was Wałęsa's role, and his policy influence. During the last years of socialism, Wałęsa controlled Solidarity's actions, and he was convinced that he could preserve influence over government policy despite being chairman of a trade union and not a member of government. Wałęsa tried to regain control over the Solidarity 1989 electoral campaign bloc by forcing his choice of appointees, and he tried to dismiss the editor of the Solidarity paper although he did not have the competency.

Wałęsa's aggressive attack on the government led to a split in the Solidarity movement and its gradual disintegration, shortening the tenure of Mazowiecki's government, while Wałęsa became president. As Chmaj (1998: 46) mentions, after elimination of the Communist party as the natural enemy of Solidarity, Wałęsa began to adopt the same approach to Mazowiecki's government by creating a climate of anxiety and fear. From the founding father of the new order, Wałęsa was becoming its demolisher. Lacking an established mediating mechanism, this role was played by the Catholic Church. For example, on 18 September, 27 political leaders met at a tea organised by primate Józef Glemp, aimed at convincing Wałęsa to postpone his plans to become president and to solve the conflict between Mazowiecki and Wałęsa.

Prime Minister Mazowiecki decided to be independent of Wałęsa as well as of the Solidarity Parliamentary Club. (Kuroń, 1997: 73). They backed the government in Parliament, but were isolated from policy-making. Kuroń also underlines the selection mechanism that resulted in the Prime Minister trusting ministers and giving them independence. Thus, in Mazowiecki's government, there were no serious policy conflicts, only personality conflicts or conflict over different styles of organisation. Moreover, in this period of exceptional change, the role of opposition was modified as they supported government policies. In Parliament, the formation of Mazowiecki's government was supported by 378 MPs, with four against and 41 abstentions. This vote shows that in this exceptional historic mo-

ment when the first non-Communist government was formed, it had much wider support in Parliament than seats held by the coalition (Chamj 1998: 39). The crucial approach to reforming administration and the “broad line” approach to personnel (described in 3.1 A) were also related to fear of nomenklatura opposition to the government. However, (Geremek and Żakowski 1990: 287-288) the nomenklatura accepted the new authority with the same subordination. Instead, the greatest challenge to efficient administration was the lack of ability to make decisions and be responsible for them. The other crucial problem for the new administration was the predominance of sectoral interests of various ministries and weak government coherence. Thus, local government reform introduced in 1990 was an attempt to partially modify the central administration structure by decentralisation.

Bielecki’s government tried to enhance its power by asking for the right to issue decrees to speed up privatisation, reform of budget law and improve supervision of the tax system. However, Parliament was afraid that the areas in which government wished to act were too wide and would lead to limiting their powers. The government proposal was supported by the majority of post-Solidarity MPs, but abstentions by some of them gave post-Communist and Party MPs, who voted against it, a sufficient majority to reject it. Dudek (2002: 182) argues that this decision had serious economic consequences. On the other hand, the government tried to limit the influence of Parliament in its policy-making. As Hebut (1998 117) mentions, the semi-democratic nature of Parliament led to an unwritten principle that the most important political reforms were initiated and conducted outside Parliament. The difficulty in introducing government projects was a problem for Bielecki and all other post-Solidarity governments; ambitious reform proposals, including administrative reform, were often rejected by undisciplined coalition MPs.

In contrast to the preceding government, where conflicts were mainly due to personal differences unrelated to party politics, in Bielecki’s government, the partisanship of ministers was crucial. The incoherent political composition of his government resulted from the president’s personal taste and his aim to satisfy post-Solidarity parties in the Sejm. However, after Wałęsa’s election it was obvious that the semi-democratic Parliament would not survive for four years. Thus, Bielecki’s government was merely temporary. (Podolak 1998: 69), and due to incompetence and little loyalty to the prime minister, some ministers should have been dismissed but political arguments meant they stayed. The most radical case was the Minister of Construction, who several times attacked government policy despite being a cabinet member. The term “political schizophrenia” was created to define this behaviour, and it quickly became an inherent feature of Polish policy-making. As Podolak (1998) argues, for the PC and ZChN, having ministers in Bielecki’s government was about acquiring positions in government at the cost

of supporting liberal policy. On the other hand, there was a larger group of loyal ministers, especially from the KLD, and limited personnel changes.

The fragmentation of Suchocka's government was an even more radical example of the difficulty of forming coherent government policy and gaining loyalty, even with ministers. The extremely fragmented coalition was formed initially by seven parties, later eight, and in addition it required support of the Solidarity Trade Union. To many, these post-Solidarity parties forming government were so distinctive in their policies that the coalition seemed artificial. In particular, there were intense conflicts between the UD-KLD and the ZChN. For example, the ZChN opposed the Association Agreement and Polish foreign policy aimed at integrating with the EU. A prominent coalition member, Prime Minister Goryszewski from the ZChN, declared his opposition to the Maastricht treaty. As a result, the chairmen of both parties had to organise a public meeting at which UD-ZChN cooperation was re-confirmed. Prime Minister Suchocka's actions to control her deputy were rather limited. Thus, it seems that in Poland the difficulty of the prime minister in introducing coherent government policy and the lack of discipline of ministers and coalition MPs were so serious that investigating activities of senior civil officials and their role in policy-making was seen as secondary.

Also, Olszewski's government shared a feature of the early post-Solidarity governments – the lack of political stability that affected policy-making. The minority status of the government meant that efforts to widen the coalition were a prerequisite for preserving the government. The general evaluation of this government is rather negative. In finance, government policy was more or less a continuation of policies of the previous government. The weakness of this government was a lack of clear vision on fundamental economic restructuring, education and insurance reforms. The exception was the 1992 reform of central administration. This situation resulted from ministerial paralysis. First, they waited for a government reshuffle because of the increased number of coalition parties and, when this proved impossible, they waited for the collapse of the government and the next election. This temporary government did not bother the prime minister. Second, despite their failures, the post-Solidarity governments did recognize the importance of comprehensive administrative reforms. The starting point of Suchocka's government reform was the judgement that Polish administration is close to the limit of enabling its control, and this is a serious threat at both central and local levels. Especially dangerous was the extreme centralisation of power and division of administration into several narrow branches which hinder coordination. The absence of personnel policy in administration was also emphasised (Rydlewski 2002: 84).

4.2 Post-Communist governments 1993 – 1997

In policy-making of post-Communist coalition governments, personnel policy and the division of spoils within the coalition were prominent, and these conflicts often dominated other issues. This was especially true for Pawlak's "restoration" government, as the prime minister publicly declared that society was tired of radical reform. Moreover, the reverse tendency – that is, a return to the former socialist *status quo* – was seen in appointments of former nomenklatura, and in the re-centralisation of administration. In the first two governments (Pawlak and Olesky) in addition to two coalition partners, the main actor participating in "the game" was the "Machiavellian" president Wałęsa, trying to create conflict between coalition partners. However, the first game was won by the coalition due to its skills and strong and integrated reaction to Wałęsa's demands.

Directly after appointing Pawlak as Prime Minister, the first conflict over personnel policy in the coalition took place as the Prime Minister wanted to force his will on the senior coalition partners by informing them after already making decisions. He presented the composition of government to President Wałęsa, which varied from what was agreed with the SLD, and then made himself unavailable for a few hours. Only after the intervention of Kwaśniewski, the leader of SLD who declared that if this was to be the case his party would not be a member of coalition, did the Prime Minister retreat, forcing coalition consultation procedures in personnel policy. Nevertheless, the Prime Minister still tried to force his decisions, most obviously in the dismissal of Deputy Prime Minister Borowski. As a result of the accusation of ineffectiveness in the privatisation of the Silesian Bank, Pawlak dismissed Deputy Minister of Finance, Kawalec. In this situation Wałęsa gained an advantage as he protested the new SLD candidate, Rosati. The SLD suggested that it wished to change the Small Constitution and in this way limit presidential competencies. In response the President threatened to dissolve Parliament. The conflict was solved by a meeting between Wałęsa and the SLD club in which the SLD accepted the presidential veto of Rosati's candidacy and withdrew its proposal to curtail presidential competencies. (Dudek 2002: 370-1).

The post-Communist coalition, despite not creating a successful reconciliation procedure and making the bargains public, had a significant majority in Parliament; also and despite the fact that their agendas varied significantly on several points, they were still closer than the UD and ZChN in the Suchocka government. Finally, they were able to unite when necessary; for example, to dismiss president Wałęsa's veto of the tax bill. Nevertheless, tensions gradually arose between the coalition partners (Rydlewski 2000: 29-45). Dissatisfaction with Pawlak's government raised the question of the endurance of the PSL-SLD coalition. However, other coalitions seemed impossible. The PSL, UP and UW were divided on agricultural policy, while a UP, UW and SLD coalition was not possible due to historical divisions. In this situation, the substantial majority in Parliament proved

crucial when the PSL-SLD coalition decided to change the prime minister from Pawlak to Oleksy.

In all three post-Communist coalition governments, ministers, their deputies and coalition MPs were significantly more disciplined and government policy more coherent than during post-Solidarity days despite differences in their economic, political and social agendas. Nevertheless, there were still occasional cases of individual ministerial policies in its radical form called “political schizophrenia”, as ministers opposed their own government. In Oleksy’s government, the labour minister behaved like this when he opposed the policies of the finance minister during the latter’s absence, forcing a more popular pension system through the Sejm. However, prime minister Oleksy, in contrast other post-Communist prime ministers saw himself as a coalition leader, rather than just a protector of his own party’s interests. Oleksy’s achievement after the power shift to the post-Communists was administrative reform. The primary incentive for central government reform was the diagnosis of Deputy prime minister and Finance Minister Kołodko, who stated that economic development required efficient central administration with limited sectoral divisions. The vision of reform was moderate as the prime minister feared this could destabilise the central administration. He also met strong resistance from numerous ministers who saw the reform as limiting their interests. Finally, the PSL and presidential ministers saw the reform as an opportunity for changes in ministerial personnel (Rydlewski 2002: 89).

After Oleksy’s departure the post-Communist coalition was in crisis but the formation of Cimoszewicz’s government showed its ability to solve its crucial problems. In this situation, the SLD considered three scenarios of government change: first, formation of a new government coalition; second, non-constructive voting for Oleksy’s government and an early election; and third, a government reshuffle including the prime minister. The most convincing was the third option. However, the support of the PSL was crucial, and it used the Oleksy affair to regain the prime minister job for Pawlak. The PSL presented the SLD with three candidates for prime minister: Borowski and Cimoszewicz both representing the SLD (although Cimoszewicz was not officially a party member) and Zych, the PSL spokesman of the Sejm. However, Zych declined to run and Borowski, was not acceptable to the PSL. On 1 February 1996 Kwaśniewski appointed Cimoszewicz prime minister.

Following the Oleksy affair, Cimoszewicz was an independent politician who gained respect as a minister of justice fighting corruption. Although closely tied to SLD, he, as a non-party member was never able to gain his own political or parliamentary backing. In Cimoszewicz’s government (Rydlewski, 2000), there were two main sources of conflict: personnel and differences of agenda. In personnel policy, the most evident case was the dismissal of Buchacz for incom-

petence in supervising state agencies. The prime minister accused the minister of acting against the interest of the state budget and dismissed him without informing his coalition partner as required by the coalition agreement. In the second area of difference, the strongest were: integration with the EU, protection of Polish agriculture in the free market economy and Catholicism.

4.3 Jerzy Buzek

Buzek's government, like previous post-Solidarity governments, found forming coherent policy difficult. Despite four years of post-Communist rule, the AWS never became an integrated party, and strong centrifugal forces persisted. Thus, forming a coalition government was a great challenge to the AWS, with serious consequences for policy-making. As in previous governments, there was limited discipline and support for government policy even among ministers. The Coalition Agreement of 11 Nov. 1997 was an attempt to overcome the previous post-Solidarity government's difficulty in making coherent policy with clear definitions of general issues for the new government and detailed procedures of policy-making and personnel appointment. Despite that, serious conflicts over the government agenda existed from the start, especially in relation to the health service, agriculture and personnel policy (the number of deputy prime ministers, division of portfolios and appointment of voivodes and deputies). The fortunes of this government also show that lack of trust among coalition partners can not be replaced by detailed written declarations. Thus, the greatest achievement of this fragmented coalition was its ability to introduce four ambitious domestic reforms: regional administration, education system, health system and pensions schemes.

The European Commission evaluation is particularly useful for estimating progress in creating a civil service and the relationship with politicians. The report emphasized the slow pace of civil service formation – qualification procedures take place only once a year and out of 240 administrative employees who volunteered to undergo the examination procedures, only 42 passed. This data led to the conclusion that creating a civil service would be a long process and civil servants would remain vulnerable to political pressure. Finally, the report emphasised the need to guarantee a substantial rise in public sector salaries as an important incentive for developing civil service cadres (*Polska 2000, Okresowy Raport...*). The reference to EU standards was also quoted to show the importance of external factors in developing the Polish civil service. In contrast to other administrative reforms with strong internal motivations, it seems that politicians had difficulty relinquishing their “unlimited” control. For, example, Prime Minister Buzek broke the Civil Service Act by appointing two director generals in ministries instead of organising competition. Rydlewski (2002: 101-102) also shows that the distinction between political and administrative positions has not been appreciated and that this causes decreased performance in government.

4.4 Leszek Miller

After a short period of this government's existence it is difficult to evaluate it. However, it is almost certain that as in the case of Buzek's government, due to constructive no-confidence, the government will last through four years' tenure, and despite being a coalition government of Prime Minister Miller's personality, it will be able to maintain coherent policy. At the same time, the Prime Minister's political and economic agenda is sometimes seen as controversial, reflecting his hard-core Communist past. After less than a year of the coalition, striking policy cohesion was visible. Especially important is the lack of public bargaining over political appointments – whether minister or voivode should be from the SLD or PSL. There has been conflict over agricultural negotiations with the EU, as the Polish Peasant Party sees itself protecting peasants' interests and has a more conservative approach than the SLD. However, the SLD has a few liberal ministers and instead emphasises financial reform to reduce the deficit and curtail state intervention. Despite that, the current government is accused of a lack of dynamism as well as an absence of reform and a retreat to centralisation (Paradowska, *Polityka* no. 27 April 2002).

Similar to Buzek's government, there has been some difficulty accepting limitations on politics and recognising that administration should be stabilized. For example, the Minister of Treasury chose himself as Director General of his ministry, although the Civil Service Act makes this an administrative position requiring competitive hiring. The other way that the successive governments of Buzek and Miller have ignored the Civil Service Acts of 1996 and 1998 has been to employ partisans in managerial positions for which competitive procedures were required. Another tactic was used by the Minister of Internal Affairs and Public Administration who purged the regional administration, defined as administrative, with the excuse of introducing standard regional administration formats (Henzler *Polityka* 19 January 2002).

Pastwa, chairman of the civil service, argues that it has been difficult for politicians (both post-Solidarity and post-Communists) to accept the Civil Service Act in 1996 as they had had a free hand in personnel policy. In the 90s, the Communist mono-nomenklatura was replaced by attempts to form a nomenklatura by each party. Nevertheless, according to him, appreciation of the civil service should be gradually raised as the qualifications, training and administrative experience of incumbents guarantee more efficient government. Moreover, he mentions the first achievements in creating a civil service as being that among 1700 managerial positions in administration, 118 (6 January 2002) were appointed by competition and several more competitions have taken place. However Pastwa emphasises that at the time the Act was introduced, there were 1200 people appointed according to criteria in the Act and those people do not have to compete (*Tygodnik powszechny*, 6 January 2002).

5. Conclusion

The investigation of successive Polish governments in this paper documents coalition-making in Poland as a political learning process in which gradually more stable coalitions have been formed (longer terms in office, gradual increases in the number of seats of successive governments in Parliament and political consolidation reflected in decreasing numbers of coalition partners). At the same time, but with a certain delay, central government reform has taken place and the organisation and procedures of central government have improved to better adapt to their new democratic role. Central government reform has been assisted by the definition of political and administrative positions in both central and regional administration, and a political cabinet of the prime minister and ministers (and voivodes) were established. In 1999, for example, the prime minister's advisers were divided into six groups. The formation of a professional and apolitical administrative sphere has lagged behind and, as a result, there is still difficulty in resisting political influence. On 29 July 2002, among 100,000 administrative employees, there were 857 nominated civil servants and 68 graduates of the National School of Public Administration who applied for nomination, in addition to 418 administrative employees who applied to enter the examination procedures required for nomination (*Gazeta Prawna* 29 of July 2002). This shows that the civil service is still weak and vulnerable to attack by politicians wishing to extend their control of public personnel. Clear and high standards are demanded in the Civil Service Acts and competition procedures for senior administrative positions should guarantee a high-quality civil service. Still, only after the rise in the number of nominated civil servants will its stability be guaranteed. Maybe, in the long run, after strengthening of administration, it will be possible to appreciate the role of a professional and apolitical civil service and even the spoils system, which, in Poland, has been aggressive and extensive.

Coalition Governments and Policy Processes: The Case of Romania

Casandra Bischoff¹ and Stefan Deaconu²

“Genuine politics – the only politics I am willing to devote myself to – is simply a matter of serving those around us: serving the community and serving those who will come after us. Its deepest roots are moral because it is a responsibility expressed through action, to and for the whole.”

Václav Havel, *“The Power of the Powerless”*

Introduction

Post-Communist countries have had difficulty translating Havel’s vision into practice, as his unitary concept points to a “dual” mission for government (Blondel, 1999): to manage the affairs of the State and make political decisions that represent the interests of the population. A balanced relationship between the first, which mirrors the administrative side, and the latter, which falls squarely within the political domain, is not a given in post-Communist countries.

This paper examines the politico-administrative relationship as reflected by policy-making processes in coalition governments in post-Communist Romania. Coalitions and coalition governments must be considered, especially in proportional representation systems such as Romania, because intra-coalition relations have a critical impact on the timing and substance of reforms. This is what the paper will try to explore – the way elected politicians and subordinated bureaucracies in coalition governments used policy processes between 1995 and 2000. One of the questions formulated here is to what extent coalition governments in Romania have substituted politics for policy processes and what impact those have had on reforms.

1. The road from single-party to coalition governments

After 1989, Romania had a two-fold agenda. On one hand, it established its first democratic regime – a semi-presidential republic. On the other hand, it started to dismantle the Communist system which was not easy. Unlike neighboring countries, Romania had no structured opposition to offer alternatives to the monopoly of the Communist regime that was pervasively rooted in institutions, behaviors and mentalities. After the Ceausescu’s fled on the 21st of December 1989, Romania experienced a power vacuum with no political party or civil society organization in place to start building a new system. The few Communist leaders who tried to

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seize power were met with hostility by revolutionaries. An impromptu National Salvation Front (FSN) formed of protesters as well as former Communist activists³ established itself with legislative, executive and judicial power. The first decisions the FSN made were to outlaw the Communist Party (PCR), to assume a multi-party system and to set up an emergency plan to run the country.

Decree No. 8⁴ which governed the development of political parties provided that only 251 members were needed for registering a new party. This legal act – and an inflated trust of the population in the virtues of democracy – led to the registration of over 100 parties in Romania in only one month⁵. The first organization of civil society to claim its rights through political actions was the Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania (UDMR). It was not a party by statute, but rather a Union that included all political platforms reflecting the interests of the Hungarian community. Its declared purpose was to gain parliamentary representation. The first political party registered – on January 8, 1990 – was the inter-war Christian Democratic National Peasant Party (PNTCD). A few days later, the old National Liberal and Social Democrat Parties came back to life. This was a unique development of the emerging parties that did not echo neighboring countries. It reflected the need of Romanians to reconcile themselves to a gloomy post-war period when the Communist Party (PCR) confiscated the assets of the older parties and threw their leaders in jail.

The leaders of the former inter-war parties had a hard time mobilizing social support. On one hand, the FSN was already trusted by a large segment of the population to the detriment of emerging parties. The members of the Front appeared knowledgeable in establishing coordination mechanisms in the country for delivery of services and maintenance of security. They also knew how to communicate with the population through the media and an incipient network of FSN offices in the territory. On the other hand, the FSN treated emerging leaders as rivals⁶, refusing their offer to start the difficult work of rebuilding the system. The FSN was competing for power (*normal politics* in Dahrendorf terms) in a historical moment that asked for all parties to sit together and write the rules of the political game (*constitutional politics*).

3 Former Communist activists that had been demoted by Ceausescu were less known to the public and more readily accepted by the protesters. An example is Ion Iliescu, who later became the first president of the country.

4 Law Decree no 8 of the National Salvation Front, December 31, 1989.

5 Pavel, D., Huiu I., 2003.

6 “I remember, I was at the Television those days, and a well-dressed man appeared (...) and when somebody said that he was Coposu, a negative reaction came right on the spot. “He should leave”, Iliescu and Birladeanu almost shouted simultaneous”. Interview with Petre Roman, Prime Minister in 1990. In Arachelian, V., (1996) *Fata in fata cu Petre Roman. 9 convorbiri* (Face to Face with Petre Roman. Nine talks).

The coexistence of new democratic institutions with the old bureaucratic apparatus, of open-mindedness with adversarial behavior and mass violence was the paradox of Romania's political and social life in 1990s. The democratic principles preserved in the first decrees of 1990 were significantly attenuated by FSN's authoritarian behaviors. Converted ad-hoc to democratic principles, former Communist leaders soon acquired good positions in FSN and became important public figures, with a preference for operating behind the scenes. Further evidence showing that secret police were actively serving the new authorities⁷ startled the public and resulted in the birth of a political cleavage between FSN and a growing opposition.

In view of elections set for May 1990, the FSN strengthened its control over the state budget and the media. National television broadcasts routinely instigated violence, slandered opposition leaders and covered opposition events in a tardy and incomplete manner. Opposition parties did not receive airtime to present their political programs nor did they have the funds to support an adequate campaign, so they started their political life with a significant handicap. At the time of the elections, the FSN had succeeded in creating a deformed, negative image for its competitors.

When the Front announced its participation in the first free elections set for May 1990, civic organizations and opposition parties went into the streets: "About what kind of free and equitable elections for all political parties are we talking about when FSN retains in a totalitarian manner the control over all the mechanisms of power? The Front uses state funds for campaigning, has control over national television and radio, most of the dailies. People are misinformed in a calculated manner"⁸. As a reaction, the authorities organized counter-demonstrations, mobilizing workers from factories around Bucharest and also from several mines. This was a strategy used extensively by the former government to ensure large participation in pro-Communist manifestations. The brutal rush of the miners (called *mineriade*) who devastated the headquarters of the opposition parties and brutalized their leaders took Romanians and the international observers by surprise.

As a result of opposition and international reactions, the FSN eventually agreed that the provisional government needed reshuffling before the elections and a Parliament needed to be established. February 9th was the birthdate of the Provisional Council for National Unity (CPUN), a Parliament with 50 percent of the seats allocated to FSN and 50 percent to the other parties (three members for each registered party). In order to decrease the influence of the historical parties represented in the Parliament, FSN offered 12 seats to registered minority groups. This innovation – useful at the time because minority groups voted traditionally

7 For more information see Pavel, D., p. 31.

8 Adevarul Daily, January 26, 1990.

with the government party – was later secured by the Constitution⁹ and acclaimed by the international community, observing this as an initial demonstration of democratic practices in Romania.

1990 elections¹⁰

The electorate had to choose from 71 party lists with candidates. Iliescu won an overwhelming 85 percent of the votes, while FSN captured a majority in the Parliament with 67 percent. The performance of the historical parties was poor: the National Liberal Party attracted only 6.7 percent, the Christian Democratic National Peasant Party 2.5 percent, and the Social Democratic Party (PSDR) only 0.5 percent. The Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania had a much better start in its political life with 7.2 percent of the seats, which became a stable UDMR result in subsequent elections.

The party system resulting from the first election could be characterized as an extreme pluralist system with a dominant party. The first electoral law did not provide for a threshold in order to balance the competition for the legislature, but the electoral demand did reduce the number of parties represented in the Parliament. The political spectrum had an unbalanced Communist/anti-Communist cleavage, overlapping significantly with the urban/rural cleavage.

Anti-Communism played an important role after 1990, and it successfully mobilized support and votes until 1996. Understanding the pervasiveness of the theme requires understanding the brutality of the Communist system and, consequently, the severe reaction of the population to that system. Romania was the only country where the Communist party was banned, while in Hungary and Poland the transition from the Communist regime to democracy happened through a negotiated transfer of power from Communist parties to the opposition. Romania discarded any role for the Communist party, mirroring the intolerance that PCR had towards other parties¹¹. Also, Romania did not have a public reconciliation with Communism, hence missing the chance to reconcile with the past. With this heritage and in the context of a new elite that embraced former

9 Under the Constitution, additional seats are allotted in the Chamber of Deputies – one of the Parliament chambers – for associations representing national minorities, regardless of passing or not the threshold for the normal distribution of mandates. These seats are in addition to the number of seats allocated to each constituency based on population figures.

10 See for a detailed chronology of Romanian elections the Annex at the end of the paper.

11 There are analysts who say that allowing PCR to exist after 1990 would have helped Romanian parties mature faster (see Pavel *idem*, p.74). However, one should not forget the specific context of late 1989, when the Communist regime had been brutal in containing the open demonstrations against the regime. During the so-called revolution in December 1989, around 3,000 people are said to have died. In these conditions it is hard to believe that a more open-minded president would have had popular support in allowing the Communist party play an active role in Romania.

Communist leaders, the anti-Communist message was a natural reflection of a growing electoral demand.

Civic organizations continued to protest against the Communist government after its official approval by Parliament and started a marathon demonstration in University Plaza, in June 1990. A third landing of the miners in Bucharest, again called by the president to secure “public order”, left behind three dead and dozens of injured. This was one factor leading to a soon-to-form alliance of opposition parties and civic organizations. Trying to contain the increasing pressure of the opposition and international community outraged by the last *mineriada*, Iliescu called all political parties for consultations and invited them to participate in the formation of a national unity government. The state coup attempt in Moscow in August 1991 temporarily put on hold the negotiations among parties. Annoyed with the bold statement of the prime minister against the state coup, the president again used the miners to force the resignation of the prime minister who was too reformist for FSN’s plans.

PNTCD, the main opposition party, refused to participate in the national unity government proposed by Iliescu. Their reason was strategic: new elections were scheduled for the following year and such a move would have confused the electorate¹². However, not all opposition parties agreed with PNTCD, so a first unity government was formed. Interestingly, more than one-fifth of the ministers including Prime Minister Theodor Stolojan did not belong to any party. This was not a surprise as the government had a short life and a narrow scope: to organize a referendum for the adoption of the new Romanian constitution in December 1991, and take care of the logistics for the local and general elections in 1992.

PNTCD continued its focus on strengthening their political position with the electorate by exploring the possibility of creating an electoral alliance. With the help of a highly visible civic organization (the Civic Alliance, AC), six opposition parties signed the protocol of the first electoral alliance in November 1991, the Democratic Convention (CD). With eight more joining the alliance in early 1992, CD represented a huge opportunity for a government alternation in the upcoming elections.

1992 elections

The local elections of 1992 brought important changes in the political party system. FSN won the elections, but this time with only half its former voters (33.6 percent), while the new opposition alliance won twice as many votes compared with the preceding year’s elections (24.3 percent). The Democratic Convention was becoming the second main political force, with strong support in large cities

¹² Not all the members of the party agreed with this decision, arguing that such an exercise would have been a good occasion to develop their governing abilities.

while FSN continued to dominate rural areas and smaller cities. It is important to mention the local elections because they triggered a few important changes in politics. The massive loss of votes crystallized otherwise silent factions inside FSN. From the internal fracture, two parties emerged revolving around the main figures of the party: the old FSN, run by former Prime Minister Petre Roman, and a newly born Democratic National Salvation Front (FDSN), formally run by Oliviu Gherman, but controlled by the President.

The division of FSN brought about a split in the Democratic Convention. The Liberal party withdrew from the electoral alliance, reasoning that with a split in FSN, there was no need for a coalition of the opposition parties: "Only the desire of small parties to become big parties justifies such a coalition"¹³. Another reason PNL invoked for leaving the alliance was the presence of the Hungarian Union among the partners. As was to be proven later, PNL intended to play the nationalist card in the electoral campaign since this strategy had previously attracted votes in earlier elections.

The members of PNL who did not agree with the withdrawal from the Convention either resigned or were excluded from the party. The ones who resigned put the basis of a new party called PNL – the Democratic Convention (PNL-CD) and continued their political life inside the alliance. Eventually, even if the Convention lost votes to the departure of PNL, it did not lose the liberal platform. In an attempt to compensate for the potential loss of votes, the Convention continued to search for more partners and soon attracted two more parties and three civic organizations. The new electoral protocol had procedures to designate a unique candidate for the presidency, as well as criteria for distributing candidates on electoral lists. To the discontent of smaller parties, the criteria included the number of party members, of organizations in the territory, of votes obtained in the local elections, and of mayors or local councilors obtained at the local elections¹⁴.

The parliamentary and presidential elections in 1992 were more democratic than the 1990 elections. Civic organizations did report more than 1000 incidents all over the country, including the cancellation of over 6 percent of the votes¹⁵. This outraged the opposition parties who had expected to win the parliamentary elections in the light of the promising results at earlier local elections. Iliescu won the presidency again with 16 percent more votes than the candidate of the opposition, Emil Constantinescu. The Convention obtained 20 percent of the seats in the Parliament, while FDSN had 27 percent of the seats. The surprise of the

13 PNL's leader statement, *Curierul National*, April 12, 1992.

14 Cf. Pavel, *idem*.

15 This worsened Romania's position internationally. The U.S. government refused to grant Romania the clause for the most favored nation, withdrawn during Ceausescu's regime.

elections was the National Liberal Party (PNL) who was unable to collect enough votes to enter Parliament.

After the 1992 election, the party system changed slightly. The proportional system was still in place and it was still a pluralist system, but this time with no dominant party. On the contrary, the spectrum could be better described as a bipolar system. A new electoral law, adopted just before the elections¹⁶ established the threshold for individual parties at three percent. Electoral coalitions were required to gather one percent extra for each member of the coalition, up to eight percent.

Viewed with the necessary amount of simplification, three ideological “orientations” and the corresponding party and political arrangements could be placed on the “left”: traditional Communists (PSM – Socialist Party of Labor); national populists (PUNR – Romanian National Unity Party; PRM – Greater Romania Party; PDAR – Democratic Agrarian Party of Romania, the nationalist wing of UDMR); and socialist populists (FDSN, later named PDSR – Romanian Social Democratic Party). The Democratic Party (PD) represented the left centre and PAC – Civic Alliance Party, PNL as well as the liberal wing of UDMR designated the right-centre parties. The right was represented by Christian Democrats (PNTCD), AC – Civic Alliance and other right wing anti-Communist groups within CDR, such as the movement of former political prisoners and monarchist groupings. The Movement for Romania – MPR, the Party of National Right – PDN and other chauvinist groups and movements were considered extreme right radical nationalists and religious fundamentalists¹⁷.

Despite the election results and threshold set by the new electoral law the number of parties continued to grow, fragmenting even more the political spectrum. Only eight years later, an Emergency Ordinance raised the electoral threshold to five percent for political parties, independent candidates and associations, while a gradual scale was adopted for political coalitions and alliances, with a threshold of eight percent for groupings with two members, nine percent for those with three members, and ten percent for those with four or more members. This legal change consolidated the political spectrum and inhibited the tendency of parties to form alliances in order to bypass the electoral threshold.

The movements inside FSN resumed after the parliamentary elections. Two of the FSN parliamentarians decided to migrate to the Socialist Party of Labor (PSM) and therefore created the PSM parliamentary group even if the

16 Lege nr. 68/1992 din 15/07/1992, Publicat in Monitorul Oficial, Partea I nr. 164 din 16/07/1992 pentru alegerea Camerei Deputatilor si a Senatului (Law 68/1992 of 15/07/1992 for election of the Chamber of Deputies and Senate).

17 For more on the differentiation of Romanian parties according to their ideological orientation see Tismaneanu, V. (1997): *Romanian Exceptionalism? Democracy, ethnocracy, and uncertain pluralism in “post-Ceausescu” Romania*, in: Dawisha, K., Parrot, B. (eds.): *Politics, Power and Struggle for Democracy in South-East Europe*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 403-451.

party did not hold seats in the legislature. It was a strategy for PSM and later adopted by the large majority of parties to acquire more leverage by recruiting politicians from other parties holding seats in the Parliament.

FDSN did not hold the majority in the Parliament so the logical strategy was to create a legislative coalition¹⁸. In the media, this coalition was called the “red quadrilateral”, as FDSN had attracted to his support the socialist as well as radical right parties: Greater Romania Party (PRM), Romanian National Unity Party (PUNR), Socialist party of Labor (PSM). Later the Democratic Agrarian Party (PDAR), another satellite of FSN, entered the “red pentagonal”.

From day one in the new Parliament, CDR parties began scrutinizing the activities of the government coalition. First, they contested the legitimacy of PRM parliamentarians who should not have been allowed to hold public functions given their Communist past. Their second fight was over the politicization of the administrative body by the new government, which divided public positions among party clients and gave party people good public positions. The main instrument of the opposition was the vote of no confidence against the executive in Parliament. The years 1992 – 1996 saw the most motions (15) submitted. None of them was successful, though the government party had a legislative coalition that – with no other common interest – became a real team when voting for survival. Even if some analysts criticized this strategy, arguing that the process slowed much needed reforms, others say that it was a good strategy for institutionalizing much-needed accountability mechanisms in order to stimulate executive performance.

The experience of opposition crystallized symptoms of organizational failures that later led to the dissembling of CDR. The opposition parliamentarian groups did not coordinate with each other before voting. Moreover, PNTCD, the largest party in the coalition, would usually drive the policy positions or nature of the motions. Oftentimes, the members of the coalition voted differently confusing their constituencies. Only at the pressure of one of the partners (the Civic Alliance), a civic organization of the Convention, were more important policy issues discussed in the meetings of the Executive Committee of the Convention. Apart from intense activity in the Parliament, CDR was concentrating on strengthening its position for the upcoming elections, scheduled for 1996. One of the most heated debates was over the CDR candidature for the presidency. A unique candidate was to be nominated and supported in elections by all 14 members of the alliance.

At the same time, besides trying to attract other important parties like FSN in the eventuality of building a legislative coalition, the leadership of the Convention needed to invest resources in managing existing tensions inside the alliance.

18 For more on legislative and executive coalitions see Laver, Schofield, 1992. The goal of forming an executive coalition includes sharing posts and building the Cabinet, while the purpose of the legislative coalition is to support in the Parliament the initiatives of the executive.

One problematic partner within CDR was the union of the Hungarian minority (UDMR). The relations with UDMR had always been complicated because of the conflict between the open-mindedness of CDR leaders, who wanted to secure their partnership with UDMR, and a country-wide electoral attraction for the nationalist discourse. CDR had to choose between refusing the seven percent disciplined electorate of UDMR and attracting the potential nationalist electorate that the alliance had not targeted before.

Although the Convention lost one of its main partners (PNL) because of UDMR, CDR did not address this issue until one year later, when one of the more radical leaders of UDMR¹⁹ made explosive declarations in Washington DC about the treatment of minority groups in Romania. The honorary president of UDMR declared that Romania was going through an ethnic cleansing process, similar to the one in Bosnia. Soon after this scandal, another one made the front page of the news. The general secretary of the Council of Europe was visiting Romania in order to evaluate its application to join the Council of Europe. Marko Bela, the president of UDMR, handed her a memorandum that highlighted the flaws in minority protection in Romania. The alliance interpreted the move as designed to obstruct Romania's accession process, despite Marko Bela's efforts to prove that each of the claims had been an objective comparison of the realities in Romania and the accession criteria of the Council. Later, isolated inside the alliance, UDMR decided to withdraw from the Convention in 1995. After the departure of UDMR, the alliance strengthened its position because it attracted the votes of the electorate estranged by the UDMR.

The heterogeneous CDR was cemented by two contextual factors before the elections. On one hand it was the outer pressure of the need to create a counterweight to PDSR that to many symbolized a comeback of a slightly modernized Communist party. On the other hand, it was the combined strength of PNTCD and the Civic Alliance. The rise of PNTCD and its dominant position in the Convention were easier to attain given the diffuse character of liberal doctrine, as the repeated splits and mergers had prevented the formation of a stable political pole. In addition, the other parties and movements of CDR spread the action and electoral appeal of the alliance and gave it a catch-all character which formed a distinct group of voters, some of them not linked with any of the particular parties, but who were attracted by the overall image and idea of CDR.

An agreement between CDR and FSN had been approached starting in 1993. However, as PD was born from CDR's traditional enemy FDSN, the more conservative members of PNTCD were resistant to a partnership with the democrats. The passing away of Coposu, the head of PNTCD, gave a different perspective to the upcoming elections. Realizing the fragility of the Convention without

19 Laszlo Tokes, a legendary figure in Romania. He was one of the first people to protest openly against Ceausescu's regime in Timisoara, in 1989.

Coposu, its leaders became more open to not only PD, but also UDMR, in an electoral pact. The Convention finally signed an electoral agreement with FSN (PD) and UDMR. This set the basis of the future coalition agreement.

1996 elections

The local and general elections brought the victory of the united opposition. CDR candidates won the major cities and the presidency of county councils, while PDSR still held a strong position in the rural areas. CDR obtained 30 percent of the seats in the Parliament, while PDSR acquired only 22 percent and USD 13 percent. Emil Constantinescu, the main candidate of CDR, won the presidency with 32 percent of the votes.

Following the 1996 elections, the number of parties in Parliament was dramatically reduced (6/6 in the Chamber of Deputies/Senate, compared with 7/8 in 1992 and 16/7 in 1990). The bipolar system strengthened around the two major poles, PDSR and CDR. Electoral law preserved the same three percent threshold, despite efforts of the opposition to change it through legislative action. FDSN (PDSR) had no interest, however, in changing it, because the law ensured access of smaller leftist parties to the Parliament, increasing the chances of PDSR to form legislative coalitions in the case of a relative majority.

As a result of the elections the seat distribution in the Parliament for CDR was the following:

Table
1996 distribution of seats in the Parliament for CDR members

	PNTCD	PNL	PNL-CD	PER	PAR	FER
Chamber of Deputies	83	25	5	2	6	1
Senate	27	17	4	3	1	1
Total mandates	110	42	9	5	7	2

The victory of CDR was a historical moment that the international community considered a return to the path towards a consolidated democracy. The new government also had to deal with huge expectations of an impoverished population which, given the complications in managing the coalition as well as the inexperience in managing the state, led to its failure, later sanctioned at the elections of 2000. CDR could not attract enough votes to enter Parliament and has never since succeeded in recovering and resuming its political life at the intensity of the 1996 – 2000 period.

2000 elections

The 2000 elections brought back PDSR (37 percent seats in the Parliament) and its president, Iliescu (36 percent of the votes for presidency). The left-wing mi-

minority government succeeded in avoiding the intra-governmental trouble that bedeviled the centre-right coalition of 1996 – 2000. Despite differences with the left-wingers, three centrist parties backed Nastase's candidacy on the condition his government would proceed with economic and democratic reforms needed for joining the European Union and NATO. Nonetheless, PNL, PD and UDMR had an extra reason to back the new leftist cabinet, namely to curb the influence of the Greater Romania Party, second party in the Parliament with 21 percent of votes after the elections. The party system turned into a moderate pluralist system and, with the disappearance of CDR, the bipolar tendencies faded into a multi-polar system.

2. Government coalitions

Romania had five coalition cabinets between 1990 and 2000, out of which the first two were somewhat atypical. Only the formation of the 1996 government required negotiations after polling was completed.

Table
Romanian coalition governments 1990 – 2004

Majority in parliament	Cabinet	Cabinet calendar	Months
FSN	Theodor Stolojan	Oct. 1991 - Nov. 1992	11
FDSN (former FSN)	Nicolae Văcăroiu	Aug. 1994 - Sept. 1996	25
CDR	Victor Ciorbea	Dec. 1996 - April 1998	16
	Radu Vasile	April 1998 - Dec. 1999	20
	Mugur Isărescu	Dec. 1999 - Dec. 2000	12

The cabinet run by Stolojan was designed from start as a transitory cabinet, whose main goal was to organize the referendum for the new Constitution and the local and general elections. As mentioned above, a fifth of the ministers were not enrolled politically, as the party preferred to keep the more important politicians far from potential ministerial failures, in preparation for the next elections.

The second coalition government was initially a minority government that later became a coalition with a dominant party. Despite the 34 percent of the votes obtained in the elections, FDNS (later PDSR) preferred to initially form a minority government, given the lack of unity among the opposition groups. CDR still saw an enemy in FSN, while the Romanian National Unity Party (PUNR) was an open adversary of CDR. Headed by Vacaroiu, the cabinet remained in power for its entire mandate and attracted the only available parties: PRM, PUNR and PSM. Given that these were the leftist, nationalist and extremist parties of the country, the media called the partnership the "red quadrilateral". When CDR started to negotiate an electoral agreement with FSN, PDSR decided it was time to reward some of its partners in the Parliament and, in 1994, transferred some

ministerial and deputy ministerial positions to its junior partners. After PDAR joined the coalition the “red quadrilateral” became the “red pentagonal”, a coalition with a dominant party. The legislative accommodation and later transfer of executive power onto the junior partners were not sufficient incentives for coalitional behaviors. In 1995, PRM withdrew from the coalition, apparently under the pressure of President Iliescu who had become annoyed at the PRM leader’s repeated slanders in the media. Also, the relationship between PUNR and PDSR lasted until early 1996, when Romania signed a cooperative treaty with Hungary to the discontent of the nationalistic PUNR.

The coalition government of 1996 – 2000

Coalition formation

Holding the largest number of seats in the Parliament, CDR became the *formateur party* (Laver and Schofield, 1990) – the party responsible for forming the government. On December 6, 1996, the Democratic Convention signed an Executive and Parliamentary Solidarity Agreement (EPSA) with UDMR and USD, establishing a coalition of coalitions.

The Agreement formalized the relationships within a complex coalition with diverse platforms. The closest party to CDR from an ideological perspective was UDMR, a meta-organization that included liberal, Christian-democrat, reformist and social-democrat platforms brought together by the ethnic factor. Much like the Democratic Convention, it hosted political parties as well as civic organizations²⁰. USD also functioned as an electoral and political coalition formed of two social parties whose main objective was to create a pole of social democracy by affiliating to the International Socialist. As a result, the coalition of the three coalitions fairly well covered most of the political doctrines and, for that reason, the preferences of a very large spectrum of the electorate.

The Agreement set the basis for the establishment of legislative and executive coalition: “The parliamentarians of the CDR, USD and UDMR groups will support together the actions of the executive. To this end, the leaders of the parliamentary groups will ensure coordination of their activities in order to accelerate the legislative process”²¹. Acknowledging the collaboration between the three partner coalitions, the accord presented the “short-term socio-economic program” and the longer-term “program for macro-economic stabilization and development of Romania 2000” that constituted the government program. Others even say that each coalition had taken ownership over the sections where they

20 Including the Hungarian Union in the government coalition was a good precedent that raised the optimism of the western world about Romania’s chances to go in the right direction. At a time when Bosnia and Kosovo were major threats to regional stability, the international community saw Romania as a positive model of managing ethnic relations.

21 The Executive and Parliamentary Solidarity Agreement, Romania Libera, December 6, 1996

had expertise (e.g., PD over economic reform issues, PNTC over property restitution and lustration laws, etc)²².

Analyzing the form and function of the document, the agreement seems to be on a scale between tight and loose, a relatively tight or binding document (Stroom, 2001). On one hand, it urges policy coordination and to that end establishes a Council for Political Coordination (COCOPO) and the Council for Parliamentary Coordination (COCOPA). COCOPO approves economic and political decisions and sends them to COCOPA in order to harmonize the activity of the parliamentarians of the coalition. However, while avoiding written procedures for the two bodies, the Agreement does not stipulate rules for managing horizontal relationships either, thus leaving communication and information outside the contract. Also, the number of positions for each partner is specified without further detailing what criteria will be used for that distribution (competency, policy goals, etc.). Policy programmatic directions are stipulated in the agreement, but with objectives vague enough to allow for maneuver. Finally, the document has an overt interest in coalition discipline (“The parties that sign the Agreement will abstain from any public declarations and manifestation”²³), but no enforcement procedures are included.

Cabinet formation

The duration of government formation is an indicator for assessing dissensions within the leadership of a certain regime (Putnam, 1993). Significant delays reflect the animosities among partners of the coalition. This was the case with the coalition of 1996, even if – for smoothly dividing up positions in the government – the coalition leaders adopted a political algorithm based on party electoral results.

The *formateur* party should be able to shape the coalition so that the ideological profile of the cabinet is biased in its favor. The policy objectives are therefore important in guiding recruitment for ministerial positions as the choice over skills and competencies has a direct impact over the cohesion, and therefore efficiency, of the ministerial team and cabinet. For negotiating a policy position (Baron, 1991), the algorithm proved not to be sufficient, so this fell under the responsibility of the *formateur* party, PNTCD. Unfortunately, this was one of the missed opportunities of the CDR Cabinets, whose main concerns were more office-seeking in nature than policy-seeking. The algorithm drove the creation of the three cabinets during the legislature of 1996 – 2000, with unavoidable conflict

22 Pavel, idem, p. 325

23 “The protocol was broken the very first day it was signed”, a journalist notices. “Our newspaper published in the same day the contents of the Protocol that says the parties will support the implementation of the reform program, as well as the declaration of Bogdan Niculescu Duvaz (USD) who says “We want another government”. So we can see by now how this coalition will go”. Cornel Nistorescu, Modelul melcului nervos (The Model of the nervous snail), February 7, 1998, Evenimentul Zilei, at http://www.evz.ro/editorial/?news_id=13778

among partners who sought scarce posts, especially the ones that guaranteed control over resources (such as Finance). The political bargaining led to a delay of up to two months in forming all the cabinets under CDR's governance:

Cabinet	Number of members by party represented in the Cabinet						
	PNTCD	PNL	PD	PSDR	UDMR	PNL-CD	TOTAL
Victor Ciorbea Cabinet, Dec. 11, 1996 – April 15, 1998	14	5	6	1	2	1	29
Radu Vasile Cabinet, April 15, 1998 – Dec. 20, 1999	8	3	4	1	2	0	18
Mugur Isărescu Cabinet, Dec. 20, 1999 – Dec. 28, 2000	8	3	4	1	2	1	19

The distribution of posts included not only ministerial portfolios, but also lower levels such as deputy ministers. The internal coalition fights over posts led to a high turnover within the government that increased inefficiency and political instability. The frequent changes in the cabinet structure gave the prime minister and ministers no time to accommodate the new teams, nor the space to accommodate with the work of predecessors, in order to ensure policy continuity:

Rotation of ministers and secretaries of state between 1996 and 2000

Ministry	Ministers	Secretaries of state
External Affairs	3	10
Agriculture	2	NA
Defense	4	7
Culture	1	3
Education	2	10
Finance	3	13
Internal Affairs	2	5
Justice	1	3
Environment	3	7
Labor	3	8
Health	4	4
Youth and Sport	2	4
Transportation	4	5
Tourism	2	2
TOTAL	36	81

The 14 positions were occupied by a total of 36 ministers, which takes us to a mean of 2.57 people per position. During the three coalition cabinets, only two ministers exercised their full mandates of four years, while seven ministers had

multiple occupants. Similarly, secretaries of state changed frequently. On average, each minister of the 1996 – 2000 government had six secretaries of state. The ultimate record was set by the Ministry of Finance, who had in four years not less than 13 different secretaries of state.

3. Intra-coalition relations and their impact on policy-making

Policy making processes – general framework

Policy processes in Romania were shaped by the institutional choices made in early 1990. Romania opted for a semi-presidential system where political power is shared among with the presidency, a bicameral Parliament and the cabinet of ministers. The system with an executive responsible to the legislative and a president with attributions typical of Parliamentary systems is very different from pure parliamentary or presidential systems, in the sense that it gives birth to a “dual leadership” in decision-making (Blondel). In Romania, the variations in the PM – president relationship resulted from personalities and political context. Prime Minister Ciorbea, for example, did not have enough political support as he had been recruited in PNTCD almost simultaneously with running as a PNTCD candidate in the local elections of 1996. A less confident premier for this reason, he had a closer relationship with the president, consulting with him often before making critical decisions. Unlike Ciorbea, the second prime minister of the CDR regime, Radu Vasile, was an older PNTCD member who did not believe in the idea of a Democratic Convention in the first place. As President Constantinescu had also been recruited from outside of PNTCD, Premier Vasile had a much more distant relationship with him and basically ran independently of the president²⁴, a decision that later cost him the premier seat. Displaying his power to intervene in the affairs of the state, President Constantinescu forced PNTCD to replace Radu Vasile with the independent Mugur Isarescu, a long-lasting governor of the National Bank.

The dual leadership also manifested in shared spheres of influence in the government or over other institutions such as the judiciary. An example of the leverage of the president is the conflict that arose in 1998 between two PNTCD – appointed ministers, one for the Ministry of Reform, the other for the Ministry of Privatization. The activities of the two ministries overlapped and coordination between them had been challenging from the start, especially because the coalition had avoided the issue. It was difficult to resolve the issue, given that one of the ministers had been appointed by PNTCD and the other one by intervention of the president. As a result, the Reform Minister made several decisions on privatization issues without involving the minister of privatization. The cabinet

²⁴ As a politician would say, “Vasile didn’t answer the president’s telephone calls”, Tuca show, Antena 1 channel, December 2000.

could not discipline the minister, so the Minister of Privatization resigned after less than a year.

By the authority of the Constitution, the president nominates the prime minister and dismisses ministers at the recommendation of the premier. Once in power, however, the prime minister and his team are responsible only to Parliament as long as they can muster a majority to prevent a no-confidence vote. The cabinet is formed by the prime minister and includes ministers overseeing major areas of life in the country. One or more deputy ministers can take part in the weekly cabinet meetings but don't have the right to vote. Cabinets may rule by decrees and ordinances under specific delegation; however, issuing laws is the main responsibility of the Parliament.

The Parliament is composed of a lower Chamber of Deputies of 343 seats and an upper Senate of 143 seats. Each member of Parliament, elected every four years in general elections from party lists, belongs to one parliamentary commission. The house meets in two annual sessions to debate draft bills introduced by the members of Parliament or cabinet, the president or at least 250,000 Romanians. The bills are discussed and voted on by the full house only after securing the approval of the parliamentary commissions they were assigned to. In each chamber, ordinary laws are passed by a majority of those present and voting, statutory laws by a majority of members in each chamber, and constitutional amendments by two-thirds of the members. For the vote to be valid, a simple majority of members should be present.

Passing laws through the Parliament is a demonstration of democratic practices, as it provides enough time for debate among parliamentarians who represent the interests of their constituents. However, it also requires more time. Unlike laws, governmental ordinances are enforced as soon as the Cabinet approves them, and before the Parliament starts debating them. The Parliament – heterogeneous and divided – was a reason in itself for the cabinet to use ordinances as often as urgent policy issues requested it. Even while expressing criticism of the practice, parliamentarians often agree that ordinances have become a necessary alternative, given the slowness of the process. Notwithstanding that consultations between the government and parliamentary parties occur, “political agreement” seems to have always prevailed, despite a strict adherence to legal order. Even if such a practice undermines the separation of executive and legislative powers and the rule of law, the coalition government of 1996 preferred it to the lengthy processes of the Parliament. It was one of the few instruments that could help a coalition habitually stuck in debates among partners to save some time on adopting normative acts on urgent policy issues. During the mandate of the 1996, the executive initiated 34 times more normative acts than the previous government. This significantly limited the influence of important policy stakeholders such as opposition parties and civil society:

Table

Number of legal acts initiated by coalition governments in Romania

Legislature	No. of ordinances	No. of laws
1992-1996	20	589
1996-2000	684	925

This way the government placed the main responsibility of policy-making in the hands of the ministers and the cabinet. The process would usually have to follow the following procedures:

- The bill is drafted in a technical committee within the specific ministry;
- It then has to receive the inter-ministerial review by other resort ministries and subordinated institutions;
- Later, it needs the approval of the Ministry of Finance which assesses the impact of the specific act on the state budget;
- The draft (or final form) is submitted in Government Meeting;
- Once it is approved by the government, it is then sent to the Parliament, following the same procedures as above.

Even if in the Parliament the normative act can suffer modifications both in the form and substance of the text, the provisions of the act are effective immediately after the cabinet approves it. Until the Parliament adopted its improved form and ensured proper implementation mechanisms, it often happened that imperfect ordinances were applied with damaging effects.

After 1990, the government meeting usually took place twice a month, and adopted decisions and new regulations in the presence of at least half plus one of its members. The law on the organization of the government²⁵ also provides that decisions are adopted with the agreement of the prime minister, by open vote of the simple majority, but not less of a third of the total number of the cabinet. However, important procedures – dissemination of materials well before the cabinet meeting, debriefings, the necessity to deliver to the prime minister the results of previous policy studies – were missing from the law, sometimes leading to a situation where the prime minister would make critical decisions with very little information at hand.

Coalition processes and their impact on policy-making: The case of the 1998 State Budget Law

Incomplete agreements require that issues not specified by the contingencies of the contract be resolved through the competency and authority of the party (or

25 Lege nr. 37/1990, din 07/12/1990, Publicat in Monitorul Oficial, Partea I nr. 137 din 08/12/1990, pentru organizarea si functionarea Guvernului Romaniei (Law 37/1990 for the Organization and functioning of the Government)

parties) that has the right to make decisions on those issues, usually the *formateur* party. This was the case of the coalition of 1996, which left issues like decision-making on policy harmonization to the ability of PNTCD to build consensus.

However, this was a missed opportunity as PNTCD had a strong preference for centralized decision-making processes and a centralized coalition structure. This was a reaction to the high fragmentation in the coalition that PNTCD tried to contain. The paradox was that the more the party tried to secure the unity of the coalition the more limits it imposed on the partners and the more it centralized the decision power around the prime minister and the leadership of PNTCD.

As dissatisfaction with the decision-making inside of the coalition grew, so did the control of the main party. The situation turned into a crisis in January 1997 when the chief auditor of the prime minister proposed to Ciorbea a review the activities of pre – 1996 government officials. By approving this, Ciorbea gave a green light to a long series of verifications of leaders of PDSR but, surprisingly, also of some of the PD members²⁶, among them the minister of transportation at the time. The Democratic Party threatened to leave the coalition, motivating their gesture by the intention of the prime minister to undermine the partnership sealed in 1996. As the minister of transportation started to react against the cabinet via the media, the prime minister invoked the coalition discipline provision in the Agreement and asked the minister to revoke his earlier statements.

In the beginning of 1998, PD finally left the executive coalition while continuing to support the cabinet in the Parliament on condition it undertake serious reform measures. The impact of the announcement was considerable, as it came at the time of much-needed support in building the Budget Law for 1998. Several events were also worsening the situation: health trade unions were on strike while trust in the cabinet was declining visibly. One year before, Ciorbea committed to an inflation rate of 30 percent, a budget deficit lowered to 3.5 percent of GDP and 3,600 state enterprises privatized before the end of the year. At the end of 1997, the inflation was 151 percent, a 6.7 percent decrease in the GDP had been achieved, a budget deficit of 4.5 percent and only 2,000 enterprises had been privatized. Moreover, the IMF team scheduled to arrive for negotiations over a new stand-by agreement as well as the state budget proposal delayed their arrival in Bucharest and waited the political crisis to be solved, giving a negative sign on the international markets.

26 According to some analysts (Pavel, p. 337) this was a rational action of secret police forces to undermine the coalition, as the new government had won the elections by promising a rigorous review of all secret police activities before and after 1989.

Coalition conflict management

The decision of the Democrat Party to withdraw was a surprise because of its timing came at a critical moment for the government, namely the budget law drafting. Otherwise, the PD's move had been planned all along in 1997. In Stroom's terms, the party had well waited for enough walk-away values to collect in order to leave without prejudicing its image in front of the electorate.

A walk-away value is what a negotiator, such as a party leader, can gain without any new collective agreement, i.e., what he/she secures by walking away from the bargaining table (Stroom, 2003). In intra-coalition relations, they function as implicit threats against each other. The more easily a party can leave the table of negotiations with confidence, the more concerned will be the rest of the parties to comply with the needs of that party.

Several walk-away values seemed to have been used in the conflict between the main party of CDR, PNTCD and PD during the 1996 – 2000 coalition. Probably the most important was public support, reflected in the results of the elections, as well as in polls run at different times during the mandate of the government. The Democratic Convention did enjoy large support well before the elections, given its catch-all features. The electoral results reinforced the support of the public. In early 1997, when PNTCD ran a new poll to measure the trust of the population in the cabinet, CDR had again more than expected, a record of 51 percent²⁷. In early 1998, when the crisis had already unfolded, Ion Diaconescu, President of PNTCD, was declaring confidently: "We will see if we can form a majority in the Parliament with the rest of the parties in the coalition. A minority government will have a hard time. I don't see this happening, as perhaps PD will never withdraw from government"²⁸.

PNTCD leaders also felt secured by the fact that there were *no other* attractive coalitions to make PD's departure a serious threat. This was one factor that PD might have not evaluated well. Also, with a strong territorial structure and the support of civic organizations like the Civic Alliance, PNTCD had the advantage of size. However, PNTCD and CDR did not have the capability to govern which PD had. The Democratic Party had been especially interested in making a significant contribution to the government program, given that PD leaders had had the experience of governing and expertise in economic reform. With the advantage of having governed in previous cabinets, PD was especially interested in contributing to government programming efforts immediately after the elections. However, while PD values this competency, PNTCD seemed not to be impressed with it. This later translated into ignoring policy input from

27 Cf. Public Opinion Barometer of the Open Society Foundation. Datasets are downloadable at <http://www.osf.ro/en/index.php?option=content&task=view&id=17&Itemid=36>. The trust in the government started to decrease only after the internal scandals became public in late 1997.

28 Ion Diaconescu statement for Ziua daily (January 11, 1998), <http://www.ziua.ro>

PD, but also from other partners (like the smaller right-wing party Romania's Alternative): "We started working on the government program right after the elections. And only now I realize that PNTCD ministers were not as interested in the governing program, maybe because they did not want that to govern that program. We were running up and down, asking all the time, could we put this in the strategy, or the other. Their opinion was that in principle we could put in the governing program everything, because that was a program for the Parliament, for the public opinion. (..) But we saw later that we frequently abated from the initial agreement. And every time we told to ourselves: let's not put in danger the stability of the country, so we compromised over and over again. So soon PNTCD started to consider that PD is an annex to the governing coalition, a partner with responsibilities and with no rights"²⁹. Later, the absence of clear policy goals was transformed into a visible inability to govern that cost the Democratic Convention, which was sanctioned severely by the electorate in the following elections.

Box:

The budgetary process was governed in 1996 by the Constitution adopted in 1991 and the Public Finance Law. According to these formal provisions, local government units had to send by June 1st the budget proposals for the following year to the Ministry of Finance which examined and approved (or modified) them, taking into consideration the macro-economic conditions and the budgetary restrictions foreseen for the next year. The first deadline in the process was September 25th, when the first state budget draft had to be submitted to the Cabinet. Once the budget bill was approved in Cabinet meeting, the government further submitted it to the Parliament until October 1st. If, given unpredictable developments (like the need to finalize international loans or other events) the budget law was not approved by the two reunited chambers of the Parliament, then the government would apply the provisions of the precedent year, until the new budget was adopted. This meant, in terms of policy that starting with the first day of the budget calendar – January 1st – public administration would only exercise its caretaker functions, with no ability to make investments, issue bonds or design development plans, given the budget constraints.

As agreement of coalition partners on the budget proposal was one of the most important policy issues scheduled for the beginning of 1998, PD used it to control the PNTCD, in order to push for their own political goal – removal of the prime minister. Another institutional issue gave more leverage to PD in coalition

²⁹ Mircea Cuzino Stan (January 11, 1998) Radu Berceanu, vicerpesedintele Camerei Deputatilor, ii ridiculizeaza pe premier. Ciorbea ar trebui sa se duca la primarie si sa se ocupe de strazi si de gunoarie, Ziua

negotiations. This was helped by an institutional feature of the coalition itself: the Agreement provided that decision-making would be made based on consensus; therefore, anytime PD was interested in blocking the decision process, they would veto the issues discussed. Moreover, because PD usually approached the two issues – one political and another one technical – together, COCOPO meetings routinely ran into deadlocks. Only when PD absented from the COCOPO meetings did the partners reached agreement on the technical details of the budget proposal³⁰.

COCOPO had not been properly equipped to deal with the heated technical and political conflicts among the coalition partners, so it soon failed as a platform for consensus-building. Feeling that he lost ground, Ciorbea appealed to the presidential authority in order to acquire more support and finalize the budget-making process. On February 23, with the facilitation of the president, the PM succeeded in securing the liberals' agreement to support the budget law³¹. Interestingly enough, the other parties saw in the budgetary process a means to strengthen the coalition governance: "The budget could be the cement for the coalition this year", the leader of the social-democrat wing of the coalition (PSDR) said³². PSDR therefore proposed a plan to institutionalize decision-making mechanisms to revitalize the coalition and persuade the PD to return in the coalition.

After the negotiations of the cabinet with the IMF concluded without securing a new stand-by agreement, PD used the occasion to urge the prime minister to resign³³. PD considered that the two Aide-Memoirs "did not represent much" and that the budget needed critical changes. This was an approach of the Democratic Party to paint the conflict – labeled as a personality clash in the media – as a policy conflict. However, PD's technical arguments related to the budget were quite general and inconsistent: "Petre Roman declared that, for PD to vote the budget proposal, the law it should provide an inflation rate under 45 percent, a maximum deficit of four percent and an unchanged taxation policy"³⁴. This declaration came two weeks after Sassu, another leader of the PD party, stated that the inflation rate agreed by the government with IMF – 45 percent – was not

30 It wasn't clear if PD used the lack of communication as the pretext for not participating at the COCOPO meetings or if PNTCD were indeed intentionally not inviting them. See Juncan, F. (March 5, 1998). COCOPO had a meeting without PD. *Ziua* daily: "COCOPO reunited yesterday in the absence of the members of PD, who say they were not invited. PNTCD leader Ion affirms the opposite. Sergiu Cunesco (the leader of PSDR, PD's partner in the USD coalition) also checked whether PD had been invited and he affirmed PD's affirmation was not true."

31 Cecilia Vasilescu, Ciorbea cauta sprijin in Parlament, February 25, 1998, *Evenimentul Zilei*

32 Adriana Tiganila, *Evenimentul Zilei*, Putem ajunge la o pace finala, February 27, 1998.

33 Catalin Varzaru, PD vrea ca Bugetul sa fie prezentat de un alt Guvern, February 25, 1998, *Ziua*.

34 Gavrilă, M. (March 23, 1998). Roman prezinta conditiile in care PD va vota Bugetul. *Evenimentul Zilei* Daily.

credible, and should have been replaced in the budget law with a more plausible one proposed by the National Bank's Governor – 60 percent³⁵.

Without being able to secure support from coalition partners, Ciorbea started to seek support from parties outside the coalition including the opposition party, PDSR. PNTCD was now dependent on the very party it had fought against for six years, to the utter disappointment of the coalition partners. Moreover, as PDSR seemed interested in amending some articles in the Privatization law, PNTCD offered in exchange for their support immediate attention on those amendments. The reaction of PNTCD's partners was explosive: "The availability of the Premier to grant concession to PDSR and to accept its amendments to the Privatization law is an offense to the partners in the coalition. Ciorbea has never consulted the coalition members even when the actual act was submitted to the Parliament, so basically the other parties in the Cabinet have never had an opportunity to offer their take on the issue"³⁶.

PDSR announced that they would take a careful look at the budget proposal and wisely used this unexpected occasion to make media headlines, but then refused to support the budget law, explaining all the weak points of the Cabinet's proposal³⁷. Finally submitted to Parliament, the budget law faced the opposition that the Cabinet had already anticipated. The premier was officially isolated between the coalition and Parliament, unable to support the Budget Law as designed by the cabinet. The law stuck in Parliament while the political crisis was unfolding in its last episodes.

It was not the lack of support in the Parliament that finally convinced the prime minister to resign. The rejection of the budget law would have added another problem to the existing set, but would have not produced the dismissal of the premier. What finally undermined Ciorbea's position were the lack of support from the presidency, an internal pressure coming from a more reformist wing of his own party, as well as the unexpected public attack from the leader of PNL, also a partner in his own coalition. The president finally intervened and advised the leadership of PNTCD to consider another premier in order to end the political instability. The end of the major crises took place only days later by resignation of the prime minister, called by the international press the "budget salvation" operation. The budget law was adopted in Parliament on June 3rd, 1998. Local governments had put on hold investment decisions and plans for local develop-

35 Tiganila, A. (March 5, 1998) Democratii au decis sa nu voteze bugetul prezentat de Victor Ciorbea, *Ziua Daily*.

36 O.M. (March 24, 1998) Ciorbea va trebui sa explice membrilor CDR ce a avut in cap cind cu varianta PDSR de modificare a Legii Privatizarii, *Ziua Daily*.

37 L.C. (March 25, 1998) Florin Gerogescu arumunteaza in sapet puncte unde gresetse Ciorbea. *Ziua Dail*

ment for more than six months, as long as the coalition government needed in order to prepare the budget for the ongoing year.

4. Conclusions

The coalition government of 1996 – 2000 led Romania into legislative gridlock and the subsequent inability to carry out coherent policies at a time of most pressing need. Several factors seemed to have had a negative impact on the policy-making capacity of the central administration:

- The institutional framework provided by the text of the coalition agreement that left major issues like decision-making or enforcement outside contractual provision;
- The inability of the *formateur* party to recruit the cabinet to manage both the office-seeking expectations of the partners, but also the needed policy position of PNTCD in charge with creating a policy profile of the cabinet capable to implement the government program;
- In contrast with the productivity in creating laws, a chronic inability to implement the policies outlined by those laws;
- A chronic tendency of substituting politics for policy-making when dealing with policy coordination within the coalition

Abbreviations

AC.....	(Civic Alliance);
ANCD	(Christian Democratic National Alliance);
ANL.....	(National Liberal Alliance);
ApR.....	(Alliance for Romania);
CDR.....	(Democratic Convention of Romania);
CDR 2000	(Romanian Democratic Convention 2000);
DR.....	(Romanian Right);
FDGR	(Democratic Forum of Germans in Romania);
FDSN.....	(Democratic National Salvation Front);
FER.....	(Ecologist Federation in Romania);
FSN.....	(National Salvation Front);
MpR.....	(Movement for Romania);
PAC.....	(Civic Alliance Party);
PAR.....	(Romania's Alternative Party);
PD.....	(Democratic Party);
PDAR	(Democratic Agrarian Party of Romania);
PDN.....	(Party of National Right);
PDSR.....	(Party of Social Democracy in Romania);
PER.....	(Romanian Ecologist Party);
PM	(Party of Moldovans);

PNL(National Liberal Party);
PNTCD(Christian Democratic National Peasant Party);
PRM(Greater Romania Party);
PSDR(Romanian Social Democratic Party);
PSM(Socialist Party of Labor);
PUNR.....(Romanian National Unity Party);
PUR.....(Humanist Party of Romania);
UDMR/RMDSZ ..(Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania);
UFD.....(Union of Rightist Forces),
USD(Social Democratic Union).

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- www.pur.ro – Partidul Umanist din România
- www.pd.ro – Partidul Democrat
- www.pntcd.ro – Partidul Național Taranesco Crestin Democrat
- www.punr.ro – Partidul Unitatii Nationale Române
- www.romare.ro – Partidul Romania Mare
- www.rmdsz.ro – Uniunea Democrata a Maghiarilor din Romania

Ministries web site addresses:

- Ministry of Foreign Affairs <http://www.mae.ro>
- Ministry of European Integration <http://www.mie.ro>
- Ministry of Public Finance <http://www.mfinante.ro>
- Ministry of Justice <http://www.just.ro>
- Ministry of National Defence <http://www.mapn.ro>
- Ministry of Administration and Interior <http://www.mai.gov.ro/>
- Ministry of Labor, Social Solidarity and Family <http://www.mmssf.ro/>
- Ministry of Economy and Commerce <http://www.minind.ro/>
- Ministry of Agriculture, Forests and Rural Development <http://mapam.ro/>
- Ministry of Transport, Constructions and Tourism <http://www.mt.ro/>
- Ministry of Education, Research and Youth <http://www.edu.ro/>
- Ministry of Culture and Religious Affairs <http://www.ministerulculturii.ro>
- Ministry of Health <http://www.ms.ro/>
- Ministry of Communications and Information Technology <http://www.mcti.ro>
- Ministry of Environment and Waters Management <http://www.mappm.ro/>

The results of parliamentary elections 1990 – 2004

Party	Establishment year	1990 elections				1992 elections				1996 elections				2000 elections			
		% of won mandates		Parliamentary status	% of won mandates		Parliamentary status	% of won mandates		Parliamentary status	% of won mandates		Parliamentary status	% of won mandates		Parliamentary status	
		S*	CD*		S	CD		S	CD		S	CD		S	CD		
National Salvation Front (FSN)	1990	67	66,3	Government	12,6	12,6	Opposition	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		
Democratic Front of National Salvation (FDSN)	1992	-	-	-	34,3	34,3	Government	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		
The Romanian Democratic Convention (CDR)	1991	-	-	-	23,8	24,1	Opposition	37	35,5	Government coalition	-	-	-	-	-		
The National Liberal Party (PNL)	1990	7	6,4	Opposition	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	9,2	8,7	Opposition			
The National Christian Peasant Party (PNTCD)	1990	2,5	2,5	Opposition	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-			
The Party for Romanians' National Unity (PUNR)	1990	2,1	2,1	Opposition	9,7	8,8	Government coalition	4,9	5,2	Opposition	-	-	-	-			
The Ecologist Movement (MER)	1990	2,4	2,6	Opposition	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-			

The Agrarian Democratic Party (PDAR)	1990	1,5	1,8	Opposition	3,5	-	Opposition	-	-	-	-	-	-
The Ecologist Party (PER)	1990	1,3	1,6	Opposition	-	-	Opposition	-	-	-	-	-	-
The Social Democratic Party (PSDR)	1990	0,5	0,5	Opposition	-	-	Opposition	-	-	-	-	-	-
The Socialist Party (PSM)	1992	-	-	-	3,5	3,8	Supports the government	-	-	-	-	-	-
The Social Democracy Party (PDSR)	1993	-	-	-	-	-	-	28,6	26,5	Opposition	46,4	44,9	Government
The Social Democrat Party (PSD)	2001	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Great Romania Party (PRM)	1991	-	-	-	4,2	4,7	Supports the government	5,5	5,5	Opposition	26,4	24,3	Opposition
The Hungarian Democratic Union in Romania (UDMR)	1990	7,2	7,2	Opposition	8,4	7,9	Opposition	7,6	7,2	Government coalition	8,5	7,8	Supported the government
The Social Democratic Union (USD)	1995	-	-	-	-	-	-	16	15,4	Government coalition	-	-	-
The Democrat Party (PD)	1993	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	9,2	8,9	Opposition

* CD – Chamber of Deputies; S – Senate

Politico-administrative Relations Under the Coalition Government in Serbia

Aleksandra Rabrenovic¹

Introduction

In the wake of the dissolution of Marshal Tito's Yugoslavia, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, consisting of the Republic of Serbia and the Republic of Montenegro, was established in April, 1992. Complex and at times adversarial relations between the two Republics, which during the 1990s *de facto* and *de jure* attracted a great number of competences from the federation, brought about a stalemate in the functioning of the federal institutions. This has triggered a badly needed redefinition of the Yugoslav federation.

In March 2002, an Agreement on the new state between Serbia and Montenegro (Belgrade agreement) was reached. Under the agreement, Serbia and Montenegro, as two semi-independent states, shall enter a union called "Serbia and Montenegro". On the 4th of February 2003, the Yugoslav Parliament adopted the Constitutional Charter of the new state of Serbia and Montenegro, by which most federal functions and authorities were devolved to the republic level.² In this way, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was officially dissolved, without much nostalgia but with a great deal of skepticism from both politicians and citizens regarding the durability and success of the new state. The new state with *sui generis* confederal features, however, has only a transitory nature. Upon the expiration of a period of three years, the member states are entitled to institute proceedings for a change of the state status. Until then, they are sharing the competencies of defense, foreign policy, external economic relations and human rights and run separate economies, currencies and customs.

Despite obvious difficulties in the state union functioning and numerous calls for its dissolution from both Republics, the European Union has on a number of occasions expressed its firm determination to endorse the existence of the state union of Serbia and Montenegro and support its joint efforts in becoming a European Union candidate state.³ This attitude should not be surprising, as the dissolution of the state union of Serbia and Montenegro may have an adverse effect on the political stability of the whole region. In order to enable smoother functioning of the state union institutions, the European Union has agreed on the "twin track" approach

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2 The constitutional charter of the Union of Serbia and Montenegro was agreed upon in December 2002 and consequently ratified by Serbian and Montenegrin Parliament in early 2003.

3 Cf. Commission Staff Working Paper, Serbia and Montenegro, Stabilisation and Association Report 2004, Brussels, SEC (2004) 376.

to economic issues, which will allow special treatment of the two republics in a number of economic and commercial elements.⁴ It is hoped that this approach will relieve the existing tensions between the republics and set the state union firmly on the path towards the EU. Whether this will indeed happen will largely depend on the ability of the state union to survive the first three years of its operation as well as the will of Serbian and Montenegrin people to stay in the joint, confederal state.

Due to a specific and transitory nature of the political system of the new state union of Serbia and Montenegro, which allows sovereign power to be vested in the republics, it would be fairly difficult to examine the impact of coalition governments of both republics on established politico-administrative relations in the joint state. Such an attempt is even more problematic in the view of the fragility of the Union level institutions, which depend heavily on the support of the republics and therefore are subject to political fluctuations both inside and between the two entities.

Therefore, this paper shall restrict itself to analysis of politico-administrative relations in one of the state union semi-independent states, the Republic of Serbia. It will analyze the relations between politicians and civil servants under the coalition governments, established in the previous decade, with a special focus on the period after the democratic changes of October 2000. The paper shall explore the impacts of coalition government on administration and the way in which political conflicts within the coalition influence administrative stability as well as the efficiency of the policy-making process. In this sense, it will be interesting to analyze the distinctions and similarities between the three subsequent coalition Serbian governments: the “red-black” coalition established during the Milosevic regime, the Democratic Opposition of Serbia coalition government of Djindjic/Zivkovic and the newly created Kostunica’s coalition government.

1. Political – Constitutional Background of the Coalition Government

Main political parties and formation of coalition governments in Serbia

Serbia has had an exceptional transitional path. Unlike most of the central and east European countries, Serbia failed to engage in a democratic transformation by the end of 1980s. Instead, the Socialist Party of Serbia, as a direct descendant of the League of Communists in Serbia continued to dominate the political scene for another decade.⁵

4 The meeting of European Council in St. Gerlach, Netherlands, September 2004.

5 According to a series of indicators, during the Milosevic’s period Serbia represented a deviant case of transition. Cf. “Challenges of Implementing the Reform Agenda – One Year After the Democratic Breakthrough”, UNDP publication, 2002.

Since the introduction of multi-party system in Serbia in 1990, there has been a strong division and struggle between two main political blocks – one supporting Milosevic’s authoritarian, populist and nationalist politics and the other representing democratic orientation of free market economic reforms, respect for human and minority rights and European integration. Although nowadays the appropriateness of such a political divide is becoming more questionable, the sharp divide between the parties of undemocratic and democratic orientation still represents one of the key features of the Serbian political system (Vujacic, 2004). Therefore, it is rather difficult to make a usual distinction between political parties on the basis of their left or right orientation.

The Socialist party of Serbia (SPS) was undoubtedly the most powerful and best organised Serbian party during the 1990s. The leader of the Socialist Party is Slobodan Milosevic,⁶ the populist and most influential politician of the early and mid-90s, being twice elected President of Serbia and later named President of Yugoslavia. Even with a manifesto based on neo-Communist concepts, the Socialist party has never pursued true “leftist” doctrines in shaping its policies. Instead, its political actions brought it very close to the ultra-nationalist political stream.

The first coalition government in Serbia was formed in 1993 after the early republican elections, when the Socialists failed to win absolute parliamentary majority. Socialists decided to make a coalition with a New Democracy, a fairly minor party with a centrist political orientation. Despite the formation of a coalition government, the absolute political domination of SPS was not at all disturbed. SPS remained in control of the state apparatus, economy and the official media, and also controlled the strategically important position of the President of the Republic (Goati, 2001).

The mid-90s witnessed the strengthening of two parties, with apparently radically opposite ideological orientation: the far right ultra-nationalist Serbian Radical Party (SRS) led by Vojislav Seselj, and the far left ultra-leftist party, Yugoslav Left (JUL) led by Slobodan Milosevic’s wife, Mira Markovic. However, policies that these two parties pursued have demonstrated significant similarities with Milosevic politics, based on the policy of the state’s dominant role in the economy and strong reluctance in establishing cooperation with international community. Although the rhetoric of SRS changed slightly in the last couple of years, its political stands, based on nationalism and xenophobia, have not substantially altered.⁷

6 The last Congress of Socialist Party held in December 2002 re-elected Slobodan Milosevic as President of the Party, despite his absence from the country. However, during the last two years, the management of SPS somewhat distanced itself from Milosevic, and stopped following his political guidance.

7 SRS has been strongly opposing the extradition of Serbian citizens to the International Criminal Tribunal for Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in Hague.

The ideological similarities between Milosevic's SPS and far left JUL, on the other hand, were even greater and their mutual relationship almost symbiotic. Most JUL members were previously members of SPS, which sometimes led to ambiguities about membership status.⁸ Close ideological and personal relationship between the two parties was undoubtedly based on a strong marital relationship between their leaders (Slobodan Milosevic and Mira Markovic), which enabled JUL to obtain more power than it enjoyed in the electorate.⁹ In order to avoid testing its own strength at elections, JUL has generally participated in an electoral alliance with the SPS.

Following the 1997 elections, the leftist alliance of SPS, JUL and New Democracy formed a so-called "black-red" coalition with far right SRS, which reinforced state repression. The main leverages of power were strengthened (especially police forces), while the traditional Serbian civil service values of professionalism and impartiality significantly deteriorated (Sevic, 2001).

During the 1990s, the democratic parties of the opposition oscillated significantly in electoral and parliamentary strength. Although there were several attempts to create democratic opposition alliances (DEPOS in 1992, Zajedno/Together in 1996), this entire period is characterized by strong of rows among them. The lack of willingness of the opposition leaders to cooperate is usually taken as one of the explanatory factors for Serbia's divergence from the political mainstreams of its central and east European neighbors (Goati 2001).

The main parties of the democratic orientation in Serbia are the Democratic Party (DS), led by late Zoran Djindjic and currently by his successor, Boris Tadic; Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS) led by Vojislav Kostunica; and Serbian Renewal Movement (SPO) led by Vuk Draskovic. All three parties are generally centrist in orientation, supporting the establishment of free market and pro-European reforms. While the DS is of centre-leftist orientation, DSS has stronger nationalist attributes and therefore is usually classified as a party of centre-right. SPO distinguishes itself by supporting the restoration of the monarchy.

At the end of 1990s, significant fragmentation of the Serbian party system occurred with a creation a number of rather small, so-called minivan parties¹⁰ of democratic orientation. Most of these parties have a strong "leadership based" structure, which was shaped primarily by the personalities of their

8 Goati (2001) describes an episode when Dragoljub Jankovic was appointed the Minister of Justice in the Government of Serbia in March 1998. Asked by a journalist whether he entered the government on behalf of SPS or YUL, the Minister replied: "I don't know; I'll have to check. Could you call me later?" The Minister later informed the journalist that he was a member of YUL. (Demokratija, March 26, 1998)

9 According to the Institute of Social Sciences opinion polls conducted in 1996, SPS enjoyed 24% support in the electorate (without Kosovo and Metohija), while JUL enjoyed only 1.7% electorate support.

10 It is sometimes argued that their entire membership of these parties could be placed in a minivan.

founders. Those leaders who could not fully impose themselves in already existing democratic parties or those left some of the parties of the regime, simply went on to create new ones, often with a very small membership. The general impression one gets is that these parties exist to support their leaders and not *vice-versa*.

A strong desire to end Milosevic's dictatorship eventually brought a large number of fairly heterogeneous opposition parties together at the 2000 elections. They formed the Democratic Opposition of Serbia (DOS), a broad-based alliance uniting 18 parties with diverse political orientation ranging from moderate nationalists to liberal. Besides DS and DSS, the DOS coalition included the following parties: New Serbia, Social Democracy; Civic Alliance of Serbia; New Democracy (Liberals since March 8th 2003); Reform Democratic party of Vojvodina; Alliance of Vojvodina's Magyars; Vojvodina Coalition; League of Social Democrats of Vojvodina; Democratic Alternative; Movement for a Democratic Serbia; Democratic Center; Social Democratic Union; Christian Democrat Party of Serbia; Sanzak Democratic Party; League for Sumadia and Serbian Resistant Movement – Democratic Movement.

A so-called "bloodless revolution" of 5 October, 2000 reinforced the victory of Vojislav Kostunica and the Democratic Opposition of Serbia (DOS) political alliance over Milosevic and parties of the previous regime at the federal elections. At the subsequent Republican elections in December 2000, the DOS alliance of 18 parties won a landslide victory with 65.04 percent of the votes cast and an absolute majority of seats in the parliament – 177 from 252 (see Table 1). The DOS coalition government with Prime Minister Djindjic was installed in January 2001. This marked the outset of the adaptation of Serbian public administration to modern public administration trends, and was perceived by many as a unique chance for breaking with the previous practice of bureaucratic subordination to a rule of a dominant party/coalition.

Although the DOS coalition was highly fragmented, it was basically led by two key parties: Djindjic's DS and Kostunica's DSS. However, a "struggle for power", based on conceptual differences, has pushed the DS and DSS in continuous conflicts which have adversely affected political stability and jeopardized nascent transitional processes. Strong antagonism between the two DOS blocks have resulted in the withdrawal of DSS representatives from the government in August 2001, and eventually the expulsion of the DSS from the coalition in summer 2002. Following the expulsion of DSS from DOS, aother DOS coalition parties were gradually leaving the alliance, thereby rendering the DOS coalition majority government into a minority government.

In 2002, a new party of a democratic orientation, with a rather peculiar name was created – G17 Plus. The G17 Plus is led by two leading economic ex-

perts, Miroljub Labus and Mladjan Dinkic.¹¹ It is a party with a centrist, liberal orientation and almost the only Serbian party that does not support the existence of state union of Serbia and Montenegro. G17 Plus emerged from a quasi-political organizations of 17 leading economic experts, who prepared a general framework for the DOS political program of economic reforms. The impact of G17 Plus experts on economic policy decisions in the country has been substantial.

The DOS government's (un) justifiable reluctance to fight the "darkest" sides of the previous regime¹² had tragic outcome, resulting in the assassination of the Prime Minister Djindjic in mid-March 2003. The Serbian government and the newly formed union government of Serbia and Montenegro reacted swiftly by calling a state of emergency and undertaking an unprecedented crackdown on organized crime. Zoran Zivkovic, a vice-president of Djindjic's DS party, was elected Prime Minister in March 2003. A series of scandals plagued the Zivkovic government through the second half of 2003, ultimately leading the Prime Minister to call early elections in December 2003.

The 2003 elections initiated a gradual consolidation and constraint of overly fragmented political system, as a number of smaller parties previously belonging to DOS coalition did not pass five percent election threshold.¹³ Coming to terms with their electoral failure, several smaller democratic parties have started merging with some of the stronger alliance parties, especially DS,¹⁴ or uniting between themselves, which is certainly a positive development that would add to the emergence of a more constrained party system in Serbia.¹⁵

11 Miroljub Labus is a current deputy Prime Minister of Serbia and former Deputy Prime Minister of Yugoslavia. Mladjan Dinkic is currently a Minister of Finance of Serbia and former Governour of the National Bank of Serbia.

12 Serbia has a relatively high degree of state capture which solving requires deep institutional reforms in the political and administrative system is still present. The Serbian "oligarchs" appear to be the wealthy previous regime figures, connected to the structures of organised crime (established and supported during the previous regime) that have secured institutional protection and thus operated parallel to the state with relative impunity, Kostic (2003).

13 The outcomes of the elections may not be truly representative as approximately 500,000 votes, mainly of democratic orientation, were disallowed. If all the votes are counted, it appears that the democratic forces stabilized their electoral support at around 2,300.000 votes (against 2,400.000 in the 2000 elections), while the parties of the previous regime have slightly increased their electoral support to around 1,450.000 (against 1,100.000 votes in the 2000 elections). For detailed analysis of 2004 elections, see Vujacic (2004).

14 In 2004, Democratic Centre Party and ex-political movement Otpor joined the Democratic Party.

15 Democratic Alternative and Social-Democratic Party merged in August 2004.

Table 1

Main political parties in Serbia and their political alliances in alphabetical order, their results at the 1997, 2000, 2003 elections and status in the Parliament.

PARTY/alliance and their leaders	1997 (regular) elections		2000 (extraordin.) elections		2003 (extraordin.) elections	
	% votes	Status in Parliament	% votes	Status in Parliament	% votes	Status in Parliament
Democratic Opposition of Serbia (DOS) coalition alliance [1]	N [2]	-	64.4	Government. Coalition	N	-
Democratic Party (DS) (Zoran Djindjic/Boris Tadic)	Boycott [3]	-	C (DOS) [4]	Government. Coalition	12,6	Opposition
Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS) (Vojislav Kostunica)	Boycott	-	C (DOS)	Government. coalition	18,9	Government. Coalition
G17 Plus (Miroslav Labus)	N	-	N	-	11.7	Government. Coalition
Serbian Radical Party, SRS Vojislav Seselj	28.1	Government. Coalition	8.5	Opposition	27.7	Opposition
Serbian Renewal Movement, SPO Vuk Draskovic	19.1	Opposition	3.7	-	C (SPO, NS)	Government. Coalition
Serbian Renewal Movement (SPO) - New Serbia (NS) coalition alliance	N	-	N	-	7.8	Government. Coalition
Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS) Slobodan Milosevic	C (SPS, YL, ND)	Government. Coalition	13.5	Opposition	7.4	Opposition
Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS), Yugoslav Left (JUL) and New Democracy (ND) coalition alliance	34.2	Government. Coalition	N	-	N	-

Source, CESID (2004)

Note: 1) DOS coalition alliance consisted of 18 fairly heterogeneous parties: Democratic Party, Democratic Party of Serbia, New Serbia, Social Democracy; Civic Alliance of Serbia; New Democracy (Liberals since March 8th 2003); Reform Democratic party of Vojvodina; Alliance of Vojvodina's Magyars; Vojvodina Coalition; League of Social Democrats of Vojvodina; Democratic Alternative; Movement for a Democratic Serbia; Democratic Center; Social Democratic Union; Christian Democrat Party of Serbia; Sanzakar Democratic Party; League for Sumadia and Serbian Resistant Movement – Democratic Movement.

2) N: non-existent party or political alliance at the time

3) B: boycotting the elections. Due to extremely difficult conditions of 1997 elections, the then opposition parties decided to boycott the elections.

4) C: pre-electoral coalition political alliances.

After two long months of intense political negotiations, a new minority coalition government was finally installed in March 2004. Although the populist Serbian Radical Party won the largest number of votes, it was not able to attract support from other parties to form a government, and therefore DSS became the pillar of the coalition. The long-lasting conflict between DSS and DS prevented the reaching a coalition agreement between the two, and the coalition agreement was finally made with remaining parties with a democratic orientation: Labus's G17Plus, and alliance of Draskovic's SPO and fairly small Ilic's New Serbia. Parliamentary support for the minority government was secured through backing by Milosevic's SPS, which provoked instant and perhaps exaggerated fears of the ability of the new government to pursue a true reformist course.

Conventional thinking suggests that the new government will be short-lived and unstable, but this may be overly pessimistic. The likelihood of the increased popularity of the populist Serbian Radical Party – the only party to benefit from the government collapse – may unite the ruling democratic coalition and provide an impetus for other parties of democratic orientation to support the Kostunica's minority government.

Fluctuation of Popularity of Main Political Parties and Their Leaders

The popularity of key political parties and their leaders fluctuated during the last few years. After 5 October, 2000 and all throughout 2001, Kostunica was undoubtedly the most popular politician in Serbia. The leading position of Kostunica as a federal president also brought substantial popularity to his party, DSS. The increasing popularity of Kostunica could be attributed to the peculiar habit of the Balkan peasantry to vote for *whatever* party is in power. In part, this explains why Milosevic was able to win votes in election after election despite a series of international and domestic fiascos. However, the logic of the Serbian voters appears to be changing. Voters have started showing deep dissatisfaction with ruling governments and providing support to opposition parties, mainly of democratic orientation, but also to parties of previous regimes. This, perhaps, should not be surprising, bearing in mind the complex political and social context of Serbian transition.

After the initial euphoria of replacing Milosevic's autocratic regime, the Serbian population faced the reality of a cumbersome transition and sliding into apathy and disillusionment with its leading democratic politicians. The late Serbian Prime Minister, Djindjic, never enjoyed great popularity,¹⁶ although his DS was well accepted by the electorate. Interestingly, Djindjic's assassination has significantly reshaped public opinion. It seems that only after the tragic event did

16 Rough estimates of the conducted media research is that Djindjic enjoyed popularity of no more than 20% of the population, and, at times, even lesser popular support. Cf. www.mediacenter.co.yu.

people become aware of the importance of the late Prime Minister's personality for taking necessary but widely unpopular measures in the transition process.¹⁷ Kostunica's popularity, in turn, has been falling continuously since 2002, especially after he became Prime Minister of Serbia in March, 2004.¹⁸ According to latest opinion polls, the popularity of ruling DSS and G17 Plus has also significantly decreased after six months in power, while SPO – New Serbia managed to sustain their supporters.¹⁹ The popularity of the opposition DS, in turn, has risen by more than 50 percent of its vote at the relatively recent parliamentary elections.²⁰ The leader of DS, Boris Tadic,²¹ has won even greater support of the electorate and currently enjoys confidence of more than 30 percent of Serbians.

While the rating of democratic parties is fluctuating, the popularity of populist policies has been continuously increasing. The ultra-nationalist SRS has attracted a large number of voters of SPS and other previous regime parties. Furthermore, at the 2004 presidential elections, a new populist political force emerged. The wealthy businessman and one-time Milosevic close ally, Bogoljub Karic, managed to take more than 15 percent of the vote, swiftly becoming one of the most popular and powerful forces in Serbian politics. The increased popularity of populist parties is certainly worrying, and should be a reminder to Belgrade's self-absorbed democratic political elites of the need for cooperation.

Experiments with electoral rules

There have been many "experiments" with electoral systems in Serbian parliamentary elections, which offer an opportunity to compare the effects of different electoral systems on the success of particular parties at the elections. However, it should be stressed that such an analysis would have serious limitations since the electoral formulas employed in Serbia changed quickly, making it difficult to identify both long term but also short-term effects. At the first parliamentary elections in the Republic of Serbia (1990) the majority principle was used, while in all subsequent elections (1992, 1993, 1997, 2000, 2003) the proportional principle was employed. Moreover, ruling regime parties, in order to achieve better results at the elections, changed not only electoral rules in narrower sense, but also other important election conditions, such as constituency number and size

17 One of the most unpopular measures was the extradition of Slobodan Milosevic to the Hague International Criminal Tribunal for Former Yugoslavia in summer 2001.

18 According to opinion polls conducted by Media center, Belgrade, Kostunica's enjoyed the support of 70% of the population in September 2000, while in December 2002 his support decreased to 40% and to some 15 – 20% in August 2004. www.mediacenter.co.yu.

19 According to opinion polls of Marten Board International and New Serbian Political Thought, conducted in August 2004, DSS enjoys 11,5% support, G17 Plus 4,4, while SPO-NS enjoys 5,2% support of the electorate.

20 Marten Board International and New Serbian Political Thought, August 2004, www.glas-javnosti.co.yu.

21 Current President of Serbia.

as well as the electoral threshold. At 1992 and 1993 elections, for example, Serbia had nine constituencies and 29 at 1997 elections. In the 2000 elections, the whole of its territory was one constituency. Furthermore, several other factors, such as variations in the size of electorates in both republics due to outdated and inaccurate electoral records, have impeded the systematic analysis of the effects of various electoral formulas (Goati, 1999).

Application of the proportional system in comparison to the majority system employed in early 1990s has brought about more generally accurate parliamentary representation. However, the change in the number of constituencies in subsequent proportional system 1997 elections had adverse effect on the representation of opposition parties.

The 2000 December elections were considered to be the first democratic elections in Serbia. As the OSCE noted in its report on the Serbian presidential and parliamentary elections of 1997, the “overall election process in the Republic of Serbia is fundamentally flawed.” The Milosevic regime routinely denied opposition parties access to state-owned media and frequently manipulated the electoral process. A high electoral threshold set out in 2000 elections (five percent) forced members of the then-opposition parties to cooperate and participate in elections with the same list. In this way, the electoral rules influenced the formation of coalition governments in Serbia well in advance of the election procedure. Although the high electoral threshold was kept for all participants to the 2003 elections, one of the first measures taken by the new Parliament in early 2004 was to abolish the threshold for parliamentary representation for parties representing ethnic minorities, as a part of further democratization of electoral rules and processes.

Peculiarities of coalition agreements

The 1997 “red-black” coalition government, which consisted of SPS, JUL and SRS did not make a formal coalition agreement. The democratic parties which won the 2000 and 2003 elections did, in turn, sign written coalition agreements. One of the possible reasons for signing the agreement was the objective of the opposition parties to avoid the scenario that the previous opposition alliance, “Zajedno,” formed for the 1997 local elections, when opposition parties entered into a series of personal and policy disputes, resulting in the break up of the alliance and loss of citizens’ trust in the opposition.

The key distinction between the DOS coalition agreement and coalition agreement of the new Serbian Government is that the former is a pre-election coalition agreement, while the latter is a post-election one. Therefore the content of the two agreements is fairly different, since the former is mainly concerned with the distribution of the political mandates in the parliament while the latter is more focused on the allocation of power within the government.

The DOS pre-election coalition agreement stipulated the way in which parliamentary mandates will be distributed between coalition partners if they won a sufficient number of parliamentary seats. Each of the two senior parties, DS and DSS reserved approximately one quarter of the parliamentary mandates, while some of the smaller parties (League for Sumadija, Serbian Resistant Movement – Democratic Movement) agreed to less than one percent (0,8 percent) of the parliamentary seats. The agreement, however, did not regulate the distribution of posts within the government, except for two key functions: the post of Prime Minister and leader of DS, Zoran Djindjic, who had the right to propose the members of his cabinet and the speaker of the Parliament, who would in turn be proposed by Kostunica's DSS. The agreement also stipulated the institution of a "narrow cabinet", composed of the prime minister and deputy prime ministers, who would also perform the functions of ministers of certain portfolios.

The key peculiarity of the DOS coalition agreement is the establishment of the leading body of the coalition alliance: the DOS presidency. The DOS presidency consisted of the presidents and authorized representatives of the alliance parties. Meetings of the presidency were prepared and chaired by the presidents of the coalition parties who performed this duty in rotation. The DOS presidency had a number of competences, starting from election of key government office holders, determining the key policy issues, to solving the coalition disputes.

By creating the DOS presidency, decision-making and coalition reconciliation mechanism were placed outside government structure. This brought about relative duplication in decision-making and weakened the formal government institutions and their accountability to the Parliament. Nevertheless, some of the DOS presidency competencies have gradually transferred to the formal government institutions which somewhat stabilized state institutions.

Lessons learned from the functioning of the previous government helped Kostunica's government to create a more comprehensive coalition agreement. One key distinction between the coalition agreement of the former and present government is that the latter contains more detailed government programs as well as the list of laws that are to be adopted in the first year of the new government. Furthermore, the decision-making and reconciliation mechanisms for the coalition are mainly brought back to the government. The disputes between the coalition partners were deemed to be settled inside the government, by three members of the government authorized to lead the reconciliation process. If the group was not able to solve the dispute, the prime minister would take over the reconciliatory role by talking to leaders of the coalition partners. The coalition agreement of the new government further established the future organization of government's structure, determining the number of ministries to be created and the distribution of ministerial posts among the coalition parties (which will be

discussed in more detail later). The agreement, however, did not go into details of distribution of senior civil service posts.

In conclusion, coalition agreements of two consecutive Serbian governments have undoubtedly provided the basis for defining the role of the coalition parties, especially in the numerous DOS coalitions. They have, therefore, have been a valuable means for setting the basic coalition policy guidelines and coordination. However, it should be stressed that the rules from the coalition agreement were at several occasions blatantly breached by coalition partners in the previous government,²² and to lesser extent in the current government.²³ The lack of success in respecting the framework of the DOS coalition agreement certainly lies in the “unnatural” way in which it was formed; that is, by engagement of all the possible political actors who, only united, could overthrow the previous regime. Due to inherent differences between the diverse political orientations of DOS allies, it was expected that the DOS coalition, in its initial form, could not last for long. Therefore, the lack of full obedience to a coalition agreement should not be a surprise. It remains to be seen whether the legalistic Kostunica’s government will have more respect for formal agreement between its coalition partners.

2. The Role of the President of the State and the Parliament

Strong president – a coalition government obstacle?

The Serbian political system can be categorized as semi-presidential, due to relatively strong legal authorities given to the President of the Republic. According to Milosevic’s 1990 Constitution, which is still in force, the President of the Republic is elected by direct votes of the citizens for the period of five years (Article 86 of the 1990 Constitution of Serbia). The procedure for presidential revocation is extremely complicated and can be initiated only by a two-thirds Parliament majority. The president of the republic has the following competencies: the right to suspensive veto on legislation (Article 84), the right to declare the “threat of war” and “the state of emergency” (Article 83) and the right to dismiss the Parliament on the government’s proposal (Article 89).

However, Serbia has witnessed that the operation of a “semi-presidential” system in reality depends to a great deal on the power relations established in political processes and in the Parliament. Thus, it may be argued that Milosevic’s

22 The DOS coalition agreement stipulated that the future speaker of Serbian Parliament would be proposed from the Democratic Party of Serbia. However, after the DSS’s speaker of Parliament Dragan Marsicanin’s resigned from this function, the DOS presidency refused to install another DSS’s representative to the post of parliament speaker, despite strong DSS’s objections that such a decision would constitute an obvious breach of the DOS coalition agreement.

23 This especially relates to respect of coalition reconciliation mechanisms which are not functioning in the present coalition, as several ministers are openly attacking policies of other coalition partners.

political power was not so much based on his authority as president, but on his position as president of the SPS, significant popular support and power over media and police forces. This enabled Milosevic to exert significant influence over appointments in higher strata of public administration, despite his relatively limited formal powers.

Milosevic's successor, Milan Milutinovic, elected at the 1997 elections also as a representative of SPS has, in turn, had much less influence over governance processes in general. He was therefore mocked as a "man who did not interfere with his job", as he has never exercised broad authority as president and merely followed the orders from the political "top". This proves the hypothesis that legal authority provided by positions in state institutions are of lesser importance than real political power, possessed by the political party and within the electorate. After the democratic changes in 2000, Milan Milutinovic's role was fully marginalized until the end of his mandate in 2002.

Although the President of the Republic does not have any direct influence on the coalition management and administration, he/she could have significant indirect impact through his authorities in the government's policy process. The indirect influence is exercised through the president's right to use a veto to return approved legislation to Parliament, which can then override that veto by a simple majority vote. This procedure could significantly slow and impede the passage of laws in Parliament. Therefore, it is plausible that the government in office would try to have an ally in such strategically important political position.

The DOS coalition government was trying very hard to avoid possible interference in the legislative process by any perspective presidential candidate. After Milan Milutinovic's mandate ended in mid – 2002, two rounds of elections for the republic presidency in late 2002 failed because of insufficient voter turnout (Serbian law required participation by 50 percent +1 of registered voters). In order to fill the institutional vacuum, Article 87 of the Serbian Constitution was applied by analogy, and the speaker of the Parliament became, at the same time, acting president of the Republic of Serbia. As DSS's representative Dragan Marsicanin earlier resigned from his post of Parliamentary Speaker, the post was, with huge disapproval from DSS, filled by a member of a rather small Civic Alliance party, a fairly unknown political figure, Natasa Micic. In February 2003, Natasa Micic made a controversial decision to postpone scheduling the presidential election until a new Serbian constitution was proclaimed.²⁴ As the adoption of the new Serbian Constitution is highly complex process, it was obvious that the decision favored the "remainder" of the DOS alliance, who were afraid of Kostunica (now opposition candidate) becoming the President of the Republic. Therefore, Micic's decision was seen by both political analysts and the public as another source of

²⁴ The new law required the new elections to be scheduled in 60 days.

political tension (Nikolic, 2003). This case proves that the position of the president of the state, even an acting one, is strategically important, and can be used by coalition partners for influencing governance and coalition management processes, despite the “political weakness” of the person involved. The Speaker’s decision to delay presidential elections was later declared unconstitutional by the Constitutional court. New elections were called for 16th of November 2003; they again failed to achieve the threshold. The new Serbian Parliament abolished the threshold in February, 2004.

On 11 July 2004, a new leader of the DS and Djindjic’s successor, Boris Tadic, was inaugurated as Serbia’s first president since December 2002. Voters chose Tadic in the second round of the election by a vote of 53 percent over the ultra-nationalist Tomislav Nikolic of the SRS. Tadic’s victory suggests that a slim majority of the electorate wants to see Serbia on a pro-European reform course. However, the Radicals’ strong showing demonstrates that Serbians are deeply divided, and a pro-reform course should not be taken for granted, particularly if economic difficulties continue. The surprise of this election was the success had by the wealthiest businessman in Serbia, Bogoljub Karić. The government’s candidate Dragan Maršićanin finished in fourth place which opened the question of new parliamentary elections in Serbia.

Since the election, Tadic has indicated that he will support the government of Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica, thereby creating the first case of true cohabitation between the Serbian president and the coalition government. However, the office of president holds little authority over day-to-day policy-making, and Tadic’s election may not necessarily translate into real change for Serbian politics. It is not likely that Tadic will have any substantial influence on public administration and coalition management, unless his party joins the existing coalition. This is not a probable option.

Parliament as a forum of coalition bargaining

During the DOS coalition government rule, the Serbian Parliament has become an open forum of coalition conflicts and bargaining. The coalition conflicts in Parliament escalated especially after the DSS withdrew its representatives from the coalition government in August 2001. Disagreeing with government policies, DSS’s MPs occasionally boycotted parliamentary sessions. Since it was often difficult to establish a decision-making quorum, law-making process was significantly slowed down.

Smaller parties were now in position to demand a greater share in power as a reward for attending parliamentary sessions and voting for government proposals. As a response, the DOS Presidency stripped DSS and some other smaller DOS alliance parties of their 36 parliamentary mandates, and in this way secured a relatively safe majority for parliamentary decision-making. This action

was deemed illegal by many and caused a grave political crisis. The situation worsened after Kostunica's DSS was expelled from the coalition which resulted in stripping DSS of their parliamentary mandates. Under great political pressure, DOS agreed to allow return of DSS representatives to the Serbian Parliament in November 2002. In this way, the fragile political/coalition stability was re-established, but only for a short while.

In the second half of 2003, the functioning of the Serbian Parliament was affected by serious cases of non-respect of the rule of law. The Parliament failed to enforce the ruling of the Constitutional Court which declared provisions allowing party coalition control of seats unconstitutional, as in the court's opinion, they violated the independent mandate of individual MPs.²⁵ There was substantiated evidence of irregular voting and non-respect for the procedural requirements. All these resulted in huge institutional crises, which were finally resolved by early 2003 elections.

The newly installed Kostunica's minority government has up to now been relying on Slobodan Milosevic's SPS support in Parliament. However, fears have arisen over the implications that this will have for the level of the new government's cooperation with the International War Crimes Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), as one of the key conditions for maintaining international support. The key to stability therefore again lies with the DS, which has so far supported reformist government's policies. In the event that the SPS did withdraw its support over the ICTY, or any other issue, it is highly likely that the DS would step in and offer their 37 seats to support the government. This, however, need not disrupt the current coalition. Rather than face constant accusations for all that is out of order in Serbia, DS would probably accept to support the coalition in exchange for increased political influence, including direct government support for certain smaller projects, rather than in return for ministerial positions.

Ineffective role of parliamentary committees

As in most parliamentary democracies, the main institutionalised Parliament's policy-making forum in Serbia is a system of parliamentary committees. According to the Rules of Parliamentary Procedure,²⁶ political parties propose members of each of parliamentary committee according to the number of their seats in the Parliament. Parliament elects members of the committees with a majority of all PM's votes. Parliamentary committees can be permanent or established

25 The decision of the Constitutional Court may be indeed questionable, as it gives the right to a member of parliament to freely change his/her political party, although he/she, in accordance with the rules of proportional elections, was elected on the basis of the coalition list and not on a personal title. However, as a Constitutional Court is the highest court instance in Serbia, there is no doubt that its decisions need to be respected and enforced.

26 Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia No. 30/02.

ad hoc. There are currently 25 permanent parliamentary committees,²⁷ such as: Parliamentary Judiciary and Civil Service Committee, Parliamentary Committee for Legislation, Committee for Constitutional Issues, etc. Most of the permanent parliamentary committees have 15 to 25 members. During the DOS coalition rule, the great number of parliamentary parties prevented involvement of all the representatives of smaller parties in all the permanent committees. The situation has partly been improved with the installation of the current fewer-party coalition government.

Parliamentary committees generally discuss technical issues related to the Parliament's competence and agenda and present their opinions, positions, reports on legal drafts to the Parliament. The Parliament, however, can discuss the legal draft without prior report of the parliamentary committee if the opinion of the parliamentary committee is not been submitted in time.²⁸ Furthermore, the Parliament is not obliged to accept the view of respective parliamentary committee on any legal issue.

Although the work of the Parliament and its committees appears to attract the attention of the government and the general public, the role of the parliamentary committees in the policy process and coalition management in practice is still negligible. This may be partly attributed to a large number of existing permanent committees, with ill-defined competences and inadequate mechanisms of cooperation between the parliamentary committees on the one hand and government committees on the other. The organization of parliamentary committees is not flexible enough to work-load changes, and the use of resources is consequently partly inefficient. There is unanimous consent across all political actors that parliamentary committees need expert, specialized research assistance to improve their review of draft legislation and fulfill their mandates as prescribed.²⁹ Due to low level of institutionalization of parliamentary structures in Serbia, parliamentary committees rarely constitute a forum of coalition management and thus will not be the subject of our further examination.

3. Coalition Structure in the Government

The key position of the executive

As in every parliamentary democracy, the key governing power in Serbia lies within the executive. The executive power is partly shared with the president, who, as we have seen earlier, has relatively strong authorities based on the legiti-

27 Article 44 of the Rules on Parliamentary Procedure.

28 Article 132 of the Rules of Parliamentary procedure.

29 Southeast Europe Parliamentary Program (SEPP), Parliamentary Centre, Joint Baseline Report on the Internal and Human Resources Management in the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia, November 2003.

macy of direct popular elections. The government is accountable to the Parliament and must resign if it loses a vote of confidence. Ministers, as part of the government, are individually accountable for the work of their departments and agencies to Parliament and have a duty to report to Parliament on their policies, decisions and actions.

In order to examine the impact of coalition government on the structure of the executive, and especially politico-administrative interface, it is necessary to understand the general formal/legal rules regulating the status of officials and civil servants and the way these rules are actually applied in the coalition context. This will require the analysis of legal status of officials and civil servants, examination of their behavioral patterns as well as examination of their own role perceptions on their functions and mutual relations in the coalition government context.

Organizational structure of the ministries and status of its personnel

The formal structure of a typical ministry in Serbia can be described as follows. According to the Law on State Administration³⁰ a ministry is headed by a minister elected by Parliament. A minister may have a deputy. The deputy minister substitutes for the minister in his absence, participates in cabinet meetings in the minister's absence and performs other duties assigned to him/her by the minister. In practice, all ministries have one deputy minister, though some may have more than one.

A ministry is divided into sectors which perform different parts of the operations of the ministry. Sector heads hold the title of assistant minister. Sectors are separated into departments, which are headed by heads of departments.

A ministry also has a secretary-general, who is responsible for administrative management (legal, accounting, etc.), and for coordination between sectors in the ministry. The secretary-general is at the same rank as the sector heads. The formal status of government officials is regulated by the Law on Labour Relations in State Organs.³¹ The law recognizes three classes of members of the civil service:

- “Elected”; i.e., ministers,
- “Appointed”; i.e., members of service appointed by the government,
- “Employed” personnel; i.e., all other staff, who can be considered as “ordinary” civil servants or “career civil servants”.

The positions of deputy minister, assistant minister and secretary-general of the ministry fall within the category of appointed personnel. They are ap-

30 Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia No. 20/92 and subsequent amendments.

31 Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia No 48/91 and 66/91 and other amendments.

pointed by the government for four years, but with any government reshuffle changes amongst them are to be expected. Usually, when ministers take up their posts, they try to establish their own executive teams. The category of appointed personnel institutionalises the right of involvement by politicians in the very top layers of the administration and has, therefore, been excessively used as a means of coalition political bargaining.

Nevertheless, there are slight distinctions between the three categories of political appointees with regard to politicization. Deputy ministers are usually pure “political appointees”, coming from different coalition parties. At times, they can be distinguished experts especially when the minister is also an expert rather than politician. Assistant ministers are also appointed posts, but because they have a strong policy-making role, the government tends to appoint experts in the relevant fields, from inside or outside the civil service with a political affiliation. The post of the secretary-general, on the other hand, is basically of a “career nature”, although again usually with a political affiliation. Because of the nature of the job, the government tends to appoint people with management experience, ideally people who have previously held senior civil service positions.

Staff in the category of “employed” personnel have permanent civil service status and therefore are normally not the subject of coalition bargaining. Civil servants are classified within different ranks, which are defined on the basis of civil servants’ educational qualifications, experience and a broad definition of the level of the job.

Managers of the state-owned companies also belong to the category of appointed personnel. The directors of public institutions, in turn, are usually appointed by particular ministries which scrutinize their work. Their status is regulated by the general provisions of labor law.

The implications of “common governance” model of coalition government structure

The Serbian executive has experienced the application of two possible concepts of the coalition government structure: the concept of “common governance” which assumes that leaders of the ministry or government agency are coming from different coalition parties, and the concept of “joint governance” which assumes that the government portfolios are relatively strictly divided between different coalition partners (Vass, 2001).

The former concept was applied during the “red-black” coalition of SPS, JUL and ND and during the Djindjic/Zivkovic DOS government, while the latter has been employed by the recently established Kostunica’s government.

The reasons for establishing a model of “common governance” against the model of “joint governance” during the mandate of the first two coalition govern-

ments was probably a desire of coalition partners to attain general political balance throughout the government, but even more so the wish to control the work of other coalition partners.

During the rule of “red-black” coalition, the ultra-nationalist SRS managed for the first time to impose the principle of proportional “common governance” representation in the socialist-held state apparatus, which brought about excessive politicization of all the appointed posts. The politicization trend was especially apparent at the deputy minister level, in which case the legal rule that the minister have one deputy was breached, and the minister assigned two to even three deputies. The appointments at the level of assistant minister and secretary of the ministry became much more dependant on political influence, patronage and allegiance to the parties of coalition than it was the case during the majority socialist rule. Due to rapid decrease of civil service social status and underpayment, most capable personnel left the civil service and went to the private sector. The rest of the civil service became apathetic and largely corrupted (Antonic, 2001).

The employment of the “common governance” coalition principle during Djindjic/Zivokovic DOS coalition government produced more mixed results. The trend of politicization of the civil service continued, as most of the appointed personal was changed. This, however, should not be attributed as much to the effect of the coalition government, but more to the radical change of the regime. Therefore, a huge mistrust of the new ruling political elite in the administrative system was usually perceived as a repression instrument of the previous government.

Following the coalition agreement, members of the Serbian government cabinet were appointed by the late Prime Minister Djindjic, while civil service chiefs were selected by the DOS collective presidency. There were no detailed guidelines made in advance of the actual appointments. The candidates for the main government posts had naturally been discussed and decided at the meetings of the DOS presidency. Besides, shortly after the elections, DOS had formed a special Human Resources Management Commission, fully outside the institutional structure of the government, which took over the decision-making process in respect of government appointments. Later on, the Commission lost most of its competencies, and human resources management decisions have been transferred to state institutions – mainly to Parliament’s Judiciary and Civil Service Committee.

The most obvious position that became the subject of coalition bargaining in the DOS government was the post of the deputy prime minister. Due to a large number of coalition parties involved, several posts (around seven to eight) of deputy prime minister were created to compensate the coalition partners. These posts were given almost exclusively to leaders of coalition parties. They were mainly responsible for coordination of cross-cutting issues of the ministries and government agencies.

The creation of additional deputy minister posts as a means of coalition compensation was much less obvious and almost non-existent. The government generally respected the law and appointed only one deputy minister in the ministry, with the rare exception of two. This was explained by the complexity and large scope of competences of the respective ministries.³²

The extent of politicization and coalition bargaining throughout the rest of administration greatly varied from one ministry to another. The scope for coalition bargaining mainly depended on the personality and influence of the minister in question in the government. Therefore, some ministers were allowed to pick up their own senior personnel while others were not able to choose their colleagues. Some ministers stated they had agreed to become a member of the cabinet under the condition they could choose their deputy themselves (K. Holland, S. Ericson, 2002). One minister revealed he could choose some but not all of his colleagues:

*“There are many parties in the government, and they all want posts. They all provided me with the names of possible candidates which decided the choice of some of my colleagues; I handpicked the others myself.”*³³

The level of politicization of public administration seems to be considerably less in the ministries led by prominent experts and professionals.³⁴ The DOS government was a mixture of politicians and experts with clear distinctions between the two categories. Ministries in charge of the economy and finance (for instance, Finance, International Economic Relations, Privatisation, and Trade and Tourism) were held by experts. As most of the expert ministers enjoyed the prime minister’s considerable support, they were usually able to attract outside expert personnel from universities and private interest groups and Serbian diaspora, and facilitate their appointment to key senior civil service posts. In this way, the government tried to address the deficiencies of established personnel in their own departments. This tendency has actually been facilitated by the ready availability of multilateral and bilateral funding from international and national donors, who were willing to see the funds used for the purpose of hiring experts as sources of policy advice, an alternative to the established civil service. This kind of “replacing capacity” support, however, dampened the incentive of the civil service to reform itself and thus impeded the political and public accountability (Coombes, Rabrenovic, 2003).

Some ministers, however, were not given the right to choose their colleagues even if they were prominent experts, but were persuaded to accept party coali-

32 The Ministry of Justice and Local Government thus had two deputy ministers 2001 – 2002.

33 Quotation taken from the K. Holland, S. Ericson, *The Serbian Central Government Administration: Organisational challenges (Impressions and recommendations from the Norwegian expert group)*, Government of the Republic of Serbia Agency for Public Administration Development, 2002, p. 73.

34 These were for example the Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations.

tion decisions. The best example may be the Minister of State Administration and Local Self-Government, Radoljub Sabic, who wanted to appoint experts as his assistant ministers. His choices were blocked by the other parties in the government who demanded candidates of their parties to be appointed to those positions. Sabic was forced to accept the appointment of another coalition party member as his deputy, but did not agree to the appointment of assistant ministers. The stalemate continued as long as Sabic was a member of the cabinet, and no assistant ministers were appointed in the ministry. This had of course a significant adverse effect on the functioning of the ministry.

The case of the Ministry of State Administration could also be taken as an interesting example of how coalition bargaining influenced the creation of new government structures. Some analysts perceived the establishment of the Ministry of State Administration as a political move rather than as an effort to strengthen public administration reform. The ministry was created in 2002, at the time when the Djindjic's government was losing its parliamentary majority and needed to broaden the political basis of its coalition. The government created a new portfolio for administrative affairs, offering it to Rodoljub Sabic, as a member of the Social Democratic Party, which at that time was outside government. This explains fragile position of Sabic in the DOS coalition.

Testing of the model of “joint governance”

Politicians participating in the DOS coalition government became aware of the problems inherent in the common governance coalition model implied in practice. Therefore, they have decided to test the opposite governance principle of “joint governance”, which assumes that government portfolios are strictly divided between coalition parties. However, it should be noted that the new Serbian government did not strictly follow the model of “joint governance”, but combined it with some elements of the common governance model as well.

As mentioned earlier, the new Serbian government coalition agreement divided the ministries' portfolios between the coalition partners, who were given the right to appoint their supporters to key civil service positions in their ministries. Nevertheless, the agreement denotes exceptions to this rule in the case of three ministries (Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management and Ministry of Labor, Employment and Social Policy) where DSS and G17 Plus share the leadership role. The coalition agreement has also stipulated a creation of a special Commission for Human Resource Management, formed again in accordance with the principle of proportional representation of coalition political parties. The commission consists of ten members of the government, and is responsible for distribution of appointed positions between the coalition partners.

Table 2

Distribution of ministerial portfolios according to the 2004 coalition agreement of Kostunica's government.

Prime Minister	DSS
Deputy Prime Minister	G17 PLUS
Capital Investments (former Ministry of Urbanism and Engineering and Ministry of Transport and Telecommunication)	SPO-NS
Justice and Local Self-Government	DSS
Internal affairs	DSS
Finance	G17 PLUS
Foreign Economic Relations	G17 PLUS/DSS
Economy	DSS
Commerce and tourism	SPO-NS
Mining and Energy	DSS
Agriculture, forestry and water management	G17 PLUS/DSS
Labor, employment and social policy	G17 PLUS/DSS
Education and sport	DSS
Science and environmental protection	DSS
Culture	SPO-NS
Health	G17 PLUS
Divinity	DSS
Diaspora	SPO-NS

Source, Coalition agreement between DSS, G17 Plus, SPO and NS, February 2004

It is questionable why the coalition decided to “share” those distinct ministries. The most probable explanation is that they deemed these portfolios more sensitive to others and therefore wanted to keep a degree of control over their operation.

One of the first observations of the ministerial structure of the new government is the unification of portfolios of former ministries into one ministry. The most obvious example is the Ministry of Capital Investments in which the former Ministry of Urbanism and Engineering and Ministry of Transport and Telecommunications are merged.³⁵ The explanation for the decision to unify existing ministries certainly lies in the wish of coalition partners to put as many as possible portfolios under their single formal jurisdiction, without disturbing the proportionality of the distribution of the ministerial posts in the cabinet and in this way obtain a larger share in power over administration.

35 The coalition agreement also envisaged the creation of the joint Ministry of Justice and Ministry of State Administration and Local-Self Government. However, soon after signing of the coalition agreement, the DSS decided to separate the Ministry of Justice from the Ministry of State Administration and Local Self-Government again, as it secured sufficient support for appointing their leadership to both ministries.

The insights on the impact of the application of strict joint governance models and elements of common governance have yielded fairly different findings. The employment of the strict joint governance model has brought about either increased politicization of some ministries (where the minister would appoint his party supporters to key ministerial positions) or gradual de-politicisation of the ministry (in which case career civil servants were given the chance to obtain key administrative posts). The example of the latter case can be found in the oft-mentioned Ministry of State Administration and Local Self-Government where career civil servants were appointed to key positions on the basis of professional qualifications and expertise. In this way, the Ministry of State Administration provided an example to other ministries on how to gradually overcome the temptations of politicization and invest in improving the skills of their established personnel.

It should be noted that the application of the model of joint governance generally brought about enhanced intra-ministerial coordination, due to well-established personal relations between the key ministry's management figures. In the same time, however, the inter-ministerial coordination worsened and became much more ineffective than in the common governance model.

Lastly, the ministries in which the model of common governance was employed have again relieved the possible weaknesses of using such an approach. In some ministries, new assistant ministers' positions and entire new sectors were created only to compensate for the coalition partners, which unnecessarily complicated the ministries' organizational and personal structure. Difficulties in coordinating the complex ministry's leadership have followed.

The comparison of the employment of the distinct models of coalition government structure in Serbian government has clearly shown that each of the applied models has its own strengths and weaknesses. Therefore, it is not possible to suggest any ideal model of coalition structure. Nevertheless, it is important that coalition leaders become aware of the implications of using any of the proposed systems, so that inherent systemic weaknesses can be adequately addressed in due course.

Role perceptions of appointed personnel towards the politicians and civil servants and vice versa

In the Serbian civil service, there is a significant distinction between appointed personnel and career civil service personnel, not only in terms of legal status but, more importantly, in their involvement in the policy process (which will be discussed later). Therefore, both groups form their distinct perceptions on the governance actors and processes and their mutual relations in the framework of a coalition government.

Research findings on senior officials' role perceptions in several ministries³⁶ conducted during the rule of the DOS government showed that the relations between minister and appointed personnel were generally quite good. This implies the existence of "functional village life" (Peters, 1997) between coalition partners at the highest administrative strata. The question which may arise is what factor lies at the basis of such a relationship: personal acquaintance, political affinity or professional competence? The answer to this question will certainly differ from one ministry to another. There have been many cases in which ministers have appointed personnel from their own parties to key positions. Nevertheless, in most cases, the "functional village life" model established between politicians and mandarins can be explained by a level of political affinity of senior officials with political appointees based, not on strict party membership, but on the personal preferences and need to compensate other coalition partners with similar political orientation. Furthermore, as stressed earlier, a number of ministries' senior officials are professionals in the field without strong political-party orientation, which certainly facilitated establishment of good working relations within the ministries and lessened possibilities of inter-coalition conflicts.

Working relations between politically appointed personnel and career civil servants were, in accordance with the research findings, at best "basically good" or, in some cases, even "pretty bad". Politically appointed personnel generally perceived their career civil service colleagues as incapable, lacking sufficient and relevant knowledge as well as basic motivation. Many have also expressed an inability to establish any kind of working relationship with a substantial part of the civil service (20 – 40 percent), although situations varied greatly from one ministry to another. Several senior officials expressed general satisfaction with their relations with career officials while the majority of them have expressed difficulty working with older administrative personnel. The relations with the younger career civil servants were generally assessed as "satisfactory" and "getting better". This at least gives some kind of positive outlook for establishing highly desired sound politico-administrative relations for the future.

The experience of career civil servants and their role perception towards politicians and work in the civil service in general is even more interesting. Most of them have stated that low salary levels, bad working conditions and the low prestige of civil servants in society create serious motivational problems. The great majority experienced changes in their relationships with the political appointees from various coalitions over the years. They have expressed the opinion that relations were quite difficult during the rule of the previous "black-red" coalition of SPS, SRS and YUL, since there had been a strong involvement of political actors in

36 The interviews were conducted with senior officials (Secretary to the Ministry, Assistant Ministers and Heads of Divisions) of the Ministry of Social Welfare, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Transport during September 2002 and January 2003.

the decision-making process. This had clear implications for the efficiency of administration, which in many cases did not remain an impartial player in coalition bargaining processes. Some coalition partners attempted to obtain support of administration by buying its affinity through corruptive or opportunistic practices. This brought about strong divisions in administration and influenced the quality of decision-making and implementation. The relations with appointed personnel during the DOS government, on the other hand, were described as “good” or “very good”, especially in the case when appointed personnel were professionals in the field. The general view, however, is that coalition government brings about difficulties in governance processes, since coalition partners want their share of power in appointing members of their parties to crucial positions in government, often to the disadvantage of professional administrative interests.

The coordinative role of the prime minister

The formal/legal position of the prime minister in Serbian government is rather weak. The prime minister's function is regulated only by one article of the Government Act, prescribing him/her the duty of cabinet coordination. However, the role of the late Prime Minister Djindjic in coalition coordination as well as the policy-making process was substantive. Although Mr. Djindjic did not have any formal role as a coalition leader, the collective nature of DOS leadership allowed him to place himself very highly in their informal power structure. Many analysts were of the opinion that Mr. Djindjic was undoubtedly the most powerful man in Yugoslav politics. This was due mainly to his leadership position in the senior coalition party, but even more so to his personal ability to master consensus between coalition partners and impose his opinion on other members of the cabinet. As one of the senior civil servants of the DOS coalition noted:

“Serbia does not have a government. It has only a prime minister. Most of the ministers are somehow fascinated by him and always ready to comply with his decisions”.

The role of current Prime Minister Kostunica in running the affairs of the present coalition government, on the other hand, is much less visible at least in the eyes of the public. This has adversely affected Kostunica's popularity. However, Kostunica has shown strong leadership potential, which has up to now kept the coalition together. Nevertheless, it remains to be seen how his premiership will continue in the future. If Kostunica finds a key to keep his coalition partners together and at the same time secure necessary parliamentary support, then his premiership will be more than successful. In the current political context, this may be an extremely difficult task.

Lastly, it should be noted that the Serbian government does not have a formalised cabinet office, as it is the case in the UK or Japan. The prime minister's office (PM cabinet) is a small and purely administrative unit which is there to support the day-to-day activities of the prime minister. The key policy support

for the work of the PM is often provided by his/her own political party apparatus. It seems that the previous and current governments favor the appointment of purely political advisers, who are recruited from parties that make the coalition or from among young, unaffiliated but high-caliber professionals. Some of them, as professionals within certain areas, have a serious impact on the government policy. It is possible that the next step will be the creation of the much stronger and professionalised Cabinet Office.³⁷

4. Coalition Related Specialties in the Policy-Making Process

Main features of the policy process in Serbia

The classical Serbian legal thinking perceives the power structure of the executive through a dichotomy between politico-executive power, which is largely vested in the hands of the government cabinet led by the prime minister (and his/her deputy/ies), and the administrative power, entrenched within government departments and agencies, whose main role is to implement government policy and advise ministers. The prevalence of this politics-administration dichotomy perhaps should not be surprising, taking into account the significant Communist heritage of Serbian public administration, followed by a decade of mainly authoritarian regimes. The key question to be posed, however, is in which way the recent subsequent establishment of coalition government structures contributes to maintaining or overcoming this politics-administration myth. The answer to this question requires a detailed examination of the main features of the policy-making process in Serbia.

The policy-making process in Serbia is still fairly non-transparent with a strong influence of political forces, some of which do not command complete legitimacy and lack impact on the general public. Therefore, it is still difficult to speak about existence of true, transparent public policy-making process in a Western sense. Policy-making is generally based on the government program. In the case of the DOS coalition, the program was adopted shortly after the coalition government was established in early 2001, while Kostunica's government included its program in the coalition agreement. It should also be stressed that since the establishment of the new Serbian government, the external international community pressure on the policy-making process has been substantial.

During the DOS government, key policy issues were subject to DOS presidency decisions. Fundamental decisions were made at DOS coalition meetings which were held outside the government institutional structure. When dealing with politically sensitive matters or assessing new measures, the political

37 D. Coombes, "Re-Building the Capacity to Govern: Setting Priorities for Public Administration Reform in Serbia", draft discussion paper for the round table 'Priorities for Institutional Development in the Reform Process in Serbia', Belgrade, March 2003.

leadership would bypass their appointed and employed staff and the chain of command. This practice should not be surprising, given the half-century Communist tradition and the subsequent Milosevic autocratic rule, during which all the decisions were made at political centers outside state institutions and legally established procedures. During the previous regime, lines of political action were principally chosen by party bodies or leaders and their closest advisers. Executive organs, the government itself and the ministers acted very much as bodies that merely implemented these decisions, as reflected in a saying during the Tito era: "The party decides, the government implements". During Milosevic's period, he himself made a number of important decision without input from government bodies and this continued to some degree during later governments.

At the very outset of the work of the DOS government presidency, a consensual style of decision-making prevailed. However, as soon as more politically sensitive issues were the subject of discussion, bargaining and logrolling style started to domineer the decision-making agenda. In order to save the large democratic alliance, some of the key decisions have been postponed where tensions between partners became too intense. The same scenario seems to be happening with the current Kostunica's government, this time inside of the formal government structures.

Representation and influence of the coalition partners in the decision-making process is variable, depending on the issue in question. Before the major break-up of DOS alliance, two main policy-making streams could be discerned: the first headed by late-Serbian Prime Minister Djindjic and followed by most of the smaller opposition parties and the second, led by Mr. Kostunica's Democratic Party of Serbia. However, after the DSS has withdrawn its representatives from the Serbian coalition government and especially after its expulsion from the DOS alliance, DS, followed by remainder of the "DOS" has taken the full lead in the policy-making. In the current Kostunica government, it seems that each of the coalition parties have a leading role in the decision-making process in its own administrative portfolio.

The crucial role in policy design in Serbia is given to the ministers, who provide policy guidance based on the government's strategic directions. Ministers may ask his/her associates to propose their programs and then to combine them with general program orientations of the coalition as well as his/her personal program. The role of the (politically) appointed senior civil servants in policy design is usually substantial. The main policy decisions are usually made at so-called collegium meetings. A collegium is an informal body of the ministry, which is usually composed of a minister and appointed senior civil servants. Career civil servants are rarely invited to collegium meetings.

When it comes to the design of a particular policy, the usual practice is that the minister establishes a special expert team. The team works on a particular

legal draft often in cooperation with professional, quasi-political organizations and respective NGOs. Usually led by one of the senior appointees, the team discusses all aspects of the proposed programme/legal draft. It is, however, often the case that expert reform teams are formed without any involvement of the career officials.

When the ministry's draft is finished, a so-called "consultation process" starts. This process is regulated in detail by the government's Rules of Procedure. The Rules envisage that the draft is submitted for comments to all public bodies (ministries and special organizations) which could be affected by it. Relying on the comments received, a ministry then usually prepares a second draft, which is again sent to related ministries, the Ministry of Finance and the Republican Legislative Secretariat. In addition to this formal procedure, some informal inter-departmental contacts usually occur, so that unnecessary disagreements are avoided. The final draft is then formally submitted to the government's General Secretariat, together with the results of the consultation process.³⁸ The role of the General Secretariat in this process, however, is mainly technical.

After the General Secretariat approves the proposal, it forwards it to a particular government committee, which is in charge of discussing the draft. Unlike the General Secretariat, which is composed of civil servants, government committees are political forums led by a deputy prime minister and consist of government appointees. Their role in the policy process can be substantial. As a rule, a respective government committee must give its opinion on the proposal; it also has the right to propose alternative solutions for most issues before those are entering the agenda of the cabinet meeting.

Once the consultation procedure is finalized, the draft is subject to the government cabinet decision-making process. It is interesting to note that the government cabinet in Serbia generally functions as a formal decision-making body, boldly approving existing legal texts. The government almost never meets in a more informal setting to discuss the most important matters it must deal with. During the Milosevic regime and the DOS mandate, cabinet meetings were rather short and did not provide for any substantial policy debate (Holland, Ericson)³⁹ This could be explained by the early misplacement of decision-making forums outside of the formal structure of government, as most of the key decisions were already made through the informal political forums while leaving the more technical issues to be designed through institutionalized channels.

38 The General Secretariat is a central supporting structure of the government, consisting of civil servants.

39 According to the Norwegian experts research conducted during 2002, ninety-nine per cent of the votes at the cabinet meetings were unanimous! Cf. K. Holland, S. Ericson, *The Serbian Central Government Administration: Organisational challenges (Impressions and recommendations from the Norwegian expert group)*, Government of the Republic of Serbia Agency for Public Administration Development, 2002.

The current government is trying to reverse this trend, by paying significant attention to discussions of policies during official government meetings.

Coalition partners may have divergent views and be impacted differently by proposed policy when crosscutting issues requiring the cooperation of several ministries or agencies. If a consensus cannot be reached at the first meeting, the coalition partners start bargaining until they reach an agreement. It is likely that in this process the options proposed by senior coalition parties will prevail over those of smaller ones. However, it must be stressed that the power in the decision-making process within a coalition, especially when crosscutting issues are in question, does not depend only on the strength of a political party. Rather, it is the ability of the party's leader to impose his/her views on other coalition leaders even if he/she does not enjoy great public popularity.

Role of the career civil servants in the policy process

An overview of the main features of the policy process in Serbia clearly demonstrates that government senior officials – mostly political appointees – have a leading role in identifying and developing government policies. The role of career civil servants in the policy process, on the other hand, is still very limited with an inherent lack of ability to substantially influence strategic policy and the decision-making process. There are numerous reasons for the subservient role of Serbian civil servants in policy development. One of the most common is the limited trust between incoming, politically-appointed personnel and civil servants from the previous government. This was especially evident when the DOS coalition replaced Milosevic's regime. A second, and probably equally legitimate reason, is the lack of expertise of career civil servants. This is a consequence of serious neglect of the civil service during the end of 1990s which partly resulted in a "brain-drain" from the civil service to the private sector. Furthermore, the reason for a subordinate position of Serbian civil service undoubtedly lies in its institutional historical development. Although the Serbian civil service kept some of its traditional values during Communist times, it never acquired the organizational capacity to distinguish and impose itself as an important yet neutral actor in the policy-making process. The education of civil servants, the preponderance of whom are law school graduates, who perceive themselves and are perceived by others as mere policy implementers, has further undermined the ability of civil service to obtain an important role in policy-making (Peters, 1987).

The establishment of coalition governments has not only sustained the politics-administration dichotomy, but made it even more sharp and visible. This is due mainly to increased politicization which has followed the creation of coalition governments in Serbia.

During the "red-black" coalition, increased politicization of higher civil servants posts resulted in creation of hostile relations between senior officials of

different parties within a ministry and significantly worsened the quality of decision-making. It has been reported that in some ministries' collegium meetings, inter-ministerial decision-making forums were fully abolished due to difficulties in establishing personal relations among members of coalition parties. Since in most cases, ministers were not specialists and unable to get proper policy advice from senior personnel, a series of superficial and incompetent decisions were made. The lack of competence of senior (politically appointed) personnel has, on the other hand, opened the possibilities of greater influence for experienced civil servants in less politically sensitive issues. However, key policy decisions were made outside the civil service, which has most of the times obediently followed the will of its political masters.

Politicisation has continued, to a lesser extent, during the DOS coalition government. This has an adverse effect on civil service development and its professionalisation, as a limited amount of time spent in public administration is not sufficient for building expertise needed for conducting senior civil service tasks and activities. In the same time, career civil servants, especially young ones, are not motivated to stay in the civil service and perform well. Their prospects for career advancement are rather limited with senior positions reserved mainly for those with political affiliations and connections.

There now appears to be a consensus within both civil service and political circles, that the de-politicisation of public administration is key for civil service capacity development. In this sense, numerous voices have been raised for amending the relevant legislation – in particular, the Law on Public Administration and the Civil Service Law – in order to strengthen the positions of secretary general, department heads and assistant ministers by providing them career civil servants status. The initiated processes of de-politicisation under the current overnment are therefore certainly encouraging.

Conclusion

The first four years of democratic changes in Serbia proved to be politically unstable, with frequent government reshuffles during the DOS government rule, followed by the change of the government at early parliamentary elections at the end of 2003. Coalition parties of both governments have continuously been engaged in sharp public disputes on government policy, reinforcing the conditions of high political instability.

The current political situation in Serbia is extremely complex. First, numerous issues of post-federal transition in the looser states of the Union of Serbia and Montenegro have still not been resolved. This has delayed the proclamation of the new Serbian Constitution to replace Milosevic's 1990 Constitution. Secondly, there has been a high level of polarisation between the political elites, primarily between the so-called parties of the democratic block and parties of the previous regime.

Inherited distrust between the state/public administration and citizens has still not been overcome, especially due to the process of regeneration of clientelistic structures at the higher public administration strata (Antonic, 2002). Therefore, many analysts are of the opinion that although the “rulers” have changed, the institutional administrative system has remained the same (Trkulja, 2001).

All coalition governments in Serbia have brought about significant changes within administrative structures. The new government usually appoints members of its coalition as well as a smaller number of non-party affiliated professionals at senior service positions, replacing mandarins from the previous regime. Moreover, government reshuffles, caused mainly by coalition disputes, have been followed by changes in senior personnel, undermining the nascent democratic reform processes. General coalition government instability, as well as post-election senior personnel changes, has triggered the question of the necessity to legally protect the senior officials’ posts from political interference. Although this issue has been raised by some leading coalition politicians, it has not received enough attention. Besides, it is questionable whether a changed legal status of higher senior officials would bring about any improvements in administrative stability.

What is the best way to establish more stable politico-administrative relations under the coalition government in Yugoslavia? The first step in forming more stable politico-administrative interface as well as overall political stability is certainly a formation of a more constrained party system, which was to some extent achieved in the 2003 elections. If the recent trend of unification among smaller parties continues, a gradual stabilization of a previously fairly fragmented political system may be expected in the near future. Lessening levels of polarization between the democratic parties and between the so-called democratic and old-regime blocks would be another highly desirable development. This would provide a ground for building gradual trust between key political factors. It would enable smoother a political power succession and greater administrative stability. Last, overall reform of the civil service in terms of its professionalism and rise of its long lost prestige should enable career civil servants to undertake much more important roles in policy-making, and finally become a recognized factor in the governance processes.

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Politico-administrative Relations Under Coalition Politics in Slovakia

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Since gaining its independence in 1993, Slovakia has been characterised by a multi-party system, where a number of political subjects are represented in Parliament, and consequently coalition governments are formed. Changes in the number of political parties in the Slovak Parliament – that is, the extent of the Slovak party system fragmentation – can be analysed by looking at two distinct government coalitions that ruled in successive full four-year parliamentary periods: the third Meciar Government (1994 – 1998) and Dzurinda's Government (1998 – 2002), and partially by looking at the results of the last elections in September 2002.

Rather than examining cleavages in the Slovak political system, we will focus on analysing the nature of the parties, the shifting, alliance and coalition-making among the parties and party blocks during these periods. In this way, we will highlight the particularities within the coalition governments in Slovakia, reveal the possible reasons and conditions for forming coalitions and, most importantly, focus on the possible consequences of the intra-coalition relationships involved in the stability of the state administration and its policy-making capacity. Further, we will try to focus on establishing any differences and similarities that may arise from different types of coalition governments: the single-party dominance during the Meciar government, the broad coalition government of Mr. Dzurinda and newly created right wing-oriented government.

1. Political-Constitutional Backgrounds of the Coalition Government:

The tradition of the pluralistic parliamentary democracy dates back to the First Czechoslovak Republic (1918 – 1938), which adhered to a system closely modelled on the French one. Even then, the system was characterized by the existence of numerous political parties: 29 altogether, with 14 represented in the Parliament. These were organized along narrow interests of diverse groups in the country and thus contributed to numerous political tensions and conflicts³. The cornerstone of the government during the two decades of the First Czechoslovak

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3 The new Czechoslovak republic was a unitary state that had to represent the interests of both Czech and Slovak nations as well as a considerable number of minorities (German, Hungarian, Ruthenian, Jewish). Toma, Kovac (2001), 79-92.

Republic was a series of four coalitions: the all-national, the red-green, the citizen parties, and the broad bureaucratic coalition.

After the fall of Communism in 1989, Czechoslovakia reverted to a system of proportional representation for parliamentary elections, and this continued in Slovakia after the division of Czechoslovakia in 1992. The first free parliamentary elections held in 1990 gave the coalition of Civic Forum (Czech movement) / Public Against Violence (Slovak movement – VPN) an overwhelming majority of seats. Both movements represented a wide range of opinions and political beliefs, and it was only a question of time until an internal split occurred. In March 1991, Public Against Violence split into two groups: the Fedor Gal group of VPN that later became the Civic Democratic Union and Vladimir Meciar VPN – For a Democratic Slovakia that later was renamed the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (Hnutie za Demokraticke Slovensko – HZDS).

The parliamentary elections in 1992 signified a new government created by a coalition of populist parties with national and social orientations and some authoritarian inclinations led by Meciar's HZDS. Out of 150 seats in the Slovak National Council, almost half (74) were held by HZDS and 15 by the Slovak National Party (see Figure 1). The second-strongest party was the Party of the Democratic Left, formerly the Communist Party of Slovakia (Slovenska Demokraticka Lavica – SDL) with 29 seats and the Christian Democratic Movement (Krestansko-demokraticke hnutie – KDH), a right wing party. These were followed by the coalition of the Hungarian Christian-Democratic Movement, Coexistence Movement and the Hungarian People's Party. A split of Czechoslovakia became inevitable.

The Slovak National Council, elected in June 1992 as an integral part of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic, became the Parliament of the independent Slovak state until the elections of 1994. The Meciar government, originally formed after the 1992 elections, also remained in power. During this period, Meciar's government lost the majority support when eight of his deputies resigned. HZDS made an attempt to form a coalition with the Slovak National Party (SNS) but shortly after their agreement, the National Council forced Meciar's government to fall and asked for new elections.

The first parliamentary elections in the independent Slovak Republic were held in 1994 and used the same electoral rules as in 1992 when the election law was amended.⁴ The amendment raised the required minimum of total votes from three to five percent for single parties, seven percent for coalitions of two or three parties, and ten percent for coalitions of more than three parties. This change in the electoral rules was aimed at stopping the Parliament becoming too fragmented and at discouraging the formation of electoral coalitions merely in

4 Act No.179/1992 on Elections.

order to circumvent the 'five percent clause.' However, the number of participating political parties and movements did not diminish as anticipated.

Although the independence of Slovakia provided an opportunity to change the electoral rules, there were no calls to do so. Because the Constitution of the Slovak Republic does not include any reference to the electoral system (unlike the inter-war Czechoslovak Constitution), it is possible to change the electoral law by a simple majority vote in Parliament; this has become a subject of political quarrels. Since 1994, the electoral rules (namely the proportional system of representation) have been the subject of permanent political discussion. The strongest political party – the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) – expressed its desire to alter the proportional rules in favour of a majoritarian electoral system numerous times, claiming that this would stabilise the Slovak party system and prevent further party system fragmentation. The hidden rationale of Meciar's desire, however, was to insure his movement political victory in the future.

According to empirical data on the number of political parties in the Slovak Parliament, the party system in Slovakia shows a considerable tendency towards fragmentation. Figure No. 1 provides information on party development and election results in the past decade. The main method for creating new political subjects is the intra-parliamentary path, if we use Duverger's terminology. In other words, new parties emerge by splitting off from existing parliamentary parties. This is also the case with two of the most currently important parties: Meciar's Movement for Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) which split off from the Public Against Violence, and Dzurinda's Slovak Democratic and Christian Union (SDKU) which split off from the Slovak Democratic Coalition. A number of new parties were also created in the last parliamentary elections in 2002, but splitting off proved to be fatal for the majority of them. (Three new split-offs, Movement for Democracy, Social Democratic Alternative and Right Slovak National Party, together with two mother parties of the latter ones – Slovak Democratic Left and Slovak National Part – were unable to reach the five percent threshold limit). At the same time, this was one of the most important factors that contributed to the creation of a continuous majority coalition under Dzurinda's lead after the 2002 elections.

Multi-party systems in a parliamentary democracy, such as the one instituted in Slovakia, necessitate electoral alliances and ad hoc coalitions to provide a measure of coherence. Immediately after the Velvet Revolution, the Hungarian minority set up a number of independent parties that united and created a coalition in 1994. This remains, despite internal tensions, the only electoral alliance. From 1993 on, Meciar and his party maintained a cabinet coalition, but electoral alliances were not as common. Although popular support for the opposition during 1994 – 1998 was significantly higher than support for the ruling coalition – primarily because of the heterogeneity of the nonruling political parties and strong self-interest among their leaders – the fragmented political opposition was

unable to assert itself in Parliament as a unified power. The first meaningful electoral alliance did not emerge until summer 1997 when a so-called Blue Coalition (sometimes nicknamed the Rainbow Coalition) was created out of the Christian Democratic Movement, Democratic Union and Democratic Party. It later became the Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK). Within the SDK, there were five platforms that corresponded to the ideological character of the mother parties: Christian Democratic (KDH), liberal (DU), Conservative-liberal (DS), Social Democratic (SDSS) and Green (SZS). Of course, representing such a spectrum of interests, it was only a question of time until the first spin-offs appeared and a gradual reshuffling of SDK deputies took place. DU officially joined SDK, although some former DU members formed a new party, the Liberal Democratic Union (LDU). The majority of DS deputies split from the mother party and formed a new Civic Conservative Party (OKS), while the pro-unification camp of SDK formed a new party, the Slovak Democratic and Christian Union (SDKU). Thus, the Parliament that in 1998 consisted of six political groups comprising 13 political parties, in 2002 incorporated 18 political parties (if we count each party represented by at least one deputy) as well as the three original parties that formed the Hungarian Coalition. Therefore, when in 1998 a coalition of coalitions became the government, nobody expected it would last for four years.

As can be seen from above, the logical consequence of both the Slovak electoral system and its subsequent party system is the need to form coalition governments. The coalition government of Vladimír Mečiar that was formed after the premature elections of 1994 included three political parties: the Movement for Democratic Slovakia (HZDS), the Slovak National Party (SNS) and the Association of Workers of Slovakia (ZRS). After the September 1998 parliamentary elections, HZDS – though again the strongest political party – was not able to form a government with a majority in the Parliament due to its lack of coalition potential. Therefore, Mikulas Dzurinda, leader of the second-strongest party, the Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK), was authorised to form a new government coalition. The negotiations were held among the former opposition parties (SMK, SDE, SDK) and the new parliamentary party, SOP. In the end, the coalition agreement was signed by these four parties. This paper will examine the nature and dynamics of these two coalition governments as they constitute two different types of coalitions.

As far as the tendencies for left-right inclination are concerned, the following development is noteworthy. In the post-Velvet Revolution elections in 1990, the political parties, movements and their coalitions – Movement for Democratic Slovakia, Slovak National Party and the Association of Workers of Slovakia (the latter sometimes referred to as a “class” party) – with populist and nationalist vocabulary dominated the political scene. The program of these parties was ambiguous and obscure; it did not fit the standard left-right continuum. Their

Figure 1

Political parties in Slovakia in alphabetical order and their means of creation (split off or ad-hoc coalition) as well as their status in Parliament after the 1994, 1998, 2002 elections.

PARTY	Creation	Elections 1994		Elections 1998		Elections 2002	
		% votes	Status in Parliament	% votes	Status in Parliament	% votes	Status in Parliament
Alliance of New Citizens (ANO)	2001	N	-	N	-	8.0	Gvt. coalition
Association of Workers of Slovakia (ZRS)	1994	7.3	Gvt. coalition	<5	-	<5	-
Common Choice (SV) – Party of the Democratic Left, Social Democratic Party, Greens, Agricultural Movement	1994	10.4	Opposition	N	-	N	-
Communist Party of Slovakia (KSS) – Former Communist Party of Czechoslovakia	1991 S (KSC)	<5	-	<5	-	6.3	Opposition
Christian Democratic Movement (KDH)	1990	10.0	Opposition	C (SDK)	C (SDK)	8.2	Gvt. Coalition
Democratic Union (DU) - Formerly Civic Democratic Union (Public Against Violence)	1990	8.5	Opposition	C (SDK)	C (SDK)	<5	-
Democratic Party (DS)	1989	<5	-	C (SDK)	C (SDK)	SDKU	SDKU*
Hungarian Coalition Party (SMK) –Hungarian Christian Democratic Movement, Hungarian Civic Party, Coexistence Party	1994	10.1	Opposition	9.12	Gvt. coalition	11.1	Gvt. Coalition
Movement for Democratic Slovakia (HZDS)	1991 S (PAV)	34.9	Gvt. coalition	27.0	Opposition	19.5	Opposition
Movement for Democracy (HZD)	2002 S(HZDS)	N	-	N	-	<5	-
Party for Civil Understanding (SOP)	1998	N	-	8.0	Gvt. coalition	<5	-
Party of the Democratic Left (SDL)	1991 S (KSS)	C (SV)	C (SV)	14.6	Gvt. coalition	<5	-
Social Democratic Alternative (SDA)	2002 S (SDL)	N	-	N	-	<5	-
Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK) - Christian Democratic Movement, Democratic Union, Democratic Party, Social Democratic Party, Greens	1997	N	-	26.3	Gvt. coalition	N	-
Slovak Democratic and Christian Union (SDKU)	2000 S (SDK)	N	-	N	-	15.9	Gvt. Coalition
Slovak National Party (SNS)	1990	5.4	Gvt. Coalition	9.0	Opposition	<5	-
Right Slovak National Party (PSNS)	2001 S (SNS)	N	-	N	-	<5	-
SMER	1999	N	-	N	-	13.4	Opposition

Note: The parties listed represent the most important range of the political spectrum.

* In the 2002 elections, the Democratic Party (DS) withdraw from the elections few days before for the benefit of SDKU, which in return for winning, gave one post to DS.

Key: C (*): part of an ad-hoc coalition created prior to the elections; * abbreviation of the coalition

S (*): split from another party/movement/coalition; * abbreviation of the mother party

N: non-existent party at the time

<5: party gained less than 5% in the elections and thus is not represented in the Parliament

popular support dropped from 48 percent in 1992 to less than 25 percent in 2002 (see Figure 1). In 1999, a new party SMER, headed by Robert Fico, was created. Its program is more to the left with a populist bend. The pre – 2002 election public opinion polls showed a preference for this party as high as 17 – 20 percent. The election result – less than 14 percent – was a surprise to everybody. The so-called standard political parties, on the other hand, gradually earned higher popular support. Thus, it can be argued that political parties with plebiscitary characteristics were gradually moved to the edge of political power, though their still relatively high public support constitutes a potential risk for future. The main right wing parties are the Christian Democratic Movement and Slovak Democratic Christian Union. The Hungarian Party coalition also leans towards the right of the centre with ethnic interests in their policies. A new party, Alliance of a New Citizen, approaches business class; however, their program is not that clearly to the right. The Party of Democratic Left (as a spin off of the Communist Party) became the main leftist power until the elections in 2002 when a spin-off of the Social Democratic Alternative was founded, headed by Weiss and Ftacnik. None of them, however, got into Parliament in 2002. The Party of Civil Understanding that was created before the 1998 elections was left-left oriented. The last elections brought the Communist Party with radical left orientation and a rather chaotic program into Parliament. Only the Democratic Union Party and Democratic Party maintained a strong liberal posture.

Coalition-Making Process in Slovakia

The struggle for power in Slovakia after its independence became not so much a contest to determine which political party, movement or coalition would rule the country, but rather a competition between the organized political forces with a democratic orientation and those with an authoritarian, social-populist and nationalist agenda. Coalition-making reflected this general trend, and two distinctive periods can be identified. One reflected the model of a multi-party system with one dominant party (HZDS) in the 1994 – 1998 period; the other one a broad “coalition of coalitions” (1998 – 2002) that united ten of the 17 political parties, whose reason for coming together was to defeat Meciar. Recent elections in 2002 and the parties that formed a coalition afterwards followed the model of a regular multi-party system without a dominant party. Each election utilized different tactics in the struggle ranging from ad hoc coalition-forming to placing candidates on the lists of larger parties in order to increase their chances for representation to individual “racing” of powerful parties or parties perceived to be powerful. Figure 1 summarizes each election period and the method of election tactics.

Prior to the 1994 election, the Movement for Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) created a coalition with the Peasant’s Party of Slovakia (RSS), and together they received significantly more votes than predicted. In spite of its impressive victory,

the HZDS-RSS coalition was unable to form a government because of the lack of the required majority, and thus Meciar expanded his coalition to include the nationalist SNS and leftist ZRS. The second ad hoc coalition, Common Choice, consisted of four parties and barely gained parliamentary representation (10.4 percent where ten percent is required). The third, the Hungarian Coalition Party, was to become the only stable and lasting coalition for next election.

The context of the political battle in the 1998 election clearly reflected the past four years of Meciar government and influenced the creation of Dzurinda's Slovak Democratic Coalition. As a reaction, HZDS amended the election law on May 20, requiring that every political party, whether in a coalition or not, receive five percent or more of the total votes.⁵ In practice, this would have meant that SDK needed at least 25 percent of all votes (five for each party). The Supreme Court ruled, however, that SDK was one party. The Party of Civic Understanding (SOP) was also created prior to the 1998 elections. Leaders of these two as well as of opposition political parties functioned more like an opposition block or election alliance than regular distinctive parties. At the same time, the unifying platform of the ruling coalition was its dislike of the SDK and Hungarian Coalition Party. This two-pole division of political parties who spoke for the majority in Parliament is best characterized by the words of Mr. Hamzik, Vice-Chairman of the opposition SOP party, after their success in the elections: "These elections were a turning point in Slovakia's history ... The opposition will have a constitutional majority [90 out of Parliament's 150 seats], enough to elect a President and make the constitutional changes needed to return this country to a normal life".⁶

It was a coalition of the right (Slovak Democratic Coalition, Hungarian Coalition Party) and left (Slovak Democratic Left and Party for Civil Understanding) that was reflected in the internal relationship between the leaders, especially when discussing the distribution of certain posts in the government. Shortly after the election, signs of division and disagreement began to show among the four former opposition parties who took nearly 60 percent of the vote in the 1998 elections. The most serious tensions were created by the Party of the Democratic Left, which said it did not want the Hungarian Party to be a part of the new government.⁷ Another source of tension was the ratio of posts to be agreed upon in the coalition agreement. These negotiations took more than a month, and from that time on the government found itself debating bills and programs largely within the coalition. Several serious threats for breaking up the coalition occurred: voting for the Constitution, ombudsman and public administration reform laws. It was only the skills of the premier, Mr. Dzurinda, as well as sacrifices in the contents of the laws that kept the coalition together. In spite of the varying

5 Act No. 187/1998 of May 20, 1998, amending the Act No. 80/1990 on Elections.

6 Slovak Spectator, Volume 4, Number 21, October 5 – 11, 1998.

7 Slovak Spectator, Volume 4, No. 22, October 12 – 18, 1998.

views of its constituent parties, the government succeeded in stabilizing the political system and reactivating the previously obstructed economic reforms. Even more surprisingly it held together for the entire four-year term.

Compared to previous ones, the 2002 elections were characterized by an opposition process: the campaign was no longer a struggle between pro- and anti-Meciar forces. As a result, instead of creating alliances or ad hoc coalitions, most of the parties split or new ones were founded. In early 1999, the situation within the SDK was so frustrating that its chairman, Premier Dzurinda, decided to return to his former Christian Democratic Movement (KDH). Shortly afterwards, he announced the creation of a new political party: the Slovak Democratic and Christian Union (SDKU) which he wanted to use in the 2002 parliamentary elections. Until then the SDK would maintain the status quo. As a result of the increasing fragility of the ruling coalition, two new political parties – SMER and Alliance for a New Citizen (ANO) – were founded. Robert Fico, a former deputy for the Party of the Democratic Left, lead SMER. In 2001, the Slovak National Party split into two fractions and gave birth to the Right Slovak National Party headed by Slota. Spring 2002 witnessed the split of the Party of the Democratic Left (SDL) when a new left wing party, the Social Democratic Alternative (SDA), was created. The SDA, in its first political poll results, immediately matched the strength of the faltering SDL, having captured some of the SDL's most popular politicians (Weiss, Ftacnik, former Minister of Education, and Schmognerova, the former Minister of Finance). When Meciar failed to put his vice-deputy, Gasparovic, on the candidate list for 2002 elections, Gasparovic founded the Movement for Democracy (HZD). It quickly emerged as a political force, but has done little to distance its politics from those of Meciar's opposition Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) party. The result: a whole new range of political parties participated in the 2002 elections. However, only few of them managed to pass the threshold necessary to be represented in the Parliament (see Figure 1).

Coalition Bargains and Agreements

All three coalition governments in Slovakia after 1992 (i.e., after the birth of the independent Slovak Republic) signed formal coalition agreements that defined the main principles of the coalition and established clear guidelines for the division of the positions in Parliament and government. All three agreements are the expression of the majority, solving problems where coalitions are made to gain the required 76 seats in a 150 – seat Parliament. This type of behaviour is characteristic for all countries in the Visegrad region and represents the behavioural residuum obtained during the years of the supremacy of the Communist Party. The coalition agreement represents a way of solving potential conflicts; in some cases, it establishes the mechanisms for solving them. And it is the extent of these provisions that differentiates one coalition agreement from another as they anticipate the behaviour of individual coalition partners and the government coalition as a

whole. Thus, major differences occur in the degree of preciseness of the content and time devoted to the coalition agreement negotiations, particularly between the 1994 Agreement on Coalition Forming and the 1998 Coalition Agreement (but also including Coalition Agreement from 2002). Figure 2 captures the similarities and differences in the assignment of political posts among coalition parties that were anchored in the coalition agreements.

The Agreement on Coalition Forming (1994) had a declarative character; it settled general and basic rules of coordination and defined some aims of the coalition. The agreement stipulated which post would be distributed to which party. However, all significant posts (ministry of finance or economy) were held by the dominant party, HZDS. According to the coalition agreement, ZRS was given a vice-premier, three ministers and three state secretaries, SNS gained two ministers and two state secretaries, RSS had one state secretary and the rest went to HZDS. The position of the HZDS in the coalition government in 1994, which was established by the coalition agreement, was so strong that the authoritarian decision-making, which was often the point of critique of HZDS chairman Vladimir Meciar, was in fact enabled by the vaguely formulated coalition agreement and further intensified by the weak opposition of other coalition partners. The coalition agreement was an example of problem-solving in the majoritarian way with the domination of one party.

The coalition government established in October 1998 was a large coalition of parties (SDK, SD, SMK, SOP) created from former opposition parties that ranged from right to left. The reasons that motivate the establishment of a large coalition are rooted in the programme/platform interests and the links among parties. However, in the case of this coalition, the opposition of the former coalition government as well as planned constitutional changes requiring a qualified majority were (together with other factors) the most significant factors in creating a large coalition government's official programme. Presented to Parliament on November 19, it proposed to sweep away the political legacy of the former government. On that occasion Dzurinda said, "The content of the government programme reflects our efforts to repair all that was spoiled during the last four years".⁸

The Coalition Agreement of 1998, in contrast to the 1994 one, contained an accurate arrangement on how to distribute cabinet posts and which channels of communication would be used; it also settled the exact mechanism of decision-making within the coalition. Thus, the coalition agreement intervened in the distribution of posts to a greater degree. It stipulated the distribution of posts in the cabinet, committees of the NRSR (Parliament), representation to international organizations (The Council of Europe, OSCE, NATO, WEU and EU) and

8 Slovak Spectator, Volume 4, Number 28, Nov. 23 – 29, 1998.

Figure 2

Distribution of posts within Coalition Governments of 1994, 1998 and 2002 according to respective coalition agreements.

Distribution of Posts	% votes	Parliament *		Cabinet		# state secretaries	Foreign Delegation
		# seats	# heads in committies	PM, VPM	# Ministers		
Coalition Agreement 1994							
Movement for Democratic Slovakia (HZDS)	34,9	61	N/a	PM, 2VPM	10	12	N/a
Association of Workers of Slovakia (ZRS)	7,3	13	N/a	VPM	3	3	N/a
Slovak National Party (SNS)	5,4	9	N/a	-	2	2	N/a
TOTAL	47,6	83	N/a	PM+3VPM	15	17	N/a
Opposition (Common Choice + SMK + KDH + DU)	39	67	N/a	-	-	-	N/a
Coalition Agreement 1998							
Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK)	26,3	42	1 VCH + 5	PM, VPM	7	9	10
Party of the Democratic Left (SDL)	14,6	23	CH + 3	VPM	5	5	6
Hungarian Coalition Party (SMK)	9,1	15	1 VCH + 2	VPM	2	4	5
Party for Civil Understanding (SOP)	8	13	1 VCH + 2	VPM	1	4	4
TOTAL	58	93	CH+ 3VCH + 12	PM+ 4VPM	15	22	25
Opposition (HZDS + SNS)	36	57	1 VCH + 6	-	-	-	15
Coalition Agreement 2002							
Slovak Democratic and Christian Union (SDKU)	15,9	28	VCH + 3	PM	5 (1VPM)	8	N/a
Hungarian Coalition Party (SMK)	11,1	20	VCH + 2	VPM	3	6	N/a
Christian Democratic Movement (KDH)	8,2	15	CH + 2	-	3 (1VPM)	4	N/a
Alliance for a New Citizen (ANO)	8	15	VCH + 2	-	3 (1VPM)	4	N/a
TOTAL	43,2	78	CH+ 3VCH + 9	PM+ 1VPM	14 (3VPM)	22	N/a
Opposition (HZDS + SMER + KSS)	39,2	72	1VCH + 8	-	-	-	N/a

Source: Coalition Agreement 1994, 1998, and 200.

Key: PM – Prime Minister, VPM – Vice Prime Minister, CH – Chair of the Parliament, VCH – Vice Chair of the Parliament, N/a – this position was not the subject of the coalition agreement.

Note: * the numbers provided in the column # heads in parl. committies are part of the total number of seats in the Parliament. The numbers within the Cabinet break down into PM/VPM and # of Ministers.

Coalition Agreement 2002 counts with 1 VPM for minorities without portfolio and three ministers who are vice prime ministers at the same time (Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Economy and Ministry of Justice).

Foreign Delegation counted with representatives to the Council of Europe, EU, NATO and OSCE.

State secretary is a political position at the ministry (second man after minister, see Figure 4).

the candidate for presidency. The posts were assigned to specific persons. These arrangements respected the principle of proportionality. Moreover, the coalition agreement specifically stated that each ministry whose minister comes from one coalition party has to have at least one state secretary coming from a different coalition party (see Figure 5). In this way, each ministry had a representative of at least two coalition parties. One of the reasons for this arrangement might have been mistrust among the coalition parties, with each wanting to secure a certain way of control. The result, however, was that the tensions among the coalition parties were reflected within the ministry notably between ministers and state secretaries. The only exception in the proportionality principle was the SDL / SOP party representation in the number of ministry posts. SDL was given one additional minister while SOP balanced this loss with the right to nominate their candidate for a president. (Rudolf Schuster was the head of SOP and became the second president of Slovakia). This coalition agreement bound participants to form a similar institution to that of the Coalition Council on a regional or local level. Since the agreement was signed, however, the KDH (Christian Democratic Party) split from the SDK in November 2000, while some representatives of the Christian Democratic platform merged with the liberal platform of the SDK to create a new political entity – the SDKÚ.

The Coalition Agreement from 2002 is less detailed than the one from 1998; however, it strictly follows the principle of proportionality (see Figure 2). It also stipulates exactly the distribution of posts in the cabinet, parliamentary committees and state secretaries. However, it does not deal in detail with the representation to international organizations or with the exact number of members in the parliamentary committees. One position, Minister of Labour and Social Affairs that belongs to SDKU according to the coalition government, was assigned to Ludovit Kanik, head of the Democratic Party (DS). The Democratic Party withdrew from the elections few days prior to the ballot and gave its support to the Slovak Democratic and Christian Party (SDKU). In the elections, the SDKÚ did far better than expected and in return gave one post to DS. However, even this step was discussed with all coalition members. The coalition agreement gave each party a veto over basic government decisions, and regarded siding with the opposition to defeat a government proposal as a gross breach of faith that could annul the agreement. Most likely, the intent was to ensure that the government's two-seat majority in the 150 – member Parliament was sufficient to sustain four years of stable governance.

The biggest difference between the 1998 and 2002 coalition agreements is the time frame devoted to negotiations prior to the document signing. In 1998, after four weeks of intensive negotiations, “the four,” as the parties called themselves, jointly declared on October 16 that they would have a coalition government agreement signed by October 27. However, it was not until October 29, the

last day of the constitutionally-sanctioned date for the new Parliament to meet, that the coalition agreement was reached. In 2002, the coalition was signed within two weeks of the elections. There were three reasons for this quick turnaround. First, it combined four parties with similar centre-right programmes that had recognized the need to launch certain type of reforms. Second, three of the four government parties had been in coalition in the previous government and been credited with turning Slovakia's international isolation around. Third, the cabinet did not involve populist parties.

2. Role of the President of the State

After the Velvet Revolution, the original constitution followed the parliamentary system first practiced in Czechoslovakia in 1918. Under this system, the government is responsible to Parliament (Slovak National Council) and is a reflection of the composition of Parliament. The president is elected for a five-year term by a three-fifths majority of all members through a secret ballot. However, throughout the course of the development of the country several shortcomings of this system occurred. That led to some constitutional amendments concerning presidential powers towards the Parliament, the cabinet and other political subjects. As a result, direct elections of the president by the citizenry were introduced.

Unlike other modern democratic republics, the president of Slovakia does not have a dominant role either over the government or the Parliament. Although the president, according to constitution, is head of the Slovak Republic, in reality that office is more ceremonial than functional. During ten years' history of independence, Slovakia has had two presidents: Michal Kovac (1993 – 1998) and Rudolf Schuster (1999 – 2004), as well as a substitute president, Vladimir Meciar in 1998. Their terms are connected with different constitutional frameworks and different political situations. Both terms have witnessed various degrees of rivalry between the president and premier. However, the Slovak Republic belongs to few countries where the experience of the president – premier relationship led to the change of the Constitution.

The Constitution of 1992 defined the president as the head of the state, the highest constitutional subject, elected by a three-fifths majority of the Parliament in a secret ballot for five years. He or she was responsible to the Parliament which had the constitutional right to recall him or her for certain specified activities. Since the 1992 Constitution did not expressly stipulate the responsibilities of the head of the state, the president was not obligated to recall a member of the government upon the advice of the premier. In addition, the method of electing the president via Parliament can lead to partial or even severe paralysis of the government if the deputies in the Parliament are unable to agree on a candidate. This conceptualization of the executive powers and grey areas in it can and in this case did lead to misunderstandings between the president and the government,

particularly when there was a personality clash as was the case between President Kovac and Premier Meciar.

Kovac was a candidate of the one-party government, Movement for Democratic Slovakia (HZDS,) and was elected president by Parliament in 1993. Shortly after his election, Kovac started to criticize the negative developments in the country ruled by Meciar and HZDS. HZDS leaders initiated a campaign against Kovac and tried to obstruct the smooth functioning of his office as well as his constitutional powers. Since they lacked the required three-fifths majority to remove the president or change the constitution, they opted for other means to impede his power. In 1995, new laws were passed that assigned the vaguely defined powers of the president to other organs of the government. These included the right to name the director of the Slovak Information Service and the right to remove or name the chief of the army; another law limited the president's right to examine petitions calling for a referendum.⁹

Slovakia has not had a president since Michal Kovac's term in office ended on March 2, 1998. The president's constitutional functions have since devolved to the premier and speaker of the Parliament. Only after the elections in September 1998 was the new government urged to pass a law on direct presidential elections. The amendment of the constitution in January 1999 brought a crucial change by establishing the direct election of the president by the citizenry. In addition, the president can be recalled before the end of the term only by plebiscite. A further stipulation is that the support of at least 15 MPs, or a petition signed by at least 15,000 citizens, is necessary to nominate a candidate for president. The president is elected by winning a simple majority of valid votes. If this does not happen in the first round, the second round between the first two candidates takes place within 14 days. In the second round, the candidate who obtains the largest amount of valid votes is elected. The term remained at five years. The amendment of the Constitution gives the president right to appoint and recall judges, the chair and the vice-chair of the Parliament, the attorney general and three members of the Judicial council.

Rudolf Schuster was a candidate from the Party of Civic Understanding (SOP) and, as set in the coalition agreement, of the government coalition. The second candidate, Vladimir Meciar, represented the opposition. In the first direct presidential elections, 75.4 percent of voters participated and cast their votes for Schuster. In his inaugural speech, President Schuster emphasized that he planned to represent not only the alliance of parties that supported him but also the opposition. His activities included various round tables as well as meetings with the leaders of all political parties in Parliament. The relationship of the president and the cabinet, particularly the prime minister worsened, however, when Hamzik, Vice-Prime Minister for EU integration and a member of the same party as President Schuster, was removed from his office after a corruption scandal.

⁹ Toma, Kovac, pp. 283 – 286.

The critical relationship between the president and prime minister was manifested after the president's report on the state of the republic, which he had submitted in Parliament in both 2001 and 2002. The president reproached the prime minister, noting that he and the members of his cabinet ignored the president's initiatives including proposals of laws, proposals for solving various problems, the problem of coordination of integration and the attempt at conciliation of the whole society. President Schuster became overwhelmingly engaged in the policy-making process, and a lot of the bills were sent by him to Parliament. He in fact offered more than 62 bills during his term, twice as many as his predecessor, Kovac (see Figure 3).¹⁰ The decision of the president as to which bill is to be returned depends to a big extent on the policy advice provided to him by his advisors. The comments and argumentation provided in the bills conclude that the president, particularly if he does not have good relations with the ruling coalition or a member party, may be influenced by certain interest groups or a political party, and thus have a certain impact on the policy-making process.

Figure 3

Number of bills returned by the Czech and Slovak presidents to the Parliament.

Year	Schuster	Havel
1999	3	2
2000	19	5
2001	19	4
2002*	21	4

Note: * Since January to August 2002.

Source: SME, 12/08/2002.

3. Coalition Structures in the Government

The structures and activities of coalition governments are arranged by formal norms, in particular by the Constitution, special laws and other rules (coalition agreement, deliberation rules). Within these norms, a government is arranged into a hierarchical framework of formal relationships which project policy-making in the Slovak republic. The most important actors in governmental politics are the cabinet, Parliament, president, ministries and specialised offices of the state administration, regional and local government. Other organisations include corporate organisations, NGOs, funds, civic associations, foreign partners, media and another interest groups.

As a collective body, the cabinet, using decrees, decides on bills of law, ordinances, the governmental programme and its realisation, on arrangements of social and economic policy, on international treaties as well as on the state budget. The government is accountable to the Parliament. The Constitution also

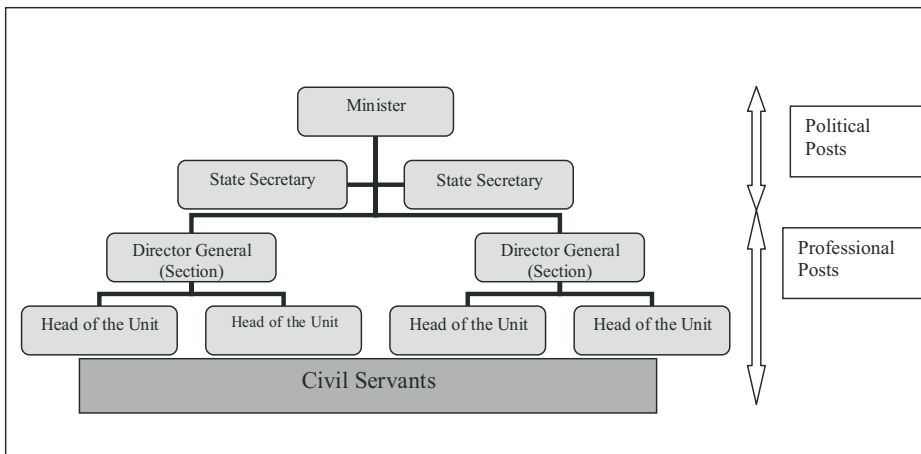
¹⁰ SME, 12/08/2002.

stipulates that each member of the cabinet is accountable to the Parliament. Despite the strong position of Parliament, which is stipulated in the Constitution in terms of the discipline of coalition parties, Parliament has become a place for “registration” of governmental proposals that is typical for a cabinet form of government. The non-problematic adoption of laws was greatly encouraged by the discipline of coalition parties. Legislative work went into a “vicious circle”: Parliament adopted a law involving anti-constitutional arrangements, the president vetoed it, the coalition majority adopted it again, and the president or opposition forwarded it to the Constitutional Court for scrutiny. The Constitutional Court has become the only institution able to regulate anti-constitutional activities by government intertwined with the executive.

Organisational Structure of the Central Executive Bodies

Legislative norms that arrange organisational relations among politicians and civil servants came into effect in April 2002 (Civil service law and Public service law). Prior to that, the practice was that each incoming government tried to place its own people into all key positions (sometimes even two or three layers down in the hierarchy. The new law clearly distinguishes between a political post (minister and state secretary) and a professional career post (head of the office, director generals of the section, heads of units and other staff at the ministry), pictured in the Figure 4. The executive team of the ministry consists of the minister, one or two state secretaries and three to seven director generals of sections (either substantive or supportive). The concrete number depends on the ministry and coalition agreement. The administrative head of a ministry is the head of the office, which is a professional post (prior to the new law it was a clear political post).

Figure 4
General Structure of the Ministry in Slovakia



The first two cabinets retained 15 ministries (see Figure 5). The new government of 2002 has joined the Ministry of Privatization and the Ministry of Economy as the need for the former one decreased after ten years of privatization processes. It was the only ministry that was somewhat reduced despite the pre-election rhetoric for the need to decrease the number of ministries. Changes took place only in the field of internal structure, where top functions, ministers and state secretaries were exchanged. Thus, the internal arrangements frequently change, both in substantive terms (i.e., their scope and field of competencies) and organizational terms (i.e., new sections and departments are created with each government). In part, this is due to the relatively fast changing needs of a transformation society. New democratic governments have to accommodate the changes, so the number of central bodies of government and fields related to newly emerging or dissolving problems are changing. The most stable bodies of the government, with regard to the definition of their competence, are the ministry of culture and ministry of finance. In all the others, either the ministries themselves or the departments in them were split, joined, dissolved or founded. It is difficult to judge which government made the most radical changes. In the ten-year existence of the Slovak Republic there have been 75 ministers with an average duration in the office of 24 months. Both in Meciar's and Dzurinda's governments nine ministers were displaced.

As far as the politico-administrative relations at a ministry are concerned, the following trends and arrangements can be observed. Naturally, the position of a minister is the substance of coalition negotiations. Each agreement clearly defines the ratio among coalition partners. However, the post of a state secretary is also a source of influence as well as a source of control and/or cooperation among coalition partners. Each government has had a different arrangement on this post (see Figure 5). During the Meciar government (1994 – 98), there were two ministries with two state secretaries and the rest had only one secretary. It is notable that each ministry had one representative from the dominant party, HZDS, and that only those ministries had two state secretaries, which had also a state secretary from a coalition party. In this way, the dominant party succeeded in providing its coalition partners with a relevant number of political posts but at the same time controlled each ministry. There were changes in the number of state secretaries during the Dzurinda government (1998 – 2002). In this case there is one state secretary in seven ministries, while the others ministries have two state secretaries. The arrangement strictly follows a principle where a minister from one of the coalition parties has at least one state secretary from another coalition party. This principle is already anchored in the coalition agreement and serves as a sort of check or control by coalition partners. The difference between this and Meciar's arrangement principle is that no single party dominates or is present at each ministry. The last coalition agreement (2002) uses a different arrangement where the state secretary can already be from the same political party

as the minister himself. This change probably occurred after several ministries experienced serious problems in the 1998 – 2002 era when coalition tensions were also reflected in the relations of minister and state secretary. As a result, at some ministries the functioning of a state secretary was hindered (institutionally or by simply not inviting him to the executive team meeting) and the state secretary role was executed by either a head of the office or director general, who was closer to the minister (or directly from his party).¹¹

Figure 5

Distribution of political posts in the ministries among coalition partners in 1994, 1998, 2002

Ministry of	1994		1998		2002	
	Minister	State secretaries	Minister	State secretaries	Minister	State secretaries
Agriculture	HZDS	ZRS, HZDS	SDĽ	SDK, SMK	SMK	KDH, SDKU
Construction and regional development	ZRS	HZDS	SMK	SDK, SDĽ	SMK	SDKU, SMK
Culture	HZDS	ZRS	SDK	SDĽ	ANO	SMK
Defense	SNS	HZDS	SDĽ	SDK	SDKU	SDKU
Economy	HZDS	HZDS	SDK	SDĽ, SOP	ANO	SMK, ANO
Education	SNS	HZDS	SDĽ	SMK, SDK	KDH	ANO, SMK
Environment	HZDS	ZRS	SMK	SDK	SMK	KDH
Finance	HZDS	HZDS	SDĽ	SMK, SDK	SDKU	SMK, SDKU
Foreign Affairs	HZDS	HZDS	SDK	SDK, SDĽ	SDKU	SDKU, SMK
Health	HZDS	SNS	SDK	SDĽ	ANO	SDKU
Interior	HZDS	HZDS	SDK	SOP	KDH	SDKU
Justice	ZRS	HZDS	SDK	SOP	KDH	KDH
Labor and Social Affairs	HZDS	HZDS	SDĽ	SMK	SDKU (DS)*	ANO, SDKU
Privatization	ZRS	HZDS	SOP	SDK	Merged with Min. of Economy	
Transport, Post and Telecommunications	HZDS	SNS, HZDS	SDK	SDK, SOP	SDKU	ANO, KDH

Note: * Democratic Party (DS) withdrew from the elections few days prior to the elections for the benefit of the Slovak Democratic and Christian Party (SDKU) which, after its success in the elections, in return gave a ministerial post to the head of DS.

Source: Coalition agreement 1994, Coalition Agreement 1998, Coalition Agreement 2002.

The role of the state secretary is defined neither in the coalition agreement nor in the legislative rules or guidelines. Only a few ministries have defined the function of state secretary in their organisational order or in the statute of the ministry (in the government of 1998 – 2002 it was only four ministries). In prac-

11 A detailed description of the position of the state secretary in Slovakia and possible suggestions for future can be find in „The Role of State Secretaries“by K. Staronova in Úspešná a úsporná vláda: Odporúčania pre budúci kabinet [Policy Options for Efficient and Effective Governing], Beblavy, Salner (eds.)

tice, however, state secretaries play the role of a junior minister or vice-minister and are responsible for a concrete area and departments. For example, one state secretary in the Ministry of Transport, Telecommunications and Post oversees transport departments; and the other is responsible for post and telecommunications. Similarly, state secretaries in the Ministry of Education have fields determined by the educational system: primary / secondary education and higher education, respectively.

Government Office, Cabinet and the Role of the Prime Minister

The Government Office of the Slovak Republic is the central body of the government; its functions are precisely defined by the Competency Law (Act No. 575/2001). According to this law, the role of the Office is defined as follows:

- Coordination of the ministries' activities;
- Preparation of material and documentation (initiatives, analyses, expertises, comments) for the cabinet meetings (prime minister, vice prime ministers and other members of the cabinet);
- Oversight of task fulfilment by the civil service in the individual ministries and oversight of the spending of the finances dedicated to the fulfilment of the tasks;
- Initiation and coordination of the reports on state and development trends in economic, social and cultural areas of the Slovak republic.

Thus, the Government Office is the central coordinating unit where all major policy initiatives should be screened prior to their submission to the cabinet meeting. However, past experience revealed several institutional drawbacks.¹² First, there is inadequate linkage of the work of the coalition cabinet with the Parliament. In practice, it means that bills that have been discussed and approved by the cabinet are not passed in Parliament because of the failure in the voting pattern of the coalition party members. These either sustain from voting or create ad-hoc alliances with opposition (more on this in the section on policy-making). Second, the cabinet itself does not include all of the heads of the coalition parties (Ján Slota, SNS and Ján Lupták, ZRS in the 1994 – 1998 period; Béla Bugár, SMK and Jozef Migaš, SDL in the 1998 – 2002 period), which decreases the decision-making power of the cabinet. In order to overcome these problems all three coalition governments brought into political decision-making an extra-constitutional mechanism; however, only the last two (1998, 2002) institutionalised this instrument into the form of a “coalition council”.

The coalition council has become the highest institution in the decision-making process within the coalition. Its main aim is to create a platform where deliberation and unification of coalition partners' opinions on major policies

¹² This section draws heavily from Beblavy (2002), pp. 27-33.

and bills take place; to ensure coherent progress in their collaboration; and to reveal potential problem areas that necessitate changes in the governmental programme. Meetings of the coalition council take place regularly twice a month at a minimum or whenever a member of the coalition council requests. Each of the coalition partners has one vote. Thus, the real bargaining and decision-making process takes place in the coalition council that constitutes a parallel policy-making structure to the one anchored in the Constitution. Yet this conflict resolution mechanism is often not very effective as it is used too late in the process; i.e., when the conflict has already risen. There is no mechanism in place that would foresee potential conflict areas among coalition partners and would try to resolve it on the level of party experts first.

The coalition council consists of:

- Leaders of coalition parties or their deputies;
- Chairs of the parliamentary groups or their deputies;
- Members of the cabinet (max. one person of each party).

The Government Office is the central body for policy-making. It is divided into divisions and departments that provide substantive expertise to the prime minister, vice-prime ministers and advisors. During the last coalition government (1998 – 2002), each vice-prime minister represented one coalition party. As a result, the Office of the Government reflected the tensions and divisions among the coalition partners where individual divisions and departments worked only for its vice-prime minister and did not cooperate with other ones. Thus, there existed five more or less independent units: division for government legislation, economic policy, minorities and rights, European Integration and security control of personal data. The lack of coordination and unclear responsibility issues were reflected in the work of the whole cabinet. The newly-elected government has chosen a different pattern of work when only one vice-prime minister (dealing with minority and human rights issues) will reside in the Office of the Government. All others are simultaneously holding a position as ministers at a ministry. It is, however, premature to comment on this arrangement.

The government appoints and recalls someone to direct the Office of the Government. He or she is accountable directly to the prime minister. There is an unwritten rule that candidates for the post of the head of the Government Office are political nominees of the strongest coalition party; i.e., the party with the majority of votes from the elections. However, it has to be noted, this post is not discussed in the coalition agreement.

The Role of the Prime-Minister

According to the Constitution of the Slovak Republic, the prime minister is appointed and recalled by the president among members of Parliament. It depends on the president who will be appointed to office, because the Constitution does

not specify how the selection of a candidate should take place. In the case of the last two coalition governments, the leader of the strongest coalition party took the position of prime minister. Thus, although in both cases the elections were won by HZDS, it was not able to create a coalition, and it was the leader of the second party in terms of the number of votes who became prime minister because of the coalition potential.

Amendments to the Constitution since 1999 clarified institutional relations between the prime minister and other officials, mainly the relationship with the president, which was a substance of numerous conflicts in the past. The prime minister has the formal right to appoint and recall any of the ministers, but in reality he depends on the will of his coalition partners. In case of the resignation of the prime minister, the whole cabinet has a duty to do the same. The National Council may declare a vote of non-confidence to the cabinet or to a single member of the cabinet.

The role of the prime minister in the coalition usually depends on the personality of the prime minister and the type of the coalition. Beblavy, ed. (2002) distinguishes between two distinct roles of a prime minister: leader and arbitrator. In the case of the former, a certain threat exists that the leader will become too dominant and the coalition partners will gradually subordinate themselves to the will of the most powerful party. As a result, the electorate perceives the coalition as one party. The latter case may turn into a less effective coalition when too many compromises are made in order to keep the broad coalition in place. The optimal role of a prime minister, according to Beblavy, is to combine these two roles. The last two government leaders demonstrated these two different roles in the coalition: Meciar was a good example of a “leader type” whereas Dzurinda corresponds to the type of an arbitrator.

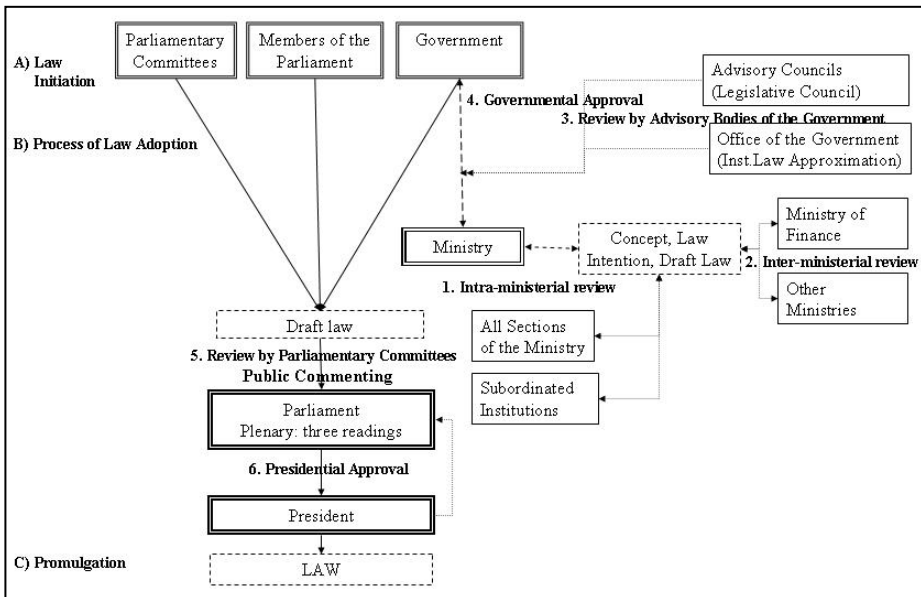
To sum up, the organisational structure of the governmental executive bodies (ministries and offices of the central government) and the relationships among them as well as the relationship between the politicians and civil servants has great impact on the functioning and effectiveness of the civil service.

4. Coalition-Related Specialties in the Policy-Making Process

The formal framework for policy development is set by the laws that regulate the initiation of new laws and amendments, the process of law adoption and its promulgation. All processes that are formally regulated are of legislative nature (see Figure 7), regulated by, in particular, the Legislative Rules of the Government and Guidelines for Drafting and Presenting the Materials for Sessions of the Government of Slovakia. There exist no formal rules or guidelines in regards to a broader policy process that encompasses the formulation of problems, design of concepts, strategies and policy analyses or design of action plans, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

The individual coalition government develop their own mechanisms and procedures in order to achieve a relatively stable working environment and smooth policy-making / decision-making processes. The arrangements of the last two coalitions (1998 – 2002 and the current one since 2002) are rather formal and anchored in the coalition agreements in the form of a coalition council. Another mechanism for smooth coalition policy-making is the representation of at least two coalition partners at the ministerial level (minister, state secretary) where the formation of policies takes place.

Figure 7
General Policy-Making Process in Slovakia



Source: *Cultural Change into Professional Policy Making: The Case of Slovakia* by K. Staronova, p. 8

The main difference between the work of the coalition government in 1994–98 and that of Prime Minister Dzurinda’s was the way they were constituted and the way they entered the post-election political scene. The former government led by Vladimir Meciar involved three political parties, with the Movement for Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) dominant. The two smaller parties – Slovak National Party (SNS) and Workers’ Association of Slovakia (ZRS), the former of strong nationalistic orientation the latter of leftist character – served as a reservoir of reliable votes in Parliament. Naturally, Meciar’s government acted with great coherence and speed. A very good example of this behaviour is when the HZDS – SNS – ZRS party coalition acted straight after constituting the governing coalition. The initial parliamentary session in the new election period took place on 3rd November 1994. The new coalition secured their position by eliminating any opposition from important

parliamentary committees and by designating persons to posts such as attorney general, National Property Fund (FNM) the Supreme Control Authority (NKU) and other public institutions such as the Slovak TV or Radio. Having gained 83 parliamentary seats, the new coalition did not have to overcome any serious barriers in implementing their strategies. The 1994–98 coalition was quite a formal one. HZDS dominated all decision processes, with little respect to its coalition partners, the power being the main tie. HZDS was the party with success in policy and decision-making. Its members held key positions at the departments of finance, economy, internal affairs, foreign affairs, health care and privatisation, all headed by Prime Minister Meciar. These departments have been the substantial resorts of all aspects of policy-making including agenda setting, preparation, evaluation and implementation of the main structural reforms of public sector and privatisation. By backing the HZDS, the smaller coalition partners received several benefits as an exchange for being safe and secure partners.

The culture of decision-making and decision implementation in this era is characterized by the lack of transparency. Privatisation had been the main showcase. From the institutional viewpoint, Meciar's government made significant steps towards creating conditions under which the lack of transparency, an uncontrolled number of agents and corrupting factors could enter the privatisation process without any sanctions. The absence of controlling and check mechanisms caused the privatisation process to be the quickest and most corrupted activity covered by the government. The government changed the mode of privatisation by transferring the responsibility for any decisions to the National Property Fund (FNM); this step a not constitutional one. As a result, whole enterprises were sold below price and by the direct sales method, and the FNM lost control over reliability of any privatisation proposals.

The coalition that emerged from the parliamentary election in October 1998, despite many splits, has survived and became the second coalition government to serve the full four-year election period. The coalition parties offered the opposition representation in all relevant institutions according to the proportional representation. It proclaimed the end of undemocratic rules and pledged to obey the formal democratic procedures. However, HZDS refused their opposition post but with no effect. The new coalition government had 91 seats – a qualified majority – in Parliament. In spite of this fact, the differing views and orientations of its coalition members ranging from right to left had peculiar consequences on the policy-making process.

One of the key impacts on the institutional environment was the slowing-down effect in policy-making and policy decision-making at the central level of government. It evolved from a coalition agreement process that requires participating parties to meet before any government action is taken. The so-called Coalition Council is a primary field of the bargaining process in the central government. Its impor-

tance has dynamically increased during the last election period due to the increase in the number of parties represented in the coalition. The two dominant areas of policy-making and decision-making of the central government since 1994 have been structural reforms and privatisation. The processes of bargaining and inter-party negotiations can be clearly observed in this period in the processes of decision-making regarding the privatisation processes.

Another key consequence in the policy-making process is the creation of ad hoc coalitions, consisting of opposition MPs and certain MPs from the ruling coalition, to reach specific ends. These coalitions, formed with a view to voting on vital pieces of legislation, weakened the ruling coalition. This was particularly true in the case of two key laws on public administration reform, notably the Law on Higher Territorial Units and Law on Elections to the Bodies of Self-Governing Regions. The original government-sponsored law submitted to Parliament in May 2001 envisioned the creation of 12 self-governing regions. However, an ad hoc majority that was formed in July voted for HZDS's amending proposal to create eight self-governing regions. It comprised MPs from the HZDS, SNS, SDL and SOP. Similar features encountered the voting for the ombudsman candidates where an ad hoc coalition comprised of HZDS, SNS, SDL overvoted the government candidate.

5. Conclusions

Coalition politics in Slovakia presents a particularly interesting case because it represents three different types of coalition governments: first, one dominant party (Meciar and HZDS) government coalition functioning during the 1994 – 1998 era; second, a broad coalition uniting all the opposition parties ranging from right to left during the 1998–2002 era; and finally, a newly-elected right wing-oriented coalition since 2002. Although the recent coalition is too young to be reviewed in terms of policy-making processes, the negotiations and contents of its coalition agreement allow the inclusion of some general conclusions into the analysis of the first two coalition governments.

First, the type of the coalition agreement and relations within the coalition have profound consequences on the quality and speed of the policy-making processes. The more equal the partners in the coalition, the more complicated is the process through which the policy proposal has to pass in order to reach the parliamentary agenda, and the more compromises have to be made in the content of the proposal. Special mechanisms are put in place to foresee problems, and parallel policy-making structures occur for bargaining and negotiations. Thus, in practice the efficiency is relatively low and only the pressure from outside (e.g. the EU) speeds up the process. At the same time, similarly-oriented parties in the coalition may have the potential to speed up the process, as was the case of the recent negotiations of right wing-oriented parties about the coalition agreement that was reached in one-third time of the previous government.

A dominant party coalition, on the other hand, does not encounter the slowing down effect as basically no negotiations are taking place. The impact of this type of coalition government, however, is visible in the politicization of civil servants. The leaders of the dominant party strive to place its people in key positions in the administration in several layers. Thus, the members of the dominant party fill not only the political but also the professional positions. The fact that until 1 April 2002, there was no civil and public service law intensified this specific problem. This meant that the coalition government played a major role in deciding on public appointments, since there was no formal way of establishing how appointments should be made. Thus, one of the key problems, which the current coalition government has to solve, is to re-establish the legitimacy of public authority and of the civil service in particular.

In conclusion, both the relative power of parties within the coalition, and their organisational structures and policy goals, are politically relevant. In the Slovak case, the interplay of these elements is significant because it allows us to control the extent to which institutional restraints affect the way that coalitions work, and also to suggest other factors which affect government.

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Ministry of Finance: <http://www.finance.gov.sk>

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Ministry of Defence: <http://www.mod.gov.sk>

Ministry of Agriculture: <http://www.mpsr.sk>

Ministry of Culture: <http://www.culture.gov.sk>

Ministry of Health: <http://www.health.gov.sk>

Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs: www.employment.gov.sk

Ministry of Privatization: <http://www.privatiz.gov.sk>

Ministry of Justice: <http://www.justice.gov.sk>

Ministry of Education: <http://www.education.gov.sk>

Ministry of Foreign Affairs: <http://www.minv.sk>

Ministry of Interior: <http://www.civil.gov.sk>

Ministry of Construction and Regional Development: <http://www.build.gov.sk>.

Newspapers and Document Sources on Internet

Complete collection of laws: <http://www.zbierka.sk>

PRAVDA, daily newspapers: <http://www.pravda.sk>

SME, daily newspapers: <http://www.sme.sk>

Slovak Spectator, weekly English language newspapers: <http://www.slovakspectator.sk>

Section II

West European Countries

“Politico-administrative Relations under Coalition Governments: The Case of Belgium”

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Introduction

The relationship between ministers and civil servants has been a subject for consideration in public administration research since the end of the 19th century.² The classic dichotomy has been the starting point of the study of politico-administrative relations. The core concept of this idea starts from a clear distinction of policy-making and policy implementation to protect the administration from political influence. The discussion continues at the beginning of the 20th century with Max Weber, and is further accelerated by authors who take over the dichotomised relationship and start rethinking it (for example: Simon Waldo, Gulick, Sayre, Svara). During the 1980s, several authors started devising new models for understanding and explaining politico-administrative relations. Examples of these models can be found in the work of Aberbach, Putnam and Rockman or Guy Peters.³

The rise of New Public Management both reinforces and denies that dichotomy. While the public choice paradigm has left the dichotomy alone, managerialism gives the dichotomy new life. In the various conceptualisations of politico-administrative relations, ministerial cabinets are often forgotten, but in Belgian, politico-administrative relations ministerial cabinets play an important role. Authors often ascribe only political functions to them, and consider them only an extension of the politicians. Ministerial cabinets, however, do not fulfil only political functions; they also fulfil policy-making functions. The sheer number and scope of their functions transform them into real institutions. Studying politico-administrative relations in a Belgian context without including ministerial cabinets would therefore be useless.

In this paper, we first present some background data on the Belgian political system. Next, we focus on the ministerial cabinets, and especially on the role they fulfil in the policy-making process, as well as their impact

1 Public Management Institute, Catholic University of Leuven, Leuven, Belgium

2 WILSON W., “The Study of Administration”, In: *Political Science Quarterly*, 1887.

3 ABERBACH J.D., PUTNAM R.D., ROCKMAN B.A., *Bureaucrats and Politicians in Western Democracies*, Cambridge, 1981, 308 p.; PETERS B.G., “Bureaucrats and Political Appointees in European Democracies: Who’s Who and Does it Make Any Difference?” in: Farazmand A., *Modern Systems of Government: Exploring the Role of Bureaucrats and Politicians*, London, Sage Publications, 1997, pp.232-254; PETERS G.B., “Politicians and bureaucrats in the Politics of policy-making”, In: LANE Jan-Erik, *Bureaucracy and Public Choice*, Bristol, Sage, 1987, pp 256-282

on politico-administrative relations. In the first section, we also provide an overview of Belgian political parties and the party system. Belgium has been a federal state since 1993, and “Belgian” federal parties means those political parties who are active in the Federal Parliament, with one caveat. In this paper, we confine our discussion of Parliament to the Lower House, and not the Senate, whose policy-making powers were recently reduced. In the context of political-constitutional background, we also deal with the way governing coalitions are formed and with the nature of coalition agreements. In the last subsection of section 1, we also discuss the possible coalition reconciliation mechanisms in Belgium.

In order to help understand the influence of political parties and the cabinet formation on the administration, the second section focuses on the coalition structures in government. This section highlights the distribution of positions and political appointments, and briefly describes the role of the prime minister. It also discusses coordination bodies. The final section describes the way policy advice is produced in Belgium. Ministerial cabinets not only assume several functions in the policy-making process, they also create numerous dysfunctions in politico-administrative relations. Important reforms are now being implemented to downsize the role of ministerial cabinets and to improve relations between the political and administrative levels. In the last part of this paper, we focus on this reform and on how it tries to improve relations. In the last two sections, we also briefly discuss the role of the king in coalition formation and the coalitions in the Parliament.

1. Political-Constitutional background of the coalition government⁴

Studying politico-administrative relations comparatively requires some data on the political and constitutional background of countries. For this reason, the first section of this paper deals with the political context of the political-administrative system in Belgium.

1.1. The number of parties in the Belgian Parliament: a brief overview

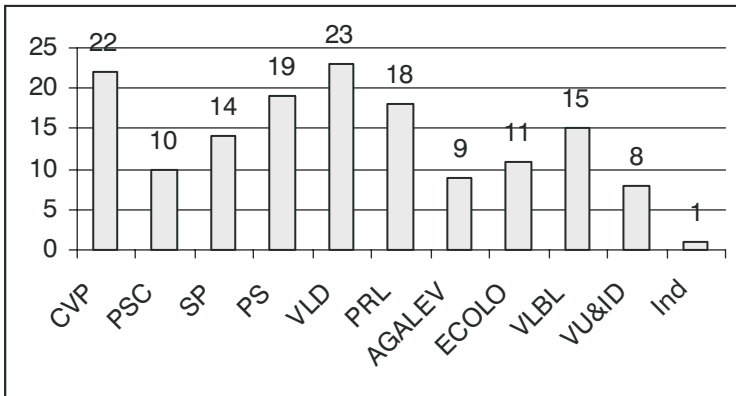
The Belgian party system has witnessed tremendous change since the creation of the country. In the 19th century, Belgium started as a two-party system with Catholics and Liberals. After the breakthrough of the Socialist party at the end of the 19th century, Belgium became an example of a two-and-half party system. The Liberals were the smallest party at that time. In the middle of the 20th century (1949), there were four parties in Parliament (Lower house), while in 1981 fourteen parties were represented in the same Lower house. After 1981, a slight

⁴ The authors would like to thank Dr. Sam Depauw for his collaboration.

decrease took place so that today the Lower House of the Parliament contains 12 political parties.⁵

The large increase in the number of parties in the Belgium Parliament was noticeable during the 60s and 70s. During these turbulent years in Belgian politics, the ethno-regionalist parties were created: the Volksunie (VU) in Flanders, the Rassemblement Wallon (RW) in Wallonia and the Front Démocratique des Francophones (FDF) in the Brussels region. Because of growing conflicts between the two main linguistic groups – the Flemish and the Walloons – the more traditional parties [the Catholics (1968), the Liberal (1972) and the Socialist party (1978)] split into a Flemish – and a French-speaking branch. Since then Belgium has had no unitary parties. “Hence one crucial feature of the Belgian party system is that there are no ‘Belgian’ parties any more! All parties are homogeneously Flemish or Francophone, and only present themselves in the Flemish or Francophone constituencies.”⁶

Figure 1
The political parties and proportion of seats in the Federal Parliament
(Lower House)



At the end of the 70s, there was another increase in the number of Belgian political parties. The extreme right party – the Vlaams Blok (VB), the poujadist Union Democratic pour le Respect du Travail (UDRT) and the Green parties (AGALEV in Flanders and ECOLO in Wallonia) – emerged. While the Communists, the RW and the UDRT lost their seats in Parliament with the elections of 1981, the Francophone extreme right party, Front National (FN), showed up in the Belgian political system with the elections of 1991. Since the last parlia-

5 http://belgium.fgov.be/nl_index.htm, 15 April 2002.

6 DE WINTER L., TIMMERMANS A. & P. DUMONT, “Belgium. On Government Agreements, Evangelists, Followers and Heretics” in: MULLER W. & K. STROM, *Coalition Governments in Western Europe*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 301.

mentary election in 1999, the Flemish Liberal party is the biggest in the Lower House with 23 seats. The Flemish Christian Democrats is the next biggest faction with 22 seats. The third party is the Francophone Socialist party followed by the Liberal party, together with the FDF. Together, they have 18 seats in Parliament. Today the majority in the Parliament is composed of Liberals (VLD=Flemish; PRL=Francophone), Socialists (SP=Flemish; PS=Francophone) and Greens (AGALEV=Flemish; ECOLO=Francophone). Together, they have 94 of 150 seats in the Parliament.

1.2. Belgium: a multi-dimensional party system

In the literature, the Belgian party system is described as a multi-dimensional party system. Three dimensions are noted: a left-right dimension, a Catholic and anti-clerical dimension, and a regional-linguistic dimension. On the socio-economic dimension, we can consider the Socialist party at the left of the spectrum, the Liberals on the right and the Christian Democrats at the centre. For the new parties it is not that easy to put them on the left-right dimension. Until the mid-60s, the Volksunie was a centre-right party but in 1968 the party moved to the centre-left. During the 80s the party took a Liberal-left label. After the election of the president in 1992, the party moved more to the left.

The same can be said about the FDF. While in the 60s the party was situated at the centre, it moved to a centre-left position in the 70s and 80s. In the 90s, they started collaborating with the Francophone Liberal party, and since then can be considered as a right party. The Vlaams Blok is put on the extreme right side of the spectrum, although the party does not have a well-developed socio-economic programme according to Spruyt.⁷ The Green parties moved from the centre-left position to a position close to the Socialist Party.

On the clerical – anti-clerical dimension, we can consider the Christian Democratic party together with the Vlaams Blok on the clerical side of the spectrum. All the other parties can be put on the opposite side of the spectrum.

The regional-linguistic dimension is the last dimension which can be taken into consideration for the study of the Belgian party system. The Christian Democratic party and the Volksunie can be considered as the protectors of the Flemish case. The Vlaams Blok is the extremist Flemish party. On the Walloon side of Belgium, the FDF and the PS are the parties that focus most on the regional-linguistic dimension.

7 SPRUYT M., Grove Borstels, Leuven, Van Halewyck, 1995, 291 p. op cit in: DE WINTER L., TIMMERMANS A. & P DUMONT, "Belgium. On Government Agreements, Evangelists, Followers and Heretics" in: MULLER W. & K. STROM, *Coalition Governments in Western Europe*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 306.

Figure 2

Political parties in Belgium in alphabetical order (election 1992, 1995, 1999)

Party	Creation	Elections 1992		Elections 1995		Elections 1999	
		%	Status	%	Status	%	Status
AGALEV	1981	4.9	Opposition	4.4	Opposition	7.0	Gvt Coalition
CVP	1968	16.8	Gvt Coalition	17.2	Gvt Coalition	14.1	Opposition
ECOLO	1981	5.1	Opposition	4.0	Opposition	7.4	Gvt Coalition
FDV /PRL (MR)	1964/1972 (2002)	1.5/8.1	Opposition	10.3	Opposition	10.1	Gvt Coalition
FN	1991	1.1	Opposition	2.3	Opposition	1.5	Opposition
PS	1978	13.5	Gvt. Coalition	11.9	Gvt. Coalition	10.2	Gvt Coalition
PSC	1968	7.7	Gvt. Coalition	7.7	Gvt. Coalition	5.9	Opposition
PVV (VLD)	1972 (1992)	12.0	Opposition	13.1	Opposition	14.3	Gvt Coalition
ROSSEM	1992	3.2	Opposition	-	-	-	-
SP	1978	12	Gvt. Coalition	12.6	Gvt. Coalition	9.5	Gvt Coalition
VL BL	1978	6.6	Opposition	7.8	Opposition	9.9	Opposition
VU	1954	5.9	Opposition	4.7	Opposition	5.6	Opposition

1.3. The coalition formation: between formal rules and reality

Belgium has a proportional representation system. That, together with the large number of political parties, means it is almost impossible for one party to win a majority in the Parliament. After the elections, political parties in Belgium need to look for a coalition with other parties. This formation process⁸ is structured by several formal and informal rules. According to the Constitution (Art. 96), it is the king who appoints and dismisses the ministers. Reality shows a different picture.

The coalition formation starts with a consultation of the political and socio-economic leaders by the king. Usually the largest party takes the initiative (if it is interested). The king appoints an *informateur* or a *formateur* to start the negotiations. An *informateur* is used mostly when the political situation is complicated. The *informateur* often has a particular task and, after an exploration of the political field, reports to the king who decides to give another task to the same *informateur* or assigns another *informateur*. Afterwards, the king nominates a *formateur*. This *formateur* negotiates with particular political parties about the coalition and the government agreement.

8 The description of the coalition process is based on DEWACHTER W, De mythe van de parlementaire democratie, Leuven, Acco, 2001, pp. 30-31.

According to Dewinter there are four “stages” in this negotiation: first, the party combination; second, the negotiations on policy; third, the distribution of portfolios; and last, the appointment of ministers.⁹ The next section focuses on the content of the coalition agreement. In addition to these formal elements, a lot of other elements are negotiated during the coalition formation; for example, the coalition building at the regional level. The coalition-building processes at the federal and regional levels are often connected to each other. During the coalition talks at the federal level, it is possible that informal agreements are made for the other level. Another element which can be an objective of the coalition formation is the role of Parliament. Sometimes it is mentioned that sensitive policy issues can only be discussed within Parliament without interference from the government. At other incidences, the initiative is reserved for the government. Last but not least the distribution of top positions in the civil service is discussed.

The appointment of the ministers is a process of checks and balances. Article 99 of the Constitution prescribes an equal number of Flemish – and French-speaking ministers in the cabinet.¹⁰ The government also tries to find an equilibrium of representatives and senators and a fair representation of the different provinces and genders. The distribution of portfolios is one of the most sensitive exercises in the coalition formation process. Sometimes the partners try to “mathematise” the process. An example can be found in the “3 – 2 – 1 – rule” which was installed in 1980. The function of the prime minister counts for three points, a minister for two and a secretary of the state for one. Even the president of the Lower House and Senate are in this process (each counts for two points).

As mentioned above, the number of Flemish and Francophone ministers should be equal, the PM excluded. First, the partners in the negotiations must decide how many points each linguistic community gets. After this distribution, the coalition members decide how many points each party receives according to their strength in Parliament.

In the first round, each party president chooses his or her preferred portfolio. The first round starts with the strongest party and ends with the weakest. Afterwards, the first round is evaluated according to the initial distributed points. At this moment bilateral and multilateral negotiations start among the parties. In later bargaining rounds, political parties start switching portfolios and competencies. In 1988, even the Belgian seat in the European Commission was one of the elements of the bargain.

9 DE WINTER L., TIMMERMANS A. & P. DUMONT, “Belgium. On Government Agreements, Evangelists, Followers and Heretics” in: MULLER W. & K. STROM, *Coalition Governments in Western Europe*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 309.

10 Until 1995 there was no restriction on the number of ministers. Most of the time, the number of ministers was part of the negotiations. After 1995, the constitution prescribed in Article 99 the maximum number of ministers at 15.

If these negotiations fail, the king assigns a new *formateur* who starts new negotiations, but if the negotiations have been successful the *formateur* becomes prime minister. After these negotiations, the national party conference of the different coalition parties votes the government composition and the government programme. “*No party conference has ever rejected a coalition agreement.*”¹¹ This is not surprising because most of the members of this institution have an interest in their party participating in the government.¹² Because government participation facilitates strengthening their individual and collective support to their constituency, party members could receive positions in the ministerial cabinets or in high-ranking positions of the civil service. The coalition agreement appears to tie the political parties together into something approaching the cartel model of Mair.

In the next step, the king assigns the ministers. The Belgium government needs a positive investiture from Parliament. This statement means that the government needs the confidence of the majority of Parliament. This is the last step in the coalition formation.

1.4. The coalition agreement as the coalition bible

The coalition agreement is a written text, usually published together with the official government declaration for Parliament. Analytically, there are three parts in the coalition agreement: the policy package, the issues and the procedural rules. The portfolios or patronage agreements hardly ever appear in written coalition agreements.

The coalition agreement consists of a policy package. This package is the policy agenda for the cabinet. In this package, the cabinet sets out its plan for the coming legislature. Some elements are, of course, more explicit than others. The issues are elements which come back in every coalition agreement because they caused a lot of troubles in past legislatures (examples include cultural autonomy, regionalisation of socio-economic competences, boundaries of Brussels). The coalition agreements make the government’s stance on these issues explicit, hence seeking to rule out conflicts in advance.

The last component in the coalition agreement is the procedural rules. This agreement is often called the coalition bible, because in times of crisis the coalition partners refer to it as a contract they closed. The coalition agreement can be seen as an element of conflict prevention during the legislature. In this respect, the literature sometimes refers to the transaction costs.¹³ When the transaction

11 DE WINTER L., TIMMERMANS A. & P. DUMONT, “Belgium. On Government Agreements, Evangelists, Followers and Heretics” in: MULLER W. & K. STROM, *Coalition Governments in Western Europe*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 323.

12 *Ibid.*, p. 324.

13 ANDEWEG R. & A. TIMMERMANS, “Conflict Management in Coalition Government” in: MULLER W. & K. STROM, *Coalition Governance in Western Europe*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, forthcoming.

costs of a party to break down the coalition are relatively high because of the energy invested in the coalition agreement, the stability of the government rises. One of the rules of the game is the morality of duty.¹⁴ This is not explicitly mentioned in the agreement but comes out of the positive investiture by Parliament. The legitimacy of the position and initiatives of the members of the government, party leaders and parliamentary parties derives from references to the coalition agreement. The coalition agreement not only ties the political parties together but also the cabinet, particularly so in times of crisis.

1.5. The coalition reconciliation mechanisms

It is clear from the previous section that conflicts in coalition governments are not ruled out with the conclusion of a coalition agreement. Stability in the political system and policy will need some conflict management processes in the cabinet and/or government. The coalition reconciliation mechanisms try to avoid the cabinet falling at each potential conflict, and can be seen as conflict management tools. The literature recognises three arenas of conflict management within the coalition: internal, external and mixed.¹⁵ The participants in these arenas differ. The internal arena comprises only ministers. In the external arena ministers are excluded, while in a mixed arena cabinet members interact with others. The following are examples.

Internal: the inner cabinet

The members of the inner cabinet are the prime minister and deputy minister. This inner cabinet is not constructed around a specific issue. *“This inner cabinet meets quite regularly, and is a forum in which coalition parties reach major decisions on conflictual matters, decisions that the full cabinet then formally ratifies.”*¹⁶ In Belgium, each coalition partner usually has a deputy minister. The inner cabinet brings together the leading members of the coalition. Deputy ministers can even create a special staff to help them in their task as deputy minister. This staff is called “the ministerial cabinet of general policy”. Deputy ministers can rely on two ministerial cabinets, one for their sectoral competences and one to assist with their tasks.

14 DE WINTER L., TIMMERMANS A. & P. DUMONT, “Belgium. On Government Agreements, Evangelists, Followers and Heretics” in: MULLER W. & K. STROM, *Coalition Governments in Western Europe*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 322.

15 ANDEWEG R. & A. TIMMERMANS, “Conflict Management in Coalition Government” in: MULLER W. & K. STROM, *Coalition Governance in Western Europe*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, forthcoming.

16 DEWINTER AND DUMONT “Belgium: Delegation and accountability under partitocratic rule.” In: *Coalition Governance in Western Europe*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, forthcoming.

Mixed

The mixed arena, in which reconciliation mechanisms involve both members of the cabinet and others is not institutionalised in Belgium. Andeweg and Timmermans describe coalition committees and committees of ministers and parliamentary leaders as examples of mixed arenas,¹⁷ in which the leaders of the coalitions meet each other regularly. The authors refer to the Italian “major summits” (Vertici) as an example of a coalition committee, and to the Dutch “turret consultation” (torentjes overleg) as an example of a committee of ministers and parliamentary leaders. In Belgium none of these formal meetings exist. This does not mean that the leaders of the coalition do not meet each other. Such meetings are simply not formally institutionalised as in Italy and the Netherlands.

External: the party summit

A party summit does not include government ministers but consists only of party leaders. These summits are called when a big crisis in the coalition occurs. The results of these negotiations are usually called “pacts”, and may maintain the government for a longer period.

2. Coalition Structures in Government

This section focuses on the coalition structures in government and on the impact of the political level on the administrative level. First, the distribution of positions and political appointments are discussed; second, the coordination bodies; and third, the role of the prime minister.

2.1. Distribution of positions and political appointments

In principle, recruitments and promotions are apolitical. Recruitment is based on competitive examinations organised by a centralised recruiting agency (Selor). Promotions are based on criteria like performance and length of service. In reality, the picture is totally different. Political parties play an important role in recruitment and promotions.¹⁸ As mentioned above, the distribution of top positions in civil service is discussed during the coalition formation. These top positions include positions in the ministry, courts and most other sectors (semi-public institutions, quasi-autonomous enterprises, etc.) This is very difficult to evidence, though, since the distribution is not formalised.

Officially, recruitment is organised by Selor. Political influence, however, is possible in several ways. Three elements can be referred to: Article 18 of the

17 ANDEWEG R. & A. TIMMERMANS, “Conflict Management in Coalition Government” in: MULLER W & K. STROM, *Coalition Governance in Western Europe*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, forthcoming.

18 BRANS M. & A. HONDEGHEM, “The senior civil service in Belgium” in: PAGE E. & V. WRIGHT, *Bureaucratic elites in Western European States*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 129.

statute, the primo-nominations and the appointment of civil servants on a contractual basis.

The first possibility, Art. 18, makes it possible to assign someone to a top position without any competition. The appointee should be someone with high-end and particular administrative, scientific, technique or artistic merit.¹⁹ This creates arbitrariness and gives the minister a lot of leeway to appoint top civil servants. Nowadays, the article is still in the statute but seems not to be used any more.²⁰ The second possibility is primo-nominations. When new departments, institutions or administrations are created (or even when the competencies of an institutions change), the minister has the opportunity to appoint civil servants without following the official procedure. The length of service or the necessary diploma conditions can be avoided. This allows the minister to fill the vacant positions faster. Nowadays, primo-nominations are interpreted much more strictly than in the past. Civil servants on a contractual basis should normally be used for unusual tasks which are not the core tasks of the administration. This rule was interpreted very liberally. Contractual civil servants were used as an instrument for political appointments, because the procedure to recruit them was much more flexible.

Promotions are discussed in a committee which consists of representatives of different political parties. This committee is presided over by an adviser of the prime minister. The most famous of all was “the committee Dekens”, named after the chair of the committee. In this committee, promotions are allocated to the parties according to the relative strength of the parties in Parliament.²¹ The quota used for this process is usually discussed during the coalition-forming process as mentioned in section 1.3. The discussions in the committee are preceded by negotiations within political parties. Because there are a lot of members and only a few vacant positions, the party has to decide which candidate will be supported by the party.²² *“Thus, public sector patronage is a very pervasive phenomenon in Belgium, and all traditional parties participate.”*²³

19 STENMANS A., “Pratiques de politisation des administrations publique” in: CERAP, La politisation de l’administration, Bruxelles, ULB, 2001 (3), p. 35.

20 Ibid., p. 36.

21 BRANS M. & A. HONDEGHEM, “The senior civil service in Belgium” in: PAGE E. & V. WRIGHT, Bureaucratic elites in Western European States, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999, p.130.

22 HONDEGHEM A., De loopbaan van de ambtenaar. Tussen droom en werkelijkheid, Leuven, Symons, 1990, p. 198.

23 DE WINTER L., TIMMERMANS A. & P. DUMONT, “Belgium. On Government Agreements, Evangelists, Followers and Heretics” in: MULLER W. & K. STROM, Coalition Governments in Western Europe, New York, Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 341.

Figure 3
Distribution of posts within coalition governments (1992, 1995, 1999)

	Name of the parties	Number Of ministers	Percent of ministerial positions	Percent of other official positions	Percent of seats in Lower House (senate)
1999-(2003)					
Verhofstadt (PM) Regular elections	VLD	4	26	Informal politisation	15.3 (15.5)
	PRL/DFD	3	20		12 (12.7)
	SP.a	3	20		9.3 (8.5)
	PS	3	20		12.7 (14.1)
	AGALEV	1(+1 Secr. of Stat)	6.67		6 (7.0)
	ECOLO	1(+1 Secr. of Stat)	6.67		7.33 (8.5)
1995-1999					
Dehaene II (PM) Regular elections Regular fall-down	CVP	5 (+1 Secr. of Stat)	33	Informal politisation	19.3 (16.9)
	PSC	2	13		6.7 (8.5)
	SP	5	33		13.3 (12.7)
	PS	3(+1 Secr. of Stat)	20		14 (15.4)
1992-1995					
Dehaene I (PM) Extraordinary elections Regular fall down	CVP	5	33	Informal politisation	26 (19.6)
	PSC	2	13		12 (6.5)
	SP	5	33		18.6 (14.1)
	PS	3 (+1 Secr. of Stat)	20		23.3 (16.3)

Figure 4
positions in department X

secr. gen. Frans - PS					
dir. gen. 1 Ned. - CVP		dir. gen. 2 <i>vacature</i>			
bestuursdir. Frans - PRL		inspecteur-gen. Frans - PSC		bestuursdir. Ned. - CVP	
directeur Frans - PSC	directeur <i>vacature</i>	adviseur Ned. - SP		adviseur Frans - PRL	
adj. adv. Ned.- CVP	adj. adv. Ned.- SP	adj. adv. <i>vacature</i>	adj. adv. Frans-PS	adj. adv. Frans-PRL	
best.secr. Ned.-SP	best.secr. Ned.-PVV	best.secr. onbekend	best.secr. Ned.-CVP	best.secr. Frans-PSC	best.secr. Frans-PRL

Political appointments cross the whole of society horizontally. This means that ministries are not owned by single political parties. Parties decide what their priorities will be. They can choose a few top positions and fewer lower positions, or the party can choose to widen the power at the lower positions and allow other parties to appoint the top civil servants. The next figure shows an example of a ministry. This figure shows that each party in the government has its people in the ministry.²⁴ For each function, there is mention of which community (Frans = French; Ned = Flemish) and which party the candidate should belong.

2.2. Coordinating bodies²⁵

In Belgium, each minister has a ministerial cabinet. These ministerial cabinets are the main players in the policy-making process and the coordination of policy. In this section, we focus on the reasons why they were created and the functions they fulfil.

Reasons why cabinets were created

Ministerial cabinets have always existed in Belgium, but their size, structure and roles have strongly evolved in the 20th Century. The growth of ministerial cabinets answered the need of ministers first to free themselves from the king's influence, and later from the grip of the permanent administration. With the creation of the Belgian state, the king still played a dominant role in determining policies, and appointed and controlled ministers. The first modest expansion of the personal secretariats of ministers consecrated the emancipation of ministers from the king's influence.²⁶ The proliferation of cabinet members really started gaining momentum after World War I, following the growth of the welfare state and party political developments. Government expansion increased not only the number of ministerial departments but also affected the nature of the tasks of ministers, in that the latter became more heterogeneous. Ministerial cabinets not only helped to support ministers in gathering information and policy advice, but also assisted in the greater need for controlling and steering the number of departments under the ministers' responsibility.

In principle, the production of policy advice and control of departments could also have been delivered by the civil service. Yet, the impact of party politics on politico-administrative relations did not allow the smoothness such an option would have required. The turnover of liberal and Christian democratic governments and their extensive use of informal politicisation of administrative

24 HONDEGHEM A., *De loopbaan van de ambtenaar. Tussen droom en werkelijkheid*, Leuven, Symons, 1990, p 203.

25 This section is based on: BRANS M., HOET D. & C. PELGRIMS, *Abolishing ministerial cabinets for re-inventing them?*, paper prepared for the P Van Riper Symposium at the 63rd annual conference of the American Society for Public Administration, Phoenix, Arizona, 23 – 26 march 2002.

26 LUYCKX T. & M. PLATEL, *Politieke geschiedenis van België. Deel 1.*, Antwerpen, Kluwer, 1985, p. 63.

positions created a dialectic that favoured the expansion of ministerial cabinets.²⁷ Consecutive politicisations of recruitment and promotions negatively affected ministers' trust of civil servants²⁸. Partisans of government parties with low turnover have been overrepresented and partisans of opposition parties underrepresented. In 1990, 62 percent of the top three senior civil servants of the federal ministries belonged to the Christian Democratic party; 21 percent to the Socialist parties; 11 per cent to the Liberal. Only six percent were independent and one percent Flemish nationalists.

Research has shown that this distrust is not always justified, in that the behavioural politicisation of civil servants remains limited.²⁹ At any rate, to ministers, the option of recruiting partisan spoils in ministerial cabinets was more attractive than involving civil servants either as modest partisans or neutral agents.

Functions of the ministerial cabinets

Ministerial cabinets exert an "irresistible charm" for ministers who prefer to work with them instead of with regular civil servants.³⁰ We can distinguish between policy functions and political functions of cabinets, in the literature often referred to as manifest and latent functions respectively. The policy functions that ministerial cabinets perform relate to the provision of policy advice to the minister, the communication between a variety of policy agents, the provision of access to and policy relevant translation of bureaucratic information and procedures, and the provision of policy support to the minister from civil society. The political functions of ministerial cabinets are related to systemic influences springing from the nature of Belgian party political recruitment and partitocracy.³¹ In this perspective, ministerial cabinets function as recruitment and career mechanisms for professional politicians, as smoothening coalition government, party control of ministers and support of party organisation.

- *Policy functions*

Cabinets play a central role in the production of policy advice. Flexible policy support, specific expertise, and unconditional loyalty are central assets for the short-term projects of generalist ministers. Advisers in ministerial cabinets ana-

27 VAN HASSEL H., "Regering en ambtenarij ten aanzien van de beleidsbeheersing in België.", In: *Acta Politica*, juli 1975, p. 304.

28 MAJERSDORF P & G. DIERICKX, "De onweerstaanbare charme van de ministeriële kabinetten.", In: *Tijdschrift voor Bestuurskunde en Publiekrecht*, 1992, 47 (8), p. 549.

29 BRANS M. & A. HONDEGHEM, "The senior civil service in Belgium" in: PAGE E. & V. WRIGHT, *Bureaucratic elites in Western European States*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 131.

30 MAJERSDORF P & G. DIERICKX, "De onweerstaanbare charme van de ministeriële kabinetten.", In: *Tijdschrift voor Bestuurskunde en Publiekrecht*, 1992, 47 (8), pp 547-557

31 DEWINTER L. et al. "Comparing similar countries: Italy and Belgium", *Res Publica*, (Special issue on Partitocracies between crises and reform: the cases of Italy and Belgium) 1996 (vol. 38), pp. 215-33

lyse policy problems and evaluate solutions in ways where technical expertise is combined with political feasibility. In contrast to civil servants, members of ministerial cabinets are outward-looking and engage in extensive contacts with all other players in the policy-making process.³²

Ministerial cabinets are centres of communication and coordination. Average cabinet members devote 60 percent of their working week to vertical and horizontal contacts with the administration and other ministerial cabinets and with the minister's party organisation, the parliamentary party and local governments.³³ Ministerial cabinet members also meet each other in the Inter-ministerial cabinet working groups (IKW's). These groups coordinate proposals prior to the government decision. In Belgian coalition governments, these institutions fulfil a very important role in the coordination and communication process.

Ministerial cabinets will engage in vertical contacts with the administration, but often also recruit trusted civil servants into their teams. This provides the minister access to the secrets of the bureaucracy, and firsthand information on informal rules and hierarchies that the minister might otherwise miss.

Ministerial cabinets are clearly at the mediating heart of government. This also applies to the gathering of policy support from civil society. It is to ministerial cabinets that interest groups turn rather than the administration. Ministerial cabinets often explicitly co-opt members from interest organisations with the aim of facilitating interest intermediation.³⁴ They also play an important role in rendering services to the ministers' constituents, ranging from the supply of information to what is called social service, the latter of which comes close to clientelism.

- *Political functions*

Ministerial cabinets provide important functions to the recruitment and careers of professional politicians. They are stepping-stones to higher political office and serve as "... an 'ante-room' for non-elected politicians waiting for a new mandate".³⁵

Cabinets also help to smooth politics in complex coalition governments. It happens that ministerial cabinets comprise members delegated by other coalition

32 MAJERSDORF P & G. DIERICKX, "De onweerstaanbare charme van de ministeriële kabinetten.", In: Tijdschrift voor Bestuurskunde en Publiekrecht, 1992, 47 (8), pp 547-557.

33 SUETENS M. & S. WALGRAVE, "Leven en werk van de kabinetsleden. Wie zijn de mannen achter de minister en wat doen ze?", In: Res Publica, 1999, 41 (4), p. 524.

34 PELGRIMS C., Ministeriële kabinetsleden en hun loopbaan. Tussen mythe en realiteit, Brugge, Die Keure, 2001, p. 27. In his research on the recruitment and careers of Flemish ministerial cabinets members Pelgrims confirmed the tradition of employers' organisations sending representatives to the cabinet of the Minister of Economy.

35 VAN HASSEL H., Het ministerieel kabinet. Peilen naar een sociologische duiding., Leuven, KUL, 1974, p. 21-22. See also: DEWACHTER W., Besluitvorming in politiek België., Leuven, Acco, 1995, p. 243.; BRANS M., Public Office – Private Rewards. The dynamics of material reward systems for legislators in Belgium and the Netherlands. Florence, EUI, PHD thesis, 1999.; PELGRIMS C., Ministeriële kabinetsleden en hun loopbaan. Tussen mythe en realiteit, Brugge, Die Keure, 2001, p. 28.

parties to control the minister's policies.³⁶ In 1995, the Flemish government even legally settled this control function, allowing for the implanting of particular policy "cells" under ministers active in other sectors³⁷. Several such cells were implanted. The cell Culture and Welfare, a functional domain of a Christian Democratic minister, was installed in the cabinet of the Socialist Minister of Education. Conversely, the cell "education" was added to the cabinet of the Christian Democrat. Cabinets positions are also used for party control. Political parties may also push for a strong "chef of the cabinet" when they consider the Minister weak.³⁸

Finally, cabinets have also served as a covert means of party financing. Cabinets sometimes comprise what are called ghosts. These ghosts are formally included in the composition of cabinets and are paid, but never show up since they are politically active elsewhere, as local councillors, for instance, or as party functionaries.³⁹

2.3. The role of the prime minister

In Belgium, the prime minister is *primus inter pares*. The prime minister chairs the cabinet which decides by consensus. He also chairs the inner cabinet which we discussed in section 1.5. The PM's most important function in these two institutions is coordinating. The prime minister is also the one who needs to be a good negotiator in order to keep the coalition together. He needs to facilitate compromise within the coalition and fine-tune them in ways each coalition party can accept.⁴⁰ The PM is also responsible for agenda-setting. He is responsible for the items that will be placed on the agenda during the cabinet meeting and also for the way in which the issues will be raised. This competence gives the PM considerable power over the other ministers.

3. Coalition-related specialties in the policy-making process⁴¹

The role of the ministerial cabinets in the Belgian policy-making process should not be underestimated. These personal staffs of the ministers are the main actors in the creation of policy. In the previous section, we discussed the policy functions of the ministerial cabinets. We will summarise them here again: policy

36 DEWINTER L., "De partijpolitisering als instrument van participatie.", in: *Res Publica*, 1981 (1), p. 61.

37 Besluit van de Vlaamse Regering van 20 juni 1995 tot bepaling van de samenstelling en de werking van de kabinetten van de Vlaamse ministers, *Belgisch Staatsblad*, 14.09.1995.

38 VANDEZANDE J., *Ministeriële kabinetten. De ontwikkeling en het profiel tijdens de periode 1918 – 1969.*, Leuven, KUL, 1999, pp. 64-65.

39 PELGRIMS C., *Ministeriële kabinetsleden en hun loopbaan. Tussen mythe en realiteit*, Brugge, Die Keure, 2001, p. 29.

40 DEWACHTER W., *De mythe van de parlementaire democratie*, Leuven, Acco, 2001, p. 213

41 This section is based on: BRANS M., HOET D. & C. PELGRIMS, *Abolishing ministerial cabinets for re-inventing them?*, paper prepared for the P Van Riper Symposium at the 63rd annual conference of the American Society for Public Administration, Phoenix, Arizona, 23 – 26 march 2002

advice, centres of communication, access to the secrets of the bureaucracy and policy support from civil society. In addition to their many functions, ministerial cabinets also provoke several dysfunctions for relations between minister and civil servants. Due to these dysfunctions together with governance crises, the government is now working on reshaping the relations between the political and the administrative levels, the so-called “Copernicus reform”. Before we describe the dysfunctions of ministerial cabinets and this reform, we will provide a short introduction to the production of policy advice in Belgium.

3.1. The production of policy advice in Belgium

In a study of policy formulation we explored the role of the civil service in the production of policy advice with the help of two sets of variables.⁴² The first set deals with the generic organisation of policy formulation and comprises the type of actors that participate in policy formulation, their location and respective roles. A second exploration of the differential features of the administration’s role in policy formulation runs along the nature of politico-administrative relations as a determining influence upon the way policy advice is produced in Belgium.

Generic organisation

We tried to identify the nature of actors that are involved in policy formulation in Belgium with the help of a taxonomy developed by Hoppe.⁴³ Hoppe distinguishes between the politically accountable group; the directly responsible group, the working group, the core group, the accompanying group and the representative group.

Since Belgium has coalition governments, the politically accountable group consists of functionally responsible ministers. Those directly responsible for preparing policies are actors who are also responsible for the policy formulation process. The working and core group⁴⁴ is responsible for the actual exploration of policy alternatives and production of policy advice. In Belgium, the working group consists of a mix of civil servants and members of the ministerial cabinets, with the latter steering the process. The number of experts involved in policy formulation can be labelled the accompanying group. In Belgium, it is more common to temporarily co-opt experts within ministerial cabinets, or to group both administrative and external experts in ad hoc projects, again managed by cabinet

42 BRANS M. & D. HOET, *De organisatie en management van beleidsvoorbereiding in België en Nederland.*, Brussels, DWTC, forthcoming 2002.

43 HOPPE R., *Beleidsnota’s die (door) werken: handleiding voor geslaagde beleidsvoorbereiding*, Bussum, Coutinho, 1998, pp. 39-40.

44 For the purpose of this comparison, it is not useful to make a strict distinction between both these sets of actors. Such a distinction is only necessary when conceiving the policy formulation process primarily as a writing process (or process in which several actors contribute to the redaction of policy documents and papers).

members. The same goes for the representative group, which consists of a number of interest and target groups that are being involved in the policy formulation process. Ministerial cabinet members take the lead in this representative group.

As to the location of these actors, we can distinguish three arenas: the central arena, the policy support arena and the external arena. The central arena consists of actors who find themselves at the apex of policy formulation, responsible for the eventual communication of policy advice to the minister. The policy support arena is composed of units within the departmental structure that contribute relevant policy information and the results of policy analyses to the central arena. The external arena consists of actors who are involved in the process, often at the initiative of players in the central arena, or only at the evaluative phase of policy process. In Belgium, the central arena is the playground of ministerial cabinets members. The research units of government parties seem to play a more significant role in the exploration of policy alternatives. Table 1 gives an overview of the location of actors in the policy formulation.

Table 1
The location of actors in the policy formulation.

Central arena	Ministerial cabinets
Policy support arena	Inspection of Finance Directorate Legislation Research units
External arena	Court of Auditors External advisers Political parties research units

What roles do these different actors play in the production of policy advice? We can broadly distinguish two types of loyalties (professional analytical loyalty and political loyalty) and two types of competencies (sectoral expertise and policy process skills).⁴⁵ In Belgium, political loyalties are structurally embedded in ministerial cabinets and informally promoted by a politicised administration. In addition, ministerial cabinets have also tended to monopolise process skills and sectoral specializations, the latter by “brain-draining” the civil service. Comparatively, the role of policy support units within the administration is rather limited. As to the external arena, the Court of Auditors has recently started evaluating policies but remains absent in auditing policy formulation. Political parties’ research units in turn still play an important role providing trusted policy advice.

45 HOPPE R., VAN DE GRAAF H. and E. BESSELING, “Successful policy formulation: lessons from fifteen case experiences in Dutch departments”, in: *Acta Politica*, 1995 (2), pp. 153-188.

Politico-administrative relations

In Peter's typology⁴⁶, Belgian politico-administrative relations fit the formal-legal model, in which political executives are solely responsible for policy formulation and civil servants for the execution of policy programmes.⁴⁷ This is confirmed in civil service attitudes and role definitions. They see themselves primarily as neutral servants of the state, and display a technocratic orientation while dismissing partisan loyalty.⁴⁸ Extensive informal politicisation and the size and role of ministerial cabinets make the political agenda dominate the administrative arena. The number of political executives is great, and the background and careers of civil servants and politicians are distinct. Belgian ministers are primarily generalists who do not see themselves as managers of their departments, but rather as representatives of their parties and electorates⁴⁹.

Belgian civil servants communicate with their political masters via ministerial cabinets, which allows them only limited use of their traditional base of power that is, expertise and experience. Ministerial cabinets function as shadow administrations, which severely diminishes the policy role of the administration. Civil service culture kept civil servants out of the political arena. Mutual distrust between ministers and their spoils on the one hand, and top civil servants on the other has, so far, put a break on conceiving political administrative relations beyond the formal legal model.

3.2. The dysfunctions of ministerial cabinets in the policy cycle

Since the late 80s, the size and scope of ministerial cabinets have suffered serious criticisms. Criticisms of the political functions of ministerial cabinets question the scope of partitocracy in Belgium or the party political penetration of all sectors of public life, at the expense of other policy actors. Ministerial cabinets would disproportionately empower party control and privileged interest groups at the expense of parliamentary oversight. *“Even if MPs can call on the research units of their respective parties, Belgian government ministers, with their staff of personal*

46 PETERS G.B., “Politicians and bureaucrats in the Politics of policy-making”, In: LANE Jan-Erik, *Bureaucracy and Public Choice*, Bristol, Sage, 1987, pp 256-282.; Peters G. B., *Comparing Public Bureaucracies*, Tuscaloosa, University of Alabama Press, 1988.; Peters B.G., “Bureaucrats and Political Appointees in European Democracies: Who’s Who and Does it Make Any Difference?”, in: Farazmand A., *Modern Systems of Government: Exploring the Role of Bureaucrats and Politicians*, London, Sage Publications, 1997, pp.232-254.

47 BRANS M. and HONDEGHEM A., “The senior civil service in Belgium”, in: PAGE E.C. and WRIGHT V. (Eds.), *Bureaucratic élites in Western European States*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999: 120-146.

48 DIERICKX G. & P MAJERSDORF, *De politieke cultuur van ambtenaren en politici in België.*, Brugge, Vanden Broele, 1994, 194 p.

49 This is of course a generalisation, and some ministers may be specialists. But we feel the systemic influence of party political recruitment and the electoral system should not be underestimated as to the kind of politicians it produces.

advisers, are still streets ahead when it comes to resources to draw upon in policy preparation, rendering of services and following up regional files"⁵⁰

For the purpose of this paper, the questioning of the policy roles of cabinets is more interesting. With their dominant role in the policy-making process, cabinets would have marginalized the career administration in policy formulation, fuelled further politicisation, ruptured the trust between ministers and their civil servants and encumbered accepted lines of communication, all elements of which have fostered an adversarial dynamics within the formal legal model of politico-administrative relations.

The administration is marginalized in the production of policy advice and acts as a mere executing agent.⁵¹ But the cabinets' weight in the policy process has gone beyond playing a role at one side of the dichotomy: policy implementation only. Cabinets not only produce policy advice but have also developed into shadow administrations, taking on secondary legislation and even mere executive tasks. This left the civil service not only marginalized in the rendering of policy advice, but also frustrated in the execution of policy programmes.

The role cabinets played in politicising the administration further added to this frustration. Close as they are at the heart of decision-making, they were in a position to manipulate the conditions for appointments and alter organisational structures without the functional need to do so.⁵² Ministerial cabinets, as stepping-stones to higher office, exerted strong pressures on appointments at the top of the civil service. Since the late 80s, such appointments increasingly met with hostile public opinion and actions of discontented civil servants taking their grievances to the administrative court of appeal.

A third dysfunction of ministerial cabinets is their encroachment upon trust between civil servants and ministers. Civil servants may bypass the administrative hierarchy and communicate directly with cabinet members. This makes the relationship between cabinets and the administrative top tense, since the latter feel ignored. Finally, the extensive role of cabinets may hurt written procedures and administrative memory. Many cabinet interventions in the policy process are oral, and arrangements are sometimes difficult to trace. More serious effects that might be termed "institutional amnesia" relate to the spoils character of cabinet members and the disappearance of crucial policy information.

50 SUETENS M. & S. WALGRAVE, "Belgian Politics without ministerial cabinets? On the possibilities and limitations of a New Political Culture, in: *Acta Politica*, 2001, 2, p. 298.

51 HONDEGHEM A., "De politieke en de ambtelijke component in het openbaar bestuur" in: *Inleiding tot de bestuurskunde Deel 2*, Brussel, STOHO, 1996, pp. 57-58

52 BRANS M. and HONDEGHEM A., "The senior civil service in Belgium", in: PAGE E. & V. WRIGHT, *Bureaucratic elites in Western European States*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 130.

3.3. The reforms in the relations between the political and the administrative level

Adversarial tensions within the accepted formal-legal model of politico-administrative relations, changes in the government's relations with civil society broadly defined and its political broader political environment, and managerial challenges to the internal operation of the administration explain the present government's intention to reshape the relation between the policy role of the administration and mechanisms of political control. The adversarial tensions between politics and administration are apparent in the above described dysfunctions of ministerial cabinets.

Concerning the government's relations with civil society and its broader political environment, it is no exaggeration to say that in the last decade of 20th century, the Belgian political system was facing a governance crisis. This is evidenced not only by election results and survey data, but also by the growing concern of political elites about standards in public life. The 1991 electoral success of right-wing extremist and anti-political parties at the expense of the traditional parties was taken as a clear sign of dissatisfaction among citizens. A significant number of focusing events further supported the call for reform. Political sleaze and corruption dominated the first half the 90s. In 1996, came the biggest and most dramatic blunder of all – the Dutroux case⁵³ – giving rise to a new social movement against past political practices and for drastic reform. New Political Culture (NPC) became the new buzzword. It included a range of plans to restore public trust and raise standards in public life, including putting an end to political appointments, curbing the size of ministerial cabinets, and reintegrating top civil servants into policy-making.⁵⁴ In the early 90s, modest steps had already been taken to reduce the size of both ministerial cabinets and politicisation.

These measures also included methods to smooth politico-administrative relations by establishing rules of conduct concerning the communication between ministers and their administration, and by strengthening the Board of Secretary-Generals with organisational and personnel management responsibilities. Government plans at the turn of the century would go much further and reshape the policy roles of cabinets and administration in a more fundamental way.

At the turn of millennium, reducing the size and role of ministerial cabinets and the reintegration of civil servants in the policy-making process had a firm place on the reform agenda of the Belgian government, which was confirmed

53 In 1995 – 1996, the police failed to prevent the abduction and murder of young girls by Marc Dutroux.

54 Maesschalck J., Hondeghe A. & C. Pelgrims, De evolutie naar een Nieuwe Politieke Cultuur in België: een beleidswetenschappelijke analyse”, in: Beleidswetenschap, 2002, 4, pp. 295-317.

in the latest coalition agreement. *“In recent years, the administration has been increasingly excluded from the preparation of political choices and from the legal and regulatory documents that put the latter into practice. The excessive influence of some ministerial cabinets has de-motivated many civil servants. The administration should therefore become a partner of ministerial cabinets again in preparing policies (own translation).”*⁵⁵

The government plans launched in 2000 aim to seriously reduce the size of ministerial cabinets and integrate policy formulation in the administrative apparatus. Yet, the way in which cabinets are dismantled and their functions transferred to other bodies clearly demonstrates how path-dependent the reform really will be. The administration’s role in producing policy advice will be strengthened, but the location and composition of policy advisory cells and the new interfaces between the administration and the minister clearly reinvent ministerial cabinets.

3.4. The Copernicus plan and the re-invention of ministerial cabinets

The press labelled the Federal government’s 2000 plan to modernise the federal administration the Copernicus plan⁵⁶. The plan was presented on 16 February, 2000. In recent years, Belgian governments have labelled major deals or agreements with reference to the birthday of historical figures. Copernicus, born on the 19 February, 1473, was revolutionary in that his theory no longer refuted the belief that the earth was the centre of the universe. Similarly, the government’s plan emphasised that government was not primordial but citizens, and that government should serve citizens, not the other way around. The government later adopted this term, as it fit the ambitious discourse of modernising government. The plan revises the organisational structure of the ministries, and re-allocates policy advisory roles to new units. Figure 3 shows the basic structure of traditional ministries. Traditional ministries are strongly hierarchical, consisting of a secretary-general with a number of staff services and directorates-general, also called administrations, managed by director-generals. Administrations are further subdivided in administrative units managed by administrative directors or inspectors-general. Under these, a number of services function, managed by advisors.

First, the Copernicus plan manages by words. Ministries become Federal Government Services (FGS). Secretary-Generals are replaced by Chairs of the Management Committee. Directors-Generals no longer preside over the “old-fashioned” administrations but operational directorates.

55 X, Federaal regeerakkoord, <http://belgium.fgov.be/abtb/gov/regeerakkoord.htm#1>, 21.12.00.

56 (<http://www.copernicus.be>, 07 03 02).

Figure 5
The traditional structure of the Federal Top Civil Service in Belgium

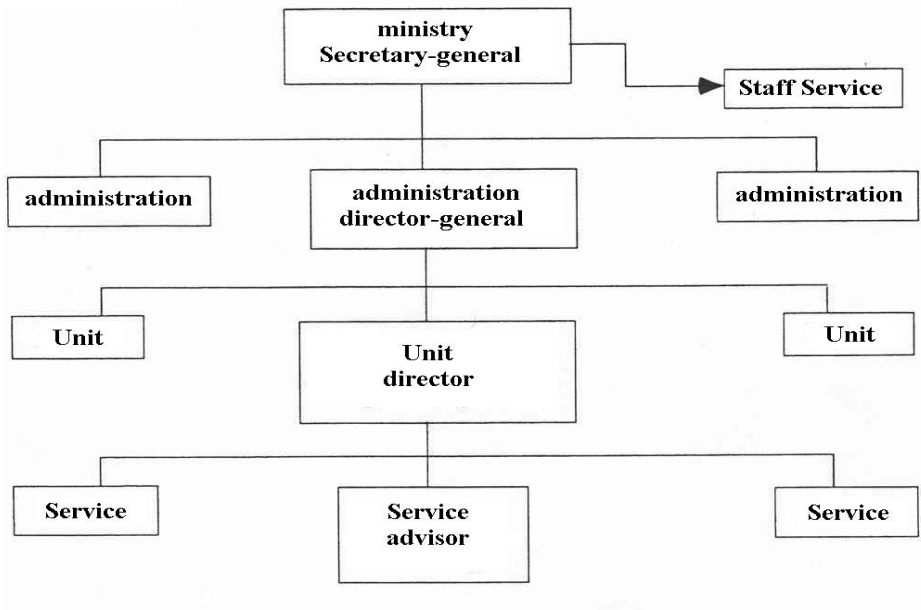
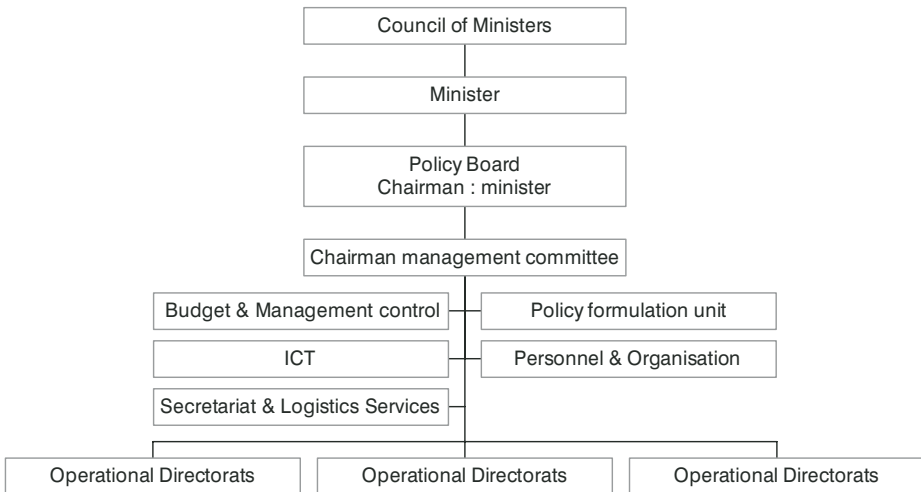


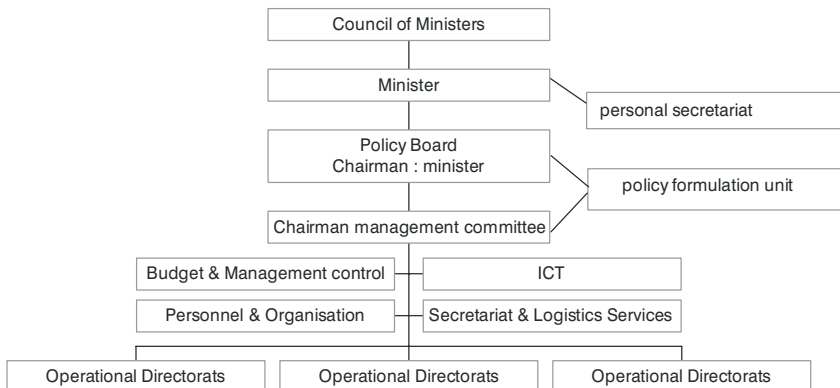
Figure 6
Copernicus Plan, Belgium



Second, Copernicus includes a number of structural measures. A new interface is created between the minister and the department: the Policy Board. This interface is responsible for a number of managerial tasks⁵⁷ as well as for assisting the minister in drafting and monitoring the execution of his or her policy programmes. Also a new cell of policy formulation will be created, responsible for coordination and integration of policy advice and evaluation. Note that the original Copernicus chart does not mention ministerial cabinets, although a complete abolition was not intended.

The plan was the initiative of the Minister of Public Office and the Prime Minister but its implementation required political negotiations. The official government decree shows some changes to the original plan. First, it now includes a personal secretariat for the minister, consisting of a personal secretary responsible for the minister's constituency work and political agenda, a spokesperson, an administrative secretary and a limited number of executive staff.⁵⁸ Also interesting is the removal of the cell policy formulation from the set of horizontal staff services, and its promotion up the hierarchical ladder, closer to the political top. It is now supposed to report to both the policy board and the chair of the management committee. The cell is responsible for the coordination and integration of policy formulation and evaluation, and consists of members of research units, statutory civil servants and temporary advisers.

Figure 7
Royal Decree Copernicus Reform



57 These tasks include the provision of advice on management contracts with agencies; approval of the personnel plan; monitoring of personnel plans; definition and evaluation of mandates and contracts.

58 The Prime Minister, one of the first to take symbolic action and reorganise his services is assisted by a seriously reduced personal secretariat consisting of two spokespersons, two advisers, a personal administrative secretary and seven executive aides (non-university grades) (www.belgium.fgov.be). Also the Minister of Public Affairs and the Minister of the Budget have formally abolished their cabinets, but no information is available on the composition of their personal secretariats.

Its members are appointed by contracts for a legislative term, and will be drawn from the FGS research units, statutory personnel on secondment, and a number of external contractual hires. Similar flexibility of appointments is guaranteed for the composition of the Policy Board as well as for the chair of the Management Committee. The Policy Board will consist of the minister, the head of his or her reduced personal cabinet, the heads of the Operational Directorates, dependent of the policy issues at hand, and a limited number of external experts⁵⁹. The Chair of the Management Committee gets a six-year contract, the term of which exceeds legislative terms by two years. An exception is made for the Chancellor under the prime minister, justified by the strong political character of this function. Although the actual functioning and composition of these new bodies still have to take effect, their location and rules of composition clearly reinvent mechanisms of political control. Ministerial cabinets are reduced and the policy role of bureaucrats is strengthened. Yet, the nature of bureaucratic involvement is drastically changed since bureaucrats become contractualised.

Much will depend upon the degree in which professional policy advisers assume their roles as policy professionals and make themselves indispensable within the new organisation, and the working relations they will develop with their political masters.

4. The role of the president of the state

Belgium is a parliamentary monarch. It does not have a president. The king in Belgium does not have the same influence as a president in a presidential system. Officially, the king has no power in policy. Every act of the king also must be signed by a minister. The king can do no wrong. Ministers are responsible for the act of the king's acts (see also Art. 88 of the Constitution). Unofficially, he has power in the policy process; for example, by "informing" the ministers or the prime minister about his point of view, although unfortunately this can hardly be proven.

In section 1.3 we described coalition formation. In this process, it was clear that the main players were the political parties. The king only has influence in the assignment of the informateur and the formateur at the beginning of the coalition formation process. In this assignment procedure, his acts are limited by the results of the elections. The next phase where the king has influence is the time where he needs to appoint the ministers as foreseen in the constitution. The king can accept the coalition or not. If he does not accept the ministers and the coalition, he can choose not to assign the ministers or some ministers. However, this is not done.

⁵⁹ Chair of the Management Committee of FGS in related policy fields, and the general directors of para-governmental agencies may be invited to the Policy Board.

5. Coalition in the Parliament

In Belgium, no institutional design of rules regulates the relations between the government and Parliament. The committees in the Parliament are important and powerful. They can rewrite government bills. In Parliament and the committees, it is impossible to slim down the number of amendments. No such rules like the kangaroo, or the guillotine procedure (as in the British Parliament) exist to manage business in the House. A motion to close the debate is also unknown in the Belgian Parliament. The only structural elements in the relations between Parliament, its committees and the government is the control of the majority over Parliament, the importance of party discipline and the strong parties in Belgian politics.

6. Impact of coalition governments on Civil Service Reforms

Civil service reform in coalition governments is likely to differ from majority systems. Due to a lack of uniformity of political parties in coalition governments, the opponents of the reforms may be active not only in the civil service but also within the coalition. Such opposition from within, may slow progress or even cause outright obstructions on the decisional level when decisions need to be taken. In the recent Copernicus reforms, one of Belgium's most salient cleavage, the regional-linguistic divide, was apparent. In the northern part of Belgium, Flanders, the majority of political parties favoured the Copernicus reforms. In the southern part, the Walloons, the reforms were opposed by some political parties. Various conflicts in the Council of Ministers showed that the French Socialist party (PS) opposed the appointments of the chairs of the new Federal Government Services.⁶⁰ They also managed to strengthen the influence of juries responsible selecting new top civil servants.

Two explanations may account for such tensions in the coalition and await further empirical testing. First, the resistance of the reforms may be inspired by the fear of losing political control over the civil service. This control was traditionally mediated through informal politisation of the civil service. Secondly, it can be argued that the New Public Management credo has permeated the French-speaking elites less than the Flemish elites. Flanders would welcome the Anglo-Saxon management perspective, while the French-speaking administrators are influenced by a French-Roman 'Etat' perspective. Research shows that the Flemish administration, compared to the Walloons, started earlier with considering and implementation NPM reforms.⁶¹ These two different management cultures and 'modernisation-experiences' may clash on the Federal level, where both meet each other in one modernisation project.

60 BROECKMEYER I., "Regering bereikt akkoord over federale topmanagers", in: *De Financieel Economisch Tijd*, 21.09.01, p 3.

61 Van Coppennolle D. *De modernisering van de Vlaamse en Waalse administratie*, 2001, KULeuven, p 104.

In addition, civil service reform in coalition governments often requires political negotiations. These negotiations often lead to political compromises the extent of which causes the fundamental ideas of reform are lost. An example of coalition negotiations can be found in the above mentioned adaptations of the Copernicus reforms. Another such outcome of coalition compromises is found in the eventual acceptance of a “personal secretariat” for each minister, and the movement of the policy formulation unit up the organization chart at hierarchy.

In coalition government, civil service reforms often come under fire, not only by the civil service or the opposition, but also by coalition partners. This may turn the implementation process into a bargain between the different coalition partners. The coalition reconciliation mechanisms will play an important role in the implementation process. Having a good captain is crucial to surviving the storms between pros and contras. When the reform project is promoted by a strong minister or ministers in the coalition, the chance to steer the ship through the storm is much higher than when the project rests on weaker ministers. Strong political leadership in reform projects inside coalition governments is an essential precondition for successful implementation.

7. Conclusions

This paper provides data on two research components: the nature of coalition government in Belgium and the nature of Belgian politico-administrative relations. As to the first component, the paper explored the Belgian tradition of coalition formation and identified several tools of coalition management. Proactive coalition management is facilitated by the coalition agreements, otherwise referred to as the coalition “bible”. On the job, coalition management is performed by inner cabinet meetings, the role of the PM, and inter-ministerial cabinet working groups. For managing coalition partners in Parliament, party discipline substitutes for the absence of formal disciplinary rules. Reactive coalition management makes use of “pacts” in the external arena. In rare exceptions, the king, whose overall role remains rather limited, may arbitrate when the coalition threatens to fall apart.

Ministerial cabinets play a central role in Belgian politico-administrative relations. They are strong vehicles for mediating political control, both vertically and horizontally. Vertically, they blend sectoral policy advice with political priorities. Horizontally, they act as centres of interdepartmental and inter-ministerial communication and coordination, the latter of which helps smooth the coalition. The Belgian system’s need for political control has strongly institutionalised ministerial cabinets, often at the expense of the civil service, who was further encroached upon by extensive informal politicisation.

The Belgian politico-administrative system is in transition. Recent reforms seek to reduce ministerial cabinets and strengthen the administration in both its

policy-making and implementation roles. However, there is no evidence that the nature of Belgian coalition government is in transition as well. If the need for strong vertical and horizontal control is explained by the features of coalition government, we expect a backlash from “agentification” and the strengthening of the administration’s policy role. Although robust assessments of the ongoing reforms are precocious, some evidence points at efforts that articulate vertical control. The new interfaces between politics and administration and greater flexibility in civil service appointments clearly reinvent mechanisms for political control.

As to the assertion of horizontal control, in which ministerial cabinets’ communicative and coordinative potential was used to the full, the direction of reforms is less clear. We might witness a strengthening of the PM’s and deputy ministers’ coordinating bodies, which would make developments in Belgium comply with trends witnessed elsewhere. Even in majority systems, the relaxation of vertical control is accompanied by strengthening the centres of government. In coalition systems, where the need for horizontal coordination is traditionally stronger, we may expect this trend to be even sharper.

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Politicians and the Civil Servants: The Case of Finland

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1. The general background

Finland has a long tradition of public administration. Before independence, Finland was first a part of the Swedish regime from about 1100 to 1809, and later was unified with the Russian Empire as an autonomous Grand Duchy after 1809. The Swedish era had a remarkable cultural impact on Finnish administrative culture and tradition as well as the legal state, providing models of the civil service and of judicial development. Our administrative cultural heritage also connects Finland to Central Europe and French-German legal tradition, from which Sweden received her initial formats for administration. The founding of the autonomy of Finland in 1809 was, however, a starting point in the development of our own administrative machinery. Having substantial autonomy within the Russian Empire permitted Finland to retain her administrative culture from the Swedish tradition (Temmes and Salminen, 1994).

Because civil service models in Finland have traditionally been Nordic, this means an open recruiting and promotion system based on merits, which have been defined in the civil service law. For instance, qualifications for the civil service have been defined in law and normally refer to having a university degree of some sort. Until the 1980s, the administrative culture in the Finnish state administration has been dominated by the bureaucratic and legal attitudes of the civil service elite and was, in that regard, a rather closed system.

The political system in Finland is a typical Nordic liberal democracy. The modern Parliament was founded in 1906, and Finland was the second country in the world to give voting rights to women. The electoral system is proportional representation, which means that in one election district there are several Parliament posts. This, in turn, results in Finland having many political parties in Parliament. Following European tradition there have been, among the Finnish parties, a strong conservative party, social democratic party, rural party (today the center party) and left wing party (former Communist party). There is also a party representing the Swedish-speaking minority in Finland. These five parties have all been available to form coalitions, with a history of effective cooperation with each other. In the government, there have normally been two or three of these main parties with the rest of the parties in opposition. There has been a continuity of coalitions, but also some fast changes in political situations.

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In the 1990s, Finnish civil service qualifications were affected by managerial conceptions of government elements because of many NPM-type reforms adopted in the Finnish administrative machinery. Until the 1980s, the management within Finnish administration had not been of high quality. From the 1980s onward, the Finnish administrative culture changed step-by-step, becoming more managerial and results-oriented. NPM-type administrative reforms and modern in-service training have played a crucial role in this change. But the managerial capacity of the administration is still too low compared with the needs of the more market-oriented society (Kekkonen, 1994), and reforms continue to be implemented.

The educational level of Finnish civil servants has been and continues to be of a very high level. It has been higher than in the private sector because of the higher percentage of university-educated people in the administration, a virtual requirement for management posts in government. The administration has had no difficulties recruiting well-educated young personnel, but this may change in the future as the population ages. Many members of the current civil service will retire within the next decade, and it is not clear whether there are sufficient graduates interested in filling the posts that will become available.

Other Nordic countries, with Sweden in the vanguard, began to build their welfare states during the 1930s. Finland's development was delayed because of the wars, and did not really begin until in the 1950s and 1960s. For the most part, the Finnish welfare state took its current shape during the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. This later start meant that Finland had to follow Nordic models in building its own welfare state. These models did not provide much support for Anglo-Saxon NPM-type reform ideas which didn't reach the Nordic countries until the 1980s (Salminen, 1991 and Ahonen and Salminen, 1997). The reassessment of the welfare state began in Finland toward the end of the 1980s. The welfare state bureaucracy and hierarchical management of the system began to be dismantled in favour of a more decentralized system. The new legislation decentralized the tasks of the central administration by transferring authority and tasks to local level – the municipalities – which have traditionally had a strong element of self-governance in Finnish and other Nordic administrative systems.

The relationships between leading politicians and top civil servants demonstrate several special characteristics of the Finnish administrative system and culture. These are derived from Finland's particular administrative history as well as its Nordic heritage. They include the following:

- Coalition governments which are formed of two or three main parties. The results and activity of this kind of government presumes good cooperation among the main parties of the government. A similar kind of coalition-forming also occurs in the municipalities resulting in a cooperative political culture at all levels.

- A strong civil service tradition derived from Nordic administrative culture, which emphasizes the neutral Weberian position of the civil servant. It also gives a dominant role in policy advice and some aspects of policy-making to permanent civil servants of the ministries and agencies.
- The dominant role of the sector ministry which gives the minister an autonomous position as the head of the ministry. The model of the strong sector ministry decreases the coordination capacity of the whole government, but enables strong governance within each sector.
- The changing relations between central and local administration had dramatically increased the autonomy of the municipalities by the 1990s. This increased autonomy is a crucial issue in the Nordic countries because of the strong autonomy and dominant role of the regional and local levels of the administration, especially in providing the welfare state services. This has the potential of being another barrier to coordination.
- The relations between the public and private sectors have also developed quickly since the 1990s because of the NPM-type reform wave. This development implies increasing needs to develop modern governance machinery for the whole administrative machinery rather than focusing on individual ministries.
- The status of the ministries has developed toward the European model while at the same time, it has become estranged from the traditional Swedish independent central agency model. Thus, the roles of the minister and the permanent secretary in the ministry, as well as the mayor and the members of the managing board in the municipalities, can be appropriate targets to analyse the development of the relationship between the politicians and the top civil servants.

The administrative reforms of the 1990s in Finnish administration meant a crucial development at the forum of central administration and in the decision-making of the municipalities. It also changes the manner in which the leading politicians and their top civil servants work together at both levels (Temmes and Kiviniemi, 1997 and Pollitt et al, 1997).

For characterizing the relationship in the Finnish administration between the leading politicians and the top civil servants, we can analyse following sub-themes:

- The roles of the politicians as chiefs of the ministries and members of the managing boards in the municipalities.
- The roles of the permanent secretaries of the ministries and the mayors of the municipalities.
- The cooperation of the politicians and top civil servants in the ministries and municipalities.
- The legal, administrative and political responsibilities of the leading politicians and the top civil servants at both levels of government in Finland.

- The problems and the benefits of the Finnish management system in the ministries and municipalities.
- The development trends of the relationship between leading politicians and top civil servants in the Finnish system.

2. Who is the “boss” in the Finnish ministry?

As a result of the 1990 administrative reforms (described above), Finnish ministers attained stronger positions as leaders of its administrative organizations. The reorganization of the central agencies has given to the ministries undivided power in their areas. Before these reforms, the Swedish-type central agencies divided the power of the ministries in Finland as they do in other Nordic countries. These reforms also meant that the boundary surface between the political steering and administrative or managerial steering moved from the relationship between the ministry and the central agency to within the ministry. The internal relationship in the ministry between the political leadership of the minister and the administrative and managerial leadership of the permanent secretary of the ministry is now the focus of the interface between politics and administration.

The strong administrative and legal tradition of the Finnish civil service gives the permanent secretary the full right to be ‘a civil servant leader’ of the ministry. At the same time, the minister is clearly the political leader of the ministry and has the formal position of the head of the ministry, which gives him or her the authority to make decisions on all issues except those issues clearly delegated to the permanent secretary or other civil servants of the ministry. In spite of the strong judicial position of the minister, she or he has been ready to divide the authority of the head of the ministry with the permanent secretary especially in non-political issues.

This internal paradox of ministerial division of the authority has in Finland been solved using several tools. First, there has been some formal delegation of decision-making rights to the civil servants in the Finnish ministries, especially on those issues in which there is a clear need for neutral and technocratic analysis and consideration. Second, the role and background of the permanent secretaries of the Finnish ministries have developed to be so sovereign within the ministry that the minister has to create a confidential working relationship with the permanent secretary. Third, the Finnish recruitment system for top civil servants has during recent decades followed the model of hidden politicisation. (This term describes a nomination system in which all applicants are formally in the same position but political decision-makers follow a hidden agenda which favour the applicants with ‘suitable’ political backgrounds. It is hidden also because of the restricted information made available to the media and other outsiders concerning the political backgrounds in civil service).

The relationship between the minister and permanent secretary of the ministry is the principal relationship between leading politicians and the top civil servants in a liberal democratic politico-administrative system like Finland. This is where political power and administrative power meet in the process of making public decisions. These relationships also reflect the changes in the power division of politics and administration. In the Finnish case, the strong legal tradition directed the development of this relationship until the 1980s. During the active construction period of the welfare state in the 1960s and 1970s, the role of the neutral top civil servants was, however, questioned because of the political importance of the welfare state reforms. The solution was to use those above-mentioned tools as the means of controlling the use of power in policy-making.

The normal procedure of solving questions about the division of tasks in the legal system is to utilize delegation of the powers according to appropriate legal norms. This moves the decision-making authority and responsibility toward the civil servants. In the Finnish central administration, this alternative was used restrictively because of the unwillingness of the ministers to give up their decision making rights over policy-making by their ministries.

In fact, the principal solution to this problem of allocating power over policy was increasingly active cooperation between the minister and the permanent secretary because of the temporary nature of the ministerial position and the strong role of the permanent secretary, the latter representing continuity and expertise in the sector of the ministry. Normally, there has been mutual understanding and obligatory trust in the working relationship of the minister and the permanent secretary to facilitate these relationships. The cooperative arrangement was possible in spite of different political opinions and background of these two partners in governing. The Finnish model of the permanent secretary as a normal civil servant means that in the coalition government some of the ministers must work together with the permanent secretaries who have different political backgrounds.

During the 60s and 70s, there was an active public debate of politicisation of the top civil service in Finland. This debate was connected to the clear changes in the nomination practices in the central administration. The technocratic education and long practice in the administration were being replaced by greater attention to political qualifications and the awarding of some employment on a political basis.

The parties represented in government wanted to nominate their own experts to prepare important welfare reforms. This created tensions and pressures in the administration. There were increasing tensions between civil servants from different political backgrounds. In practise, these tensions were mainly in the control being imposed over civil servants using the model of hidden politicisation. It meant the normal nomination procedures with a hidden agenda gave special

privilege to some of those applicants, who represented the political background of the parties in the government. During the 70s, this new political nomination culture acquired some features which did not correspond well with the legal and neutral tradition of the Finnish civil service, one example being duplication of important posts in the ministries. There were cases in which the principal parties of the coalition government made informal bargaining arrangements for dividing important posts in the administration among themselves. On the other hand, this hidden politicisation gave the active parties of the 70s a channel which guaranteed to the political steering mechanisms sufficient power to direct the preparation activities of important welfare state reforms and, at the same time maintain the model of the neutral civil service in the ministries. As a heritage of this politico-administrative culture, most of the permanent secretaries in the ministries have a party-political background in addition to the status and role of the neutral civil servant. However, there are also some permanent secretaries who do not have a party membership.

The last act in the play: Who is really the boss in the ministry is a question that needs to be solved in the long struggle over the need of the political secretaries in the ministries. After Finland joined the European Union in 1995, an increasing and special need to seek tools to lighten the working burden of the ministers has been sought. In fact, these kinds of preparations were already implemented in the 80s, but the critics of permanent secretaries and especially of the conservative party hindered the reform of adding political secretaries to the ministries to directly assist the minister in his or her tasks.

In 2004, this reform appears to be succeeding but the model, which will be used as the means of implementing political secretaries, is a compromise between the full model of the political secretaries and the civil servant model. In the new system, some of the ministers will have a political secretary whose rank in hierarchy is same as the permanent secretary, but who is nominated only for the mandate period of the government and receives political powers and responsibilities only from the minister. She or he is not a normal civil servant. The role does not include acting as the leading administrative or managerial role in the ministry, something that will remain in the province of the civil service.

This new model follows the legal tradition of the Finnish civil service in which the political and administrative powers and responsibilities have been clearly divided and allocated to the different individuals. The reform also implies some kind of dual leadership in the ministry by the civil servant-type permanent secretary and the political secretary under supervision of the minister who is the formal head of the ministry. This dual leadership in organising the work of the ministry easily can produce problems and tensions. Future development and experiences will show how well the new model is working and how well it can be fitted to the Finnish administrative culture. Further, in practice, other top civil

servants in a ministry will come from the same party as the minister especially for members of the larger parties in a coalition.

The changing balance between the roles of the minister and the permanent secretary is an interesting mirror which reflects the power balance between political steering represented by the prime minister, the minister and the permanent secretary who, in the Finnish system, represents the civil service power. From independence in 1917 until after WWII, the strong technocratic tradition of the civil service was dominant. This meant in the 60s and 70s political steering must discover informal challenges to guarantee the needs of political steering. The delegation of the decision-making rights to the top civil servants could only partly solve the emerging needs for a balance among the players. The hidden politicisation had a bigger impact, but it also distorted the organisations and the clear division of tasks typical to Finnish administrative tradition.

The last phase of the development with the heavy NPM-type reforms including the elimination of central agencies, EU membership and wide decentralisation activities from the central administration to the municipalities, completely changed the forum in which the balance between political steering and civil service technocracy is played out. The new system of political secretaries can still change the balance, but first, the new institution must determine its own limits and possibilities for action. Probably the relationship between the state and municipalities can be seen as more important in analysing the future of the balance between political steering and civil service technocracy in the Finnish administrative machinery.

3. The municipality – politicians and civil servants in the same boat

After WWII and into the 1950s, the volume of the personnel in the Finnish state administration and in the municipalities stayed at the same level: about 100,000 employees each. From the 60s onward, the rapid increase of both parts of the Finnish public sector started with the development of the welfare state services. By the end of the 80s there were about 215,000 employees in the state administration; and about 600,000 employees in the municipalities and their associations. The severe depression in the economy and the NPM-type reforms in the 90s caused cuts in these levels of employment. As of 2004, there were only about 120,000 employees in the state administration but still over 400,000 in the municipalities, and this number is increasing again.

In those years of fast growth and construction of the Finnish welfare state, the relationship between the state and the municipalities was based on strict control from the ministries and the central agencies. This relationship changed in the 90s because of wide decentralization of powers from the state administration to the municipalities. In the same period, the system of state aid and subsidies was

reformed; municipalities obtained the right to use lump sum subsidies without any detailed steering from central administration. Only the legislation, which in many areas is quite general, mandated some of the activities of the municipalities. The elimination of central agencies for service delivery was part of this process.

The main political institutes of the Finnish municipality are the municipal council and the managing board, the latter nominated by the council. The managing board is the main operative unit of the municipality which is in the hands of politicians. The formation of the managing board is normally based on coalition of the main parties. In the Finnish system, the mayor is a civil servant who is elected by the council. Today, this nomination is mainly for the period which is fixed by the council.

There are both similarities and differences in the state administration and municipalities concerning coalition formation and the relationship between the politicians and top civil servants. The similarities are connected to the traditional legal civil service model, which is in use both in the state administration and the municipal administration. The differences are most clearly defined in the politicisation of the civil service, which is much wider in the municipalities than in the state administration.

In principle, the model of the hidden politicisation is used also in the municipalities but the politicisation is more overt, and can reach even the lowest level of public organisations. There are also many municipalities (about 440) in which one party – mostly the Centre party which dominates the rural areas – is so dominant that it can, in practise, govern alone and freely choose its coalition partners which can decrease political control. We can say that the politicisation of the municipal administration is more comprehensive than in state administration which it is limited to the small quota of the top civil servants.

4. The problems and the benefits

When considering the capacity of the Finnish politico-administrative system, we must remember that Finland is a small country with only five billion inhabitants. The small scale and intimacy of the administrative machinery eliminates many of the bureaucracy problems encountered in larger systems. The Finnish population is also very homogenous which makes it easier for the parties to practice coalition cooperation. Generally, the administrative machinery is well organised and civil servants are well educated and capable in their jobs. The level political debate and activities have also strengthened during the last decades, although during the last years voting rates have decreased.

The problems in the Finnish politico-administrative system are mostly potential threats to governance, which can endanger the capacity of the political system to steer the administrative system (Bouckaert, Ormond and Peters,

2000). The significant decentralisation of policy-making to the municipalities has decreased the possibilities of the central administration in controlling and supporting the development in welfare services at the grassroots level. Not even evaluation systems designed to follow the development in the municipalities have succeeded in organizing governance because of the critics of the municipalities. The tension between the state administration and “the strong municipal state” are obvious, but are not channelled to public debate because of the dominant position of so-called municipal politicians. These politicians, the dominant group in governing, represent most of the parties. Many of them are sitting as members in Parliament and at the same time on municipal councils and even on the managing boards of the municipalities. Thus, the coalitions in government are integrating the development and implementation of policy at several levels of government.

When the electoral system favours the municipal connections because of the proportional election system in the relatively small election districts, it is obvious that even the ministerial-level politicians tend to identify themselves with the municipal view. The unfortunate chaos in the administration of the capital area and its artificial division in two separate election districts also prevent the growth of the national level politicians in the Helsinki area.

It is quite obvious that the decentralisation policy which was connected to the NPM-type reform policy can form a serious threat if the central administration loses its contact with the municipalities. Because of this development, Finland has for next few years a serious governance problem. The other part of this governance problem consists of privatised and corporatised public services. It is obvious that this kind of “ownership steering” can cause many problems especially in the municipalities. There are, for instance, threats of monopolies and abuses. On the other hand, the company model and special public corporation model used in Finland have created more efficiency (Temmes, 1998).

In the division of tasks between the politicians and top civil servant, these new targets of governance are difficult. Do these new market-type institutions belong only to directors of the technocracy or are they also subject to the supervision of politicians?

The benefits of the Finnish system can be identified in the close cooperation between the politicians and civil servants in governance. The Finnish administration is used to having the capacity to act in a flexible way because of this cooperation. The obligatory trust and mutual understanding between the minister and the permanent secretary is a good example of that cooperation. The second example, which has, however, had a negative impact on the internal administrative culture, is the hidden politicisation of the top civil service. In the municipalities, these phenomena are more difficult to govern because of complicated political steering in the municipal administration.

5. The development trends

Finland has as a society gone through numerous structural reforms during the 90s. The new decade began in a stable way. The long term stabilisation of the political culture, for instance, inform the governments which are in power during the whole electoral period (four years), and the stable position of the main political parties have created the basis for good evolution in politics and economy. Membership in the European Union has also stabilised Finnish society. The main part of the difficulties in foreign policy and agricultural policy have been moved to the responsibility of the EU. At the same time, the EU directed the political activity in several domestic policy areas, which has perhaps decreased the activity in national level reform policy (Temmes, 1995).

The Finnish welfare state is also stabilised after rapid growth during the 60s, 70s, 80s and some reassessment in the 90s. In fact, the Finnish welfare state reforms appear to await the developments at the EU level more than at the domestic level. The enlargement of the EU will very likely directly impact the future of the Finnish welfare state, but these impacts are difficult to forecast. It is quite obvious that both the political elite and the technocracy of Finland are following a wait-and-see strategy in that area. The Finnish economy is probably the most independent element of our society in spite of the EU integration. The national responsibility of the competitiveness of Finnish industries has directed the activities of the elite in the national level but also in the regional and local levels.

Together, stabilisation and the Finnish politico-administrative system are moving toward being increasingly European. This change in attitudes has been true not only for integration into the European Union, but also for development toward a more European-style executive government and parliamentary government. The elimination of Swedish-type neutrality and the move toward specific political secretaries in the ministries are examples of the latter trend.

We can ask many questions concerning the further development of Finnish governance. How much will the Finnish political elite and central-level technocracy become involved in the trans-national EU level in the future? Is it possible to identify clear divisions between the roles of the national actors who mostly work at the EU level and domestic actors working mostly at the municipal level? This kind of development is possible if the trend of "the municipal state" continues with the powers of the national government being squeezed between Europe and localities in the process.

Political stabilisation can guarantee the future of coalition cooperation both at the national level and in the municipalities. The more difficult question is how it can be integrated at the EU level. The future of a strong technocratic civil service is very much open, and may be seriously threatened. The normal parliamentary style of governing, which involves increased political steering and more political

appointees in government, has already diminished the role of the technocracy. On the other hand, NPM-type reforms have created more manoeuvring room for managerialism as well as technocrats in the civil service. In the relationship between the state and municipalities further development remains open. It is quite possible that the central administration will devote itself to the issues that are important for further integration into the EU, and the main domestic activities will happen at the municipal level. The weak position of the Finnish intermediate regional administration is one symptom of this possibility.

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The Impact of Coalition Government on Politico-Administrative Relations in Ireland 1981 – 2002

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1. The administrative, constitutional and political framework of Irish Government

1.1 Introduction

Ireland is composed of two jurisdictions, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. This paper will concentrate on the impact of coalition government on public administration in the Republic of Ireland (herein referred to as Ireland), in particular from the period 1981 – 2002 whereby a coalition has been the main form of government. Although the succession of coalition governments is a relatively recent, but likely to be persistent, feature of the Irish political landscape, coalition government in Ireland dates back to 1948 (Table 3). Therefore, the paper will make reference to the nature of these earlier coalitions and their impact on politico-administrative relations, the focus of which was to exclude the dominant Irish political party – Fianna Fáil – from government.

1.2 The development of the Irish administrative system

Political independence did not precipitate administrative problems as Ireland inherited a well-established structure based on the British model – a parliamentary democracy with a cabinet system of government, and a central structure of ministerial departments which, along with the local government system, absorbed almost all public business. Approximately 21,000 civil servants, many of whom were senior officials, transferred their services to the new state. Steeped in the British tradition, these officials did not deem it necessary for the state to create new administrative machinery. Thus, despite a break in constitutional theory, the political institutions were built on pre – 1922 roots, with the new Irish government centralising virtually all aspects of central administration into government departments under cabinet ministers. At the political level, ministers wanted clean and economical administration, not “jobs for the boys,” and this was reflected in the rapid creation of the Civil Service Commission, 1923 (O’Halpin, 1991: 288). The 1930s witnessed the introduction of the Constitution “*Bunreacht na hÉireann*” which, though republican in nature, ironically tended to enshrine the British system of government. Therefore, in the wake of independence, the re-

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sponse of the new Irish administration was largely that of one which had wholly absorbed the organisation and principles of its predecessor.²

A second distinctive feature of the Irish system was embodied in the Ministers and Secretaries Act of 1924, which provided the legal basis for the civil service. This is the principle that the minister alone is responsible for the acts of his department. The Act established eleven departments and indicated the work allocated to each. The minister in charge of each department was designated a “corporation sole”, whereby the minister essentially was the department and the acts of the department would be the acts of the minister for which he would be responsible to the Dáil (lower house). Consequently, a considerable quantity of detailed business came to be discharged at high levels of the administration. Senior officials, instead of being preoccupied with broad questions of policy, became immersed with matters of detail. Under the general programme of public administration reform, the Public Service Management Act of 1997 amended this and sets out a formal structure for assigning authority and accountability within the civil service. Among other issues, it aims to clarify the roles and duties of individual civil servants. Under the Act, each department and office must publish a strategy statement every three years, or within six months of the appointment of a new minister. Then-Taoiseach John Bruton (Fine Gael), when introducing the bill, spoke of ministers “releasing their grip” on some of the levers of power. Yet the clientelist nature of much of Irish politics puts significant pressure on politicians to involve themselves in detailed matters. Also, the distinction between ministers being responsible for policy and outcomes and civil servants being responsible for policy advice and outputs, while attractive, may in practice pose difficulties. In reality, setting the boundaries as to who does what is unlikely to be crystal clear.

1.3 Party system

The party system in Ireland is different from most European party systems because it is not based on social cleavages. There was and continues to be a distinct lack of significant ideological divisions between the main parties. The division of the country into two separate states largely removed the main cultural cleavage between the Protestant Unionists and the Catholic Nationalists. The major issue after independence in 1922 was the Anglo-Irish Treaty, and it was the national question that largely produced and formed the basis of appeal and commitment

2 The main feature of *Bunreacht na hÉireann, 1937* (replacing the Constitution of the Irish Free State in 1922) include the republican and unitary nature of the state, separation of powers, a bicameral (two chamber) legislature – the Oireachtas is composed of an upper house *Seanad Éireann* (the Senate whose role in the legislative process is quite restricted) and a lower house, *Dáil Éireann*, together with a President, a government and independent court system. The principal architect of the constitution was Eamon de Valera, the leader of the main political party, *Fianna Fáil*.

to political parties. In contemporary times, civil war politics has faded into the background and alignment to political parties is now built more on the basis of loyalty and economic factors. The current leaders of the main parties have no family connections with civil war leaders. The principal Irish political parties are Fianna Fáil (Soldiers of Destiny) [FF] and Fine Gael (Tribes of Irishmen) [FG] which are centre-right parties. These two major parties originated from a split in the original Sinn Féin (“ourselves alone”) party, whose success in the 1918 Westminster election led to Irish independence in 1922. Other parties include the Labour party, the Progressive Democrats [PDs], Sinn Féin [SF] and the Green Party. In respect to the Labour party, it may be noted that Ireland records a low level of electoral support for left-wing politics. Another interpretation is that the main Irish parties tend to be run on personalist lines, meaning that internal disputes have focused largely on personalities rather than on policies. Divisions exist within each of the four main Irish parties, though these have rarely impaired their ability to function as unitary actors when it comes to coalition bargaining (Laver and Schofield, 1990: 228).

Some features of the key political parties will be described below. The principal political parties are Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael. Both Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael represent farmers with Fianna Fáil tending to have a broad representation in urban areas while Fine Gael tends to draw more support from the middle classes. As well as the gulf of policy between them on the national question, Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil were initially separated by intellectual / social barriers, urban and rural. Both Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael are to the right of centre.

The following sub-sections serve as a brief description of the background of the two political parties currently in government – Fianna Fáil and the Progressive Democrats – as well as the two most dominant opposition parties, Fine Gael and Labour.

Fianna Fáil

In the fifty years following the establishment of the state, Fianna Fáil evolved into the biggest “catch-all” party, drawing its support from all sections of society.³ It was the dominant force in Irish politics until 1989 when the party had to enter into a coalition for the first time. The party was founded in 1926 by anti-treaty leader Eamon de Valera who resigned from Sinn Fein after the signing of the treaty. Fianna Fáil claimed support from the less well-off sections of society, and was traditionally supported by landless farmers and farm labourers who gave their support to the anti-treaty side.

3 The support base for Fianna Fáil has decreased somewhat in recent years with the local elections of June 2004 proving to be their most disastrous performance at local level in several decades. The Sinn Féin party has been one of the beneficiaries of the softening in support for Fianna Fáil amongst the working class.

The Fianna Fáil leaders who participated in coalition government are Charles Haughey (1989 – 1992), Albert Reynolds (1992 – 1994) and Bertie Ahern (1997 – 2002, 2002 –)

Progressive Democrats

The Progressive Democrats was founded in 1985 following an acrimonious split within Fianna Fáil. The PDs are clearly on the political right and some of their policies have been interpreted as being akin to Thatcherism. It may be implied that the emergence of the Progressive Democrats transformed the politics of coalition in Ireland. The PDs have also used a coalition to ensure that its policy voice be heard. It offered a new coalition partner to Fine Gael while denying Fianna Fáil an overall majority in the 1987 election. Ironically, however, the PDs have not to date participated in government with Fine Gael or Labour, and their coalition bed-partners have been their previous adversaries, Fianna Fáil.

The Progressive Democrats leaders who have participated in coalition are Des O'Malley (1989 – 1992) and Mary Harney (1997 – 2002, 2002 –).

Fine Gael

Fine Gael was formed in 1933 as a result of a merger between Cumann na nGaedheal, the Centre Party and the Blueshirts. The party has its origins in the other side of the divide on the national question – support for the Anglo-Irish Treaty. Initially Cumann na nGaedheal, and later Fine Gael support was largely drawn from larger business owners and big farmers who supported the preservation of trade links with Britain.

The Fine Gael leaders who participated in coalition government are Liam Cosgrave (1973 – 1977), Garret Fitzgerald (1981 – 1982 and 1983 – 1987), John Bruton (1994 – 1997)

Labour

The Irish Labour Party is the oldest party presently operating in the Republic of Ireland, having been formed as a wing of the trade union movement during the First World War (Collins and Cradden, 2001: 20). The party predated independence and was established in 1912. Its success with voters has been intermittent, with its greatest achievement being the general election of November 1992. In the cities where it would be expected that Labour would do well, Fianna Fáil has consistently performed better. Following the 1997 general election, the party was enlarged to include a merger with the Democratic Left⁴ to form one Labour Party serving as the platform for politics left of the center.

⁴ Democratic Left was a small left wing party that emerged in 1992 as a result of a split in the Worker's Party.

Labour/Democratic Left leaders noted for participating in coalition are Dick Spring (1983 – 1987, 1992 – 1997) and DL – Proinsias De Rossa (1994 – 1997)

1.4 The development of a mature coalition system in Ireland?

Since 1977, there has not been a majority single party government. And since 1981, every government formation barring 1987 has required negotiation after polling was completed and that negotiation has become progressively more problematic. Ireland is no longer a uni-polar system. With the exception of the very short-lived Charles Haughey administration of 1982 (sustained in office by independent deputy Tony Gregory and the Workers' Party) and the minority Haughey administration, (1987 – 89) which was essentially maintained in office by a broad consensus on fiscal and economic policy with the main opposition parties, a coalition has been the normal form of government since 1981. Two of these coalition governments have been formed without a general election being called – 1992 (FF-PD) and 1994 (FG-L-DL). This is all in marked contrast to Irish government formation in earlier years.

The establishment of coalition governments in Ireland has predominantly advanced as a result of the demise in the dominant position of Fianna Fáil (FF) which managed to identify itself as a “national movement” rather than a partisan organisation (Farrell, 1992: 146). The development of Fianna Fáil into the main catch-all party made the formation of an alternative government difficult, and it was not until 1948 that this became possible. The so-called “inter-party” (coalition) governments of 1948 – 51 and 1954 – 57 involved parties whose policies, particularly on socio-economic issues, were remarkably diverse. However, dissimilar parties were inevitably drawn together by the dominance of Fianna Fáil and disillusionment with its then insular economic strategy. This trend was repeated in the 1970s and 1980s when the Fine Gael (FG) and Labour (L) coalition governments (1973 – 77, 1981 – 82, 1983 – 87) were put together with the exclusive aim of excluding Fianna Fáil. A change to this pattern occurred in 1989 when Fianna Fáil formed a government with the Progressive Democrats (PDs). This ended the latter party's principle of not entering coalition government, and is perceived to have come about due to then-leader Charles Haughey's reluctance to cede personal power and relinquish the government to Fine Gael and Labour. Since 1989, Fianna Fáil's overall share of the vote has not substantially recovered, and there have been a succession of coalition governments: 1989 – 1992 (FF-PDs), 1993 – 1994 (FF-Labour), 1994 – 1997 (FG-Labour-Democratic Left⁵ known as the ‘Rainbow coalition’), 1997 – 2002 (FF-PD). This succession has altered the nature and perception of coalition government and the complexity of post-election bargaining, whereby small parties exert greater leverage and independent

5 Following electoral losses in the 1997 general election the Democratic Left was merged within the Labour party in January 1999.

Teachta Dála (Dáil deputies, TDs) may hold the balance of power as was the case in the FF-PD administration in 1997 – 2002.⁶

The coalitions of contemporary times had their roots in the coalition experiments of the 1970s and 1980s and the formation of the PDs in the early 1980s. During the 1973 – 1987 period, the Labour party was divided on the issue of coalition. A more left-wing faction, often identified with then-party chairman Michael D. Higgins, opposed coalition with FG. A more right-wing faction, typically centred on the leader of the parliamentary party, favoured coalition. The Garrett Fitzgerald coalitions of the 1980s had to indirectly manage this division as well as the coalition relations and themselves, and long meetings were deemed to be the norm in an effort to reach consensus. In 1987, Labour ministers walked out of the coalition over the failure of the partners to agree upon the shape of the 1987 budget. Fianna Fáil capitalised on this in its manifesto to save the country from a weak and indecisive government, and formed a minority government in 1987 on the premise of no compromises and no deals.

The Taoiseach, Charles Haughey, called an election in June 1989 as it was perceived that FF would fare better at the polls and regain its position as a government with an overall majority. Ironically, it lost seats and so began the process of dependence on other parties in order to enter government. Labour and the Worker's Party ruled out any participation in government. The PDs, who had entered into a coalition agreement with FG during the election campaign and performed badly, formed a coalition government with FF in mid-July 1989. Connelly and O'Halpin (1989: 251) stress that Fianna Fáil's pragmatic conversion to coalition politics at a time when the state's acute public financial problems were fading and when the first evidence of economic improvement was emerging after a decade of disaster, helped to remove the aura of perpetual crisis management that had surrounded previous coalitions.

Although Charles Haughey was generally careful not to upset the junior coalition partner and took the support of the PDs seriously, his successor Albert Reynolds' attitude was that the PDs were a dispensable component of government.⁷ This rather acrimonious government finally broke down following the evidence given by Albert Reynolds at the Beef Tribunal which was derogatory to Des O'Malley, and the former refused to apologise. The outcome of the 1992 election was a victory for the Labour Party vis à vis the proportion of seats gained by the party. Although Labour had been highly critical of the FF-PD administration and called for the formation of a truly alternative administration during

6 It is estimated that 30 percent of all administrations have depended on the support of independents (Weeks, 2004). In the most recent national elections (2002) independents acquired 13 seats, the highest number since 1951.

7 Ironically it was the Progressive Democrats that finally forced Charles Haughey's resignation as Taoiseach and leader of the Fianna Fáil parliamentary party in January 1992.

the election campaign, it ironically turned to FF in the aftermath. This can be explained by the reluctance of Dick Spring, the Labour leader, to go into a coalition with FG due to personality clashes and poor relations in general during the 1983 – 1987 government. These will be explained in the paper in the context of the policy-making process. The Dail met on 12 January 1993 and elected Albert Reynolds as Taoiseach. Labour obtained six cabinet posts, five junior ministries, a restructuring of government, and a new office of the Tánaiste, as well as the Ministry for Foreign Affairs for the Labour leader in the bargaining process. The government included new ministries for Equality and Law Reform, Employment and Enterprise, and Arts Culture and Gaeltacht and a regrouping of some others. From the outset the Labour Party strategists determined that it was necessary to restructure government in an effort to deal with the needs of a coalition as against single party government. This was a concerted effort to strengthen the Labour leader's role in government; it also led to the introduction of programme managers to monitor policy implementation.

This government lasted until November 1994, by which time relations between the coalition partners had seriously deteriorated. Two issues acted as a catalyst to end the “partnership for government”: the publication of the Beef Tribunal report⁸ and the disagreement over a judicial appointment. An election was not necessary as FF resigned from government and the Rainbow coalition was formed in December 1994. This coalition with the unlikely combination of FG-L-DL proved enduring and presided over the emergence of the “Celtic Tiger”. The coalition partners put forward a joint campaign for re-election. However, the Labour success of the 1992 election was reversed as the party performed badly. The Democratic Left also performed badly at the polls and later merged with Labour to create a broader platform for the Left. Fianna Fáil, while not significantly increasing its overall share of the total vote, managed to gain nine seats through an effective vote management strategy under the STV system. In July 1997, FF and the PDs formed a minority government with the support of four independent deputies. Following a general election in May 2002, the FF-PD alliance was returned to government. The coalition is now in a stronger position; its reliance on the support of independents has been rendered redundant in the wake of more favourable election results for both parties.

1.5 Electoral rules

Fighting an election as a coalition can be of great value because of the Irish electoral system. This is proportional representation (PR) by the single transferable vote (STV), in multi-member constituencies. Each constituency returns between three

8 The Beef Tribunal examined irregularities in the beef process industry and accusations of corruption. Its report in August 1994 raised disturbing questions about the quality of public administration in Ireland, the relationship between business and politics, and the issue of political funding (Collins and Cradden, 2001: 92).

and five TDs. The elector can vote for all the candidates, listing them in numerical order of preference. A 'quota' is worked out according to the following formula:

$$\frac{\text{Total valid poll (number of votes cast)}}{\text{number of seats} + 1} + 1$$

When a candidate reaches the quota he or she is deemed to be elected. It is here that transferability kicks in. The surplus of the candidate's votes above the quota – namely those votes not needed to elect them – is then allocated to the other candidates according to the subsequent preferences recorded on the ballot papers. Thus, if two parties have a coalition pact before an election, they can ask their supporters to give their second preference vote to the partner party. A pre-election pact between Fine Gael and Labour in 1973 yielded considerable benefit in returning both parties to government. However, while a formal agreement or strong indication of preferred coalition partners may aid accountability and minimise the complexity of a post-election bargaining environment, they also limit the parties' flexibility in the negotiating arena (Seyd, 2002: 24). Prior to the general election in 1992, the Labour Party was asked by Fine Gael to form a pre-election alliance with themselves and the Progressive Democrats. This was rejected by the Labour Leader, Dick Spring, since he anticipated that Labour would perform well at election time and therefore boost its bargaining powers in the aftermath. In the recent general election of May 2002, none of the main parties entered into coalition pacts; neither was there any significant pressure from the electorate for them to do so. It had been the trend that heavy electoral reverses afflicted the smaller parties after participating in coalition governments, but this was not the case in regard to the Progressive Democrats performance. Their overall share of the vote was slightly down but the party doubled its number of seats in the Dáil (Tables 1 and 2). Laver and Schofield (1990: 89) noted that some commentators argue there is a potential for proportional representation electoral systems and coalition government to undermine democracy by taking the choice of government away from the electorate and giving it to politicians. In short, the membership of a coalition government may not ultimately reflect the wishes of the electorate.

1.6 Formation of coalition governments following elections

When governments are formed by a single party, no delay occurs when one administration falls and another is formed. But in multi-party conditions, elections may not be 'decisive' and governments may only become formal following a process of inter-party bargaining. In recent times, these negotiations, along with the formal written agreement to which they give rise, are an obvious difference between single party and coalition administrations. The 'winning' parties must compromise on their manifestos, depending on their bargaining position, and pool their commitments. Since 1993, this has taken the form of an explicit

agreement called the Programme for Government. The current one is entitled the “Agreed Programme for Government, 2002 – 2007”. Such agreements are also seen as an insurance against a policy priority being rejected later by the other party. But an issue not already contained in the agreement may, at a later stage, be greatly diminished in its ability to reach the government’s agenda.

In Ireland the negotiation of agreements normally takes two to three weeks – the 1992 election being exceptionally long as Labour, basking in a victory for the party with more seats in the Dáil than ever before, explored its options. Negotiations are typically undertaken by a small group of senior figures from the bargaining parties. After the 2002 election, coalition negotiations between Fianna Fáil and the Progressive Democrats were conducted by a small group of ministers and advisers. The party leaders, Bertie Ahern and Mary Harney, were not involved directly in the negotiations but, as in the 1997 negotiations, determined their broad parameters at the outset. Senior civil servants played a background role in informally proofing the viability and cost of the proposed programme for government and offered advice in ascertaining whether targets could be realistically achieved.⁹ Other issues on which the parties typically seek advice from secretary generals are the state of the social partnership, EU issues and the internal structure of government. There are no formal arrangements covering the provision of such advice and requests by the parties are sent to the relevant department directly. It must be stressed, however, that civil servants have no role in decisions in relation to appointments but they may be involved in discussions in changes to departmental structures and composition.

2. The Role of the president of the State and the Parliament

As a parliamentary system, government must always retain the support of the Dáil in order to survive. Governments taking office and oppositions overthrowing them must both achieve majorities among those taking part in the vote. In the 1990s, the Dáil returned two alternate versions of coalition government, one without an election being called with Labour moving from an initial partner to another. During the 1980s, intra-party conflicts generated as much government instability as inter-party conflicts. In response, coalition governments will often commit their members to disciplined behaviour in the legislature. In general, strong discipline is required unless, for example, a moral issue such as abortion arises.

The president is the guardian of the rights of the Irish people and of the Constitution. However, in guarding these rights very few powers are left to the president’s own discretion. The Irish Constitution of 1937 sets out these powers. The office is largely ceremonial, rather like a constitutional monarchy, with very little leeway for exercising discretionary powers. Elgie (1999: 232) argues that

⁹ These are generally accurate but occasional inaccuracies do occur e.g., the impact of the 2000 budget tax cuts on revenue was underestimated by finance officials.

there is no doubt that the presidency is a secondary political office and there are no expectations that the president should exercise political leadership.

The president normally acts on the advice and authority of the government. The Constitution emphasizes in several places that the president requires the approval of the government before taking action. In the identification of a taoiseach after an inconclusive election result in multi-state conditions, the president is left out of the start of the process; it becomes a matter for the parties alone. The parties bargain among themselves until one party or a combination in coalition believes it has sufficient strength to form and operate a new government. The head of state then plays a ceremonial role in formally appointing new taoiseach. The president does not play any tangible role in managing a coalition government.

But there are six independent powers where she may exercise her own initiative independent of the government (and regardless of its complexion). Two of these have particular significance for government (single or multi-party).

1. The president is part of the system of checks and balances on the legislature, and she may refer a government bill to the Supreme Court to test its constitutionality following consultations with her Council of State (a symbolic body).
2. The most arguably important independent power of the president is the wide power under Article 13.2.2 which enables her, with absolute discretion, to refuse to dissolve the Dáil on the advice of a taoiseach who has ceased to retain the support of a majority in the Dáil. This power has never been used. The president cannot dissolve the Dáil without the request of the taoiseach.

3. Coalition Structures in the Government

3.1 The Role of the Prime Minister ethos

The first step in the government formation process is to identify a potential new prime minister. In the case of Ireland, the taoiseach, as the head of the executive has consistently been a powerful actor since the introduction of Bunreacht na hÉireann in 1937.¹⁰ The taoiseach has important prerogatives with regard to the operation of the cabinet, even though coalition government is now the norm and has somewhat restricted the head of government's power in these respects.

In a coalition, the taoiseach is the leader of the senior coalition party. In a coalition government the taoiseach is generally perceived as having the role of chairman as opposed to chief. The current Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern (FF), is perceived as a consensus-orientated and chairman-like politician. Taoiseachs of the past (e.g., Charles Haughey) tended to follow the chief-like role but this is not

¹⁰ The Constitution officially designates the Taoiseach as head of government under Article 13.1.1 and Article 28.5.1.

really an option in the current run of coalition governments. Bertie Ahern and Mary Harney meet and go through the agenda before cabinet meetings, and business is conducted in a non-confrontational manner. As one official commented, “They are determined to avoid a number of veto cards getting played. We have had leaders (in a coalition) who depart from the collective and this is inevitable as parties do have separate identities”.¹¹

Elgie (1999) illustrates that the impact of coalition government can be seen in four ways. First, the taoiseach’s power of appointment is restricted by being shared with the leaders of other parties participating in the coalition. The ministerial nominations made by the coalition partner must be tolerated, and special arrangements are sometimes introduced to accommodate the junior partners’ representation in government. Second, in-office representatives of the coalition partner may be in a position to shape the development of policy in the departments that they head. For example, Ruairi Quinn was a high profile Labour party Minister for Finance in the 1994 – 97 ‘Rainbow’ coalition. Third, it may also mean that the tánaiste becomes a significant political actor. The tanaiste’s formal role is limited to standing in for the taoiseach should he be away or die in office. It was only in 1993 when Labour went into government with Fianna Fáil for the first time that the office gained a more substantial role. This model was a new departure for government since it is only the taoiseach who is seen to operate outside departmental boundaries (Farrell, 1993: 156-8). During 1993 – 1997, Dick Spring, leader of the Labour Party was, in tandem with his position as Tánaiste, Minister for Foreign Affairs. His influence on foreign and Northern Ireland policy was greater than that of the typical foreign minister. Finally, if the taoiseach rides roughshod over the concerns of the coalition partner, then the government runs the risk of collapse. There is nothing inherently unstable about coalition governments, but circumstances can conspire to render them extremely fragile, as the coalition break-ups of 1992 and 1994 showed (Elgie, 1999: 243).

3.2 The Carve-Up – Distributing Posts in a Coalition

Following the appointment of the government (a maximum of 15 ministers), the taoiseach will in due course nominate up to 17 junior ministers of state outside the cabinet. With the exception of the chief whip, they are not entitled to attend government meetings unless invited specifically to speak on a particular departmental matter. In coalitions, special arrangements can be made to facilitate the junior partner. In the Rainbow coalition, Pat Rabbitte of the Democratic Left was allowed to attend all meetings of the cabinet with his leader, then – Minister for Social Welfare Proinsias De Rossa, even though the constitutional limit of 15 ministers had already been reached. In the 1997 – 2002 administration, the same privilege was extended to the Progressive Democrats so that Mary Harney did

11 Interview, Government Secretariat, Department of Taoiseach, 9th April 2002.

not feel isolated in cabinet meetings; it also ensured participation in her absence. To this end, the Progressive Democrats were allocated an additional “super-minister” who attended cabinet but without voting rights. In the current administration, this has not to date been deemed necessary as the PDs have two ministerial and two junior ministerial positions. In addition, the tánaiste’s programme manager has an office in the taoiseach’s office, rather than in the Department of Enterprise and Employment where Mary Harney has been based. This enables the two programme managers to liaise closely, and also gives the junior partner a stronger voice at the centre of government.

3.3 Coordination and Conflict Resolution

Governments serve under Article 28.4.4 of the Constitution as collective entities, underpinned by strong collective cabinet responsibility. But ministers are expected to restrict their activities to their own departments which have been described as “mini-corporations”. The Department of Taoiseach is the one with the greatest overview of policy. The focus of conflict management is predominantly the cabinet which remains the key forum for discussion, and via bilateral meetings between the taoiseach and tánaiste who are the principal political actors involved in the coordination of a coalition. Major ideological conflicts are not likely to occur. Differences are more likely to arise over differences of opinion of policy and the allocation of public expenditure.¹² Informal mechanisms of coalition coordination have been perceived to work quite well and commentators like Chubb (1992) believe that the advent of continuous coalition governments since 1989 has served to weaken the discipline of collective cabinet government.

During the Rainbow coalition (1994 – 97), considerable management of the government took place during meetings of the three party leaders immediately prior to cabinet. This operated as a clearing house, and levels of discussion in cabinet fell with some cabinet members becoming concerned at their detachment from decision-making. As noted, Bertie Ahern and Mary Harney also meet before full cabinet meetings but there seems to be less sense that these sessions channel important issues away from cabinet (Seyd, 2002: 104). The taoiseach’s power as chairman of the cabinet is reflected in the rule that no item can be put on the government agenda without his approval.

Murray (1997) notes that the proliferation of coalition governments have required structures to facilitate them (Murray and Teahon, 1997: 40). The Fianna Fáil-Labour government of 1993 – 94 is noted for the introduction of more formal mechanisms for coalition management. From the outset, the Labour Party strategists determined that was necessary to restructure government in an effort to deal with the needs of the coalition as against single party government. These

¹² For example, the Progressive Democrats were not convinced of the merits of the establishment of a National Stadium – more commonly known as the ‘Bertie Bowl’.

mechanisms will be discussed below. The overall context of existing arrangements for the FF-PD government is set by the programme for the government the parties agreed to prior to taking office. The secretary general to the government plays an important advisory role and under him there are three divisions – the Government Secretariat, Protocol, and European and International Affairs – providing for interdepartmental coordination and the smooth and efficient running of government. The Government Secretariat services all government meetings, drawing up the agenda, circulating documentation to ministers and communicating decisions to government departments. The current strategy statement illustrates that the central mission of the department is to provide the taoiseach and chief whip with policy advice, information and support necessary for the effective leadership, coordination and strategic direction of government policy from policy formulation through to decision-making, implementation and monitoring. There is no dedicated coalition committee and no coordinating political management role for cabinet committees. One of the more recent innovations in coordinating mechanisms has been the establishment of the government legislation committee which brings together the government chief whip and the attorney general together with a representative of the Parliamentary draftsmen's office, programme managers to the taoiseach and tánaiste and senior staff of the taoiseach's department. The remit of the committee is to establish the government's legislative programme, to prioritise work, to consider resource issues and to monitor progress.

3.4 Politico-Administrative Relations and the Creation of Programme Managers

A number of distinct developments in the central administration may be directly attributed to facilitating coalition government partners. The 1993 – 1994 (FF-L) coalition saw the creation of a new class of public official: the programme manager. The programme manager is deemed to have had its genesis in the facts of Irish electoral life rather than in the tortuous history of mainstream civil service reform (O'Halpin, 1996), and operates along the blurred borders between politics and administration. In 1993, the programme managers were established at the request of the Labour government as a coordinating mechanism between departments and as a method of keeping ministers fully aware of policy developments.¹³

Labour was fully aware of the difficulties that the PDs encountered in coalition with FF between 1989 and 1992 whereby they sometimes became informed

13 The Civil Service Commissioners Act, 1956, and the Civil Service Regulation Act 1956, grant the Minister of Finance wide powers relative to regulating the civil service and allow certain exceptions to the requirement that positions be filled by competition. Ministerial advisers, personnel secretaries, and programme managers from outside the civil service are appointed to "excluded positions". These appointments are temporary and end when the minister's term of office ends.

of policy developments through the media as opposed rather than their coalition partners. In tandem was their own unhappy experience of coalition in the Cosgrave (1973 – 1977) and Fitzgerald (1981 – 82, 1983 – 87) coalitions. Those governments were put together with the straightforward aim of excluding FF from office. Policy was secondary to this goal. Any advisers during these administrations did not become involved in any executive roles within departments. Programme managers were perceived as a combination of advisers and managers operating along the lines of an underdeveloped ministerial cabinet system.¹⁴

Each minister had one programme manager and the taoiseach and tánaiste had two each.¹⁵ The programme manager was supposed to be pitched at the level of principal officer. The Labour party brought in more political affiliates from the outside that were deemed to have maneuvered the more cautious career officials upon whom FF relied. Such a mechanism would, it hoped, enable the party to maximise its strength in a coalition and to exercise influence across a range of issues, including those where Labour ministers had no direct responsibility but on which the party itself had some view or definite policy position. After some discussion, it was agreed that these new officials would be termed partnership programme managers rather than *chef de cabinet*, the initial preference of Labour negotiators. In the words of one civil servant, “ministerial cabinets are not on the agenda”.¹⁶ This tallies with Brian Farrell’s comments that employing the idea of ministerial cabinets as mechanisms for ensuring that government policy in line with the agreed coalition outline and implemented accordingly was likely to meet considerable resistance within the existing public service. (Farrell, 1993: 158). In the long run, political imports would damage the apolitical ethos of the Irish civil service.

The new system also provoked hostility from TDs from within the Labour Party itself. One label coined to describe the programme managers was the “Tánaiste’s non-elected kitchen cabinet” and “spin doctors” for ministers. They were accused of neglecting relations with the parliamentary groups, and some Labour TDs felt marginalized in the decision-making process.

The provision for joint meetings of programme managers certainly represented a new departure in Irish administrative practice. Convention dictated that there were to be no established meetings of departmental secretaries since could be interpreted as supplanting the role of the cabinet. The programme managers met weekly on Wednesdays, the day after the cabinet’s normal meeting. The main

14 In reply to a parliamentary question on 29th March 1993 the Minister for Finance stated: The role and function of the new managers is quite distinct from that of departmental secretaries general and senior line managers. Senior civil servants will continue to have responsibility for the development of policy proposals, the overall management of schemes and programmes and have charge of their departments generally.

15 Personal interview, Department of Taoiseach, 9th April 2002.

16 Personal interview, Department of Taoiseach, 9th April 2002.

purpose of these meetings was to review progress under the programme for government on a department-by-department basis in order to identify blockages in the system, facilitate interdepartmental exchanges on matters of common interest and shared responsibility, ensure legislative targets were in process of attainment and generally provide a forum where difficulties could be quickly ironed out.

The system of programme managers continued to operate during the Rainbow coalition 1994 – 1997 (FG-L-DL), and were criticised for excessive cost and politicisation of the administration through the employment of party staff affiliates on the public payroll.¹⁷ O’Halpin, commenting in 1997, noted that programme managers appeared set to become a standard feature of Irish administrative life, at least under coalition governments. Civil servants, at least in relation to legislation, had identified the desirability of a coordinating mechanism at an administrative level between departments even before it became a political imperative. However, the current administration (FF-PD, 1997 –) has discontinued the practice of programme managers for each minister save for the taoiseach and the tánaiste and there is no comparable coordination mechanism for the other ministers. A corresponding emphasis is now placed on the role of the ministers of state in achieving the implementation of the objectives of government. The civil servant comment on the programme manager episode is that they were deemed “a step too far”.¹⁸ To others, the programme managers were an instrument to facilitate more genuine inter-party partnership as opposed to old-style coalitions.

The role of special advisors, on the other hand, is expressly political and their contracts co-terminous with the duration of the life of the government. In addition to providing expert advice, special advisors also offer advice of a political nature on individual policy issues. The presence of special advisors reduces access to the minister. There are between 30 – 40 advisers operating in the full range of departments in the current administration. Ministers are hard pushed to meet all departmental responsibilities, and time for coalition management is difficult to find. Ideological differences are also a factor in the appointment of advisers as they are sympathetic to the political orientation of the minister. The practice commenced with the 1973 FG-Labour coalition whereby several Labour ministers appointed advisers from outside the civil service to provide them with non-departmental advice. As noted, this practice has since been adopted to varying degrees by subsequent governments. One viewpoint put forward by a civil servant in the Department of Taoiseach is that the number and proliferation of advisers is reaching a “saturation point,” and that it is questionable whether so many advisers are necessary. There is concern that advisers can have a discouraging effect

17 Indeed, John Bruton (FG) and Proinsias de Rossa (DL) had been vociferous themselves in their criticism of the programme managers and their cost to the public purse when they had been in opposition.

18 Personal interview, Department of Taoiseach, 9th April 2002.

on some elements of the service and some policies may not be given the attention they deserve when they are forwarded. This may have the potential to impact upon medium – to long-term strategic policy-making as policy decisions become based on short term political priorities. The programme manager network is gone but special advisors have filled in the gaps. The taoiseach has six to eight advisors and, at times, they are in competition with each other for his attention.

3.5 Innovating Politico-Administrative Structures under Coalition Government

In general, it may be noted that coalition governments or their composition have not been a salient factor in broad public sector reform. The Strategic Management Initiative launched in 1994 was conceived of the Fianna Fáil-Labour coalition government and the momentum taken on board by the subsequent Rainbow coalition of the Fine Gael-Labour and Democratic Left parties. In some respects – e.g., decentralisation issues – reforms tend to be debated on constituency grounds as opposed to inter-party grounds which illustrates the clientelistic nature of Irish politics in action. In regard to innovations in politico-administrative structures, few examples can be illustrated and, as with the programme managers experiment, the instances apply to the 1993 – 1994 FF-Labour coalition government.

The leader of the Labour party and Tánaiste, Dick Spring, also insisted on the creation of an Office of the Tánaiste that in some respects resembled and was designed to shadow the Department of Taoiseach in its leadership and policy overview role. The Office of the Tánaiste¹⁹ was supported along the lines of the Department of Taoiseach. A Minister of State, Eithne Fitzgerald, and an assistant secretary were instated. The Labour leader thus received all government papers and not simply those relating to his own ministerial portfolio of foreign affairs. The public view of the office was that it was superfluous and expensive with Dick Spring posing as a “mini-taoiseach” The FF-PD government abolished it when they entered office in 1997. In hindsight, many actors believe that the larger tánaiste’s office during the earlier coalitions was beneficial for the junior coalition partner. However, the revival of this mechanism as a monitoring tool for the junior coalition partner is not likely to be revisited in the current administration.

4. Coalition Related Issues in the Policy Making Process

4.1 Agenda Setting and Decision-Making in Coalition

When a single party forms a government, its ideas may be fairly broad and open to change through cabinet reconsideration and civil service advice. The agreed

¹⁹ This was an administrative office though the experience of the 1993 – 1994 FF-L coalition was deemed to have recast the role from its constitutional remit which is that of deputising for the Taoiseach in circumstances where the latter is outside the state or incapacitated.

programme for government in a coalition determines policy. Collins and Cradden, (2001) note that subsequent civil service reservations may therefore count as little. To ensure a coalition survives, individual ministers may view it as their primary task to “deliver” on a policy promise, despite reservations within their own party or department (Collins and Cradden, 2001: 56). Coalition government is also underpinned by arrangements for information sharing, and policy documents are now routinely copied to the taoiseach and tánaiste at draft stage (Murray and Teahon, 1997: 42). However, the flow of information tends to be shaped by the habits of and relations between ministers, so that the junior coalition partner can sometimes be left out of the decision-making loop by virtue of not having seen the relevant official papers. Earlier coalitions did not have these mechanisms and when the principles of one party did not align with that of the other the result was a clash. For example, statistics on government meetings demonstrate that in 1986 (FG-L) 91 meetings and 724 memoranda took place whereas in 1998 (FF-PD) 51 meetings and 1065 memoranda took place. Hence, in relation to agenda setting there is now a formal document between the parties that is reviewed mid-way through the government. The programme is the statement of intent and strategy, and detail is developed in the department which also has a clearing house role and is responsible for implementation. There is a clearer idea of what is required of government departments and this is taken into account in the framing of the strategy statements.

In relation to effective management and decision-making, Irish coalition governments may be divided into two phases. The first phase being the coalitions of the 1970s and 1980s and the second phase being the 1990s. The coalition of the 1970s was led by Liam Cosgrave (FG) during 1973 – 1977, and it came to be as the only workable alternative to Fianna Fáil. All parties subscribed to government on this basis and one reason why the coalition proved workable was that it was driven to a large degree by the lack of expectation of the junior partners. At this time, it is perceived that the Labour mindset was such that it was almost a sufficient reward in itself to achieve a change of government and have a role in that alternative FF government. The coalitions of FG-L led by Garret Fitzgerald in the 1980s had a steep learning curve. By that time, Labour expectation had risen to having policy input into government. The Labour Party at this time was still characterized by an older generation of people who held to a politically principled philosophy (organized labour principles) that made coalition with Fine Gael difficult. The 1983 – 1987 government did serve its term but its method of “business management” left some legacies that informed their participation in later coalitions where greater premium was put on avoiding the irretrievable rifts between the partners.

It is important in a coalition that procedures (such as those outlined in the cabinet handbook) are adhered to as far as possible, and that there is acceptance and trust that departures from the guidelines are not intended to subvert

the process of less consultation or that the process is accelerated. In Fitzgerald's government, items did come forward to the cabinet table which still had intractable problems at principle where neither party would yield. Differences of this magnitude should not be dealt with at the cabinet table but rather settled between ministers. Unless, however, a framework to manage such conditions has been developed, interpersonal relationships between ministers may not resolve such differences of opinion.

In the Fitzgerald government, it was decided to divide the decision-making agenda into Part One and Part Two. Any item on the Part One agenda that the government failed to deal with within a reasonable period – months more than weeks – was then forwarded to Part Two. The arrangements for Part Two were to protect the interests that had relegated the issue into this backwater. An issue could not be taken out of the Part Two agenda to be actively considered again without giving several weeks' notice to the other sides. So if an issue (such as the breaking up of a state company) had been forwarded into the Part Two agenda as an intractable item and could not be resolved, it could not, for political reasons, come off the agenda altogether and remained in the parking lot. Towards the end of the 1983 – 87 government, the agenda had become divided into Part One, Part Two and a Part Three. The Part Three agenda was recognized as a graveyard beyond the parking lot where it was now agreed that no party would try to come to agreement but for reasons of external politics and public perception, it was necessary to say the issue was still on the government agenda. By the end of this government, there was a whole list of items that had failed to produce policy. In attempting to find a solution to this impasse, Garret Fitzgerald, in the last 12 months of the FG-L government, made the first initiative towards recognizing what was until then an unappreciated consequence of coalition, namely agendas Part Two and Part Three (Personal Interview with officials, Department of Taoiseach, 9 April 2002). Garret Fitzgerald appointed the Chief Whip, Sean Barrett, to an informal role that was declared as the taoiseach's 'chief of staff'. This role meant that the latter would seek to broker an agreement between the parties on items that were held in abeyance in order to reduce the volume of agenda Two and Three respectively. Barrett had the secondary function of dealing with the active items on the Part One agenda in order to halt them sliding into agenda Two and Three. This was deemed to be reasonably successful as Barrett was uninvolved by a ministerial function and he attempted to mediate with a common sense approach. This strategy was deemed to be successful, but was introduced too late in the term of government.

The succession of coalitions since 1989 has altered the nature of decision-making and cabinet government. For example, during the period from 1989 – 1992, the PDs discovered that, having forced FF into coalition, they could exert considerable leverage and were able to push through action on taxation and other issues

close to their hearts. More significantly, they found that the Taoiseach, Charles Haughey, took the threat of PD withdrawal from government so seriously that he was willing to antagonise his own party in order to maintain the coalition PDs' major concessions. The historical relationship between FF and the PDs took careful management of interpersonal relationships, and ensuring tensions did not come to the boil. The business of government was deemed to be conducted in an open way but it was also recognized that a volume of work 'disappeared off the tables'.

4.2 Ideological Differences and their Reconciliation

In December 1992, the Labour leadership did not wish to be drawn into a FF-dominated coalition without a well-articulated programme for action and a mechanism for securing its implementation. Fianna Fáil negotiators found themselves dealing with a policy-focussed Labour Party with definite aims across the spectrum of government. The Labour Party recognised that they would always be the junior coalition in government, but in order to develop their role, they had to be proactive in developing models to optimise their position. The programme manager system, special advisors and the Office of Tánaiste has already been discussed. In relation to decision-making management, each minister's advocate met before cabinet and would try to transact business and sort out issues. In this way, controversial issues and ideological differences were addressed before the cabinet meeting without compromising principles or causing a minister to lose face at full cabinet.

There is no doubt that the decision-making process in coalition is slower than in single party government, given the ideological principles and opposing views on policy that characterise the divide between one political family and another. It may also be the case that components of decision-making may be improved given the checks and balances that have been introduced as politicians have learned from the early experiences of coalition governments in the 1970s and 1980s. Junior partners in coalition may also be given policy wins by the senior partner; these allow them to claim responsibility for a popular initiative or even secure a policy that the senior partner does not favour. For instance, during the Rainbow coalition, between 1994 – 97, FG was opposed to the policy of ending water charges but allowed its Labour and Democratic Left partners to pass this issue to assuage their supporters.

4.3 Civil Servants and the Policy-Making Process in Coalition Government

O'Halpin (1991) notes that ministers in most governments have accepted the apolitical nature of the civil service without difficulty. Indeed the role of the Civil Service Commission has done much to remove political influence from the civil service. The key test was probably in 1932 when Fianna Fáil came into office for the first time. There was no release of senior officials and no infusion of political appointees to departments. When FF finally lost power in 1948, however, the inter-party gov-

ernment that succeeded it showed reluctance to trust the senior civil servants they inherited. But the service did not become politicised. There are only two occasions when secretaries of departments had clearly been forced out because of disputes with their ministers (O'Halpin, 1991: 292). Those in question, E.P. McCarron and Dan Donovan, would not carry out specific instructions. McCarron had exceeded his authority in sanctioning an appointment, while Donovan refused to implement the suspension of an official of his department. In neither case was there any suggestion that either man was removed on grounds either of policy or party politics. Joseph Brennan, the key civil servant in the early years of the state, voluntarily quit the Department of Finance in 1927 after repeated differences of opinion with his minister (O'Halpin, 1991: 293). Peter Berry, the Secretary of the Department of Justice from 1961 – 1971, who had played a key part in the handling of the 1969 – 70 arms crisis, resigned despite pleas from the government to remain in office. The government failed to give him adequate support and protection when, through his duties, he became identified with aspects of national security policy. In January 1987, Sean Donlon, Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs and one of the main architects of the Anglo-Irish agreement, resigned at the age of 48 and took a position in the private sector. It was claimed that his decision was linked with the likelihood of a general election which the coalition government (FG-Labour) was expected to lose. He later returned in the reincarnation of a programme manager.

Overall, there are almost no cases of a complete breakdown in relations between ministers and civil servants that have become public knowledge. There have been clashes of personalities and policies, but this tends to be contained within departments. One such incident that was widely portrayed in the media was that of the “strains” between the then – Minister for Foreign Affairs, David Andrews (FF), and his Secretary General, Paddy MacKernan in October 1998. This was over a series of issues – disputes over official appointments and the leaking of secret department dispute documents during the presidential election – and the stand-off between them became a matter of public and political debate. There were two issues at the heart of the controversy. One was the breakdown in relations between the Minister and the Secretary General and the other was the decision by the Minister to use his legal power to personally select three people for senior promotions, hence politicizing appointments. Recommendations from the promotional system within the department, the Management Advisory Committee, in favour of certain officials was rejected by David Andrews in favour of individuals known personally to him. An ancillary problem was the way in which a number of ambassadors were given foreign assignments by the Minister against their wishes.²⁰ Andrews fortified his defence in the Dáil with the phrase “I am a Minister – not a rubber stamp”. The

20 David Andrew's promotion of the three diplomats prompted the opposition to accuse him of politicising the department and it has caused a great deal of anger amongst most of the staff at Iveagh House, Department of Foreign Affairs, who see it as undermining the normal structure for promotions in Foreign Affairs.

Opposition parties attempted to draft the Taoiseach and Tánaiste into the row but it had no implications for coalition relations. The Tánaiste offered her full support to the beleaguered Minister, but it was confirmed that representations of a sort were made by her in relation to one of the three positions filled.

According to Page (1995), cohesion among top civil servants is commonly claimed to have two effects upon the policy process. First, it is generally argued that it strengthens the role of the civil service in decision-making. An internally divided body does not have the status or power of one that speaks with a single voice. Second, cohesion imparts a set of interests: since an elite is a distinctive group, it may have distinctive group interests (Page, 1995: 262). The Irish senior civil service is small and deemed to be cohesive. In respect of the policy-making process, it would be strange if as individually and collectively, that public servants did not develop coherent and generalised views of where the public interest lies – namely, the departmental line. It is clear that Irish ministers are at a significant disadvantage in seeking to impose themselves on their departments and drive them in new directions.

Farrell (1994: 83) refers to the civil service as the “permanent government”. This portrays senior civil servants as an entrenched, professional and protected elite group of puppet masters manipulating the transient, part-time, and vulnerable amateur ministers, who are no more than titular lords of their departments. This representation is as unrealistic as the opposite image, the conventional dichotomy between politics and administration which continues to survive as convenient fiction as opposed to a description of any reality (Campbell and Peters, 1988: 81-82). In Ireland, civil service and legislation is seen as providing a framework for new accountabilities and working relationships. Under the Public Sector Management Act 1997, ministers are requested to release their grip on some of the levers of power. Yet Ireland does not have a tradition of legislative change to guide public service reform. It may be questioned whether the government’s commitment to changing power relationships between ministers and top civil servants is yet to be tested. The focus on strategic management itself raises issues about the role of civil servants. Zimmerman (1997: 541) notes that Lindblom’s mutual adjustment model is of value in explaining ministerial-secretarial relations in Ireland where secretaries have no statutory duties.

From another perspective, and as previously noted, effort has been employed to use ministerial advisers to facilitate ministers anxious to achieve change, but where their expertise in a particular policy area is likely to be offset by their inexperience in dealing with the administrative apparatus and its personnel. There is the added problem that time is a scarcer resource for the part-time and transient minister than for the fulltime and permanent civil servant. As discussed, the role of the programme manager was not really a policy advisory one. Programme managers gave opinions, but policy advice in respect of collective wisdom, historical recall and number-crunching is best contributed from civil servants.

In examining ministerial autonomy and collective responsibility Farrell (1994) explains how ministers were asked questions on matters relating to their own department and on what kind of decisions they made on their own. Responses fell into four categories: cost, innovation, coordination, or those regarded as politically sensitive. Ministers were unanimous in identifying the Department of Finance as a major constraint on their capacity to run their own department let alone advance new policy proposals (Farrell, 1994: 77). This is the case in both single and multi-party government.²¹

5. Conclusion

To conclude, it would appear that coalition government will continue to be the most likely mode of government for the foreseeable future. However, the experience of coalition in Ireland is moderate in comparison to, for example, Denmark or Germany. Coalition management in Ireland appears to have stuck closely to the Westminster model with relatively few adjustments in the transition from single party rule (Seyd, 2002: 104). The concerns of the coalition partners are two-fold: how to coordinate matters within the executive, and how to ensure adequate support for their measures in the legislature.

Initially, coalition government was perceived as a weak alternative to strong government led by the dominant party player, Fianna Fáil. However, since 1989, all governments have been coalitions and the notion of coalitions being weak and without capacity for effective leadership and policy has faded into the past. The unprecedented growth of the “Celtic Tiger” economy together with the dramatic achievements of the Northern Ireland peace process in the 1990s were overseen by a succession of coalition governments. As Connolly and O’Halpin suggest, these successes disposed of the old argument that coalitions were simply a poor substitute for single party government and could not provide strong and resolute direction of national affairs (O’Halpin and Connolly, 1999: 251). They also note that the absorption of the Democratic Left into Labour and the need for the Progressive Democrats to reinvent themselves may eventually see the re-emergence of the “Fianna Fáil versus the rest” paradigm that dominated government formation for over 50 years. One feature that may complicate this is an increase in the number of independent deputies elected to the Dáil. Given the clientelistic nature of Irish politics and the results of the last two elections in particular, this is not an unlikely possibility.

21 Attention was given to tensions between the Department of Health and the Department of Finance in relation to spending in relation to the government health strategy ‘Quality and Fairness: a system for you’ launched in 2001. The strategy constitutes massive investment to improve quality, capacity and service (in particular waiting lists and primary care) in the current health service and promote horizontal actions.

The real agent of development in coalition government has been the Labour Party. It recognized a growing role in government within an understanding that the likelihood of any, or most, government formations would result in Labour being the junior coalition partner. Labour has been the most proactive party in providing and testing models to optimize their capacity to influence government and have a detailed horizontal overview of the policy-making process. Three instruments in particular have been illustrated: the programme for government, the introduction of special advisers and programme managers, and the establishment of an Office of Tánaiste (1992 – 1997). The strengthening of the Tánaiste's Office and the deployment of programme managers in 1992 are the most serious attempt so far to give a more formal structure to coalition management and enhance the power of the junior partner (Seyd, 2002: 107). The Tánaiste's Office was deemed to be a good model for coordination and enhancing the identity of the coalition partner.

Prior to 1992, programmes for government did not exist. There was not even a skeletal document prepared to mark a treaty between the coalition partners or prioritise and plan policy. Ministerial advisers are perceived to be effective for their political know-how and ability to respond quickly to public concerns. In the current administration, all ministers, with the exception of the Minister for Finance Charlie McCreevy, have political advisers. The civil service accepts that this role is useful up to a certain point. The civil service system may not be as quick to get its mechanisms in place in comparison to these actors working at a political level. However, there is the concern that the civil service tradition should not be relegated to the background. On the other hand, a layer between the civil service and the minister can be useful in the drafting of policy. The Programme Manager system has been curtailed to a limit of the taoiseach and tánaiste being the only members of the government with programme managers. The civil service views the development of the Programme Manager system during 1992 – 1997 as the “edge of tolerance”.²² The programme managers were an additional layer between civil servants, advisers and ministers that disturbed a carefully balanced system as they operated as a collective as opposed to the singular role of a political adviser. The department is perceived to be the arena and have the capacity to bring policy forward efficiently and effectively. To this end the Facts/Interest model as advocated by Aberbach et al (1981) would appear to be the most appropriate as senior politicians and civil servants alike generally avoid the development of a political role in public service in Ireland.

22 Personal interview with official, Department of Taoiseach, 9th April 2002.

6. Data Collection

Table 1

The following table illustrates the final number of seats each party won in the 2002 general election and a comparison with the number of seats allocated in the 1997 election.

PARTY	SEATS	SEATS LAST ELECTION
Fianna Fáil	81	77
Fine Gael	31	54
Labour	21	21
Progressive Democrats	8	4
Green Party	6	2
Sinn Féin	5	1
Socialist Party	1	1
Others	13	6

Table 2

The following table illustrates the percentage of first preference votes for each party, their overall share of the vote and their gain/loss in the 2002 general election.

PARTY	1st PREFERENCE	% SHARE	% GAIN/LOSS
Fianna Fáil	770,846	41.5	+2.2
Fine Gael	417,653	22.5	-5.4
Labour	200,138	10.8	-2.1
Progressive Democrats	73,628	4.0	-0.7
Green Party	71,480	3.8	+1.0
Sinn Féin	121,039	6.5	+4.0
Others	203,332	11.0	+1.2

Table 3

The following table indicates the parties who have formed coalitions, when the government was formed and what the balance of power has been in the Dáil.

TERMS	NAME OF PARTIES	No. of Ministers	Percent of Ministerial positions	Proportion of seats held by the coalition government as a percentage of total number of seats in Dáil Éireann
(1) 18.02.1948	Fine Gael	6	46	45.6%
	Labour	2	15	
	Others	5	39	

(2) 02.06.1954	Fine Gael	8	62	50.3%
	Labour	4	31	
	Others	1	7	
(3) 14.03.1973	Fine Gael	10	67	50.7%
	Labour	5	33	
(4) 30.06.1981	Fine Gael	11	73	48.2%
	Labour	4	27	
(5) 14.12.82	Fine Gael	11	73	51.8%
	Labour	4	27	
(6) 12.07.89	Fianna Fáil	13	87	50.0%
	Progressive Democrats	2	13	
(7) 11.01.1993	FF	9	60	60.8%
	Labour	6	40	
(8) 15.12.1994 (no election)	Fine Gael	8	53	50.6%
	Labour	6	40	
	Democratic Left	1	7	
(9) 26.06.1997	FF	14	93	48.8% Reliant on the support of 4 independent TDs
	PD	1	7	
(10) 4.06.2002	FF	81	87	54%
	PD	8	13	

Source (excluding 2002 data): Coakley, John & Michael Gallagher (eds.), 1999. *Politics in the Republic of Ireland*, p.376.

- Others include two Clann na Poblachta, one Clann na Talmhan, one National Labour and one independent in 1948, one Clann na Talmhan in 1954.
- Dáil support refers to Dáil seats held by parties participating in government as percentage of Dáil membership immediately after the formation of the government.

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Conclusion: Learning From the Cases

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The relationship between civil servants and their nominal political masters is one of the enduring questions in the study of government, and especially democratic government (see, for example, Aberbach, Putnam and Rockman, 1981; Peters, 1987; Verheijen, 1999). Politicians believe they are elected to make policy, but frequently report themselves frustrated once they achieve office. They encounter a permanent bureaucracy that may have ideas of its own about policy, or is simply unresponsive to the demands of the politicians. Civil servants have seen governments come and go numerous times, so are not about to become enthusiastic about the programs of yet another government. On the other hand, the permanent civil service often report themselves frustrated by the inexperience and lack of knowledge of the politicians they are supposed to serve, and appear to believe that one part of their task is to save the politicians from themselves and their poor policy choices.

The relationship between politicians and civil servants may be difficult in any setting but may be especially problematic in coalition governments. Whereas in a single party government the civil service receives relatively coherent policy signals, the direction of a coalition government generally is less clear, and different ministers may have different policy ideas from those of the prime minister or from his or her other colleagues. The difficulties of managing these internal differences are bad enough for the ministers themselves, but are pronounced for the civil servants. Should a civil servant follow the general directions of government policy, or the wishes of his/her particular minister? What role should the civil servant play in defending the political interests of the minister (and ministry) in dealings with other departments? How can policy coordination best be achieved when there are conflicts in government that have not only functional roots, but also partisan lines of conflict?

The question of the relationship between civil servants and politicians has both normative and empirical elements. Normatively, the dominant question is one of democracy, and the capacity of the public to control policy through their voting (see Rose, 1974). If the will of the minister is thwarted by a permanent civil service then to some extent democracy is undermined. But in a coalition, what is the will of the people, and who gets to interpret it? Determining that may be relatively easy if the parties in the coalition are relatively homogenous ideologically, but the increasing tendency toward 'rainbow coalitions' makes reading the core policy ideas difficult. To some extent, the very nature of creating coalitions after an election weakens the capacity of the public to direct policy, as in a 'majoritar-

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ian' governing in which a majority party is clearly responsible for policy and can be held accountable at subsequent elections. That having been said, however, the large majority of democratic political systems function with coalition governments and there is, therefore, a need to develop means of linking voters to policy, and policy to implementation through the civil service.

The empirical question concerning the linkage between civil servants and politicians is simply one of capacity to govern. Can the political system govern effectively, or are there so many internal conflicts over policy, and over personality and partisan affiliations, that any policies that are made are, at best, lowest common denominators and not effective. Again, coalition governments may present some particular challenges to effective governance, no matter how desirable they may be on representational grounds. While the usual problems of implementing policy intentions can be found anywhere, the particular problem encountered in coalition governments may be policy coordination. When different parties with different priorities are controlling different ministries the inherent problem of policy coordination in government (Peters, forthcoming) is exacerbated.

To some extent the issue of the politicization of the public service links the empirical and normative dimensions of the linkage between civil servants and politicians. On the one hand, the idea of a politically neutral civil service has been important in conceptualizing 'good government' (Peters and Pierre, 2004). The commitment to political neutrality has been perhaps strongest in the Anglo-American democracies (Ingraham, 1994) and in the Scandinavian countries (Christensen, 200x;). In many continental European countries some level of political commitment on the part of civil servants is accepted, albeit in the context of strong requirements for legal training and examinations for recruitment. In those systems, there are still limits of acceptability and a strong sense of a public interest that must be served (Rouban, 2004; Schroeter, 2004).

While there may be normative concerns about the politicization of the civil service, there may also be some gains in performance if the civil service is more committed to the program of the minister or government more generally. If civil servants, and most importantly for this analysis, senior civil servants, are committed to the programs of a government then they are more likely to invest in making those programs effective. Thus, we need to think about the relative virtues of 'neutral competence' versus 'responsive competence' in the civil service. That is, how important in a democracy is the detachment of the civil service from politics, as opposed to the commitment of that civil service to responding – directly and perhaps even enthusiastically – to the demands of the elected government.

In summary, while a competent and effective civil service is doubtless important for democratic governance, so too is a responsive bureaucracy. The task that any government faces therefore, is balancing those two elements. The several national cases included here are examples of different ways of striking such a

balance, and finding ways for political leaders to control government while at the same time allowing some decisions to be made strictly *sine irae et studio*. Not only do these countries place themselves at different points on an implicit continuum of politicization of public administration, but they also demonstrate a variety of mechanisms that political actors in government can use to impose their will on personnel and policy. We will now proceed to attempt to classify these cases and to demonstrate comparisons with other countries that face the same concerns.

The Civil Service System

All democratic political systems have some elected officials and political appointees, and they have some permanent staff. Where then is the boundary between those types of officials, and is that boundary clear – even to the point of being made formal and legal? The division that exists between the career and political officials within the administrative apparatus, and the degree of formalization of the difference, will have a significant impact on the manner in which public servants and politicians interact. Likewise, the degree of institutionalization of merit criteria, and the very idea of a civil service, will influence the manner in which these sets of actors interact. In general, the political systems of Central and Eastern Europe have not been able to fully institutionalize a merit system, especially for senior civil servants, and hence there are numerous issues concerning the relationship between political and administrative power.

As well as the dimension of politicization of the civil service, we need to be concerned with the reform capacity of government, and the ability, especially in the newer democracies, to implement significant changes in their systems. Even in the more established democracies there have been significant reforms but also some resistance to those reforms, so the capacity to change the system has varied markedly. The Belgian case, for example, demonstrates how the so-called Copernicus reforms have been affected by the balance within the coalition and the limitations that the coalition imposed. Similarly, reform attempts often ran afoul of internal political difficulties of coalitions in Poland and in Slovakia.

Forms of Politicization and Coalition Government

The papers contained in this volume point to the numerous impacts of coalitions on the process of managing the career public service, or of substituting direct political appointees in positions that might be thought to be better occupied by a career public servant. The patterns that we can discern here are subtle and complex, with some being a function of coalition government, and some being more general functions of changes in the manner in which politicians and civil servants interact in any democratic political system. There has been a subtle yet perceptible change toward more political appointments in democratic societies,

and the cases examined here certainly correspond to this pattern although some, such as Belgium, do appear to be trying to fight the trend.

Everything else being equal, we might expect coalition governments to have greater difficulty in imposing their wills on the civil service than would single party governments. In the first place, the instability (and potential instability) of coalitions means that the civil service may be able to wait out any government they do not like, assuming that there is a genuine civil service system with some security of tenure for the members. For many countries in Central and Eastern Europe the civil service may not have that luxury, but they do in many of the Western European coalitions. Similarly, the instability of governments often leads the government of the day to depend heavily on the civil service as a resource for policy ideas and as a means of keeping government running while all the internal politics associated with coalition governments occupy much of the time of the participants. Even if the coalition is reasonably stable, their own internal differences may prevent imposing a particular view on the government.

Of course, there are some countervailing tendencies in the impact of coalition governments on the relationships between these sets of actors. The multiple parties involved in a coalition may not be able to impose a single view on their civil servants, but it may be easier to divide and conquer and have each minister focus on an individual policy and a smaller set of civil servants. Coalition politicization of civil servants may be less visible and threatening to non-coalition members than if undertaken by a single dominant party. Further, by dividing these 'spoils' among multiple parties the more direct political involvement may be able to strengthen political coalitions (and political parties themselves), something that is perhaps especially important in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

The Nature of the Coalition

One of the most important factors shaping the extent and style of politicization is the nature of the coalition. Several aspects of coalitions influence the attempts of politicians to control their civil servants (see Vass on Hungary in this volume). On the one hand, coalitions with a single dominant party (e.g., in Ireland and Slovakia) for part of time period, in the cases considered here, will face rather different problems in managing relationships with the civil service than will more diffuse coalitions. A dominant party coalition may be less willing to share its influence with smaller partners than would be necessary when the members of a coalition are more or less equal partners. On the other hand, when there are only a limited number of available members for a coalition the minority member may have to take it or leave it, and will generally take it. Further, the dominant party may have the capacity to more overtly politicize the civil service.

As well as the number of parties involved, the degree of ideological consistency among them certainly influences the nature of relationships among the parties in the coalition. It may also influence the relationship between ministers and civil servants. Slovakia (during one period) and Finland represent interesting examples of broad coalitions and the impacts of that diversity on the management of the civil service. Both have had very broad coalitions, and in each the level of overt political control over the civil service was weak. This pattern was in marked contrast to the tendency of dominant party coalitions in Slovakia to engage in overt politicization.

The internal management of the civil service through the coalition may make a significant difference in the consequences of politicization. If a dominant party is able to control the allocation of positions, or if there are some checks and balances among the senior members of the coalition then the process may work smoothly. If, however, each minister can manage his or her own political appointments then there is likely to be substantially less consistency in policy within government and significant problems of coordination. The latter pattern has been creating difficulties in Serbia, and to a lesser extent in Finland among the cases reported here.

The stability of coalition governments will also affect the relationships between politicians and civil servants. If, everything else being equal, civil servants can expect that a cabinet will have a reasonably long political life then they may feel more obliged to follow the directions of that government than when coalitions and their cabinets come and go quickly. Part of the impact of short-term coalitions is that civil servants may simply not want to invest heavily in planning programs and negotiating out all the necessary agreements among departments and with civil society actors if it is clear that a government will not be around long enough to actually push the program through Parliament.

Finally, the presence of a strong president as an interlocutor with the coalition may have an impact on the relationships that exist between the coalition and their civil servants, as implied in the Polish paper. To the extent that independent presidents can claim a more direct relationship with the public, and perhaps also with the public interest, they maybe able to minimize some of the more destructive aspects of politicization in the civil service. On the other hand, however, they may simply add another layer of political control as they attempt to infuse their own people into positions where they are able to control the actions and policies of the coalition government.

Front Door or Back Door Politicization

Especially for the countries in Central and Eastern Europe the difference between overt and covert politicization may be crucial for understanding the relationships between politicians and civil servants. In some systems, the number and nature of

political appointments has been regulated and it is clear who is political and who is not in government. In particular, some systems have either created ministerial cabinets as in Belgium (see Chapter x) or have formal agreements that allocate state secretary and other positions among parties. In other cases, the number and nature of political involvement in administrative positions is less clear, creating a sense that something bordering on illegality is occurring in the appointment of officials to their positions.

Further, it is important to note the variety of ways in which political influence may be diffused within the public sector. Several of the cases contained in this volume have retained a significant public enterprise sector in the economy, and therefore may have more places in which to exercise patronage, as well as ensure some degree of political control over the performance of these important economic actors. Politicians in Hungary, for example, have been able to make appointments to the boards of a number of state enterprises, and this also has been the case in Ireland. In other countries, the creation of a number of quasi-public organizations as a part of the New Public Management reforms has simultaneously created more options for political control over appointments in the public sector. With that understood, however, the number of appointments outside the center of government may reduce the pressure for more politicized appointments within government itself.

The Finnish case in this volume represents a clear case of political influence coming into the selection and management of civil servants through the back door. Like other Nordic countries, Finland has a strong tradition of a politically neutral civil service, but at the same time there is a recognized need for a good working relationship between the top civil servants and the minister. Thus, an appointment process that is nominally meritocratic may also contain some disguised political criteria to facilitate communication and cooperation between the political and administrative levels. The Hungarian case shows how a system that was originally overtly politicized with political state secretaries has experienced creeping backdoor politicization as increasing numbers of positions appear subject to ministerial appointment.

Everything else being equal, we would argue that 'front door' politicization is superior to 'back door' or covert politicization. The virtue of the more overt approach to political involvement is that it makes the role of political appointment of public servants clearer to the participants in the political process, and to the public. Further, if there are a number of agreed upon political positions then there may be less temptation to engage in more covert approaches to political involvement and political control that have the potential for undermining the legitimacy of the system. There, will, of course, always be some temptations to make more political appointments, both as a means of controlling public policy and providing jobs for party supporters. But making an agreement among the actors

about the appropriate level of political involvement may be a means of regulating these practices in a way that is acceptable to the direct participants in the process, if not perhaps to all citizens (or all academics).

New Public Management and Politicization

We should return here to a theme raised in the introduction and consider the impact of New Public Management (NPM) reforms in the public sector on the manner in which civil servants and politicians interact. The easy assumption to make about these reforms would be that they should enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of government, and indeed that is their stated goal. If managers in the public sector are freed from some of the restraints associated with traditional civil service systems and other forms of internal regulation in government, they should be able to make more effective decisions and run programs more efficiently (DiIulio, 1994;). A major component of those reforms is the capacity of senior managers to hire whomever they believe can do the most effective job in running a program, regardless of whether he or she is already a civil servant.

While the efficiency assumptions of internal deregulation in government are, on their face, plausible, in practice the consequences of this variety of reform may not be so benign. In particular, if government managers (including, one presumes, ministers) are free to hire whom they want, and also have other enhanced freedoms in personnel management there is nothing to prevent them from utilizing those powers to hire and fire on partisan political grounds, or even on grounds of personal loyalty to the minister. As noted, this may enhance some aspects of efficiency, but also could make programs subject to high turnovers in office, and to the same excesses of spoils systems as in the past. There is no evidence that any European political systems have gone that far in politicizing public service, but we need to be cognizant of the potential effects of reforms and consider ways of managing those potential effects. The control of rampant politicization is probably more of an issue for the Central and Eastern European systems that are still building the civil service and still in processes of political transition, but this danger of excessive political involvement in the civil service must be a consideration for any contemporary government.

Long Term Consequences of Politicization

Although the short-term consequences of a significant role for political appointment in the civil service are obvious, and perhaps even positive, we need to be concerned about the longer term consequences as well. In the short term, using political appointments may encourage more of the 'best and brightest' into government than might be possible otherwise. Spending some time as a political civil servant may be seen as simply one step in a political career, and an aspiring politician may be willing to accept the relatively low wages and demands of the

job in order to have greater opportunities in the future. When there are coalition governments in office, this pattern of political appointment may even more appealing given that the party may have only a short time in office and will want to have the maximum impact on policy as well as producing patronage positions for supporters.

In the long run, however, such a pattern of recruitment institutionalizes a weak civil service with few career opportunities for real advancement. This, in turn, means that the civil service may find it extremely difficult to develop a cadre of efficient and effective career managers for government. The Serbian paper contained here makes this point rather clearly, and it is implied in several of the others. The difficulty, however, is not only in persuading politicians to not use what may be fleeting opportunities for patronage as extensively as they prefer, but also in finding a way of quickly building that necessary depoliticized cadre of public servants who can do an adequate job of running the state, no matter what parties may be in coalition with what other parties in the government.

Conclusion: The Consequences of Relationships Between Politicians and Civil Servants

To this point we have been discussing the relationships between civil servants and their political masters in a rather academic and detached manner. While that is important for understanding these relationships at one level, it is also important to consider the broader political and social implications of these relationships. One obvious question is the effect of these patterns on the performance of government and its efficiency in producing policy outputs for citizens. While there is a tendency among academics to favor a more impartial and permanent civil service, it is not always the case that this form of governance does produce the most efficient direction of policy and programs. As already noted, some commitment to the programs may be crucial as well. Further, political appointment does not necessarily mean that the appointees will be incompetent, as the German and French civil services have been proving for some years. Thus, the impacts on efficiency are definitely an empirical question which will require further exploration and analysis, as well as a nuanced understanding of government performance.

The more important impact of the relationships between civil servants and politicians may be on the legitimacy of government with the public. To some extent an effective government can build legitimacy, but even an effective government that has the appearance of corruption, favoritism and patronage may find building or maintaining legitimacy difficult. While the extent of the impacts of high levels of politicization may vary across political cultures, in general the appearance of corruption that often accompanies politicization – especially covert politicization – is not likely to enhance the legitimacy in governance capacity of a political system. That having been said, however, political involvement in

administration is not likely to disappear any time soon, in any of these systems. What governments will have to do is find the means of coping with pressures for greater political involvement in the appointment and direction of civil servants, and at the same time ensure their continuing capacity to govern 'in the public interest' to the greatest extent possible. This balance may be difficult to maintain for any government, but it may be a particular challenge to the new democracies of Central and Eastern Europe in which there has not been sufficient time to institutionalize an effective public bureaucracy.

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Studying Politico-Administrative Relations under Coalition Government: Notes on Framework and Methods

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The permanent Working Group on Politico-Administrative relations was created at the 1998 NISPAcee Annual Conference in Prague. In the workshop on Administrative Reform, the lack of a well-functioning politico-administrative interface was singled out as one of the principal impediments to the administrative development process in Central and Eastern Europe. Therefore, it was decided to attempt to develop comparative case studies on politico-administrative relations in Central and Eastern Europe and, on the basis of these studies, to formulate possible means of breaking the stalemate in politico-administrative relations. On the basis of this comparative framework, a first series of country studies were developed on Bulgaria, Estonia, Romania, Russia and Yugoslavia. Furthermore a pilot study on politico-administrative relations at local government level, using the same framework, was done for the Ukraine.

The working group developed a comparative analytical paper, an additional set of country studies and a set of thematic cross-cutting studies on organizing policy advice, alternative ways of re-structuring politico-administrative relations, and on the role of professionalization in improving politico-administrative relations. The results of the working group research have been published in a book (*Politico-Administrative Relations: Who Rules?*) in 2001.

The working group discussions directed the attention of the participants toward a particular field of investigation, and a new research project on politico-administrative relations under coalition governments in the CEE countries was developed. The members of the working group found this topic essential for better understanding of the political conditions and limits of the professionalization of administrative systems in the region. It was also expected that the research would reveal more about the impact of the coalition form of the government on the formation of the government's administrative structures and decision-making mechanisms. Given the limited experience of the countries in this region with coalition government, not to mention democratic government more generally, understanding how coalitions functioned was considered essential in both academic and practical terms.

The Purposes

The coalition form of government is common in the CEE countries, and most of the countries have already experienced that changes in government associated

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with coalitions result in breaks in (already fragile) administrative development. In addition, the changes within the coalition may also involve serious consequences for public administration such as confusion or discontinuity in personnel, breaks in the policy process, instability, loss in efficiency and professionalism, etc. The coalition as such is also a driving force for the politicization of administrative institutions, and it also may also slow down government decision-making processes, potentially resulting in poor policy decisions. On the other hand, there is very little comparable data and information about the coalition governments in the CEE countries. The authors of this volume surveyed this topic and oriented the collection and presentation of the basic data, information and their initial analysis and evaluation about their country's experiences of coalition government and its impact on the public administration.

The first task of this research was putting together a body of comparative statistics on the composition of coalition governments in CEE countries. The share of the politically-appointed governmental positions among coalition partners may be compared to the proportions of party mandates in the Parliament. The analysis of the deviations and the coincidences helps to clarify not only the political power relations within the government, but also the different political influences of the governing parties on the administration. Stability or fluctuation in the proportions and shares of positions in government may also be important as setting conditions for the exercise of public administration and the role of the civil service. In an over-politicised situation the stable government coalition may deepen the political dependence of the public service. If the coalition is not stable, the repeated changes provide greater room for an independent and neutral operation of the administration.

Political science analysts already have given comprehensive overviews on the conditions and reasons of the coalition governments in the CEE countries. Much less research has dealt with the forms and operation of coalition governments in this region, and there is no professional survey on structural and functional consequences of coalition politics on governance and the operations of public administration. Putting together parallel overviews on Western and Central Eastern European coalition politics and their impacts on public administration offers an exceptionally valuable possibility of comparisons and enhanced understanding.

The proposed topics for the country cases

On the basis of the workgroup discussions the authors received a proposed thematic structure for their research. When analyzing the available government documents, interviewing influential coalition politicians and leading figures in national public administration, and monitoring the political and administrative

development and articulations of the coalition politics, each country's experts were advised to explore the following topics:

1. Political-Constitutional Backgrounds of the Coalition Government:

- General description of the party system: type and number of the political parties; alliances and cleavages between the parties; strength and popular support behind the parties.
- Electoral rules: proportional or majority systems; the impact of electoral rules on the coalition making pressures and possibilities.
- Rules and traditions in forming coalition government: short description of the 'coalition-making culture'; how the parties look for coalition partner (s); who initiates the coalition; the common interests or values; invitations to and participation in the coalition-making.
- Coalition bargains and agreements: the applied form and method of the coalition agreement; the main topics of the bargain; written and formal conclusion of the coalition agreement and its content.
- Coalition reconciliation mechanisms: coalition resolution mechanisms; formalized procedures and fora for this purpose; the participants of the formal or informal reconciliation process; levels of the government involvement; political and policy issues on agenda at coalition reconciliation.

2. Coalition Structures in the Government:

- Distribution of positions: Questions on this topic include the sharing of important positions among the coalition partners (deputy prime minister, ministers, deputy ministers, state secretaries, deputy secretaries, department heads or directors, directors of public institutions, public media leaders, managers of the state owned companies, agricultural farms, etc.); room for the maneuvering of coalition partners and the possibility of creating new positions in order to compensate the partners; trade-offs.
- Coalition setting in Ministry Agency: sharing the positions within the government structure below the ministerial level; whether political appointees from only one party are in same organization or whether coalition sharing goes through all institutions and organizations; the given practice of the coalition sharing and its reasons.
- Political appointments: How do the coalition partner parties decide on political appointments? Are the politicians appointed to government positions keeping their party leadership positions after the appointment? Is there a detailed guideline fixed in advance for the appointments? What is the lowest level position in the government institutional system that would be a political appointment?

- Coordinating bodies: Is there any formal mechanism or forum set up by the coalition partners in order to coordinate the work in the government of the coalition? What kind of coordination exists among the coalition partners: political negotiations among parties, meetings of party leaders and/or ministers, meetings of parliamentary faction-leaders, etc.?
- Role of the prime minister: Is the prime minister the first leader of the senior coalition party? Has the prime minister any special role as coalition leader? How does the prime minister control government leaders belonging to the coalition partners.

3. Coalition-Related Specialties in the Policy Process

Representation and influence of the coalition partners in the policy-making process: The authors were to provide parallel descriptions of the policy-making process and of position-sharing among the coalition partners.

One element of the policy process was to be the interaction between the possible differences of the interests, values and style of the coalition partners and the cohesion of the policy-making process.

Identification of policy process within the given conditions of the government system: These conditions become evident at the agenda-setting phase (government program, ministers' initiatives, coalition agreement, parliamentary decisions, party decisions, pressure group claims, etc.). There may be formal and regulated as well as informal-political processes of preparation of government decisions, differentiation of the bureaucratic-professional line of the policy decision-making process and the channels of the political control over that process.

What are the politico-administrative relations in connection with the policy-making process? How do the politicians and political appointees influence civil servants during the policy process? Is it a common practice?

In the case of crosscutting issues (cooperation among more ministries or special taskforce set-ups etc.) the coalition partners may be touched differently. How do those types of issues create tensions among the partners? What is the usual solution? Can the senior party can enforce its position or the highest ranking government official play a dominating role?

4. Role of the President of the State

The role of the president in the coalition government system: Can the president "help" to smooth tensions among potential partners when there are coalition conflicts or tensions? If so, how? How active is, and should be, the president in this kind of political situation? Can any party use the presidential power against the coalition partners in the case of conflicts? Does the president have any potential to ameliorate the impact of coalition problems on the civil service?

5. Coalition in the Parliament

The main subject of the analysis is the parliamentary background of the coalition government. How does the coalition get its own way in the complex parliamentary machinations associated with these changing political systems. Do the formal rules governing parliamentary procedures reflect the real position of the Coalition? What is the role of Parliamentary Committees in the policy-making process, and how do the coalition factions operate within the Committees? Does the iron triangle of the coalition politicians-line ministries-parliamentary committees and interests in society shape policy in predictable ways?

Expectations

The research that has been undertaken should reveal the depth of the influences of coalition politics on the administrative structures, including the civil service. In addition to the formal structures of government coalition, politics is also expected to play a role in the behavior of those civil servants.

Analysis of the coalition form of the government in relations with the effective governance and efficient operation of public administration may help the formulation of future administrative reform plans. Again, it is important to note that this academic analysis can have some real world significance for the participants in the process of governing.

Modelling the politico-administrative relations under coalition politics in the Central and Eastern European countries, and comparing it with Western models, is a significant professional contribution to a better understanding of today's governance and politico-administrative relations.

Summary

This reflects the culmination of a long stream of research on how politicians and permanent civil servants interact in governing within Central and Eastern Europe, as well as how the experiences of those countries compare with those of Western European countries.

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