Pre-electoral coalitions and cabinet stability in presidential systems

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Abstract:
Most comparative research on coalition cabinets in presidential systems have set up theoretical models assuming that coalitions are mostly a product of post-electoral agreements whose objective is to confer a majority to presidents that would otherwise count on the support of a legislative minority. However, the assumption that multiparty cabinets result mostly from post-electoral bargains is at odds with the actual workings of coalitional presidentialism. Indeed, we show in this paper that coalitions use to emerge from pre-electoral agreements between a presidential candidate and one or more parties. Moreover, we argue that the timing of coalition formation has important effects on coalition stability. Specifically, we claim that parties that coordinate earlier and more effectively with the president, by developing consistent strategies across the governing and electoral arenas, tend to be more loyal partners than other coalition party members. We test these hypotheses using a data set of pre- and post-electoral coalitions in 10 Latin American countries.

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Previous comparative research has usually assumed that government coalitions in presidential systems are mostly a product of a post-electoral agreement whose objective is to confer to the president a majority that could not be obtained in the election. Following this line, office-seeking particularistic parties are supposed to have few incentives to form pre-electoral coalitions, because presidential candidates can only distribute cabinet posts in the case of winning (Kellam, 2015). However, these statements may be mistaken, as coalitions may emerge from pre-electoral agreements between the winning presidential candidate and one or more parties. In this sense, the coalition building process is rather proactive or positive, and constitutes the materialization of a political strategy (Albala, 2016).

Although pre-electoral coalitions are rather frequent in multiparty presidential countries, there is a paucity of research on the causes and implications of these electoral alliances (Albala, 2014; Freudenreich, 2016; Kellam, 2015). In particular, we still know very little about the timing effects of coalition formation. That is, to what extent government coalitions that originate totally or mostly from the winning pre-electoral coalition differ from cabinets formed after the election? Are cabinets that originate from a pre-electoral agreement more stable than those that do not?

Seminal comparative studies of presidential politics from Juan Linz (1991) to Mainwaring and Shugart (1997) have been overtly sceptical about the possibility of conciliating stable and institutionalized coalitions with the presidential system of government. In his oft-quoted article on the perils of presidentialism, Linz (1991:57) did recognize the potential for coalition formation in presidential races, but he emphasized the risk that such pre-electoral agreements might allow extreme parties to gain undue influence. The main issue for Linz was that in developing societies with highly volatile and polarized electorates, presidential candidates would often need the support of ideologically extreme parties with which they would otherwise never collaborate. More generally, presidential candidates need to appeal to a wider segment of the electorate and, therefore, they have an incentive to form coalitions across ideological lines. This in turn may introduce an element of system instability in the process of coalition making and breaking that is absent in parliamentary countries (Casal Bértola, 2012).

Contrary to the pessimistic views on the incentives for coalition formation in presidential elections, recent research has shown that parties that enter the presidential race as members of an alliance may be rewarded by lower-level elections agreements. Indeed, presidential candidates know that there are costs for parties to join their coalition, starting with the loss of the potential gains associated with a presidential candidacy of their own. Therefore, coalition formateurs in the electoral arena are disposed to make important concessions to convince other parties to join the coalition (Borges & Turgeon, 2017). These concessions include, in part, supporting coalition party members in simultaneous, lower-level elections.
From this follows that the electoral success of allied parties will be tied, to some extent, to that of the winning presidential candidate. Therefore, post-electoral coalition parties that supported the chief executive at an earlier, pre-electoral, stage are expected to have stronger incentives to remain loyal to him during his term. Also, to the extent that electoral constraints induce parties to form more ideologically compact coalitions, cabinets based on pre-electoral agreements are likely to be less polarized than cabinets formed mostly after the election.

Consequently, we argue that presidential cabinets congruent with the electoral alliance will likely rest on more solid foundations than those formed mostly in the post-electoral period. That is, they are expected to be more homogeneous ideologically, more consistent, cohesive and, by extension, more stable (Chiru, 2015; Debus, 2009). Our central claim is that the parties that coordinate earlier and more effectively with the president, by developing consistent strategies across the governing and electoral arenas over time, tend to be more loyal and more ideologically proximate partners than other coalition party members. Therefore, the greater the relative size of the pre-electoral coalition in terms of coalition seats, the longer the tenure of the presidential cabinet. We test this hypothesis using a data set of presidential cabinets in 10 Latin American countries.

1. Pre-electoral coalitions in presidential systems

This article focuses on the inception of coalition cabinets and the potential consequences of early-crafted agreements over the government stability. Therefore, we follow common conceptual considerations for our object, and define coalition cabinets, those formed by different political forces, each counting with the corresponding support of all the respective members in congress (Cheibub, et al, 2004; Strom, 1990). Using this narrow definition, we would exclude from our conceptions: i) governments whose allies consist of co-opted or independent ministers; ii) governments of a single party comprising several internal factions, however autonomous they may be; and iii) governments formed by a dominant party and ‘satellite’ parties.

In the meantime, by ex-ante coalitions we mean those coalitions whose formalization has taken place before election-day. It is the product of a public agreement between two or more parties that have consented to share their economic, organizational and logistical resources to run together in an upcoming (Golder, 2006, p. 12). This kind of coordination may encompass various aspects (“united electoral front”, “common candidate”, etc.), according to greater or lesser binding levels (Albala 2017).

Broadly speaking, electoral coalitions are formed for or during the electoral campaign as a tentative to maximize electoral potential, mostly for smaller parties. The most common form of this kind of agreements is the merger of electoral lists (Golder, 2010). Run-off agreements are another typical example of these bargains: they consist
of a public call for electoral campaigning between the two rounds of the electoral competition, and include a transfer of staff and organizational resources from the eliminated candidate(s) to the contender who qualified for the ballottage.

Additionally, these agreements should not be considered as merely static and exclusive. Indeed, some coalition agreements may have had pre-electoral inception, but for some reason they had to accommodate new members in post-electoral bargaining. The inclusion of a new member into an existing ‘core’ alliance can occur, for instance, when the original alliance could not reach a legislative majority. Thus, this scenario implies a re-opening of the bargaining process, the length and difficulty of which would depend on the political strength of the newcomer.

As a matter of fact, with few exceptions (Albala, 2016; Kellam, 2015; Spoon & West, 2015), studies of coalition formation have neglected the timing of formation. Indeed, for question of convenience, most studies dealing with coalition cabinets in presidential regimes used to consider their formation as a necessity (due to a lack of legislative majority) rather than a strategy (to secure votes and the election). Hence, our argument in this article is, precisely, to set out that coalition cabinets, in presidential regimes, use to be the products of pre-electoral strategies and bargains. Moreover, we will test whether the fate of coalition cabinets, that is their duration, is linked to the timing of their inception.

1.1 Pre-electoral coalitions, the coalition cycle and cabinet stability in presidential systems

According to the literature it is possible to highlight three main characteristics of presidential systems. First, the direct election of the head of government, who is at the same time the head of state, by popular vote, in a zero-sum game. The election works by the immediate selection – or after a second round, if necessary – of a winner among all the candidates. The winner is the only actor in charge of forming his government, and no government can be formed without the president’s party (Cheibub, 2007; Martinez-Gallardo, 2014). In other words, the presidential election operates as a cleaver, leading to a bipolarisation of the competition between winners, and potential winners, vs. election losers.

Secondly, the election of the president (either simultaneous with legislative elections or not) does not depend on parliamentary bargaining (Cheibub, et al., 2004). The president’s legitimacy derives from his/her own election. Nonetheless, this does not mean that the president rules alone.

Finally, under presidentialism the mandate of the executive head is fixed. This means that even if the president loses his majority in congress, he remains in office until
the next election, which takes place following a constitutionally-mandated time schedule.

This last presidential feature may potentially diminish the bargaining strength of coalition partners by reducing their “walk away value” (Lupia & Ström, 2008). Hence, since the departure of any member of the coalition does not lead to the fall of the government, the “walking away” option for a coalition member is less attractive, as it is more costly and may prove to be unsuccessful (Albala, 2016; Martinez-Gallardo, 2012).

At the same time, the presidential mandate’s principle of fixity not only concerns the termination of the mandate but also its beginning. This implies that the process of cabinet formation in presidential systems is limited in time, running from the proclamation of the election results to the president’s inauguration. This feature supposes that the cabinet must be formed immediately after the president assumes office. This is quite different from parliamentary regimes, where, broadly speaking, the bargaining rounds of coalition formation begin after the election and are (theoretically) unlimited in length (Golder, 2015), which contributes to blurring the lines between clear ‘winners’, and hinders the responsiveness of ‘unexpected’ coalitions (Glasgow et al. 2010; Falco-Gimeno & Indridason, 2013; Glasgow, Golder, & Golder, 2011).

The graph in Figure 1 is used to illustrate the presidential timing constraint and shows the constitutional lapse between election-day and the day the president assumes office, for all presidential systems in the Americas. Although the average lapse ranges from 1.9 to 3.05 months, this value does not reflect the disparity among the cases. Indeed, the Mexican and Uruguayan presidents-elect have 5 months in which to form their cabinet before taking office (4 for the Uruguayan if the election came after a ballotage). At the opposite end of the scale, Argentina’s and Bolivia’s presidents-elect have the shortest lapse in which to form their cabinet: from 0.5 to 1.5 months, again depending on the need for a run-off. Note that run-off conditions vary according to the respective constitution. In the Americas, 10 out of 19 polities include it in their electoral system. Moreover, the extent of the lapse between the first and the second round of the election also varies: from a month (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, El Salvador and Uruguay) or a month and a half (Ecuador), to two months (Chile, Peru and Guatemala).
Figure 1. Lapse between election-day/inauguration-day of the president

Note: I inserted in black the lapse between the first, or unique, election round and the inauguration of the mandate. I inserted in grey the lapse between the second election round and the assumption.
Source: authors’ elaboration from national constitutions

The forming of a coalition government articulates, thus, around the occurrence of recent or forthcoming elections. This formation may be either before the election of the president, (i.e electoral or pre-electoral coalition formation) or after his election (i.e post-electoral formation). As a matter of fact, the formation can also proceed from both, that is from an ex-ante inception combined to a post-electoral “widening”.

Hence, the separation of powers and the fixity of the mandate (both its beginning and its conclusion) constitute, thus, definite constraints that have a significant impact on the formation, development and conclusion of coalitions. Furthermore, since the president-elect is by definition the formateur, coalition options are more limited in presidential regimes. This feature leads to a quite restricted dimension of willingness to form coalition governments (Strom 1990; Strom et al. 1994; Cheibub et al. 2015; Kellam 2015). In the meantime, according to the literature, majoritarian electoral systems are supposed to be more prone to electoral coalitions due to their higher level of uncertainty (Golder, 2006). As presidential elections are extremely majoritarian, with only one possible winner in a single constituency, parties seem, then, to have strong incentives to form pre-electoral coalitions.

Thus, contrary to a common belief, pre-electoral coalitions under presidential regimes are not unlikely to occur. As a matter of fact, in a recent work Albala (2017)
has shown that 90% of coalition cabinets formed in Latin America, since 1980, derived partially or completely from pre-electoral agreements.

In the absence of coordination, multiparty systems are likely to produce a substantial number of presidential candidates. Therefore, the parties with the most viable candidates routinely seek the support of other, often ideologically similar and less competitive parties in order to reduce the number of competitors in the presidential contest.

1.2 The incentives for keeping the electoral pact

Although pre-electoral agreements are not binding (Kellam, 2015), winning presidential candidates have important incentives to keep their promises after inauguration. Usually, coalition partners allow the coalition formateur to obtain the support of segments of the electorate otherwise inaccessible, and they aggregate valuable organizational resources, increasing the candidate’s chances of winning the presidency (Spoon and West, 2015; Borges and Turgeon, 2017). On the other hand, parties that decide to support another presidential candidate face substantial opportunity costs. Parties joining an electoral coalition not only give up the possibility of controlling the presidency themselves, at the same time they lose an important tool to reach voters, but they also risk losing credibility and weakening their party base if the coalition is not perceived as adequate (Freudenreich, 2016:5). Because there are substantial costs for parties to join the pre-electoral coalition, the formateur party usually compensates coalition partners by supporting them in simultaneous, lower-level elections, making concessions in policy platforms and promising cabinet positions in the case of winning (Borges and Turgeon, 2017; Freudenreich, 2016; Kellam, 2015).

On another hand, the credible commitment problem is inherent in presidential systems because, as exposed above, chief executives do not need the support of any party to stay in office. However, presidents need a strong reputation to negotiate with the legislature and, therefore, they have an incentive to keep their promises and invite pre-electoral coalition members to the cabinet. Not doing so would likely imply losing the ability to make any political deal in the legislature that involved future political actions (Freudenreich, 2016: 6). Hence, under coalition governments, the president is constrained by the coalition agreement in order to keep his or her legislative majority. This is particularly true if the president’s party could not reach alone a legislative majority.

All else being equal, parties that support the president earlier, in the first (or single) round of the presidential race have a greater likelihood of obtaining a cabinet position (Freudenreich, 2016; Albala, 2016). But the partisan composition of the cabinet may or may not coincide fully with the pre-electoral coalition. Often, presidents will invite additional coalition partners after the election if the pre-electoral coalition lacks a majority in the legislature.
Additionally, the question of congruence, that is the repartition of office outputs among the partners, constitute a central question. Indeed, the degree of congruence between pre- and post-electoral coalitions will also depend on whether or not parties' pursue consistent strategies across the governing and the electoral arenas. That is, if the losers in the presidential election almost always join the opposition, and such behaviour is observed not only among the losing candidates' parties but among their coalition allies as well, then the president ought to face greater difficulty in finding available coalition partners outside his pre-electoral coalition. On the other hand, if parties' strategies are mostly inconsistent, and there are a substantial number of office-seeking parties that are willing to sacrifice the potential policy and electoral gains of staying in the opposition in exchange for cabinet portfolios, then presidents will have greater opportunities to form cabinets incongruent with the pre-electoral coalition.

2. Theorizing on the duration of coalition cabinets under presidentialism

As parties' motivations to coalesce, either at the pre- or post-electoral stages, are likely to respond to distinct goals (Strom et al. 2008; Reniu and Albal 2012), the causes of the dissolution of the pact may also vary. In the recent years, scholars have identified different constraints that may impact on the durability of the coalition agreement, some of which we will test here alongside of our main hypotheses.

First of all, the timing of coalition formation matters. Running for the presidency has a cost that not every political party can afford. In this case, one alternative is, thus, the forming of a pre-electoral coalition pact around a credible candidate from another party, to secure office and policy outputs. Such an agreement, either formal or not, constitute a guarantee for the coalesced partners, in a post-electoral pay-off redistribution. Hence, the main assumption here is that the by crafting earlier agreements, the members would have more time to find an agreement around political goals and portfolio distributions. Also, pre-electoral coalition agreements often include behavioural way-outs in case of internal disagreements. So, we logically assume, following Mouy (2011), that pacts originating from longer and earlier bargaining processes tend to be wider (in terms of policy coverage) and more precise (to resolve eventual controversies), and act as an effective constraint against betrayal temptations. As a matter of fact, this argument is not completely original. Chiru (2015) has shown that, for parliamentary regimes, coalitions that have had an earlier inception (at a pre-electoral stage) tend to last longer than the others. Hence, from this, we state as our first hypothesis:

_Hypothesis 1 (H1): The sooner the formation of the coalition, the more enduring is the coalition pact._

The second factor that may shape cabinet duration concerns the degree of congruence between the electoral coalition and the coalition cabinet. Independent of the specific mechanisms that produce earlier interparty bargaining and similar pre- and post-electoral coalitions, one should expect congruent cabinets to rest on more solid
foundations and last longer than those formed mostly after election results are known. Indeed, we assume that pre-electoral coalitions face stronger ideological compatibility constraints than any post-election coalition does. This is because parties forming an ideologically incongruent electoral alliance may be punished by voters unwilling to support it. Conversely, after the election, parties have more leeway to enter these types of government coalitions, because voters can no longer vote against politicians’ decisions (Golder, 2006:196).

Moreover, due to the cleaver effect of presidential election, as described above, some parties may opt to converge in order to impede the success of a common competitor, or a large political enemy. This was, for instance the logic of the formation of the Alianza in Argentina (1997-2001), where the traditional Civic Radical Union (UCR) coalesced with the newborn Frepaso, in order to defeat the Justicialist Party. On the other hand, post-electoral coalition may conduce to the formation of unpredicted and surprising coalitions, as a result of political opportunism, like in the case of Paz Estenssoro’s first coalition in Bolivia (1985-1989), who formed a coalition cabinet with his main rival during the electoral campaign – the conservative ADN (Acción Democrática Nacionalista) party. In presidential systems, in particular, policy concessions play a rather important role in pre-electoral coalition bargaining because the pre-electoral agreement is not binding and presidents do not need the support of any particular party to stay in office (Kellam, 2015).

From this follows that multiparty cabinets that are fully congruent with the winning pre-electoral coalition tend to be more ideologically compact than those that are formed mostly after the election. Given that cabinets with lower variation in parties' policy positions are more likely to coordinate effectively and last longer (Martínez-Gallardo, 2012), one should expect congruence between pre- and post-electoral coalitions to increase cabinet durability due to its moderating effect on ideological heterogeneity.

Moreover, presidential candidates and their parties have strong incentives to compensate coalition parties by supporting them in lower-level elections, including the congressional races. As a consequence, coalition parties’ electoral success will be partly dependent on the presidential candidate's popularity among voters. That is, once coalition parties become associated with the president in the minds of voters, their electoral fate tends to be more strongly tied to the government's performance (Borges and Turgeon, 2017). By their turn, presidents and their parties are aware that keeping the coalition together should increase the electoral prospects of the incumbent candidate in the next presidential race. Analogously, losing the support of important and traditional allies that contributed for the president’s victory is likely to decrease the chances of winning the subsequent election.

Based on the above discussion we can now present our second hypothesis:
**Hypothesis 2 (H2):** The greater the congruence between the winning pre-electoral coalition and the government coalition, the longer the cabinet’s tenure

The extent to which the government may actually govern is another factor that may have an impact on cabinet duration. A coalition government that cannot ensure the approval of bills by the legislature will have a lower value from the point of view of its members and, therefore, the incentives for keeping the coalition together will be weaker. The assumption here is that minority coalitions are expected to experience stronger internal tensions because they have a lower probability of approving bills. The same applies to coalitions that rely on a bare-majority, which in turn increases the blackmail power of small parties. Conversely, if the chief executive counts on support of a large legislative majority, small parties will have a lower bargaining power (Martinez-Gallardo 2012). Albala (2017) has shown, as a matter of fact, that in the absence of a legislative majority after the election, presidents generally opt for enlarging the coalition through a post-electoral bargain. Therefore, we can expect that, among cabinets congruent with the pre-electoral coalition, majority cabinets are likely to last longer. From this we can deduce our third and last hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 3 (H3):** Coalitions formed in the pre-electoral period are likely to last longer when they hold a majority of the seats.

3. Data and Methods

To test the hypotheses outlined in the previous section we use a revised and extended version of Kellam’s (2013) data set of presidential cabinets in 10 Latin American countries. The original data set recorded the partisan composition of the government, month by month, covering the period between the early 1980s and the mid-2000s for all of the countries, and earlier democratic periods for Brazil, Costa Rica, Venezuela, Uruguay and Chile. We extended the data set by including information on the partisan composition of the pre-electoral coalition that supported the president-elect. Because we were unable to find reliable information on either the composition of the pre-electoral coalition or the distribution of seats by party for a total of twenty cabinets, we lost 350 observations. The final data set includes 135 cabinets and 3174 valid observations.

The dependent variable in our statistical models is the cabinet duration. By “durability of the coalition agreement” we mean the length of time during which a coalition cabinet remained stable. Therefore, we shall not consider cabinet reshuffles. Indeed, any change of the party proportion inside the cabinet, without altering the party composition, supposes that every member of the cabinet agreed with the alteration, and/or received a pay-off in compensation. Thus, a cabinet is considered to terminate (and another starts) when any alteration in the original composition occurs; either i) the defection of a party, whatever the motivation for walking away; or ii) the inclusion of a
new member into the coalition\footnote{This second scenario supposes that the president needed – or felt that it was necessary – to broaden the coalition so as to ensure governability or presidential legitimacy.}. Both these scenarios imply, indeed, a change in the balance of power and influence within the coalition. By inertia, the termination of a cabinet occurs also when a new president is inaugurated, even if the party in government remains the same.

Because chief executives have fixed terms in presidential systems, cabinet changes resulting from a presidential election (or another exogenous event leading to the termination of the president’s term, such as impeachment) cannot be treated in the same way as changes in the partisan composition of government that occur during the president’s mandate. This is another main difference with parliamentary regimes, where cabinets may, theoretically, survive the end of the PM’s mandate. In this case, given the existence of an exogenous constraint, we cannot know for sure the “actual” duration of the cabinet.

Survival analysis allows one to deal with this type of data, by separating cases of failure into two groups: censored and uncensored cases. In our data set, censored cabinets are those that ended because of exogenous events leading to termination of the president’s mandate. All other cabinets are uncensored. We estimate a Cox proportional hazards model to explore the effect of the independent variables on the hazard rate of cabinets. In survival analysis, the hazard rate expresses the likelihood that a subject will experience failure given that it has not failed up to the moment. For instance, in many clinical studies, the hazard rate indicates the probability of death of a patient with certain characteristics given it has survived for a certain time since the start of the study. A similar rationale applies to our modeling of cabinet duration, as we intend to explore the factors that increase or decrease the likelihood of cabinet termination.

We operationalized congruence by measuring the proportion of seats held by the parties present in both the pre- and the post-electoral coalitions relatively to the total seats held by the parties in the cabinet and by all parties present in the electoral alliance. We then multiplied these two proportions to obtain a summary measure of congruence. By definition, full congruence implies i) that all parties that supported the president in the pre-electoral period were also present in the cabinet; and, ii) that none of the cabinet parties was absent from the pre-electoral coalition. When these two conditions are met, pre-electoral coalition parties present in the cabinet must necessarily control all seats of the pre-electoral coalition and all seats of the cabinet, and therefore, both proportions that comprise the congruence score must be equal to one.

By the same token, when the president decides to invite to the cabinet, in a post-electoral bargain, one or more parties that did not support him during the presidential race; or if one or more parties present in the pre-electoral coalition are not invited to the cabinet, congruence must be lower than one.
We relied on the formula below to calculate the congruence score:

\[(1.1) \quad \sum_{i=1}^{N_1N_2} \frac{s_{PC_i}}{s_{P_i}} \times \sum_{i=1}^{N_1N_2} \frac{s_{PC_i}}{s_{C_i}}\]

Where:

\(s_{PC_i}\) = lower chamber seats held by the \(i^{th}\) party present in both the pre-electoral coalition and in the cabinet

\(s_{P_i}\) = lower chamber seats held by the \(i^{th}\) party present in the pre-electoral coalition

\(s_{C_i}\) = lower chamber seats held by the \(i^{th}\) party present in the cabinet

\(N_1\) = number of parties present in both the pre-electoral coalition and in the cabinet

\(N_2\) = number of parties in the pre-electoral coalition

\(N_3\) = number of parties in the cabinet

The advantage of the above operationalization is that it accounts for the fact that parties present in the winning pre-electoral coalition may fail to obtain seats in the lower chamber. Given that cabinet portfolios are usually allocated according to party size in the legislature, one should not expect a party that did not obtain seats to enter the cabinet, even if it supported the president previous to his election. By taking account of the number of seats held by the parties present in the pre- and post-electoral coalitions, the congruence score adequately deals with these issues.

To demonstrate the application of the formula to the data, we present a rapid example of cabinet congruence in Brazil. In January 1946, general Dutra formed a cabinet that included his PSD (Social Democratic Party), the UDN (National Democratic Union) and the PR (Republican Party). The cabinet was mostly incongruent with the pre-electoral coalition that supported Dutra in the 1945 election, because neither the UDN nor the PR had joined the electoral alliance (actually, the UDN competed in the presidential race against Dutra). The pre-electoral coalition was formed by the PSD and the PTB (Brazilian Labor Party), but the latter party was absent from the cabinet. To calculate the congruence score, we first calculated the number of seats held by the party that was present in both the pre- and the post-electoral coalition (the PSD) and divided this figure by the total number of seats held by the pre-electoral alliance \((151/173 = 0.87)\). Second, we calculated the proportion of total cabinet seats
held by the PSD (151/241 = 0.62). Finally we multiplied both proportions to obtain the congruence score (0.87 x 0.62 = 0.55)².

We claim that not only the degree of congruence between pre- and post-electoral coalitions, but also the timing of cabinet formation, have a relevant impact on cabinet survival. H1 indicates that congruent cabinets are more likely to endure when they are formed immediately after the president's inauguration. When the two conditions are met - congruence and early formation - it is possible to say that the cabinet emerged from a continuous process of bargaining that started before the election and ended with the president's inauguration. This is rather different from, say, a situation in which the president invites additional coalition partners, absent from the pre-electoral pact, to form his first cabinet, but later on these post-electoral coalition partners leave the coalition. In the latter case, congruence is produced, in part, by a bargaining process that occurs after the election, different from the ideal-typical scenario in which the first cabinet is congruent with the pre-electoral pact. Therefore, to adequately test H1 it is necessary to differentiate these two situations. We do so by including a measure of the months elapsed since the president-elect's inauguration (presidential mandate). We logged this measure and interacted it with the congruence score. With the inclusion of the interaction term, the partial effect of congruence can be interpreted as the effect of the similarity between the pre-electoral coalition and the cabinet formed in the first month of the president's mandate.

In addition to the measures of congruence and time elapsed since the start of the president's term, we include a set of covariates to account for various alternative explanations of cabinet termination. Cabinet status is a crucial determinant of cabinet stability. Single party cabinets are supposed to last longer in presidential systems as compared to parliamentary systems, because the government cannot be defeated by a parliamentary vote. Regardless of whether the government has majority status or not, congress can only remove the president by extraordinary means (Martínez-Gallardo, 2012). In particular, centrist minority executives have less of an incentive to engage in bargaining with parties other than their own, because they may be able to obtain favorable policy outcomes by forming ad hoc legislative coalitions. If this is so, congress will have few incentives to block the executive's policy proposals when the president's party is also the median party in congress (Alemán and Tsebelis, 2011; Colomer and Negretto, 2005). Furthermore, empirical evidence on minority governments in Latin America suggests that presidents have few incentives to form a coalition when they count on a legislative contingent close to a majority. In the latter situation, presidents can successfully govern in minority by negotiating the support of small parties or independent legislators on a case-by-case basis. Single party cabinets

² Note that whenever the cabinet contains all of the parties present in the pre-electoral coalition, the first part of equation 1.1 is necessarily equal to one. Therefore, it is only necessary to calculate the second part of the equation.
that fall short of a majority are the most frequent among instances of minority government in Latin American countries (Figueiredo, Canello, & Vieira, 2012).

Among coalition governments, presidents face the lowest cost of dissolution when the coalition controls a minority share of the legislature. In that case, no party is pivotal in maintaining a legislative majority, and so the cost of a defection is also relatively low (Martínez-Gallardo, 2012: 70). Furthermore, both minority and majority coalitions tend to be less stable as compared to single-party minority cabinets because coordination becomes harder to achieve as the number of cabinet members increases (Martínez-Gallardo, 2010). But majority coalitions, as exposed in H3, are likely to last longer as compared to minority multiparty cabinets, among other reasons because the marginal gain of including an additional party into the cabinet decreases as a majority of the seats is reached.

We include in the Cox regression models two dummies to account for cabinet status: one for single-party government and the other for minority coalition. Majority coalitions are the reference category. By definition, single-party cabinets formed by presidents that counted only on the support of their co-partisans during the election receive a congruence score of 1. Given that single-party governments tend to be more stable as compared to coalition governments, this might bias the estimation of the impact of congruence on cabinet termination. Furthermore, because our argument is about coalition formation, we need to assess the impact of congruence on the formation and durability of multiparty as opposed to single-party cabinets. We deal with these issues by interacting congruence with the dummies for single-party and minority coalition government in one of the models. In the latter specification, the coefficient for congruence expresses the impact of the degree of similarity in the partisan composition of the cabinet and the pre-electoral coalition on the hazard rate of the cabinet. Following our hypotheses set above, we expect congruence to have a strong reductive effect on the likelihood of termination of majority coalitions. This effect should be weaker for minority coalitions, as the latter tend to be more unstable for the reasons already mentioned.

The remaining explanatory variables in the regression models account for party system fragmentation and polarization, and for the legislative powers of the presidency. A highly fragmented legislature might make the cost of defections lower for the president. Indeed, if the political options for coalesce are limited for the president, one can expect that the president would seek to preserve his natural or “captive” allies, in order to secure predictable behavior. Conversely, if the potential partners are numerous, we can expect that in case of internal tensions, the president might seek out for substitutive coalition partners eager to enter to government. This may, thus, turn the position of political allies instable, depending on the president good will, and so increase cabinet instability (Kellam, 2013).

A fragmented party system could also exert a more indirect effect on cabinet duration, by inducing presidents to form increasingly large and hard-to-manage
coalitions. As policy authority becomes more and more fragmented among several parties, effective coordination should also become harder to achieve (Martinez-Gallardo, 2010, 2012). Ideological polarization in the legislature has similar effect on cabinet duration, as it likely favors the formation of ideologically heterogeneous coalitions. The cost of interparty bargaining should be higher when coalition parties have more dissimilar preferences as compared to coalitions with mostly homogeneous policy preferences. Therefore, ideological polarization in the legislature should increase cabinet's likelihood of failure. The models control for party fragmentation by including a measure of the effective number of parties in the legislature. Ideological polarization was calculated using Coppedge's (1998) polarization index.

Finally, the models include measures of veto and decree powers. President's veto powers were rank ordered from 3 (weak) to 13 (strong), according to the classification proposed by Alemán and Tsebelis (2005). Decree powers were operationalized as scale from zero (no decree) to 4 (strong decree powers). Theoretically, presidents endowed with greater unilateral powers should be less likely to compromise than to preserve the coalition. For example, some presidential systems give the executive the authority to change policy unilaterally through the use of executive decrees. In these cases we should expect presidents to value coalition building less and to be less willing to rely on the distribution of cabinet portfolios to form and maintain a majority (Amorim Neto, 2006). In contrast, where the president’s ability to change policy relies necessarily on the concurrence of a legislative majority, the president will be more likely to compromise with other parties and to pay a higher price to maintain the support of other political parties. Under the latter structure of incentives, presidents will be less willing to pay the price of maintaining the coalition in the face of changing circumstances (Martinez-Gallardo, 2012) and, therefore, cabinet stability will be lower. We expect both our measures of decree and veto powers to decrease the likelihood of cabinet survival.

We opted for not including measures of cabinet fragmentation and polarization, because the latter are highly collinear with government status. But either including or excluding these measures does not significantly alter model results.

Our theoretical claims on the greater stability of cabinets formed earlier, during the pre-electoral period, rest on the assumption that electoral alliances exert a profound impact on cabinet formation and maintenance. In particular, we expect presidents that come into power with the support of a pre-electoral coalition to be more willing to form and maintain multiparty cabinets. Furthermore, we assume that multiparty cabinets congruent with the pre-electoral coalition tend to be more ideologically compact than cabinets formed mostly after the election. Below we present descriptive data that provide initial evidence in favor of these claims.

Table 1 shows the distribution of cabinets by status (majority/minority and coalition/single-party) and according to the presence/absence of a pre-electoral coalition.
Table 1: Cabinet status according to the presence/absence of a multiparty pre-electoral coalition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of cabinets, by cabinet status</th>
<th>President supported by a pre-electoral coalition</th>
<th>No pre-electoral coalition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Majority coalition (%)</td>
<td>54.05</td>
<td>31.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minority coalition (%)</td>
<td>35.14</td>
<td>30.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single party majority (%)</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>28.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single party minority (%)</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>9.52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Single-party cabinets respond for 38% of all governments formed by presidents that relied solely on the support of their co-partisans to win the election. In contrast, within the group of presidents that formed a pre-electoral coalition, single-party governments represent mere 10.8%. Multiparty cabinets represent a smashing majority of cabinets formed by presidents in the latter group: 89.2%. Interestingly enough, majority coalitions are more commonly found in the group of presidents who came into power with the support of an electoral alliance (54%). Overall, these figures suggest that coalition governments are more likely to originate from a pre-electoral coalition, whereas single-party cabinets are more common in instances in which the president's party opts for disputing the presidential race alone.

Pre-electoral coalition formation is also likely to exert an impact on the degree of ideological homogeneity of government coalitions. As already mentioned, electoral constraints and incentives induce parties to choose ideologically proximate partners to form a pre-electoral coalition. Table 2 below shows the mean cabinet ideological polarization for all multiparty cabinets in the data set, according to the level of cabinet congruence relatively to the winning pre-electoral coalition - High (4th quartile), Medium (2nd and 3rd quartiles) and Low (1st quartile).
Table 2: Mean cabinet Ideological polarization by levels of congruence (excluding single-party cabinets)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Levels of congruence</th>
<th>Mean polarization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High congruence</td>
<td>8.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium congruence</td>
<td>23.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low congruence</td>
<td>31.17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As expected, cabinet ideological polarization is much lower for highly congruent cabinets as compared to mostly incongruent ones. Mean cabinet polarization decreases as one moves from the 1st to the 4th quartile of the distribution of congruence scores, which indicates there is a negative linear relationship between congruence and polarization ($r = -0.42$).

Table 3 presents preliminary evidence on the association between the congruence score and cabinet duration. We obtained cabinet duration means by the level of congruence, relying on the same categories shown in table 2 (High, Medium and Low). We divided cabinet duration in months by the length of the president's term to control for any potential variation due to cross-country differences in term length. The first column shows the means for all cabinets; the second column excludes single-party cabinets; and column 3 excludes both single-party and censored cabinets.

Table 3 - Mean cabinet duration (in percentage of the president's term) as a function of congruence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All cabinets</th>
<th>Excluding single party govt.</th>
<th>Excluding cens. cabinets and sg. party govt.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High congruence</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium congruence</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>0.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low congruence</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of cabinets</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table shows that, on average, cabinets showing low levels of congruence ($\leq 0.22$) are less durable than cabinets characterized by high ($\geq 0.85$) or medium
congruence. These differences cannot be attributed to the fact that single-party and, usually, congruent cabinets tend to last longer, all else being equal. As seen in the second column of the table, multiparty cabinets that are highly congruent survive for a longer time than those exhibiting low levels of congruence, which is consistent with H2. Once we exclude censored cabinets from the data set, mean cabinet duration estimated for the high congruence group is cut by 20 percentage points. This indicates that an expressive amount of the cabinets located in this category last for the whole of the president's term.

To test whether these differences hold in the presence of adequate statistical controls, we ran a series of Cox regression models, which are presented below. Models 1 and 2 test for the average, undifferentiated effects of congruence, whereas models 3 and 4 test for distinct effects of congruence according cabinet status, including the appropriate interaction terms. Finally, models 2 and 4 includes the interaction term between the time elapsed since the president’s inauguration (mandate) and congruence, allowing to test our hypothesis on the timing of coalition formation.

Tests for proportionality of the hazard rates indicate that two variables deviate from this assumption: decree power and ideological polarization (all models) and congruence (model 4). Thus, we include an interaction between each of these variables and the natural log of duration time. Table 4 reports the unstandardized coefficients and the respective standard errors in parenthesis.
Table 4: Cox regression models for cabinet duration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
<th>Model 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minority coalition</td>
<td>**0.664</td>
<td>**0.684</td>
<td>-0.271</td>
<td>-0.404</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.339)</td>
<td>(0.351)</td>
<td>(0.571)</td>
<td>(0.617)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single party govt.</td>
<td>*-0.774</td>
<td>*-0.790</td>
<td>-0.631</td>
<td>-0.646</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.418)</td>
<td>(0.423)</td>
<td>(0.725)</td>
<td>(0.736)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eff. Number of Parties</td>
<td>0.097</td>
<td>0.084</td>
<td>0.083</td>
<td>0.065</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.088)</td>
<td>(0.090)</td>
<td>(0.088)</td>
<td>(0.091)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polarization</td>
<td>0.057</td>
<td>0.052</td>
<td>*0.059</td>
<td>*0.054</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.032)</td>
<td>(0.032)</td>
<td>(0.032)</td>
<td>(0.033)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polarization X ln(time)</td>
<td>-0.018</td>
<td>-0.016</td>
<td>-0.020</td>
<td>-0.017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.012)</td>
<td>(0.012)</td>
<td>(0.012)</td>
<td>(0.013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veto</td>
<td>-0.033</td>
<td>-0.035</td>
<td>-0.022</td>
<td>-0.024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.063)</td>
<td>(0.064)</td>
<td>(0.065)</td>
<td>(0.066)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decree</td>
<td>**-1.015</td>
<td>**-1.043</td>
<td>**-0.894</td>
<td>**-0.906</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.427)</td>
<td>(0.434)</td>
<td>(0.423)</td>
<td>(0.432)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decree X ln(time)</td>
<td>**0.384</td>
<td>**0.394</td>
<td>**0.367</td>
<td>**0.372</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.161)</td>
<td>(0.163)</td>
<td>(0.160)</td>
<td>(0.162)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congruence</td>
<td>**-0.910</td>
<td>-2.076</td>
<td>***-1.811</td>
<td>*-2.787</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.403)</td>
<td>(1.458)</td>
<td>(0.674)</td>
<td>(1.552)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congruence x ln(time)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.026</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.314</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>(0.572)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>(0.572)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandate (ln)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-0.036</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>(0.295)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>(0.316)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congruence x ln(Mandate)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.415</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.094</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>(0.484)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>(0.518)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minority x Congruence</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>**1.837</td>
<td>**2.037</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.876</td>
<td>(0.918)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sg. Party Gov. x Congruence</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.124</td>
<td>0.097</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1.006</td>
<td>(1.020)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Observations         | 3174   | 3174   | 3174   | 3174   |
| Number of failures   | 69     | 69     | 69     | 69     |
| Number of clusters   | 10     | 10     | 10     | 10     |
| Log Likelihood       | -279.57 | -278.71 | -276.74 | -275.56 |

*** p<0.01; ** p<0.05; * p<0.10

Contrary to theoretical expectations, decree and veto powers reduce the odds of cabinet change, although the coefficients for veto power lack statistical significance. This probably indicates that unilateral powers create an asymmetry in the executive-legislative bargain that is mostly favorable to the executive. Instead of trying to sidestep congress, minority presidents with strong decree and veto powers might take advantage of their institutional prerogatives to induce parties in the legislature to cooperate with the executive (Figueiredo et al, 2012). Polarization has a positive effect on the odds of
cabinet termination, as expected, although the coefficient only achieves statistical significance in models 3 and 4.

Models 1 and 2 estimate the main effect of cabinet status - minority coalition and single-party cabinet - on the odds of cabinet dissolution. If one uses the coefficients estimated in the first equation, the odds of cabinet termination are 94% higher for minority coalitions than for majority coalitions (recall that multiparty majority cabinets are the baseline category). On the other hand, the odds of dissolution of single-party cabinets are 54% lower than for majority coalitions.

Model 1 estimates the mean effect of similarity between pre- and post-electoral coalitions, regardless of cabinet status, and regardless of the timing of coalition formation. Model results are congruent with hypothesis 2: congruence decreases cabinet instability. As one moves from the first to the third quartile of the distribution of congruence scores (0.22 to 0.85), the odds of cabinet dissolution experience a 44% decrease.

Model 2 includes an interaction term between the months elapsed since the beginning of the president’s term and thus allows to test the timing effects of coalition formation. In this equation, the coefficient estimated for congruence indicates the effect of similarity between pre- and post-electoral coalitions when the latter are formed immediately after the president’s inauguration. As one can infer from the larger effect estimated for model 2 as compared to model 1, congruence has a stronger impact for cabinets formed earlier in the president’s term. However, the coefficient lacks statistical significance.

Model 4 includes interaction terms between congruence and cabinet status, in addition to the interaction between congruence and months elapsed since the president’s inauguration (mandate). Therefore, the partial effects estimated for congruence refer to a hypothetical majority cabinet formed in the beginning of the president’s term. The joint impact of these two conditions is very strong, as predicted by hypothesis 3: the odds of termination of a highly congruent majority coalition (3rd quartile), formed immediately after the president’s inauguration is 83% lower than the odds of dissolution of a majority coalition with a low level of congruence (1st quartile), formed later in the president’s term. Also consistent with hypothesis 3, the effect of congruence on the survival of minority coalitions is significantly weaker as compared to the effect estimated for majority coalitions. A highly congruent minority coalition (3rd quartile) formed early in the president’s term has an odds of dissolution that is about 53% lower than a mostly incongruent coalition (1st quartile, 0.22) formed after the president’s inauguration.

3 Effects are calculated by multiplying the coefficients by the desired value and exponentiating the results. For instance, the effect of the minority coalition in model 1 is equal to: exp (0.664 x 1) = 1.94.
Comparison between models 4 and 3 reveals that congruence only decreases the odds of dissolution of minority, multiparty cabinets when the latter are formed just after the president’s inauguration. Recall that model 3 is similar in everything to model 4 with the only difference that it does not include the interactive term between congruence and mandate. In this equation, congruence has no relevant effect on the survival of minority coalitions: a highly congruent minority coalition (3rd quartile) has an odds of dissolution that is only about 1.7% higher than a mostly incongruent coalition (1st quartile). On the other hand, the odds of dissolution of a majority coalition with a high level of congruence (0.85) is 69% lower than the odds of dissolution of a majority coalition with a low level of congruence (0.22). This indicates that congruence has an impact on the survival of majority coalitions that is partly independent from the timing of coalition formation.

These results confirm our hypotheses, and suggest that the effect of similarity of pre- and post-electoral coalitions on cabinet duration is strongest when: a) presidents form pre-electoral coalitions that have a majority of seats; b) the cabinet clearly results from pre-electoral bargaining and is, therefore, formed immediately after inauguration. Most probably, presidents supported by a minority pre-electoral coalition have fewer incentives to keep it after the election as compared to chief executive who have the opportunity to form a majority cabinet that is fully congruent with the electoral alliance. Among other reasons, when the pre-electoral coalition commands a minority of the seats in the legislature, the chief executive may face a hostile congress, controlled by parties that did not support his electoral bid or, worst, which competed against him in the presidential race. In countries with polarized presidential contests, this scenario implies that presidents will have a hard time to govern in minority and, therefore, cabinets will be mostly unstable. Still, model results indicate that congruence increases the odds of survival of multiparty minority governments, when the latter are formed early in the president’s term.

**Conclusion**

Research on multiparty cabinets in presidential systems has focused almost solely on the post-electoral bargaining environment, neglecting the key role played by pre-electoral coalitions in the making of government coalitions. In this article, we have demonstrated that multiparty cabinets that are mostly congruent with the pre-electoral coalition formed in support of the winning presidential cabinet are much more stable than coalitions formed after the election. Specifically, congruence substantially increases the odds of survival of majority coalitions, but no such effect exists for minority coalitions. One of the mechanisms through which congruence between the pre- and post-electoral bargaining processes may increase cabinet stability concerns the greater ideological compatibility constraints face by electoral alliances. All else being equal, coalitions formed previous to the election tend to be more ideologically compact.
than those formed in the post-electoral period. In more precise terms, we set out that multiparty cabinets in which pre-electoral coalition parties hold most or all of the cabinet seats tend to last longer than cabinets mostly formed by parties absent from the pre-electoral coalition. Therefore, congruent cabinets are also likely to exhibit lower levels of ideological heterogeneity than incongruent ones, which in turn favors cabinet stability. Also, and not least important, the timing of coalition formation matters. All else being equal, multiparty cabinets formed in the beginning of the president’s term and that are congruent with the pre-electoral coalition tend to last longer than coalitions that do not meet either or both of these two conditions. The joint effects of congruence and the timing of coalition formation are strongest for majority cabinets. However, congruence between pre- and post-electoral coalitions may also decrease the odds of termination of minority coalitions when the latter are formed in the beginning of the president’s term. This indicates that the timing of coalition formation might be an additional explanation for why some minority coalition governments in presidential systems are more stable than others.

Our findings suggest that electoral institutions may exert a relevant impact on the dynamics of cabinet formation in coalitional presidentialism. That is, countries where the presidential race structures party competition through the formation of a few large and ideologically compact pre-electoral coalitions are more likely to witness the formation of stable multiparty cabinets that provide durable support to the president. But such effects are most likely to occur if the winning pre-electoral coalition succeeds in obtaining a number of seats close to a majority. Future research should develop further this line of inquiry, looking at the institutional incentives and constraints that shape pre-electoral coalition formation, and unravelling the causal mechanisms that connect the electoral and governing arenas in coalitional presidentialism.
References


