

Party government in Europe? Parliamentary and semi-presidential democracies compared

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Abstract. Control over government portfolios is the key to power over policy and patronage, and it is commonly understood to lie with parties in European democracies. However, since the democratic transitions of the 1990s, Europe has had nearly equal numbers of parliamentary and semi-presidential regimes, and there is evidence that the ability of parties to control government posts in these two regime types differs. As yet, political scientists have a limited understanding of the scale and causes of these differences. In this article a principal-agent theoretical explanation is proposed. Data are examined on 28 parliamentary and semi-presidential democracies in Europe that shows that differences in party control over government portfolios cannot be understood without reference to the underlying principal-agent relationships between voters, elected politicians and governments that characterise Europe's semi-presidential and parliamentary regimes.

Comparative work on European governments over the last fifty years has regarded government composition as determined by parties. Although scholars have variously stressed the importance of a party's legislative seat share (Gamson 1961; Warwick & Druckman 2006), bargaining power (Schofield & Laver 1985) and formateur status (Baron & Ferejohn 1989) in shaping the share of government portfolios that a party holds, the basic assumption underlying this literature is that parties control government posts (Budge & Keman 1990; Klingemann et al. 1992; Laver & Budge 1992; Laver & Shepsle 1994). This assumption is driven and justified by the literature's focus on the regime type that dominated amongst European democracies for most of the twentieth century: parliamentarism.

Yet, the democratic transitions of the 1990s in East and Central Europe and the former Soviet Union have fundamentally altered the continent's constitutional traditions (Amorim Neto & Strøm 2006). Today Europe embraces nearly equal numbers of parliamentary and semi-presidential democracies, and there is evidence to suggest that parties are not equally dominant actors in these two regime types. The case-oriented literature on governments in Europe's semi-presidential regimes documents the appointment and dismissal of ministers, prime-ministers and even entire governments by popularly elected presidents, which often reduces party control over government posts.

French presidents, for example, have exercised extensive influence over the composition of governments in the Fifth Republic, often appointing ‘“technician” ministers, the existence of whom testifies to a presidential preference for non-partisan recruitment’ (Thiébaud 2000: 514). Prominent nonpartisan presidential appointees in France have included prime ministers and a string of foreign ministers. Ukrainian presidents have been major players in the appointment and dismissal of entirely nonpartisan governments throughout most of the post-Soviet period (Protsyk 2003). In Portugal, President Eanes was responsible for the appointment of three ‘presidential cabinets’ between 1976 and 1979 (Lobo 2001). In Bulgaria a close associate of President Zhelev, Ljuben Berov, was appointed to lead a nonpartisan government in 1992, when ‘no obvious party-based cabinet was in sight’ (Blondel & Andreev 2001: 137). These findings are supported by recent work by Amorim Neto & Strøm (2006) on European governments in the 1990s, which shows that presidential influence modifies party government in semi-presidential regimes, and leads to the inclusion of nonpartisans in cabinet. In short, in the first decade of the twenty-first century, an understanding of democratic government in Europe as tantamount to party government – in the sense of party control over government portfolios – falls significantly short of the facts.

Who, then, determines one of the most fundamental aspects of the nature of European cabinets: the extent to which parties control government portfolios? While scholars have long regarded parliamentary governments as shaped by parties, Amorim Neto and Strøm (2006) model semi-presidential cabinets as negotiated between president and prime minister. Like Amorim Neto and Strøm (2006), we view presidents as important actors in the negotiations over semi-presidential governments, but disagree that prime ministers are best thought of as their negotiating partners. Although prime ministers in semi-presidential regimes often have authority to propose or even to appoint the remaining cabinet ministers, the prime ministerial appointment itself is a central outcome and endogenous part of the cabinet negotiation process. In choosing or proposing a particular set of ministers, prime ministers are typically acting on behalf of the politicians who empowered them.

We propose an alternative approach that applies a single, principal-agent framework to the analysis of parliamentary and semi-presidential governments (see also Schleiter & Morgan-Jones forthcoming a; Schleiter & Morgan-Jones forthcoming b). European parliamentary and semi-presidential democracies alike, we argue, give authority to negotiate government composition to those politicians whom voters have empowered to make and break governments. In parliamentary regimes, voters elect only one agent – parliament – and assembly parties have authority to form and recall parliamentary governments on their voters’ behalf. However, in semi-presidential democra-

cies, such as France, voters elect a president and an assembly who share influence over the cabinet. Because the president's election and accountability are separate from that of parliament, presidents typically have goals that are to some extent distinct from those of their parties. This divergence of party and presidential aims, combined with the joint influence of president and assembly over the cabinet, weakens the party-government relationship in semi-presidential regimes. The argument of this article, then, is that the role of parties in European governments cannot be understood without reference to the underlying democratic principal-agent relationships. In the sections that follow we develop this argument, and examine the extent to which it has empirical support, using data on 438 governments in 28 parliamentary and semi-presidential democracies.

A principal-agent theoretical approach

To consider why parties might be represented to different degrees in parliamentary and semi-presidential cabinets we draw on principal-agent theory. This approach has been applied in political science to analyse the delegation regimes established by different types of democracies and has its roots in the economics of organisation (Moe 1984; Strøm 2003; Strøm et al. 2003; Shugart 2005; Samuels & Shugart 2006). From this perspective, representative democracies are differentiated by the way in which they structure the delegation of political authority from voters (the ultimate democratic principal) to politicians (who act as agents on behalf of voters), and from politicians (acting in turn as principals) to the government (agent). Voters in parliamentary regimes delegate to a single agent – parliament – which is the sole principal of the government. In semi-presidential democracies, by contrast, voters delegate to two agents – a popularly elected president and an assembly – who act as joint principals of the government. These different delegation chains shape the role of parties in government.

Parliamentarism is defined by the fact that only parliament controls the government so that 'the Prime Minister and his or her cabinet are accountable to any majority of the members of parliament and can be voted out of office by the latter, through an ordinary or constructive vote of no confidence' (Müller et al. 2003: 13). Politically, this delegation relationship is nearly universally managed by parties (Müller 2000). This is because politicians and voters in parliamentary democracies turn to parties as the means to align preferences and to solve the information and collective action problems that election campaigns and running a legislature involve. At the electoral stage, parties act as gatekeepers to public office, selecting who can run under the party label for

election. They coordinate politicians and ‘can pledge to support comprehensive policy platforms on which individual politicians cannot credibly claim to have much impact’ (Carey 2007: 93). Parties thereby fulfil a crucial role in informing voters and ensuring that politicians elected on the same ticket pursue the same goals. Once elected to parliament, parties coordinate the work of their legislators to ensure the decisiveness of parliament in advancing their legislative agenda, forming and supporting governments. They do so by informing members of parliament, subjecting them to party discipline, and by acting as gatekeepers to positions of parliamentary and ministerial power. Government formation in parliamentary regimes is, in effect, negotiated by party leaders on behalf of their backbenchers, often through explicit coalition agreements, and parties exercise near exclusive control over government posts (Saalfeld 2000: 361). The party link binds backbenchers to their cabinet and is a crucial tool to ensure incentive compatibility between principal and agent, whose fates are entirely co-dependent under parliamentarism. On the one hand, parliamentary governments depend for their effectiveness and survival on backbench support. On the other, voters hold backbenchers and their executive jointly accountable in a single parliamentary election for the successes or failures of the government – ‘[if] the voters reject their party, they all go down together’ (Saalfeld 2000: 357). There are therefore powerful theoretical reasons to expect that parliamentary government in Europe will in essence amount to party government.

Semi-presidentialism introduces an element of separation of powers into the delegation chain through the separate election of a president and assembly, but in contrast to a full blown separation of powers, president and assembly act as joint principals of the government. This joint control arises because the government’s survival depends, on the one hand, on the confidence of the assembly and, on the other, semi-presidential regimes grant presidents varying powers to influence government formation and termination. Under semi-presidential constitutions, president and assembly must therefore transact and negotiate to control the government (Shugart 2006: 358). Government is never the agent of parliament or president alone, and all semi-presidential regimes have a dual executive in which a prime minister and government exist separately from the popularly elected president. The definition that captures these authority relationships in a minimal and unambiguous way is Elgie’s institutional definition of *semi-presidentialism* as being characterised by ‘a popularly elected, fixed term president [who] exists alongside a prime minister and cabinet who are responsible to parliament’ (Elgie 1999: 13).¹

Semi-presidential constitutions loosen the party–government relationship because the government’s two principals have different electoral constituen-

cies and therefore divergent concerns. Presidents are elected by and accountable to voters in a single national constituency, while the constituencies represented by their party in the assembly normally embrace only a fraction of the presidential electorate. The concerns of the median voters, to which the president and his or her party's median legislator must respond, are therefore likely to differ. As a result, presidents typically campaign on platforms that are wider than that of any given party (including their own), and frequently build electoral coalitions across parties or even above parties as nonpartisan candidates (Amorim Neto & Strøm 2006). The tensions between the president's mandate and that of his or her legislative party can therefore be considerable (Samuels & Shugart 2006), so that cabinet members drawn from the president's party are not automatically good agents for a president (Schleiter & Morgan-Jones forthcoming a). Put differently, unlike assembly parties, presidents cannot necessarily achieve high incentive compatibility by securing the promotion of members of their party to the cabinet. Thus even partisan presidents often seek a mix of party members and loyal nonpartisans in cabinet.² We should stress that we are not proposing that presidents have no incentives to seek some proportion of partisans in cabinet – typically presidents will wish to see parties that supported their election rewarded with cabinet posts, and they will wish to ensure that cabinets have sufficient assembly support to remain in office and achieve their aims. What we do suggest, though, is that presidents have greater incentives to favour the inclusion of nonpartisans in semi-presidential cabinets than assembly parties, for whom the best agents to realise their policy and electoral aims will typically be ministers who are party members.

Semi-presidential constitutions not only weaken the party–government relationship, they are also likely to induce greater variation in the relationship between parties and governments than parliamentary democracies. This is because the constitutional and political capacities of president and assembly to negotiate a government that represents their own and their constituencies' interests can vary. Semi-presidential constitutions display significant variation in the powers of presidents to influence the formation, support or dismissal of governments, and their legislative success (Shugart & Carey 1992; Siaroff 2003; Protsyk 2005; Shugart 2005, Schleiter & Morgan-Jones forthcoming a). For example, Ireland's constitutionally weak presidents, who appoint the prime minister on the nomination of parliament, may refuse the prime minister's request to dissolve the assembly, can initiate judicial review, and act as gatekeepers for a minority referendum (Strøm et al. 2003: 673–681), are less likely to affect government composition than Russian presidents, who have powers to appoint the prime minister (subject to assembly investiture), to dismiss the government and to influence its legislative success via veto and decrees

(Morgan-Jones & Schleiter 2004). How semi-presidential constitutions divide powers over the government matters because it affects the probability with which presidents are likely to achieve their preferred government composition and thus the degree to which the party–government relationship is weakened. Beyond this, transaction over the government also allows political conditions – notably the ability of assembly parties to act collectively in negotiations with the president – to influence government composition. We will return to this issue in more detail below.

In sum, principal-agent theory makes plain why partisan control of cabinet posts enables assembly parties to achieve an incentive-compatible cabinet, but is a less reliable tool for presidents, who have incentives that differ from those of their party. It also makes clear that variation in the party–government relationship in semi-presidential regimes can arise precisely because the two principals of the government have distinct incentives, but share control over the cabinet and must transact to fill ministerial posts. We derive two expectations from our analysis. First, we expect the party–government relationship in semi-presidential regimes to be weaker on average than in parliamentary systems. Second, we expect the party–government relationship in semi-presidential regimes to vary with the constitutionally and politically conditioned capacities of president and assembly to negotiate a government that represents their own and their constituencies' interests.

Before turning to the empirical analysis we address one final point – the difference between semi-presidential and parliamentary heads of state – because parliamentary heads of state sometimes also have powers to influence government composition. Heads of state in parliamentary regimes can be presidents or constitutional monarchs. In contrast to semi-presidential regimes, they never have a direct agency and accountability relationship with the electorate. Presidents in parliamentary regimes are elected by (and therefore agents of) parliament, while the hereditary succession of monarchs situates them outside the democratic framework of delegation. As a result, parliamentary heads of state lack a democratic mandate independent from parliament to promote a separate set of goals in government formation. In other words, the democratic separation of purposes that characterises semi-presidential regimes is absent in parliamentary democracies. To the extent that parliamentary heads of state exercise constitutional powers over government composition, their role is to aid and facilitate parliamentary party government. In the case of parliamentary presidents, this brief is defined by the fact that they are agents of parliament, while the role of monarchs has been shaped by the historical compromises that accompanied their subordination to democratic government, which require them to exercise their powers on the advice of parliament and its government (Bogdanor 1984). In sum, the party–

government relationship in democratic regimes cannot be understood in isolation from the nature of the delegation chain that links politicians and their voters. A principal-agent perspective makes that clear.

In what follows we examine our expectations. The first part of the article considers regime type differences in cabinet partisanship overall and among the most valued portfolios. The second part turns to the mechanisms that lie behind the empirical patterns that we find and takes a closer look at variation in the partisanship of semi-presidential governments. The next paragraph gives a description of our data.

Data

Applying our regime type definitions to the constitutions of all minimally democratic European regimes that existed in 1998 and had a population in excess of 500,000, we arrive at our classification of 28 European regimes, 15 of them parliamentary and 13 semi-presidential.³ We trace the governments in these regimes back to 1945, or to the point at which they adopted the democratic regime type that was in place in 1998. Our data cover portfolio allocation in 438 governments: 278 in parliamentary regimes, 160 in semi-presidential democracies. With the exception of five governments (one in each of Sweden, Finland, Portugal, Bulgaria and Romania) for which we were unable to trace portfolio allocation, these data offer a complete record of portfolio allocation in our 28 European democracies. ‘Government membership’ is defined in terms of full ministerial posts, which we record as reported by our data sources (listed in the Appendix). We now turn to the analysis of party control over government portfolios in Europe’s two main types of democracies.

Regime types and party government

For elected politicians, control over a share of government portfolios is one of the most important keys to power. It gives politicians power to shape policy and access to patronage, which opens up opportunities to implement electoral commitments, deliver benefits to constituencies and reward supporters. In order to reap these benefits, elected politicians must appoint cabinet ministers who will act in the best interest of their principal. Assembly parties, we argued, rely on the party affiliation of ministers to ensure that this is the case, while presidents are likely to seek the inclusion of nonpartisans with specific loyalty to the president in the cabinet mix. In this section we probe our first expectation that presidential influence on the cabinet leads to systematic differences in

the degree to which parties control government portfolios between Europe's semi-presidential and parliamentary democracies.

We begin with Table 1, which reports the mean share of nonpartisan-controlled portfolios and its standard deviation by regime type and country. Because 13 of our 28 democracies are new democracies, in which the dynamics of government formation may be complicated by factors such as initial contestation of aspects of the constitution, we separate established and new democracies within the parliamentary and semi-presidential categories.

Two features of European governments stand out in Table 1. First, the table suggests sizable differences in the levels of party control over parliamentary and semi-presidential governments. As is consistent with previous research, we find that parliamentary government in Europe amounts overwhelmingly to party government (left-hand side of Table 1). On average, only 4 per cent of all portfolios in parliamentary governments are held by nonpartisan ministers (given an average government size of 20 portfolios, this is less than one minister per government). In established parliamentary democracies that average drops a little to 3 per cent; in new parliamentary democracies, it rises to 9 per cent. In semi-presidential regimes, by contrast, parties have significantly less control over government portfolios (right-hand side of Table 1). On average 17 per cent of the portfolios in semi-presidential cabinets are held by nonpartisans, in established semi-presidential democracies that share drops to 12 per cent; in new democracies it soars to fully 36 per cent. These differences in partisanship between parliamentary and semi-presidential cabinets are large, and as the t-tests (last two columns of Table 1) suggest, highly statistically significant. Second, Table 1 shows that the variation in the nonpartisanship of semi-presidential cabinets (from 0.003 per cent in Ireland to 100 per cent in Russia and Ukraine) is more pronounced than in parliamentary cabinets (from 0 in Norway and the United Kingdom to 17 per cent in Estonia), as is consistent with our second expectation. We return to this variation below. For now we note that there appear to be significant regime type differences in the degree to which parties control government portfolios.

Caretaker and regular cabinets

The first question that arises, though, is whether these differences persist if we distinguish between regular and caretaker cabinets. Caretaker situations arise when governments resign pending early elections, following, for example, coalition failures or parliamentary dissolution. In these situations, a temporary cabinet is appointed, which by convention or constitutional stipulation normally has no authority to initiate new policy until fresh elections are held. This curtails the opportunities for parties and presidents to employ cabinet

Table 1. Nonpartisanship in cabinets by regime type and country

Parliamentary democracies	Observations	Mean	Standard deviation	Semi-presidential democracies	Observations	Mean	Standard deviation	t-test (difference in means)	p > t
Average all parliamentary countries	278	0.04	0.11	Average all semi-presidential countries	160	0.17	0.30	6.74	0.000
Established democracies				Established democracies					
Belgium	33	0.02	0.06	Austria	21	0.03	0.04		
Denmark	31	0.01	0.03	Finland	44	0.16	0.28		
Germany	26	0.01	0.02	France	23	0.13	0.12		
Greece	11	0.10	0.22	Ireland	21	0.00	0.01		
Italy	49	0.06	0.16	Portugal	13	0.25	0.35		
Norway	26	0.00	0.00						
Spain	8	0.02	0.03						
Sweden	25	0.05	0.07						
United Kingdom	20	0.00	0.00						
Netherlands	22	0.02	0.07						
Average established democracies	251	0.03	0.10	Average established democracies	122	0.12	0.22	5.25	0.000
New democracies				New democracies					
Czech Republic	4	0.12	0.20	Bulgaria	5	0.49	0.50		
Estonia	6	0.17	0.41	Lithuania	4	0.08	0.17		
Hungary	5	0.10	0.09	Macedonia	3	0.03	0.05		
Latvia	7	0.05	0.08	Poland	5	0.19	0.12		
Slovakia	5	0.03	0.05	Romania	7	0.08	0.08		
				Russia	6	1.00	0.00		
				Slovenia	5	0.04	0.05		
				Ukraine	3	1.00	0.00		
Average new democracies	27	0.09	0.20	Average new democracies	38	0.36	0.42	2.99	0.004

portfolios for the pursuit of policy or patronage, and reduces the incentives for elected politicians to seek control of portfolios. For this reason, caretaker cabinets include a higher average proportion of technical ministers who typically have an administrative background, are nonpartisans and are appointed because of their technical expertise (Woldendorp et al. 2000: 19). In our sample, caretaker governments account for 17 (6 per cent) of the parliamentary governments and 7 (4 per cent) semi-presidential ones. Table 2 examines whether the regime type differences in government partisanship persist once caretaker cabinets are excluded. The first row reports, as a point of reference, the average share of nonpartisans across all portfolios in each regime type.

Two patterns are evident in Table 2. First, as row 2 shows, a sizable and statistically significant difference in party control persists between regular parliamentary (3 per cent nonpartisans) and semi-presidential cabinets (15 per cent nonpartisans, $t = 6.73$, $p = 0.00$). Second, caretaker situations account for most of the variation in the partisanship of parliamentary cabinets; among regular parliamentary cabinets, hardly any meaningful variation remains (mean = 0.03, S.D. = 0.08). Regular semi-presidential cabinets, by contrast, display significant variation in partisanship (mean = 0.15, S.D. = 0.28). We investigate the mechanisms behind this variation later in this article.

Tables 1 and 2, then, suggest an empirical pattern. Parties appear to exercise virtually exclusive control over cabinet posts in parliamentary regimes, but their ability to secure cabinet posts is significantly reduced in semi-presidential regimes. This pattern is consistent with the principal-agent view of cabinet composition that we propose: While semi-presidential constitutions require assembly parties to transact about government composition with the electorate's other agent, the president, who is likely to favour the inclusion of nonpartisans in the mix of government ministers, parliamentary constitutions impose no such constraints on assembly parties. Of course the *share* of portfolios controlled by parties as opposed to nonpartisans offers only one indicator of the level of party control over cabinets. A second indicator is the *importance* of the portfolios controlled by parties or nonpartisans. We now turn to this second indicator.

Portfolio allocation

While all government portfolios represent a 'glittering array of prizes which ambitious politicians may crave' (Laver & Schofield 1990: 165), some portfolios are more valuable than others. For example, securing control of the posts of prime minister, finance and foreign affairs affords a party, or indeed the president, significantly greater influence on policy and more patronage powers than, say, control of transport, health and education. Power to govern therefore

Table 2. Nonpartisanship in regular and caretaker cabinets by regime type

	Parliamentary democracies			Semi-presidential democracies			t-test (difference in means)	p > t
	Observations (%)	Mean	Standard deviation	Observations (%)	Mean	Standard deviation		
All cabinets	278 (100)	0.04	0.11	160 (100)	0.17	0.30	6.85	0.000
Regular cabinets	261 (94)	0.03	0.08	153 (96)	0.15	0.28	6.73	0.000
Caretaker cabinets	17 (6)	0.14	0.30	7 (4)	0.59	0.43	2.90	0.008

hinges disproportionately on control over the most important government portfolios (Warwick & Druckman 2006).

Parties and presidents alike will strive for control of these top posts and we would expect regime type differences in the party control of top portfolios to mirror the differences within cabinets over all. We include in this expectation the premiership, which we (in contrast to Amorim Neto & Strøm) regard as negotiated as an endogenous part of the government formation process. However, we would expect to see one important exception. Despite the variation in presidential powers across semi-presidential democracies (which we examine in more detail below), the case-oriented literature points to a trait that many semi-presidential regimes share: enhanced presidential influence on foreign affairs (Arter 1987; Hayward 1993; Van Der Meer Krok-Paszowska 1999; Verheijen 1999). What accounts for this shared trait is the president's role as popularly elected head of state, which semi-presidential constitutions tend to associate with powers to conclude treaties, appoint ambassadors and sometimes to act as commander-in-chief of the army. In other words, if presidential influence were the mechanism behind the regime type differences in cabinet composition, it should reduce party control over all top government portfolios, but in foreign affairs this reduction should be noticeably larger than average.

To evaluate these expectations, we draw on a robust cross-national measure of portfolio salience in West and Eastern Europe based on expert ratings by Druckman and his associates (Roberts & Druckman forthcoming; Druckman & Warwick 2005). In both Eastern and Western Europe, the single most valued portfolio is the premiership, immediately followed by finance, foreign affairs and interior (Roberts & Druckman forthcoming; Druckman & Warwick 2005: 34–35). In Table 3 we report average nonpartisan control of the four top-ranked portfolios by regime type (including and excluding caretaker cabinets). The first row in each section reports, as a point of reference, the average share of nonpartisans across all portfolios in each regime type. Note that the number of observations with respect to individual portfolios varies from the number of governments observed because the spheres of finance, foreign affairs or the interior are often divided up into several posts.

Table 3 suggests that there are sizable regime type differences in the level of party control over top cabinet posts. In parliamentary cabinets (upper half of Table 3), we find a consistent picture of party dominance. The average share of just 2–4 per cent (depending on portfolio and inclusion of caretaker cabinets) of nonpartisans in top cabinet posts corresponds almost exactly to the overall mean across all portfolios in these regimes. In semi-presidential cabinets, by contrast (lower half of Table 3), parties fail to control between 14 per cent and 26 per cent of the top portfolios (depending on portfolio and inclusion of caretaker cabinets). In both regime types party control over the

Table 3. Nonpartisanship in most valued portfolios by regime type

Portfolio	Observations	Mean (all cabinets)	Observations	Mean (regular cabinets only)
Parliamentary democracies				
Average all portfolios	278	0.04	261	0.03
Prime minister	278	0.03	261	0.02
Finance	415	0.04	390	0.04
Foreign affairs	290	0.04	275	0.04
Interior	361	0.03	343	0.02
Semi-presidential democracies				
Average all portfolios	160	0.17	153	0.15
Prime minister	160	0.19	153	0.16
Finance	175	0.19	169	0.18
Foreign affairs	161	0.26	154	0.24
Interior	197	0.16	190	0.14

premiership is aligned with the patterns in other top portfolios. Only foreign affairs in semi-presidential cabinets stands out: While the nonpartisan share of premiers, finance and interior ministers in regular semi-presidential cabinets gravitates around the 15 per cent average for all cabinet posts, foreign affairs displays a noticeably higher than average (24 per cent) share of nonpartisans.

In sum, regime type differences are evident in the control of the portfolios that form the commanding heights of the cabinet, and nowhere more so than in foreign affairs. Party control of the premiership follows the same empirical pattern as other top portfolios in each regime type and appears to be negotiated as an endogenous part of the government formation process. These patterns lend *prima facie* support to the principal-agent approach: bargaining between the electorate's agents appears to determine portfolio control. In parliamentary regimes, this bargaining process unfolds between parties – the result is party control over portfolios. In semi-presidential regimes, parties transact with presidents who often favour the inclusion of some non-partisans in government, and we observe significant departures from party government. The greater than average reduction of party control over foreign affairs, where semi-presidential constitutions systematically grant presidents authority, is consistent with our argument that presidents are the actors behind these departures from party government and that their constitutional powers influence their bargaining position. We now investigate the mechanisms behind these patterns in more detail.

Accounting for variation in cabinet partisanship

As we have seen, significant departures from party government occur in semi-presidential regimes, while there is hardly any meaningful variation in the partisanship of regular parliamentary cabinets (see Table 2). In this part of the article, we examine the factors that account for variation in the party–government relationship, focusing primarily on semi-presidential regimes where most of the variation is concentrated, but where these factors have applicability to parliamentary regimes, we also explore their effects on the composition of parliamentary governments.

We argued that two mechanisms account for the weakened party–government relationship in semi-presidential regimes. The first is the separate electoral origin of president and assembly, which loosens the relationship of presidents with their parties in the assembly because presidents and legislators must respond to the concerns of different median voters. This limits the usefulness of co-partisanship as a tool for presidents in achieving an incentive-compatible cabinet, and gives them reason to seek loyal nonpartisans as part of

the cabinet mix. However, elections can separate the concerns of president and assembly parties to a greater or lesser degree, and if we have correctly identified this mechanism, then variation in election outcomes should drive part of the variation in the party–government relationship in semi-presidential regimes.

The second mechanism through which semi-presidentialism affects the party–government relationship, we suggest, is the joint control of the government by president and assembly, which requires these two players to transact over government composition. We expect the outcomes of this transaction to vary with the capacities of president and assembly to negotiate a government that represents their interests, and those of their constituencies. These capacities, we argued, are both institutionally and politically conditioned. On the one hand, we expect the party–government relationship to vary with the president’s constitutional powers; on the other, the ability of assembly parties to act collectively should have an impact on the outcome of transactions with the president. As parliamentary fragmentation rises, parties are likely to face greater collective action problems in negotiating cabinet composition and should be less effective in securing partisan control of cabinet posts. We examine these potential sources of variation below, first descriptively and then by turning to a regression model to examine the overall account.

Separate election and divergent concerns

Presidential elections that return a nonpartisan president can be expected to maximise the difference in the preferences of parties and president over the inclusion of nonpartisan ministers in the cabinet mix. To probe that expectation, we consider whether cabinets negotiated with nonpartisan presidents are associated with greater reductions in cabinet partisanship than governments negotiated with partisan presidents. In Table 4 we examine how presidential party membership affects mean cabinet partisanship in semi-presidential democracies, using party membership of the president at the point of his or her election.

As we would expect, nonpartisan presidents secure, on average, significantly more nonpartisan cabinets than their party-affiliated counterparts. The middle rows of Table 4 show that fully 50 per cent of the members of regular semi-presidential cabinets are nonpartisans when the president lacks party affiliation, as compared to 9 per cent when the president is a party member ($t = 8.08, p = 0.00$). It is possible, though, that this pattern does not characterise semi-presidential regimes in general, but is in fact driven by Russia and Ukraine – two countries that appear unusual among semi-presidential regimes because they combined very powerful, nonpartisan presidents with wholly

Table 4. President's party membership and nonpartisanship in semi-presidential cabinets

	Observations	Mean	Standard deviation	t-test (difference in means)	p > t
All cabinets					
Nonpartisan presidents	27	0.53	0.47	8.11	0.00
Partisan presidents	133	0.10	0.18		
Regular cabinets					
Nonpartisan presidents	25	0.50	0.47	8.08	0.00
Partisan presidents	128	0.09	0.15		
Regular cabinets excluding Russia and Ukraine					
Nonpartisan presidents	16	0.22	0.35	2.76	0.01
Partisan presidents	128	0.09	0.15		

nonpartisan cabinets up to the end of the 1990s. However, the bottom rows of Table 4 show that a significant, although narrower, gap in cabinet partisanship (22 versus 9 per cent) persists if we exclude these two countries from the analysis ($t = 2.76$, $p = 0.01$).

The question that arises is whether the regime type differences that we charted above are simply driven by the impact of nonpartisan presidents on the composition of semi-presidential cabinets. If this were the case, then cabinets formed under partisan presidents in semi-presidential regimes should be no different from parliamentary governments in terms of partisanship. However, the gap remains significant (comparison not presented in Table 4), with an average of 9 per cent nonpartisans in regular semi-presidential cabinets (formed under party-affiliated presidents) as compared to regular parliamentary governments with a mean of 3 per cent non-party ministers ($t = 4.77$, $p = 0.00$). This pattern is consistent with a principal-agent account, which suggests that presidents seek departures from party government in semi-presidential regimes because their separate election ensures that their incentives diverge from those of their party in the assembly.

Joint control of the government and transaction

We now turn to the effect of the second mechanism identified above, transaction, on the party–government relationship. Because semi-presidential regimes share control of the government between president and assembly, and require them to transact over government composition, they make the party–government relationship susceptible to constitutionally and politically induced variation that does not occur in parliamentary regimes.

As we saw above, semi-presidential regimes vary in how they structure the powers of the government's two principals to achieve their preferred outcomes in negotiations over the government. We expect this institutional variation to have an impact on the party–government relationship. Specifically, constitutionally more powerful presidents should dilute party control over the cabinet more than their weaker counterparts.

To examine this expectation, we measure presidential power according to the Shugart and Carey index (Shugart & Carey 1992). Table 5 presents the correlation between presidential powers and the share of nonpartisans in semi-presidential governments. The table shows that there is a strong and significant positive correlation ($r = 0.47$ to 0.49 , $p = 0.00$) between presidential power and the share of government portfolios controlled by nonpartisans, regardless of whether caretaker cabinets are included in the analysis.

Again, it is possible that this correlation does not characterise semi-presidential regimes in general, but is driven by Russia and Ukraine – two

Table 5. Presidential power and nonpartisanship in semi-presidential cabinets

	Observations	Correlation	p-value
Semi-presidential regimes			
All cabinets	160	0.47	0.000
Regular cabinets	153	0.49	0.000
Regular cabinets excluding Russia and Ukraine	144	0.28	0.001

countries with exceptionally powerful presidencies. We therefore exclude these two potential outliers from the analysis, and as the bottom row of Table 5 shows, a significant positive correlation ($r = 0.28$, $p = 0.00$) persists. These patterns are consistent with our argument that one mechanism behind the regime type differences in cabinet partisanship is the joint control of the government between president and assembly in semi-presidential regimes, which is absent in parliamentary regimes. On average, greater constitutional prerogatives make presidents more powerful actors in transactions with the assembly, and give them greater influence on the allocation of portfolios.

As we noted above, in addition to constitutional factors, political circumstances are likely to affect the outcome of transactions over government composition – notably the assembly's capacity for collective action. In semi-presidential regimes, parliamentary collective action problems should weaken the ability of assembly parties to achieve their preferred level of government partisanship in negotiations with the president. In parliamentary regimes, by contrast, the assembly is the sole principal of the cabinet and parliamentary collective action problems should not affect the party–government relationship.

To examine this expectation we use parliamentary fragmentation – a factor that increases the probability of collective action problems in parliament – as measured by the Laakso and Taagepera index of the effective number of parliamentary parties (Laakso & Taagepera 1979). Table 6 presents the correlation between the effective number of parties and the share of nonpartisan portfolios in cabinet, broken down by parliamentary and semi-presidential regimes.

As we would expect, the upper half of the table shows that there is no statistically significant correlation between parliamentary fragmentation and increased nonpartisanship in parliamentary cabinets, regardless of whether we exclude caretaker cabinets from the analysis. In semi-presidential regimes, the correlation initially appears strong and highly statistically significant ($r = 0.52$ to 0.58 , $p = 0.00$, depending on whether caretaker cabinets are included in the analysis). Again, though, Russia and Ukraine are potentially outliers whose

Table 6. Parliamentary fragmentation and cabinet nonpartisanship by regime type

	Observations	Correlation	p-value
Parliamentary regimes			
All cabinets	278	0.09	0.116
Regular cabinets	261	0.10	0.112
Semi-presidential regimes			
All cabinets	160	0.52	0.000
Regular cabinets	153	0.58	0.000
Regular cabinets excluding Russia and Ukraine	144	0.14	0.100

exceptionally fragmented party systems during the 1990s might drive the correlation in semi-presidential regimes. Indeed, when we investigate this possibility we find that the magnitude and significance of the correlation between the party system fragmentation and nonpartisan controlled portfolios in the semi-presidential cabinets drops ($r = 0.14$, $p = 0.10$), and the difference between parliamentary and semi-presidential cabinets narrows.

To shed further light on these correlations, we turn to a comparison of the mean share of nonpartisan-controlled portfolios in governments formed at different levels of party fragmentation (Table 7). To distinguish between low and high levels of party fragmentation, we dichotomise the effective number of parliamentary parties using two alternative cut-points (2.5 and 3) to avoid cut-point dependent conclusions. This comparison shows that the difference between semi-presidential and parliamentary cabinets is small and mostly not statistically significant at low levels of party fragmentation (upper part of Table 7). At high levels of party fragmentation, however, it becomes bigger and statistically very significant ($t > 5$ and $p = 0.00$), regardless of whether caretaker and Russian and Ukrainian cabinets are included in the analysis. In the context of high party fragmentation (lower part of Table 7), parliamentary cabinets still only include an average of 3–4 per cent nonpartisan-controlled portfolios. In semi-presidential regimes, that proportion jumps to between 11 and 22 per cent (depending on the cut-point chosen, and whether caretaker and Russian and Ukrainian cabinets are included). This was exactly our expectation. In semi-presidential regimes, when parliament's ability to bargain is inhibited by party fragmentation, presidential influence rises and party control over portfolios declines. In parliamentary regimes, where parties are not required to transact with another agent of the electorate, even high levels of party system fragmentation have no significant effect on the party–government relationship.

Table 7. Parliamentary fragmentation and cabinet nonpartisanship by regime type

	Effective number of parties	Parliamentary democracies			Semi-presidential democracies			t-test (difference in means)	p > t
		Observations	Mean	Standard deviation	Observations	Mean	Standard deviation		
Low effective number of parties									
All cabinets	<2.5	38	0.01	0.03	23	0.10	0.29	2.10*	0.04
Regular cabinets	<3	85	0.03	0.09	47	0.07	0.21	1.39	0.17
	<2.5	35	0.01	0.03	22	0.06	0.21	1.54	0.13
	<3	79	0.02	0.05	46	0.05	0.16	1.43	0.16
High effective number of parties									
All cabinets	≥2.5	240	0.04	0.12	137	0.18	0.30	6.56**	0.00
Regular cabinets	≥3	193	0.04	0.12	113	0.22	0.32	6.98**	0.00
	≥2.5	226	0.03	0.09	131	0.17	0.29	6.64**	0.00
	≥3	182	0.03	0.10	107	0.20	0.31	6.82**	0.00
Regular cabinets excluding Russia and Ukraine	≥2.5	226	0.03	0.09	122	0.11	0.19	5.18**	0.00
	≥3	182	0.03	0.10	98	0.13	0.20	5.39**	0.00

Note: * Significant at 0.05 level. ** Significant at 0.001 level.

The correlations and descriptive statistics that we have presented so far are strongly suggestive of support for the mechanisms that we argue drive variation in party control over cabinet portfolios. In semi-presidential regimes the existence of a president, the divergence of his or her concerns from those of assembly parties as shaped by separate elections and joint control over the cabinet shaped by the president's constitutional powers and party system fragmentation all have significant effects on cabinet partisanship. Moreover, party system fragmentation – a factor that influences the level of transaction and thus cabinet composition in semi-presidential regimes – has, as we expected, no effect on cabinet composition in parliamentary regimes. We now move from the separate examination of each of these mechanisms to a regression model to probe the joint effects of the factors that our principal-agent account identifies.

Our model choice is guided by the nature and distribution of our dependent variable. The share of nonpartisan-controlled portfolios in government is proportions data (minimum = 0, maximum = 1) resulting from grouped binary observations: the appointment of nonpartisan or partisan ministers grouped within a government. Appointments within a government are typically not independent of each other, but are negotiated as part of the overall cabinet mix. To model these data we use the extended beta-binomial distribution (King 1998: 45–48; Palmquist 1999) and estimate an additional over- or under-dispersion parameter, γ , to account for the possible government-specific probability of nonpartisan appointments.⁴ Our regression model includes all parameters of theoretical interest – presidential power (measured by the Shugart and Carey index), presidential partisanship (coded 1, otherwise 0) and parliamentary fragmentation (measured by the effective number of parliamentary parties) – as well as two controls – caretaker cabinet status (coded 1, otherwise 0) and the level of democracy as measured by a country's normalised polity score (a more fine-grained measure of the distinction between new and established democracies than the dummy variable used above).⁵ We run model 1 on all semi-presidential cabinets in our sample, model 2 excludes governments from Russia and Ukraine. Table 8 presents the results of these two regressions.

The results for both models suggest that presidential power, parliamentary fragmentation and caretaker status of the cabinet increase the share of nonpartisans in semi-presidential cabinets significantly, while presidential party membership reduces the share of nonpartisan-controlled portfolios. If Russian and Ukrainian cabinets are excluded from the analysis, the magnitude of two coefficients – the effective number of parties and presidential party membership – is slightly reduced, but all variables retain their signs and statistical significance (at the $p = 0.05$ level or better). The γ parameter is highly significant, which suggests that there is indeed a government specific probability of nonpartisan appointments.

Table 8. Analysis of share of nonpartisan portfolios in semi-presidential cabinets

	(1)	(2)
	Extended beta binomial	
	All cabinets	Cabinets excluding Russia and Ukraine
	Coefficient (standard error)	Coefficient (standard error)
Dependent variable	Share of nonpartisan ministers	
Presidential power	0.14** (0.04)	0.13** (0.04)
Effective number of parliamentary parties	0.26** (0.09)	0.21* (0.10)
Presidential party membership	-1.07** (0.36)	-0.85* (0.40)
Caretaker cabinet	1.86** (0.53)	1.92** (0.53)
Level of democracy	-6.57** (1.46)	-5.55** (1.61)
Constant	2.99* (1.44)	2.09 (1.58)
Gamma	0.42** (0.09)	0.41** (0.08)
Log-likelihood	-716.52	-714.39
Number of observations	160	151

Note: * Significant at 0.05 level. ** Significant at 0.01 level.

To interpret the size and substantive meaning of these effects, we set the values of our parameters in model 1 equal to those of Jacques Chirac's first cabinet, formed after 1974 election of President Giscard d'Estaing. Chirac led a conservative coalition government that included, among other parties, his own UDR and the president's FNRI. For this cabinet, our variables take the following values: presidential power = 7, effective number of parties = 5.35, presidential party membership = 1, caretaker government = 0 and polity = 0.9. Three portfolios in this cabinet (out of 17) were controlled by nonpartisans (17.6 per cent), and our model predicts a nonpartisan share of 16.9 per cent, which is a good estimate.

Varying the value of each variable in turn, we explore the magnitude of their effects. All else being constant, in this cabinet, an increase of presidential power from 7 to 13 on the Shugart and Carey scale (equivalent to the power wielded by the Portuguese president between 1976–1982) would have increased the share of nonpartisans to 32 per cent (equivalent to 5.5 nonpartisan-controlled portfolios). If the number of effective parliamentary parties in the assembly had been 2 (rather than 5.35), our model estimates that the share of nonpartisans in this cabinet would have fallen to 8 per cent. If President Giscard d'Estaing had not been a member of a political party, the

share of nonpartisans would have increased to 36 per cent. If the cabinet had been a caretaker cabinet rather than a regular cabinet, the share of nonpartisan would have rocketed to fully 51 per cent. Finally, had the polity score of France (measuring the level of democracy) in 1974 still been as low as under de Gaulle (0.75), our model predicts that the share of nonpartisan ministers in this cabinet would have increased to 34 per cent. These changes are sizable and suggest that our variables have an effect on portfolio control that is meaningful in substantive political terms.

To assess how well the model fits the data, we cross-tabulate observed and predicted shares of nonpartisan-controlled portfolios in our cabinets. Dividing both variables into four categories (0–25, 25–50, 50–75 and 75–100 per cent), we find that the model correctly predicts 81 per cent of the observed values, which suggests that it fits the data well.⁶

The two models lend support to all aspects of our principal-agent account for the significant departures from party government in semi-presidential regimes: presidents clearly seem to be the actors who are responsible for these departures. Their party membership and constitutional powers have significant effects on party control over the portfolios of semi-presidential cabinets, as has parliamentary fragmentation, which inhibits the assembly's effectiveness in negotiating cabinet composition with the president.

Conclusion

In sum, our analysis suggests that attention to the different principal-agent relationships between voters, elected politicians and governments in Europe's semi-presidential and parliamentary regimes is crucial to a fuller understanding of a fundamental aspect of European cabinets: the extent of party control over government portfolios.

In parliamentary and semi-presidential regimes alike, we have argued, bargaining over governments unfolds between those actors whom voters authorise to make and break governments: assembly parties and presidents. In parliamentary regimes, government is the agent of the legislature alone, which gives assembly parties undiluted control over the allocation of government portfolios. The result is tight party control over government posts, which serves both the party in parliament and its agents in cabinet because their fates are mutually dependent given the fusion of executive and legislative power and their joint accountability in parliamentary elections. In semi-presidential regimes, however, the party–government relationship is loosened by the fact that governments are not the agents of the assembly alone, but have a second principal – a popularly elected president – who has incentives that are distinct

from those of his or her assembly party. For presidents, the usefulness of co-partisans in achieving an incentive-compatible cabinet is limited and as a result they tend to seek inclusion of loyal nonpartisans in the cabinet mix. As a consequence, we expected systematic regime type differences in the party–government relationship.

Our empirical findings lend strong support to this analysis and demonstrate powerful and consistent differences in the level of party control over 438 governments in 28 European parliamentary and semi-presidential democracies throughout the second half of the twentieth century. Moreover, we offer the first systematic evidence to show that these differences carry over into control of the top government posts, including the premiership. In parliamentary regimes, 96–98 per cent of the top government portfolios are controlled by parties; in semi-presidential regimes, fully one in six prime ministers and a quarter of all foreign ministers escape party control.⁷ The fact that party control over the premiership also mirrors the pattern in other highly valued cabinet portfolios suggests, contrary to Amorim Neto and Strøm (2006), that the choice of the prime minister is an endogenous part of the cabinet formation process, which is negotiated by the government’s popularly elected principals like the control of other portfolios.

Our second expectation was that semi-presidential constitutions induce greater variation in the party–government relationship than parliamentary democracies because they grant joint control of the government to president and assembly and require them to transact over government composition. As a result, the party–government relationship can vary with the institutional and political conditions that shape the ability of the president and assembly parties to negotiate a government that represents their own interests and those of their constituencies. The evidence strongly supports this expectation. While there is hardly any variation in the partisanship of regular parliamentary governments, semi-presidential regimes display very significant variation in the partisanship of regular cabinets. Analysing the sources of this variation, we demonstrate that it is structured by election outcomes and the capacity of president and assembly to negotiate as structured by the president’s constitutional powers and the extent of collective actions problems among assembly parties.

In sum, the article shows that we cannot understand the composition of European governments without reference to the underlying democratic principal-agent relationships. This finding has clear implications for the study of the policy process, democratic performance and accountability in different types of European democracies – areas in which the approach developed here should now be extended and extensively tested. We reserve this task for future work.

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Appendix: Data sources

Cabinets, their composition and status (caretaker, regular): Woldendorp et al. (2000) and *European Journal of Political Research*. Cross-checked against Müller & Strøm (2000) and information from country experts. Coalition Governments in Western Europe (July 2006 version), *Parliamentary Democracy Data Archive*: www.pol.umu.se/ccpd/Database.htm. Data on Russia and Ukraine are original, compiled from *Keesing's Record of World Events* and the *Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press*.

Presidential power (sources of constitutional texts): *International Constitutional Law*: www.oefre.unibe.ch/law/icl/. *Constitution Finder*: <http://confinder.richmond.edu/>. *Constitution Act of Finland, 1919*, translated into English by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Finland.

Effective number of parliamentary parties and presidential party affiliation: Coalition Governments in Western Europe (July 2006 version), *Parliamentary Democracy Data Archive*: www.pol.umu.se/ccpd/Database.htm. *Political Transformation and the Electoral Process in Post-Communist Europe*: www.essex.ac.uk/elections. *Lijphart Elections Archive*: <http://dodgson.ucsd.edu/lij/westeurope/>. *Parties and Elections in Europe, 1997–2004*: www.parties-and-elections.de. *Election Results Archive*: <http://cdp.binghamton.edu/era/elections>. *Rulers*: www.rulers.org. Caramani (1999).

Level of democracy: *Polity IV Project*: www.cidcm.umd.edu/inscr/polity/.

Notes

1. Shugart (2005: 339) has attempted to specify a minimum of constitutional powers that presidents must command (veto, or assembly dissolution, or power to appoint a prime minister when the assembly deadlocks), which would, for example, exclude Ireland

from the semi-presidential category. However, popularly elected presidents regularly command some, however weak, constitutional powers to influence the government on behalf of their electorate. Take Ireland, where President Mary Robinson's threat to refuse assembly dissolution by the government achieved a coalition renegotiation that saw her former party join the cabinet (Gallagher 1999: 116). This clearly is an instance in which the president's constitutional powers forced negotiation and affected government composition. We therefore choose to err on the side of caution and follow Elgie's minimalist definition, which focuses solely on the popular election of the president and specifies no minimum of constitutional powers. In the context of this article, this definition has the virtue of providing a more conservative test of our expectations about differences in party government between semi-presidential and parliamentary regimes.

2. Presidents have similar but more pronounced effects on cabinets in *presidential regimes* where the president is sole principal of the cabinet. Although presidents may include partisans in cabinet to facilitate legislative work with the assembly (Altman 2000; Amorim Neto 2006), this is a matter of presidential discretion given the cabinet's independence from assembly confidence, and presidential cabinets contain a higher share of nonpartisan ministers than semi-presidential or parliamentary governments (Amorim Neto & Samuels 2003). These findings are consistent with our principal-agent argument, but the investigation of cabinet formation in presidential regimes is beyond the scope of this article.
3. We consider a country as minimally democratic if it has a better than mid-point rating on either the Freedom House or Polity IV democracy indices. Moldova and Croatia could not be included because of a lack of reliable data sources.
4. All models were estimated using STATA SE, version 9.
5. We considered the inclusion of an additional control for democratic system time measured as the age of democracy or its natural log, but it makes no difference to the results. If added to model 1, age of democracy makes no significant contribution to the model's explanatory power, the coefficient remains statistically insignificant (for age of democracy it is -0.01 , S.E. 0.01 , $p = 0.13$, for \ln [age of democracy] it is -0.21 , S.E. 0.13 , $p = 0.11$), and it does not affect other coefficients or their significance.
6. Several studies suggest that powerful presidents encourage party system fragmentation, or that party system fragmentation favours the choice of executive presidents, and we examined whether collinearity is a problem in this analysis. In our sample, the correlations between none of the explanatory variables are high enough to give rise to collinearity problems; tolerances for all our variables fall in the range between 0.73 and 0.98.
7. Note that our central descriptive results in Tables 2 and 3 of this article would be robust if Russia and Ukraine were excluded. A significant difference would persist between regular parliamentary (3 per cent nonpartisan) and semi-presidential (10 per cent nonpartisan) cabinets ($t = 5.32$, $p = 0.000$), as would the differences in party control over top portfolios in parliamentary and semi-presidential cabinets (prime minister 2 and 11 per cent, foreign affairs 4 and 19 per cent, respectively). Since Russia and Ukraine are semi-presidential regimes according to our definition, we see no reason to exclude them from the descriptive analyses in the first part of the article.

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