

EXPLAINING EXTREMITY
IN THE FOREIGN POLICIES OF PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACIES¹

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Why do multiparty cabinets in parliamentary democracies produce more extreme foreign policies than single-party cabinets? Our paper argues that particular institutional and psychological dynamics are responsible for extremity. We test this argument using a global events dataset incorporating foreign policy behaviors of numerous multiparty and single-party governments. We find that more parties and weak parliaments promote extremity in coalitions, but parliamentary strength has the opposite effect for single-party governments. This study challenges existing expectations about the impact of democratic institutions on foreign policy.

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Parliamentary democracies governed by multiparty cabinets make foreign policy decisions in a politically complicated context. But deadlock and meaningless compromise need not result. Even the image of the coalition cabinets in the French Fourth Republic as epitomizing instability, ineffectiveness, and deadlock is now being challenged. Indeed, coalition dynamics may have promoted activism in the Fourth Republic's foreign policy. As Hanreider and Auton (1980:156) argue: "...internal weakness pushed the Fourth Republic even more toward foreign matters." Among historians "a positive view of post-war French foreign policy has become something of an orthodoxy" (Imlay 2009:500).

Despite the predominant view of coalition governments as being constrained, they frequently make significant foreign policy decisions. In 1993, Japan's first multiparty cabinet after decades of mostly single party rule made a historic and controversial decision to open its domestic markets to rice imports (Kaarbo 2012). Turkish coalition governments joined a customs union with the EU (in 1995) and accepted the EU's offer of candidacy (in 1999) – two important and historic points of cooperation in EU-Turkish relations (Kaarbo 2012). In 2003, Italy, Australia, and the Netherlands—all ruled by coalition governments—made significant contributions to troop levels in Iraq. (BBC News 2004). And in 2014, coalition governments in Belgium, Germany, Italy, and the United Kingdom (among others) maintained troop commitments in Afghanistan (NATO 2014). Indeed, recent research finds that coalitions engage in extreme—whether cooperative or aggressive—foreign policies (Kaarbo and Beasley 2008). Other research, however, fails to find any difference between the foreign policies of multiparty and single party cabinets. Furthermore, some theoretical logics suggest that coalitions generally should be more constrained and peaceful than single-party cabinets; others imply the opposite.

To address this debate, we first unpack the category of coalitions by exploring theoretical expectations of various institutional and psychological factors on foreign policy. We then use historical events data to analyze the links between cabinet characteristics and foreign policy behavior. We find that extremity in coalition foreign policy is related to the cabinet's parliamentary strength and to the numbers of parties in the coalition, but in ways that are counter-intuitive to expectations from democratic peace research. We also find that institutional factors affect single-party cabinets differently than they do coalition cabinets.

The Importance of Coalitions in Foreign Policy

Coalitions are widespread and occur in parliamentary democracies when no single political party controls enough seats in parliament to form a majority or when leaders form oversized cabinets (national unity governments or "grand" coalitions) in response to national crises. Historically, coalition cabinets existed in important states at critical times: Great Britain during the world depression of the early 1930s, Israel during all Arab-Israeli conflicts and peace processes, West Germany during the Cold War, and India when it became a nuclear power.

Coalition cabinets operate within a distinct institutional context where the authority to make foreign policy is shared among competing political parties. These parties frequently disagree on foreign policy. How parties resolve these disagreements is critical to foreign policy choices. Although disagreements are common in the executive branch of any democratic government, they are particularly contentious in a coalition cabinet. If policy disputes are not settled, the coalition may dissolve, leaving the government in a deadlock. The dynamics of bargaining and decision-making in coalition governments is therefore unique. Junior coalition partners (which may include very

small political parties) can have disproportionate influence, even thwarting the dominant party's preference at times (Kaarbo 1996). This is especially true if the junior party controls the foreign or defense minister posts, as it does in the majority of current coalition cabinets (Kaarbo 2012).

Previous Research: Coalitions vs. Single Party Governments

Empirical work on the links between coalition politics and the substantive nature of foreign policy shows mixed results. Contrary to the democratic peace logic, which argues that the institutional constraints of multiple actors and possible “veto players” make coalitions the most peaceful regime type (Maoz and Russett 1993),² other studies show that coalitions formulate more aggressive foreign policy than single-party governments. Compared to single-party governments, coalitions engage in greater reciprocation in militarized disputes (Prins and Sprecher, 1999), greater likelihood of involvement in international disputes (Palmer, London, and Regan, 2004), and increased likelihood of initiating disputes leading to fatalities (Clare, 2010). However, Ireland and Gartner (2001), Reiter and Tillman (2002), and Clare (2010) found no difference between single-party and coalition cabinets in dispute initiation. Palmer, London, and Regan (2004) found no difference between single and multi-party cabinets in dispute escalation. Leblang and Chan (2003) conclude that coalition cabinets are not more likely than single party cabinets to be involved in war.³ Research on the impact of coalition governments on diversionary foreign policy also shows mixed results, as some studies suggest that coalitions are less likely to use diversionary force (Brulé and Williams 2009;

² For theoretical rationales for why coalitions might be more constrained, see Auerswald 1999; Elman 2000; Ireland and Gartner 2001; Palmer, London, and Regan 2004. Brulé and Williams (2009) argue a different logic for peaceful foreign policy in coalitions: because coalitions enjoy diffuse accountability, they may be able to blame other parties for poor internal conditions, reducing their need to divert with aggressive foreign policy (see also Kisangani and Pickering 2011).

³ Although they did find that electoral systems based on proportional representation, which is highly correlated with coalition governments, was negatively related to a country's war involvement.

Kisangani and Pickering 2011), while others indicate that coalitions are more prone to diversionary behavior (Kisangani and Pickering 2009).

Variations in research designs may influence these mixed results, as studies use different time periods and include different additional variables in their analyses. In particular, the type of dependent variable used in these studies may produce inconclusive results. Democratic peace research examines conflict-related behavior, including dispute initiation, escalation, and reciprocity (Prins and Sprecher 1999; Ireland and Gartner 2001; Reiter and Tillman 2002; Palmer et al. 2004; Clare 2010). In conflict situations, moreover, international factors may have more influence, governments may suppress internal disagreements, and the decision-making authority may become restricted to manage the crisis. We therefore expect that the institutional effects of coalition politics will be less apparent in these situations.

Existing research also confounds institutional constraints with substantive policy direction.⁴ Arguing that coalitions are more *peaceful* assumes that coalition leaders prefer more aggressive policies but are institutionally constrained. Similarly, arguing that coalitions are *more aggressive* assumes that junior partners favor aggressive policies and push the cabinet in this direction. Neither assumption is necessarily true. Junior parties may favor more peaceful policies and push the cabinet in that direction, and peace-loving prime ministers may be just as constrained by institutional checks as war-prone leaders. We cannot assume that coalitions are generally peaceful or generally aggressive in their foreign policies without knowing the preferences of the coalition actors.

Kaarbo and Beasley (2008) addressed some of these limitations. Using the World Event/Interaction Survey (WEIS) dataset, they compared a broad range of foreign policy

⁴ Clare (2010) is a notable exception. He focuses on the ideological fractionalization of the coalition. Palmer, London and Regan (2004) also include ideological orientation of the cabinet.

behaviors for single and multi-party cabinets. They examined the level of policy extremity (exhibiting highly aggressive or cooperative behavior, rather than moderate behavior) and the level of policy commitment (making verbal statements versus material acts). Their study found that coalitions were not more prone to conflict than single-party governments, but that coalitions were both more aggressive *and* more cooperative. In other words, coalitions were more *extreme* than single-party cabinets. The study, however, did not examine the specific mechanisms that produce this relative extremity. Building on this previous research, we attempt to uncover these mechanisms. This paper examines the factors that account for the extremity of coalitions' foreign policy choices.

Explaining Extremity

There are four theoretical explanations for the extremity of coalition cabinets' foreign policy choices: 1) political *hijacking* by junior parties within the coalition, 2) *domestic political weakness* driving diversionary foreign policy, 3) *diffusion of accountability* due to shared authority among multiple parties, and 4) *logrolling* that combines and multiplies policy options. These four theoretical explanations come from two disciplines: political science and psychology. Interestingly, institutional explanations from political science have parallels in social psychology literature on group decision making, particularly in research on group polarization (see Kaarbo 2008).

Numerous studies find that groups are more than the sum of their parts, tending to make more extreme or more cautious choices than their individual members prefer before group discussion (Brown 2000). Evidence for group polarization comes from studies conducted in over a dozen different countries and from a wide-range of research on attitudes, jury decisions, ethical decisions, judgment, person perception, and risk taking (Myers and Lamm 1976; Brauer and Judd 1996). Group polarization research has

focused on comparing groups to individuals and has ignored institutional characteristics.⁵ A combination of institutional dynamics with psychological polarization processes means coalition cabinet group may be particularly vulnerable to extremity. In the next section, we review these institutional explanations for extreme foreign policy, noting corollary social psychological mechanisms where appropriate. We unpack the category of coalitions and argue that different types of coalitions will behave in different ways.

1. Hijacking

The first explanation for coalitions' extreme foreign policy behavior involves the power of junior parties in the cabinet. Moderate senior parties often have to rely on smaller, more ideologically extreme junior parties to maintain a majority of seats in parliament. As a result, senior parties become vulnerable to political "hijacking" by their junior partners. If the senior party cannot successfully bargain with its junior partners on foreign policy decisions, the latter may defect from the coalition and bring down the government. Junior parties are, in Tsebelis's term, potential "veto players" in the cabinet (Tsebelis 1995). While they might not always get the more extreme decisions they seek, junior parties have been influential in key foreign policy decisions of important states, such as Germany, Israel, Turkey, and Japan (Hofferbert and Klingemann 1990; Kaarbo 1996, 2012; Kaarbo and Lantis 2003).

Many scholars assume that junior parties in a coalition are either a strong advocate for peace (Auerswald 1999; Rieter and Tillman, 2002; Palmer et al. 2004) or an agitator for conflict (e.g. Elman 2000). This assumption confounds the institutional position of the junior party with its policy position. Only Clare (2010) combines the

⁵ Janis (1972) is one exception.

ideological orientation of the cabinet and the blackmail potential of critical junior coalition partners in his examination of foreign policy extremity. Clare adds ideological distance, or “fractionalization,” in his analyses, locating the distance of a left- or right-wing outlier party from the rest of the government. His study finds that “the likelihood of dispute initiation increases as the government moves from a fractionalized coalition with a far-left outlier party toward one with a right-wing outlier party” (Clare 2010: 980-981). Clare’s study is an important contribution to this area of research, as it decouples the institutional and the ideological dynamics of coalition decision-making. We believe, however, that the presence of junior parties affects foreign policy independently of political ideology. The hijacking potential that critical junior parties have should produce more extreme foreign policy behaviors.

Social psychological research highlights other ways that more extreme junior parties can influence coalition politics. A dominant explanation centers on the “group polarization” phenomenon, and the use of informational persuasion:

Group members with more radically polarized judgments and preferences invest more resources in attempts to exert influence and lead others....The more self-confident and assertive members of the group are very often capable of communicating expectations that eventually their position will prevail....These expectations may act as a powerful incentive for those who are undecided and are waiting for indications concerning which way the wind is blowing. Correctly or incorrectly, these members interpret assertiveness as a cue and throw in their support. This triggers a self-fulfilling prophecy resulting in majority support for the more polarized position (Vertzberger 1997: 284).

A junior partner with a more extreme foreign policy position provides an opportunity for polarization through persuasion. Even without any blackmail power, minority junior parties can persuade the majority by framing the problem in terms of socially shared constructions (see, for example, Moscovici 1976; De Vries and De Dreu 2001; Smith, Tindale, and Anderson, 2001).

2. Domestic Political Weakness

The second explanation of coalition cabinets' extreme behavior involves the domestic conditions these governments face. The political fragmentation, vulnerability, and uncertainty that produce coalition governments can compel these governments to use foreign policies for diversionary or legitimating purposes. According to Hagan (1993: 30-31), an "...unstable coalition may try to act on major foreign policy issues in order to demonstrate its ability to cope with policy crises and thereby achieve some legitimacy at home...." Prins and Sprecher (1999: 275) similarly argue: "...the relatively higher level of domestic uncertainty that surrounds coalition cabinets may...encourage greater risk-taking behavior." This logic is consistent with diversionary theories of conflict (Levy 1989). Brulé and Williams (2009) and Kisangani and Pickering (2009, 2011) point to diffuse accountability in coalition governments, noting that parties may be able to blame others for bad domestic conditions, and may not need to fall back on diversionary foreign policy. On the whole, however, these studies report mixed results. Brulé and Williams (2009) contend, for instance, that very weak coalitions may have limited recourse to address domestic strife, and subsequently use aggressive foreign policy for diversionary reasons.

Social psychological research offers a parallel explanation for the effects of domestic weakness on foreign policy extremity. According to Janis (1972), high stress from external threats and low self-esteem induced by recent failures creates an illusion of invulnerability, self-censorship, and pressure on dissenters. These conditions can polarize groups when its members initially concur on an extreme position and groupthink reinforces this choice. Coalition governments do not seem like plausible victims of groupthink, as their structure of competing political parties appears to promote a difference of opinions. (Blondel and Müller-Rommel 1993). Yet Metselaar

and Verbeek, in their study of Dutch foreign policymaking, argue that “...when the survival of the government is threatened and coalition partners estimate that the government’s downfall may produce serious negative electoral consequences or may otherwise harm party interests, they may engage in feverish consensus-seeking” (1997: 109). Furthermore, the desire for cohesion may drive the group into premature consensus-seeking without actual agreement on its political goals. Brown (2000) suggests that “maybe it is only when groups are desperately seeking to manufacture unity that they become prey to the concurrence seeking defects that Janis identified; having once achieved it, the pressure for unanimity will be more than outweighed by the security it provides to allow criticism and dissent” (2000: 219). Coalitions desire unanimity to continue to govern and may seek to manufacture policy unity, even if excessive consensus-seeking produces much more extreme foreign policy.

Although domestic political conditions can explain coalitions’ aggressive and conflictual behavior, they can also explain very cooperative foreign policy. Weaker coalitions—those that are more vulnerable to collapse from defections, challenges from the parliament, or by-elections that would further weaken them—seem more likely to engage in extreme behaviors.⁶

The strength of the coalition can also influence the specific direction of the cabinet’s policies. Political leaders may believe that highly conflictual policies bolster an otherwise weak government, as external conflict often produces a “rally-‘round-the-flag-effect.” The psychological dynamics of groupthink are also more typically associated with highly conflictual policy “fiascoes.” On the other hand, Palmer, London, and Regan (2004) argue that politically stronger cabinets face lower costs associated with the use of force. They find a significant positive relationship between the percentage of cabinet

⁶ Kisangani and Pickering (2011) make a similar argument for humanitarian/benevolent vs. political/strategic interventions.

controlled parliamentary seats and the likelihood that the country is involved in a dispute (but found no relationship to dispute escalation). Their study, however, compared all cabinets (single-party and coalitions) and did not analyze whether the parliamentary strength of the cabinet affects coalition decision-making. We expect weaker coalition cabinets to use extreme (and particularly conflictual) policies for diversionary purposes.

3. Diffusion of Accountability

The third explanation for coalitions' extreme behavior focuses on the diffuse accountability within these governments. It is difficult to hold multiple parties accountable for policy failures within a coalition. Prins and Sprecher (1999) argue that the inability to blame any single political actor gives coalitions more flexibility in foreign policy-making. They find that coalitions are more likely to reciprocate behavior in militarized disputes.⁷ Ironically, by this reasoning, the more veto-players in a coalition translates into a rather "constraint free" environment (Hagan 1993: 27).

The political diffusion argument has a parallel explanation in the social psychological concept of group polarization, wherein "...responsibility and accountability for consequences is diffused among group members. This reduces fear of failure, and thereby decision makers have incentives to make riskier decisions" (Vertzberger 1997: 281). Similarly, Vertzberger argues that "when decisions for others are made by a group, the tendency toward risk avoidance is less pronounced because failure can be shared with others so that anticipated personal responsibility would be reduced" (1997: 282). Thus for both psychological and political reasons, a greater

⁷ Note that as it is applied to diversionary use of force, accountability approaches expect the opposite: less accountable coalitions are less likely to use force since they can blame domestic problems on other parties (Brulé and Williams 2009; Kisangani and Pickering 2011). In this study, we separate diffusion and accountability issues. Regardless of domestic conditions, less accountable coalitions may feel more comfortable engaging in risky foreign policy.

number of parties in a cabinet can allow the government to engage in more extreme political behaviors.

Coalitions in parliamentary democracies come in many sizes, and those with four or five parties would presumably enjoy more flexibility due to diffused accountability than those with only two. Clare's 2010 study is most relevant here, as it includes the number of veto-players in a cabinet (those parties that are critical to maintaining a parliamentary majority), and found that cabinets with more parties were less likely to initiate disputes leading to fatalities. Clare did not find a significant relationship between the number of parties in a cabinet and dispute initiation. Brulé and Williams (2009) found that cabinets with more parties exhibited less aggressive behavior.⁸

Scholars use the diffusion argument to justify the expectation that coalitions are more conflictual, aggressive, and pursue policies that involve more risks. We argue that highly cooperative policies (and policies involving a high level of commitment) are also risky for governments. Cabinets with more parties find it safer to pursue riskier behavior, as the parliament and the general public cannot easily attribute policy failures to any single party or actor.

4. Logrolling

The fourth explanation for coalitions' extreme foreign policy also focuses on the number of actors within a coalition, but involves a different underlying mechanism. A greater number of parties in a coalition creates the potential for *logrolling*. Highly fragmented coalitions can resemble what Jack Snyder (1991) calls "cartelized systems," in which narrow, parochial interests are represented in the government. In these systems, decision-making proceeds by "logrolling" or "paper-clipping" several preferred options

⁸ Palmer, London and Regan (2004) examined whether or not there were multiple pivotal players in the cabinet (coded as a dichotomous variable) but not how many coalition partners, critical or otherwise, were present. The results from their analyses were mixed: the presence of multiple pivotal parties was slightly significantly and negatively related to dispute involvement, but not to dispute escalation.

together. Snyder argues that this process can lead a government into riskier decision-making, and eventually into overexpansion.

The logrolling explanation is very political in nature, and does not have a direct parallel in psychology, but some findings in comparative political economy are relevant. Bawn and Rosenbluth (2006) found that more parties in a cabinet correlate with higher levels of government spending. They suggest this is because "...coalitions of many parties will strike less efficient bargains than those composed of fewer parties. The less efficient bargains imply a larger public sector, other things being equal, as the number of parties in government increases" (Bawn and Rosenbluth 2006: 251). The logrolling effect is, according to Blais, Kim and Foucault (2010), the "standard view" in the literature on public spending, although there are alternative theoretical viewpoints and mixed empirical findings (Sakamoto 2001). Thus the logrolling dynamic is another explanation of extreme decision-making. Given Snyder's argument about government "overexpansion," we expect this extreme behavior to lean more in the direction of conflict than cooperation.

Summary

From this review of four theoretical explanations for coalitions' extreme foreign policy, we derive four hypotheses. We present these in Table 1, which also summarizes their underlying mechanisms.

--TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE--

Research Design

The study assesses various theoretical explanations for extreme behavior by examining the characteristics of coalition governments and their effects on foreign policy. We then investigate some of these characteristics across single-party and

coalition governments. For our statistical analysis we use a subset of the World Event/Interaction Survey (WEIS), which McClelland (1976) developed and Tomlinson updated (1993). The WEIS dataset catalogues the actions of all major international players in “newsworthy” events from 1966 to 1991. For each event, WEIS identifies the actor (originator of the action), the type of action, the target of the action, and the arena or situational/episodic context in which the event occurred. Actions include both verbal acts (i.e., statements of policy support and threats) and non-verbal acts (i.e., grants of aid and military clashes).

The actors selected from this dataset are the major parliamentary democracies, including governments not only in Western European states, but also those in North America, Oceania, Southeast Asia, and the Middle East. For each actor in the WEIS dataset that was a parliamentary democracy, we consulted Woldendorp, Keman, and Budge’s (2000) *Party Government in 48 Democracies (1945-1998)* to determine if the cabinet was a coalition at the time of the event. Coalitions are cabinets that formally contain at least two independent political parties. Minority cabinets that only include one party, but which relied on the support of other parties in parliament, are considered single-party governments. Likewise, cabinets in which all the parties have permanent electoral alliances are considered to be single-party cabinets. Our analyses include over 23,000 events, from 1966 to 1989.⁹ The countries and the total number of events by cabinet type for each country are listed in Table 2.

We include three dependent variables to examine the effects of cabinet characteristics on international behavior: (i) the level of cooperation/conflict in the

⁹ Events that were domestic actions (‘domestic event codes’) and events that were comments that are not translated into the Goldstein scale (i.e. pessimistic and optimistic comments) were not included in the analysis. There were seven events under one cabinet (in 1979 in India) for which the Woldendorp, Keman, and Budge (2000) source did not report the number of parliamentary seats controlled by cabinet and were excluded. Malta had only three events from one government, and was thus excluded from the analyses. Because of extensive missing WEIS data for 1990 and 1991, this study does not include these years in the analysis.

actor's behavior; (ii) the extremity of the actor's behavior; and (iii) the level of commitment in the actor's behavior. The level of cooperation/conflict in the actor's behavior is captured by Goldstein's (1992) widely used conflict-cooperation scale, which ranges from -10 indicating the highest levels of conflict to +10 indicating the highest levels of cooperation. We refer to this variable throughout as cooperation/conflict. We also used the cooperation/conflict scale to assess the extremity of the actors' behavior; the scale was folded at the midpoint by using the absolute value of the cooperation/conflict scale to create a new scale ranging from 0 (moderate) to 10 (extreme). To assess the level of commitment in the actor's behavior, we categorized actions as low commitment (verbal behavior) and high commitment (non-verbal behavior).¹⁰ We view the extremity and commitment variables as different indicators of high profile, riskier behaviors. Both of these variables tap the riskier nature of the foreign policy but do not communicate anything about its substance or particular direction (i.e., how cooperative or conflictual the foreign policy is).¹¹

-- TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE --

The independent variables in our first set of analyses correspond to the four explanations of extreme coalition behavior – *hijacking*, *weakness*, *diffusion*, and *logrolling* (see Table 1 for specific hypotheses). To assess the potential for hijacking by a junior party (any coalition party that is not the largest party in the coalition), we coded each cabinet for the presence of a critical junior party.¹² Critical junior parties are defined as any party in minority coalitions, and as any party with enough parliamentary

¹⁰ The following action categories were coded as low commitment: comment, consult, approve, promise, agree, request, propose, reject, accuse, protest, deny, demand, warn, threaten. The action categories coded as high commitment were: yield, grant, reward, demonstrate, reduce relations, expel, seize, force. See East (1973: 569) for a similar connection between level of commitment and verbal/nonverbal behavior.

¹¹ The variables commitment and extremity of behavior are correlated (Pearson $r = .59$, $p < .01$) but are not identical, nor are they linearly related. Very extreme behaviors are always non-verbal in nature, and very moderate behaviors are always verbal in nature. Behaviors in the mid-range of the extremity scale are mixed between verbal and non-verbal acts.

¹² We used Woldendorp, Keman, and Budge (2000) as the source used to determine if the coalition included a critical junior party.

seats in a majority coalition that its defection would mean the loss of a parliamentary majority for the cabinet. Consistent with the possibility of hijacking foreign policy, we hypothesize that the presence of a critical junior party will result in more extreme and more committed behaviors. Given that we do not include the substantive or ideological positions of the junior party, we make no prediction on the direction of extremity (i.e., cooperative or conflictual).

We use two related but distinct variables to assess the proposition that the weakness of coalitions propels them toward extremity. First, we coded each coalition cabinet for its level of parliamentary support. This is simply the percentage of parliamentary seats controlled by all parties formally in the cabinet.¹³ Our second indicator of weakness is the majority/minority status of the coalition. For this we use a standard dichotomous classification: a majority coalition is comprised of parties that together have more than half of the total parliamentary seats (50%+1 seat). We hypothesize that as parliamentary support decreases, coalition behavior will become more extreme and more committed, since weaker coalition cabinets have more reason to engage in high-profile behavior. We also expect that as parliamentary support decreases, coalitions will engage in more conflictual behavior, since this creates a diversion from the government's domestic weakness. Similarly, we hypothesize that minority coalitions will be more extreme and more committed in their foreign policy behaviors, and will engage in more conflictual behaviors than majority coalitions.¹⁴

We assess the third and fourth explanations (diffusion of accountability and logrolling) by coding the cabinets for the number of parties that are formally part of the

¹³ We use Woldendorp, Keman, and Budge (2000) as the source to code the parliamentary strength variable.

¹⁴ Looking at both coalition and single party cabinets, Brulé and Williams (2009, p.787) conclude "minority executives appear to have a greater propensity than majority executives to turn to the international arena to demonstrate their leadership competence in response to deteriorating economic conditions." Kisangani and Pickering (2011) had similar results. For a general comparison of minority and majority governments, see Strøm (1990).

coalition.¹⁵ The number of parties in the coalitions included in this analysis ranged from two to five.¹⁶ Because cabinets with more parties are less accountable for risky decisions and because more parties may engage in logrolling, we hypothesize that coalitions with more parties will act in more extreme and more committed ways. Because less accountability and logrolling have been associated with militarized action and expansion, we also expect that more parties will engage in more conflictual behaviors.

We run separate linear regression models for both the cooperation/conflict and the extremity dependent variables. For the dichotomous dependent variable *commitment*, all analyses use logistic regression. Each model includes all three independent variables (number of parties, parliamentary strength, and presence of a critical junior party). Recognizing that other factors have clear effects on foreign policy, we include control variables to isolate the effect of cabinet characteristics on behavior.¹⁷ For each analysis of the three dependent variables, we include the actor's power score at the time of the event, using the Composite Indicator of National Capability (CINC) from the Correlates of War National Military Capabilities dataset (Version 3.0) (Singer, Bremer, and Stuckey 1972; Singer 1987). We expect that countries' levels of cooperation/conflict, extremity, and commitment reflect their national government's power, regardless of the characteristics of the cabinet (East 1973).

When examining the level of conflict/cooperation in the dependent variable, we include an additional control variable indicating whether the target of the action was

¹⁵ We use Woldendorp, Keman, and Budge (2000) as the source for the number of cabinet parties.

¹⁶ All but one of the 2691 events for coalitions with more than five parties were for Israel, making the inclusion of such coalitions statistically problematic. Thus, all analyses were restricted to countries with five or fewer parties. Removing these events is a more conservative test, working against our hypotheses, as the six and seven party cabinets in Israel were also the most conflictual and extreme in our dataset.

¹⁷ Many studies, particularly those looking at conflict behavior and dispute escalation, have demonstrated the importance of interaction and reciprocity in dyads. Although some studies using WEIS have examined dyads and reciprocity, these studies are limited to very few states (cf. Derouen and Sprecher 2006). We do not include the effect of prior events in our analysis due to the difficulty of isolating many initiating events, as well as our uneven ability to do this across the countries in our study. Examining the state-state dyadic interactions available in the WEIS dataset would have produced narrow analyses across a limited number of countries and institutional configurations.

democratic (all actors in the analysis are democratic). This control variable accounts for findings in the democratic peace literature on dyadic state behavior. We use the Polity IV data set (Marshall and Jaggers 2002) to code whether the target, if another state, is a democracy. Not all of the targets of the actions are states. All non-state actors are not coded for this control variable and these events are not included in the analysis of cooperation/conflict behavior. We code states with a democracy score of greater than seven as democratic. We expect that countries will be more cooperative toward the target if it is democratic, regardless of the characteristics of the cabinet.

We weight the data to address the problem that particular countries dominate the dataset. Specifically, Israel (as the actor in over 53% of the events) and West Germany (as the actor in over 23% of the events) together constitute more than 76% of the data for coalitions. These two countries have a disproportionate influence on any un-weighted analyses. Furthermore, Israel, with the highest percentage of events, engages in the most conflictual behavior of these coalition cabinets and exhibits very high levels of extremity and high-commitment behaviors. To address this distortion, we weight the cases so that all countries' events are equal in the analysis (Kaarbo and Beasley 2008). We weight each country's events to the mean number of events across countries. This ensures that no country is disproportionately represented in the data and the total number of events is preserved.¹⁸

Comparing Coalitions: Results & Discussion

Table 3 reports the results from the regression analyses. The presence of a critical junior party in coalitions is significantly related to levels of cooperation/conflict, extremity, and commitment, although not as our hypotheses predicted. *Coalitions with*

¹⁸ Controlling for the effect of country using dummy variables is problematic, as several countries have no or very little variation in number of parties or in cabinet type (single party or coalition).

critical junior parties are more cooperative, less extreme, and less committed in their behaviors than coalitions without critical junior parties. The presence of critical junior parties does not appear to promote more extreme foreign policy for coalition governments, as we hypothesized. These results suggest that such parties do not blackmail, hijack, or polarize through persuasion to push the cabinet toward highly extreme and committed behaviors, but instead may act as moderating forces. In addition, although we made no prediction on the cooperative-conflictual direction of critical junior parties' influence, their presence in a coalition correlates with more cooperative behavior. These results are consistent with the democratic peace research, as multiple actors are expected to constrain governments to cooperate.

-- TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE --

Parliamentary strength is also significantly related to cooperation/conflict, extremity, and commitment in these data. Two of the relationships are in the direction we hypothesized. Foreign policy behavior becomes more conflictual as parliamentary strength declines: the weaker the coalition (as measured by parliamentary strength), the more conflictual the behavior. Similarly, foreign policy behavior becomes more extreme when coalition governments hold proportionally fewer seats in their parliaments. Both of these findings are consistent with the diversionary argument: weakness prompts behaviors designed to bolster legitimacy and to redirect attention from political fragility. Interestingly, weakness as measured by the majority/minority status is not significantly related to levels of cooperation or extremity for coalitions. This may suggest an important but independent role for parliamentary strength in coalitions' foreign policy extremity. Our analysis does not support the notion that minority coalitions are particularly vulnerable and thus prone to diversionary behaviors. Rather, the overall

level of parliamentary support may be the more important consideration with regard to the weakness of a regime and its impact on diversionary behavior.

Contrary to our expectation, however, *stronger coalitions are more committed*. This is the case for both the parliamentary strength variable and the majority/minority status variable. This is puzzling, since we expected parliamentary strength to act similarly for extremity and commitment; we predicted stronger coalitions to be more extreme and more committed. Furthermore, extremity and commitment are themselves significantly related, but not identical (Pearson $r = .59$, $p < .01$), suggesting the possibility of an interaction. We examined the commitment data across different levels of parliamentary strength and extremity and found a statistically significant interaction. As coalitions get stronger, verbal acts are less extreme. For material behaviors, the relationship is non-linear: material acts for weaker governments and for very strong governments are not as extreme as material acts committed by moderately strong coalitions. We observed the same pattern of interactions for different levels of cooperation/conflict. Overall, our findings suggest that parliamentary strength is a factor in discerning coalitions' foreign policy behaviors, and thus the diversionary logic may be crucial for explaining the more extreme policies of coalitions.

Our third coalition cabinet characteristic, the number of parties in the coalition, is also significantly related to cooperation/conflict. As predicted, *coalitions with more parties are more conflictual*. Our results with regard to number of parties, however, do not support our hypotheses regarding extremity and commitment. These results are consistent with the diffusion of accountability and the logrolling explanations, but only with regard to conflictual behavior. More parties in the cabinet may take riskier and more conflictual decisions because they feel they are less responsible for any policy failures. Alternatively, more parties may engage in logrolling many of their own

interests, and conflictual policies that benefit each party's narrow interests might not be checked by a general, diffuse interest.

Single Parties and Coalitions: Results & Discussion

The characteristics of coalitions shed considerable light on their extreme behavior, but the pattern of our results was unexpected in many ways. Three of these characteristics – parliamentary strength, majority/minority status, and number of parties – can be analyzed for single-party governments as well.¹⁹ This provides a sharper picture of the distinguishing characteristics of single-party and coalition decision units. We proceed with the same data based on the same sources, operational definitions, relevant control variables, and procedures for weighting. The first analysis (Model 1 in Table 4) combines all cabinets and examines the effects of cabinet type (single-party or coalition), parliamentary strength, and majority/minority status.²⁰ The number of parties variable cannot be included in this analysis, due to the very high correlation between cabinet type and number of parties (Pearson $r = .8$, $p < .001$). Hence we include it in a separate analysis (Model 4).

--TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE--

Cabinet type is significantly related to cooperation/conflict and extremity, with coalitions behaving more cooperatively and more extremely than single-party cabinets. These results replicate our earlier findings (Kaarbo and Beasley 2008). As with the analysis of coalitions alone, we find that parliamentary strength is significantly related to cooperation/conflict, extremity, and commitment. Contrary to the coalitions-only

¹⁹ The presence of critical junior parties cannot apply to single party cabinets since, by definition, they do not include any junior parties. This variable is thus not included in any subsequent analyses.

²⁰ Parliamentary support and majority/minority status are positively correlated (Pearson $r = .537$). We utilize Variance-Inflation Factor (VIF) to determine possible problems with co-linearity. All VIF values were below 2.0 in all main-effects models and below 8.0 in models with interaction terms, thus indicating no co-linearity concerns (Chatterjee, Hadi, and Price 2000).

analysis, however, these results show that stronger cabinets are more conflictual and more extreme. Similar to the coalitions-only results, however, stronger cabinets are more committed in their behaviors. Majority/minority status (our other indicator of weakness) is not significantly related to cooperation/conflict, but is significantly related to commitment in the same direction as parliamentary strength. Majority/minority status is related to extremity in this analysis, although at a low threshold of statistical significance ($p < .1$) and in the opposite direction of parliamentary strength. Therefore, majority cabinets are more cooperative than minority cabinets in this analysis.

Although these starkly different findings in the second analysis could be attributed to the structure of their respective statistical models (i.e., the second analysis excludes critical junior parties and the number of parties), we note that a more likely explanation lies in the interaction between parliamentary strength and cabinet type. Model 2 in Table 4 presents the results of the regression analyses with the interaction of cabinet type and parliamentary strength. The interaction is indeed significant: parliamentary strength has a different relationship with both cooperation/conflict and extremity depending on whether the cabinet was a coalition or a single party. This pattern of results also holds for the interaction between majority/minority status and cabinet type, as presented in Model 3 in Table 4.

Separate linear regressions for single party governments and coalitions confirm the nature of the interaction. For single party governments, parliamentary strength is negatively related to cooperation (unstandardized coefficient = $-1.633 (.752)$; $p < .05$) and positively related to extremity ($2.502 (.392)$; $p < .01$), whereas the results are opposite for coalitions (cooperation/conflict: $2.043 (.439)$, $p < .01$; extremity: $-.897 (.231)$, $p < .01$). For coalitions, majority/minority status is unrelated to both cooperation/conflict ($.070 (.134)$, ns) and extremity ($.024 (.072)$, ns), but for single parties, majorities are more

conflictual (-.360 (.132), $p < .01$) but less extreme (-.380 (.071), $p < .01$) than minorities. In sum, the effect of weakness on cooperation/conflict and extremity is different for single-party governments than for coalitions. *Weakness (as measured by parliamentary strength) results in less extreme and more cooperative behavior in single-party governments, but more extreme and more conflictual behavior in coalitions. Weakness in the form of a minority government results in more conflictual but less extreme behavior for single-party governments, and has no effect on coalitions.*²¹

These results suggest that government weakness, as measured by parliamentary strength, operates very differently for single-party and multi-party cabinets. Single-party governments with weaker parliamentary support may be less confident, less willing to take risks, and less able to mobilize resources, pushing them to engage in less extreme and aggressive behaviors. Conversely, coalitions with weaker parliamentary support may seek to divert attention from their relatively vulnerable position by engaging in more aggressive and extreme behaviors. If so, the diversionary logic applies only to coalition governments and not to single-party governments.

The other cabinet characteristic we examine is the number of parties in the government across both single-party and coalition governments. Model 4 in Table 4 presents the results of this analysis, again including parliamentary strength and majority/minority status (to isolate the effect of number of parties). These results show that the number of parties is also a significant predictor of commitment and extremity. *The presence of more parties increases the probability of high-commitment foreign policies. Similarly, as the number of parties increases, there is an associated increase in*

²¹ Unfortunately, running an interaction for majority/minority status and parliamentary strength is statistically problematic, in part due to co-linearity between the two variables as an interaction term, and in part due to the uneven distribution of minority governments across both country and coalition/single-party status. Running separate regressions for majority and minority governments is also untenable due to the small number of events for minority coalitions across several countries.

extremity. Thus the number of parties is related in similar ways for extremity and commitment, consistent with the diffusion of accountability and logrolling explanations.

The relationship between the number of parties and cooperation/conflict, however, is not significant. Unlike the coalitions-only results, cabinets with more parties are not necessarily more conflictual. Because of these different results for the number of parties across all cabinets, we examined the shape of the relationships by looking at the weighted means.²² Figure 1 shows the non-linear relationship between the number of parties and cooperation/conflict (unadjusted weighted means). *Coalitions with two parties are more cooperative than single party governments, but three- and four-party coalitions are more conflictual, and five-party coalitions look similar to two-party coalitions in their level of cooperation/conflict.* Figure 2 shows a non-linear relationship between the number of parties and extremity (unadjusted weighted means). *Cabinets with three and four parties are more extreme, on average, than one and two party cabinets; five party cabinets are the most moderate, on average.* Overall, this indicates that different logics may be operating for different types of cabinets. These patterns also suggest that the difference between single-party cabinets and coalitions is not a dichotomous distinction (either single-party *or* multi-party), but rather that differences are being driven by larger coalitions and that single-party and two-party cabinets may be more similar than different. Brulé and Williams (2009) present similar results, finding that governments with one and two parties have the opposite effect on diversionary behavior than governments with three or more parties.

--FIGURES 1 & 2 ABOUT HERE --

²² An analysis for interaction between number of parties and cabinet type is not possible, since all cabinets with 1 party are also single-party cabinets.

Conclusion

The results of this study (summarized in Table 5) offer compelling insights into the institutional characteristics that distinguish the foreign policy behaviors of coalition and single-party governments. All three characteristics examined in this study – the presence of a critical junior party, parliamentary strength, and number of parties in the cabinet – predict various aspects of these countries’ foreign policy behaviors. Countries ruled by coalitions with weak parliamentary support behave differently than those ruled by coalitions with strong support. Coalitions with fewer parties will likely behave differently than those with many coalition partners. Coalitions with critical junior parties act differently than those without. Importantly, by examining extremity, we isolate the institutional and psychological effects of coalitions on foreign policy independent of actors’ policy positions. Even without knowing the content of a policy (i.e., whether it is cooperative or conflictual), our results show that cabinet characteristics influence the foreign policy of parliamentary democracies. This could explain the mixed results of previous research on the relationship between institutional characteristics and conflict behavior.

-- TABLE 5 ABOUT HERE --

These findings challenge the logic of how institutions affect democratic peace. Institutional constraints that presumably produce peaceful behavior, such as multiple voices in a cabinet, are actually related to more conflictual behavior in our study. The number of potential veto-players in a coalition also does not correlate with foreign policy in the direction that democratic peace theory predicts: in coalitions, more parties are associated with more conflictual and committed behaviors. The presence of a critical junior party, on the other hand, does seem to constrain coalitions towards more

cooperative behaviors. Institutional and psychological dynamics appear to be operating within coalitions that distinguish these types of governments from single-party cabinets.

In particular, our results suggest that coalitions with weak parliamentary support engage in diversionary tactics, whereas similarly weak single-party cabinets do not. Since our study does not include measures of domestic conditions that could motivate diversionary foreign policy, we can only speculate on this observed relationship. The traditional logic states that coalitions are more politically vulnerable than single-party governments. Weak parliamentary support is then a “compounded weakness”, compelling coalitions to divert domestic attention by engaging in higher-profile foreign policy behavior. Single-party governments, on the other hand, do not experience this additional level of structural weakness. This can explain why majority/minority status had no independent effect on coalitions for cooperation/conflict or extremity in our analyses. Perhaps minority status could not amplify the “compounded weakness” of coalition governments further, as even a relatively strong minority government has rather weak parliamentary support (50% or less). Unfortunately, the difficulty of examining the interaction between majority/minority status and parliamentary strength limited our ability to investigate this with our data. Nevertheless, the observed interactions are intriguing, suggesting that different mechanisms may be at work.

More research is also needed to clarify and verify the apparent non-linear relationship between number of parties and foreign policy behaviors. In our analysis, the difference between one- and two-party cabinets and three- and four-party cabinets is unclear, and there is no obvious theoretical rationale to explain this difference. Psychological research has encountered a similar puzzle. A recent review of research on the effects of diversity on work groups suggests that there may be curvilinear relationships between diversity and work performance—i.e., only moderate diversity

produces greater performance—but the reasons for this relationship require additional investigation (van Knippenberg and Schippers 2007).

In investigations into the foundations of democratic peace, scholars have attempted to isolate the normative, social, and institutional aspects of democracies that pacify their international behavior. There is now growing empirical consensus that the institutional features of coalition governments systematically influence their foreign policies. By dissecting these dynamics, our study offers additional insight into the political and social psychological mechanisms by which institutional characteristics can (or cannot) constrain foreign policy.

This study moves the research on institutional effects closer to the decision-making process by identifying cabinet characteristics that highlight both political and psychological explanations of extreme foreign policy. Decision-making dynamics in cabinets are foundational to these explanations. These aggregate analyses, however, cannot examine the exact decision making mechanisms at work. For example, although our results suggest that diversionary tactics can explain the more extreme behavior of coalitions, we do not have direct evidence that this dynamic actually creates the extremity. We are also unable to distinguish the logrolling explanation from the diffusion of accountability explanation with these data.

We need to know much more about how coalitions choose particular foreign policies to understand the dynamics that various cabinet characteristics produce. A case study approach that traces the process of decision-making in cabinet governments may be the best strategy for further investigation. We also need to know more about the decision-making process to understand the relative importance of institutional and psychological factors.

Coalition are distinct from other forms of government in many ways, but the prevailing view of them as misfits prone to limitations imposed by instability and deadlock belies their complex dynamics and the important foreign policies they generate. Conflating institutional complexities with excessive constraints neglects the stories coalitions can tell us about democratic structures and foreign policy decision making. This is particularly important, as coalitions appear likely to be an increasingly common actor on the international stage. As Bejar, Mukherjee and Moore (2011) observe, coalition governments are growing in frequency around the world and are now the most common form of government. Understanding the dynamics shaping their creation and conduct of foreign policy is of central concern.

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Table 1. Explanations of Extreme Foreign Policy in Coalitions

<i>Hypothesis</i>	<i>Underlying Mechanism</i>
The presence of a critical junior party will result in more extreme and committed behaviors	blackmail by extreme junior parties; persuasion by assertive members
Weaker coalitions will engage in more extreme, committed, and conflictual behaviors	diversion and stress from domestic weakness and uncertainty
More political parties within coalitions will result in more extreme, committed, and conflictual behaviors	diffusion of accountability and responsibility; logrolling

Table 2. Countries and Cabinet Types, 1966-1989

<i>Actor</i>	<i># of Events With Single Party Cabinets</i>	<i># of Events with Coalition Cabinets</i>	<i>Total</i>
Australia	281	286	567
Austria	192	48	240
Belgium	0	289	289
Canada	1158	0	1158
Denmark	93	73	166
West Germany	14	2907	2921
Greece	547	0	547
Iceland	0	137	137
India	1759	0	1759
Ireland	176	109	285
Israel	0	6526	6526
Italy	105	799	904
Japan	1674	171	1845
Luxembourg	0	38	38
Netherlands	0	317	317
New Zealand	271	0	271
Norway	101	104	205
Spain	256	0	256
Sweden	326	45	371
Turkey	332	408	740
United Kingdom	3896	0	3896
Total	11,181 (48%)	12,257 (52%)	23,438

Table 3. Coalition Cabinet Characteristics and Foreign Policy Behavior

	<i>Cooperation/Conflict</i>	<i>Extremity</i>	<i>Commitment</i>
Critical Junior Party	1.345 (.155)***	-0.395 (.081)***	-0.386 (.085)***
Parliamentary Strength	2.557 (.440)***	-1.014 (.232)***	0.960 (.242)***
Majority Government	0.096 (.134)	0.002 (.072)	0.302 (.076)***
Number of Coalition Parties	-0.138 (.043)***	0.004 (.023)	0.034 (.025)
Actor Power	56.432 (3.554)***	-23.943 (1.891)***	-27.096 (2.276)***
Democratic Target	0.533 (.080)***	-----	-----
(Constant)	-3.284 (.315)***	3.873 (.164)***	-1.464 (.194)***
N	8849	12,257	12,257

(Notes: Critical Junior Party is a dichotomous variable (1=there was a critical party; 0=none of the junior parties were critical). Majority Government is a dichotomous variable (0=minority government; 1=majority government). The number of events for the cooperation/conflict analysis is lower due to the exclusion of events with non-state actor targets. Reported here are the unstandardized coefficients from the regression analysis, with two-tailed tests (logit analysis for the commitment variable). Numbers in parentheses are the standard errors. Asterisks indicate significance levels: *** $p < .01$, ** $p < .05$, * $p < .10$).

Table 4. Weakness and Accountability and Foreign Policy Behavior (Coalitions and Single Party Cabinets)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
<i>Cooperation/Conflict</i>				
Cabinet Type	0.153 (.060)**	0.173 (.060)***	-0.414 (.138)***	
Parliamentary Strength	-1.563 (.397)***	-4.33 (.566)***	-1.55(.396)***	-1.389 (.396)***
Majority Government	0.125 (.092)	0.294 (.095)***	-0.126 (.107)	0.132 (.092)
Number of Parties				-0.002 (.026)
Strength X Cabinet Type		4.488 (.656)***		
Maj/Min X Cabinet Type			0.697 (.153)***	
Actor Power	20.276 (1.859)***	24.087 (1.938)***	21.554 (1.879)***	18.961 (1.845)***
Democratic Target	0.225 (.058)***	0.246 (.058)***	0.227 (.058)***	0.221 (.058)***
(Constant)	0.197 (.184)	1.491 (.263)***	0.359 (.187)*	0.187 (.185)
N	17,059	17,059	17,059	17,059
<i>Extremity</i>				
Cabinet Type	0.101 (.032)***	0.091 (.032)***	0.306 (.073)***	
Parliamentary Strength	1.324 (.209)***	2.902 (.299)***	1.328 (.209)***	1.322(.209)***
Majority Government	-0.088 (.049)*	-0.191 (.051)***	0.001 (.057)	-0.082 (.049)*
Number of Parties				0.049 (.014)***
Strength X Cabinet Type		-2.527 (.343)***		
Maj/Min X Cabinet Type			-0.255 (.082)***	
Actor Power	-4.945 (1.012)***	-7.069 (1.051)***	-5.484 (1.027)***	-4.967 (1.002)***
(Constant)	1.964 (.093)***	1.231 (.136)***	1.905 (.095)***	1.917 (.094)***
N	23,438	23,438	23,438	23,438
<i>Commitment</i>				
Cabinet Type	0.055 (.036)	-0.272 (.210)	-0.057 (.040)	
Parliamentary Strength	1.147 (.228)***	1.013 (.262)***	1.146 (.228)***	1.061 (.227)***
Majority Government	0.268 (.053)***	.285 (.056)***	0.261 (.079)***	0.265 (.053)***
Number of Parties				0.058 (.015)***
Strength X Cabinet Type		0.396 (.377)		
Maj/Min X Cab Type			0.010 (.089)	
Actor Power	-10.558 (1.228)***	-10.903 (1.271)***	-10.533 (1.245)***	-10.060 (1.22)***
(Constant)	-2.086 (.131)***	-1.954 (.156)***	-2.030 (.138)***	-2.128 (.132)***
N	23,438	23,438	23,438	23,438

(Notes: The number of events for the cooperation/conflict analysis is lower due to the exclusion of events with non-state actor targets. Reported here are the unstandardized coefficients from the regression analysis (logit analysis for the commitment variable), with two-tailed tests. Cabinet type is coded 0=single party, 1=coalition. Majority Government and Maj/Min Status are coded 0=minority government, 1=majority. Numbers in parentheses are the standard errors. The interactions were performed using mean-centered values to address potential co-linearity. Asterisks indicate significance levels: *** $p < .01$, ** $p < .05$, * $p < .10$).

Table 5. Unpacking the Distinctiveness of Coalitions: Summary of Key Findings

<i>Cabinet Characteristic</i>	<i>Foreign Policy</i>	<i>Underlying Logic</i>
Critical Junior Parties in Coalitions	Cooperative, Moderate, Low Commitment	Democratic Peace
Parliamentary Strength Weaker Coalitions	Conflictual, Extreme	Diversionsary
Stronger Single Party	Conflictual, Extreme, Committed	Resources/Support/ Confidence
Number of Parties More Parties In Coalitions	Conflictual, Committed	Diffusion of Accountability/ Logrolling
More Parties Across Cabinets	Non-Linear Relationships	Different Logics Operative for 1- & 2 -vs. 3- & 4-party Cabinets