

# **Pre-electoral coalitions and cabinet stability in presidential systems**

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## **Abstract**

Previous research on coalition stability in presidential systems has relied to a substantial extent on the parliamentary literature. By focusing on the post-electoral bargaining environment, these approaches have neglected the key role played by pre-electoral agreements formed around the winning presidential candidate in the making and breaking of coalitions under presidentialism. We claim that cabinets derived from pre-electoral coalition (PEC) should foster trust and reduce uncertainty regarding partners' future behavior. However, the positive effect of PECs over cabinet duration is conditional on cabinet status, that is the control of a legislative majority or near majority. Therefore, we argue that PEC cabinets holding a majority or near majority of seats will be more durable than purely post-electoral majority coalitions, whereas minority PEC cabinets congruent should endure less than minority post-electoral coalition cabinets. We test these hypotheses using a data set of pre- and post-electoral coalitions in eleven Latin American countries.

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Extant comparative research has typically assumed that government coalitions in presidential systems are mainly produced through a post-electoral agreement whose objective is to confer a majority to a president that could not be obtained in the election. Accordingly, office-seeking particularistic parties should have few incentives to form pre-electoral coalitions (hereafter PEC) since presidential candidates can only distribute cabinet posts if they win (Kellam, 2015). However, this understanding is hard to reconcile with the fact that government coalitions frequently emerge from pre-electoral agreements between the winning presidential candidate and one or more parties (Carroll and Cox, 2007; Albala 2020). In this sense, the coalition building process is rather proactive and constitutes the materialization of a political strategy.

Although PECs are fairly common in multiparty presidential countries, there is a paucity of research on the causes and implications of these electoral alliances. In particular, we still know very little about the effects of pre-electoral bargainings on cabinet stability. Research on coalition survival in presidential systems has relied, mostly, on analytical models adapted from the parliamentary literature. These studies have typically focused on explanatory factors pertaining to the post-electoral bargaining environment, such as presidential legislative powers, levels of legislative polarization and fragmentation and exogenous economic shocks (Kellam, 2015a; Martínez-Gallardo, 2012). Hence, while some studies from parliamentary regimes dealing with the impact of timing over coalition stability have arisen recently (Chiru, 2015; Debus, 2009), scholars working on coalition under presidentialism have mostly neglected the timing question, with few exceptions (Borges et al. 2020; Albala, 2020; Carroll, 2007; Freudenreich, 2016). We argue here that this is a serious theoretical and empirical gap, to the extent that pre-electoral bargaining not only shapes government formation in multiparty settings, but also significantly determines the odds of cabinet survival.

As a matter of fact, the popular election of the national executive is an ultra-majority race that creates very strong incentives to form electoral alliances. In multiparty systems with a large number of medium-sized parties, the absence of coordination between party elites might produce an excessive number of presidential candidates. Thus, parties with the most competitive candidates have incentives to seek the support of other parties to increase their chances of victory. Compensations to electoral rally may involve support in simultaneous elections for Congress and subnational offices, changes in the party's program to incorporate allies' proposals, and -more generally- portfolio distributions in case of victory (Borges and Turgeon, 2019; Carroll, 2007; Freudenreich, 2016; Kellam, 2015b).

Pre-electoral bargaining implies that the electoral success of allied parties (and the ensuing vote, office and policy benefits) will be tied to that of the winning presidential candidate to some extent. Moreover, because PECs entail cooperation among parties during the campaign, there is a higher likelihood that each coalition member will develop a mutual understanding of the needs and priorities of their partners once in government (Chiru, 2015). To the extent that PEC parties benefit from electoral

and policy concessions, and cooperate with the presidential candidate, they tend to be more loyal and reliable allies than any other potential coalition partner in the post-election period.

Consequently, we argue that presidential coalition cabinets that derived from an electoral alliance will be more consistent, cohesive and thus more stable than those predominantly formed after the election (Chiru, 2015; Debus, 2009). However, these effects are shaped by post-election coalition status. When PEC parties form a minimum winning coalition or when they control a share of legislative seats close to a majority, the incentives for keeping the original pre-electoral agreement will be high. In these settings, presidents can approve bills by relying on the support of the pre-electoral coalition and/or negotiating additional legislative support on a case-by-case basis. Therefore, (H1) the greater the congruence between the cabinet and a pre-electoral coalition, the lower the odds of termination for near-majority and minimum winning coalition cabinets.

On the other hand, when PEC parties form oversized coalitions, the incentives to reward every PEC member with cabinet positions and keep the coalition together will be much lower, because one or few partners would be unnecessary for passing bills. Thus, (H2), we do not expect similarity between the cabinet and the PEC to have a relevant effect on cabinet stability for oversized coalitions.

Finally, when the winning pre-electoral coalition is unable to obtain a legislative majority (or a near majority), the president-elect will often seek to enlarge the coalition by inviting additional parties. Minority PEC cabinets will often emerge as a consequence of the failure - or ideological impossibility- of post-electoral negotiations to obtain a majority or the support of the crucial median legislator, leading to additional bargaining rounds. For these reasons, minority government coalitions composed mostly or solely of PEC parties tend to occur less often and, when they form, they will usually constitute a less stable bargaining equilibrium than minority coalitions formed after the election, which usually emerge in a less uncertain context. In sum, when the cabinet coalition is clearly in minority, we expect congruence between the cabinet and the pre-electoral coalition to decrease the odds of cabinet survival (H3)

We test these hypotheses using a data set of 133 cabinet coalitions in eleven Latin American countries. Our results show that similarity between pre- and post-electoral coalitions, in combination with coalition status, is a very strong predictor coalition survival. These findings constitute an important contribution to the comparative literature since they bring in an innovative and much more accurate account of coalition building and survival under presidentialism.

### **Pre-electoral coalitions in presidential systems**

This article focuses on the inception of coalition cabinets and the potential consequences of early-crafted agreements for government stability. In doing so, we follow common conceptual considerations, defining a coalition cabinet as that formed by different political forces, each counting on the corresponding support of all the respective members of congress (Cheibub et al., 2004; Strom, 1990). Thus, this conception excludes governments whose allies consist of co-opted or independent ministers.

We define pre-electoral coalitions as those formalized before election-day. These are the result of a public agreement between two or more parties that have consented to share their economic, organizational, and logistical resources to run together in an upcoming election (Golder, 2006, p. 12). This kind of coordination may encompass various aspects (including a “united electoral front” and “common candidate,” among others) according to varying binding levels (Albala, 2020).

These agreements should not be considered as merely static and exclusive. Indeed, some coalition agreements may have been conceived before an election, but had to accommodate new members in post-electoral bargaining. For instance, the inclusion of a new member into an existing “core” alliance can occur when the original alliance is unable to reach a legislative majority. This scenario implies a re-opening of the bargaining process, the length and difficulty of which depends on the political strength of the newcomer.

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

The extant literature highlights two particular characteristics of presidential systems, that are of particular relevance for our purpose. First, the direct election of the head of government, who simultaneously serves as the head of state, by popular vote in a zero-sum game. The election works through the immediate selection (or after a second round, if necessary) of a winner from among all the candidates. The winner is the only actor with the power to form the government, and no government can be formed without the president’s party (Cheibub, 2007; Martínez-Gallardo, 2014).

Second, the principle of the mandate fixity. This means that even if the president loses her majority in congress, she remains in office until the next election, which occurs in accordance to constitutionally-mandated schedule. This may potentially diminish the bargaining strength of coalition partners by reducing their “walk away value” (Lupia and Strøm, 2008). Since the departure of any member of the coalition does not lead to the imminent fall of the government, the “walking away” option for a coalition member is less attractive as it may prove to be unsuccessful (Albala, 2020; Martínez-Gallardo, 2012).

At the same time, this principle concerns both the termination and initiation of the mandate. This implies that the process of cabinet formation in presidential systems is limited in time, spanning from the proclamation of the election results to the president's inauguration. This feature supposes that the cabinet must be formed immediately after the president assumes office. This is markedly different from parliamentary regimes, where, broadly speaking, the bargaining rounds of coalition formation begin after the election and are (theoretically) unlimited in length clouding the lines between clear "winners" and hindering the responsiveness of "unexpected" coalitions (Falcó-Gimeno and Indridason, 2013; Glasgow et al., 2011).

Therefore, the formation of a coalition government in presidential systems centers on the occurrence of recent or forthcoming elections. This formation may occur *before* the election of the president, (i.e., electoral or pre-electoral coalition formation) or after her election (i.e., post-electoral formation). The formation can also proceed from both, that is from a pre-electoral timing inception combined with a post-electoral "widening."

In summation, the separation of powers and the fixity of the mandate constitute definite constraints with a significant impact on the formation, development, and conclusion of coalitions. In particular, since the president-elect is the *formateur* by definition, coalition options are more limited in presidential regimes (Cheibub 2007; Kellam, 2015b). On the other hand, since presidential elections are extremely majoritarian, with only one possible winner in a single constituency, parties may have strong incentives to form pre-electoral coalitions.

### ***The incentives for keeping the electoral pact and post-electoral coalition stability***

Although pre-electoral agreements are not exhaustively binding (Kellam, 2015), victorious presidential candidates have important incentives to keep their promises following their inauguration. Usually, coalition partners allow the coalition *formateur* to obtain the support of segments of the electorate otherwise inaccessible to them, as well as aggregate valuable organizational resources and increasing the candidate's chances of winning the presidency (Borges and Turgeon, 2019; Spoon and West, 2015). Meanwhile, parties that supported another presidential candidate face substantial opportunity costs. Parties joining an electoral coalition not only surrender the possibility of controlling the presidency themselves and lose an important tool to reach voters, they also risk losing credibility and weakening their party base if the coalition is perceived as being inadequate (Freudenreich, 2016, p. 5). As there are substantial costs involved in joining a pre-electoral coalition, the *formateur* party usually compensates coalition partners by supporting them in simultaneous, lower-level elections, making concessions in policy platforms, and promising cabinet positions in the event of winning (Kellam, 2015, Borges et al., 2017).

Carrol (2007) argues that the pursuit of office is a very strong, if not fundamental, motivation behind pre-electoral agreements. He claims that in both parliamentary and presidential countries, a similar coalition formation logic is evident. In both cases, pre-election agreements create incentives for parties to share ministerial posts according to the contribution of each party to the coalition's electoral success and not based upon their post-electoral bargaining power (*idem*, p. 11).

However, this logic does not hold under presidentialism unless one assumes that coalition parties have strong reasons to believe that presidential candidates will keep their promises once elected. The credible commitment problem is inherent in presidential systems because, as noted earlier, chief executives do not need the support of any party to remain in office. However, presidents need a strong reputation to negotiate with the legislature and, therefore, they have an incentive to keep their promises and invite pre-electoral coalition members to the cabinet. Not doing so would likely result in losing the ability to make any political deal in the legislature that involved future political actions (Freudenreich, 2016, p. 6). Hence, under coalition governments, the president is likely constrained by the pre-electoral coalition agreement, as to secure a legislative majority. All else being equal, parties that support the president earlier—in the first (or only) round of the presidential race—have a greater likelihood of obtaining a cabinet position (Freudenreich, 2016). Of course, the partisan composition of the cabinet may or may not coincide fully with the pre-electoral coalition. Often, presidents will invite additional coalition partners after the election, especially if the pre-electoral coalition lacks a majority in the legislature.

Regardless of the specific mechanisms that produce earlier interparty bargaining and similar pre- and post-electoral coalitions, we argue that these types of cabinets are likely to rest on more solid foundations and last longer than those predominantly formed after election results are known. To the extent that PEC parties have ran the election together, coordinating their campaign efforts, there is a higher likelihood that they will develop a mutual understanding of the needs and priorities of their partners once in government (Chiru, 2015). In other words, previous cooperation is likely to foster trust and reduce uncertainty regarding partners' future behavior. Moreover, PEC agreements might appear as less complex than post-electoral ones, since they need to focus, mostly, on common policies and potential safeguard measures. First comes first: the effort for winning the election comes before the sharing of the outputs deriving from the winning. In this sense, coalitions formed mostly or solely by PEC parties tend to be better equipped to deal with intra-coalition disputes and changes to the bargaining environment than those formed after the election.

Since the existence of a pre-electoral agreement changes the incentives and constraints faced by both the *formateur* and the members of the electoral alliance, one should expect the degree of congruence between the partisan composition of the pre-electoral coalition and that of the cabinet to exert substantial impact on cabinet stability. However, we believe that these effects are conditional on cabinet status. Even though

previous research has shown a causal relationship between pre-electoral coalitions and cabinet status (Borges et al. 2020), the former is not precluded from entailing any sort of cabinet status. Consequently, cabinet status still has a substantial impact on the odds of cabinet survival, to the extent that the value of the coalition to each of its members is likely greater when it controls a number of seats that is sufficient to approve policy. This is the case of coalitions holding a nominal majority or a number of seats that is close to a majority<sup>1</sup>. Furthermore, presidents will face higher costs of cabinet dissolution when the exit of any coalition member would jeopardize the government's ability to pass its bills. This condition applies to both minimum winning coalitions (MWC), where each and every party is necessary for keeping a majority, and near majority coalitions, for which the loss of a coalition partner will increase the costs of negotiating *ad hoc* support to approve policy. In this scenario, the policy benefits provided by the coalition and the high costs of cabinet dissolution will reinforce the incentives for cooperation resulting from pre-electoral bargaining.

On the other hand, congruence between the PEC and the cabinet should exert a much weaker effect on the odds of cabinet survival in the presence of oversized coalitions, that is, when the government can keep a majority even if one or more coalition parties leave the cabinet. In this setting, cabinet status will weaken the incentives for cooperation resulting from pre-electoral bargaining and, therefore, we should not observe a substantial difference in the odds of cabinet survival between pre- and post-electoral coalitions.

Conversely, cabinets formed solely by PEC parties should have a higher likelihood of early termination when the PEC is in clear minority in the legislature (i.e. under 45% of the seats) as compared to a situation in which PEC parties form a minimum winning coalition or a near majority coalition (45%-50% of the seats). When coalitions are clearly in minority (share of seats lower than 45%), congruence between the cabinet and the pre-electoral coalitions should increase instead of decreasing the risk of cabinet termination. Given that PECs are, usually, formed before the partisan composition of the legislature is known and are subject to distinct constraints than those usually faced in the post-electoral period, minority coalitions resulting solely from pre-electoral bargaining are less likely to be an optimal governing strategy as compared to post-electoral minority coalitions<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Previous research on minority governments in presidential systems has shown that presidents whose parties hold a share of legislative seats that is close to a majority (around 45%-50%) are less likely to form coalitions because they can easily approve policy by negotiating additional support on a case-by-case basis (Figueiredo et al., 2012). We believe the same rationale applies to coalition governments: presidents may prefer to govern with a minority coalition in control of a near majority of seats than inviting additional allies, thus approving policy at a lower cost.

<sup>2</sup> When legislative and presidential elections are concurrent, the distribution of forces in the legislature may change substantially from the moment a pre-electoral agreement is made until the president's inauguration. But even when elections do not concur, the presidential race has the potential to promote changes in the partisan composition of the legislature. For instance, some legislators may join a new party created by a popular presidential candidate. Party switching can also occur among existing parties, as the parties of the frontrunners in the presidential election attract legislators from parties lacking competitive

Presidents may opt to govern in minority to spare resources to form and maintain a cabinet and avoid making too much policy concessions. In these cases, presidents can pass legislation by seeking to include the median legislative party in the coalition and thus negotiating the support of shifting majority legislative coalitions with partners situated to the right and to the left of the cabinet (Negretto, 2006). But these strategic calculations are less likely to succeed if the *formateur* party does not have complete information on the partisan composition of the legislature, as it is often the case in a pre-electoral bargaining setting.

Indeed, minority pre-electoral coalitions will often emerge not because the *formateur* would prefer to govern in minority, but rather because voters opted for giving a majority to parties outside the PEC. Also, in many instances, a minority coalition comprised mostly of PEC parties will result from the failure of a new bargaining round to include new partners and obtain a majority (or obtain the support of the crucial median legislator). Enlarging the coalition is usually a costly and uncertain process because it requires renegotiating the pre-electoral pact and agreeing on a new distribution of cabinet positions. Thus, the president will need to engage in difficult and, often, lengthy negotiations to keep the PEC together and, at the same time, increase the likelihood of approving policy in the legislature. When these negotiations fail and the result is a suboptimal coalition, cabinet instability is likely to follow, as the bargaining process is reopened, and both pre- and post-electoral allies enter and exit the coalition.

By the same token, a minority president elected on the sole support of his co-partisans does not face such constraints while negotiating the formation of a feasible minority coalition, as he is not bound by a pre-electoral agreement. Therefore, post-electoral minority cabinets face lower bargaining constraints and are more likely to control a legislative contingent closer to the median legislator. This configuration is, thus, more likely to result in a stable equilibrium, all else being equal.

Based on the above discussion, we propose three hypotheses:

**Hypothesis 1 (H1):** *Congruence between a cabinet coalition and an electoral alliance will lead to greater cabinet stability when PEC parties form a minimum winning coalition or when they control a seats share close to majority status.*

**Hypothesis 2 (H2)** *Congruence between the PEC and the cabinet will not have any relevant impact on cabinet duration when pre-electoral coalitions are oversized.*

**Hypothesis 3 (H3):** *When coalitions hold a clear minority of seats, congruence between the cabinet coalition and the PEC will increase the risk of cabinet termination.*

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candidates.



## Data and Methods

### *Dataset*

To test these hypotheses, we use a dataset of pre- and post-electoral coalitions in 11 Latin American countries. We obtained data on the partisan composition of cabinets, cabinet status, legislative and cabinet fragmentation and polarization from Kellam (2015a) and Meirelles (2016). Information on the composition of pre-electoral coalitions, and total PEC and cabinet seats was obtained from various sources.<sup>3</sup> We cross checked and revised replication data obtained from Kellam (2015) and Meirelles (2016), by comparing the number of cabinet seats indicated in these datasets with the totals we obtained through our own data collection. In those instances where we found inconsistencies, we relied mostly on the IPU Parline Database to make the appropriate corrections. Also, we added 26 cabinets from three countries—Brazil, Chile, and Panama—formed in the 2000s and 2010s. The dataset of coalition governments comprises 133 unique cabinets and 2488 monthly observations. The countries and periods covered by the data are listed in Table 1.

Although the dataset includes both coalition and single-party governments, we opted for relying on a subset of the data that excludes the latter. We believe this is a justifiable decision because our hypotheses require making comparisons across distinct types of coalitions and, therefore, single-party cabinets would not add much to the analysis. Moreover, restricting the analysis to multiparty coalitions facilitates the task of estimating differences in the odds of survival of different types of cabinets. Given our focus on multiparty coalitions, countries where coalition governments are more frequent, such as Chile, Brazil, Bolivia and Ecuador, have more observations than those countries where single party governments are the rule.

**Table 1 - Number of coalition cabinets by country and period**

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<sup>3</sup> The sources include the Political Database of the Americas (<http://pdba.georgetown.edu/>), Adam Carr's Election Database (<http://psephos.adamcarr.net>), the IPU Parline Database (<http://www.ipu.org/parline-e/parlinesearch.asp>), as well as the electoral results reported by the countries' official electoral bodies. In instances where we were unable to find reliable information on specific elections, we relied on various secondary sources on the politics of Latin American countries. We indicate the other sources utilized to obtain information on the independent variables throughout the results section.

<b>Country</b>	<b>Period</b>	<b>Number of cabinets</b>
Argentina	1990 - 2003	5
Bolivia	1982 - 2004	11
Brazil - 1	1946 - 1963	13
Brazil - 2	1990 - 2016	27
Chile - 1	1934 - 1972	32
Chile - 2	1989 - 2014	5
Colombia	1981 - 2000	7
Costa Rica	1958 - 1962	1
Ecuador	1980 - 2005	14
Panama	1999 - 2009	2
Peru	1980 - 1985	1
Uruguay	1985 - 2004	4
Venezuela	1959 - 1964; 1989-1992	11

### ***Dependent variable***

The dependent variable in our statistical models is the duration of the cabinet. By “durability of the coalition agreement,” we mean the length of time during which a coalition cabinet remained stable. We do not treat cabinet reshuffles as instances of cabinet termination, as we assume that any change in the distribution of cabinet portfolios within the cabinet that does not alter the party composition indicates that every member of the cabinet agreed with the alteration and/or received a pay-off in compensation. Therefore, a cabinet is considered to terminate, with another start, when any alteration in the original composition occurs. This includes i) the defection of a party, regardless of the motivation for walking away; or ii) the inclusion of a new member into the coalition.<sup>4</sup> Both these scenarios imply a change in the balance of power and influence within the coalition. By inertia, the termination of a cabinet also occurs when a new president is inaugurated, even if the party in government remains the same.

Since chief executives have fixed terms in presidential systems, cabinet changes resulting from a presidential election—or another exogenous event leading to the termination of the president’s term, such as impeachment—cannot be treated in the same way as changes in the partisan composition of the government that occur under the president’s mandate. This constitutes another main difference with regard to parliamentary regimes, where cabinets may, theoretically, survive the end of the prime minister’s mandate. In this case, given the existence of an exogenous constraint, we cannot identify the “actual” duration of the cabinet with any certainty.

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<sup>4</sup> This second scenario supposes that the president needed—or felt that it was necessary—to broaden the coalition to ensure governability or presidential legitimacy.

Survival analysis deals with this type of data by separating cases of failure into two groups: censored and uncensored cases. In our dataset, censored cabinets are those that ended because of exogenous events resulting in the termination of the president's mandate. All other cabinets are uncensored. We selected a Cox proportional hazards model to explore the effect of the independent variables on the hazard rate of cabinets. In survival analysis, the hazard rate indicates the likelihood that a subject will experience failure given the absence of failure at the moment of measurement. For instance, in many clinical studies, the hazard rate indicates the probability of death of a patient with certain characteristics given their having survived for a certain amount of time since the start of the study. A similar rationale applies to our modeling of cabinet duration, as we intend to explore the factors that increase or decrease the likelihood of cabinet termination.

### **Main independent and control variables**

To differentiate between distinct types of coalition governments and test our hypotheses, we created two dummies to account for cabinet legislative status: *MWC /near majority coalition*, which assumes value 1 for minimum winning coalitions and near majority cabinets holding 45%-50 of the lower chamber's seats, and *oversized coalition* to account for coalitions where one or more coalition partners are superfluous to the goal of maintaining a majority.

We also distinguish between post-electoral and pre-electoral coalition cabinets. By definition, pure post-electoral coalitions are those formed by presidents elected on the sole support of their co-partisans. Coalition governments originated from a PEC, for their part, tend to exhibit substantial variation in what concerns the centrality of post-electoral bargaining for cabinet formation. As already mentioned, presidents will opt for PEC enlargement in many instances, by inviting additional coalition parties after the election.

Given these aspects, we measure the origin of the coalition and the extent to which the coalition government is mostly pre- or post-electoral, by relying on a measure of the share of cabinet seats held by PEC parties (*PEC share of seats*). Because the president's party is always the *formateur* party and, besides, it is almost always present in both the pre-electoral coalition and in the cabinet, we exclude the president's legislative contingent from the calculus of total seats. Therefore, our measure indicates the proportion of seats held by pre-electoral coalition parties relatively to total coalition seats excluding the president's party.

By definition, when PEC share is equal to 1 this implies that PEC parties control all ministerial portfolios allocated to coalition parties. Therefore, the latter hold all of the cabinet seats in excess of the president's legislative contingent, thus constituting a purely pre-electoral cabinet. A hypothetical score of 0.5, on the other hand, would indicate a situation in which half of the seats are controlled by PEC parties, and the

other half by post-electoral allies. Pure post-electoral coalitions receive a score of zero, as these types of cabinets, by definition, do not include any pre-electoral coalition parties.

Note that the share of PEC seats only takes into account in the calculations those parties with at least one seat in the lower chamber. Given that cabinet portfolios are usually allocated according to party size in the legislature (known as *Gamson Law*, from Gamson 1961), a party that did not obtain seats is much less likely to enter the cabinet regardless of whether it supported the president before their election. Furthermore, the incorporation of a large party to a coalition government tends to exert a more significant effect on interparty bargaining than the inclusion of a tiny party that controls only a fraction of the legislature's seats.

We interact the dummies for cabinet status with the share of PEC seats to account for the effects of pre- and post-electoral bargaining on coalition survival. With the inclusion of the interactions term, the coefficients estimated for *MWC/near majority coalition* and *Oversized coalition* are the log of the hazard ratio when the share of PEC seats is equal to zero and, therefore, the coalition is formed solely by post-electoral partners. The coefficient for PEC share, on the other hand, indicates the effect of the share of seats held by pre-electoral coalitions for the reference category: minority coalitions.

## **Other control variables**

### *Legislative fragmentation and polarization*

In addition to our measures of cabinet origin (pre- or post-electoral) and coalition enlargement we include a set of covariates to account for various alternative explanations of cabinet termination. These include measures of party system fragmentation and polarization. A highly fragmented legislature might make the cost of defections lower for the president. Indeed, if the president has limited options for obtaining majority, he is likely to preserve his natural or “captive” allies to secure predictable behavior. Conversely, if there are numerous potential partners for a president facing internal coalition tensions, the president will likely seek substitutive coalition partners eager to enter to government. This may make the position of political allies unstable and dependent on the president's goodwill, thereby increasing cabinet instability (Kellam, 2015). A fragmented party system could also exert a more indirect effect on cabinet duration by inducing presidents to form increasingly large and hard-to-manage coalitions (Carroll, 2007; Martínez-Gallardo, 2010; Martínez-Gallardo, 2012). The models control for party fragmentation by including a measure of the effective number of parties in the legislature.

Ideological polarization has a similar effect on cabinet duration because it tends to favor the formation of ideologically heterogeneous coalitions. The cost of interparty bargaining should be higher when coalition parties have more diverse preferences in comparison to coalitions with mostly homogeneous policy preferences. Therefore, ideological polarization should increase a cabinet's likelihood of failure. We rely on two distinct measures of polarization: cabinet polarization, to account for coalition ideological heterogeneity, and a system-level measure considering all parties represented in the lower chamber (legislative polarization). Because the two measures are highly correlated with each other, we have estimated separate models using either of these variables. Ideological polarization was calculated using Coppedge's (1998) polarization index. The index considers the distance between each party and the mean ideological position of Congress (or the mean coalition ideological position, in the case of the cabinet measure), weighted by party seats, and varies from 0 to 100.

For almost all of the cases, we relied on the original scores of legislative and cabinet polarization calculated by Kellam (2015a) using the ideological classification of Latin American parties developed by Coppedge (1998) and updated by Pop-Eleches (2008). In the absence of information on parties' ideological position in Coppedge's (1998) original scale for the few cabinets formed in the 2000s and 2010s, we relied on the alternative left-right scale developed by Baker and Greene (2011). We converted this latter measure back to Coppedge's (1998) classification to calculate legislative and cabinet polarization.

#### *Veto and decree powers*

All regressions in this study include measures of veto and decree powers. President's veto powers were ranked from 3 (weak) to 13 (strong) according to the classification proposed by Alemán and Tsebelis (2005). Decree powers were operationalized as a scale from zero (no decree) to 4 (strong decree powers) (Carey and Shugart, 1998). Theoretically, presidents endowed with greater unilateral powers should be less likely to compromise than preserve the coalition. For example, some presidential systems give the executive the authority to change policy unilaterally through the use of executive decrees. In these cases, we should expect presidents to value coalition building less and to be less willing to rely on the distribution of cabinet portfolios to form and maintain a majority (Amorim Neto, 2006). Under the latter structure of incentives, presidents will be less willing to pay the price of maintaining the coalition in the face of changing circumstances (Martínez-Gallardo, 2012), weakening cabinet stability. In contrast, where the ability to change policy depends on the support of a legislative majority, the president will be more likely to compromise with other parties and pay a higher price to maintain the support of other political parties. We expect both our measures of decree and veto powers to decrease the likelihood of cabinet survival.

#### *Caretaker presidents*

A significant number of cabinets in our dataset were formed by interim presidents that took office following a resignation, impeachment, or other exceptional circumstances leading to the early termination of their predecessors' term. These presidential interruptions are, most often, associated with political and/or economic crises (Pérez-Liñán and Polga-Hecimovich, 2017). Furthermore, caretaker, unelected presidents lack the legitimacy granted by the popular vote and they will usually find themselves in a fragile position to bargain with the legislature. In many instances, indeed, caretaker presidents opt for assembling highly heterogeneous “grand coalitions” that include both supporters and opponents of their predecessors. For these reasons, we expect cabinets formed in such exceptional circumstances to exhibit a much higher risk of termination than any other cabinet. Therefore, we control for presidential interruptions by including a dummy variable for all cabinets formed by unelected presidents.

### *Exogenous shocks*

To control for the potential impact of exogenous economic shocks on coalition agreements, we include a measure of economic downturns in the models. The health of the national economy has a very strong and direct impact on the president's popularity. Therefore, we expect that fluctuations in economic to growth will shape the president's ability to obtain the legislature's support, with sharp decreases in GDP growth leading to less stable cabinets (Martínez-Gallardo, 2014). Our recession dummy assumes a value of 1 whenever there is a GDP contraction in year  $t$ , and zero otherwise.

## **Results and discussion**

Before reporting and discussing model results, we present descriptive data on the distribution of the cases across different types of coalitions (pre-electoral / post-electoral and majority/minority).

Table 2 shows the distribution of coalition cabinets by status (majority/minority) and according to the presence/absence of a PEC. The number of observations in the table is greater than the actual number of cabinets, because we include changes in total cabinet seats due to midterm elections. Therefore, table 2 shows the total number of cabinet observations (N=151) accounting for potential changes in cabinet status resulting from electoral swings.

**Table 2: Cabinet status according to the presence/absence of a multiparty pre-electoral coalition**

<b>Cabinet Status</b>	<b>President supported by a pre-electoral coalition</b>		<b>No pre-electoral coalition</b>		<b>Total observations</b>
	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>N</b>
Minority Coalition	47	67.14	23	32.86	70
Majority Coalition	53	65.43	28	34.57	81
Total	100	66.23	51	33.77	151

The table shows that 66% (100 of 151) of all cabinet observations refer to coalitions that were formed subsequent to a pre-electoral agreement. These figures are slightly higher (67% - 47 out of 70) if only the distribution of minority coalitions is considered. Overall, Table 2 clearly indicates that coalition governments are more likely than not to originate from a pre-electoral coalition.

Table 3 shows the standard deviation, mean and median values of the PEC share of cabinet seats by PEC status (majority/ near majority / minority). Pre-electoral coalitions were classified according to the percentage of the legislature's seats they had obtained in the most recent election. Recall that our measure of PEC seats indicates the proportion of cabinet seats (excluding seats held by the president's party) controlled by post-electoral coalition allies. Values equal or close to 1 indicate the formation of mostly pre-electoral coalition cabinets, whereas intermediate scores are evidence of mixed coalitions including both pre- and post-electoral coalition partners.

Our hypotheses rely on the assumption that the reopening of the bargaining process to include additional post-electoral coalition partners should be less common when the pre-electoral coalition has a majority or a near majority, around 45-50% of the seats, the opposite being true for minority PECs. We also claim that oversized PECs provide lower incentives to maintain the pre-electoral agreement. Table 3 results reinforce this assumption.

**Table 3: Mean, median and standard deviation of PEC share of seats by PEC status**

<b>Pre-Electoral Coalitions</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>N</b>
Minority PEC (<45%)	0.41	0.18	0.42	60
MWC / Near Maj. PEC	0.83	1.00	0.32	10
Oversized PEC	0.73	0.82	0.30	30

On average, the proportion of seats controlled by PEC members is around 0.4 within the group of cabinets originated from a minority PEC. Furthermore, PEC parties respond for a proportion of seats inferior to 0.18 in half of these cases, as indicated by the median value. In contrast, the mean and median proportions for near majority and minimum winning PECs are 0.83 and 1, respectively. The same figures estimated for oversized PECs are slightly lower (0.73 and 0.82), which suggests that presidents are

less likely to form cabinets comprised only of PEC parties when one or more of the former are unnecessary to maintain a majority. In sum, our data reveals that where pre-electoral parties form a minimum winning or a near majority coalition, presidents have greater incentives to transform them into coalition cabinets, thus keeping the pre-electoral agreement. Even when these coalitions are enlarged to include post-electoral partners, the latter tend to represent a small proportion relatively to the total of cabinet seats. On the other hand, presidents resort to coalition enlargement more frequently and more intensively when pre-electoral coalitions are clearly minority.

Of all cabinets preceded by a minority PEC with less than 45% of the seats, 55% turned to have a majority in the ensuing legislature (33 out of 60), as the president invited parties outside the electoral alliance to the cabinet. Minority PECs resulted in minority coalition cabinets in 45% (27) of the cases. Within this subset, most of the minority coalitions were comprised solely of PEC parties: 17 out of 27 (62%). The remaining cases (10 out of 27) constitute situations in which the bargaining process was reopened, but coalition enlargement did not produce a majority or near majority.

Table 4 presents the mean cabinet duration by cabinet status and origin. Majority and minority coalitions for which the share of PEC parties relatively to total cabinet seats was equal or higher than 0.9 were defined as congruent majority and minority PEC cabinets. Enlarged PECs (majority and minority) are cabinets originated from an electoral alliance with a lower participation of PEC parties.

**Table 4 – Mean coalition duration by cabinet status and origin**

<b>Cabinet Status and Origin</b>	<b>Mean Duration (in months)</b>	<b>N</b>
Enlarged PEC	13.26	56
Congruent Minority PEC	10.71	21
Congruent Min. Win. / Near Maj. PEC	50.66	6
Congruent Oversized PEC	25.25	4
Post-Electoral Minority	19.53	15
Post-Electoral Min. Win. / Near. Maj.	24.40	15
Post-Electoral Oversized	31.43	16

Consistent with theoretical expectations, coalitions holding a share of legislative seats close to or baring a majority (MWC or near majority) are more enduring when they are predominantly formed by PEC parties. The average duration in months is 50.6 as compared to 24.4 for post-electoral minimum winning / near majority coalitions. Congruent minority pre-electoral coalition cabinets have the lowest average duration (10.7 months) well below the mean tenure of post-electoral minority coalitions (19.5 months). Also consistent with our theoretical claims, we find that congruent oversized PECs are substantially less enduring than congruent minimum winning / near majority



PECs (25.2 months and 50.6 months, respectively). Finally, enlarged PECs where post-electoral coalition parties control more than 10% of the seats are, on average, slightly more enduring than congruent minority PECs, but less enduring than either oversized or near majority / minimum winning PECs.

We also obtained data on the frequency with which presidents reopen the bargaining process and/or coalition partners opt for defection depending on the type of cabinet formed at the beginning of the presidential term. We analyzed all cases in which the cabinet formed immediately after the president's inauguration was comprised predominantly of PEC parties (PEC share  $\geq 0.9$ ). Then we checked how many cabinets were formed subsequently to the inauguration cabinet, depending on cabinet status (majority/near majority or minority). In the case of majority pre-electoral coalition cabinets, the average number of additional cabinets was 0.36 as compared to 1.71 for minority coalitions comprised predominantly of PEC parties. We also calculated the average number of cabinets formed subsequently to minority post-electoral coalitions created immediately after the president's inauguration: 0.6. Overall, these results strongly suggest that minority pre-electoral coalition cabinets represent a much less stable equilibrium in comparison with either majority pre-electoral coalitions or minority post-electoral coalitions.

### ***Model results***

In this section, we test our central theoretical claim that the distinct mechanisms of coalition formation in the presence of PECs have a significant impact on cabinet duration. We rely on Cox proportional hazards models to assess the effect of the main explanatory variables in the presence of appropriate controls. Standard errors are clustered by country to deal with the panel structure of our data.

Model results are presented below. Model 1 is a baseline model with no control for pre-electoral alliances and excluding the measures of party system polarization and fragmentation. It compares majority coalition cabinets with the reference category (minority coalitions) making no distinction in terms of the origins of these cabinets (if mostly pre-electoral or post-electoral). Model 2 includes the share of PEC seats in addition to the interaction term between the latter and the dummies for cabinet status. In model 3 we use the measure of cabinet polarization instead of legislative polarization. Because the two measures are highly correlated, we opted for running separate models with each of them. We found evidence of non-proportional hazard ratios over time for the measures of decree and legislative fragmentation in all of the models. To correct this critical violation of the Cox regression model, we interacted each of the offending variables with the logarithm of cabinet duration.

**Table 5: Cox regressions for cabinet termination with clustered standard errors**

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE
MWC / Near Majority Coal.	-0.530	0.362	0.500	0.423	0.052	0.487
Oversized Coalition	-0.267	0.234	*0.544	0.272	0.073	0.288
PEC Share of Seats	-	-	***1.183	0.215	***1.048	0.266
MWC / Near Maj. x PEC Share	-	-	***-3.195	0.654	***-3.016	0.710
Oversized Coalition x PEC Share	-	-	***-1.604	0.466	***-1.416	0.378
Nonelected President	***1.093	0.121	***1.114	0.242	***1.148	0.207
Recession	*0.359	0.199	*0.342	0.205	*0.459	0.251
Veto	-0.055	0.034	-0.003	0.048	0.047	0.039
Decree	***-0.496	0.184	-0.281	0.240	-0.243	0.239
Decree x log(time)	**0.149	0.066	0.060	0.095	0.065	0.104
Legislative Fragmentation	0.148	0.151	0.048	0.189	0.017	0.192
Leg. Fragmentation x log(time)	0.030	0.056	0.101	0.078	0.092	0.085
Legislative Polarization	*0.024	0.013	0.016	0.010	-	-
Cabinet Polarization	-	-	-	-	***0.020	0.008
Observations		2536		2536		2536
Number of Failures		87		87		87
Number of Cabinets		133		133		133
Log Likelihood		-349.93		-342.06		-339.74

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

The negative coefficient for MWC/near majority coalitions in model 1 suggests that the latter have a lower likelihood of termination than minority coalitions (when cabinet origin is not controlled for): the risk of dissolution is 42% lower, although the coefficient does not reach standard levels of statistical significance. In models 2 and 3, the coefficients estimated for the *MWC/near majority* dummy now indicates the difference between majority and minority post-electoral coalitions (i.e., when PEC share = 0). In both model specifications, the coefficient is positive, but not significant, which demonstrates that cabinet status does not have a relevant effect on the likelihood of survival of post-electoral coalition cabinets. The coefficient for oversized post-electoral coalitions in model 2 indicates that the latter have a higher risk of termination than minority post-electoral cabinets. However, once we control for cabinet polarization in model 3, this effect disappears.

The interaction terms for cabinet status and *PEC share of cabinet seats* are negative and highly significant, congruent with our first hypothesis. That is, near majority/majority cabinets have a lower odds of dissolution when they are formed solely or predominantly by PEC parties, but the effect is larger for near majority/minimum winning coalition cabinets as compared to oversized coalitions. To test whether pure near majority/minimum winning coalitions are more stable for higher levels of similarity in the partisan composition of the PEC and the cabinet, we need to calculate the marginal effect of PEC share of seats when *MWC/near majority* is equal to

1. This is equal to the antilogarithm of the sum of the coefficients for PEC share of seats and for the interaction term.

We relied on the results of model 3 to calculate marginal effects for different levels of PEC share of seats. Figure 1 plots marginal effects and 95% confidence intervals.

**Figure 1: Marginal Effects of PEC share of seats for near majority / minimum winning coalitions**

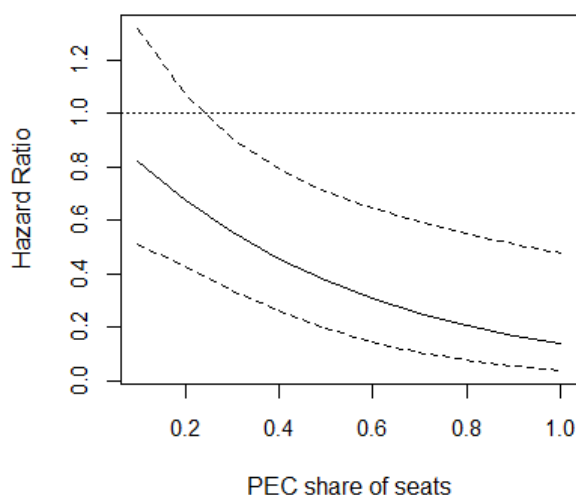
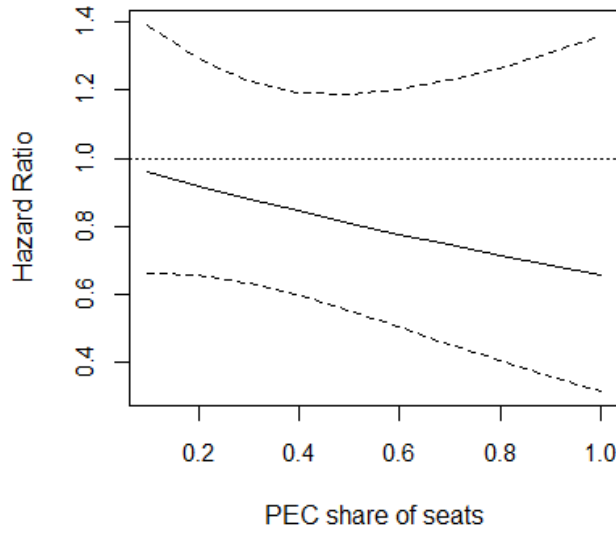


Figure 1 shows that similarity between the pre-electoral coalition and the cabinet has a negative, statistically significant marginal effect on the odds of cabinet termination for a broad range of values of the measure of PEC share of seats. When PEC share is equal to 0.9, the odds of cabinet termination is 83% lower than the odds of dissolution of a post-electoral coalition, maintaining cabinet status constant (near majority/ minimum winning coalition). Pre-electoral bargaining has a relevant, yet substantially lower effect, for a hypothetical coalition where PEC parties control only 30% of the seats: the odds of cabinet change is 45% lower. For values of PEC share lower than 0.3, there is no longer a statistically significant effect.

We also calculated the marginal effects of PEC share for oversized coalitions (Figure 2). We found much weaker effects as compared to near majority/minimum winning coalitions: when PEC share is equal to 0.9 the odds of cabinet dissolution decreases by only 29%. Moreover, marginal effects have large standard errors and lack statistical significance.

**Figure 2: Marginal Effects of PEC share of seats for oversized coalitions**



Our third hypothesis states that minority coalition cabinets originated totally or mostly from a pre-electoral coalition should not endure for longer than post-electoral minority coalitions. Recall that the coefficient for *PEC share of cabinet seats* in models 2 and 3 indicates the effect of this variable when *majority/near majority* is equal to zero. The effect is positive which indicates that congruence between pre- and post-electoral coalitions increases the likelihood of cabinet termination when the cabinet is in minority. Using the coefficients reported for model 3, we find that the odds of dissolution of a minority coalition formed solely by PEC parties is three times higher than the odds of termination of a post-electoral minority coalition. Thus, we find strong support in favor of our third hypothesis.

The effect of our control variables on the risk of cabinet termination is mostly consistent with theoretical expectations. Legislative fragmentation (effective number of parties) and polarization both have a positive effect on the odds of cabinet dissolution, although only the coefficient estimated for cabinet polarization achieved standard levels of statistical significance. Presidential interruptions have a very strong, destabilizing effect on presidential cabinets, as indicated by the large, positive coefficients for unelected presidents in all models. Finally, the dummy for economic recessions came with the right sign (positive), although it lacks substantial statistical significance.

Contrary to theoretical expectations, decree powers decrease the odds of cabinet change, but this effect diminishes over time, as shown by the interaction term included to deal with non-proportional hazards. Moreover, in two of three model specifications, the effect of decree lacks statistical significance. Finally, neither veto powers nor legislative fragmentation have a significant impact on cabinet duration.

## Conclusion

Research on multiparty cabinets in presidential systems has focused almost entirely on the post-electoral bargaining environment, neglecting the key role played by pre-electoral coalitions in the making of government coalitions. In this article, we have demonstrated that, all else being equal, near-majority or minimum winning coalition cabinets tend to last longer when they are mostly deriving from a pre-electoral agreement. We argue that this is so because PEC parties tend to be more loyal and reliable allies to the extent that they have fought the election together and cooperated with the president before inauguration. Moreover, these incentives are strongest in the near-majority or minimum winning coalition scenario, to the extent that presidents need the support of all PEC parties to pass legislation. On the other hand, the effect of congruence between the cabinet and a pre-electoral agreement is not relevant for oversized coalitions, as in the latter case presidents will have much lower incentives to keep the PEC together. Finally, we find that minority coalitions formed by PEC parties are actually less stable than minority post-electoral coalitions.

Our research thus makes two important contributions to the comparative literature on coalitional presidentialism. First, it demonstrates that cabinet origin (if mostly pre-electoral or post-electoral), in combination with cabinet status, is a very strong predictor of cabinet duration. Second, it makes an important conceptual and methodological contribution, by proposing and testing a simple measure to differentiate coalitions according to their origin (the share of cabinet seats held by pre-electoral coalition parties). These findings are particularly relevant since the inclusion of the timing condition challenges previous findings from the literature on coalition survival on presidential regimes.

Finally, our results suggest that electoral institutions may exert a relevant impact on the dynamics of cabinet formation in coalitional presidentialism. That is, countries where the presidential race structures party competition through the formation of a few pre-electoral coalitions are more likely to witness the formation of stable multiparty cabinets that provide durable support to the president. However, such effects are most likely to occur if the winning pre-electoral coalition succeeds in obtaining a bare or a near-majority of the legislature's seats. Future research should develop this line of enquiry, investigating the institutional incentives and constraints that shape pre-electoral coalition formation, and unpacking the causal mechanisms that connect the electoral and governing arenas in coalitional presidentialism. For instance, some countries (Argentina and Uruguay) have turned obligatory the organization of partisan and coalition primaries, before the beginning of the presidential race. This institutional innovation should thus, according to our findings, lead to more stable coalition pacts in case of achieving legislative majorities.

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