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Taking it to the Extreme: The Effect of Coalition Cabinets on Foreign Policy

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ABSTRACT

Institutional constraints have been offered by some scholars as an explanation for why multiparty coalitions should be more peaceful than single party cabinets. Yet others see the same institutional setting as a prescription for more aggressive behavior. Recent research has investigated these conflicting expectations, but with mixed results. We examine the theoretical bases for these alternative expectations about the effects of coalition politics on foreign policy. We find that previous research is limited theoretically by confounding institutional effects with policy positions, and empirically by analyzing only international conflict data. We address these limitations by examining cases of foreign policy behavior using the World Event/Interaction Survey (WEIS) dataset. Consistent with our observation that institutional constraints have been confounded with policy positions, we find that coalitions are neither more aggressive nor more peaceful, but do engage in more extreme foreign policy behaviors. These findings are discussed with regard to various perspectives on the role of institutions in shaping foreign policy behavior.

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Research on how political institutions affect foreign policy typically focuses on the pacifying consequences of democratic institutions. Political systems that include more voices and interests in the policymaking process purportedly require more time to mobilize domestic players, and input from domestic constituencies presumably constrains leaders who might otherwise take their country to war. This idea is at the heart of the institutional, or structural explanation of the democratic peace, but it has been used by others comparing different types of democratic institutions as well. Some have argued, for example, that democratic political systems with powerful legislatures, compared to systems with weak legislative bodies, will more likely render an executive reluctant to use force (Auerswald, 1999; Reiter and Tillman, 2002).

The notion that institutional constraints translate into more peaceful international behavior has also been used in propositions regarding the effects of coalition politics on the foreign policy of multiparty cabinets. Yet an alternative view sees the same institutional setting as a prescription for more aggressive behavior. Recent research has investigated these conflicting expectations, but with mixed results. In this article, we examine the theoretical bases for alternative expectations about the effects of coalition politics on foreign policy. We argue that recent investigations have addressed these perspectives in a fairly limited way, both theoretically and empirically, and offer a new study using some 26,000 cases of foreign policy behavior by parliamentary democracies from the World Event/Interaction Survey (WEIS) dataset. In this investigation, we compare the foreign policy behaviors of coalition cabinets to those of single party cabinets in terms of levels of conflict/cooperation, extremity, and commitment.

COALITION POLITICS AND FOREIGN POLICY BEHAVIOR: PEACE OR CONFLICT?

Despite the diffusion of governmental powers and the increased number of actors who seek to influence the process in most democratic systems, the authority to make foreign policy in parliamentary democracies remains with the cabinet (Nousiainen and Blondel, 1993). When this decision making authority is shared by two or more political parties in coalition, the cabinet can provide a distinct and partisan context. Coalition cabinets occur with great frequency in Western Europe. More than 70 percent of post-World War II West European governments have been multiparty coalitions (Gallagher, Lavel, and Mair, 2001:357) and some states, such as the Netherlands, Germany, and Italy, are almost always ruled by multiparty cabinets. Not limited to Western Europe, coalitions can also be found in parliamentary democracies world-wide, such as in Hungary, India, Israel, Japan, and Turkey. The presence of coalition governments in important states in world affairs begs the question: how important is this institutional distinction for understanding the foreign policies of parliamentary democracies? Do single-party cabinets behave differently in foreign policy than do coalition cabinets?

Surprisingly, there is no scholarly consensus on the way in which coalition politics should influence foreign policy. Disagreement primarily turns on the degree and nature of political and institutional constraints in coalitions. This, in turn, generates competing assertions about the likelihood of aggressive as opposed to peaceful behavior. Those who see coalitions as highly constrained, expect peaceful foreign policies; those who see coalitions as unconstrained, expect more aggressive behaviors. Aggressive

behavior also arguably comes from other institutional dynamics associated with coalitions, namely problems of weakness and legitimacy and disproportionate influence of ideologically extreme junior coalition partners.

The expectation that coalitions will engage in peaceful foreign policy primarily rests on the notion that coalitions are highly constrained. Political and institutional constraints in coalitions stem from a number of institutional characteristics. Many see coalitions as highly constrained because of the high levels of conflict that can occur among the parties (Blondel and Müller-Rommel, 1993). Differences that are not resolved at the formation stage of a coalition are likely to contribute to conflictual policymaking and to cabinet instability (Prins and Sprecher, 1999). Indeed, one survey of ministers in several Western European countries confirmed that coalition cabinets tend to have more internal disagreements than single-party cabinets and that this conflict increases with more parties in the cabinet (Frognier, 1993). This conflictual process has consequences for the life of the cabinet. Not only are coalitions short-lived, compared to single-party cabinets holding a majority of parliamentary seats, coalition cabinets are much more likely to dissolve because of internal, cabinet disunity (Strøm, 1990).

Constraints in coalitions originate from other sources as well. After the formation of the coalition, for example, "…the scope of governmental action tends to be markedly constrained by the coalition agreement. Therefore coalition cabinets often have less freedom of manoeuvre than single-party governments: not so many matters are left open" (Blondel and Müller-Rommel, 1993:9). Multiple parties and vigilant parliaments are additional sources of constraint. More actors involved in the process means more constrained executives, as "coalition governments require the executive to consult more

parties and avoid unpopular policies that might split the government" (Ripsman, 2002:46).

The constraints in which coalitions operate presumably dampen aggression. This argument is consistent with the institutional explanation of the democratic peace – the more built-in constraints in democracies (via checks-and-balances, multiple viewpoints, and accountability), the more peace-loving political actors and publics can constrain war-prone leaders. Indeed, Maoz and Russett (1993:626) propose that coalition governments are among the most constrained among democracies and thus should be the most peaceful towards each other. This logic has informed a number of studies hypothesizing that coalition governments will be less likely or able to reciprocate in militarized disputes (Prins and Sprecher, 1999), to become involved in international disputes to begin with (Rieter and Tillman, 2002; Palmer, London, and Regan, 2004;), or to be involved in war generally (Leblang and Chan, 2003). The proposition that leaders of coalitions are constrained from pursuing aggressive foreign policies has also been applied to case studies of Israeli (Elman, 2000) and French (Auerswald, 1999; Ripsman, 2002) decision making.

Others disagree, arguing that the institutional and political dynamics of coalitions provide conditions that promote more aggressive foreign policies. Part of the expectation that coalitions are more aggressive directly challenges the idea that coalitions are constrained. Indeed, some see coalitions as "constraint free" (Hagan 1993:27). This stems from a diffusion of authority and accountability. "With coalition governments, the voting public may be less able to attach responsibility to any one party for policy failures. Presumably then, coalition leaders would have greater flexibility in their handling of

foreign affairs" (Prins and Sprecher, 1999:275). With this logic, Prins and Sprecher hypothesize that "coalition governments tend to be less accountable than single-party cabinets and as a result should be less constrained in decisionmaking. These types of governments should be more willing to reciprocate militarized disputes" (1999:275).

Coalition governments may also engage in more aggressive behavior due to their inherent institutional weaknesses. This logic is consistent with diversionary theories of international conflict (Levy, 1989). According to Hagan, "the literature suggests that even the most 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….In effect, because of their political fragmentation and vulnerability, these weakened actors were often compelled to deal with the most difficult issues in order to legitimize themselves…." (Hagan 1993:30-31). Moreover, "…the relatively higher level of domestic uncertainty that surrounds coalition cabinets may…encourage greater risk-taking behavior" (Prins and Sprecher, 1999:275).

Aggressive foreign policy behaviors could also come from the ability of junior coalition partners to "hijack" the coalition and push them towards the extreme. As Elman notes, "…in less majoritarian democracies, such as presidential and coalitional parliamentary systems, groups in favor of war will be better situated to push the state down that road, even if the executive favors a more moderate approach" (Elman, 2000:97). Because the senior parties, which are often center-of-the-road "catch-all" parties, might have to rely on smaller, often more ideologically extreme, junior parties to maintain a majority of seats in parliament, they are vulnerable to blackmail by these partners; the senior party must bargain with its junior partner or the latter may defect

from the coalition. Junior partners can use a variety of strategies to influence foreign policy and while they are not always successful, they have been influential at key times in the foreign policies of important states, such as Germany and Israel (Kaarbo, 1996a, 1996b).

Given these conflicting expectations regarding coalitions and their possible effects on foreign policy, it is not surprising that the empirical evidence is decidedly mixed. In support of the proposition that coalitions breed aggressive foreign policy, Prins and Sprecher (1999) found that coalition cabinets are more likely to reciprocate behavior in militarized interstate disputes than were single-party parliamentary governments and Palmer et al. (2004) found that coalitions were slightly more likely to become involved in international disputes. On the other hand, Ireland and Gartner (2001) and Reiter and Tillman (2002) found no difference between single party and coalition cabinets in dispute initiation and Palmer et al. (2004) found no difference between single and multiparty cabinets in dispute escalation. Leblang and Chan (2003) found that whether the cabinet was unified under a single party was not related to war involvement, although whether the electoral system was based on proportional representation, which is highly correlated with coalition governments, was significantly important as these types of system were less likely to be involved in war.

CHALLENGING CURRENT THEORETICAL EXPECTATIONS AND EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

These mixed results may not be surprising given the competing expectations about the peacefulness of foreign policy by coalitions that in turn stem from conflicting assumptions about the nature of political constraints and the role that weak institutions and junior parties play in coalition policymaking. Moreover, many of these theoretical arguments confound institutional effects with the positions of political parties. Indeed, implicit in the argument that hijacked coalitions engage in more aggressive behavior is the assumption that junior partners favor aggressive policies and are able to push the cabinet in this direction because of the nature of coalition politics. Similarly, implicit in the argument that coalitions are peaceful is the assumption that coalition leaders prefer more aggressive choices but are constrained by the institutional context.

Of course, both assumptions may be misdirected. Junior parties, for example, may favor more peaceful policies and propel the cabinet in that direction. The Green party, as a junior party in the current German coalition, arguably pushed the cabinet, not just constrained it, toward a more peaceful position vis-à-vis Iraq in 2002 (Kaarbo and Lantis, 2003). And peace-prone prime ministers would presumably be just as constrained as war-prone ones by the institutional checks on their actions. Given these reasons, it is difficult to expect coalitions to be either generally peaceful or generally aggressive without knowing the preferences of the coalition actors. We agree with Elman that "structure alone does not account for war propensities—we need to specify actors' preferences before structure can tell us anything" (Elman, 2000:125). Without knowledge of the specific actors serving to constrain policy choices and their substantive position on those policy choices, predicting specific policies will be difficult. We thus

expect that coalitions will reveal no systematic tendency toward either conflictual or cooperative behavior.

Yet institutions, such as cabinet structure, may still have an independent effect on foreign policy. Structure may tell us something about the nature, but not the direction, of coalition foreign policies. There are two possibilities, based on the competing theoretical expectations. If one follows the logic that coalitions are vulnerable to hijacking by extreme junior parties, are largely unaccountable, and seek legitimacy in risky foreign policies -- one would expect extreme behaviors, with coalitions choosing both more aggressive *and* more peaceful foreign policies, compared to single-party governments.[i] If, alternatively, one follows the logic that coalition politics constrain both dovish and hawkish prime ministers, one would expect moderate behaviors and coalitions should adopt middle-of-the-road policies. Indeed, one prominent image of coalition cabinets is that they, compared to single-party cabinets and other types of executives, produce very little coordinated policy because they are immobilized or deadlocked by their circumstances (Hagan, 1993; Prins and Sprecher, 1999; Elman, 2000; Hagan, Everts, Fukui, and Stempel, 2001).[ii]

Thus, we argue, we should expect to see differences in the foreign policy of coalitions, as compared to single party governments, but these differences are not in terms of the substance or direction of the policies. Rather, the institutional and political dynamics of coalitions impact the nature, or character of the foreign policy. We should expect either highly constrained foreign policy, with little meaningful action taken, or extreme foreign policies. Previous research on the effects of coalition politics has not examined this possibility that the same underlying mechanisms used to predict aggression

or peace may in fact predict extremity or moderation. This may explain the mixed results that this research has generated.

Progress in research on the effects of coalition politics on foreign policy is also hindered by the tendency to focus too narrowly on conflict-related dependent variables rather than more general foreign policy behavior. Because many studies are following in the tradition of the democratic peace research, investigations into structural influences on foreign policy have focused on conflict initiation and escalation (Prins and Sprecher, 1999; Ireland and Gartner, 2001; Reiter and Tillman, 2002; Palmer et al., 2004), paying less attention to the wider variety of foreign policy behaviors typically engaged in by governments. Such conflict-based dependent variables are problematic for at least three reasons. First, during times of conflict and crisis, disagreements within governments may be most likely to be suppressed or minimized (Hermann, 1969; Vertberger, 1990; Verbeek, 2003). Second, conflict and crisis behavior is a fairly narrow slice of the broad array of foreign policy behaviors in which states engage. The third reason is related to the previously discussed theoretical argument. A focus on conflict perpetuates the focus on the substance of the policy, confounds institutional constraints with policy preferences, and does not allow for the possibility that cabinet type might be related to the character, but not the content, of foreign policy.

EXAMINING THE EFFECTS OF COALITION POLITICS ON EVENT BEHAVIOR

To address some of the limitations in previous research, this study examines the character, as well as the content, of general foreign policy behaviors of single party and coalition cabinets. Specifically, we investigate the levels of conflict and extremity in

foreign policies using a subset of the World Event/Interaction Survey (WEIS) as developed by McClelland (1976) and updated by Tomlinson (1993). The WEIS dataset catalogues the actions of all major international players in "newsworthy" events from 1966 to 1991 (McClelland, 1966; Tomlinson, 1993). 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 (i.e. statements of policy support and threats) and non-verbal (i.e. grants of aid and military clashes) acts. Using the WEIS data, this study is able to investigate the effects of coalition politics on a wide range of foreign policy behaviors across a large number of events, a large set of parliamentary democracies, and a great length of time.

Cases and Variables

The actors selected from this dataset are the major parliamentary democracies, including many West European states, but also states in North America, Oceania, Southeast Asia, and the Middle East. The cases analyzed are 26,844 events including 11,933 from single-party cabinets and 14,911 from multiparty coalitions and cover a range of issues, from 1966 to 1989.[iii] The countries and their cabinet types are listed in Table 1.

--- *Table 1 here* ---

Whether each parliamentary democracy was a coalition or a single party government serves as our independent variable. For each actor in the WEIS dataset that

was a parliamentary democracy, we determined the cabinet type-- if it was a single-party or coalition cabinet at the time of the event -- by consulting standard sources.[iv] Cabinets that formally contained at least two independent political parties were coded as coalitions. Minority cabinets that only included one party, but which relied on the support of other parties in parliament, were coded as single-party cabinets. Political parties that were in permanent electoral alliance (e.g. the CDU and CSU in Germany) were considered to be single parties.

We chose three dependent variables to examine the effects of coalition politics on international behavior. The first dependent variable is the level of cooperation and conflict in the actor's behavior. The level of cooperation in the actor's behavior is indicated by the widely-used conflict-cooperation scale developed by Goldstein (1992). This scale translates WEIS event categories into an ordinal scale that ranges from -10 (indicating the highest levels of conflict) to +10 (indicating the highest levels of cooperation).

The next two dependent variables are designed to assess the extremity of the foreign policy behaviors engaged in by single party and coalition cabinets. The first assesses extremity by taking the Goldstein conflict-cooperation scale and folding it at the mid-point. This gives a measure of the extremity of conflict or cooperative behavior.[v] Actions that are very cooperative or very conflictual will receive a higher score (more extreme) than those that are only moderately cooperative or conflictual (less extreme). By folding the scale we no longer have information about the content of the behavior (cooperation or conflict), only its character (more or less extreme). Finally, we measure extremity by classifying behaviors into two categories. Following Schrodt and Gerner

(2004), we divided WEIS actions into material and verbal categories. We then classified them as low and high commitment of resources, following East (1973). Low commitment behaviors are purely verbal behaviors, while high commitment behaviors involve some commitment of resources.[vi] We consider high commitment behaviors to represent more extreme behavior than low commitment behaviors.

The first hypothesis relates to the proposition that the institutional circumstances of coalitions translate directly into the content, either cooperative or conflictual, of foreign policy. We have argued that, whether or not coalition governments are more or less constrained, it is not possible to predict the level of cooperation or conflict of the foreign policy behavior. Constraints, if they exist, can equally constrain peaceful or war-prone proclivities and junior parties can hijack policies towards peace or towards conflict. Thus, we expect to see no difference between coalition governments and single party governments in terms of the conflict-cooperation variable.

The second hypothesis is aimed at the question of the independent effect that the institutional context of coalitions may have on the characteristics of foreign policy behavior. If coalition governments are, in fact, more constrained than single party governments, then we would expect to see less extreme (more moderate) foreign policy behaviors from coalitions than single party governments. If, on the other hand, coalitions are not constrained, are susceptible to ideologically extreme (dovish and hawkish) junior parties, or try to divert attention away from their domestic political weakness through highly visible foreign policies, then we should see more extreme (less moderate) foreign policy behaviors. This should apply equally to conflict-cooperation extremity as well as extremity associated with level of commitment.[vii]

We include in our analysis two control variables. In order to examine the independent effect of cabinet type on the dependent variables, we included a measure of the actor's power. We used 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 both a country's level of conflict-cooperation and extremity would reflect their level of national capabilities, regardless of the type of the cabinet (East, 1973).

Given findings from numerous studies on the dyadic democratic peace, we also include an additional control variable in our analysis of the level of conflict-cooperation. This variable indicates if the target of the action was democratic (all of the actors in our analyses are democratic). We used the Polity IV data set (Marshall and Jaggers, 2002) to code whether the target, if another state, was a democracy.[viii] States receiving a democracy score of greater than seven on a ten point scale were coded as democratic, otherwise they were coded as non-democratic.

Results

The effects of cabinet type on foreign policy behavior were examined using multiple regression analysis. Separate models were run for each dependent variable. In Table 2, regression estimates are first presented for the dependent variable of level of conflict-cooperation. Across 18,220 events there is a significant relationship between cabinet type and level of conflict-cooperation. Coalitions are associated with more conflict-prone behavior than single party cabinets ($p<.000$). This finding runs counter to our proposition that it is not reasonable to predict the content of foreign policy from the

government structure alone. Indeed, at first blush, this finding seems to justify those who have posited a relationship between government structure and the peace/war-proneness of a country, especially those having argued that coalition cabinets are more prone to conflictual behavior.

--- *Table 2 here* ---

Table 2 also presents regression estimates for the two dependent variables measuring extremity (conflict-cooperation extremity and commitment extremity). Across 26,143 events there is a significant relationship between cabinet type and conflict-cooperation extremity ($p<.000$).[ix] Coalition governments tend to engage in more extreme behavior than single party governments. This finding is consistent with the proposition that coalitions pursue more aggressive and/or more cooperative strategies because of their institutional and political dynamics.

With regard to the commitment variable we find a similar pattern. Using logit analysis, across 26,806 events, coalition governments were more likely to engage in high commitment behavior (more extreme behavior) than single party governments ($p<.000$). As with conflict-cooperation extremity, this finding suggests that coalitions are not constrained, are hijacked toward extremity, or try to divert attention from domestic problems, thus resulting in more extreme foreign policy behaviors.

On closer examination, however, a difficulty arises with regard to drawing conclusions from these analyses. In particular, the results may be driven by particular countries that dominate the dataset. Specifically, Israel (as the actor in over 30% of the events), the United Kingdom (as the actor in over 15% of the events), and West Germany (as the actor in over 11% of the events), together constitute more than three-fifths of the

data. Germany and Israel together account for 82% of the events with coalition cabinets and the United Kingdom accounts for over 34% of the events with single-party cabinets. Thus, these three countries undoubtedly have a disproportionate influence on the results. Furthermore, Israel, with the highest percentage of events in the dataset, engages in the most conflictual behavior of the parliamentary democracies and exhibits very high levels of extremity in terms of both conflict-cooperation and commitment.

For these reasons, we performed two additional sets of analyses, each of which adjusts for the distortion associated with countries that dominate the dataset. The first set of analyses (see Table 3) weights the cases so that all countries' events are equal in the analysis. This is done by weighting each country's events to the mean number of events across countries. In this way, no country is disproportionate in the data, and the total number of events is preserved. This analysis yields results consistent with our hypothesis that cabinet type is not related to the level of conflict-cooperation. The relationship is positive (coalitions are more cooperative than single party cabinets) but is not significant (p=.352). The relationships between cabinet type and extremity, however, remain significant. As before, coalitions engage in more extreme conflictual-cooperative behavior than single-parties, (p=.000) and are more likely to engage in high commitment behaviors (p=.000).

--- *Table 3 here* ---

An alternative approach to aggregating the data was explored in order to further address the disproportionate influence of some countries. Instead of examining all events from single-party government in comparison to all events from coalition governments,

we aggregated the events by individual governments. For each country we established the beginning and end date of every government. We coded each individual government as a single party or coalition, and then took the mean value for each dependent variable across all events for that government. Thus, each government has a score for level of cooperation/conflict based on that government's average cooperation/conflict score across all events coded for that government. The same was done for the Extremity variable and for the Commitment variable, as well as for the control variables (Power, and Democratic Target).[x] This results in a much smaller dataset that consists of 216 governments (rather than 26,000+ events). It also has the effect of creating greater equality for the number of observations across countries. The number of governments within countries ranges from 4 (Iceland and Spain) to 25 (Italy), with Israel having 17, the U.K. having 9, and Germany having 12 (see Table 4).[xi]

--- *Table 4 here* ---

As with the weighted analysis, the results of this test (see Table 5) support our expectation that cabinet type is not significantly related to conflict-cooperation (p=.283). The results are also consistent with the previous analyses in that coalitions engage in more extreme conflictual-cooperative foreign policy behaviors than single-party governments (p=.029). Contrary to the previous analyses, however, the relationship between cabinet type and commitment is no longer significant (p=.475), although it is in the same direction.

--- *Table 5 here* ---

From these three sets of analyses, we cannot conclude that coalitions are more peaceful, as some contend, or more aggressive, as others argue. This is consistent with the mixed findings of previous studies. We can, however, be more confident that cabinet type is related to extremity of action. In all three tests, coalitions exhibited more extreme behaviors compared to single party cabinets. In two of the three tests, coalitions were associated with more committed behaviors.[xii]

Discussion

Our results point to the conclusion that the institutional and political dynamics of coalitions affect the character of their foreign policy. In the events analyzed here, coalitions tend to be more extreme in their conflict-cooperation behavior than single party governments. With event data, however, it is difficult to investigate the possible mechanisms behind this finding. There are several possibilities in the extant literature. First, since senior parties usually have to rely on more extreme, ideological junior parties with whom they are vulnerable to blackmail attempts, coalitions may be "hijacked" by these junior parties, in both extreme directions. Junior parties that are able to influence foreign policy may pull the cabinet towards highly cooperative policies or highly aggressive policies. Second, if coalitions are inherently weak domestically, then they may need to engage in "high profile" foreign policies in order to gain legitimacy and/or divert attention from their domestic problems. This argument is usually used to predict more conflictual policies, but one could argue that highly cooperative foreign policies would serve the same purposes. Finally, if coalitions are less constrained than single

parties in that the multiple actors make it more difficult for others to assign responsibility to any single party, coalitions may feel more comfortable engaging in extreme endeavors. Again, this argument is usually made to justify the expectation that coalitions are more conflictual, but if both highly conflictual and highly cooperative behavior and high commitment behavior entail risks, then the diffusion of authority that comes with multiparty coalitions may be behind these risky choices.

Interestingly, these possible explanations for the relationship between cabinet type and more extreme foreign policy parallel the research on group polarization in social psychology. This research focuses on the finding from several studies that groups make more extreme choices than do individuals (Myers and Lamm, 1976; Brauer and Judd, 1996). More than the sum of their parts, groups tend to engage in excessively cautious or risky behavior (Brown, 2000).[xiii] Polarization means "the average postgroup response will tend to be more extreme in the same direction as the average of the pregroup response" (Myers and Lamm, 1976:603). 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).

Psychologists and political scientists who have utilized this research to look at policymaking groups have offered several explanations behind group polarization, including diffusion of responsibility, persuasion by leaders or by a minority within the group, and information-sharing practices (for reviews, see Vertzberger, 1997; Brown, 2000). This research has rarely looked at institutional characteristics that might enhance group polarization (Janis's work on groupthink (1972) is one exception). We argue,

however, that coalitions provide an institutional setting that is ripe for such polarization, for the reasons discussed above.

Still, what accounts for the observed extremity in the foreign policies of coalitions is unclear and further research is necessary to investigate the possibilities. This future research could be guided by parallel ideas from social psychological research on group polarization.[xiv] Case study research that traced the process of coalition decision making would shed light on the underlying mechanisms linking institutional and political conditions to foreign policy outcomes. If junior parties and their persuasive and manipulative techniques are actually the source of extreme policy positions, this explanation gains greater credibility.

Further research might also focus on the differences between coalitions and even on the notion that the categories of multi- and single-party cabinets are not dichotomous, but rather exist on a continuous dimension of coalition character (Nousiainen and Blondel:306). Thus, some coalitions might behave more like our expectations of single-party cabinets, and vice versa. It may be that the different images of coalition politics, as described above, stem from different types of coalitions. Certain coalitions, for example, may be more prone to conflict, while others are more likely to be cooperative, regardless of their external environments.

What factors might we investigate as possible conditions affecting the coalition character of cabinets? Hagan (1993) offers some avenues in his discussion of how coalitions can escape internal divisions and act coherently. He argues that the precise distribution of power among the parties in the cabinet, the degree of policy agreement that exists inside and outside the cabinet, the overall nature of political relationships

among the coalition parties (i.e. the presence or absence of consensual norms), and the extent of opposition within the coalition partners all influence the nature of the policymaking process and the decisions that coalitions make (Hagan, 1993:27-30; see also Hagan et al., 2001). Many of these factors are consistent with how coalition theorists (e.g., Dodd, 1976; Strøm, 1990; Laver and Shepsle, 1996) categorize cabinets. Coalition theory has focused on predicting what types of coalitions might emerge – e.g., minimum winning majority coalitions, grand coalitions, minority coalitions, etc. While there has been little research on the effects of these coalition types on cabinet processes and policy choices (Browne, 1982; Müller and Strøm, 2000), the types of coalitions suggested by this body of work could be useful in future research on how coalition politics influence policymaking and foreign policy behaviors.

CONCLUSIONS:
INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTS ON CHARACTER, NOT CONTENT

Coalitions and Single Party governments appear to behave differently in foreign policy. Our analyses, however, suggest that institutional differences do not directly translate into differences in the content of policies. Generally, coalitions do not engage in either more cooperative or more conflictual behavior compared to single party cabinets. This runs counter to much of the research that assumes a unidirectional policy effect of institutions. In particular, the structural explanation of the democratic peace assumes that the constraints built-in to democratic institutions produces more peaceful behavior. We have argued, however, that this confounds institutions with the policy positions of

domestic actors and that it is necessary to know both positions and institutions in order to have clear expectations about the direction of a state's foreign policy. In the case of coalitions, it is important to know the preferences of parliaments and the multiple parties within the cabinet who may constrain or push the state in policy choices.

Rather than directly affecting the content of foreign policy in a single direction, the institutional dynamics associated with multiparty cabinets appear to have an independent effect on the character of their foreign policies. This study suggests that coalitions engage in more extreme behaviors. The search for the underlying mechanisms that translate institutional constraints and incentives into more extreme foreign policies leads us to a focus on policymaking processes, such as the relationships between cabinet members, the influence strategies junior parties use, and the effects of accountability on policymakers. These processes, in addition to actors' preferences, are often assumed but seldom investigated in extant research. Given the importance of the states in contemporary global politics that are ruled by coalitions (such as India, Turkey, and Japan), we believe it is critical to enhance our understanding of the policymaking processes that lead multiparty cabinets to adopt extreme foreign policies.

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Table 1
Countries and Cabinet Types

Actor	# of Events with Single Party Cabinets	# of Events with Coalition Cabinets	Total Events
Australia	292	286	578
Austria	192	112	304
Belgium	0	238	238
Canada	1187	0	1187
Denmark	93	73	166
West Germany	17	2958	2975
Greece	570	2	572
Iceland	0	138	138
India	1918	5	1923
Ireland	177	111	288
Israel	0	9320	9320
Italy	108	817	925
Japan	1865	0	1865
Luxembourg	0	40	40
Netherlands	0	329	329
New Zealand	272	0	272
Norway	101	104	205
Spain	307	0	307
Sweden	329	44	373
Turkey	409	334	743
United Kingdom	4096	0	4096
Total	11933	14911	26844

Table 2
Cabinet Type and Foreign Policy Event Behaviors

COOPERATION/CONFLICT

	Coefficient[a]	Standard Error	Significance
Cabinet Type[b]	-.297	.065	.000
Actor Power	35.069	1.744	.000
Democratic Target	1.512	.056	.000
(N = 18,220)			

EXTREMTIY OF ACTION

	Coefficient	Standard Error	Significance
Cabinet Type	.243	.039	.000
Actor Power	-13.192	1.063	.000
(N= 26,143)			

COMMITMENT

	Coefficient	Standard Error	Significance
Cabinet Type	.184	.036	.000
Actor Power	-18.1	1.088	.000
(N= 26, 806)			

[a]The coefficient is the unstandardized estimate from the regression analysis (logit analysis for the commitment variable).
[b]Cabinets were coded positive for coalitions (0=single party, 1= coalition)

Table 3
Cabinet Type and Foreign Policy Behavior:
Weighted Cases

COOPERATION/CONFLICT

	Coefficient[a]	Standard Error	Significance
Cabinet Type[b]	.052	.056	.352
Actor Power	19.305	1.722	.000
Democratic Target	.238	.055	.000
(N = 18,918)			

EXTREMITY OF ACTION

	Coefficient[a]	Standard Error	Significance
Cabinet Type[b]	-.213	.030	.000
Actor Power	-3.423	.936	.000
(N= 26,062)			

COMMITMENT

	Coefficient[a]	Standard Error	Significance
Cabinet Type[b]	.137	.032	.000
Actor Power	-10.205	1.121	.000
(N= 26,806)			

[a]The coefficient is the unstandardized estimate from the regression analysis (logit analysis for the commitment variable).
[b]Cabinets were coded positive for coalitions (0=single party, 1= coalition)

Table 4
Cabinets and Cabinet Types[a]

Actor	Single Party Cabinets	Coalition Cabinets	Total Cabinets
Australia	5	8	13
Austria	5	3	8
Belgium	0	8	8
Canada	10	0	10
Denmark	7	3	10
West Germany	1	11	12
Greece	6	0	6
Iceland	0	4	4
India	9	1	10
Ireland	6	2	8
Israel	0	17	17
Italy	6	19	25
Japan	17	0	17
Luxembourg	0	5	5
Netherlands	0	10	10
New Zealand	9	0	9
Norway	6	4	10
Spain	4	0	4
Sweden	8	3	11
Turkey	7	4	11
United Kingdom	9	0	9
Total	115	102	217

[a]Only cabinets with five or more events are included in this analysis so that a cabinet's foreign policy behavior would not be represented by a very small number of events.

Table 5
Cabinet Type and Foreign Policy Behavior:
Cabinet Aggregates

	COOPERATION/CONFLICT		
	Coefficient[a]	Standard Error	Significance
Cabinet Type[b]	-.215	.199	.283
Actor Power	15.334	5.877	.01
Democratic Target	.14	.453	.758
(N = 217)			

	EXTREMITY OF ACTION		
	Coefficient[a]	Standard Error	Significance
Cabinet Type[b]	.245	.111	.029
Actor Power	-2.685	3.291	.415
(N= 217)			

	COMMITMENT		
	Coefficient[a]	Standard Error	Significance
Cabinet Type[b]	.012	.017	.475
Actor Power	1.542	.514	.003
(N= 217)			

[a]The coefficient is the unstandardized estimate from the regression analysis.
[b]Cabinets were coded positive for coalitions (0=single party, 1= coalition)

NOTES

[i] This is consistent with the literature on group polarization that suggests group processes generate more extreme choices than group members would make independently (see, for example, Vertzberger, 1997).

[ii] The expectation that coalition cabinets are immobilized is strongly rooted in historical examples from the French experience (see Hagan, 1993, Elman, 2000, and Ripsman, 2002).

[iii] One parliamentary democracy that was in the data set, Malta, was not included in this analysis due to its very small number of events (3). This did not affect the pattern of results.

[iv] The sources used were: Dodd (1969; 1983) Ahmad (1977), Strøm (1990), Van Roozendaal (1992), Derbyshire and Derbyshire (2000), Hale (2000), Hideo (2000), Müller and Strøm (2000), Woldendorp, Keman, and Budge (2000), Close (2002), Mershon (2002), and Moon and Sharmon (2003).

[v] Absolute values of the cooperation-conflict scales were used so that both the highest levels of conflict and the highest levels of cooperation received the same score (+10).

[vi] 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.

[vii] The variables commitment and extremity of behavior are correlated (Pearson correlation .694) but are not identical.

[viii] Not all of the targets of the actions were states. All non-state actors were therefore not coded for this control variable and these events were not included in the analysis of cooperative behavior.

[ix] With the extremity dependent variables, there is no theoretical or empirical rationale for including as a control variable the status of the target in terms of whether it is a democracy or not. Thus, this control variable is not included in the models with the conflict-cooperation extremity dependent variable or the commitment extremity dependent variable.

[x] The CINC data is annual. In those instances when a government was in power through two or more calendar years, the average CINC value was used.

[xi] The 217 cabinets had a mean number of events of 123.

[xii] In an additional set of analyses, we examined all events, unweighted and unaggregated, except those in which the actor was Germany, Israel, and the United Kingdom. Leblang and Chan (2003) likewise omit Israel from their analyses of war involvement for similar reasons. This analysis revealed the exact same pattern as the weighted analyses. With the three most dominant actors omitted, across 7,691 events, the relationship between cabinet type and level of conflict-cooperation is no longer significant (p=.5). The relationships between cabinet type and extremity of behavior, however, remains significant. As before, coalitions are more likely to engage in more extreme conflict-cooperation

behaviors (n=10,106; p.=.003) and more extreme commitment behavior (n=10,454; p=.03).

[xiii] Earlier research focused on the "risky-shift phenomenon", assuming that groups engage in more extreme behaviors, but later studies demonstrated that the shift occurs in both directions, leading to the more general term "group polarization."

[xiv] Along these lines, Kaarbo (1996a, 1996b) used theoretical ideas from research in social psychology on minority influence to analyze the conditions under which junior parties in Israel and Germany successfully influence foreign policy.