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**Citation for published version:**

Kaarbo, J 2017, 'Coalition Politics, International Norms, and Foreign Policy: Multiparty Decision-making Dynamics in Comparative Perspective', *International Politics*, pp. 1-14. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41311-017-0060-x>

**Digital Object Identifier (DOI):**

[10.1057/s41311-017-0060-x](https://doi.org/10.1057/s41311-017-0060-x)

**Link:**

[Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer](#)

**Document Version:**

Peer reviewed version

**Published In:**

International Politics

**Publisher Rights Statement:**

This is a post-peer-review, pre-copyedit version of an article published in International Politics. The definitive publisher-authenticated version Kaarbo, J. *Int Polit* (2017). Is available online at: <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1057/s41311-017-0060-x>

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**Coalition Politics, International Norms, and Foreign Policy:  
Multiparty Decision-making Dynamics in Comparative Perspective**

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Forthcoming in *International Politics* (accepted for publication April 2017)

Keywords: coalition cabinets, foreign policy change, international norms, Turkey, Japan

**ABSTRACT**

This article examines how decision-making dynamics in coalition cabinets influence states' responses to international norms and foreign policy change. International normative structures may be interpreted differently by coalition partners, which share the authority for responding to external expectations and pressures. I examine two cases of internal contestation over international norms – Japanese decision-making over the ban of imported rice in response to international norms of trade liberalisation (1993) and Turkish decision-making over the ban of the death penalty in response to international norms on human rights (1999-2002). In both cases, coalition partners disagreed over policy responses to the norm and I unpack the way in which the norm became entangled in internal coalition politics. The cases are examples of (eventual) policy change, which challenges a dominant image of coalitions completely deadlocked actors. The explanations of these case outcomes furthers our understanding of how domestic agents and structures respond to international norms and produce changes in foreign policies.

## Introduction

Compliance and internalisation of international norms does not occur evenly across states. There is wide variation in countries' response to international norms and associated normative and material pressures. This variation may be due to a clash of international expectations with states' material interests or with deeply held and institutionalised domestic values. It may also stem from clashing positions of different agents inside states and domestic contestation over responses to external norms.

This article addresses calls to examine domestic-level mechanisms and processes to explain variation in countries' compliance with or internalisation of international norms (e.g., Checkel, 2005; Cortell and Davis, 2005; Wiener, 2007). The focus here is on coalition cabinets in parliamentary democracies. A coalition of multiple political parties has become the most dominant form of government globally (Müller *et al*, 2008). The cabinet's collective authority for making foreign policy is complicated when shared by two or more parties. The coalition partners – parties who are independent political actors, competing with one another in the electoral process -- share the cabinet, dividing up the ministries and the responsibility for making decisions for the country. This can be particularly important for foreign policy, as key cabinet posts for foreign, defense, or trade policies are often split across party lines (Author, 2012). When these types of governments react to pull processes of the politics and politics associated with international norms, it is important to understand the characteristics of multiparty cabinets and the coalition politics that may arise, in order to explain how countries may change foreign policies to align (either through internalisation or compliance) with external expectations.

Although coalition partners do not always disagree on foreign policies, they frequently do, and such disagreements can affect policy-making, policy choices, and international politics. Disagreements among political parties may be especially likely with regard to international norms. As Rathbun argues, political parties, as ideationally-based actors, "become the domestic vehicles of international norms" (2004, p.7). Occupying different points in ideational space, political parties may have different orientations toward external normative pressures. How party competition and policy disagreements are resolved can be

critical to countries' foreign policy choices, including choices for change. While disagreements within an executive are certainly not unique to coalition cabinets, the dynamics of bargaining and decision making differ since the continued existence of the executive is at stake. If the policy dispute is not settled, the coalition may dissolve.

Other factors—such as the nature of security threats, economic interdependence, and public opinion—may also be important in explaining the foreign policies of countries governed by coalition cabinets. The full range of external and internal sources of foreign policy is potentially operative in every case. Consistent with the decision-making approach to foreign policy and international politics (Author, 2015), I argue that these other factors affect foreign policy primarily by how they are filtered through the decision-making authority—the coalition cabinet.

When political parties disagree on responses to international norms, it is clear that these external pressures are not automatic determinants. Parties themselves may cite external normative pressure or internal cultural norms to support a policy, but the conflict between coalition partners itself still matters and is not predetermined. Even if normative pressures point to the likelihood that one side will prevail, the disagreement between parties may have other politically significant consequences (such as loss of prestige in the international community, side payments on other policies, new elections, or political instability).

Coalition politics are often assumed to prevent foreign policy change, as the multiple veto-players in coalitions may constrain and even deadlock foreign policy (for review, see Author, 2012). According to this perspective, countries governed by coalitions are less likely to change foreign policy, either to embrace new norms or reject previously internalized ones. A decision making approach, on the other hand, sees institutional constraints as non-deterministic. Qualitative research suggests that outcomes of party disagreements in coalitions are conditioned by many factors, including the nature of the issue, decision-making tactics, the leadership style, and the unity of the parties (Author, 1996; Ozkececi-Taner, 2009; Oppermann and Brummer, 2014). Quantitative research finds that coalitions are not as deadlocked as assumed and engage in more

extreme foreign policy than single party cabinets (Author, 2008; Oktay, 2014). I address this debate by examining how coalition cabinets change foreign policy in the face of external normative pull factors and despite significant internal divisions.

### **Coalition Cabinet Responses to International Norms: Two Comparative Case Studies**

This article examines two cases of contestation in coalition cabinets over international norms – Japanese decision-making over the ban of imported rice in response to international norms of trade liberalisation (1993) and Turkish decision-making over the ban of the death penalty in response to international (particularly EU) norms on human rights (1999-2002). In each case, coalition partners disagreed over the policy response to the norm. Each case examines the way in which the international norm became entangled in internal coalition politics. The Japanese and Turkish cases are instances of (eventual) policy change, over the objection of veto-players. The explanations of the outcomes of these cases furthers our understanding of how the pull processes associated with international norms are responded to by states.

These cases are not representative, in a statistical sense, of coalition disagreements over international norms. But they do provide a rich empirical platform for assessing how coalitions respond to norms across very different temporal, institutional, and political landscapes. This study has the advantages of the comparative case study method – an ability to trace the decision making processes and the microfoundations of social and political phenomena, develop theory, examine causal factors and underlying mechanisms in context, attend to complex causation and path-dependent dynamics, and identify patterns across different contexts (George and Bennett, 2004; Beach and Pedersen, 2013). Evidence for the case studies comes from a variety of materials, including secondary sources, journalist accounts, and primary source material. In each case, I briefly examine the international norm in question, outline the coalition parties' positions on the country's proper response to the norm, trace the

decision-making process through to the outcome (a policy decision), and offer explanations for why that particular outcome emerged.<sup>1</sup>

These cases were not chosen to compare different explanations of foreign policy change, but rather to illustrate the complex decision-making processes involved in the polities and politics associated with coalition cabinets. The cases are different in many respects, including the historical, cultural, and political contexts and the nature of the foreign policy issue. Yet both cases include coalitions comprised of ideologically diverse partners who disagree on their country's proper response to international pressures, despite the strong 'pull' of international norms in these cases. Both cases involve junior coalition partners who oppose foreign policy change and threaten the survival of the government over the policy disagreement. As such, these cases are good laboratories to investigate the interplay of domestic and international factors in foreign policy change.

#### Japan, International Trade Liberalisation, and the Lift of the Rice Ban

Japan's (domestically popular) post-WWII protectionist, mercantilist foreign economic policies clashed with (U.S.-backed) international norms of liberalisation. Although Japan was a GATT member throughout this time and by the 1970s had considerably reduced its formal trade tariffs, "Japan maintained numerous non-tariff barriers, institutions, and other practices that protected national industries and contravened the fundamental objective of the GATT system: the liberalisation of trade" (Cortell and Davis, 2005, p.4). By the 1980s, the main area of Japanese trade that remained protected, at odds with GATT-based norms, was agricultural products, particularly Japan's ban on rice imports. Japan cited many reasons for its preference to not import rice, including Japanese laws identifying self-sufficiency in rice as a national security interest

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<sup>1</sup> The two cases in this paper, along with ten others, are developed fully in my book (Author, 2012). The book focuses on explaining the outcomes of coalition disagreements and on the consequences of coalition politics for effective decision-making, foreign policy and international relations. It is not directly focused on the question of international norms and foreign policy change, as is this article.

(Blaker, 1998). In addition, for Japan, rice is a near-sacred product, deeply embedded in Japanese history, culture, economics, politics, and symbolism; it was the ultimate non-negotiable market-access topic. "Not a single grain of foreign rice shall ever enter Japan," was the vow of most Japanese politicians, backed by public opinion, the press, the business community, academics, and the bureaucracy. Demands for opening the Japanese rice market were seen as a frontal assault on Japanese culture itself (Blaker, 1998, p.215).

As "rice became a symbol of all that was wrong with U.S.-Japan trade relations, international attention increasingly focused on Japanese protectionism" (Schwartz, 1998, p.260). In 1986, the United States issued a formal complaint against Japan's restrictions on agricultural imports, including rice. Japan responded by seeking exceptions to rice in multilateral liberalization negotiations. In the 1990s, the United States, along with Canada and the European Community, proposed comprehensive negotiations to force Japan to confront the rice issue (Blaker, 1998). In addition, the United States offered a compromise: Japan could delay implementing tariffs on rice for six years, during which time the United States would be granted minimum access to the Japanese rice market. Additional talks, some of them secret, ensued between the U.S. and Japan's Ministry of Agriculture to work out details. Under pressure, Japanese officials privately became resigned to some form of liberalization (Schwartz, 1998). Thus, in the early 1990s, Japan faced considerable pull factors: a structured international norm environment (trade liberalization), political institutions (GATT backed by the weight of U.S. power), and international politics (GATT negotiations and U.S. and other state lobbying).

These developments occurred in the summer of 1993 simultaneous with domestic political upheaval in Japan in which the long-ruling Liberal Democrats were replaced by a coalition government, under Minister (PM) Hosokawa. Taking office during the final round of GATT negotiations, Hosokawa's government faced significant international pressure to import rice and domestic pressures to retain the ban. A parliamentary resolution on rice self-sufficiency remained in effect and long-standing domestic opposition to rice imports remained strong. The chief barrier to change was disagreement within his governing coalition (the key domestic polity in this case). Hosokawa's public

popularity and his mandate for political reform “did not translate into the political clout to force opponents in his multi-party government, especially on a subject as touchy as rice. The coalition was not united on rice liberalization” (Blaker, 1998, p.226).

Hosokawa’s Japan New Party was the key player in Japan’s first coalition. Hosokawa assembled a seven-party coalition, with the Socialists controlling six cabinet posts and the Japan Renewal Party (JRP) five. Takemura, head of Sakigake (New Party Harbinger) was also a key actor in the coalition, even though it was a very small party (Curtis, 1999). The coalition was generally very ideologically diverse (Curtis, 1999; Hideo, 2000) and particularly divided over the issue of rice imports. Both Hosokawa and Ozawa represented domestic agents (push factors) as they favored opening the rice market before they took office (Financial Times (FT), 1993a). Japan New Party’s platform included neoliberal commitments of deregulation and trade liberalization. “Particularly significant was the fact that during the 1993 election campaign Hosokawa called for the opening of the Japanese rice market, hitherto regarded as a taboo by political parties” (Hideo, 2000, p.142). “Prime Minister Hosokawa personally placed the highest priority on the conclusion of the GATT Uruguay Round. In his words: ‘Japan is in the world system and I thought that we must show leadership by contributing to the successful conclusion of the Uruguay Round’” (Shinoda, 1998, p.705).

Although Hosokawa himself favored liberalization, as PM he reiterated the official line of opposing the lifting of the ban (Straits Times, 1993) and repeated that Japan would respect parliament’s resolution and not import rice (Agence France Presse (AFP), 1993a). When a report surfaced in October 1993 that Japan and the United States were negotiating a tariff deal, Hosokawa denied it (Jiji Press Ticker Service, 1993). After a visit from a GATT director-general in October, “the prime minister’s defensive and evasive public statements stemmed from the tightrope he was walking in domestic politics. Caught between his own preferences and stated commitments and his die-hard political opponents, Hosokawa was frustrated and cautious” (Blaker, 1998, p.228).

Hosokawa had support from his own party, Komeito, and the Democratic Socialist Party (Shinoda, 1998). To persuade Sakigake to join the coalition,



however, Hosokawa had pledged that he would oppose subjecting rice to tariffs (but did not rule out a compromise) (Blaker, 1998). Some hardline opposition to tariffs arose in Ozawa's Renewal Party, "but Ozawa seemed able to contain his troops and kept them in the party and the coalition" (Blaker, 1998, p.227). Ozawa also supported tariffs, warning that Japan would be isolated in the international arena if the United States and Europe reached an agreement on agricultural issues (Japan Economic Newswire, 1993).

The Socialists were the coalition's main source of opposition to tariffs. When rumours surfaced that Japan and the United States were negotiating a tariff deal, the Socialists warned "that Hosokawa risks undermining the governing coalition if he unilaterally endorses a lifting of the ban [and that] any move to lift the rice ban would run counter to an agreement among the coalition members to oppose liberalization" (United Press International (UPI), 1993a). The Socialists opposed any compromise and reportedly warned Hosokawa that "there could be opinions emerging in our party to leave the coalition" (AFP, 1993b).

The Socialists were supported by interest groups, a majority of the public, and the main opposition party, the LDP. In the fall of 1993, the Japanese public was divided over opening their rice market to, with 42 percent favoring and 44 percent opposing the idea. Many in the public, however, felt that Japan would have to accept rice imports eventually (Asahi News Service, 1993a; Cortell and Davis, 2005). Rice farmers were a vocal and visible source of opposition, protesting in the streets of Tokyo, even though surveys showed that most farmers also believed that rice imports were unavoidable in the future (FT, 1993a).

Supporters of liberalization attempted to change domestic opposition. Hosokawa sent the Agriculture Minister on a surprise trip to Europe to again request for an exemption for Japanese rice, in order to demonstrate to the Japanese that his government had tried to fight rice imports (Straits Times, 1993). The government also stressed "the danger of Japan being blamed for the failure of the talks if it does not agree to a compromise deal on rice" (FT, 1993b).

Throughout November 1993, government leaders continued to deny secret negotiations on rice liberalization. Not until late November did a senior official

reveal that Japan indeed was negotiating with the United States regarding rice tariffs and was likely to accept a compromise that phased in tariffs over six years (Emiko, 1993). The compromise—known as “minimum access”—was officially presented to the cabinet in early December 1993. Hosokawa argued that Japan had an obligation to uphold the world’s free trade system (Asahi News Service, 1993b). Disagreement in the coalition and ambiguity about the compromise led Hosokawa to postpone a cabinet meeting to decide the issue. Amid the delay, GATT officials pressured Japan to reach a decision and rice farmers were arrested for protesting at the parliament building.

In early December, Hosokawa called an emergency meeting with the Socialists and sent Foreign Minister Hata to Geneva to try to gain last-minute concessions (Talmadge, 1993). Hata returned with no alternatives, and the cabinet scheduled an extraordinary meeting to accept the minimum-access proposal, even if the Socialists would not approve (UPI, 1993b). The Socialists remained divided on the policy and on whether to leave the coalition (Kin, 1993; Blaker, 1998). “With Hosokawa only holding a slim parliamentary majority...the departure of just a few SDP members would threaten the four-month-old government” (UPI, 1993b). Finally, the Socialists changed their position in an overnight meeting, whilst farmers held an all-night protest outside. The party decided reluctantly to accept the proposal and to remain in the government (AFP, 1993c). Shortly thereafter, the cabinet met at 3:16 A.M. on December 14 to approve the “minimal access.” “We must do it for the sake of world trade,” Hosokawa said at a 4 A.M. news conference where he asked for the nation’s understanding” (Talmadge, 1993).

The Socialists’ attempt to constrain the coalition from changing its foreign policy and adapting to international normative pressures failed despite the party’s blackmail potential. Two factors were particularly important in this case’s outcome. First, Hosokawa’s personal commitment to rice liberalization, his leadership style, and the decision-making processes he established in the coalition allowed him to prevail over the Socialists’ objections (Shinoda, 1998). According to Shinoda (1998, pp.706-7), the “centralized nature of the coalition government helped in implementing Hosokawa’s political decision to open the rice market.” The PM never met with officials from the agricultural ministry and

for months denied that negotiations were taking place (Blaker, 1998). Hosokawa also tried to keep the issue out of public scrutiny. Government officials repeatedly denied reports of the compromise and insisted that Japan was still trying to negotiate a better deal. "As late as December 9...Hosokawa himself publicly rejected reports of a final agreement. The Japanese leaders' claim strained credulity" (Blaker, 1998, p.230).

The way the Socialists attempted to constrain this policy and their political calculations were also important. The party adopted a rigid negotiating style throughout: "The Socialists, known for nearly four decades as a party in perpetual opposition, were still playing that adversarial role—to the point of posing hostile queries about the state of the rice liberalization negotiations directly to the prime minister on the Diet floor. In the end, the negativistic politics of the Socialists left them out of the loop" (Blaker, 1998, p.230). Although they threatened to leave the coalition over the rice issue, "in the end, the party decided that breaking with the popular prime minister and bearing the blame for the collapse of the world trade system would be much more dangerous politically than protecting rice farmers" (Shinoda, 1998, pp.706-7).

In this case, no politician seemed willing to confront the pressure of the international community and risk isolating Japan (Blaker, 1998, p.230). Yet the PM navigated both internal and external pressures to significantly change Japan's foreign policy. According to Nonaka, Hosokawa "neither obeyed the U.S. government, nor utilized *gaiatsu*, as external or U.S. government pressure for domestic reform" (Naoto 2000, p.108) This decision is viewed as a major policy achievement and the Hosokawa government is characterized as "successfully" pursuing rice market liberalization, one of its chief goals, although with considerable delay and even deception (Curtis, 1999, p.134).

Despite the announcement of the agreement to allow minimal access, the issue of rice liberalization continued to cause problems for the coalition. The Socialists maintained pressure on Hosokawa not to sign the Uruguay Round treaty and again, threatened to resign. "Hosokawa said, he told them to go ahead and resign if that is what they wanted to do. He said that he was proud of his decision to open the rice market and that it was all right with him if his government fell on this issue" (Hosokawa interview, quoted in Curtis, 1999,

p.264). Hosokawa claimed that he resigned as PM to reduce the Socialist Party's ability to obstruct Japanese policy (Curtis, 1999). The rice liberalization issue weakened the Socialists' internal cohesion, and they were left out of the next coalition (Mochizuki, 1995).

### Turkey, International Norms of Human Rights, and the Abolition of the Death Penalty

In March 2001, the EU (the chief agent at the international level in this case) agreed on the Accession Partnership for Turkey. This framework established the economic, legal, and political reforms (the Copenhagen criteria) necessary for membership. These criteria enshrined European and international norms about democracy, liberalism, and human rights (Manners, 2002) and represent the external normative environment in this case. Although all of Turkey's political parties generally supported EU membership, some reforms were contentious, particularly the abolishment of the death penalty which was required by the Accession Partnership (Robins, 2003). Turkish public opinion was not very supportive of complete abolition of the death penalty (Associated Press, 1998). According to Mehmet Güner, director of an organization for families of soldiers and police killed in the line of duty, "We do not accept any good will for those who want to divide this country and pull down our flag....Ending capital punishment should not be a precondition to enter the European Union. If they like us, they better accept us, the way we are" (Frantz, 2001).

The issue of the death penalty was connected to Turkey's convicted terrorists and the Kurdish nationalist problem. Members of the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK), the political and terrorist organization in Turkey seeking Kurdish independence, were found guilty of terrorism and had been sentenced to death. Most important, the PKK's leader, Abdullah Öcalan was sentenced to death and was awaiting this punishment when the EU issued its demands to Turkey regarding the death penalty. The execution of Öcalan became a very sensitive issue within Turkey, and in Turkish foreign policy (Dunér and Deverell, 2001; Eralp, 2003).

The EU's requirement that the law be abolished became one of the focal points in European-Turkish relations and the politics of its international negotiations. At the 1999 Helsinki Summit, EU President Solana summarized the EU's position: "It would be very difficult to have a member in the European family who does not have the same respect for life" (Associated Press, 1999b). The death penalty also became a foreign policy issue in Turkey's bilateral relations (additional pull factors at the external level), particularly with Italy and Belgium who refused to extradite PKK leaders to Turkey because they faced capital punishment (Dogar and Dennis, 1998). More generally, Turkey found itself out of step with liberal international norms of human rights and the growing notion that domestic political conditions are relevant to foreign relations. According to Robins, "Turkey just did not connect with the spirit of these normative changes" (Robins, 2003, p.30). This lack of connection, Rumford argues, and the inconsistency "in Turkey's approach to aligning domestic democratic norms with those of the EU is the result of divisions within the political elites" (Rumford, 2002, p.51).

Indeed, the cabinet that came to power in 1999—the coalition between the Democratic Left Party, the Nationalist Action Party, and the Motherland Party—attempted to commute existing death sentences to life in jail but failed because of disagreements among coalition member, despite European pressures to act. In October 2001, Parliament passed thirty-four amendments to the constitution to conform to EU requirements, and the death penalty was restricted to crimes committed in cases of war or the imminent threat of war and terror crimes. The EU was not satisfied and insisted that Turkey must abolish the death penalty completely (Hale, 2002).

Although parliament held the final authority to the death penalty law lay, the cabinet (the primary domestic agent in this case) was critical to the decision (Mclaren and Müftüler-Bac, 2003).<sup>2</sup> The conflict between the coalition partners (the primary domestic agents in this case) over the death penalty, however, remained unresolved through the government's tenure and weakened the

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<sup>2</sup> There is no evidence of direct presidential or military pressure or involvement in this case (Avci, 2003).

government (Hale, 2003). “The widening of human rights thus became Turkey’s most pressing political question alongside the survival of the government” (Hale, 2003, p.107). The Democratic Left party, the largest party in the coalition and the party of PM Ecevit, and the Motherland Party (as domestic push factors) supported abolishing the death penalty; the Nationalist Party, the second largest party in the cabinet, was staunchly opposed.

Although the Democratic Left Party was nationalist and held deep suspicions of the EU, it saw the death penalty as problematic for Turkish foreign relations (Ozkececi-Taner, 2009; Dunér and Deverell, 2001). Ecevit stated that “it is clear that the capital punishment cannot go with EU membership” and called the two a “contradiction.” He continued, “God willing, we will overcome this contradiction soon” (Associated Press, 1999a). The minister of justice, also from the Democratic Left Party, agreed: “Turkey, as being a member of both the Council of Europe and a candidate country to the EU, has to review the death penalty” (Anadolu Agency, 1999).

While PM Ecevit expressed hope that the penalty could be lifted for the sake of EU membership; he also stressed that this would depend on support from the other members of his coalition government (AFP, 1999). Ecevit could count on support from the Motherland Party, the smallest of the coalition partners, which was more internationalist in orientation and supported Turkey’s alignment with international human rights norms (Ozkececi-Taner, 2009). According to Önis (2003, p.18), no party “actively promoted EU-related reforms as vocally” as the Motherland Party during this period.

This was not the case with the other coalition partner, the Nationalist Action Party “which regarded any constitutional liberalization—especially on the Kurdish issue—as an insult to those who had died during the long struggle” against the PKK (Hale, 2003, p.109). The Nationalist Action Party’s position on the death penalty directly stemmed from the party’s anti-Kurd orientation. The party wanted to retain the death penalty and the right to execute Öcalan (Hale, 2002; Ozkececi-Taner, 2009). The party’s leader “Bahçeli stated Turkey wants to unite with Europe in an honorable, fair and full membership. However, there would be ‘no bargaining concerning Öcalan’” (Avci, 2003, p.160). During the 1999 elections, the Nationalist Action Party had campaigned on a “hang Öcalan”

ticket (Dunér and Deverell, 2001, p.3). “Officially, the MHP supported Turkey’s application for eventual accession, but party spokesman maintained that, since the EU was unlikely to admit Turkey anyway, there was no point in making these ‘concessions’” (Hale, 2002, p.109).

The Nationalist Action Party signaled that it would be willing to consider abolishing the death penalty but not the commutation of Öcalan’s sentence (Tinc, 1999). In one deputy’s words: “First execution. Then we can abolish the death penalty” (quoted in Tinc, 1999). Bahçeli too stood firm on Öcalan, stressing that “the sentence which the murderer deserved cannot be changed with pretexts” and that “efforts by some EU circles to present this (sparing Öcalan) as a basic condition for Turkey’s EU membership are the indication of double standards which contradict Europe’s own human rights and democracy values” (Associated Press, 2002a). In the summer of 2002, Bahçeli argued that there was no need to rush ahead with EU-demanded reforms like the death penalty since Turkey would not be able to enter the EU for another decade anyway: “This murderer has become a condition for Turkey even to be given a date to start membership talks. If that is not injustice and disrespect to our country, then what is it?” He continued, “The nationalists will under no circumstances be part of such a move” (Associated Press, 2002b).

In 2002, the party signaled that it was considering withdrawing from the coalition if the PM submitted a constitutional amendment to outlaw capital punishment (Sisler, 2002). The support of the MHP was not necessary for the legislation to succeed, as the opposition parties generally backed the measure. “Ecevit...had either to persuade Bahçeli and his colleagues to change their minds, by citing the need to meet the Copenhagen criteria if Turkey were serious in its aim of gaining accession to the EU, or to appeal to support from the opposition parties, at the risk of provoking serious splits in the government” (Hale, 2002, p.350). For a year and a half, the PM opted for delaying Turkey’s response to the EU in the hopes that he could keep the coalition together (Hale, 2002).

Eventually, in August 2002, the Motherland Party, over Nationalists’ objections, introduced a package of reforms in parliament that included the complete abolition of the death penalty. With support from the Democratic Left Party, Motherland, and the opposition parties, the legislation passed. The

Nationalist Action Party voted as a bloc against the reforms, and the coalition fell shortly after this case as a result of partisan differences regarding EU-related reforms (Özcan, 2008).

The coalition's weakened nature by 2002 may have played a role in the eventual decision to proceed with the abolition of the death penalty. As general elections were approaching and the government was still dealing with the economic consequences of the 2001 financial crisis, PM Ecevit may have opted to risk the coalition and pass reforms that were necessary for membership. Although abolishing the death penalty was not popular in Turkey, the Democratic Left Party and the Motherland Party may have calculated that their constituencies would see the pro-EU policy favorably. Also, as the election neared, the Nationalist Action Party's threat to withdraw from the coalition became less meaningful—the coalition was not likely to survive the next election anyway.

One possible reason the coalition survived its disagreements on this issue for so long was because of a commitment to the coalition. According to Başkan (2005, p.65) "Ecevit and Bahçeli acted like a state elite in emphasizing that the country's interests were more important than each party's interests." PM Ecevit refused to dismantle the coalition to move forward on the reforms, and his "strong words to the PKK appear to be an attempt to placate MHP and its grassroots supporters" (Radio Free Europe, 2000). Early on, Bahçeli apparently overruled the rest of his party by agreeing to postpone a final decision on Öcalan (Radio Free Europe, 2000). The Nationalist Action Party, however, became more vocal and insistent in 2002. With elections approaching and the party facing grassroots pressure, it may have felt the need to distinguish itself from its coalition partners (Avci, 2003).

The nature of this issue may have also played a role in this case. Although a compromise was attempted, with the 2000 legislation abolishing the death penalty except for terror crimes, the EU rejected it. The black-and-white choice facing Turkey prevented compromise between the parties (Hale, 2003). Finally, the fact that Parliament would be the final locus of authority for this decision and that the opposition parties supported the abolition of the death penalty



allowed the coalition to escape a direct decision that risked the government's survival.

This case of change in foreign policy to adapt to external normative pressure conforms with two somewhat contradictory images of coalition policy-making. On the one hand, considerable deadlock and delay occurred. After the Helsinki Summit in December 1999, Turkey knew it would have to abolish the death penalty so that membership negotiations could begin. But it did not act decisively for more than a year and a half. This delay stemmed directly from the opposition of a junior coalition partner. On the other hand, the eventual decision was historic, and the time it took to pass the set of reforms was shorter than expected, given the significant opposition (Eralp, 2004; Önis, 2003). That such a weak coalition was able to make this reform runs contrary to the image that divided coalitions are incapable of producing anything but fragmented action.

## **Conclusions**

The cases in this article offer a window into the world where international normative pressures through polities and politics meet domestic political agents in domestic institutional contexts. The cases examine how coalition cabinets respond to international norms and when and how these responses lead to foreign policy change. They demonstrate that political parties can disagree on their state's proper response – some support internalization of or at least compliance with international norms, others favor resisting external normative pressures.

These cases also demonstrate that variation in countries' reactions is about more than a clash of external vs. internal norms. Internal agents themselves can disagree over both internal and external values and principles. States are not unitary normative agents and norms are filtered through domestic contestation, which is conditioned by institutions, actors' positions, and actors' decision making strategies. A decision making perspective highlights the complexities of contestation. Key factors explain the outcome of these internal conflicts, including PM leadership style, party strategies, political calculations and commitment to the coalition, and the nature of the issue, and public support were all important in these cases. International pull factors – both normative

and material – was also present and may have tipped the balance in favor of the internal actors supporting the ‘zeitgeist’ of the international norm, but external pressures in no way determined the final outcomes. Pressures failed to convince, and in some instances hardened the views of opponents to norm-aligning foreign policy.

Finally, these cases challenge the image of coalitions as incapable of significant foreign policy change. Despite the presence of multiple veto players with deep disagreements, the Japanese and Turkish cabinets made historic decisions. Yet in both cases, coalition politics considerably delayed the countries’ responses to international norms due to the constraint of junior coalition partners. The junior coalition parties in these cases were not ‘hijacking’ the policy (one strategy for junior party influence; see Author, 1996, 2012), but ‘blackmailing’ the cabinet by using their required support for the survival of the coalition to prevent the PMs from doing what they would do. In these cases, PMs were able to eventually circumvent this opposition, for the multiple internal and external reasons discussed above.

These cases demonstrate that attention to the nature of coalition politics is necessary for a complete understanding of their responses, and indeed for the responses of the many states ruled by coalitions, as they grapple with international norms and as international norms in turn become entangled in internal political decision making processes.

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