

Appointing Ministers to Multiparty Cabinets ¹

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ABSTRACT

How does intra-party competition affect governance in multiparty cabinets? For a long time scholars have recognized that intra-party competition and the strength of factions can affect governance through the selection of cabinet ministers or through policy negotiations among coalition partners. Yet, there has been very little, if any, quantitative work to test these expectations, primarily due to lack of data that could either measure party cohesion or ministerial types. Using novel data on both accounts, this paper investigates how intra-party ideological cohesion affects ministerial appointments in four European countries with multiparty governments: Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden and Ireland. We make two important contributions in this paper. First, we provide a theory of ministerial appointments predicting that when there is intra-party conflict over policy, more ideologically extreme ministers are appointed. This prediction holds even in multiparty cabinets, going against one's expectations that more moderate ministers should be appointed in multiparty cabinets. Second, utilizing unique data on ministers' background, we show that intra-party conflict predicts the appointments of ministers with more extreme policy preferences.

1. INTRODUCTION

Intra-party politics are responsible for many political decisions that at first seem hard to explain. Notable examples are the Greek referendum in the summer of 2015 about accepting the conditions of a deal with the country's lenders that had actually expired (Stamouli and Walker 2015), or the British referendum on exiting the European Union (Follain and Kennedy 2016), they point to a very important and yet understudied question: how do parties and their ideological cohesion affect government formation and, subsequently government policy? To this day, scholars have failed to systematically investigate theoretically and empirically the role of intra-party competition on ministerial appointments, with only a couple of notable exceptions (Bäck et al. 2016).

More broadly, the empirical and theoretical work on party competition, coalition formation and policy making has mostly treat parties as unitary actors (for example, Downs 1957; Laver and Shepsle 1996). Only recently have scholars started to study the impact of intra-party politics more rigorously (Bräuninger and Giger 2016; Lo et al. 2014; Ceron 2016; Greene and Haber 2015), although they have long identified that intra-party competition affects both party policy position and government formation (Budge et al. 2010; Laver and Shepsle 1999).

This question is of particular interest to scholars of parliamentary systems where the majority of governments are coalitions of parties. Common wisdom and principal-agent models would suggest that given conflicting policy preferences, party leaders should try to appoint moderate MPs to the cabinet to reduce intra-cabinet conflict (Bäck et al. 2016). Against this expectation, we provide a theory and empirical evidence that ministerial appointments are often best explained by intra-party conflict than by a party's policy agenda, or by simple principal-agent models. A direct implication of our predictions is that more ministers with extreme policy preferences are appointed to multiparty cabinets

when their parties are ideologically divided, thus increasing the ideological polarization of multiparty cabinets.

The formation of coalition governments is one of the most complicated processes in democracies. Political parties have to agree on a common government program despite often running on divergent electoral manifestos, on the distribution of ministerial portfolios, but also on the specific ministerial appointments. Even though scholars have typically treated these processes as independent of each other by studying, for example, government formation and portfolio allocation separately, for party leaders this is one complicated exercise. Party leaders go to these negotiations aiming at achieving multiple goals: maximize their office and policy goals, while also minimally satisfying their party and its factions.

This paper provides one of the rare attempts to empirically establish the link between intra-party competition and ministerial appointments in coalition cabinets. We provide a theory of strategic ministerial selection under varying levels of intra-party competition, building from the assumption that leaders choose ministers to maximize their party's support. If possible, they would do this by appointing the median party member. However, and perhaps counter-intuitively, not all members of parliament (MPs) are willing to accept ministerial positions. Unlike in ideologically cohesive parties, in factionalized parties accepting an important ministerial post is costly. Thus we predict that in factionalized parties more ideologically extreme MPs will want to join the cabinet to implement their preferred policies. For ideologues, the costs of not serving are too high

Building on recent work that argues ambiguity in party manifesto positions might reveal intra-party competition (Lo et al. 2014) and that party factions are represented in the cabinet through cabinet ministers (Alexiadou 2015), we predict that manifesto ambiguity predicts the appointments of cabinet ministers. In particular, we argue that to the extent that pledge ambiguity is an outcome of intra-party competition between different

ideological factions, more ambiguous party positions are linked to the appointments of ideologues–ministers with more extreme policy views than the party leadership. Equivalently, we expect higher clarity on policy issues is associated with the appointments of loyalists.

Finding a linkage between intra-party ideological competition and ministerial appointments has major implications for governance and democratic accountability. Most scholars have either assumed that ministers are constrained by the preferences of the party leader in line with the ‘leadership hypothesis’ (Strøm 2000) or are constrained by party backbenchers in line with the ‘party government hypothesis’ (Kam et al. 2010). Neither of these important hypotheses, however, assumes that backbenchers are split along ideological lines in party factions, despite recent work that highlights how party factions constrain party leadership (Ceron 2012). Illustrating that ideological intra-party competition constrains cabinet ministers significantly enhances our understanding of the very complicated process of party and cabinet governance in parliamentary democracies.

2. THEORETICAL MODEL

Our theory is derived from the citizen-candidate model of electoral competition (Besley and Coate 1997; Persson and Tabellini 2000). We assume that the preferences of party members can be represented with a uniform distribution on single dimension over a finite range, $\text{unif}(a, b)$ with mean $\mu = \frac{1}{2}(a + b)$ and variance $\sigma^2 = \frac{1}{12}(b - a)^2$. The range of this distribution identifies the ideological/policy space over which party members’ ideal points are spread. Ideologically homogeneous parties, faction-free parties, are represented by low-variance distributions that concentrate around a single (ideal) point. By contrast, ideologically heterogeneous parties, faction-laden parties, are represented by

high-variance distributions.¹

Our model demonstrates the theoretical connection between party heterogeneity and minister selection by identifying which party members would accept an appointment under various levels of preference heterogeneity. We show, somewhat counter-intuitively, that middle-of-the-road consensus candidates for ministerial posts will not emerge under heterogeneous party preferences. Moderate party members will decline to serve. Consequently, party leaders occasionally have to appoint members with extreme preferences.

Assume two parties whose members are located at opposite ends of the policy continuum, a left and right-wing party. Imagine three types of potential candidates for the post within each party, $J = E, M, C$, where candidate E is an extremist candidate (i.e., an ideologue) located near the end of the policy continuum, candidate M is the median party member, and candidate C is a centrist candidate located closest to the center of the policy continuum.

Why are MPs willing to serve as ministers? The theoretical literature typically assumes that politicians are either office seeking or policy motivated. In our model, candidates are purely policy motivated and, after they are chosen, there is no commitment mechanism for ministers to follow through with any policy promises made prior to their appointment. In other words, it would not be credible for an extremist to commit to govern as a centrist. The only credible policy commitment is at the candidate's ideal point. Because the candidates are policy motivated, serving as a minister is costly. We assume the cost of serving, ε , is a function of party heterogeneity, $\varepsilon = f(\sigma^2)$. It is more taxing to serve as minister when the party is divided. The party leader follows an appointment rule that maximizes support among the party membership.

The sequence of events is as follows: 1) party members announce their willingness to

¹Working with a uniform distribution simplifies the model, but the main results are not driven by this assumption.

serve as minister, 2) the party leader selects among the candidates, 3) the chosen candidate sets policy, and, if no one agrees to serve, a default policy \bar{g} is implemented. We focus on the one and two-candidate equilibria.

The party leader will always appoint the median party member if she is willing to serve. No other candidates have an incentive to challenge the median party member. A one-candidate equilibrium in which the median party member agrees to serve, is unopposed, and then appointed by the party leader exists whenever

$$W^M(g^M) - W^M(\bar{g}) \geq \varepsilon,$$

where W^M is the indirect utility of the median party member from choosing her ideal policy, g^M . Given our assumption about preference heterogeneity and the cost of serving as minister, this condition is more likely to hold when parties are unified.

Next, consider the two candidate case. In order to maximize party support, the leader focuses on the policy preferences of the median party member, W^M which is single-peaked at g^M . In this case, the party leader's appointment rule is

$$p_E = \begin{cases} 0 & \text{if } W^M(g_E) < W^M(g_C) \\ \frac{1}{2} & \text{if } W^M(g_E) = W^M(g_C) \\ 1 & \text{if } W^M(g_E) > W^M(g_C) \end{cases}$$

The party leader never appoints the ideologically extreme candidate when the median party member prefers the centrist; the party leader appoints the ideologically extreme candidate with probability $\frac{1}{2}$ when the median party member is indifferent between the extremist and centrist; and the party leader always appoints the ideologically extreme candidate when she is preferred by the median party member to the centrist.

A two-candidate equilibrium exists when

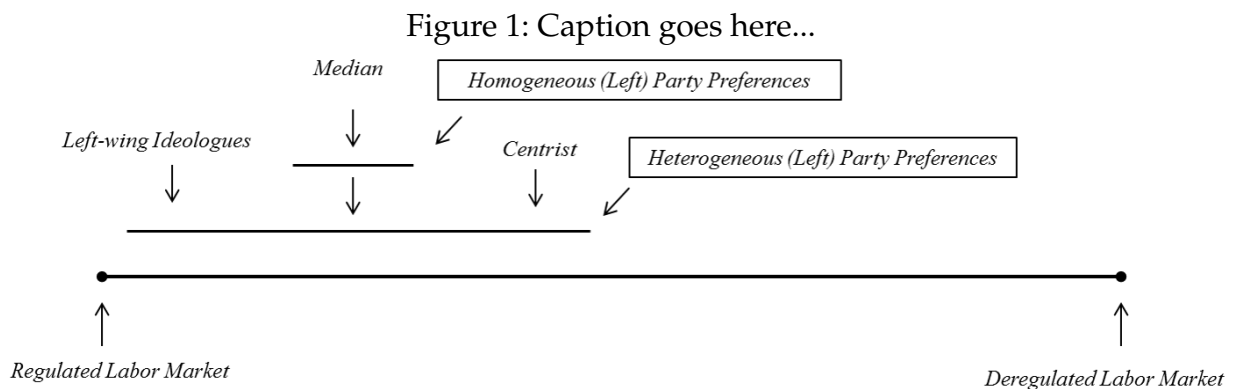
$$W^m(g^E) = W^m(g^C)$$

$$\frac{1}{2} [W^E(g^E) - W^E(g^C)] \geq \varepsilon$$

$$\frac{1}{2} [W^C(g^C) - W^C(g^E)] \geq \varepsilon$$

Note that in equilibrium the two party members willing to serve have ideal points that are symmetric around the median party member and when the range of ideal points is large and therefore the cost of serving is high, these candidates will be located near the endpoints of the interval.

A graphical representation of the model is provided in Figure 1. We have in mind the position of labor minister and policy preferences over the optimal degree of labor market regulation. Party members located on the left end of the policy continuum prefer regulated labor markets while those on the right prefer deregulated markets. This representation shows two hypothetical left-wing parties—one for which the range of policy preferences is small and one for which the range of policy preferences is large. For left-wing parties, the range of preferences will locate on the left-hand side of the policy continuum.



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The party leaders would prefer to appoint the median party member in both cases, but this can only happen if she is willing to serve. When party preferences are homogeneous and the costs of serving are low, the conditions for a one-candidate equilibrium are likely to hold. The median party member agrees to serve because the cost is less than the utility loss from having the default policy adopted. No other party members have an incentive to signal their willingness to serve because they will not be selected. By not throwing their hats into the ring they avoid the humiliation of not being chosen, if nothing else.

When party preferences are heterogeneous, the cost of serving is higher. When the cost is too high, no party members will find it in their interest to serve. There is a range of costs, however—too high for the one-candidate equilibrium and too low for the no-candidate equilibrium—for which party members near the endpoints will agree to serve. These party members are the left-wing ideologue and centrist in Figure 1. If the cost is high enough, the median party member (and others centrally located) will prefer the default policy to serving. End-point candidates, however, may find it in their interest to serve, and if they are symmetrically located around the median, the party leader will flip a coin to decide the appointment. This is stable. No one has an incentive to deviate from this behavior. In this two-candidate equilibrium, end-point candidates will be appointed, ideologues and centrists. Note that both these party members have relatively extreme preferences *within the party*. We refer to these candidates below as *party extremists* even though centrists do not have extreme preferences with respect to the entire ideological/policy space.

3. EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

To test our hypothesis we must construct measures of intra-party ideological cohesion, on the one hand, and of ministers own ideological preferences on the other. Our dependent

variable is cabinet ministers who have more extreme policy preferences within their parties, who we will call *party extremists*. Theoretically, these ministers would be located away from the party median, to the median's left and right. So, for social democratic parties, for example, an extremist would be either a left-wing ideologue, such as a former trade unionist or a centrist, such as someone with a business background. In right of center parties, on the other hand, someone with a union background would be a centrist and to the left of the party, while someone with a business background would be placed to the right. We rely on Alexiadou's (2015; 2016) coding of extremists and moderates. According to the author ministers own policy preferences can be proxied by ministers' prior professional experience and partisan affiliation. Specially, studying the ministers of social affairs and employment, Alexiadou coded left ideologues as social democrats who were former trade union leaders, and right ideologues as those ministers who have background in business, economics and finance and who were appointed by right of center parties. We follow these definitions and assume that social democrats with union background are left ideologues while social democrats with business background are centrists, while conservatives with background in business are right-wing ideologues and conservatives with union background are centrists. Utilizing data from Alexiadou (2016), we define as party extremists all ministers with background in the trade union movement and in economics, banking, finance and business. Thus, our main dependent variable is ministers with background in *trade unionism, economics, banking, finance and business*.

We rely on data produced by Alexiadou (2016). The dataset consists of ministerial appointments to the portfolios of the prime minister, the deputy prime minister, as well as the ministers of foreign affairs, economics, finance, budget- when applicable- health, employment and social affairs. Even though this list of portfolios is on average about a third of all cabinet portfolios, it is a pretty exhaustive list of the portfolios that handle the governments socio-economic policy. The unit of analysis in the dataset is individual ministers

nested in cabinets, which in turn are nested in the governments of the four countries we study here: Germany, Ireland, The Netherlands and Sweden. Thus, the dataset is structured at four different levels; individual ministers, cabinets, governments and countries. We include all major party families in the analysis - social democrats, Christian democrats, Libeals, Conservatives-, and exclude small niche parties, such as green or nationalists. We also exclude the agrarian Swedish party.

We follow Lo et al. (2014) to measure intra-party ideological conflict. According to the authors, higher levels of manifesto ambiguity understood as a similar number of left and right policy statements is indicative of multiple and conflicting views within political parties (cite). We use the measure of manifesto ambiguity as our main explanatory variable. Manifesto ambiguity is defined as the ideological dispersion of parties electoral manifestos across a range of policies that are placed on the left, center and right of the ideological scale. A similar number of policy positions in the manifesto on both the left and the right indicate an ambiguous manifesto, whereas, for example, a clearly large number of policies on the left indicate a homogeneous, left party.

There is one concern regarding this particular measure of manifesto ambiguity. The authors selected eleven policy areas that are likely to be covered by a party manifesto. They formulated generic statements on these areas along a left, center and right positions. Thus, they constructed thirty-three policy statements. For the authors, a manifesto that included only one centrist statement and five statements on the right and five on the left is more ambiguous than a manifesto that includes five center statements and three left and right statements. This way the authors have estimates of ambiguity along a single left-right dimension, based on statements along eleven separate policy areas (Lo et al. 2014, 8). To test our theory we would ideally need to have measures of ideological clarity within one policy area- such as employment or tax. Still, we employ the current measure of ambiguity because the authors show that their measures of manifesto ambiguity

is highly correlated and is replicable with alternative measures of ambiguity along the economic dimension (Lo et al. 2014, 11).

We include the following control variables: the *left-right position* of parties based on party electoral manifestos and constructed by Lo et al. (2014) to be sure that the over-dispersion measure does capture parties position on the left-right dimension. The *saliency of social welfare policy* as measured by the Comparative Manifestos Project and coded by Alexiadou (2016) to control whether ministerial background is explained by the saliency of social welfare policy. We also include the *number of ministries* parties control in the government as well as the *number of parties* that participate in the government to control for other contextual factors that might affect ministerial appointments as found by Huber and Martinez-Gallardo (2008).

Table 1: Logit Model Estimates for Appointing Party Extremists

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Welfare Saliency	0.0597* (2.47)	0.154*** (3.57)	0.0357 (1.02)
Left-right el. pos	-0.157 (-0.49)	-1.416 (-1.72)	-0.373 (-0.89)
Manifesto Ambiguity	2.269*** (4.78)	2.687* (2.27)	1.802 (1.82)
Mins. held by Party	0.0801* (2.55)	0.289*** (4.59)	0.0621 (1.01)
Parties in Gov.	0.223 (1.02)	-14.05*** (-12.15)	-0.745* (-2.18)
Ireland	-0.817 (-1.55)	-0.305* (-2.31)	0.0940 (0.11)
Netherlands	-0.409*** (-3.73)	14.73*** (12.39)	0.473* (2.19)
Sweden	-0.737 (-1.70)	-16.88*** (-11.11)	2.066* (2.43)
Constant	-3.325*** (-4.72)	21.12*** (7.84)	-1.218 (-0.79)
Observations	234	96	138
<i>t</i> statistics in parentheses. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$			

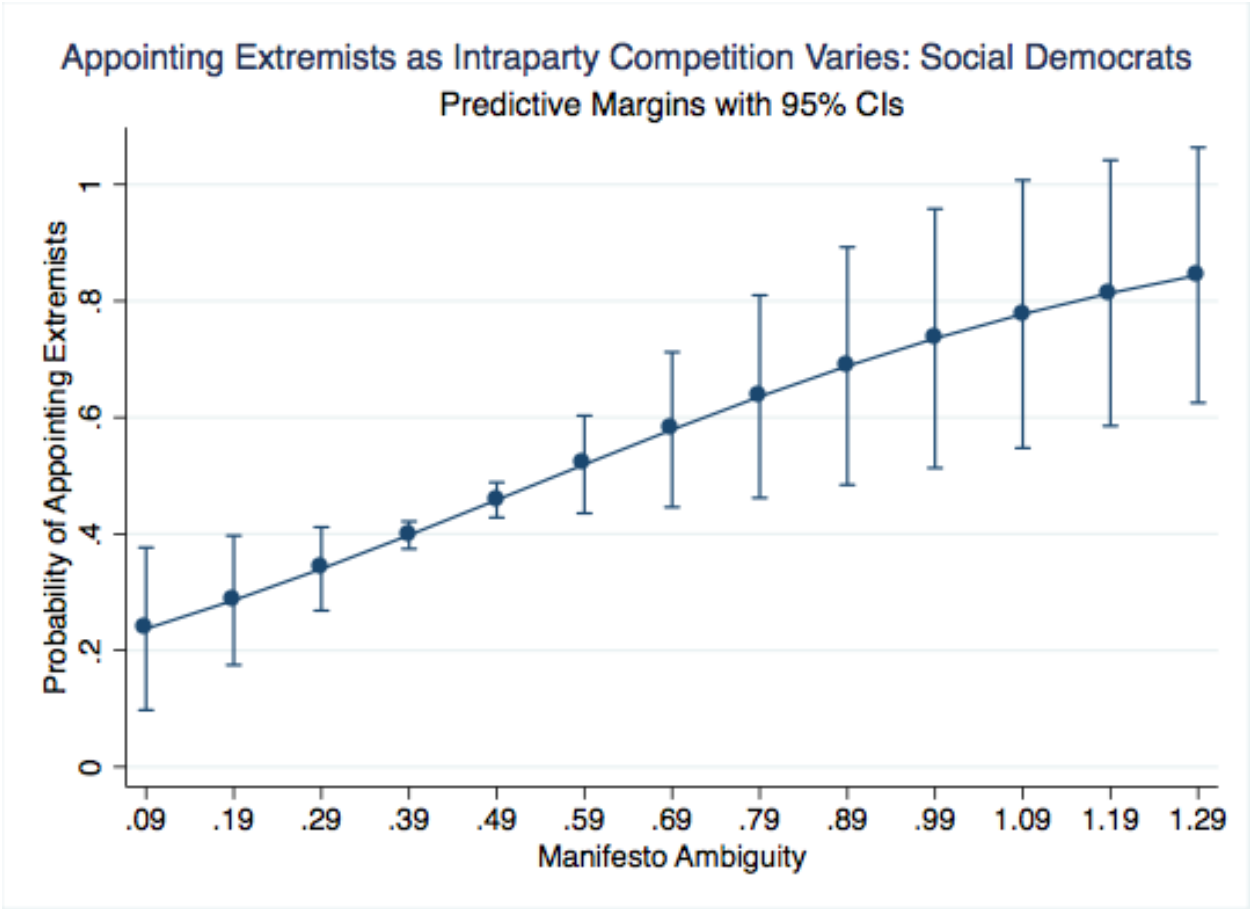
Table 1 reports the logistic regressions for the appointments of ministers with more extreme policy preferences relative to their fellow party members, also referred to as party extremists. All models are estimated with logistic regression, clustered errors by country and country dummies. Column 1 reports the results for all the parties in our sample, while Columns 2 and 3 present the results for social democratic parties only and right of center parties only, respectively. Starting with Model 1, the results are quite striking. The most significant predictor for appointing extremists in multiparty cabinets is manifesto ambiguity. In fact, the level of manifesto ambiguity explains these appointments better than parties' left/right position or the saliency of welfare policies. Party size is another predictor that positively predicts these appointments, with larger parties being more likely to appoint party extremists. However, the size of the coalition fails to reach statistical significance in the pooled model.

Specifically, the average effect of manifesto ambiguity on the probability of appointing a party extremist is 45 percent. In other words, at moderate levels of manifesto ambiguity, the probability of appointing a minister who has either a trade union background or an economics/finance or business background is 45 percent. This is a considerably large effect, given that no other predictor comes close to this effect and given that we control for un-observable country attributes. Nonetheless, according to Models 2 and 3, these effects vary significantly across party families. Indeed, the probability of appointing an extremist by a social democratic party when manifesto ambiguity is present is 57 percent, where as the probability of such appointments by center-right parties drops to 32 percent. This difference in effects are illustrated and better understood by Figures 2 and 3. Figures 2 and 3 report the marginal effects of manifesto ambiguity on the probably of the appointments of extremists at different levels of ambiguity.

For social democrats, as manifesto ambiguity increases from a low level of 0.1 to a high level of 1, the probability of appointing an extremist in the cabinet goes up by more

than fifty percent. The Dutch social democratic party, PvdA provides a nice such example, as its manifesto was quite cohesive in the 2000 elections with a value of 0.23, but highly ambiguous at the 2007 elections with a value of ambiguity as high as 1.36. In this case, the probability of appointing an extremist in 2000 would have been less than thirty percent, while in 2007 would have been around eighty percent. Naturally, not all social democratic parties have experienced such high variation in the level of ideological ambiguity in their manifestos. For example, the Swedish social democrats SDA have consistently had a moderate level of manifesto ambiguity of about 0.4, which would give them a probability of 40 percent for appointing ministers with more extreme policy preferences to the cabinet.

Figure 2: Caption goes here...

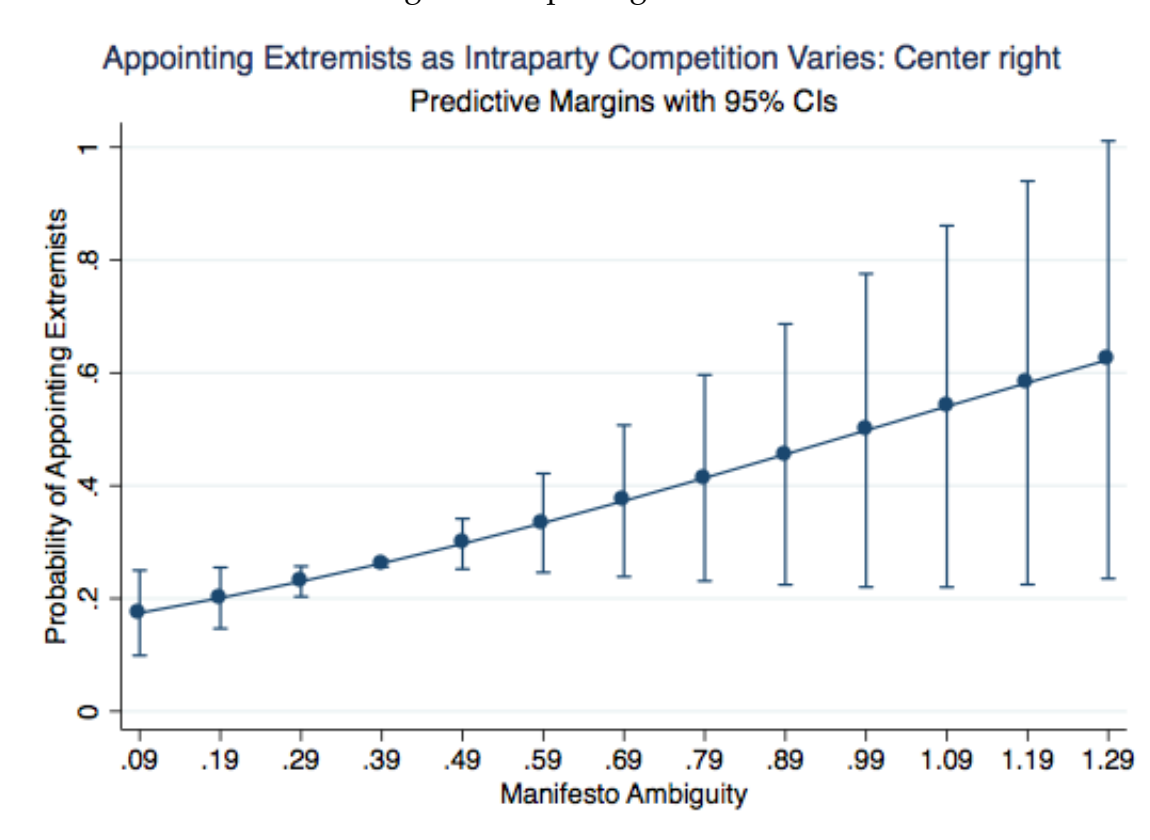


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Similar variations exist among center-right parties. For example, while the Irish Fianna Fail has a relatively stable and moderate level of manifesto ambiguity of about 0.35, the German Christian democrats, CDU have had more variation in the ideological dispersion of their manifestos ranging from 0.23 to 0.46. We also find some interesting cases of constant moderately high levels of ambiguity, above the mean value in our sample, as is the case of the German liberals, FDP with a stable value of 0.48. Overall, while the effect of manifesto ambiguity is also present for center right parties, it is not as strong as it is for social democratic parties. This is clearly illustrated by Figure 3, where a shift from low to high levels of manifesto ambiguity increases the probability of appointing extremists by about 30 percent. In addition, we see that the confidence intervals are a lot wider at higher levels of manifesto ambiguity compared to social democratic parties.

These results hold when we control for the ideological consistency of the cabinet and/or the legislature. The partisan consistency of the legislature predicts the appointments of party extremists, particularly for the appointments of extremists by right of center parties. Specifically, a larger percentage of both left and right seats in the lower chamber, positively predict the appointment of extremists. In addition, when we control for legislative partisanship, manifesto ambiguity predicts the appointments of party extremists by center-right parties. We present these results in the Appendix. Finally, the results are not driven by any single country and do not vary significantly by party family, although there are some meaningful variations in the ideological dispersion of manifestos across party families, with social democrats and liberals exhibiting higher levels of ambiguity than Christian democrats.

Figure 3: Caption goes here...



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4. CONCLUSION

Intra-party conflict matters in politics and it matters in many ways. In this paper we investigate how intra-party conflict affects ministerial appointments in multiparty cabinets. Making use of two new datasets, one on ministers background and one on manifesto ambiguity, which measures intra-party conflict, we find that higher levels of intra-party conflict lead to the appointments of ministers with more extreme policy preferences relative to their party. These findings are independent of the left/right ideological position of parties but their magnitude varies with party family, with social democratic parties experiencing being more likely to appoint ministers with more extreme views when intra-

party cohesion is low than right of center parties.

To the extent that manifesto ambiguity indeed reveals the existence of party factions, we find that party factions have an important role in ministerial appointments. Given that policy is formulated by cabinet ministers, we thus, find that party factions play a crucial role in policy formulation in multiparty governments. This finding is not only novel but it might also appear as counter-intuitive as many would probably expect that in coalition governments more moderate ministers would be appointed.

A question that arises is whether party factions actually play a role in portfolio allocation and ministerial appointments or whether manifesto ambiguity is strategic and not as strongly related to party factionalism as assumed here. For example, it is possible that manifesto ambiguity enhances coalition formation and portfolio allocation, particularly for parties that are ideologically more extreme (Bräuninger and Giger 2016). Thus, future research that investigates both theoretically and empirically the links between intra-party competition, electoral competition and manifesto drafting is required.

A second important question that arises is to what extent ministers types might be affecting intra-party competition. This is a crucial question but one that cannot be answered unless we have data on the background of all MPs that could be potential cabinet members.

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Online Appendix

Table 1: The appointments of party extremists. Odds ratios reported

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Pro-welfare saliency	1.088** (0.0387)	1.191*** (0.0228)	1.222** (0.103)
Left-Right Eletoral Pos	1.047 (0.380)	0.296 (0.368)	1.347 (0.668)
Manifesto Ambiguity	5.664*** (1.693)	9.402* (12.58)	3.816** (2.142)
Mins. Held by Party	1.087*** (0.0331)	1.286*** (0.113)	1.047 (0.0377)
# of Parties in Government	1.189 (0.325)	3.04e-07*** (3.52e-07)	0.675 (0.260)
Left Legislative Seats	0.998 (0.0461)	0.845*** (0.0288)	1.223** (0.113)
Right Legislative Seats	0.959*** (0.0118)	0.974 (0.0616)	1.081*** (0.0308)
Ireland	1.193 (1.077)	0.0102*** (0.0114)	4.149 (8.576)
Netherlands	0.419* (0.210)	213,431*** (379,397)	9.162** (9.722)
Sweden	0.105** (0.0933)	1.11e-08*** (4.37e-08)	0.450 (0.690)
Constant	0.323 (0.691)	4.067e+14*** (2.160e+15)	7.59e-07*** (3.81e-06)
Observations	194	88	106
Robust seeform in parentheses			
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1			

Table 2: Summary Statistics

Country		Left-right	Ambiguity	Party Extremists
Germany	Mean	-0.56	0.42	0.44
	Min	1.29	0.20	0.00
	Max	0.91	0.71	1.00
Ireland	Mean	1.10	0.33	0.29
	Min	0.87	0.22	0.00
	Max	1.55	1.05	1.00
Netherlands	Mean	-0.76	0.38	0.32
	Min	1.11	0.09	0.00
	Max	0.32	1.36	1.00
Sweden	Mean	0.44	0.39	0.46
	Min	0.32	0.22	0.00
	Max	2.43	0.51	1.00