

Politics of Intraexecutive Conflict in Semipresidential Regimes in Eastern Europe

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This article analyzes the patterns of intraexecutive conflict and cooperation in East European democracies that adopted semipresidential constitutional frameworks. It explores how the coexistence of popularly elected presidents and prime ministers is shaped by constitutional provisions, parliamentary fragmentation, and party system characteristics. The article emphasizes a critical role that party systems play in the evolution of intraexecutive relations across the region. It argues that variations in the political status of the cabinet, in the character of parliamentary composition, and in the constitutional powers of the president affect both the type and frequency of intraexecutive conflict experienced by semipresidential regimes.

Keywords: semipresidentialism; president; prime minister; cabinet; party system; Bulgaria; Lithuania; Moldova; Poland; Romania

Uneasy coexistence often characterizes the political relationship between presidents and prime ministers in post-communist democracies that adopted semipresidential constitutional frameworks.¹ This relationship has been prone to conflict both during the democratic transition period and during the later stages of democratic consolidation. Given the salience of interactions

1. There is a continuing debate about the utility and precise meaning of the concept of "semipresidential government." A political regime is defined in this research as semipresidential if it meets the first and third criteria of the classical Duverger definition: (1) the president of the republic is elected by universal suffrage; (2) he possesses quite considerable powers; (3) there is also a prime minister and ministers who possess executive and governmental powers and can stay in office only if the Parliament does not show its opposition to them. See Maurice Duverger, "A New Political System Model: Semi-Presidential Government," *European Journal of Political Research* 8:1(1980): 165-87. Due to its imprecision, Duverger's second criteria has become the focus of much of the debates in the literature. Following some other authors, I chose to ignore the second criteria at the initial stage of research while identifying cases of semipresidentialism in Eastern Europe. See Robert Elgie, "The Politics of Semi-Presidentialism," in Robert Elgie, ed., *Semi-Presidentialism in Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 1-21.

between the president and the prime minister in the functioning of semipresidential regimes, intraexecutive relations have attracted a significant amount of interest in the scholarly literature that is devoted to the problems of political regimes with a dual executive.²

The term “dual executive” is, however, somewhat misleading since there is substantial ambiguity about whether the presidency should be regarded as part of the executive or as an institution that stands apart from the executive branch of government. Several post-communist constitutions have provisions explicitly specifying that the president does not belong to any branch of government and has a “head of state” status. At the same time, since some powers awarded by the semipresidential constitutions to the presidents functionally belong to the domain of executive responsibilities, usage of the term “dual executive” is justified.³ This conceptualization of the executive also allows us to describe the relationship between the president and prime minister as intraexecutive.

The ambiguity and/or overlap of the constitutional responsibilities that stems from such duality has been recognized by a number of scholars as one enduring source of tension between the president and prime minister.⁴ Popular election of the president is another such source. This type of election is a very powerful source of political legitimacy for presidents in semipresidential regimes.⁵ Popular elections often provide justifications for presidential demands for a greater involvement in executive mat-

2. See, for example, Matthew S. Shugart and John Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Thomas Baylis, “Presidents versus Prime Ministers: Shaping the Executive Authority in Eastern Europe,” *World Politics* 48 (1996): 297-323; Ray Taras, ed., *Post-Communist Presidents* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Robert Elgie, ed., *Semi-Presidentialism in Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); and Jean Blondel and Ferdinand Muller-Rommel, *Cabinets in Eastern Europe* (New York: Palgrave, 2001).

3. For a recent discussion of the nature of presidential powers in semipresidential regimes, see Lee Kendall Metcalf, “Measuring Presidential Power,” *Comparative Political Studies* 33 (2000): 660-85; and Steven D. Roper, “Are All Semipresidential Regimes the Same? A Comparison of Premier-Presidential Regimes,” *Comparative Politics* 34 (April 2002): 253-76.

4. See Ray Taras, “Separating Power: Keeping Presidents in Check,” in Taras, *Post-Communist Presidents*, 15-37; and Krzysztof Jasciewicz, “Poland: Walesa’s Legacy to the Presidency,” in Taras, *Post-Communist Presidents*, 130-68.

5. Duverger, “A New Political System,” 165-87.

ters. They also serve as a source of frustration for presidents whose political legitimacy is not matched by their rather limited constitutional powers. This frustration is only exacerbated by the fact that presidents who have a major say in forming a cabinet by controlling the power to nominate a prime minister are often tempted to interpret their relationship with the cabinet as a relationship between principal and agent.⁶ All these factors contribute to a situation in which semipresidentialism, as one scholar of semipresidentialism recently pointed out, remains a highly contested regime type.⁷

This article tries to assess systematically how the variations in the political status of cabinet, in the character of parliamentary composition, and in presidential constitutional powers shape the relationship between the prime minister and president and how they affect the likelihood of intraexecutive conflict in semipresidential regimes. The empirical analysis is based on data collected on Bulgaria, Lithuania, Moldova, Poland, and Romania. A semipresidential framework has been in place in these countries for most of the post-communist period.⁸ In all countries, the president participates directly in forming the cabinet by exercising his power to nominate a prime minister.⁹ There were thirty-nine cases of the coexistence of a president with different cabi-

6. Terry Moe, "Integrating Politics and Organizations: Positive Theory and Public Administration," *Journal of Public Administration Research & Theory* 4 (1994): 17-25.

7. Robert Elgie, "Semi-Presidentialism and Comparative Institutional Engineering," in Elgie, *Semi-Presidentialism in Europe*, 298.

8. Lithuania was the latest of five countries to adopt semipresidentialism. The semipresidential constitutional framework was in place effectively since the 1993 presidential elections introduced the first Lithuanian president to office. See Dainius Urbanavicius, "Lithuania," in Elgie, *Semi-Presidentialism in Europe*, 150-69. Of the countries included in this study, Moldova is the only one where the transformation of a constitutional regime took place in recent years. The institutional framework in Moldova was radically altered in the middle of 2000 when an enduring conflict between the president and Parliament led to constitutional reform that transformed Moldova into a parliamentary republic. See "Moldova Update," *East European Constitutional Review* 9:4(2000): 26-28.

9. While according to the formal Duverger criteria Bulgaria has a semipresidential regime, the exact constitutional rules regulating cabinet formation in Bulgaria follow parliamentary rather than semipresidential logic. The 1991 Bulgarian Constitution is the only one that imposes very strict restrictions on the presidential ability to choose a candidate for prime minister (Article 99). The fact that the Bulgarian president is popularly elected, and has considerable nonlegislative and legislative powers, justifies the inclusion of the Bulgarian case in this analysis and allows for an exploration of a broader variation in the design of semipresidential regimes.

nets in these countries during the 1991 to 2002 period. Cabinets varied very substantially in terms of the political support they relied on in parliaments.

I start by discussing how Eastern European cases introduce a much richer variation in the types of coexistence between president and prime minister than the current literature, heavily influenced by the French Fifth Republic case, usually examines.¹⁰ I discuss the differences in parliamentary composition, which is in itself a function of differences in party system and electoral design, and relations that the parliamentary majorities forge with the prime minister and president. The focus is on how the political status of the cabinet, which is determined by the character of parliamentary composition and the level of party system development, affects the set of incentives that prime ministers and presidents face in a semipresidential institutional setting.

I then discuss intraexecutive conflict, which is defined as political competition between the president and prime minister over the control of the executive branch of government. The number and type of instances of intense intraexecutive competition are compared across semipresidential regimes and across different cabinet types. Political configurations that produce the largest and the least amount of intraexecutive conflict are contrasted and strategic choices that prime ministers and presidents made under varying political circumstances are analyzed in detail. The last section of the article provides a number of conclusions.

Cabinet type in semipresidential regimes

Parliamentary support is the foundation on which the prime minister claims the authority to control the executive branch of government. It is also the most important deterrent for the popularly elected presidents' claims to a greater role in executive leadership. The logic of peaceful "cohabitation," which is most famously

10. For a discussion of how the experience of the French Fifth Republic can be relevant for the new semipresidential regimes, see Alfred Stepan and Ezra Suleiman, "The French Fifth Republic: A Model for Import? Reflections on Poland and Brazil," in H. E. Chehabi and Alfred Stepan, eds., *Politics, Society, and Democracy: Comparative Studies* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1995), 393-414.

illustrated by the French experiences of coexistence of the president with the prime minister who relies on the support of an ideologically opposite majority, implies self-restraint on the part of the president. Facing a prime minister who was backed by the support of a disciplined parliamentary majority, the presidents in the French Fifth Republic reluctantly acquiesced to the prime minister's leadership over executive and helped to avoid intraexecutive confrontation.¹¹

As numerous accounts of semipresidential experiences in Eastern Europe suggest, cohabitation was far from peaceful in the countries under investigation. Among the factors leading to conflict, the scholars often cite personality factors, ideological differences magnified by certain party system configurations, divisive communist legacies, newness of institutional designs, and constitutional ambiguities.¹² Very few attempts, however, have been made so far to arrive at some comparative framework for analyzing the intraexecutive conflict.

Assessing how the different types of cabinets that result from the varying compositions of parliamentary majority affect the motivations of the president and prime minister to cooperate can be one starting point of such an analysis.¹³ Table 1 indicates the political status of cabinets and lists the total number of cabinets in each of the countries between 1991 and 2002. A successful confirmation vote in Parliament was taken as an indication of the formation of a new cabinet. For party-based cabinets, a change in the party composition of the cabinet was also interpreted as a change in cabinet, even in the absence of a confirmation vote in Parliament.¹⁴ A party-based cabinet was coded as a majority or

11. Robert Elgie, "France," in Elgie, *Semi-Presidentialism in Europe*, 67-86.

12. For a summary of these arguments, see Elgie, "Semi-Presidentialism and Comparative Institutional Engineering," 281-99.

13. Such a starting point is not, however, uncontested. Summarizing findings in a recent collective volume, Robert Elgie claimed that party and parliamentary politics were important but often not the most critical factors in explaining the practice of semipresidential leadership. See Elgie, "Semi-Presidentialism and Comparative Institutional Engineering," 291-93.

14. My classification of new cabinets for the period that overlaps with the period analyzed by Blondel and Muller-Rommel, which is 1991 to 2000, produced almost identical results to the ones obtained by these authors; see Jean Blondel and Ferdinand Muller-Rommel, *Cabinets in Eastern Europe* (New York: Palgrave, 2001). The only major difference is in the number of technocratic cabinets. I use a less restrictive definition of a technocratic cabinet, which produced a larger count of this type of cabinet.

Table 1. *Political Status of Cabinets in Post-Communist Semipresidential Regimes, 1991-2002*

Semipresidential Regime	Party Cabinets			Total Number of Cabinets
	Majority Cabinets	Minority Cabinets	Technocratic Cabinets	
Bulgaria ^a	4	1	1	6
Lithuania ^b	8	1	2	11
Moldova ^c	4	—	4	8
Poland ^d	5	5	—	10
Romania ^e	6	1	1	8
Total ^f	27	8	8	43
Percentage of total	62.79	18.60	18.60	100

a. The name of a prime minister and office term are used to identify cabinets. Majority cabinets: Videnov 1995-97, Kostov 1997-99, Kostov II 1999-2001, Gotha 2001-. Minority cabinet: Dimitrov 1991-92. Technocratic cabinet: Berov 1992-94.

b. Majority cabinets: Vagnorius 1991-92, Slezevicius 1993-96, Stankevicius 1996, Vagnorius 1996-98, Vagnorius 1998-99, Paksas 1999, Kubilius 1999-2000, Brazauskas 2001-. Minority cabinet: Paksas 2000-2001. Technocratic cabinets: Abisala 1992, Lubys 1992-93.

c. Majority cabinets: Sangheli 1994-96, Ciubuc 1998-99, Sturza 1999, Tarlev 2001-. Technocratic cabinets: Muravschi 1991-92, Sangheli 1992-94, Ciubuc 1997-98, Braghis 1999-2001.

d. Majority cabinets: Pawlak 1993-95, Oleksy 1995-96, Cimoszewicz 1996-97, Buzek 1997-2000, Miller 2001. Minority cabinets: Bielecki 1991, Olszewski 1991-92, Suchocka 1992-93, Suchocka II 1993, Buzek II 2000.

e. Majority cabinets: Roman 1990-91, Stolojan 1991-92, Ciorbea 1996-98, Vasile 1998, Vasile II 1998-99, Isarescu 2000. Minority cabinets: Nastase 2000-. Technocratic cabinets: Vacaroiu 1992-96.

f. The table lists all cabinets formed during the 1991 to 2002 period in countries where semipresidential constitutional regimes were in place for the most of the 1991 to 2002 period. A semipresidential constitutional framework in Lithuania was introduced only in 1993. There were also changes made to the Moldovan constitution in 2000 that ended the direct election of the president and transformed Moldova into a parliamentary republic. Only those cabinets from table 1 that coexisted with popular elected presidents are included in later tables. This explains the difference between the total number of cabinets listed in various tables.

minority cabinet depending on whether the party or party coalition that the cabinet belonged to controlled the majority of seats in Parliament. A cabinet was defined as technocratic when neither a prime minister nor a majority of cabinet members had for-

mal party affiliation and when parliamentary factions that supported the cabinet explicitly distanced themselves from the cabinet by stressing the nonparty nature of the cabinet.¹⁵

As Table 1 indicates, majority governments were the most common type of government in semipresidential regimes. Majority cabinets accounted for almost 63 percent of all cabinets in the region. There were also eight minority cabinets and eight technocratic cabinets formed during the period analyzed. The relatively high share of technocratic cabinets—almost 19 percent—could be taken as a reflection of the slow institutionalization of the party system in some of the countries during the first post-communist decade.¹⁶

Coding the technocratic cabinets involves substantial methodological difficulties. The major issue is whether a cabinet composed primarily of nonparty technocrats and experts and consistently backed by one political force in Parliament should be considered a technocratic or party cabinet. For example, the Vacaroiu 1992 to 1996 cabinet, which was composed of predominantly technocratic ministers and led by politically unaffiliated prime ministers relied on the support of the Democratic National Salvation Front (DNSF) and later the Party of Social Democracy of Romania (PSDR). While supporting the cabinet, these political forces explicitly stressed the nonparty or technocratic nature of the cabinet they backed. Given the preoccupation of this article with the effects that variations in the nature of parliamentary support for the cabinet has on the motivations of the prime minister and president, distinguishing technocratic and party-based cabinets provides additional analytical leverage.

In terms of cross-country distribution, majority cabinets were the dominant cabinet type in Bulgaria, Lithuania, and Romania. In Poland, the extreme fragmentation of the 1991 to 1993 Parlia-

15. Policy expertise and government experience rather than party ties are usually cited as the criteria employed to select candidates for ministerial positions in technocratic cabinets. For a discussion of the effects that technocratic cabinets have on policy making and political process, see, for example, Stephan Haggard and Robert Kaufman, *The Political Economy of Democratic Transitions* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995).

16. Leonardo Morlino, "Constitutional Architectures and Democratic Politics in Eastern Europe," in Jan Zielonka, ed., *Democratic Consolidation in Eastern Europe: Institutional Engineering* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 53-78.

ment, which produced three consecutive minority cabinets, contributed to the equal number of majority and minority cabinets. Poland was also the only country that did not experience technocratic cabinets, which reflects the existence of a rather effective, although rapidly changing during the first half of the 1990s, party system.¹⁷ In Moldova, on the other hand, a much less developed and clientelistically structured party system produced an equal number of majority and technocratic cabinets.¹⁸

The theoretical literature on the functioning of the dual executive in semipresidential regimes has formulated some general expectations about the character of relations between the president and prime ministers in the context of a highly structured and disciplined parliamentary majority.¹⁹ This relationship can be especially prone to conflict when the president faces a prime minister backed by the opposite parliamentary majority. Whether such coexistence turns out to be confrontational depends to a large extent on the willingness of the president to exercise self-restraint in matters of executive politics. Coexistence of a president and prime minister who belong to the same majority is expected to be less problematic and largely influenced by the prior distribution of leadership roles inside the political party or party coalition that gained the majority in Parliament.

The existing literature is less explicit about what to expect when the president faces a prime minister leading a minority or technocratic cabinet. This is partly due to the fact that the most researched cases of “dual executive” practices come from political systems generating stable parliamentary majorities. It is also because the recent cases of technocratic cabinets that emerged in the course of political transformation in Eastern Europe are often viewed as transitional and temporary phenomena.²⁰ The general

17. For a comparative discussion of the ideological maturity of the Polish party system, see Herbert Kitschelt, Zdenka Mansfeldova, Radoslaw Markowski, and Gabor Toka, *Post-Communist Party Systems: Competition, Representation, and Inter-Party Cooperation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 387-88.

18. William Crowther, “The Politics of Democratization in Post-Communist Moldova,” in Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrott, eds., *Democratic Changes and Authoritarian Reactions in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 282-330.

19. Shugart and Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies*, 54-75.

20. Blondel and Muller-Rommel, *Cabinets in Eastern Europe*, 194-95.

logic employed for analyzing intraexecutive coexistence in majority governments is valuable to the discussion of minority and technocratic cabinets only in one very limited sense—the absence of a stable and disciplined parliamentary majority removes the major system-defining environmental factor and introduces much more uncertainty into intraexecutive relations.

The following section of the article analyzes whether the expectations about intraexecutive relations in majority governments is empirically supported by the experiences of semipresidential regimes in Eastern Europe. It also discusses whether uncertainty about leadership roles, which is introduced into the political process with the formation of minority and technocratic cabinets, led to the emergence of distinct patterns in intraexecutive relations and affected the likelihood of intraexecutive conflict.

Measuring intraexecutive conflict in semipresidential regimes

Intraexecutive conflict was previously described as political competition between the president and prime minister over the control of political resources available to the executive branch of government. The coexistence of the president and the cabinet was characterized in this research as an instance of intraexecutive conflict when either the president or prime minister contested the status quo interpretations of constitutional and statutory norms that regulate power relations inside the executive, contested the norms themselves, or frequently exercised constitutional powers to challenge policy moves initiated by the other side.

The manifestations of intraexecutive competition are ubiquitous. Conflicts arise over policy design in specific issue areas, over the right to issue executive orders and regulations, over reporting and execution routines inside the executive, over the practices of presidential participation in cabinet meetings, and so on. The presidents and prime ministers also contest individual appointments to the cabinet or other government positions made

by the other side or try to dispute decisions about the dismissals of government officials.

Although numerous laws and other statutory acts often try to provide a detailed description of powers that belong to the president and prime minister, no legal document can fully regulate all the aspects of power relations inside the executive. The rights to exercise discretionary power in situations that are not explicitly regulated by formal procedures are often described as residual rights.²¹ Intraexecutive relations are often conflict-prone when there is no tacit agreement between the president and prime minister about who controls residual rights.

Trying to change the formal distribution of powers is the most radical alternative that rival institutional actors could opt for to redress an existing power balance inside the executive. As the next section of the article indicates, both presidents and prime ministers resorted to the tactic of challenging the legitimacy or rationality of the existing constitutional framework. The frequently used strategy was to appeal to the Parliament and/or directly to the voters, advocating the changing of the basic constitutional norms that regulate the distribution of appointment, executive, and legislative powers among the different state institutions.

Using their special authority in certain constitutionally defined policy areas or constitutional veto powers to stop policy moves by the cabinet is a less radical but still effective way for presidents to influence the distribution of power inside the executive. Whenever a president chooses to use these constitutional means frequently over a short period of time to counteract a prime minister's leadership, the coexistence of the president and prime minister was characterized as conflictual.

Media and scholarly accounts of intraexecutive relations were used to identify the cases where a high level of political contestation characterized the coexistence of the president and the cabinet. The cross-country comparative analysis of intraexecutive relations was facilitated by the fact that the *East European Constitutional Review (EECR)* publishes quarterly country reports that

21. Timothy Frye, "A Politics of Institutional Change," *Comparative Political Studies* 30 (1997): 523-52.

include detailed accounts of executive-legislative relations in the post-communist region. Whenever the country report indicated the existence of conflict between the president and prime minister, other sources were consulted to corroborate the *EECR* reports.²²

In the ideal model of harmonious intraexecutive relationship, no major disagreements are expected between the president and Parliament with regard to appointment and policy issues. Since some manifestations of intraexecutive tensions can be found in all cases of intraexecutive coexistence, and detailed classification of the cases is methodologically problematic, a simple dichotomous classification was employed. Episodic conflicts that arose from specific issues were qualified as indicating a low level of conflict. When tensions between the president and prime minister were persistent and evolved not around one or a few specific issues but around the general principles of subordination and accountability in the executive, or when policies were contested across a large spectrum of issue areas, the level of conflict was considered to be high.

Results

All cabinets formed under a semipresidential constitutional framework in post-communist countries included in this research are listed in Appendix A, which also indicates the level of intraexecutive conflict during the incumbency of each cabinet. Table 2 summarizes the data from Appendix A. It classifies cabinets according to the cabinet type and partisan affiliation of the presidents and prime ministers that formed a dual executive. Cabinets whose term in office was characterized by a high level of intraexecutive conflict are underlined.

22. See "Country Updates," *East European Constitutional Review (EECR)*, 1992-2001. Moldova is the only country out of five included in this study that was not systematically covered by the *EECR* during the analyzed period (the coverage started only in the last years of the 1990s). I relied on Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) reports and secondary sources to form a judgment on intraexecutive relations in this country during the first years of the post-communist transition. See "Daily Reports," Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), 1991-2000.

Table 2. *Distribution of Cabinets in Premier-Presidential Regimes, 1991-2002*

	Cabinet Type		
	Majority	Minority	Technocratic
Political orientation of president and cabinet	<p>Same</p> <p>Cimoszewicz 1996-97 (Pol)*; Bielecki 1991 (Pol)*; Berov 1992-94 (Bul); Ciorbea 1996-98 (Rom)*; <i>Dimitrov 1991-92 (Bul)</i>; Vacaroiu 1992-96 (Rom)*</p> <p>Minority</p> <p>Ciubuc 1998-99 (Mol)*; Nastase 2000- (Rom)*; <i>Olszewski 1991-92 (Pol)*</i>; Gotha 2001- (Bul); <i>Suchocka 1992-93 (Pol)*</i>; Isarescu 2000 (Rom)*; <i>Suchocka 1993 (Pol)*</i>; Kostov 1997-99 (Bul); Kostov II 1999-2001 (Bul); Miller 2001- (Pol)*; <i>Roman 1990-91 (Rom)</i>; Slezevicius 1993-96 (Lit); Stankevicius 1996 (Lit); Stolojan 1991-92 (Rom); Sturza 1999 (Mol)*; Vasile 1998 (Rom)*; <i>Vasile 1998-99 (Rom)*</i></p>		

Political orientation of president and cabinet	Different	<i>Brazauskas 2001– (Lit)*</i> ; <i>Buzek 1997-2000 (Pol)</i> ; Kubilius 1999-2000 (Lit); Paksas 1999 (Lit); <i>Pawlak 1993-95 (Pol)*</i> ; <i>Sangheli 1994-96 (Mol)</i> ; <i>Oleksy 1995-96 (Pol)*</i> ; Vagnorius 1996-98 (Lit); <i>Vagnorius 1998-99 (Lit)</i> ; <i>Videnov 1995-97 (Bul)</i>	<i>Buzek 2000-2001 (Pol)</i> ; <i>Paksas II 2000-2001 (Lit)*</i>	Ciubuc 1997-98 (Mol)*; Muravski 1991-92 (Mol)*; Sangheli 1992-94 (Mol)*; Braghis 1999-2001 (Mol)*
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Note: Italics indicate that a cabinet experienced a high level of intraexecutive conflict. An asterisk (*) indicates that a cabinet was formed in a parliament with an effective number of parties (ENP) score of more than 3. Based on author's calculations provided in Appendix B.

The results from Table 2 suggest that the variation in political orientation of president and cabinet is an important factor in determining the likelihood of intraexecutive conflict. As the table indicates, both in absolute terms and relative to the total number of cases included in the upper left cell, the coexistence of presidents and prime ministers who belonged to the same one-party or coalition majority in Parliament has been predominantly peaceful. Common political orientation diminished room for potential conflict by reducing the differences in opinion about cabinet policies and the appropriate people to conduct those policies.

This was the case, for example, in Lithuania where President Brazauskas had a largely harmonious relationship with the three consecutive cabinets led by Lubys, Slezevicius, and Stankevicius. Prime ministers and the president belonged to the post-communist Lithuanian Democratic Labor Party (LDLP) that held the majority of seats in the 1992 to 1996 Lithuanian Parliament. The LDLP was a stable and disciplined party with strong incentives for party members not to factionalize the party and not to defect from its ranks. President Brazauskas was the undisputed leader of the LDLP at the time of the 1992 parliamentary and the 1993 presidential elections in Lithuania.²³

Two reported cases of a high level of intraexecutive conflict that fall in the upper left cell of Table 2 indicate, however, that the nature and character of the parliamentary majority needs to be further scrutinized. Both cases come from Romania but took place in a different political context and involved different presidents and prime ministers. During the early stage of democratic transition in Romania, the coexistence of president Iliescu and prime minister Roman was described by observers as highly conflictual. The National Salvation Front (NSF), a political movement to which both leaders belonged and which controlled more than two-thirds of seats in the two chambers of the 1990 to 1992 Parliament, was neither disciplined nor ideologically coherent.

23. Nida Gelazis, "Institutional Engineering in Lithuania: Stability through Compromise," in Zielonka, ed., *Democratic Consolidation in Eastern Europe*, 165-85; and Dainius Urbanavicius, "Lithuania," in Elgie, *Semi-Presidentialism in Europe*, 150-69.

The president and prime minister presided over two main rivalry factions inside the NSF.²⁴

The second incident of a high level of intraexecutive conflict in Romania took place during the coexistence of president Constantinescu and prime minister Vasile, who belonged to the same umbrella organization, the Democratic Convention (DC), that formed the core of the majority coalition in the 1996 to 2000 Parliament. The DC was a rather loosely organized coalition of parties with prime minister Vasile being a member of the largest coalition partner. After the prime minister was weakened, first by the withdrawal of a coalition partner and later by the resignation of more than half of the ministers, president Constantinescu risked dismissing the rival prime minister although the constitution did not provide the president with such authority.²⁵

The fact that the president and prime minister belong to the same majority coalition thus does not serve as a sufficient condition for avoiding intraexecutive confrontation. These two cases suggest that the incentives for president and prime ministers to cooperate might be much less compelling when they are members of a highly factionalized party or of different parties that form a governing coalition than when they belong to the same organizationally disciplined and ideologically coherent political party.²⁶

The bottom left cell in Table 2 includes all cabinets supported by a parliamentary majority that was different from the president's ideological orientation. As the table shows, intraexecutive relations in these cases were much more often characterized by intense competition between the president and prime minister. Six out of ten cabinets included in this cell experienced a high level of intraexecutive conflict.

24. Tony Verheijen, "Romania," in Elgie, *Semi-Presidentialism in Europe*, 193-215.

25. Renate Weber, "Constitutionalism as a Vehicle for Democratic Consolidation in Romania," in Zielonka, *Democratic Consolidation in Eastern Europe*, 212-42.

26. By including both the cases of high and low levels of intraexecutive conflict in each cell of Table 2, I tried to avoid the dangers of selecting on a dependent variable. The claims that I make, including the proposition that coalition majority governments can be more prone to interexecutive conflict than one-party majority governments, are likelihood claims, not deterministic claims.

As the country affiliation of prime ministers, which is denoted in parenthesis, indicates, there were instances of intraexecutive conflict in three out of four countries that experienced this type of cabinet: Bulgaria, Lithuania, and Poland. The majority of cases of intraexecutive conflict in this cell come from Poland.

In Poland, the high level of intraexecutive conflict characterized most of Walesa's incumbency as president. Analysts attribute the persistence of intraexecutive competition in Poland to the unwillingness of President Walesa to accept the prime minister's leadership in executive matters.²⁷ In a quest for control of the executive, Walesa challenged prime ministers that led the different types of cabinets. After his powers were enhanced by the "little constitution" of 1992,²⁸ he engaged in confrontation with Pawlak and Oleksy's cabinets, which relied on the support of a stable coalition majority. Before that, he also chose to confront a relatively weak minority coalition government led by prime minister Olszewski.

The growing consolidation of democratic institutions and the transfer of the presidency from Walesa to Kwasniewski profoundly affected the nature of intraexecutive relations but did not eliminate built-in structural incentives for conflict. Walesa's legacy of undermined trust in the presidential office and a high level of institutionalization of the practice of parliamentary control over the cabinet did not leave much room for president Kwasniewski to openly contest the existing distribution of executive powers. The Polish Constitution, however, provided the president with other means to contest prime ministerial dominance.

Veto power became an effective way for the president to challenge cabinet initiatives. Veto wars characterized Kwasniewski's coexistence with consecutive Buzek cabinets. Although detailed statistics on the number of vetoes is not available, the country reports on Poland consistently mention a large number of presi-

27. Krzysztof Jasciewicz, "Poland: Walesa's Legacy to the Presidency," in Taras, *Post-Communist Presidents*, 130-68.

28. M. Wyrzykowski, "Legitimacy: The Price of a Delayed Constitution in Poland," in Zielonka, *Democratic Consolidation in Eastern Europe*, 431-54.

dential vetoes as a frequent, persistent, and highly resonant phenomenon in Polish politics during the incumbency of Buzek's cabinets. While the president did not openly contest prime ministerial leadership over the executive, the frequency with which he vetoed the laws initiated by the cabinet across a large number of policy areas, especially during 2000, indicates that the president actively and systematically contested cabinet policies.²⁹

Resorting to vetoes may provide a less disruptive for the process of democratic consolidation way of solving tensions that arise during cohabitation. In other cases of intraexecutive conflict reported in the bottom left cell in Table 2, the presidents, however, not only challenged the policies of cabinets but also tried to undermine the support for the cabinet in Parliament. The Lithuanian cases are especially indicative of the unwillingness of the president to fully accept the leadership of the prime minister.³⁰

These patterns of intraexecutive relations differ from those found in the French Fifth Republic on several occasions when the president and a prime minister who belonged to the opposite political camp had to coexist. Robert Elgie describes three recent cases of cohabitation in France (1986-88, 1993-95, and 1997-) as periods of rather peaceful coexistence between the president and the prime minister, enhanced by a relatively clear division of responsibility between the two leaders.³¹

When placed in the comparative perspective, the French patterns of peaceful intraexecutive relationships prove to be an exception rather than a general rule of cohabitation between a president and prime minister who belong to opposite political camps. In Eastern Europe, presidents challenge prime ministers, who are backed by a solid parliamentary majority, more often than the French experience of cohabitation would suggest.

The bottom middle cell in Table 2 includes two minority cabinets supported by parliamentary coalitions politically opposed

29. "Poland Update," *East European Constitutional Review* 9:1-2(2000): 35-38; and "Poland Update," *East European Constitutional Review* 9:3(2000): 28-31.

30. "Lithuania Update," *East European Constitutional Review* 8:3(1999): 21-23; "Lithuania Update," *East European Constitutional Review* 11:3(2002): 24-27.

31. Elgie, "France," 73.

to the president. In both cases, there was a high level of intraexecutive confrontation. A comparison with the results from the bottom left cell indicates that minority cabinets are even more prone to experience conflict than majority cabinets, which are ideologically opposed to the president. In both cases reported in this cell, minority status weakened the prime ministers' claims on exclusive control of the executive and its policies and strengthened the presidents' willingness to challenge the prime minister.

The Lithuanian case is especially suggestive that changes in the political strength of the cabinet may affect the strategic calculations of the president. President Adamkus chose to challenge prime minister Paksas's leadership only after the latter was weakened by the disintegration of a majority coalition and had to form his second—this time minority—cabinet in 2000. Earlier, under somewhat similar conditions, Adamkus chose to confront the second but not the first cabinet formed by Prime Minister Vagnorius.

The upper middle cell provides data on the minority cabinets that were of the same political orientation as the president. Proportionally to the number of cabinets included in the upper middle and upper left cells, intraexecutive conflict appeared to be more likely when the president faced an ideologically similar minority cabinet rather than an ideologically similar majority cabinet. There were two instances of a high level of intraexecutive conflict in each cell, but there were two and half times as many ideologically similar majority cabinets as minority cabinets.

The lower left and the lower middle cells, which list majority and minority cabinets that were of different ideological orientation from the president, also indicate that minority cabinets might be more prone to conflict than majority cabinets. It seems that whenever the president faced a minority cabinet, either ideologically similar or opposed, a similar logic characterized presidential behavior. The minority status of the cabinet was interpreted by the presidents as a sign of political weakness and was more likely to invite presidential intervention and lead to political confrontation.

Minority cabinets, as well as technocratic cabinets, are largely the products of fragmented parliaments. Six out of eight minority cabinets and five out of six technocratic cabinets reported in Table 2 were formed in parliaments with a high degree of fragmentation. The effective number of parties (ENP) score of more than 3.0 was used in the table to differentiate cabinets formed in a more consolidated or more fragmented legislative environment. Appendix B provides details on the ENP scores.³²

Parliamentary fragmentation invites presidential claims on executive leadership by lowering the president's political costs of attacking a prime minister and cabinet that lack solid support in Parliament. Conflict occurred every time a prime minister was not willing to accept a higher degree of presidential involvement in executive matters.

Prime ministers did not always choose to defend their powers. Some acquiesced to the presidential ambitions to participate more actively in executive decision making. Technocratic cabinets, which lacked strong and consistent political backing in Parliament, were especially prone to grant presidents a larger say in executive matters. Prime Minister Vacaroiu's cooperation with President Iliescu during the office term of the fragmented 1992 to 1996 Romanian Parliament and Prime Minister Sangheli's acceptance of President Snegur's leadership during the 1990 to 1994 Parliament's office term in Moldova illustrate this type of intraexecutive coexistence.³³

In explaining the patterns of intraexecutive relations, what seems to matter is not only the degree of party fragmentation but its quality. One of the principal qualitative characteristics of a party system is the extent to which party competition is structured along programmatic or clientelistic lines.³⁴ Clientelistically structured party systems are more likely to produce technocratic cabinets, which are more complacent to the president. Even after

32. Markku Laakso and Rein Taagepera, "Effective Number of Parties: A Measure with Application to Western Europe," *Comparative Political Studies* 12:1(1979): 3-27.

33. Verheijen, "Romania," 206; and Crowther, "The Politics of Democratization in Post-Communist Moldova," 302.

34. Herbert Kitschelt, "Formation of Party Cleavages in Post-Communist Democracies," *Party Politics* 1:4(1995): 447-72.

considering two technocratic cabinets at the beginning of the 1990s in Lithuania, which were not included in Table 2 because they were formed before a semipresidential constitutional framework was in place, the majority of technocratic cabinets come from the countries with a higher degree of clientelistic structuring of the party system.³⁵

It is indicative that neither of the cabinets formed in Romania belong to any cell in the bottom part of Table 2, which lists cabinets that had different political orientation from the president. Romania was the only country among the Eastern European semipresidential regimes where all majority, minority, and technocratic cabinets shared the same political orientation with the president. This can be primarily attributed to the effects of a concurrent electoral cycle.³⁶ Simultaneous holding of the presidential and parliamentary elections in Romania, which is unique among Eastern European semipresidential regimes, had a tendency both to boost the electoral chances of the presidential party/coalition and to strengthen the ability of this political force to form the cabinet.

Given the frequent claims from the different ends of the political spectrum in semipresidential regimes of the need to change the constitution, the constitutional framework itself does not seem to be conducive to reaching an equilibrium point that would satisfy the majority of political players. The fierce debates during the 1997 Lithuanian presidential campaign about the

35. No specific index that would allow for the measurement and comparison of the degree of clientelistic structuring of a party system exists in comparative literature. The closest thing to such an index as of today is country corruption scores composed by a number of international organizations. Transparency International (TI) corruption perception index (CPI) is one of the most widely used such scores. Lambsdorff distinguishes five distinct groups of countries in Eastern Europe based on the TI CPI, which is published regularly for most of the countries in the region. In TI CPI reports, Estonia and Hungary are consistently rated as the countries with low levels of corruption. Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Poland, and Slovakia belong to the group with medium levels of corruption. Romania, Russia, and Ukraine have the highest levels of corruption. Lithuania falls in between the groups with low and medium levels of corruption and Latvia and Moldova between the second and third groups. See J. Lambsdorff, *How Precise Are Perceived Levels of Corruption? Background Paper to the 2001 Corruption Perception Index* (Berlin: TI, 2001). I would like to thank Herbert Kitschelt for bringing to my attention the relevance of corruption scores to the discussion of the clientelistic structuring of the party system.

36. Matthew S. Shugart, "The Electoral Cycle and Institutional Sources of Divided Presidential Government," *American Political Science Review* 89:2(1995): 327-43.

proper scope of presidential power are one of the recent manifestations of the fact that the existing rules of the game are still contested. The debates in Lithuania were initiated by one of the most likely candidates to win the presidential elections. Arturas Paulauskas, the presidential candidate who in the course of his campaign argued for broader powers to be awarded to the president, lost his presidential bid in the second round of elections by less than 1 percent of votes.³⁷ The 1999 referendum on strengthening presidential control over the executive in Moldova, which was initiated by President Lucinschi, and the subsequent parliamentary decision to limit presidential powers and change the rules for presidential elections, is another example of challenging the constitutional status quo.³⁸

In general, parliamentary fragmentation contributes to the perpetuation of ambiguity about where ultimate executive authority resides. The political weaknesses of cabinets, which have been often manifested in the technocratic character of cabinet composition, only highlight the political legitimacy of popular-elected presidents. While premier-presidential constitutional frameworks clearly privilege the prime minister, it is the political context in which the institutional actors operate, which often legitimizes presidential attempts to have a larger say in executive matters.

Conclusion

Intraexecutive conflict was a frequent phenomenon in Eastern European semipresidential regimes during the first post-communist decade. Contrary to the expectations from theoretical literature, very little empirical support can be found for the claim that a semipresidential institutional setting can have a conflict-mitigating effect during the early stages of democratic consolidation.³⁹ Dur-

37. "Lithuania Update," *East European Constitutional Review* 7:1(1998): 17-19.

38. Due to a number of factors, which include both the formation of a broad legislative coalition favoring a parliamentary option and a significant involvement in the constitutional debates in Moldova of such European Union organizations as the Venice Commission, Parliament was able to prevail in the executive-legislative conflict over the distribution of executive powers and to enact constitutional changes. See "Moldova Update," *East European Constitutional Review* 8:4(1999): 24-26.

39. Shugart and Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies*, 49-54.

ing the period analyzed, intraexecutive confrontation was usually initiated by presidents who challenged the prime ministers' leadership over the cabinet. Presidents were willing to engage in intraexecutive competition under varying political circumstances. They challenged prime ministers who led cabinets supported by the different types of coalitions in the Parliament.

The Eastern European prime ministers backed by coalitions that had different political orientations from the president were much more frequently challenged by the presidents than their Western European counterparts. The article's findings also show that in Eastern Europe, a cabinet's minority status made it more likely that the prime minister would be challenged by the president. The presidents saw minority cabinets of both the same and opposite orientation as an opportunity to strengthen presidential influence over the executive.

The fact that presidents are more likely to challenge prime ministers who led minority cabinets constitutes an important empirical finding, especially in the light of the existing literature on cabinet formation. This literature's widely shared premise is that minority cabinets can function as well as majority governments due to the fact that they are backed by parliamentary parties that, although not formally part of the cabinet, support cabinet policies.⁴⁰ While the relatively small number of observations does not allow one to test whether the relationship between cabinet type and the level of conflict are statistically significant, a high frequency of intraexecutive competition during the incumbency of minority cabinets may indicate an important political vulnerability of this type of government.

Technocratic cabinets, on the other hand, experienced a rather low rate of intraexecutive conflict. This was largely due to the willingness of prime ministers to accept a greater degree of presidential involvement in executive matters. A lack of full and stable political backing in Parliament is largely responsible for the technocratic prime ministers' lack of ability to assert full control of the executive.

40. Kaare Strom, *Minority Government and Majority Rule* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); and Michael Laver and Norman Schofield, *Multiparty Government: The Politics of Coalition in Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

The evolution of party systems in semipresidential regimes is the single most important factor affecting the character of intraexecutive relations across the region. Proliferation of party system fragmentation provides grounds for continuing ambiguity about the scope and extent of presidential involvement in the executive. Further consolidation and ideological stratification of the party system would greatly diminish this ambiguity.

Poland is the only country in the list of semipresidential democracies discussed in this article that analysts consistently put into the group of the most consolidated democracies in Eastern Europe.⁴¹ While the debates continue about whether the most recent Polish experiences of cohabitation are consequences or some of the causes of democratic consolidation, these experiences indicate a greater acceptance on the part of the president of the existing distribution of executive powers. Rather than resorting to the constitutionally questionable practices and strategies of challenging the prime minister's leadership, President Kwasniewski chose to go through constitutional channels—the right of veto—to exercise some influence over policies designed by cabinet policy makers that were ideologically opposed to him.

While the veto powers of presidents in other Eastern European semipresidential regimes are weaker or nonexistent, current constitutions provide a number of opportunities for presidents to exercise their influence over the executive (partial veto powers, power to make appointments to various public offices, special decision-making powers in designated policy areas, etc.). The presidents' willingness to rely more extensively on these means of policy involvement rather than on constitution-bending strategies of undermining prime ministers' leadership are likely to be conditioned by the trajectories of party system evolution. Structuring post-communist countries' experiences with semipresidentialism along theoretical lines will also depend on further progress in studying how the constitutional design features and party systems characteristics interact in the process of democratic consolidation.

41. Morlino, "Constitutional Architectures and Democratic Politics in Eastern Europe," 53-78.

Appendix A
The Level of Intraexecutive Conflict in
Semipresidential Regimes, 1991-2002

Country	Cabinet	Level of Conflict
Bulgaria	Dimitrov 1991-92	High
	Berov 1992-94	Low
	Videnov 1995-97	High
	Kostov 1997-99	Low
	Kostov 1999-01	Low
	Gotha 2001-	Low
	Lithuania	Slezevicius 1993-96
Stankevicius 1996		Low
Vagnorius 1996-98		Low
Vagnorius 1998-99		High
Paksas 1999		Low
Kubilius 1999-2000		Low
Paksas II 2000-2001		High
Brazauskas 2001-		High
Moldova	Muravschi 1991-92	Low
	Sangheli 1992-94	Low
	Sangheli 1994-96	High
	Ciubuc 1997-98	Low
	Ciubuc 1998-99	Low
	Sturza 1999	Low
	Braghis 1999-2001	Low
	Poland	Bielecki 1991
Olszewski 1991-92		High
Suchocka 1992-93		Low
Suchocka II 1993		Low
Pawlak 1993-95		High
Oleksy 1995-96		High
Cimoszewicz 1996-97		Low
Buzek 1997-2000		High
Buzek 2000-2001		High
Miller 2001-		Low

(continued)

Appendix A (continued)

Country	Cabinet	Level of Conflict
Romania	Roman 1990-91	High
	Stolojan 1991-92	Low
	Vacaroiu 1992-96	Low
	Ciorbea 1996-98	Low
	Vasile 1998	Low
	Vasile II 1998-99	High
	Surescu 2000	Low
	Nastase 2000–	Low

**Appendix B
Effective Number of Parties (ENP) Scores, 1991-2002**

Country	Parliamentary Elections	ENP Score
Bulgaria	1991	2.40
	1994	2.70
	1997	2.50
	2001	2.92
Lithuania	1992	2.50
	1996	2.70
	2000	4.04
Moldova	1994	2.62
	1998	3.43
	2001	1.85
Poland	1991	9.80
	1993	3.90
	1997	2.90
	2001	3.57

(continued)

Appendix B (continued)

Country	Parliamentary Elections	ENP Score
Romania	1990	2.10
	1992	4.70
	1996	3.90
	2000	3.18

Source: Author's calculations from <http://www.essex.ac.uk/elections/>