



Universidade de Brasília  
Instituto de Ciência Política  
Programa de Pós-Graduação em Ciência Política

**Minority presidential governments on manifolds: theoretical expectations,  
Latin American reality and policy results on the ground**

Fernando Moutinho Ramalho Bittencourt

Tese de Doutorado em Ciência Política



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Orientador: Prof. PhD Adrian Nicolas  
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## ABSTRACT

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Studies dealing with multiparty presidential systems have focused on majoritarian coalition-building and their outcomes in strictly political terms. This research aims at studying another democratic arrangement, minority presidential governments, through the lens of their actual results in terms of policymaking. First, it presents a new empirical assessment regarding how frequent minority cabinets have been in Latin America's third wave of democratization, as well as to the economic policy results they're correlated with, taking full account of the bicameral nature of many legislatures in the region.

Then, the dissertation causally assesses minority presidential governments in terms of their policy performance, searching across several strands of literature for plausible determinants to their policy results and testing them in an integrated QCA causal framework.

The empirical results concur with extant literature in that minority governments represent a considerable proportion of all presidential terms, being a regular feature of Latin American political landscape, and provide clearly good policy results, comparable to those produced by majoritarian governments.

Regarding causal analysis, which takes minority cabinets as a scope condition, the assumed causal determinants are a composite of presidential institutional powers, reconcilability of goals among parties in the legislature, and the holding of a minimum threshold of parliamentary seat shares by the presidential coalition (held together under a macrocondition of "decisiveness"), as well as "horizontal accountability" (measured by a proxy for the intensity of parliamentary *ex post* oversight on executive actions).

Those conditions were found not to be logically necessary conditions to good policy performance, which suggests that they operate alongside other possible alternatives to policymaking. They do offer consistent sufficient solutions to good performance, though. Closing down on such sufficient configurations, one condition clearly stands out as the most relevant factor: the reconcilability of goals among the parties represented in congress, which serves as a potential enabler to successful bargains on behalf of presidential policy agendas, incentivizing a policymaking style based on negotiation and consensus-seeking. On the other hand, presidential institutional powers (be it in lawmaking, budgeting and the handling of informal benefits), as well as the seat share threshold, were found to be, at most, as leveraging factors to aid sound negotiation strategies; they never appear as being able to support successful unilateral attempts at policymaking. Finally, the expected causal effect of accountability is not significantly corroborated; this absence, however, may be due to horizontal accountability being performed, at least partially, by congresses through *ex ante* legislative scrutiny in the lawmaking process.

**Keywords:** Minority governments. Coalitional presidentialism. Political determinants of policymaking. Decisiveness. Accountability.

## RESUMO

Bittencourt, Fernando Moutinho Ramalho (2025). *Minority presidential governments on manifolds: theoretical expectations, Latin American reality and policy results on the ground* (Tese de doutorado). Instituto de Ciência Política, Universidade de Brasília, Brasília.

Os estudos sobre sistemas presidenciais multipartidários têm tido foco na formação de coalizões majoritárias e nos seus resultados no âmbito estritamente político. Esta pesquisa busca pesquisar outra forma de arranjo democrático, os governos presidenciais minoritários, sob a perspectiva dos resultados concretos de política pública por eles alcançados.

Inicialmente, apresenta-se uma nova avaliação empírica sobre a frequência dos gabinetes minoritários durante a terceira onda de democratização na América Latina, bem como sobre os resultados de política econômica a que eles são associados, levando em conta plenamente a natureza bicameral de muitos parlamentos da região.

Em seguida, a tese avalia em termos causais os governos presidenciais minoritários quanto ao seu desempenho em política pública, buscando em várias vertentes da literatura hipóteses sobre fatores determinantes desse desempenho e testando tais hipóteses por meio de um modelo causal integrado baseado na metodologia QCA.

Os resultados empíricos coincidem com a literatura existente no sentido de que os governos minoritários representam uma proporção considerável de todos os mandatos presidenciais, tornando-se uma característica normal da paisagem política latino-americana, e proporcionam resultados de política pública claramente positivos, comparáveis àqueles produzidos por governos majoritários.

No âmbito da análise causal, que toma os gabinetes minoritários como condição de escopo (*scope condition*), os determinantes causais levantados na teoria são uma combinação de poderes institucionais da presidência, potencial de conciliação dos objetivos entre os partidos representados no legislativo, e a ocupação de um percentual mínimo de assentos no parlamento por parte da coalizão presidencial (agrupados em uma macrocondição de “capacidade decisória”), bem como a “responsividade horizontal” (*horizontal accountability*), esta última medida por meio de uma *proxy* da intensidade do controle parlamentar *ex post* sobre as ações do executivo.

Estas condições não foram confirmadas como logicamente necessárias ao bom desempenho governamental, o que sugere que eles convivem com outras possíveis alternativas no processo de produção de políticas. No entanto, elas consistentemente oferecem soluções suficientes à ocorrência de bom desempenho governamental. Detalhando estas configurações suficientes, uma claramente sobressai como o fator mais relevante: a capacidade de conciliação de objetivos entre os partidos representados no congresso, que serve como um catalisador potencial de barganhas bem-sucedidas em favor das agendas presidenciais e incentiva um estilo de produção de políticas baseado na negociação e na busca de consensos. Por outro lado, os poderes institucionais da presidência (seja no processo legislativo ou sobre o orçamento ou a concessão de vantagens informais), assim como o controle de um número mínimo de cadeiras pela coalizão presidencial, servem no máximo como fatores de alavancagem em auxílio de estratégias solventes de negociação; eles nunca aparecem como capazes de viabilizar tentativas exitosas de decisão unilateral sobre políticas públicas.

Por fim, o efeito causal esperado da responsividade horizontal não é corroborado significativamente; esta constatação, porém, pode dever-se ao fato de que a *accountability* horizontal seja desenvolvida pelos legislativos, ao menos parcialmente, por meio do escrutínio parlamentar *ex ante* ao longo do processo legislativo de aprovação das leis.

**Palavras-chave:** Governos de minoria. Presidencialismo de coalizão. Determinantes políticos do processo de formação das políticas públicas. Capacidade decisória. Responsividade (*Accountability*).

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# 1 Introduction

Most studies dealing with multiparty presidential systems have concentrated on the processes by which presidents form and keep majoritarian coalitions going, and on the main aspects of coalitions as political realities. Much less has been said about the possibilities of other democratic arrangements not involving majority coalition-building, despite a growing awareness of the continuous existence of a relevant number of presidential governments who operate under minority conditions. Besides, the lenses through which those governments have been watched are massively those of the causes for their very existence, their political survival, and the different aspects of power-sharing they exhibit, while their effective results in terms of policymaking are seldom mentioned.

Hence, this research aims at studying minority presidential governments through the lens of their actual results in terms of policymaking. In order to do that, we first present the main findings on the extant literature on minority presidentialism, highlighting their conclusions on the breadth, political performance and general analytical frameworks of such experiences, followed by our own empirical exploration regarding how frequent that kind of political arrangement has been in Latin America's third wave of democratization, as well as to which economic policy results they're correlated. Finally, the dissertation will causally assess minority presidential governments in terms of their policy performance, searching across several strands of literature for plausible determinants to their policy results in order to test them in an integrated causal framework, as well as exploring how the results relate minority governments to broader institutional features in presidential regimes.

## 1.1 Research design overview

This essay will present and discuss some causal relationships involved in good policymaking results for minority governments. More specifically, decisiveness and accountability features within the universe of Executive-Legislative relations in a given polity will be put in line with policy outcomes - the nature of minority governments acting here as a scope condition for the analysis.

Our focus being the discussion of minority presidential governments from the perspective of their substantive results in policymaking, the object of research

consists in the performance of minority governments under presidential regimes in delivering good public policies.

Our main goal is pointing out factors that are positively associated with better policy performance under minority governments in Latin American presidential systems. To reach this main goal, it's necessary to fulfill a secondary one which involves the empirical compilation of minority governments to be found in Latin American contemporary democratic presidentialism, as well as their performance in terms of economic policy results. From the very beginning, it must be clear that we do not assess the differential impact of minority conditions on government results *per se*: instead, from the empirical cases where those minority settings are indeed found, we ask under which conditions good policy results are produced <sup>1</sup>.

The main goal leads to our research question, which has a causal nature and covers the determinants of positive policy results empirically compiled. Here, we investigate which sets of political and institutional factors determine the quality / effectiveness of policies under minority governments.

To answer the research question, we must forward the general view, to be further deployed in several specific hypotheses, that good policy outcomes are strongly associated with the existence, in each case, of a composite of decisiveness factors duly pointed out from coalitional presidentialism and minority parliamentarism literatures, combined with a strong horizontal accountability thrust by the legislature.

To reach this goal of assessing the policy performance of minority governments in Latin America, we define as parameters of good policy outcomes a combined set of results in macroeconomic policy in each country-year, to be compared with the region's average in the same year (for analytical purposes, those country-years will be bundled into larger time spans, corresponding to continuous tenure times for presidential cabinets, to be compared with the regional average along the same time horizon). On the causal side, we posit as theoretically expected reasons for any better-than-average (i.e. "good") policy outcome a bundle of features regarding the government's capacity to make decisions and commit to them (decisiveness), associated with the existence of strong legislative checks in the form of congressional oversight. On one side, we expect the government decisiveness to be affected by different combinations of factors, according to each case: by some

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<sup>1</sup> That is, we do not ask if minority conditions lead to better government results than any other possible configuration, but when better government results are achieved under their occurrence.

relevant presidential powers (basically on the legislative process and over the budget outlays and other administrative measures affecting the relationship with legislators), by the possibility of reconciling other parties' goals along several political dimensions ("policy", "office" and "votes"), and by the holding of a minimal legislative support threshold by the presidential coalition. On the other side, a more intense activity by congresses in deploying their oversight capacities must provide the accountability without which the risks of troublesome policymaking raise exponentially in any political system. Finally, a very broad assessment of basic instability factors affecting emergency presidential mandates is to be factored in the causal chain, to gauge the potential effect of those exceptional circumstances.

## 1.2 What's posited as of now, and what lays ahead – the opportunities facing this study

In a bird's eye view, we might say that the study of minority presidential governments offers thriving prospects. The literature seems to be at an initial stage in the task of taking the more consolidated frameworks and tools already available to both parliamentary governments and coalitional presidentialism and adapting them to specific minority problems. Field and Martin (2022a) reckon that, even for parliamentary regimes, the knowledge of minority governments' reality has advanced a lot theoretically and, empirically, in case studies (or small-n comparisons in clusters of relatively similar cases like Scandinavia), but still lacks strong comparative efforts.

It will be clear from the literature review in chapter 2 that minority governments, both in parliamentary and presidential systems, are fully taken now as relevant empirical phenomena, whose existence is no longer considered accidental, frictional, or improvised. On the contrary, it's one of the mainstream political choices made by governing actors. On the other hand, there are relatively few attempts to deal analytically with its functioning aspects in presidentialism (at least when compared with parliamentary literature on the same subject), and even fewer covering the substantive policy outcomes of such governments. In Field and Martin's (2022, 2022b) suggestive vocabulary, a rich vein of scholarship has been devoted to *why* minority governments form, while much remains to be seen about *how* they govern, and much more about *how well* they do it. Most of those attempts share a fruitful characteristic: their departure points are existing political theory (remarkably, coalition theories) and their instruments or strategies for decision-making in

executive-legislative relations. However, those levers are assessed only on an individual basis (or in partial batches) against their effectiveness over outcomes (mostly in the politics domain, not yet in the policy realm *per se*).

Those characteristics (the isolated assessment of each instrument/strategy, and the focus on strictly political outcomes) point to two major window of opportunity for further refining those theoretical foundations. Firstly, most presidentialism scholars<sup>2</sup> focus their research on politics and historical settings where a formal legislative majority under presidential command, associated to the sharing of cabinet posts with the coalition parties, can be found. They concentrate, thus, on how those settings work, or on the conditions required for such settings, or even on the presumed absence of working democracies without them. The “majority assumption” runs through two – otherwise radically opposed - visions of multiparty presidentialism (Rennó, 2006): the original Linzian approach of the unfeasibility of democratic presidentialism outside US-like strictly bipartisan dynamics<sup>3</sup>, and the generation of coalitional presidentialism theorists that followed<sup>4</sup>. The former group fears for democracy precisely because presidents wouldn’t be able to raise such legislative majorities (and, due to that, presidential systems couldn’t work properly); the latter argue that governability in multiparty presidential systems exists because, and only because, presidents keep adding new parties to the cabinet at least until reaching legislative majority status. As settled as those founding debates can be considered now, they underline a remarkable focus on getting and managing a majority legislative status by the president as the key issue for policymaking and even for democratic stability in multiparty presidentialism. Consequently, minority governments became automatically equated by those general theoretical interpretations to an undesirable or, maybe, unconceivable phenomenon – something

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<sup>2</sup> For broader overviews on the whole theoretical debate on multiparty presidentialism, including the original concerns on its democratic feasibility and how it was overcome, see also Couto, Soares and Livramento (2021), Melo (2009), Bittencourt (2019) and Freudenreich (2016).

<sup>3</sup> Or, in a less pessimistic but still very strictly conditioned view, outside very restrictive assumptions that ensured presidential majority in congress, including low party fractionalization and a very specific electoral design (plurality rule in presidential elections, closed-list proportional representation with moderate district magnitudes to elect legislators, and concurrent national elections for the presidency and congress), leading to an almost non-existent empirical footprint (Negretto, 2004, p. 2). See Chasquetti (2008), for an extensive literature survey.

<sup>4</sup> In short references, Figueiredo and Limongi (1999, 2008), for the Brazilian case; Chasquetti (2008), and Raile, Pereira and Power (2010), for a broader Latin American context with a more analytically sophisticated approach; and Chaisty, Cheeseman and Power (2018) for a cross-national framework including most presidentialisms in the world, as well as the general evolution in the literature towards a relative optimism regarding the regime’s governance possibilities.

that is not in line with the evidence presented in the minority presidentialism literature that will be assessed here.

On the other hand, as the theoretical controversies on presidentialism evolved, a booming literature also emerged in dealing with minority governments in parliamentary systems<sup>5</sup>. These minority endeavors, that would seem at first sight contradictory<sup>6</sup>, have shown to be a surprisingly frequent occurrence in parliamentarism also. Several studies presented by Strøm (1990) set the number of minority governments covering from 30 % to 45 % of all governments in post-war advanced parliamentary democracies until 1990; adding data from the last decades from now, König and Lin (2020) raised this number to 32,19 % of governments all the way from 1945 to 2017<sup>7</sup>. That is, under parliamentary settings, minority experiences are no longer taken by the mainstream scholarship as undesired, random by-products of stalemate or ungovernability; rather, they're seen as one more "government as usual" pattern<sup>8</sup>, whose characteristics, origins and effects must be an object of study (Strøm, 1990; Elgie, 2001a; Ganghof et. al., 2019; Salom, 2003; König & Lin, 2020; Thürk, 2022<sup>9</sup>).

In the meantime, as our review in section 2.2 will suggest, scholars did not restrain themselves to studying government systems separately. Recently, the comparative literature on executive-legislative relations has undergone something of an analytical convergence between presidential and parliamentary systems, emphasizing that presidents and prime ministers share, as heads of the executive, a common purpose of managing the legislative branch to advance their policy goals,

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<sup>5</sup> See, for instance, Strøm (1990), Herman and Pope (1973), Keudel-Kaiser (2016); Ganghof, Eppner, Stecker, Heeß and Schukraft (2019); Thürk (2022); Anghel and Thürk (2021); Moury and Fernandes (2016).

<sup>6</sup> Or, at most, frictional, temporary, or haphazard devices, since any parliamentary government should, supposedly, be born out of a parliamentary majoritarian support.

<sup>7</sup> Still other compilations range from 33 % in all Europe to 41,1 % in Eastern Europe, and 39,1 % among Spanish regional parliamentary governments (Field, 2016, p. 2 and 73), or from 28% to 35% (Andeweg, 2011, pp. 192).

<sup>8</sup> Not that the resource to minority or "divided" solutions as stopgap interim measures has disappeared, or that some of those cases haven't collapsed into political dogfight and impasse. Elgie (2001a) presents examples of both, although emphasizing their scarcity: divided or minority government as a routine matter is currently the main outcome, with heterogeneous results varying from lean decision-making to occasional gridlocks, in both parliamentary and presidential systems.

<sup>9</sup> In a more regional focus, Green-Pedersen and Thomsen (2005, p. 156) claim that minority governments ended up as one of the distinctive characteristics of Scandinavian parliamentarism.

and that purpose depends heavily on interbranch coordination instead of turf wars over power (Chaisty, Cheeseman & Power, 2020<sup>10</sup>).

Hence, there's the first window of opportunity for further enhancement of minority presidentialism studies: in-depth exploration of minority government workings may add a new viewpoint on the very essentials of presidential systems' feasibility and prospects. Such perspective has not yet reached neither the comprehensiveness nor the depth already featured by those dedicated to parliamentary regimes (Figueiredo et al, 2012, p. 840; Elgie, 2001a, p. 1), despite analytical and methodological tools that seem already ripe for usage (either from minority parliamentarism studies or from the presidential studies who focus on majority coalition-building), and also despite minority presidential governments being an empirically relevant phenomenon. These prospects are enhanced by the relative scarcity of comparative minority government studies in larger samples that include new democracies from the "third wave" or post-Soviet Central and Eastern Europe. Together with newly prevalent issue dimensions other than left-right socioeconomic agendas, and with increased party-system fragmentation and diversification, those empirical realities weren't available or fully visible in the early 1990's, when the bulk of reflection on minority government was attempted, following Strøm's seminal works (Field & Martin, 2022a, pp. 13-14).

Another open avenue to be followed is the full consideration, in those assessments outlined in the previous paragraphs, of the bicameral nature of many Latin American polities. Most coalition studies in multiparty presidential systems focus their analysis exclusively on lower houses, ignoring the almost symmetrical sharing of powers that most Latin American senates enjoy (Albala, 2017; Couto & Albala, 2023)

There's yet another theoretical window of opportunity in studying minority presidentialism: most of the literature assesses, directly or indirectly, impacts of minority government on political institutions or on specific results regarding politics

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<sup>10</sup> Acknowledgement of that reality may be found in earlier studies such as Laver and Shepsle (1991, p. 252): "*At a more general comparative level, political systems that might on the face of it appear to be constitutionally quite distinctive may exhibit similar patterns of practical political confrontation between different branches of government, each controlled by different constellations of partisan forces*". However, such acknowledgement doesn't mean they are seen as undistinguishable in analytical terms, since their specific institutional features make some mechanisms and causal relationships to act differently on governance (Pereira & Melo, 2012, pp. 159-160; Amorim Neto, 2006, p. 436).

and political competition<sup>11</sup>. Little could be found, however, regarding the impact of political or other variables on policy outcomes under the specific conditions of minority government, other than a few works looking at the effects of minority government conditions on fiscal balances (Powell 2000; Pech 2004; Falcó-Gimeno & Jurado, 2011; Edin & Ohlsson, 1991; Potrafke, 2019<sup>12</sup>). Such scarcity of studies

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<sup>11</sup> Under those broad categories of “impacts of minority government on political institutions or on specific results regarding politics and political competition”, we might find studies showing their association with democratic stability (Elgie, 2001a; Cheibub, 2002; Cheibub et al, 2004; Negretto, 2006a; Stein, 2007, pp. 153-154) and their performance in terms of specifically political variables: government duration (Deheza, 1997; Chaisty & Chernykh, 2017; Saalfeld 2008; Grotz & Weber, 2012; Brenton & Pickering, 2022; Morgenstern, Negri & Pérez-Liñan, 2008; Nikolenyi, 2022; Strøm, 2022; Anghel, 2022; Field, 2022; Bäck & Hellström, 2022; Godbout & Cochrane, 2022; Fernandes, 2002; Crowley & Hughes, 2022; Jones & Whitaker, 2022; for Strøm, 1990, that’s a measurement of fulfillment of parties’ office goals); legislative “productivity” as absolute number of bills passed by parliament (Field, 2022; Bäck & Hellström, 2022; Strøm, 2022; Godbout & Cochrane, 2022; Weeks, 2022; Jones & Whitaker, 2022; including a stratification of laws according to their relative weight on “major policy changes” as proxied by several procedural attributes in their decisionmaking process – Baumgarten et. al., 2014); legislative success and/or dominance rates in lawmaking processes (Badillo, 2007; Strøm, 1990; Cheibub et al 2004; Field 2016, 2022; Brenton & Pickering 2022; Nikolenyi, 2022; Pickup & Hobolt, 2015; Anghel, 2022; Bäck & Hellström, 2022; Godbout & Cochrane, 2022; Weeks, 2022; Zubek, 2022; Fernandes, 2002; Crowley & Hughes, 2022; Jones & Whitaker, 2022; for the bipartisan US case, classical Mayhew, 1991, or Ansolabehere & Palmer & Schneer, 2018); voting discipline on behalf of the Executive in parliament (Chaisty & Chernik, 2007; Albala, 2009); government termination reasons (Nikolenyi, 2022; Strøm, 1990, who considers it as a measurement to the attainment of parties’ policy goals); pledge fulfillment by governments (Moury & Fernandes, 2018; Matthieß, 2019; Klüver & Zubek, 2018; Brenton & Pickering, 2022; Artés, 2011; Bäck & Hellström, 2022; Fernandes, 2002; Carson & Gibbons & Martin, 2019); government ability in getting oppositional support for the government (Mújica & Sánchez-Cuenca 2006; Godbout & Høyland 2011; Louwerse, Otjes, Willumsen & Öhberg, 2017; De Giorgi & Ilonszki 2018; Zubek, 2022); incumbents’ future electoral successes (Strøm, 1990, considered as the metrics for parties’ vote-attracting goals; Field, 2016; Strøm, 2022; Bäck & Hellström, 2022; Weeks, 2022); or Executive-Legislative conflict at large, either as publicly-aired dissent or as extreme acts of mutual dissolution (Negretto, 2004). A survey of “how well” minority governments govern in terms of strictly political variables can be found in Field and Martin (2022, pp. 26-27).

<sup>12</sup> Heller (1997, p. 498) also incidentally assesses a government’s minority situation as a possible control for budget deficit, discarding it as “consistently statistically insignificant” (the same conclusion drawn in Cheibub, 2006, for 98 countries between 1970 and 2002, and in Sakamoto, 2001, for 18 OECD countries between 1961 and 1994). Indirectly, Altman and Castiglioni (2008), when looking at the propensity of coalition governments to enact specific kinds of pro-market economic reforms, bring information regarding the effects of presidential legislative arithmetics on those outcomes. Bäck & Hellström (2022, pp. 143-144) make a brief reference to studies showing very little differential effect by the minority condition on Swedish governments’ fiscal deficits. Pickup and Hobolt (2015) measure a minority government’s “policy response” in the Canadian case by the amount of federal expenditure in social welfare, justified by the fact that this issue dimension consistently figures out as the most salient one in national opinion polls. Rozenberg (2022, p. 183) presents a short list of policy achievements by French minority governments between 1988 and 1993 (as well as other policy proposals that failed then), but only by briefly nominating them (without a systematic analysis of causes or consequences). As an outstanding exception, Fernandes (2022) shows a systematic comparison on what he explicitly calls “government performance indicators” for Portuguese minority and majority governments, namely the share of social expenses in the budget, unemployment rates, GDP growth and public deficit, all of them substantive policy outcomes.

regarding minorities' policy outcomes is also decried by König and Lin ("we still know very little about how minority governments sustain without the majority support in parliament" – 2020, p. 3), Field (2016), Schleiter (2020); Negretto (2004), Thürk (2022) and Field and Martin (2022, p. 26-27)<sup>13</sup>. So, studies trying to fulfill such a reflection gap might not only shed light on minority governments' policy performance and its determinants, but also provide some feedback into the consideration of strictly political variables themselves (that is, on the links between government performance and those institutional political variables who have, up to now, been the main focus of interest in the study of minority governments).

### 1.3 How this study is organized

Chapter 2 presents an empirical and theoretical background to our general object of minority presidentialism. Its first half consists of a structured view on the literature on minority governments in presidentialism, portraying the wider theoretical background on the issue, culminating in an attempt at forging a structured view on the main analytical paths into which the literature on the issue converges. The second part shows an empirical glimpse of these phenomena: it presents a summary of the main substantive findings in the literature regarding minority presidential governments on the ground, that is, what they posit regarding the existence and the mechanisms through which they work. Then follows our own empirical work on minority governments' incidence, prevalence, and duration within Latin American third wave democracies.

Chapter 3 brings our focused theoretical effort in building analytically on the issue. Here, our concept of good policy performance is developed, where we discuss the theoretical rationale for using economic outcomes as proxies. After that, we build the conceptual framework to our causal research, retrieving the analytical components of decisiveness and accountability in government action as posited in the presidentialism literature and associating both to good policy results – in short, theoretically displaying the causal conditions and the outcome to a causal model. That means drawing the broad lines of the decisiveness/accountability architecture as causal configurations for good policy outcomes (section 3.2), as well as the detailed

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<sup>13</sup> More generally, Desposato (2006, pp. 168-169) deplors that studies on Latin American legislatures avoid the question of policy outcomes, including the impact of institutional design and legislatures on the quality of a regime and its capacity to produce good public policy.

specification of each one of the individual factors posited to be relevant to the causal analysis (section 3.3) and the caveats regarding short and emergency mandates.

Those theoretical outlines are presented in a properly formalized way in Chapter 4, where more precise hypotheses are laid down and the nature of minority governments as a scope condition (that is, the precise theoretical reasons why minority governments will be chosen as the universe for our study) is explained.

Chapter 5 deals with data and methods, including the rationale for choosing QCA methodology, as well as the selection and sourcing issues involved in that empirical endeavor (with operationalization and data source details deployed in online Appendix 2).

Following that, the findings directly related to the causal analysis are displayed in sections 6.1 and 6.2 of chapter 6. They encompass the performance results of minority governments and the systematic assessment of the empirical picture as regards the causal conditions and the corresponding outcomes in each relevant time span of minority governments (a detailed display of the empirical results is to be found in online Appendix 1). Those findings will then be analytically discussed within a QCA framework in section 6.3, which includes necessity and sufficiency tests and their interpretation, contrasted against the hypotheses forwarded in chapter 4.

The concluding chapter summarizes the main findings and reassesses the research question in order to gauge the degree to which it might have been properly answered, finishing by suggesting new possible avenues of research on the subject.

Both Appendixes 1 and 2, as well as replication data, R scripts and worksheets used in data compilation and processing are available at the online repositories Github<sup>14</sup> and Harvard Dataverse<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> <https://github.com/Fernando-Bittencourt/Minority-presidential-governments-on-manifolds>

<sup>15</sup> <https://dataverse.harvard.edu/dataverse/minoritygovtsmanifolds/>

## 2 Setting the background for analytical modelling: theoretical and empirical landscape regarding minority presidential governments

This chapter tries to draw the main background lines of minority presidential government, setting the broader context within which a causal assessment of policy results may be developed in the following chapters. To that purpose, its first endeavor is a survey on how the literature deals with the minority presidential governments at large. *À vol d'oiseau*, we try to assess the main issues being covered by such literature, as well as the most important analytical features employed in how it covers minority presidentialism. Section 2.1 brings some conceptual specifications followed by a summary of the main theoretical pathways explaining minority governments' working (section 2.2) and a review of empirical comparative and case studies in section 2.3.

### 2.1 Getting the names right: specifying the meaning of coalitions and minority governments

To explore in a more detailed fashion the substantive content of the minority presidential government literature, we must first go through a few notional definitions and classification frameworks to correctly locate the theoretical debate. Those clarifications will also be useful in setting the precise meanings to some concepts who will be employed along the following chapters<sup>16</sup>. The bulk of extant research so far has been performed on parliamentary systems, and that circumstance also reflects on the prevalence of parliamentary-based conceptualization for the issues tackled in this section. Indeed, that's another way of exploring the opportunity in taking instruments already available for parliamentary settings and using them to discuss presidential governments.

#### *Coalition*

The first definition to be established is the very notion of “coalition” within this context of presidential governments. Conceptually, coalitions might be understood as credible understandings between political parties (either by explicit

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<sup>16</sup> For other extensive considerations on conceptual issues regarding minority government, not directly affecting our theoretical concerns in this paper, see Field and Martin (2022a)

written agreement or tacitly agreed practice) to share political resources and reach common goals - here, with the specific purposes of mutual coordination in government (Couto, Soares & Livramento, 2021; Reniu & Albala, 2012). This underlying strategy is, however, hard to observe empirically: coalitions must be traced in real life indirectly, generally through the empirical assessment of how much cabinet-level appointments follow partisan logic, that is, how much they reflect an agreement between the president and the minister's party regarding his or her nomination (Amorim Neto, 1994, 1998, 2019; Chasquetti, 2008<sup>17</sup>). For the same empirical reasons, besides some theoretical ones discussed further below in a specific cluster of section A.2.8 in Appendix 2, the occasional prevalence, in some cases, of strong disciplined intraparty factions such as in Uruguay (Altman, 2000), will not be considered in our core operationalization of coalitions<sup>18</sup>.

Not that other conceptualization strategies have not been attempted. In parliamentary scholarship, several studies emphasize the relative novelty of explicit support agreements within cabinets (Christiansen and Pedersen, 2014) and with external supporters (Bale & Bergman, 2006; Andeweg, 2001; Aylott & Bergman, 2011; Thürk, 2022; Krauss & Thurk, 2022; Matthieß, 2018; Nikolenyi, 2022) designated "contract parliamentarism". This relatively new phenomenon <sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Alemán and Tsebelis (2011, p. 8) reckon that even presidents who may expect to rally ideologically close non-presidential parties to their support based on policy content "most often [...] see necessary to trade cabinet posts for greater and more reliable partisan support". Martínez-Gallardo (2014) also points to several pieces of empirical evidence that presidents who are more in need of political support in the legislature (in episodes of low popularity; when their parties are minoritarian in the assemblies; when they have less formal authority in the lawmaking process) actually resort more frequently to ministerial appointments and reshufflings in "core", institutionally more relevant, ministerial departments. It must be conceded that there's no absolute theoretical association between cabinet membership and party support: Camerlo, 2013, presents the criticism around the several degrees of involvement of party-affiliated ministers in their parties' dynamics (which puts into question the literature's expectations of full legislative support awarded by each and every cabinet nomination) and, on the other hand, around the possibility of non-partisan, "independent" ministers, instead of being only technocrats or presidential acolytes, bringing presidents the support of other social groups or clusters that might not be organized along partisan lines. However, as the same autor reckons, "[d]esde la literatura de las coaliciones, la variable relevante para identificar y describir a los miembros del gabinete es la afiliación partidaria."

<sup>18</sup> That's the same strategy adopted by Morgenstern, Negri and Pérez-Liñan (2008, pp. 163-164), who found such factional data only for the well-known case of Uruguay and, even so, only up to 1995, measuring only the parliamentary size of whole parties in every other case. Contrary to their choice, we won't even try to override party information with any kind of intraparty factional splits even in those very limited instances where factions' data might be available. On top of all that, Chasquetti (2018, p. 163) describes changes in Uruguayan electoral system between 1994 and 1996 that might significantly change the relevant fault lines in this factional framework.

<sup>19</sup> Not that they've been unknown: Strøm (1990) had a specific category of "formal minority governments" to designate minority cabinets with binding external support agreements. The

encompasses formally minority governments (either single party or coalition) which have relationships with their ‘support’ parties that are so institutionalized through formal, written, explicit agreements that they come close to being majority governments. Chaisty, Cheeseman and Power (2018, ch. 3) discuss the actual existence of stable support arrangements in the legislature that not necessarily include cabinet sharing, but they stress the extreme difficulty of developing comparative metrics for them, since qualitative, case-by-case empirical assessments are necessary to identify them (portfolio-based definitions being the only practicable solution for studying coalitions in large-N analyses). For our purposes of discussing the extant views on presidential governments, we adopt the cabinet-based definition<sup>20</sup>, specially taking into consideration that this methodological choice has been adopted by the clear majority of assessed authors<sup>21</sup>.

### *Cabinet coalition and legislative coalition*

Another clear distinction present in the literature is between this widespread definition of coalition (also called “cabinet coalition”, “government coalition”, or even “executive coalition”), made up by the parties who share cabinet posts in the executive<sup>22</sup>, and another very important feature: the “legislative coalition” or “floor coalition”<sup>23</sup>. The latter means the effective support, in votes, for the executive’s bills and other initiatives towards the legislature – which sometimes can last, but, more often than not, means *ad hoc* arrangements built for each and every vote in congress.

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novelty is the centrality recently detected for such agreements in minority prime ministers’ strategies.

<sup>20</sup> Aniyaw, cabinet-sharing is only a proxy for an assumed coordination in executive and parliamentary action by governments: Colomer (2005) emphasizes that the absence of (at least some) party discipline iolivan legislative voting renders the concept of “unified” or “divided” government meaningless, since the president will have to individually negotiate with legislators to reach compromises for each vote according to their individual policy preferences.

<sup>21</sup> With very few exceptions, remarkably the case-based work by Chaisty, Cheeseman and Power (2018)

<sup>22</sup> Throughout this study, executive cabinet posts will not include, in any way, the offices of president and vice-president, but include those positions denominated “cabinet head” (such as *Jefe del Gabinete de Ministros* in Argentina or *Presidente del Consejo de Ministros* en Peru), since those authorities can, ultimately, be nominated by the President (albeit with some additional restrictions regarding parliamentary approval) and dismissed by him (in this case, we found no exception to presidential prerogative of having those “cabinet heads” serving at their pleasure). In other words, the formal existence of a minister singled out with increased coordination roles or higher transactional costs for nomination and dismissal does not change the fully presidential nature of the politics in question.

<sup>23</sup> Godbout and Høyland (2011a) call them “voting coalitions”, stressing that very little is known about them. Morgenstern (2003, p. 141) uses the term “policy coalitions”, albeit emphasizing that they are defined by “the patterns of voting on any given roll call”.

Indeed, the very condition for survival of any executive lawmaking agenda (and, to a great extent, the survival in office of a parliamentary government) is that it reaches a majoritarian legislative coalition, which may or may not coincide with its own “cabinet coalition”, in the relevant issues put to the chamber. Legislative coalitions can be shifting literally from vote to vote, and as such they can’t define the minority or majority status of governments for framing any kind of typology<sup>24</sup> – however, most minority decision-making issues revolves precisely around the buildup of more stable legislative coalitions to pursue policymaking (Chaisty & Power, 2018, pp. 16-17; Chaisty, Cheeseman & Power, 2018<sup>25</sup>). That also means we’ll not be using the expression “minority presidents” but in the strict sense of an executive head whose party does not hold by itself a majority in parliament (Chaisty & Chernykh, 2017)<sup>26</sup>; for the core of our analysis, we’ll focus instead on the concept of “minority government” (also described as “minority presidential government” or “minority cabinet”) where the president is unable or unwilling to put together a cabinet coalition who collectively holds a working majority in the relevant chamber (Chaisty & Cheeseman & Power, 2018).

### *Minority governments*

Now turning to the conceptualization of a whole government, different ideas are encompassed in the literature by such expressions as “minority governments” or “divided governments”. A very general definition is the one presented by Elgie (2001a, 2001b) and named “divided government”, grounded on purely arithmetical terms: the situation where the executive (that is, the parties whose members formally enter the executive cabinet as first-range ministers<sup>27</sup>) fails to enjoy majority support

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<sup>24</sup> “Finally, minority governments can, and often do, have the support of a majority in the legislature. This majority, however, comprises parties or legislators whose parties do not have representation in cabinet. Again, the key focus of a definition of minority government is not whether the cabinet has the support of a majority of parliament, but whether the party or parties in cabinet between them control a majority of seats in the relevant chamber of the legislature” (Field & Martin, 2022a, p. 7)

<sup>25</sup> On the opposite view, Freudenreich (2016) argues that coalition-building in general (and minority ones in particular) arise from pre-electoral compromises aimed at increasing parties’ electoral perspectives before any given presidential election.

<sup>26</sup> This concept is somehow open-ended: a “minority president” may either be the formateur of a strong majoritarian coalition or pursue a minoritarian single-party government, or any combination in between.

<sup>27</sup> So, this definition of cabinet or “executive coalition” can be used interchangeably with the notions of “majority coalition” or “minority coalition”, since the executive is depicted as having a cabinet composed by one or more parties (Negretto, 2004, p. 12).

(50% plus one of the members) in at least one working house<sup>28</sup> of the legislature (which does not require that the chamber in question be controlled by any unified opposition party or coalition).<sup>29</sup>.

#### *Other concepts for minority governments in the literature*

Those conceptual specifications are not the only ones forwarded by the literature, where other, more complex, proposals can be found. To begin with, a more fine-grained typology is provided by Negretto (2004, pp. 5-8) for specifically presidential settings, considering not only the floor arithmetic but also the policy location of the president's party and the other parties represented in parliament. The key variable for him is the party control of two pivotal positions in the legislature, the median legislator and the veto legislator<sup>30</sup>. If the presidents' party (or coalition) controls both benchmarks, there's a "presidential" government, which might be disaggregated into "unified presidential" (if presidential party or coalition has more than 50 % of the chamber) and "median presidential" (that is, presidents' coalition encompasses both veto and median legislators but hold less than 50% of the chamber, in which case he considers it the "functional equivalent" of a parliamentary minority government). "Divided government", in the sense given to that expression by Negretto in his framework, appears when another party controls the median legislator

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<sup>28</sup> A "working house" is any chamber who has the prerogative to approve legislation. So, in a bicameral parliament, one chamber is understood as such even if the cabinet is responsible to the other one. Note that this differs from the usual definition for parliamentary studies, in which the chamber that matters is the one to which the cabinet is constitutionally responsible (Strøm, 1990, p. 6; Field & Martin, 2022a, p. 6) – something that makes no sense in presidential regimes. Actually, as will become clear along this study, since legislative majorities are relevant in presidential systems not to keep the government in office (except for impeachment procedures) but instead to legislate and influence oversight activity, and since those roles are commonly shared by both chambers in Latin American systems who feature them, it's theoretically much more meaningful to use a bicameral definition to the minority condition of a government.

<sup>29</sup> "Majority" is defined by the absolute number (50% plus one), regardless of the occasional existence of higher thresholds for certain decisions such as constitutional change or veto overriding. Field and Martin (2022a, p. 6), when establishing this clarification, assign it to the explicit or implicit requirement for a parliamentary government to stay in office (something hardly relevant to presidential administrations). However, we must follow this numerical criterion too, since there's hardly any other expressed in the literature; it requires the assumption that absolute majority is the decision criteria for legislative decision-making in most relevant issues across parliaments in the daily business of governments (to our knowledge, there's no empirical counter example in our Latin American sample). Of course, veto overriding, constitutional changes or even impeachment may (and probably will) have supermajority requirements, but those are very specific institutional features who deserve individually crafted consideration when relevant to any analysis.

<sup>30</sup> Underlying that definition are the assumptions of a one-dimensional policy space in which to locate parties' position; of disciplined, unitary parties; and of a unicameral legislature.

but the president’s still holds the veto legislator. “Congressional government”, at last, emerges when the presidential coalition is away from both median and veto legislators, generating an extremely high decisional dominance by the legislature. This typological framework is summarized in the following table below, and its analytical implications in the context of our research will be further discussed below.

*Table 1 - Government typology in presidentialism by Negretto (2004)*

	Controls Median Legislator	Controls Veto Legislator
Presidential government Unified presidential (PP holds 50%+ of votes) Median presidential (PP holds < 50% of votes)	PP	PP
Divided government	OP	PP
Congressional government	OP	OP

*Obs.: “PP” means presidential party (or presidential cabinet coalition, if any). “OP” means any other party represented in the chamber who doesn’t belong to the cabinet coalition.*

Source: Negretto (2004, pp. 5-8)

There’s another segmentation developed by Strøm (1990, p. 62) which, although originally applied by him in his analysis of parliamentarism, can be meaningful also in discussing presidential cases. It involves differentiating “formal minority” from “substantive minority” cabinets. In the former, the governing cabinet is externally supported, that is, enjoys the parliamentary support of one or more parties not represented in the cabinet who hold enough seats to ensure a majority of the floor on the decision scope to which it applies - provided such support is negotiated prior to the formation of the government, and takes the form of an explicit, comprehensive, and more than short-term commitment to the policies as well as the survival of the government. This kind of support makes formal minority governments very similar to *de facto* majority governments in terms of legislative stability and support. “Substantive minority” governments, on the other hand, are not graced by any such support arrangements<sup>31</sup>.

<sup>31</sup> Definition also proposed by Thürk (2022, p. 8-10), who presents a sub-typology of formal minority situations according to the degree of binding commitment between its partners. Strøm will argue that formal minority governments have markedly different dynamics vis-à-vis substantive minority ones, and that claim will be deepened by the studies on “contract parliamentarism” which will be referenced in the following chapters.

Other definitions are grounded on behavioral features, thus leaning much less on institutional traits. Laver (1999, p. 6) specifies "divided government" under this perspective as what happens when governance structures with independent sources of legitimacy have the potential to come into conflict (in which case the existence of significant overlapping powers between them creates the possibility of deadlock in the governmental system). Haggard and McCubbins (2001) see "divided government" when no single cluster of unified societal interests (proxied by political parties<sup>32</sup>) controls all separate powers (not just when the assembly and the presidency are in different partisan hands, as is the common view, but also when the two houses of a bicameral legislature are, or when the presidency and the courts are, and so forth).

### *Our chosen definition*

Summing up those definitional issues, we must say that all those behavioral aspects are relevant in the causal assessment of minority governments. However, given their shifting, dynamic characteristics, extremely affected by each case's idiosyncrasies, most of the literature follows some kind of numerical-based framework as a departing point for characterization and empirical treatment. That will be our own choice too, to consider minority governments as those where the parties represented in the cabinet hold less than 50% of the seats in any legislative chamber<sup>33</sup>.

## 2.2 The extant knowledge: a structured view on the literature on minority governments in presidentialism

### 2.2.1 Analytical patterns in the appraisal of minority presidential governments

Moving now towards more general analytical trends pervasive among most of the literature, the first point to make is the almost unanimous point of departure<sup>34</sup>, converging with their predecessors who studied parliamentary systems: they take for

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<sup>32</sup> Parties here seen as the best available proxy for specific interests: it's possible that a party's factionalization makes it a representative of several interests, or some parties are so tightly aligned that their separate control of office might be seen as a unitary one. That, however, would be a measurement error, not affecting the conceptualization based on "separation of purposes".

<sup>33</sup> Reminding that, as discussed above, in our Latin American universe, both lower and upper chambers are to be equally considered in bicameral polities.

<sup>34</sup> Although Cheibub (2002), Cheibub and Limongi (2002) and Cheibub et al (2002, 2004) are widely regarded as seminal works in reaching such scholarly consensus.

granted that minority governments, both single-party or coalition ones, are far from being an aberration or a prelude to breakdown. On the contrary, both kinds of minority governments emerge as entirely normal features of presidential regimes, occurring regularly (often as a deliberate choice by president and parties) and meaning, per se, absolutely no sign of crisis or impasse.

Another remarkable convergence is that all authors seem to vindicate, one way or another, some degree of the almost canonical view of the “inefficient secret” in presidentialism (Shugart & Carey, 1992), in which legislators with fragmented or particularistic perspective (and, correspondingly, localistic electoral connections) delegate national policy to the president. From the point of view of congresses, however, there’s no claim for neither abdication nor unconditional delegation: on the contrary, the portrayed parliaments are remarkably involved in policymaking deals (Calvo, 2014; Casar 2013).

Finally, one more clear position in the literature is the emphatic denial of previously assumed links from minority presidential governments to gridlock or legislative impasses. On the contrary, in one way or another, those governments managed to go on with their businesses (Cheibub, 2002; Cheibub & Limongi, 2002; Cheibub, Przeworski & Saiegh, 2002) and to advance national legislative agendas - although possibly not as bold as they’ve been originally presented to voters (Elgie, 2008; Negretto, 2006b). Quite to the contrary, a minority condition is even suggested by some authors as enabling, through better checks on presidential powers, an enhancement to democratic quality (Elgie & McMnamin, 2008; Elgie, 2008; Kim, 2015)<sup>35</sup>.

### 2.2.2 Digging deeper: a very broad framework for the observable general patterns in the literature on minority presidentialism

Those new segments of the literature that deal with minority presidentialism as a usual, recurrent, phenomenon seem to have an implicit or explicit reference framework for analyzing multiparty settings, while focusing on individual features within this broader frame of reference. We sketch this framework here to offer a very stylized backdrop against which the collation of several analytical models can be

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<sup>35</sup> Mexican case studies, in particular, seem enthusiastic in stating that the democratic transition of 1997-2000 brought both minority presidential governments and a surge in governance quality (Casar, 2013; Ferrel, 2019).

better understood; it's not a model *per se*, nor any attempt to pursue the whole framework as an engine for causal or even descriptive analysis has been found. However, putting all the pieces together may help to better appraise their individual workings.

Such broader approach might resemble the one advanced by Field (2016) and updated by Field and Martin (2022)<sup>36</sup> as a multilevel framework, which extends a general model of party-based government focused on “policy, office and votes” (Strøm & Müller, 1999), with the addition of some qualifications from the several “executive toolbox” approaches in coalitional presidentialism studies (Raile, Pereira & Power, 2010; Chaisty & Cheeseman & Power, 2018)<sup>37</sup>. The framework's components are the factors that account for a given government's ability to make significant, authoritative decisions regarding the country's public policies, divided into three main groups (analytically separated, but interdependent in real life).

#### *Institutional bases for bargaining power*

The first component includes the institutional features who shape a government's bargaining power in parliament.

Starting with an admittedly very indirect stance, electoral institutions at large will impact on a country's degree of multipartism, and party discipline, as well as on the timing of its elections. Those features, by their turn, will affect the bargaining circumstances for government and opposition (for instance, in the form of more likelihood of congressional fragmentation, more opportunity for individual deals with individual parliamentarians, or more opportunities for coattail effects to happen in simultaneous presidential and legislative elections). That is, the electoral institutions may shape a more or less favourable environment for a minoritarian electoral outcome, and for more or less bargaining leverage by presidents emerging from that outcome.

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<sup>36</sup> A summarized version of the model, incorporating more recent theoretical studies in parliamentary minority systems can be found in Field and Martin (2022). This last attempt tries to generalize to minority governments at large this framework originally deployed by Field to understand the Spanish case, which is the reason we include that framework in the literature slate dealing with minority presidentialism (although the more detailed original work on Spanish minority governments will be the preferred source to display the model's features).

<sup>37</sup> Our goal at this point is not to fully explore the analytical potential of such framework, but just to delineate (in an almost stylized fashion) its main features, so as to create reference points to locate the several relevant aspects of that literature to the purposes of this section. Further on, segments of those frameworks will be built into our causal theoretical model.

Then, legislative formal rules and procedures who directly condition the balance of powers in lawmaking represent other extremely relevant institutional features which directly affect concrete legislative bargaining on behalf of the presidential agenda. Paramount among those rules and procedures are:

- a) government legislative powers (both reactive - mainly veto powers - and proactive - in the form of agenda and decree powers);
- b) the centralization of decision rights and gatekeeping powers within parliaments; as well as
- c) the lawmaking thresholds (in terms of the share of votes required for each decision<sup>38</sup>).

Third, the already mentioned “toolbox” approach adds some other features to this institutional slate of bargaining levers for presidents to use in pushing their agendas through congresses:

a) the cabinet powers (presidential prerogatives to hire and fire ministers and, occasionally, congressional capacities to influence that by vetting or censuring ministers)<sup>39</sup>;

b) the presidential powers over patronage at large (meaning the president’s prerogatives to appoint sub-cabinet positions in public administration, that is, choosing officeholders at top and mid-level bureaucracy posts);

c) the presidential powers over the disbursement of pork, basically through budget allotments;

d) a less delimited (but not less important) category of informal “exchange of favours” which includes the beneficial treatment of allies’ interests by regulatory, policy or tax measures promoted by the executive within governmental discretion; the measures encompassed by this last category are expanded, in some models, to include any directly illicit form of exchange, such as direct payments to legislators (Pereira & Power & Raile, 2008, 2011; Calvo, 2014, pp. 206-207) or a deliberately

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<sup>38</sup> Alemán and Tsebelis (2011) add, indirectly, congressional oversight powers as a conditioning factor in minority government formation, since its absence would deprive legislative parties from levers to pressure for office-holding.

<sup>39</sup> It may seem odd that such feature is considered in presidential settings who are supposedly devoid of confidence votes. However, it’s not restricted to parliamentary systems: there are indeed different degrees of presidential executive appointment prerogatives vis-à-vis the legislature across countries, both at cabinet level and – even more heterogeneously – in patronage appointments at large. The issue – and its analytical implications – will be further discussed in section 3.3.1.

blind eye on the misuse of public resources by officeholders in sync with allied parties (Samuels, 2002).

Finally, the unitary or multilevel<sup>40</sup> structure of the polity: such arena is mostly about bargaining, after all, and the existence of more than one level of government exponentiates the number of possible bargains (Albala & Reniu, 2018). Multilevel states can offer negotiating parties several sources of payoffs to exchange, affect their relative bargaining weight and even open up a whole new dimension of policy space in reshaping the relative distribution of policy mandates and resources along different administrations<sup>41</sup>. These represent potential tools for presidents in minority governments to entice cooperation among non-coalition lawmakers.

### *Parties' goals and their settlement potential*

The second group or component to this framework are parties' goals and their potential for reconciliation (or mutually beneficial settlement), where the seminal influence of Strøm and Müller (1999) is felt more intensely. Instead of the older theoretical vision of parties as mere ladders for conquering ministerial-level posts, their goals are here assessed within a four-dimensional template: each party can have its preference curve deployed differently along each dimension<sup>42</sup>, each having different priorities across parties (and along time).

Two of those dimensions may be called “intrinsic”, in the sense that, ultimately, self-interested agents<sup>43</sup> could only engage rationally in politics if this engagement brought them: i) office (the ability to hold and command government portfolios) and/or ii) policy (bringing government policy as close as possible to their own preferred policies). All benefits to be reaped by agents and parties (including direct ones such as pork, patronage or favors) can only stem from either office or policy payoffs<sup>44</sup>.

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<sup>40</sup> Also described as “devolved”, or “federalist”.

<sup>41</sup> That is, the very definition of which policy jurisdictions and prerogatives will be assigned to each level of government becomes a subject of negotiation (as in the Spanish “autonomic State” debate which is so central to Field’s arguments)

<sup>42</sup> The multiple possible party goals are present in Field’s framework with reference to the seminal work of Strøm and Müller (1999). The wider, four-dimensional model presented here (adding the “cohesion” dimension) is fully developed in Reniu (2011), which refers to Bergman (1995) as its original design (see also Aylott & Bergman, 2011).

<sup>43</sup> Either individually or acting collectively as parties.

<sup>44</sup> Indeed, such traditional features of political payoffs as pork, subcabinet patronage or informal favours (as discussed in the “toolbox” concept) may be hard to impute unequivocally to either holding an office or getting beneficial policies *per se*. However, but for those two, no other source seems to be able to provide them.

To reach those goals along time, other two “instrumental”<sup>45</sup> goals may be posited: i) votes (the standing in the electoral arena, which means the potential support of voters in the ballot box); and ii) party cohesion (which stands for a very crucial element in the party’s capacity as collective action vehicle to realize its member’s goals). Those two “instrumental” goals are, to some degree, necessary conditions for the “intrinsic” ones to be reached, since no office or policy gains can be collected by parties who do not get voted at the ballot box, and electoral success is probably hindered by infighting and intraparty rivalries. So, even “instrumental” goals are frequently considered individually in a party’s strategy as benchmarks to be fulfilled by themselves.

Here, the essential connection to the framework is that party goals can be reconciled through multiple deals along one or more of the dimensions<sup>46</sup>, and the traditional analytical effect of policy distances in spatial models can be fully factored in along that specific dimension<sup>47</sup>. On a multilevel polity, this distribution of goals and priorities across dimensions for each party is compounded by different configuration along each dimension (i.e., a party can be moderately or partially policy-seeking in the national level and strongly office-seeking in the subnational arena<sup>48</sup>). That is, reconcilable party goals “level the playing field” creating willing partners for presidents to engage in offers using the “toolbox” resources. In other

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<sup>45</sup> That is, “instrumental” to accruing office and policy gains by electoral competition.

<sup>46</sup> Although the “cohesion” dimension and, to a lesser extent, the “votes” issue are more difficult to frame as an explicit offer in a bargain; that is, they are implicitly present at the table as an element in the involved party’s calculation, but can hardly be explicitly put in an offer by the government – except, maybe, by promising to explicitly vocalize support by the president to a given party’s electoral bids, or by agreeing on future electoral alliances that benefit the party being cajoled.

<sup>47</sup> A very suggestive illustration to that bargaining possibilities is provided by Crowley and Hughes (2022, pp. 293-294) when describing strictly nationwide policy-oriented swaps in a highly successful Australian minority government:

*“The particularistic agendas of the Gillard government supporters were clear in their agreements with the prime minister. These supporters had a clear aversion to the Abbott-led Coalition opposition and strongly expressed their preference for Labor. The rural regional independents secured unprecedented funding. The Greens achieved carbon pricing, national dental care, and secured a parliamentary debate on the war on Afghanistan (Crowley and Moore 2020). The multiparty climate policy process that was achieved was a testament to the collaboration that arises under minority government circumstances.”*

<sup>48</sup> That’s the case, Field argues, for her main object of study (Spanish regional parties and their role in supporting minority governments by nationwide parties at the national level). The same appraisal is made by Jones and Whitaker (2022) regarding Northern Irish regional parties in the British Westminster parliament. Oddly as it might seem, that may also be the case of the (otherwise policy-seeking and anti-system) Portuguese Communist party, who is deeply involved in running several local governments (Fernandes, 2022).

words, they create “demand” for bargains with the president among non-coalition legislators and parties).

### *Contingent bargain factors*

The third component group, closing the framework, is the consideration that any given government in real world will face contingent bargaining circumstances who will interact with both institutions and parties’ objective functions, resulting in the actual decisions. The first among those contingent circumstances is parliament’s arithmetic: exactly what is the legislative contingent of the president’s party or coalition, his potential allies and his potential opposition (or, in multilevel structures, those same features in national and regional parliaments).

Then comes the policy distances among parties, and between them and the government policy distances among parties, and between them and the government. This feature interacts with parties’ numbers in parliament to determine their actual effect at each point in time<sup>49</sup>. There’s also the timing effect: the proximity to an election affects the balance between parties’ payoff calculation regarding joining the government and supporting policies<sup>50</sup>.

A stylized shape of this more encompassing framework is shown in Figure 1 below.

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<sup>49</sup> Which decisively affects, for instance, a government’s ability to shift allies along the party spectrum or its willingness to unilaterally propose policies to non-coalition parties deemed to favor them.

<sup>50</sup> This timing effect resembles the one described in Strøm’s (1990) seminal work on minority parliamentary governance regarding parties’ willingness to support the government without joining a formal cabinet coalition. Broader logical consequences of election timing on the accountability and inclinations of both government and legislators, as posited by Shugart (1995) or Manow and Burkhart (2007) can also fit this category.

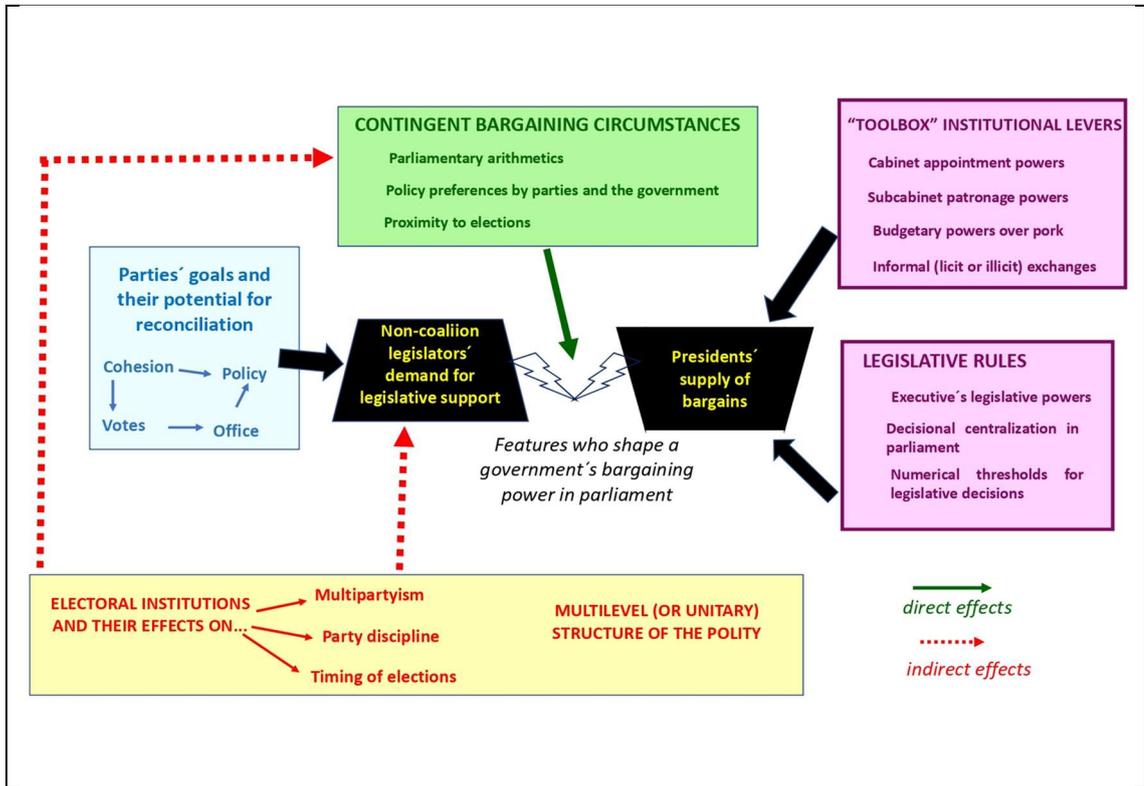


Figure 1 - Multiparty presidentialism models applied to minority situations –  
The generalized reference framework

Source: The author

As depicted in the blueprint above, the framework involves both supply and demand for presidential bargains in exchange for legislative support beyond their cabinet coalitions: on the demand side, the different incentive structures (promoted by the several possible goals) shape parties' valuation of presidential offers - which can be also affected by the contingent circumstances of political preferences by both sides, and by the proximity to elections. The supply side is represented by the institutional levers that presidents may pull along the bargaining process, which are directly defined by the legislative rules and "toolbox" instruments. Moreover, both supply and demand are indirectly "superdetermined" by the effects of electoral institutions over the party and electoral landscape: their impact on multipartyism and the timing of elections affects both sides' goal structures and the contingent parliamentary arithmetics, while the ones on party discipline will affect the concrete dynamics of any bargain.

Those traits were generated from joining different partial frameworks into an integrated view. However, most individual models in the literature flexed one or more of these elements in the core of their causal arguments, as shown in Table 2 below.

*Table 2 - Multiparty presidentialism models applied to minority situations –  
Applying specific elements within the generalized reference framework*

COMPONENT	ELEMENT STRESSED	SOURCES	REMARKS
INSTITUTIONAL FEATURES	legislative powers by the president and congressional rules of procedure	Borges (2014), Calvo (2014), Cheibub & Limongi (2002), Negretto (2006a); Figueiredo & Canello & Vieira (2012).	
	The availability of the different instruments in the “executive toolbox”, and their relative weights	Chaisty & Cheeseman & Power (2018) <sup>51</sup> ; Chaisty & Chernykh (2017).	
PARTY MOTIVES AND GOALS	Party motives in bargaining, and party discipline	Cheibub & Limongi (2002); Fleisher & Bond (1996); Barnes & Jang (2016)	centering on intraparty factionalism as a strategic feature
		García (2008)	emphasizing the regional/provincial dimension of party motives
		Kellam (2015a); Chaisty & Power (2018)	stressing the effect of particularistic dominance among potential partners’ motives.
CONTINGENT FACTORS	combination of parties’ preference position and their relative size in parliament	Chaisty & Power (2018), Cheibub & Przeworski & Saiegh (2002), Negretto (2006a, 2006b), Figueiredo & Canello & Vieira (2012), Hix & Noury (2016)	highlighting the restricting impact on coalition-building of new extremist parties acquiring sizeable parliamentary representation in recent European elections
		Thürk & Hellstrom & Doring (2021)	
	contingent timing of coalition deals (whether pre- or post-electoral)	Borges & Turgeon & Albala (2020); Chaisty & Cheeseman & Power (2018).	

Source: The author

## 2.3 Minority presidential governments on the ground – empirical overreach

### 2.3.1 Comparative and case studies – how do they describe the empirical characteristics of minority presidentialism

<sup>51</sup> That’s hardly surprising, since this work is the most systematic and extended implementation to this “toolbox” approach to multiparty presidential governance so far.

Now we turn to the review of major pieces of research on the prevalence and substantive results of minority presidential government<sup>52</sup>.

*Cross-country, large-n studies with multi-regional scope*

Some studies attempt a cross-country approach, relying on a large sample of cases and regression-based inferences. In what's probably the most referenced paper crossing the issue and dealing also with presidential regimes, Cheibub, Przeworski and Saiegh (2004) try to assess, in a worldwide base of cases<sup>53</sup>, how often government *formateurs* resorted to coalitions as a way to shape their administrations, and how successful they were in lawmaking.<sup>54</sup> They found that a single party majority of seats in parliament occurred in 43,2 % of country-years in parliamentary countries and 55,5 % in presidential ones. Under minority conditions for the president or prime minister (other than oppositional single-party majority), some kind of coalition<sup>55</sup> was formed in 78.1 % of the parliamentary situations, and in 53.6 % of presidential situations - which means that they're less frequent in presidentialism, but even so, are far from exceptional<sup>56</sup>. Indeed, presidents can – and do - live with cabinet coalitions and legislative coalitions, not necessarily equal, and not necessarily on the same side of the spectrum; as a matter of fact, presidential rules can sometimes make coalition-making easier, by dispensing with formal policy-based party negotiations and going along through invitations and more informal agreements. Their conclusions strongly reinforce the several mentions made here to the fully mainstream status of minority governments in presidentialism also: 79.1 % of cabinet coalitions under

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<sup>52</sup> The causal factors who account for the very existence of minority governments - that is, "why minority governments happen" are only mentioned *en passant* when they relate to the other findings of the reviewed papers, though. Clearly, the seminal work on minority governance is Strøm (1990), who focuses entirely on parliamentary systems. For that reason, it's not reviewed here, although its features on the reasons and "nuts and bolts" in minoritarian governments pervade most of the following sections, either directly or as the departure point to more elaborate theories by theoretical disciples.

<sup>53</sup> In their own words (p. 565), "observing almost all democracies that existed between 1946 and 1999". A previous version on the same broad issue is Cheibub et al(2002).

<sup>54</sup> Their study also assesses the democratic stability of regimes (in terms of the probability of a democratic breakdown occurring), which is not substantially included here for lack of connection to our reviewing objectives. It should be noted that their metrics for legislative success is the raw approval rate of government-initiated bills, disregarding other dimensions as the amendments received by such bills, or the duration of the approval process.

<sup>55</sup> Regardless of reaching or not a majoritarian share of parliament for its parties.

<sup>56</sup> Adding to that is the finding that probabilities of democratic breakdown do raise under presidentialism as compared to the parliamentary systems, but that happens in a similar fashion across all coalition statuses. So, if presidential systems are more fragile, that would not originate from its oft-quoted "incapacity to form coalitions".

parliamentarism were found majoritarian, but only 59.7 % on presidential regimes – leaving 40,3% of presidential coalitions in a formally minority condition<sup>57</sup>. Coherently with the literature in parliamentarism, party fractionalization raises the frequency of coalitions (in both systems), and when the *formateur* party is between one third and one half of the seats, coalitions become less frequent<sup>58</sup>.

As for legislative performance, Cheibub, Przeworski and Saiegh point that parliamentary governments are indeed more successful in terms of bills approved than presidential ones under every coalition status<sup>59</sup>. Single-party minority governments prevail over any kind of coalition in both systems (a hint on that they may have the support of legislative majorities outside a formal coalition), but legislative paralysis happens to be very rare<sup>60</sup>. In short, those authors find that minority governments legislate at least as successfully as majority coalitions, and assign the occasional lower success rates mainly to circumstances of coalitions formed on the basis of granting posts to parties in exchange for policy support in parliament under polarized environments, which creates strong intra-coalitional cleavages around policy with some degree of party defection or indiscipline<sup>61</sup>.

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<sup>57</sup> Not that minority situations crowd out coalitions: those arrangements existed in 78.1 % of parliamentary minority governments and under 53.6 % of such presidential situations.

<sup>58</sup> That may stem either from the *formateur's* raised expectations to get by with a legislative share which is close to the majority threshold, or because, in more fractionalized situations, *formateurs* might prefer to spend cabinet posts than bargain in core policy content to gather support, since potential partners may be farther away from their own preferences – a trend increased by the absolute distance between their preferences, in line with classical minority government theory in parliamentarism.

<sup>59</sup> There's a strictly mechanical causal path to part of those findings: presidentialism allows for cases in which a majority of parties in congress is against any possible presidential policy, and yet government stays in place (when in parliamentary systems the most likely outcome would be a government demise). For that reason alone, some degree of additional minority government situations - and of legislative defeats - are expected to be more frequent under presidentialism. Besides, the diminished risk of presidential demise over the loss of any vote (while defeat in major issues - like the general budget - can bring down prime ministers by force of rules or entrenched custom), means that presidents can be less risk-averse in submitting bills, thus raising the probabilities of their defeats.

<sup>60</sup> The only example presented is a perfect storm of idiosyncratic blockage factors which have no direct link with the presidential system *per se* (the final leg of Allende minority government in Chile after 1972).

<sup>61</sup> This last finding, taken alone, might suggest there's no need for revisiting minority presidentialism in terms of effectiveness, as we try to do in this study. That's not true, though. First, because this specific explanation is strongly dependent on the existence of only two possible party motives for support in their model (policy or office): other possible levers such as patronage, pork or others included in the "toolbox" version – that is, other possible strategies for presidential policymaking achievements - are not factored in their calculations. Last but not least, their focus is on "legislative success" in lawmaking, which falls short of the substantive policy results we try to gauge and measure.

In another cross-country study, Cheibub (2002) covers all presidential regimes between 1946 and 1996 (790 country-years, along 38 countries) to seek for the occurrence of minority governments<sup>62</sup>, and deadlock situations where the opposition can pass legislation but not override vetoes<sup>63</sup>. He shows a picture where minority presidential governments are 53,35 % of observed country-years of presidentialism; minority governments (whose cabinet-joining parties end up minoritarian) account for 40,22 % of all observed cases - another instance showing the non-negligible existence of coalition-making also in presidential regimes<sup>64</sup>. Deadlock, for its part, occurs only in 33,52 % of cases (far from being dominant), and (when the United States and Switzerland are excluded from the sample) are not affected by any of the causal factors which determine the occurrence of minority presidential governments<sup>65</sup>. Among the determinants of successful government formation and duration under minority conditions, Cheibub endorses the relevance of agenda powers already claimed by Figueiredo and Limongi (1999, 2000)<sup>66</sup>.

Chaisty & Power (2018) contemplate minority presidential governments in democracies and “semi-democracies” from 1974 to 2013 (amounting to 610 country-years), to search for the reasons for them to have chosen to form a minority coalition instead of pushing a one-party cabinet. They conclude that the most relevant variable are the congressional seat shares by the president’s party (which, if close to the majority, might disincentivize incurring in the costs of a coalition) and by the largest

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<sup>62</sup> Coherently with our definitional section, Cheibub includes here the instances where the governing coalition doesn’t hold a majority in any one of the relevant chambers.

<sup>63</sup> That’s another study who also assesses the democratic stability – now comparing presidential regimes *vis-à-vis* parliamentary ones, a comparison which is not included here for lack of connection to our reviewing objectives.

<sup>64</sup> To Cheibub, those minoritarian shares are higher than in parliamentary regimes, but not dramatically more. The inclusion of majoritarian countries as the United States (and others with very different institutional features such as Switzerland) may explain the slight difference (around 13%) between minority presidents and majority governments, that is, that’s the share of minority coalitions. Such percentage, clearly behind the findings on strictly multiparty (mainly Latin American) cases, is strongly influenced by the number of US bipartisan “divided government” (which precludes coalitions), which are recorded since the beginning of the time frame considered - while Latin American cases are more frequent after 1996 – and double the opportunity for minority situations due to bi-annual congressional elections in two chambers. Anyway, after such stringent limitations, minority coalitions still amount to a 13% share.

<sup>65</sup> It must be noted that, although it’s an “outcome” in the last instance, such definition of deadlock is only a static, numerical condition (formal vote shares in parliament). So, in terms of policymaking, it’s only a potential to real decisional stalemates, who can be circumvented by means of negotiation and support gathering.

<sup>66</sup> Those agenda powers consist basically of: presidential control over the legislative agenda; congressional party leaders’ control over the information flows and opportunities to individual legislators; , the institutional features of voting thresholds for approving bills, and the veto regulations.

non-presidential party. They emphasize the role of that last party<sup>67</sup>: after reaching a certain caucus size, its incentives to join in instead of presenting itself as a power alternative are reduced; that party also lures the support of other parties that previously might be tempted to go along the presidential party.

Elgie's (2001a) comparative attempt at studying minority governments<sup>68</sup> brings interesting points to our purposes. Instances of minority government have been found in every governmental regime across his cases<sup>69</sup>, in a relatively high frequency that makes them a common, recurrent, widely known phenomenon. They most often reach successfully negotiated political outcomes, although not without some degree of gridlock sometimes<sup>70</sup>. He quotes the literature on the recurrence of the same cleavage we've been pointing in this chapter. On one hand, studies of American bipartisan politics at federal and state levels<sup>71</sup> point to several dysfunctional courses of action by presidents who end up in blockages or sub-optimal last-minute compromises. On the sunny side of that street, observers of parliamentary minority governments, building on Strøm's (1990) seminal insights, paint a much less maladjusted picture. They talk of successful gathering of stable support from out-of-cabinet parties<sup>72</sup>, as well as tailored, policy-specific negotiations with opposition

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<sup>67</sup> The authors claim that this crucial role of the "Largest Non-Formateur Party" is their most innovative finding.

<sup>68</sup> Defining his object more particularly as "divided government", or the arithmetic minimalist definition of whenever a government – parliamentary, semi-presidential or presidential – doesn't control the majority of seats in at least one of the legislative chambers.

<sup>69</sup> 9 case studies featuring different regimes, including three (United States, Mexico and Ecuador) with purely presidential institutions

<sup>70</sup> As remarkable examples discussed in the book, the United States under the Nixon and Clinton administrations, Ecuador (as an almost permanent feature) and the first years of Polish democracy under semi-presidentialism.

<sup>71</sup> Quoted from Cox & Kernell (1991a, 1991b) and Ware (2001). From the point of view of legislative enactments, Coleman (1999) does not support a full-fledged condemnation of divided governments's possibilities of getting policy done, but stresses the clearly superior legislative achievements by federal unified governments in the US.

<sup>72</sup> In exchange for policymaking powers and other goods and perks acquired without the reputational and electoral costs of being perceived as co-responsible for the government's actions.

parties<sup>73</sup>, either in an *ad hoc* fashion over each issue or bill<sup>74</sup>, or in a more structured way where legislative support coalitions revolve around whole policy arenas<sup>75</sup>.

*Comparative studies in strictly Latin American contexts*

We must now turn to specific Latin American settings, where findings on minority governments may be interpreted within a much more homogeneous historical, economic and institutional context than more broadly-based comparisons.

First (chronologically as well as analytically) we must see Deheza’s (1997) comparative study of 9 South American polities between 1958 and 1994, covering the degree in which coalition governments are formed, their coalescence and duration, and their effect on the stability of the president’s fulfillment of his constitutional term of office<sup>76</sup>.

The 123 governments measured in her sample had, with strong variability across countries<sup>77</sup>, the following overall distribution as in the table below.

Table 3 - Distribution of democratic cabinet types in 9 Latin American countries (1958-1994) – Deheza (1997)

CABINET TYPE	ABSOLUTE NUMBER	%
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<sup>73</sup> Specially under governments who occupy the median or pivotal position in parliament, allowing them to balance the oppositional extremes off each other.

<sup>74</sup> The main examples here are the several US administrations (Eisenhower, Ford and, partially, Reagan) where a minority president (which in the American system equates to a minority cabinet) handled significant policy agendas with a reasonable degree of success (although the shifting engagements here are not performed by parties, but by means of across-the-aisle adherents from the opposition majoritarian party); in parliamentary settings, Germany is more clearly associated with this issue-by-issue, give-and-take advancement, as well as some specific governments in Denmark (Elgie, 2011, p. 223).

<sup>75</sup> As examples, multiple Danish minority prime ministers alternating between an “economic policy majority” support joining center and center-right parties over mainstream economic policy measures, and an “alternative majority” among left and center-left parties who collude in foreign and defense policies and in social and environmental measures. In presidential settings, the Mexican president from 1997 to 2000 managed to get a core conservative support for economic and constitutional decisions and an expanded support bloc for public security measures (Elgie, 2001a, p. 223).

<sup>76</sup> Deheza’s work is probably one of the most frequently quoted by other scholars debating multiparty presidentialism.

<sup>77</sup> While in Brazil all democratic governments formed were coalitions, in Argentina and Venezuela (since 1968) there were only single-party governments (Costa Rica, although not included in the working sample, is mentioned as another example of strictly single-party government all along the period, along with the prototypical case of the United States). A change in government, for the purposes of that summarizing, is counted whenever there’s a change in the presidency’s officeholder (for whatever reason), or there’s a change in the parties who make up the cabinet, or when congressional elections change the percentage of legislative seats commanded in the lower house by the parties represented in the cabinet.

Single-party	48	39,02
Single-party majority	22	17,89
Single-party minority	26	21,14
Coalition	69	56,10
Minimum winning coalition	17	13,82
Minority coalition	24	19,51
Oversized coalition	28	22,76
Interim governments	6	4,88
Total	123	100,00

*Obs.: "Coalition" means a government where any party other than the president's own holds cabinet seats. "Majority" means a government whose parties represented in cabinet control more than 50% of legislative seats in the lower or sole house of parliament. "Oversized" means a government whose parties represented in cabinet control more than two thirds (66,6%) of legislative seats in the lower or sole house of parliament. "Minimum winning" means a government whose parties represented in cabinet control more than 50% and less than two thirds (66,6%) of legislative seats in the lower or sole house of parliament.*

Source: Deheza (1997), Table 3.1, p. 67

Those numbers underline the trend, now widely acknowledged in the literature, for Latin American multiparty presidential systems to produce majoritarian governments (54,45% of them), but clearly through majority coalitions (around 36%). Besides, such coalitions aren't uniform at all: some conform strictly to the half chamber (or the number necessary for passing bills), but a very significant 19,51 % of governments are minority coalitions, and even more (22,76 %) add up to beyond that level. This distribution strongly suggests that governing under a coalition is more than gathering majoritarian support (which is the cornerstone of traditional coalition theory in parliamentarism): a higher cost is in fact incurred voluntarily by many presidents who rally more parties than those strictly necessary for a minimum winning coalition<sup>78</sup>, while numerous others attempt to gather support from others but not enough to reach a formal majority. This last point is particularly relevant to our analysis, since it suggests that minority coalitions may have a different, broader dynamics of formation: if such coalitions did not reach majority status, why should the president even bother to form one ?

<sup>78</sup> Costs broadly defined in terms of losing the benefits of office in the distributed cabinet posts and incurring in the agency costs of losing some degree of control over the policy handled by them. Some of the possible reasons for that in the literature are: reaching legislative supermajorities to effect legislative changes under higher thresholds (such as amending the constitution); "national unity" governments formed to overcome serious factionalism who threatened democracy (such as Colombia's National Front or the Betancourt government in Venezuela); hedging against party indiscipline in crucial votes; a numerical consequence of having to sustain bicameral majorities, or keeping the ideological connectedness within the coalition.

Another perspective unveiled by Deheza is the ideological proximity between coalition partners (the coalition's "connectedness"): the costs of adding a small party<sup>79</sup> to reach the minimum winning threshold, thus sharing as little office benefits as numerically possible, may be outweighed by the agency and transaction costs of sharing decisional power if the given party is too far away from the president's preferences. In such cases, it may be preferable for him to add a bigger party (giving off more office benefits) who is closer to his preferences. She finds that "connected" or "compact" coalitions (that is, those whose members are contiguous along the considered ideological/policy space) make up for 44 of 68 coalitional instances<sup>80</sup>, representing 47,06 % among the minimum winning coalitions, 64,29 % of the oversized coalitions and an impressive 75 % of the minority coalitions, giving considerable empirical weight to the argument, and reinforcing the point that minority government management is heavily affected by policy-centered bargaining.

Relevant to our purposes, also, are the findings that just 30,5% of inaugural coalitions<sup>81</sup> had origins in pre-electoral agreements, and that most post-electoral coalitions departed from a presidential share of votes lower than 45%. That finding is a strong suggestion that governments who surpass a given "critical minority threshold" had incentives to try on a minority stance, since the added costs<sup>82</sup> of getting more coalition partners to fill that small gap in seats may outweigh the expected benefits of a formal legislative majority to be reached through the cabinet. As for the traditional associations between party system and coalition patterns, and in line with other authors presented here, the study found that coalitions are the more likely the more fractionalized<sup>83</sup>, and the less polarized, the party system<sup>84</sup>. In this sense, her study argues that multipartism *per se* is not the key to instability, but polarization:

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<sup>79</sup> Here, "small" and "big" parties characterized by the size of their legislative share of seats.

<sup>80</sup> Data from Deheza (1997), Table 4.5, p. 104. We couldn't locate the reason for the missing case when compared to the 69 coalitions recalled in Table 1.

<sup>81</sup> That is, governments formed immediately after elections.

<sup>82</sup> Either agency costs or the simple loss of office benefits.

<sup>83</sup> This association is partially determined by the very fact that low fractionalization potentially raises the odds for a majoritarian single-party president. That would be also the effect of any kind of plurality rule in the electoral system, by inducing a smaller number of parties or, at least, the formation of pre-electoral coalitions. In that direction, some older constitutional provisions in which the congress elected the president if popular vote didn't produce an absolute majority (existing in Chile until 1973 and Bolivia until 2008), together with the constitutional custom of confirming in parliament the first candidate in the popular vote count, made party incentives closer to such plurality settings.

<sup>84</sup> Specially because polarization increases the policy distance between the president and the potential partners, and among parties themselves, making them less willing to compromise over power-sharing.

even in close-to-bipartisan systems (as Argentina during the period she examines the country) radicalization can lead to deadlocks.

On the nuts and bolts of minority coalition management, several reasons are posited for the decision for presidents to forgo majoritarian coalition-building (or any coalition-building at all): first of all, the already mentioned “critical minority threshold” (45% of seats) from where presidents (specially if they come from a median of pivotal party in congress) may feel inclined to try *ad hoc* legislative coalitions; besides, political polarization may prevent significant potential partners from joining cabinet out of policy differences either regarding actual policy implementation, or on behalf of seeking reputational distance from the president; finally, when presidents see too much agency loss in sharing cabinet-level power positions. That is, actual coalition results in South America can’t be explained by policy-blind minimum willing coalition theories based on purely office-seeking parties. Deheza claims that policy preferences matter a lot to that explanation: there’s a clear trade-off between size and cohesiveness in the coalition (mitigated by ideological proximity between partners). To our specific purposes of minority government assessment, this trade-off might strengthen the rationale for a minority coalition when it holds close to a majority of the seats: an internally cohesive minority government may be more able to tackle *ad hoc* policy negotiations and raise external support than a faction-ridden formal majority who can’t put itself to agree on divisive issues.

Institutional characteristics also intervene, in the expected theoretical direction: veto powers (and veto overriding rules), decree powers, and even the limited dissolution powers assigned to the president in some countries<sup>85</sup>: having less of those powers raises the preference (or need) for coalition-building by the president. Bicameralism, demanding a majority of votes in both chambers, reinforces the need for coalitions: the partisan composition of each chamber may be different, which means more partners are needed to secure votes in each one (bicameral minority can make for the gravest instances of decisional paralysis).

Figueiredo, Canello and Vieira (2012) add to the literature a very targeted presentation of a few behavioral insights specifically aimed at understanding minority presidential governments in Latin America. First, the basic logic underlying the

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<sup>85</sup> During the time frame considered in the study, Constitutions in Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay allowed, under limited conditions, congressional dissolution and the call for new elections by the president, if some reiterated stalemate points are reached without possible compromises.

likelihood of interbranch cooperation under presidentialism: if one assumes that – under whatever system - presidents wish to govern effectively, which needs some kind of congressional cooperation, they’ll look for broader partisan support regardless of any institutional disincentive (such as those deplored by the early Linzian tradition of the “perils of presidentialism”). Another very relevant insight: the overall logic to the feasibility of minority governments in parliamentary systems, inaugurated by Strøm (1990), does not include any feature or assumption who depends on specific parliamentary institutional features, relying instead on the different goals by potential external support parties<sup>86</sup>. Since parliamentarism is the hardest testing ground for minority government conditions, given the ever present risk of government demise by parliament, there’s nothing left to prevent these conclusions regarding minority governments from applying to presidential regimes as well.

They corroborate those theoretical arguments with another batch of suggestive numbers, who broadly concur with the previous empirical findings surveyed above: 211 country-years of minority presidential governments in Latin America have grown into 30,0 % of minority coalition governments; if added single-party minority endeavors, the overall count of minority governments reaches 47,7 % of all cabinets. A very relevant portion of those governments is not a case of presidential extremism or isolation: 59% of them show the presidential party (or coalition) holding between 40% and 50% of lower house seats; the average seat share of minority governments is 42,5% (if single party) and 33,8 % (if coalition). That is, the most frequent pattern is a plurality president with gathers a considerable permanent support (yet not numerically majoritarian), although the lower seat share average for minority coalitions might suggest a non-negligible number of really isolated presidents who fail to gather broader support (or dispense with it altogether). Naturally, there’s variance among countries: some show mostly majoritarian (coalition) governments<sup>87</sup> while others see minoritarian dominance<sup>88</sup>.

Their empirical regression findings about the determinant factors of minority governments were not always in line with theoretical expectations: while greater veto

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<sup>86</sup> To Strøm, relevant parties may be willing to support the government (either in investiture or in lawmaking, or both) without being part of it, thus allowing for successful minority governments, when they simultaneously see sufficient perspectives to influence policy from the opposition (thus attaining some policy goals) and they expect competitive forthcoming elections ahead, when their electoral goals will be better served by running from the opposition standpoint.

<sup>87</sup> Cases of Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Dominican Republic and Uruguay.

<sup>88</sup> Argentina, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Panama, Peru and Venezuela. Mexico has roughly 50% of country-years for each setting.

powers were found significant in relation to higher probability of minority government formation, some other factors usually theorized as relevant to that outcome resulted inconclusive or non-significant: the availability of agenda and decree powers<sup>89</sup>, presidential policy position (both extremist and median<sup>90</sup>) and ideological dispersion in parliament; lastly, party fractionalization had a very unexpected negative and significant impact on minority government formation.

As for the logic of government formation, they emphasize the absolute necessity of pondering a multi-dimensional incentive structure for parties to join coalitions and to offer support (the classical “office, policy and votes” framework)<sup>91</sup>, without which the amount of minority governments found would be very hard to reconcile. Another relevant factor is the closeness of many cases to the majority threshold (presidents holding 40 % to 50 % of the house floor): the few missing votes required for legislative success are considered an admissible risk, so as to give up on forming increased coalitions to capture them. Veto powers, by their turn, have consistently shown their impact on presidential preferences for forming minority governments: if and when the president controls the veto legislator (being able to keep his vetoes from congressional overrule), the odds for opting for a minority bet increase significantly.

Still on Latin America, Negretto (2006a) enquiries into the outcomes of minority presidents (whether or not coalition-makers) in terms of executive-legislative conflicts (their frequency and the number of premature ends to elected mandates<sup>92</sup>). From the oft-quoted finding that the small share (32%) of presidents elected in the continent who enjoyed a single-party majority didn't bring democracies to collapse nor prevented decisive policymaking (including sometimes radical

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<sup>89</sup> That is, those proactive legislative powers would be useless to overrule congressional majorities, serving only as better negotiation levers without affecting the coalition calculations.

<sup>90</sup> Greater ideological distance among parties is usually thought to enhance coalition-building by reducing the likelihood of parties supporting the president's agenda simply out of convergent preferences (thus requiring the enticement of office and associated perks). The same logic applies to the median condition of presidential party: its incentive to remain minoritarian raises since the odds of gathering legislative support for its policies from close-to-median external parties are greater.

<sup>91</sup> In other words, for the president, cabinet appointments are necessary only to rally the support that doesn't come from other means. If policy-based concessions, for example, suffice for a party's policy or reputational motivations, having it in the cabinet may be unnecessary for having its vote in parliament.

<sup>92</sup> Conflict between branches measured by their mentions in political stories on the mainstream press. The premature loss of mandate (by the president or by congresses as a whole), either by legal or illegal means, is depicted as the terminal bankruptcy of interbranch cooperation. The time span to the cases sampled is 1978 to 2003.

reforms), he concurs with the many other authors reviewed in that minority governments are not the most frequent result, but they did happen significantly (39 out of 80 cabinets sampled were minoritarian).

Negretto's main message seems to be the relevance of the congressional configuration of parties (compounding size and policy position) for the likelihood of coalition-making and governability: if the presidential party holds a relevant seat share (say, 40%) and is centrally located, it will be an indispensable member of almost every conceivable winning vote coalition in congress. This condition leverages its ability to attract partners for a majority coalition or, alternatively, to pursue successful shifting legislative alliances as a minority government. Also, this reinforces the centrality of president/parliament congruence as one of the main factors for governing capacity in minority situations, a vision that is shared also by Pereira and Bertholini (2019). At the other side of the spectrum, an extremist president with limited seat shares under his control would be extremely in need of ceding cabinet posts to many other parties (even so, conditions will remain difficult if their ideological distance is too big), or he will most probably be forced to try unilateral policymaking under the risks of congressional blockage and reprisals, in a highly contentious manner. On the other hand, those same conclusions are reassuring in the sense that minority conditions *per se* are not unavoidably associated with conflict and stalemate: a pivotal minority government who can nevertheless override vetoes can prevent unilateral imposition of a congressional agenda and find room for negotiating changes to the *status quo* closer to its preferences<sup>93</sup>.

Finally, Payne, Zovatto, Florez and Zavala (2007, pp. 104-109) offer an alternative data summary of minority coalitions' incidence in Latin America counting the periods "during which the balance of power resulting from the previous election remained the same", resulting in 131 such periods in 18 countries (that is, from an legislative or presidential election to another one, to another kind of substitution in the presidency, or to a change in the partisan composition of the cabinet). Within them, an average 43.8 % corresponded to a presidential majority (single-party or coalition-based) in both chambers of the legislature, evolving along time around the

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<sup>93</sup> Negretto touches on a somehow overlooked feature in presidential studies, that of cabinet appointment restrictions: congressional prerogatives to confirm (as in the United States) or remove cabinet ministers (as used in Ecuador as a common harassment tool over presidents), when they exist, can strongly restrict presidential capacity to organize coalitions - actually, to organize any kind of cabinet (and, consequently, strongly jeopardize a president's decision-making abilities).

benchmark of 55% from 1984 to 1995, and later sharply increasing the volatility (between 40% and 70% until 2000, and from 60% to around 35 % in the first four years of this century). As a general trend, they point out that, although coalitions are ever more present as time goes by, the share of majority governments tends to be slightly declining from 1984 to 2004<sup>94</sup>.

### *Single case studies*

Still in Latin America, single case studies about the Mexican transition to multiparty competitive democracy show important snapshots to minority governments' problems: Badillo (2007) reckons acceptable legislative success rates, remarkable stability and a high degree of inclusiveness (involving the opposition into a high degree of consensus around the presidential agenda, in exchange for broad participation in policy decisions). Nacif (2006)<sup>95</sup> gives to the almost nine years of uninterrupted presidential minority the subtitle "what is wrong with paralysis?". His point is that the usual lawmaking indicators of "presidential success"<sup>96</sup> (widely used as a benchmark for policy effectiveness) are misleading in substantive terms (what it actually measures are quick and concentrated changes operated by a cohesive majority, on behalf of that majority). Instead, if "paralysis" is reconceptualized as the impossibility by any of the players to unconditionally impose its unilateral will on the others, as in the concrete Mexican experience, it'll result in incremental, negotiated, policy decisions who allow for much better prospects for democratic stability and welfare.

Not only Latin America has relevant presidential minority cases: Chaisty and Chernykh's (2017) analysis of post-soviet Ukraine from 1999 to 2012, produced

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<sup>94</sup> Their definition of coalitions includes cases where "a formal agreement was reached between the president and the coalition partners" (besides those of formal cabinet membership by parties), thus being different from the specification used in most empirical works.

<sup>95</sup> Similarly positive conclusions for the Mexican case are also brought by Klesner (2001).

<sup>96</sup> Paralysis (or legislative success) has been measured by the number of approved bills per legislature (which is meaningless, since not all have the same importance and merit), the "productivity rate" of bills approved into law (which is affected by the raw number of initiatives tabled by lawmakers, a highly variable feature, and might only be relevant in extremely low tiers so as to indicate the complete breakdown of parliament as a deliberative body), and by the approval rate of presidential bills. This last one is even more misleading: a high approval rate may cover up a strategic self-restraint on the part of the president, who refrains from sending bills he thinks won't be accepted by the legislature (a case in point during the Fox government in Mexico); on the other hand, even if presidents approve a very high share of their intended decisions, this might simply mean a rubberstamp congress, with no benefit for overall policymaking.

multiple government coalitions, including minority ones, all of which benefited from a relevant and stable share of legislative support coming from parties not included in the cabinet, using a very clear “toolbox” approach to generate legislative coalitions who outnumbered the cabinet coalitions most of the time. Such smooth workings of coalition management in Ukraine might be seen as an “extreme” case with very extreme values of any independent variables (Seawright & Gerring, 2008, p. 301), thus making a robust statement on minority presidentialism’s prospects in terms of government effectiveness.

### 2.3.2 Latin American minority presidential governments on the ground - Our own empirical survey

Our causal model, conceptualized in chapters 3/4 and empirically developed in chapter 5, will require a granular association of country-level time series<sup>97</sup> between presidents’ minority status and their respective government performance. To achieve that, one first requirement is the availability of year-on-year series on Latin American presidential cabinets and their status regarding coalitional control of legislative shares. Since we couldn’t find such information (with the contents and structure required) in available repositories, we built our own empirical dataset, which supports the presentation, under this section, of a first descriptive approach to presidential minority governments in terms of their occurrence and some other composition features.

Further specification to each data component presented here, both conceptually and in terms of data sources and limitations, is offered in section A.2.9 in Appendix 2. An exhaustive presentation of all data points and the process for obtaining them can be found in the summary tables in section A.1.1 in Appendix 1, as well as in the online repositories mentioned at the end of section 1.2.

#### *Minority governments’ occurrence*

Given the guidelines sketched above, our empirical assessment of minority presidential governments in Latin America from 1978<sup>98</sup> up to 2018 yields the following results, summarized in Tables 4 and 5 below.

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<sup>97</sup> First in a country-year level, for further clustering into mandate segments, as explained in section 5.1.4.

<sup>98</sup> Or the beginning of the “third wave” of democratization in each country, if later.

Table 4 - Minority governments in “third wave” Latin America – occurrence – summary statistics

		Country-years	
Total number of governments	443	100%	
Total number of minority governments	228	51,46%	100%
Minority situations in unicameral parliaments	99		43,42%
Minority situations only in bicameral lower houses	18		7,89%
Minority situations only in bicameral upper house	38		16,66%
Minority situations in both bicameral houses	73		32,03%

Source: The author

That is, minority governments account for 51,46% of presidential country-years in our sample of redemocratized Latin America<sup>99</sup>, of which 43,42% are recorded in unicameral parliaments. The remaining 56,58% of bicameral cases are mostly determined entirely or partially by minority in lower houses (senates make out only 16,66% of instances when they are the only chamber where presidents have a minoritarian situations).

Still on gross numbers, Table 5 below brings a first approach to the demographics of “quasi-majorities” (the legislative support thresholds that affect minority governments in their ability to perform parliamentary business)<sup>100</sup>. Here, as opposed to our analytical definition of minority governments (a minority situation in any chamber, regardless of an occasional majority in the other chamber in bicameral systems), we assess the frequency in terms of minority situations in every chamber – in other words, how frequently governments reach legislative thresholds in whatever chambers they deal with.

Table 5 - Minority governments in “third wave” Latin America and legislative support thresholds in the chambers– occurrence – summary statistics

		Country-years		
Total number of governments	443	100%		
Total number of chambers in minority (*)	301	67,94%	100%	
Chambers with minority support below 40%	122		40,53%	
Chambers with minority support above 40%	179		59,47%	100%

<sup>99</sup> Which, as discussed in section A.2.8 in Appendix 2, includes 85,19 % of the potential 520 cases of democratic country-years since 1978, discarding all country-years from Nicaragua and Guatemala, as well as significant numbers of cases in Argentina and Venezuela, due to lack of consistent data. From the potential sample, Ecuador had been previously dropped due to the theoretical reasons sketched in section A.2.9.

<sup>100</sup> This issue is brought here in a descriptive fashion. Its analytical deployment into a causal model will be performed in section 3.3.1.

Chambers with minority support between 40-45%	76	25,24%	42,46%
Chambers with minority support between 45-50%	103	34,21%	57,54%

(\*) Where the presidential coalition holds minority support in any chamber (in bicameral parliaments, it may happen in both or just one of them) in a given country-year. That's the addition of all minority situations (228) to the 73 cases where more than 1 chamber are in a minority condition (all numbers from Table 4).

Source: The author

So, holding seat shares of more than 40% of the chambers is achieved by minority presidential cabinets in 59,45% of the country-years assessed (that is, in 59,45% of the chambers relevant in minority governments, presidents held at least 40%). Among those 179 chambers featuring more of 40% of their seats to government cabinets (either single-party or coalitions), a majority of 57,54% is composed of chambers where those presidential cabinets hold more than 45% of the seats, while 42,45% remain between 40% and 45%. That means, first and foremost, an empirical relevance of such near-majority situations: their frequent occurrence makes for a potentially strong impact on any causal links that may be posited from them, reinforcing the theoretical clout that might emerge from our assessment of this condition.

We must now disaggregate those overall numbers across countries and along time. Figure 2 shows the absolute number of minority governments (in country-years) for each country in our sample.

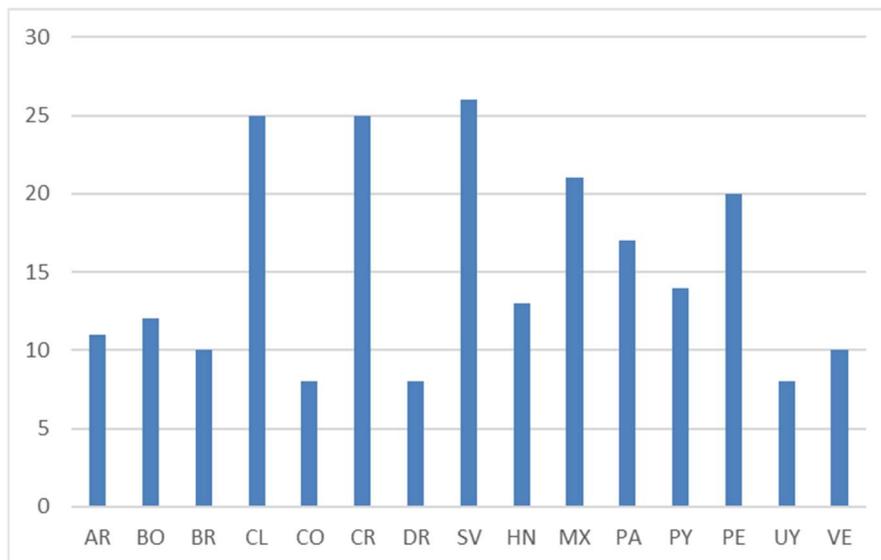


Figure 2 - Minority governments - absolute numbers per country (in country-years)

Source: The author

OBS: AR = Argentina; BO = Bolivia; BR = Brazil; CL – Chile; CO = Colombia; CR = Costa Rica; DR = Dominican Republic; SV = El Salvador; HN = Honduras; MX = Mexico; PA = Panama; PE = Peru; PY = Paraguay; UY = Uruguay; VE = Venezuela)

It's clear that the minority government phenomenon is not restricted to some countries: all of those within our sample show a non-negligible number of them<sup>101</sup>. Absolute numbers might be misleading, though. Since different time spans were covered for each country (due to either data unavailability or the polity's non-democratic condition in a given year), we show in the following Figure 3 the number of minority governments as a share of the country-years studied in each country.

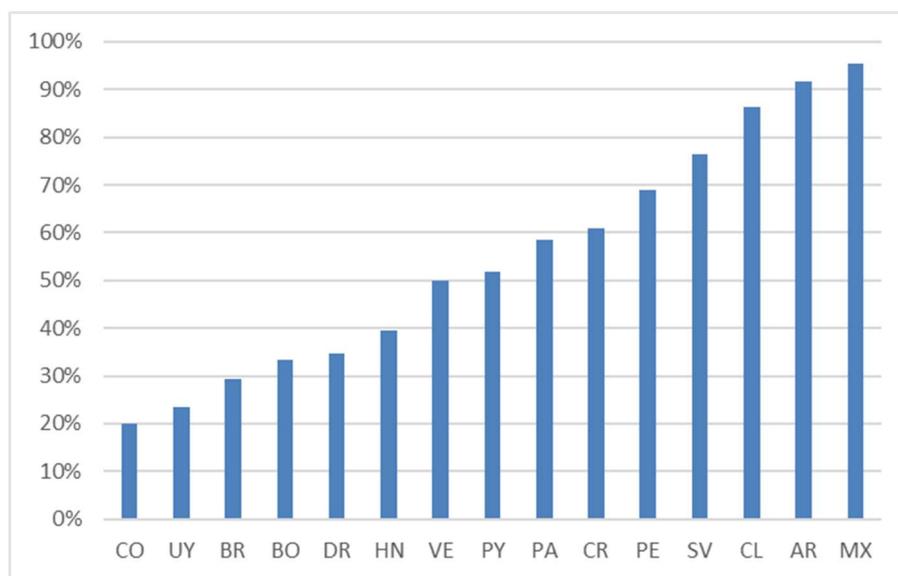


Figure 3 - Minority governments – as a share of all governments in the sample per country (in percent)

Source: The author

OBS: Both minority governments and total governments are measured in country-years. AR = Argentina; BO = Bolivia; BR = Brazil; CL – Chile; CO = Colombia; CR = Costa Rica; DR = Dominican Republic; SV = El Salvador; HN = Honduras; MX = Mexico; PA = Panama; PE = Peru; PY = Paraguay; UY = Uruguay; VE = Venezuela)

Here, it clearly emerges that not only the phenomenon is widespread among Latin American countries, but also that it's extremely consequential to some of them (9 out of 15 countries have more than 50% of the assessed country-years as minority

<sup>101</sup> Including some surprising cases such as Costa Rica, widely considered to be the epitome of quasi-bipartisan system in Latin American presidentialism. As will be explained just below, most probably the high absolute numbers can be explained jointly by the long democratic period to which data is available (actually, the longest among all countries studied) and the condition of "quasi-majorities" where the presidential party holds more than 40% of the assembly seats for most of the country-years concerned.

governments). Some like Mexico and Chile faced more than 80% of their democratic period as minority governments<sup>102</sup>. Of course, significant variance offers a promising analytical pathway for other studies that have minority conditions as their outcome or dependent variable. However, our own choice of minority governments as a scope condition (as will be seen in section 4.2) benefits from that heterogeneity, since causal conditions for policy performance will be drilled across a wide variety of contextual environments, enhancing the odds for different causal configurations to emerge.

Turning now to the evolution along time, Figure 4 shows the minority governments formed as a share of all governments in our sample<sup>103</sup>, along the years from 1978 to 2018, segregated into three categories: i) those holding less than 40% of the seats in any chamber; ii) those above 40% in both chambers (but below 45% in at least one of them); and iii) those who have above 45% in both chambers (but below 50% in at least one of them). Those definitions comply to our underpinning logic that the loss of majorities in one single chamber suffices for the consequences of minority conditions under symmetrical bicameral settings to be felt in the handling of presidential agendas in parliament. So, those numbers count as minoritarian (or below some threshold) any year on a bicameral country where the presidential coalition has less than the threshold (50%, 45% or 40%) in any chamber, regardless of an occasional majority in the other.

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<sup>102</sup> Argentina shows also a 90% share, but the short time covered by reliable data prevents extending those remarks to the country.

<sup>103</sup> Measuring in absolute numbers would be somewhat misleading, since there are different numbers of countries being counted each year (due to data availability limitations or to less democratic polities in that given year). So, the share of minority governments among all governments considered in any country-year is a better benchmark for their empirical importance.

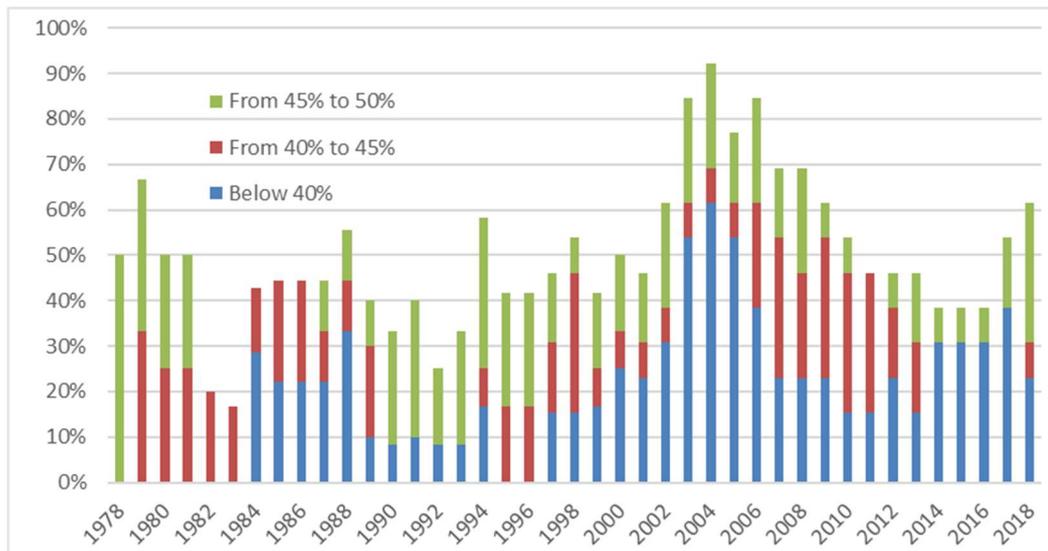


Figure 4- Minority governments as a share of all governments in the sample per year (in percent)

Source: The author

OBS: Both minority governments and total governments are measured in country-years.

Again, the data suggest that minority presidentialism is far from being a leftover from inexperienced post-transition democracies. Quite the opposite: those governments have been more numerous as time advances. Also remarkable is the visible importance of the “near-majority” instances, particularly over the threshold of 45%, whose number has kept steady over time and, except for a few years in-between<sup>104</sup>, has maintained or increased its share among all others. The “hyperminoritarian” sort (less than 40%) has occurred particularly in limited bouts of time (in the early 2000’s<sup>105</sup>, and after 2014).

Of course, this distribution is not meant to be statistically extrapolated for Latin America as a whole, but encompasses a very large portion of the continent’s democratic polities<sup>106</sup>, showing that minority governments do represent a very important feature in the region’s presidentialism. From as low as 16,67% in 1983 to a top value of 92,31% in 2004, the percentage of minority governments by each year in our sample has an average value of 50,23%, and a modest 0,3254 as coefficient of variation, showing little spread around the mean (which, by the way, is close to the

<sup>104</sup> From 1990 to 2007, for instance, this cluster represented on average 20,94% of all of minority governments (with a 6,14% standard deviation).

<sup>105</sup> Between 2000 and 2009, those cabinets ranged from 23,08% to 53,85% of all minority governments. From 2014 to 2017, their share oscillated from 3,77% to 38,46%.

<sup>106</sup> In rough numbers, the fully absent countries are just three (Ecuador, Guatemala and Nicaragua), and the partial gaps involve basically Argentina after 1996 and Venezuela after 1999).

52% found in Table 4 as the overall share of minority governments in all the sample). That can be read as remarkable stability, that is, minority governments have not been a temporary trend during some specific period of time, but a persistent feature of presidential coalition management. Regarding the the patterns followed by the three different types of minority, the same comments apply as in the previous discussion regarding their absolute number.

### *Comparing our new data with previous empirical assessments*

When compared to existing empirical studies, some contrasting features emerge from our empirical exercise. Country case studies in general concur with our observations. Casar (2016, p. 165), is tantamount as to "no coalitions based on cabinet and parliamentary program sharing can be found in Mexico" (floating legislative coalitions between the three major parties being the bread and butter of any presidential lawmaking achievements). Indeed, Mexico stands out in our sample as having more than 95% of its governments as minority ones all along the time frame of interest. Berríos and Gamboa (2006, p. 122) point out that, until 2006, the presidential coalition in Chile had not held control of both chambers in parliament (which coincides with our data<sup>107</sup>). Ponce (2018, p. 302) states that Peruvian presidents had never a majority in the unicameral Congress from 2001 to 2011. Some other factual claims by country studies show some minor disagreement with our findings. The assessment of Colombian presidencies' coalition support by Carroll and Pachón (2016, p. 128) mostly concurs with our description, with only one exception regarding two years in the Pastrana government (2002-2005<sup>108</sup>). Chasquetti (2016) claims that the second coalition by Uruguayan president Lacalle in 1992–3 was a

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<sup>107</sup> The fact that this contingent situation is mainly due to non-elected senators (inherited from the constitution imposed by the previous dictatorship) does not contradict this factual statement that the senate was always controlled by an opposing majority, at least until the end of non-elected senatorial seats in 2005.

<sup>108</sup> Carroll and Pachón present the share of seats held by "Parties included in the congressional coalition" in each house (emphasis added). During those 2000-2001 years, they disavow any congressional support by the Liberal party (although the party continuously holds several ministerial posts all along that period, according to the verified empirical sources). Since our definition of minority governments is operationalized through the parties represented in the cabinet, we have no alternative other than insisting on our finding. Several other years (from 2002 to 2008) during the Uribe governments show a congressional coalition (in Carroll and Pachón) much larger than the cabinet coalition (which constantly holds less than 20% in both houses) – this discrepancy, however, is precisely an instance of the capture of congressional support by the president without the sharing of cabinet portfolios, and does not mean an empirical inconsistency.

minoritarian one (although the two main parties remain the same along all his presidency), and that in 2002 the second coalition in the Batlle presidency was a “minority party” government (in spite of the Colorado Party having held cabinet portfolios alongside the presidential National Party) – all other country-years coincide with our assessment. This discrepancy might be due to the effect of factional influences in Uruguayan politics, as discussed in section A.2.8 in Appendix 2 (and, since they contradict raw empirical data on cabinet composition, we must stick to our own findings).

Turning now to the aggregate numbers, as already shown in section 2.1, several studies tried to quantify the occurrence of minority governments at large<sup>109</sup>. Table 6 summarizes those attempts:

*Table 6 - Prevalence of minority governments – estimates in the literature*

Source	Scope	Unit of counting	Share of minority governments	CH
Cheibub et al (2004)	almost all democracies that existed between 1946 and 1999	“situation” (a combination between a given government and a given distribution of legislative seats (n = 380))	41,8% (under parliamentarism, n= 136); 71,1 % (under presidentialism, n = 97)	L (* )
Deheza (1997) <sup>110</sup>	9 Latin presidential 1958-1994	American systems Presidential cabinets (in absolute numbers) (n = 123)	40,65 %	L
Figueiredo & Canello & Vieira (2012).	14 Latin presidential 1979-2011	American systems Presidential cabinets (in absolute numbers and in country-years) (n = 130; in country-years, n = 287)	47,7 % (absolute numbers); 45,99 % (country-years)	L
Negretto (2006a)	18 Latin presidential 1978-2003	American systems, Presidential cabinets (in absolute numbers) (n = 75)	48 %	B
Strøm (1990)	15 Western parliamentary 1945-1987	European systems, Parliamentary cabinets (n = 356)	35,1 %	L
König & Lin, 2020, Online Appendix	16 Western parliamentary 1945-2017	European systems, Parliamentary cabinets (n = 522)	32,19 %	L (**)

<sup>109</sup> Cheibub (2002) has been discarded as a source to this comparison, although presenting abundant data on the subject. The boundaries of his sample are not clear from the paper’s text: first, he claims to be based on data for all pure presidential regimes that have existed between 1946 and 1996, totaling 790 years (across 38 countries in every stage of development) – pp. 287 and 309. Then, he presents results for “21 industrialized parliamentary regimes between 1946 and 1996” yielding 31 % of elections producing minority governments (p. 293). Lastly, he finds 40,22 % of minority governments in 726 “Presidential regimes” (Table 2, p. 295). So, the scope is not clear, besides including (at least probably) the extreme case of US bipartisan divided government multiplied by the mid-term elections (he himself points out at p. 287 that United States and the Phillipines are atypical situations).

<sup>110</sup> Deheza’s data also feature in Table 2 of Morgenstern, Negri and Pérez-Liñan (2009, p. 168).

Field, 2016	29 Western European parliamentary systems <sup>111</sup> , 1945-2010	Parliamentary cabinets (n = 640)	33 %	L
Christiansen & Damgaard (2008)	18 Western European parliamentary systems <sup>112</sup> , 1945-2003	Parliamentary cabinets (n = 459)	28 %	L
Albala & Clerici & Olivares, 2023 <sup>113</sup>	19 countries in American presidential systems, 1980-2020	Presidential cabinets formed in day one of any presidential term <sup>114</sup> (n = 181)	42,9%	L
Field & Martin (2022a)	43 mostly developed parliamentary democracies in a judgmental sample, 1990-2020	Cabinets (in absolute numbers) (n = 448)	31,6 %	B (***)
Montero (2009, 283)	15 Latin American presidential regimes with heterogeneous starting dates, allways within the last democratic time span of each country (***)	Presidential cabinets (in absolute numbers) (n = 71)	57,74% (***)	B

Source: The author, compiled from the references in the left column

OBS: CH = Chamber(s) whose partisan composition is considered in order to define majority/minority status of cabinets (L = Lower House only; H = Higher House only; B = both chambers simultaneously)

(\*) Consideration of lower house is not explicitly mentioned in the text or annexes. However, legislative success indicators (executive bills approved) are measured only in the lower house (Appendix II, p. 585), which suggests that only that chamber is considered in the measurements.

(\*\*) Consideration of lower house is not explicitly mentioned in the text or annexes. However, Footnote 1 (p. 17) mentions that their compilation is an extension in time to Strøm (1990), which expressly circumscribes empirical measurement to lower chambers.

(\*\*\*) Their criterion is a numerical minority in the chamber to which the government is responsible (p. 6-7), since most of their examples are parliamentary democracies. So, all cases but two measure minority conditions in the lower chamber, albeit the only exceptions (Italy and Romania) are measured according to the specific numerical formulation applicable to each one (minority in both chambers, and minority in the joint composition of them, respectively).

(\*\*\*\*) The sample includes five Mexican cabinets previous to 1997, which might not be counted as within a democratic time frame.

(\*\*\*\*\*) That author doesn't present a given percentage. The abovementioned result is directly obtained by us through computing every cabinet whose stated share of any of the chambers is below 50% (since seat shares are given independently, it's possible to get other numbers if considered only the lower chamber). Anyway, as the time brackets considered for each country diverge, the results are highly dependent on which starting and end dates have been chosen for presenting each one's data.

The several previous empirical surveys seem to range from 40 to 48 % of minority governments in presidentialism (except for Montero, 2009, that suggests a ratio clearly above 50%, even after discounting differences emerging from diverse counting rules), and 28 to 35 % in parliamentarism<sup>115</sup>. The only other measurement

<sup>111</sup> The French governments included in the sample are from the Fifth Republic, where the classification of "pure parliamentary regime" is disputable.

<sup>112</sup> The French governments included in the sample are from the Fifth Republic, where the classification of "pure parliamentary regime" is disputable.

<sup>113</sup> Albala & Clerici & Olivares (2013), Supplementary Material, Table C, variable "Majority".

<sup>114</sup> Sample includes the United States.

<sup>115</sup> For comparison purposes, we must discard Cheibub, Przeworski and Saiegh's numbers, because they include the United States, where the number of potential divided governments is overrated since they must be counted also after each midterm election, multiplying by two the

in country-years (Figueiredo, Canello and Vieira, 2012) returns a 45,99% share of minority governments in presidential cases (actually, in Latin American presidential cases).

Comparing the Tables 4 and 6 (our assessment versus the ones found in the literature), our sample is somewhat extended in terms of units of analysis (443 cabinets, when the largest sample in presidential settings was 287, also in country-years) and incorporates a more recent time span (except for Albala & Clerici & Olivares, 2023, all previous presidential enquiries reached only as far as 2012). Our overall share of minority governments in the sample is 51,46%, which is close to the higher bound to the interval in the literature for presidential systems and replicates Montero's finding that minority cabinets may even be the most common configuration in Latin American presidentialism.

This relatively small increase in the frequency of presidential minority situations (from a 40/48% range to 51%) might stem partially from the taking into consideration of the seat shares of senates and upper houses, which alone made for 16,66% of our minority situations. Indeed, disregarding the upper chamber is a frequent methodological shortcoming in the classification attempts (Field & Martin, 2022, pp. 6-7 and 326-327; Deheza, 1997, p. 61), and the two other surveys who include the upper houses in presidential settings (Negretto, 2006a, and Montero, 2009) actually generate the higher minority government shares (48 % and 57,74%) among all precedents found. The data collected in this study offer a relevant stepping stone for overcoming this gap, and provide the empirical starting point both for considering the full political dynamics of presidential support gathering in the assemblies and the occasional difference that might emerge between lower and upper houses in the actual workings of presidential legislative negotiations.

When deploying the data along the country and year dimensions, we find that all the patterns suggested in the aggregate numbers persist in place: some countries have a smaller share of minority governments, but in none of them this share is negligible, and in some it's outstandingly high; over the years, the relative weight of those cases *vis-à-vis* the total number of governments tended to increase, but kept a steady course around the general pattern of 50%, with very few steep outliers.

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probabilities of finding minority government (an effect compounded by the uninterrupted presence of the country from the beginning to the end of the series). Besides, as thoroughly discussed, the overall logic of divided government in the American bipartisan system is different from the multiparty settings we're studying.

All in all, our results are consistent with the previous empirical literature, pointing to a higher share of minority government than most previous surveys, but closer to the studies who are more recent and who include both chambers in bicameral congresses.

### *Minority governments and non-partisan ministers*

Our data can also shed some light on an issue that, partially related to the minority condition, has seen growing interest on the presidentialism literature: non-partisan ministers (i.e., those with no party affiliation or, even when affiliated, whose appointment is reckoned by parties as an individual presidential choice and discarded as co-participation in the government). Originally, presidential coalition scholars attributed non-partisan appointments as part of a unilateral, decree-oriented policymaking strategy, that is, a reflection of presidents giving up attempts to collect parliamentary support by means of a coalition (Martínez-Gallardo & Schleiter, 2015, p. 2). More recently, their presence in cabinets has been associated with more complex motives, which do not discard coalition-building at any rate: Martínez-Gallardo and Schleiter (2015) see them as presidential tools for minimizing the agency risks involved in delegating policy authority to partisan ministers (who might have different goals, goals that cater to their parties' or their individual constituencies' interests, instead of the presidential agenda)<sup>116</sup>; Olivares & Albalá (2025) point also to the political attractiveness of appointing civil society members (left-wing governments) or business executives (right-wing governments) to increase presidential agendas' success odds. Besides, non-partisan technocrats were regarded as relevant support points to shore up sharp market-assuaging policy responses to acute economic crises (Dominguez, 1997; Teichman, 2001; Kaplan, 2016; Centeno & Silva, 1998). Camerlo and Pérez-Liñan (2015) add a supply-side factor to non-partisan appointments: whatever they aim by choosing ministers, presidents who face severe unpopularity are much less likely to have their ministerial invitations accepted by party representatives, fearful of the contagion effects on their own political capital.

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<sup>116</sup> Camerlo and Pérez-Liñan (2015) emphasize that ministerial reshuffling is not only a tool for support gathering in the legislature and beyond, but also for mobilizing technical competence and preference alignment between the president and the cabinet; non-partisan ministers (among which "technocrats" are only one of several varieties) are instrumental to all of those goals.

Under those circumstances, only those with careers elsewhere or strict personal loyalties to the president might accept being in the cabinet.

The takeaway from the literature here is that, while the first views might suggest a closer association of non-partisan ministerial share with minority governments (both being markers for possible unilateral presidential action), the latter approaches invite more cautious consideration: non-partisanship might be correlated not with minority conditions *per se*, but very specific conditions regarding agency risks identified by the president, or events of extreme economic fragility, or even the presidential popularity. Therefore, non-partisan ministers are to be seen in different cabinet seat shares across all kinds of government. There are, however, some claims regarding the positive impact of minority conditions on non-partisan appointments (Olivares & Albala, 2024, p. 8): a majoritarian condition is oftentimes dependent on a multiparty coalition, which in turn increases the political value of each portfolio, making non-partisan nominations costlier to formateur presidents; on the other hand, minority cabinets might gain policy credibility from incorporating reputed technocrats.

Table 7 presents some summary statistics on the presence of non-party ministers in the governments included in our sample, as well as their share of cabinet seats<sup>117</sup>. It shows that non-partisan ministers serve under 76% of all governments in our sample (among minority governments this proportion is higher, 85%), and they average 24% of all cabinet posts. As a proxy for the dominance of such appointments in presidential strategies, the number of cabinets with a majority of non-partisan ministers is 8% among all governments, and 12% among minority governments.

Table 7 - Presidential governments in “third wave” Latin America and non-partisan ministerial appointments - summary statistics

		In country-years	
Total number of governments	443	100%	
Number of governments with non-partisan ministers	335	75,62%	
Number of governments with a majority of non-partisan ministers	36	8,12%	
Total number of minority governments	228	51,46%	100%

<sup>117</sup> The criteria we adopted for assigning cabinets to any country-year (the party composition that lasted longer during any given year), described in section 5.1.4, has the helpful effect of reducing the count of “caretaker” or “lame duck” pre-electoral cabinets (those formed in the weeks or months previous to the elections, when party heavyweights typically leave government posts to run in the elections, only to be replaced by bureaucratic underlings until a new administration takes shape).

Number of minority governments with non-partisan ministers	194	43,79%	85,08%
Number of minority governments with a majority of non-partisan ministers	27	6,09%	11,84%
Average share of non-partisan ministers in all cabinets	23,56%		

*Source: The author*

The average number of ministers broadly concurs with findings by Martínez-Gallardo and Schleiter (2015, p. 2)<sup>118</sup> on that one out of four cabinet members is not a party-endorsed appointment, and by Olivares and Albala (2025, p. 10) on that the average of non-partisan ministers is 27,3%<sup>119</sup>. Those data also advise against associating non-partisan cabinets and minority governments: both minority and majority-based presidencies have non-partisans with high and not dissimilar frequencies, and, for both strategies, non-partisans overshadow party representatives in terms of cabinet shares only in a small number of governments. This last piece of information may indicate a higher proportion of non-partisan cabinets among minority governments (since about 12% of them are, as compared to 8% in all governments), thus endorsing Olivares and Albala's (2025) empirical claim that minority conditions increase the odds of more non-partisans at the table. However, those are very modest proportions *vis-à-vis* the overall number of cabinets, thus reducing the significance of such difference. The way we see it, there's no evidence on behalf of the extreme argument that minority governments partake the cesarist view of presidents "going alone" regardless of the legislature (which also underlies previous notions of non-partisan ministers as the embodiment of government by *fiat*). On the contrary, for the overwhelming majority of governments (minoritarian or not), those ministers are one more resource employed in conjunction with all the others (including party nominations to materialize a coalition) to tackle several possible problems in conducting government agendas. Yet, that more cautious association to minority conditions by Olivares and Albala cannot be ruled out neither, since the (small) proportion of mostly non-partisan cabinets is still 50% bigger among minority governments than within presidential governments at large.

<sup>118</sup> Martínez-Gallardo and Schleiter (2015) extract information from an ensemble of 44 single-party governments in 9 Latin American countries, counting new cabinets as any presidential inauguration or any change to more than half of ministerial positions.

<sup>119</sup> Olivares and Albala (2025) extract information from 181 "day-one" governments from 18 Latin American countries, from 1980 to 2021, involving only the cabinets formed at presidential inaugurations.

Drilling down the share of non-partisan ministers across all country-years (i.e., covering the 335 instances where either minority or majority cabinets incorporated non-partisans), Figure 5 supports the expectation that different strategies are available, albeit under an overall limited overreach. The histogram points to a very high concentration of cabinets with very low proportions of non-partisans (well below the 24% average), followed by non-negligible instances of a more prominent role to those actors. This finding is also compatible with the heterogeneity described in Martínez-Gallardo and Schleiter (2015, p. 16), where the average participation of non-partisans was 30%, but with strong variation between countries (Argentina had less than 5% in average, while Bolivia reached 62%<sup>120</sup>). It also resembles the box-plot in Olivares & Albala (2025, p. 11), although they found the bulk of their governments between 10% and 20%, instead of the concentration in the lowest decile shown in the histogram<sup>121</sup>. Most important, all other sources surveyed concur with our findings that there are very different patterns of non-partisanship in presidential governments, although some of them (basically, the lower degrees of non-partisan cabinet shares) are significantly more frequent than the others.

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<sup>120</sup> The Ecuadorian average in their sample is even bigger (80 %), but that might be due to the “shadow coalition” phenomenon that will be discussed in section A.2.9 (which was the very reason for dropping that country from our own analysis).

<sup>121</sup> This clear difference (Albala and Olivares point to a higher proportion of non-partisan share of cabinets than our data, although both remain in the lower sections of the distribution) may stem, at least partially, from the fact that their “day one” inauguration cabinets reflect a preferential strategy by presidents, which might be under pressure from the needs of gathering political support later in the mandates, while we capture this time-dependent effect by measuring all country-years of the mandate. It also may be affected by our exclusion of Ecuadorian data, which suffers from the “shadow coalition” bias.

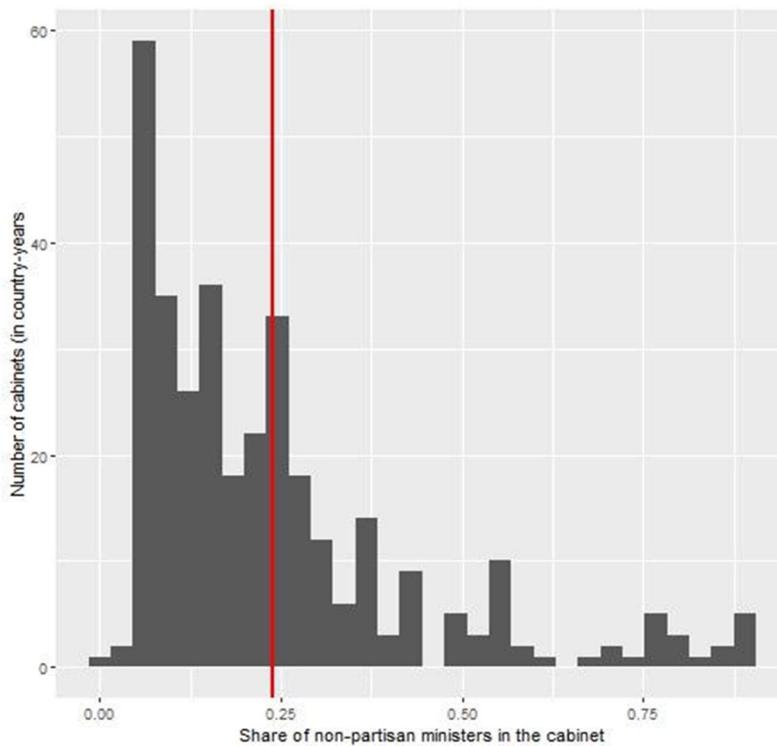


Figure 5 - Share of non-partisan ministers in cabinets that included them, per country-year – Histogram

Source: The author

To sum up, this *vol d’oiseau* on our data regarding non-partisan ministerial appointments shows little support to causal associations between minority governments and a bigger usage of non-partisan appointments by presidents (and absolutely no support to any kind of linkage of either condition to an allegedly unilateral, decree-oriented presidential strategy).

### 2.3.3 Final remarks on the empirical background to minority presidentialism

The findings related to the occurrence and frequency of minority governments, summarized by their 51,46% proportion (more than half of country-years considered) and its stability across countries and along time, reinforce the general theoretical conclusions outlined in section 2.2: minority presidential governments do exist regularly and can perform government business and advance legislative agendas under normal circumstances. If assumed otherwise, third-wave Latin America would consist of mostly crisis-ridden polities unable to overcome gridlock and paralysis (in some countries, such impasses would be decades-long), a result which is clearly in

contradiction with reality (something the next sections discuss in more depth). Those numbers state forcefully that governing under minority conditions (whether in single-party or minority coalition governments) is a common situation (in fact, the most common one) for presidents, and they can and do live with the possible consequences of such conditions. Moreover, those results are not followed by any hint of minority governments being associated with presidential attempts to impose their agendas by circumventing interbranch dialogue in a cesarist or unilateral way; a possible proxy for that strategy (the share of non-partisan ministers in presidential cabinets) shows that it occurs unfrequently, in a very similar pattern as that shown under presidential governments in general.

### 3 Minority presidential governments and policy performance – an analytical model

The fundamental underlying issue to our study is: what are the factors causally related to good policy results in presidential regimes under minority conditions? Naturally, our focus will be on the ultimate policy effect of some institutionally defined features who are strongly affected by the minority condition of a presidential government. This kind of approach follows an already established research interest regarding the impact of political institutions involved in Executive-Legislative relationship on policy outcomes<sup>122</sup>, although it still constitutes “an analytically difficult task, given current data constraints and value judgements.” (Mitchell, 2001, p. 205). With very few exceptions (Negretto, 2004; Shugart, 1995), we still know very little about the effect of minority cabinets over good policymaking.

This chapter 3 digs in theoretical foundations to that assessment, presenting the rationale for pondering policy results in terms of a basket of economic indicators (section 3.1), as well as the overall logic for proposing the posited causal factors (section 3.2) and the theoretical arguments on each causal mechanisms towards policy performance (section 3.3<sup>123</sup>). The conceptualization brought forward in this chapter will be operationalized according to the procedures described in chapter 5 (and presented in more minute details in Appendix 2).

#### 3.1 Defining the outcome: good policy performance

First, a clear understanding of what might be seen as the occurrence of “good policy performance” must be laid out. The whole purpose of this section 3.1 is to show that wide swathes of the literature consider economic outcomes as significant indicators of good policy performance by incumbent governments, and, by listing the several causal pathways posited to association between political variables and

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<sup>122</sup> Or “on tangible government behavior” (Haggard & McCubbins, 2001, who add vast literature surveys on the relationship between political institutions and policy outcome); see also, on that subject, Haggard, McCubbins and Shugart (2001, p. 319), Melo (2009, p. 32) and Altman and Castiglioni (2008)

<sup>123</sup> After the development of each considered causal mechanism, section 3.3.3 closes the chapter explaining why other relevant features of political life mustn't be included in our causal argument, in spite of their close association with the study's general object.

economic outcomes, to reinforce the theoretical validity of using economic outcomes for proxying the policy outcomes of governments.

### 3.1.1 – Building the concept – Economic outcomes as proxies for good policy performance

*Además, en épocas de transición en los países en desarrollo donde hay pobreza, la gestión económica es fundamental porque es necesario generar crecimiento para satisfacer las demandas de los sectores desfavorecidos. Es necesario adoptar políticas públicas sólidas que orienten el gasto allí donde es necesario para que la gente vea un cambio. Si la gente no siente que sus vidas están cambiando para bien, se desencantará con el régimen democrático. Muchos pueden pensar que si la democracia no ofrece resultados, ¿para qué sirve? (Lagos, 2016, p. 136)*

Following the methodological advice of Spanakos (2016), we will try to develop a concept (a set of meanings associated with its name, and to which logical rules apply), in order to structure around them descriptive (section 6.1) and causal (sections 6.2 to 6.3) arguments regarding government performance. For the reasons stated just below, that's not about picking off-the-shelf concepts to apply to data: instead, theoretical antecedents will be summoned into a new attempt at "script" conceptualization, that is, something to navigate the relative ambiguity of the several interrelated constructs about government performance and track a more clearly defined – albeit limited in scope – subset of those ideas for operationalization within the chosen context. To reach *validity*<sup>124</sup>, such concept must encompass phenomena that are within the action range – and expected influence - of individual cabinets' policy decisions; it must also be amenable to *operationalization*, that is, its core attributes must be distinguishable from others' and objectively located in empirical space; its coexistence with other solidly established concepts in the field must be reasonably coherent, so as to reach *field utility*; finally, the concepts' description must show as much *parsimony* as possible to attain its goals.

The broader issue of government results (sometimes labeled as "effectiveness") is clearly identified in the literature as a concept in itself, relevant enough to be listed among the causal factors of democratic legitimacy (Magalhães,

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<sup>124</sup> All assessment criteria for our concept-building are presented in Gerring (2001, chapter 3)

2013, p. 79). The essence of our enquiry regarding the outcome of a specific feature of political arrangements is well translated by Rothstein and Teorell (2012, p. 22):

[..] what we need to know is whether societies that are socially and economically efficient, that is, are able to solve the problem of producing the amount and type of public goods they need, have institutions that are qualitatively different in their operative principles from the opposite type of societies.

To fulfill those substantive as well as methodological expectations in a still far from settled field of research both in social sciences and in political philosophy (Holmberg et. al., 2009, p. 155-156; Rothstein & Teorell, 2012), our choice will be to follow an old tradition of assessing governments' end results through nationwide economic policy achievements. Sáez (1995, pp. 28-29 and 122-124) claims that economic variables have been those most often used as "governability" measures in the literature (except for the abovementioned strictly political variables); Holmberg, Rothstein and Nasiritousi (2009) assign the same theoretical relevance to them.

Indeed, there seems to be a strong argument for taking some economic outcomes as proxies to the end result of political variables working together. Although certainly reductionist to some degree, macroeconomic indicators present a very comprehensive end result of a whole array of government decisions and outputs (Bizzarro et. al., 2018, p. 310), available in long time series (thus presenting less data availability limitations), compiled and presented in a reasonably uniform way across countries.

That kind of perspective seems to us a remarkable improvement over the more traditional assessment of Executive-Legislative relations by means of "legislative performance" metrics of "success" and "dominance" rates (see, for instance, Thürk, 2022; Montero, 2009, pp. 87-101, Saiegh, 2009)<sup>125</sup>: besides the intrinsic leakages given to influences such as amendments proposed by legislators (Huneus, Berríos & Cordero, 2006, p. 415, Siavelis, 2018, p. 128), those measurements of legislative capacity do not account for the relative importance of different policies, nor do they explain how much the government parties had to move from their ideal positions in prelegislative negotiations (Field 2016, p. 78; Thürk, 2022, p. 13; Saiegh, 2009, p. 1344-1345; Siavelis, 2018, p. 128)<sup>126</sup>. So, finding benchmarks with deeper meanings

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<sup>125</sup> Or more sophisticated variations of them, including time delay on approval or amendment numbers (Alemán & Tsebelis, 2016) or qualitative assessments on a judgmental sample of approved legislation according to their origin (Berríos & Gamboa, 2006), or even the elaborate "legislative cartel" measures by Chasqueti (2013).

<sup>126</sup> Indeed, even under strictly political perspectives, Thomas (2007) demonstrates in a case study of the Canadian national parliament how many other relevant criteria may be employed

to tap into substantive outcomes seems a much necessary effort to better understand the impacts of institutional factors in government performance at large.

Several research efforts have tried to describe in empirical terms the association we're trying to track between political variables and economic outcomes through several theoretical associations (Armijo & Gervasoni, 2010; Doucouliagos & Ulubasoglu, 2008; Sirowy & Inkeles, 1990; Persson & Tabellini, 2003; Funke, & Schularick & Trebesch, 2023; Stein, 2007, pp. 152 *et. seqs.*; Brunetti, 1997, p. 185; Scartascini & Spiller & Stein & Tommasi, 2010; Kaufmann & Kraay, 2002; Palanza, & Scartasini & Tommasi, 2012, p. 21; 2016, pp. 17-19; Aisen & Veiga, 2013, pp. 151-157)<sup>127</sup>. Although research questions like those share the same logical architecture as ours (that is, assessing the performance of a given set of political features on a country's economic performance), this study has a much narrower focus. We focus on the chosen causal conditions<sup>128</sup>, by trying to capture the effects of much more strictly defined characteristics of already democratic polities. On the other hand, we employ a broader conceptual and empirical outreach when it comes to the outcome<sup>129</sup>, for we substitute a larger set of economic conditions for the single measure of economic GDP.

Summing up: some variegated political features are widely seen in economic literature as empirically close to economic growth. While this conclusion does not apply mechanically to our causal research<sup>130</sup>, the relationship is relevant as a background framework to the links between government policy and economic outcomes which are being broadly discussed in this section<sup>131</sup>.

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in assessing a given legislature's performance (which include points as legislative compromise and deliberation, executive accountability to the legislature, opportunities for private members and accountability to citizens at election). Simultaneously, studies of political executives mirror-image that conceptual scarcity, there being no universally accepted standards for measuring the performance of political executives, but only proxy indicators, specially the similarly politics-centered 'longevity' in office (Helms, 2020, p. 647)

<sup>127</sup> Still in this broader empirical scope, some cross-country quantitative studies try to assess, over a large time span, the multiple partial correlations found in the economic literature between economic growth and a plethora of other demographic, economic and political variables which might tangentially refer to the kind of relationship discussed here (Ross & Renelt, 1992; Kalaitzidakis & Mamuneas & Stengos, 2000; Sala-i-Martin, 1997, p. 181; Dollar & Levin, 2005, pp. 5-7; Bizzarro et. al., 2018; Negretto, 2013, pp. 49-51).

<sup>128</sup> Or, in more traditional parlance among mainstream quantitative-based studies, on the "independent variables".

<sup>129</sup> Or, to keep the analogy, the "dependent variable"

<sup>130</sup> Since we assess only reasonably well-functioning democracies as measured by Polity V and Freedom House, and some of the causal links posited in the literature involve relationships that cut across the democratic status of each country on a given year.

<sup>131</sup> The detailed causal mechanisms offered by the literature will be presented in section 3.1.4.

### 3.1.2 – Locating the concept in the field – what it is and what it is not

We must discuss how this new indicator fits the extant knowledge about government performance, that is, its *field utility*. As we have already pointed out both in the introduction (section 1.3) and in the background literature review (chapter 2), most studies regarding government outcomes in minority situations emphasize classical, strictly political variables such as democratic regime survival, government duration and termination, legislative success and dominance rates in lawmaking processes, or voting discipline on behalf of government; others point to more dynamic, results-based, measures, but still rigidly in the realm of politics: pledge fulfillment; oppositional support collected by the government; incumbents' future electoral successes; party objective's fulfillment or Executive-Legislative conflict at large<sup>132</sup>. Our object of concern is clearly different: the outcome in terms of politics' end results as translated in concrete policies. But this set of outcomes has itself an individual footprint that differs from other perspectives: it focuses on the measurement of results, in a relatively short-term, that can be associated (at least partially) to a given cabinet's policy measures as compared to others' - since our main analytical object is the comparative performance of minority presidential government, and many of the causal factors posited for it will be also relatively high-frequency measures, such as the intensity of parliamentary oversight impact and the partisan composition of each cabinet. In other words, we're looking at an elusive, grassroots, year-on-year material projection of the relationship between broader political institutions and governmental performance at large.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> Since we're only dealing with democratic governments as objects of study, there's no point in engaging in the existing debate on the ultimate effects of democracy on development (Holmner et. al., 2009, pp. 138-139)

<sup>133</sup> One might put into question the very possibility of searching for causal effects in such shorter time frames. Beyond the precedents in the literature, as presented in this section 3.1, there's a broader historical angle as to the large amount of economic change that might be brought to a given country in a single year or so: (Piketty, 2014, p. 95):

*In my view, the most important point— more important than the specific growth rate prediction (since, as I have shown, any attempt to reduce long-term growth to a single figure is largely illusory)— is that a per capita output growth rate on the order of 1 percent is in fact extremely rapid, much more rapid than many people think. [..]*

*What this means is that today's societies are very different from the societies of the past, when growth was close to zero, or barely 0.1 percent per year, as in the eighteenth century. A society in which growth is 0.1–0.2 percent per year reproduces itself with little or no change from one generation to the next: the occupational structure is the same, as is the property structure. A society that grows at 1 percent per year, as the most advanced societies have done since the turn of the nineteenth century, is a society that undergoes deep and permanent change. This has important consequences for the structure of social inequalities and the dynamics of the wealth distribution. Growth can create new forms of inequality: for example,*

Therefore, our focus differs from several other relevant theoretical approaches on the linkages between the political system and government performance, and we should briefly highlight those differences. First, ours is a clearly distinct view from that of “governance”, theoretically defined as a kind of state infrastructure for policy implementation (or “state capabilities”), about which several different and long-ranging models abound: Payne & Zovatto & Florez & Zavala, 2007, pp. 86-87; Evans, 1995; Marquand, 1990; Weaver & Rockman, 1993; Keefer, 2004; Scartasini & Stein & Tommasi, 2008; Fernandes & Fernandes, 2025; Norris, 2012, p. 44; Evans, 1995; Holmbeg et. al., 2009, pp. 139-140; Scartasini & Stein & Tommasi, 2008). Models like those typically mean changing institutions themselves along the developmental process, which involves a degree of continuity along time that would be incongruent with the individual footprint of cabinets and their minority or majority conditions. Actually, such continuity would require focusing on factors who remain constant regardless of power alternance, whose assumption is mandatory in the study of any democracy. Under this generic label of “governance” as a conceptual umbrella, there’s a great number of different repositories containing fitting indicators (United Nations Development Program - UNDP, 2012; UNDP & Eurostat, 2008; Holmberg et. al., 2009; Kaufmann, Kraay & Mastruzzi). Such sources, albeit extremely relevant and widely used to depict governmental quality<sup>134</sup>, are not adequate to our purposes, since they operationalize a different underlying concept. A few other attempts at measuring the quality of government include an exhaustive survey of multidimensional statistics on rule-of-law attributes, economic variables and a plethora of sectoral policy outputs in health, education and other domains (Lane, 2008, ch. 2; Rothstein & Sören, 2014); however, in attempting such wide arrays of measurements, we would fall short both of the empirical resources to gather and process so much data and of the theoretical groundwork with which to justify why some indicators were chosen and many others remained absent<sup>135</sup>.

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*fortunes can be amassed very quickly in new sectors of economic activity. At the same time, however, growth makes inequalities of wealth inherited from the past less apparent, so that inherited wealth becomes less decisive. To be sure, the transformations entailed by a growth rate of 1 percent are far less sweeping than those required by a rate of 3– 4 percent, so that the risk of disillusionment is considerable— a reflection of the hope invested in a more just social order, especially since the Enlightenment. Economic growth is quite simply incapable of satisfying this democratic and meritocratic hope, which must create specific institutions for the purpose and not rely solely on market forces or technological progress.*

<sup>134</sup> For recent examples of WGI usage, see Nakatani, Zhang and Valdes (2022), and Magalhães (2013).

<sup>135</sup> A valuable attempt at using multidimensional measurements of fiscal management, effectiveness and efficiency of management results in very specific social policy areas as the

Our approach also differs from another relevant tradition regarding the quality of government which disregards that “policy infrastructure” approach as “doomed to failure” and equates good government with the underlying normative values that structure a country’s institutions, basically under a political culture approach (Sánchez & Ros-Medina & Mendieta, 2022; Holmberg et. al., 2009, p. 157; Gustavson, 2015), As relevant as this framework surely is, we choose not to focus exclusively on one feature of the whole polity; as the discussions in this chapter 3 suggest, there are plenty of institutional features besides a particularistic environment who potentially affect the final outcomes of government – specially since among them figure those that are more influenced by the minoritarian condition of a government in parliament.

One more distinction is to be made in face of the measurement of governmental success by notions of “well-being” or “human development”, that is, "individuals’ and communities’ ability to harness social and political opportunities to improve their lives" (measured by social statistics on areas such as poverty, health, gender empowerment and education (Wampler, Sugiyama & Touchton, 2020, p. 7). As theoretically and socially important as that approach may be, however, we can’t go along that path. First, for stringent data restrictions, mainly regarding the curtailment of data access in those very recent fields of study (in contrast to the much more disseminated information infrastructure for economic variables), added to the very aggregated nature needed for such statistics if we are to perform cross-country comparisons focusing on country-specific polity features (thus obfuscating within-country inequalities who are in the core of the human development concepts<sup>136</sup>).

### 3.1.3 – Designing the concept – fully developing the indicators

For the reasons stated above, we find ample theoretical justification to choose a macroeconomic set of indicators as a relevant proxy for the conceptual construct of good policy results for a given government in a given year. In order to meet the

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assessment of public policy results for Brazilian municipalities has been performed by Cavalcante (2012). However, our overall choice to highlight the joint causal effects of key decisiveness and accountability factors wards us off from using his quantitative multivariate approach, who aims at measuring the partial, incremental effects that several (electoral, party and participatory) political variables have individually on each specific policy domain.

<sup>136</sup> Wampler, Sugiyama & Touchton (2020) use municipal-level concepts and data (and comparative case studies involving different towns) to deploy the operationalization of their concepts.

study's analytical goals, we choose to build those indicators for good policy performance as logical (fuzzy) variables, whose meaning will reflect the actual occurrence of this phenomenon in every country-year.

So, we take as outcome a composite of two aggregate measures of economic performance: GDP growth, and income inequality. That's the first of many synthetic, composite conditions made up from different empirical components, to be used in our reasoning<sup>137</sup>. That aggregation of several related factors offers a "macro-condition" incorporating various dimensions of our concept of economic policy results. In substantive terms, that's necessary because economic policy often has competing and contradictory objectives: inflation *per se* can be resolutely reduced, but, if that's made by means of a recession, growth and employment are jeopardized; on the other hand, some kinds of expansionary policies can compromise economic sustainability through uncontrolled inflationary pressures, which often have negative distributive effects after a very short time lag. That is, any one isolated indicator could be too misleading - or too reductionist - a ruler; hence, a careful assembling of those competing returns into one single indicator is needed. In a general methodological sense, Ragin (2008, pp. 21 and 75-76) makes a strong case for building multidimensional indicators in lieu of single numerical measures, using precisely the phenomenon of economic development as a prime example.

That choice also means taking a clear stand in the - still ongoing - debate regarding the ultimate goals of development, by not endorsing the traditional view of mere "trickling down" of GDP growth onto the majority of the population. On the contrary, specific and deliberate policies to increase the poor's share in income distribution are to be seen as essential for a good valuation of economic policy performance in a Latin American context (Galván, 2015, pp. 70-71<sup>138</sup>). Indeed, as Medina and Galván (2014) exhaustively review, literature on economic development evolved under strongly polarized debates on whether an improvement in poor peoples' condition will be reached merely by reducing poverty in absolute terms

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<sup>137</sup> The logic around clustering causal variables into composite macro-variables is discussed in the last paragraphs of section 3.3.

<sup>138</sup> For a normative or axiological view on that same issue, which we also endorse, see Piketty (2020, p. 967): "*What is a just society? For the purposes of this book, I propose the following imperfect definition. A just society is one that allows all of its members access to the widest possible range of fundamental goods. Fundamental goods include education, health, the right to vote, and more generally to participate as fully as possible in the various forms of social, cultural, economic, civic, and political life. A just society organizes socioeconomic relations, property rights, and the distribution of income and wealth in such a way as to allow its least advantaged members to enjoy the highest possible life conditions.*"

(which might be achieved simply by absolute GDP growth) or, instead, if development strategies must assign proportionally more gains to the poorest strata, thus reducing inequalities. This long and multifarious debate has been gradually converging to the acknowledgement that poverty reduction – being, as it is, a key goal of economic development – is better served by pursuing *in tandem* two policy goals: economic growth cumulated with decreases in income inequality (Medina & Galván, 2014, p. 17). Their conclusion on this overall assessment summarizes the theoretical foundation for our double choice of policy results indicators:

La evidencia demuestra que la incidencia de la pobreza depende de la dinámica de la economía y de la distribución de la riqueza al interior de los países. Cuando el ingreso promedio aumenta y no se materializan cambios en la distribución del excedente económico, sólo una parte de la población –los que tienen ingresos en torno al umbral de pobreza- está en condiciones de abandonar la pobreza. (Medina & Galván, 2014, p.66)

For Latin America, besides suggestive empirical work on behalf of such arguments (Medina & Galván, 2014b), a very specific concern (with special repercussion in the region's politics) adds to the choice for including the inequality component: literature has warned about the widespread phenomenon of “policy switch”, that is, presidents who get elected on a progressive or leftist agenda, only to turn around completely and implement a neoliberal or right-wing policy package when in office (Stokes, 2001; Coelho, 2022). Regardless of being a deliberate opportunistic strategy by presidents (Stokes, 2001), or being a possibly undesired and unavoidable side effect stemming from currency crises (Campello, 2013; Stokes, 2001) or from unsurmountable parliamentary obstruction due to minoritarian situations (Sáez, 2004), any event of “policy switch” must here be considered as a non-positive condition as a governmental policy outcome in the way we're building the concept. First, because it increases the likelihood of severe political instability (Coelho, 2022); moreover, because theoretical expectations (partially confirmed in Latin America) are that “[w]hen rent-seeking politicians carry out policy switches, we expect the outcomes of their policies on average to be worse than the outcomes that would have attained had they not switched.” (Stokes, 2001, p. 190); last but not least, because in keeping electoral mandates and respecting constituent preferences in the policy process, a politician “improves the quality of democracy”, “enhances

social welfare and reduces political risks for governments” (Stokes, 2001, p. 172-173)<sup>139</sup>.

For that pair of indicators of short-term macroeconomic results (GDP growth, and income inequality), validity is clearly to be expected, since such results are to a large extent affected by a given government’s policy decisions, in a relatively short time frame (in our research context, one minority presidential cabinet tenure or even each year along that tenure). Indeed, even in the Latin American context of strong influence of commodity booms and busts on GDP and other macroeconomic variables, actual growth and distributive results are actively influenced by policy measures in almost every area of economic management such as tax systems design and enforcement, economic diversification policies, income transfers, labor market regulation and active employment policies, or fiscal decentralization, to name but a few (Balakrishnan & Lizarazo & Santoro & Toscani & Vargas, 2021).

Given that conceptual background, how will our good policy performance indicator be built from raw economic data?

We begin by comparing, for each economic measurement and each country-year, minority governments to the overall performance of Latin American economies in the same time frame: by doing so, we level off, at least to some degree, international economic cycles (either commodity-based or of a financial nature) who could distort a within-country assessment<sup>140</sup>. On doing so, any given country’s economic results will not be compared diachronically with his own time series; its numbers will be assessed against the same parameters for the whole Latin American region in the same year (a basis for comparison that already incorporates the region-wide cyclical effects)<sup>141</sup>. The comparison benchmark here will be the whole Latin American sample of countries reflected in our assessment, regardless of the minority or majority condition of governments, and even regardless of the democratic status of its member

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<sup>139</sup> In another specification by Anastasia, Ranulfo and Santos (2004), disregarding core electoral pledges on behalf of a right-wing platform opposed to those pledges compromises the representativeness of representation, decreases political trust and adherence to democratic values by citizens, and might require "strange bedfellows" in arranging the instrumental coalitions to implement.

<sup>140</sup> Since short-term changes in the same country might have their origins in the head- or tailwinds of commodity prices booms or busts, for instance, instead of virtuous or wrongful internal policies.

<sup>141</sup> The Latin American average, by its turn, seems a quite reasonable proxy for the overall impact of worldwide (or region-wide) economic cycles, depending only on the assumption that there’s a strong degree of correlation between cyclical fluctuations of most commodities (the one determined by world economic conditions at large, which affects every traded product, and not any product-specific volatility).

countries in a given year, since the whole region faces the same similar external pressures, while decisiveness and accountability factors may act independently in each country. This comparison will be performed twice, the first associating one country-year to the economic results recorded in that same year (contemporary results) and another using the economic results recorded in the following year (lagged results)<sup>142</sup>. This double lens is extremely relevant for assessing government performance, since many crucial decisions require considerable time to enact (such as the budget, as noted by Garritzmann and Seng, 2024) and will only take effect after some latency time. Even more important, decisions brought about at a given moment will take effect along time (especially the interlocked measures that compose whole batches of government policies): capital expenditures must be turned into physical investment; projects must mature; studies must be concluded; social agents must react to regulations by changing their activities. All that means a potential difference between what can be reaped in the very short term (the same year) and sometime later (even as early as the following year), thus recommending those two outcomes be measured and assessed separately.

For clarity purposes, we advance here some of the operational steps furthered in section A.2.1 in Appendix 2 to reach the final indicator, on a two-step procedure. We start from the individual components of: (i) percent rate of economic growth, on a year-on-year basis over the previous year; and (ii) percent of change in the household consumption share of GDP. An intermediate result of good performance is then built: if the government in question yields higher results than the region's average rate, it gets a logical true (Boolean value 1), and false (Boolean value zero) otherwise.

In the second step, each of those scores will be fused into one, organized into three fuzzy thresholds as displayed in Table 8 below<sup>143</sup>: 1 if all two indicators score 1; 0,66 if one of them does so; and 0 if no indicator comes better than the region. That deployment of thresholds follows the abovementioned logic of competing goals in economic policy: if “market-friendly” results (high growth) add to “pro-poor” (reducing inequality) ones, the economic results can be considered clearly better (and

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<sup>142</sup> For instance, the contemporary results for the Chilean government in 2007 will be the ensemble of Chile's economic results in the year 2007; the lagged results will be those recorded in 2008.

<sup>143</sup> The last part of section A.2.1 in Appendix 2 explains why such a three-level calibration of a fuzzy set scale is fully adequate in theoretical and methodological terms, although it might sometimes appear as counter-intuitive for not showing symmetrical numerical values in its structure.

policy approaches more comprehensive) than if only one subset of such results is achieved<sup>144</sup>. If at least one of those results is reached, policymaking delivered one of its expected outcomes in a positive fashion *vis-à-vis* the regional environment, which entitles at least some degree of membership in the good policy results set<sup>145</sup>.

Table 8 - Good policy performance indicator - Composition strategies

PARTIAL INDICATORS WITH CRISP LOGICAL VALUES AMOUNTING TO 1	OVERALL INDICATOR (fuzzy value)
2 indicators	1
1 indicator	0,66
0 indicator	0

Source: The author

According to QCA methodological guidance (Mello, 2021; Goertz & Mahoney, 2006), we began by conceptualizing positive cases as above. We must, however, follow it by the explicit assessment of negative cases (given that the negation of a successful policy to deal with a problem can be, for instance, either ill-suited measures, or delayed responses, or no response at all). Finally, irrelevant cases, (that is, those who present some characteristic that make the outcome of interest impossible) must be stipulated so as to be purged if and when they occur.

As for the negative outcome, the opposite of good economic performance does not need to be a particularly disastrous outcome: our overall goal is to find causal factors to specially good government performance; so, anything that does not correspond to such circumstances is substantively a negative outcome. Particularly tricky, as expected, will be the situation when only one of the chosen government's outcome dimensions is above Latin American average performance— that, however, would be an interpretative challenge under whatever methodological resources we might be using in the research. Indeed, we found no theoretical grounds on which to establish a precedence between either variable as a “better” policy outcome than the

<sup>144</sup> So, our fuzzy variable is entirely defined in its values by theoretical reasoning, which means direct QCA calibration, rendering unnecessary further formulaic or functional calibration approaches.

<sup>145</sup> *Por otra parte, es habitual que cuando el crecimiento es negativo la pobreza se incremente. No obstante, en la práctica se documentan episodios en que la pobreza declina aún en situaciones en que el crecimiento del ingreso sea negativo. Esta situación puede presentarse cuando la desigualdad se reduce y contrarresta el efecto negativo del crecimiento sobre la pobreza, lo cual permite que esta situación se califique como fuertemente anti-pobre (strongly anti-poor) si se comprueba que tanto la pobreza como la inequidad (sic) se reducen en presencia de un episodio de crecimiento negativo.* (Medina & Galván, 2014, p. 21)

other (“if a government delivers good growth at the expense of greater inequality, or the opposite happens, does that mean good or bad policy ?”); that means we can’t establish a different degrees of membership in the good policy set (that is, different fuzzy values) for them. Therefore, such performance defined by only one indicator will be considered in the good policy performance set, although in a clearly smaller degree than those cases where both variables are better than the regional average (which translates into a fuzzy 0,66 value).

The logically irrelevant cases are those where no possible governmental action affected by the theory’s causal factors might have reached the outcome<sup>146</sup>. From a strictly theoretical point of view, the only *ex ante* hypothetical situation (related to the causal mechanisms *per se*) that foresees such conditions would be the descent of a country into non-democratic conditions, when former governmental measures to which performance-enabling factors were relevant are voided by further authoritarian decision packages. That may happen, in our design, in cases where the lagged effect of one government’s year in office has to be measured by the following year data, and during that following year the country is no longer democratic - such cases must be excluded from the set<sup>147</sup>. Besides, there are empirical events that may turn one year’s results mostly unconnected to previous governmental actions: first, any possible unpredictable tail event of war or natural disaster that fundamentally affects a single country’s overall economy without any causal links to previously adopted courses of action<sup>148</sup>; second, is such degree of dependence from a given international commodity’s price that any other government measures are irrelevant to the country’s economic results<sup>149</sup>. Both points have been discussed in Appendix 2, in which we discard any instance for their empirical occurrence on our chosen sample.

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<sup>146</sup> “[C]ases that neither show the outcome nor hold meaningful values on the explanatory conditions” (Mello, 2021, p. 24).

<sup>147</sup> Indeed, by definition, non-democratic country-years are excluded from our sample.

<sup>148</sup> The only possible case that comes out at first glance and deserves specific empirical assessment is the Chilean earthquake in 2010 (Haiti is not included in the sample because it’s not a presidential system), which will be assessed – and discarded - in section A.2.1 of the Appendix. Other extreme events, such as draughts and hurricanes, cannot be considered as such since they’re part of the policy landscape of many countries in the region, and must necessarily be taken as given in each government’s actions year after year. Even the Covid-19 pandemic, likewise, negatively affected all countries in the region and couldn’t be considered something unaffected by governmental measures (on the contrary, policy responses were essential to determine how the negative effects of the pandemic were fought by each country). The pandemic times, however, are not covered by our time frame, being mentioned here only for explanatory purposes.

<sup>149</sup> The obvious case of Venezuela against the oil price has been assessed against this possibility and discarded, as shown in section A.2.1.

### 3.1.4 – How the literature associates economic results with good policy performance – the transmission mechanisms

The choice of economic outcomes as indicators of good policy performance does not come out of the blue or as a fishing expedition. On the contrary, that pervasive relationship between political aspects of government policy and macroeconomic results is dealt with in the literature through several causal arguments, which emphasize a wide array of transmission chains. This section mentions some among the several possible configurations of causal factors and outcomes regarding political variables (or, as Keefer puts it quoting Douglass North, some “non-policy characteristics of government”<sup>150</sup>) and their economic outcomes as widely proposed in the literature<sup>151</sup>.

Some authors emphasize that political features induce cooperation and provide predictability and deal enforceability over time, all of which favor economic agents’ productive achievements, exploring several possible substantive pathways for this to happen (Scartascini & Spiller & Stein & Tommasi, 2010; World Bank, 2003; Bizzarro et. al., 2018; Schmidt, 1999, p.284; Aisen & Vieira, 2013; Klüver & Zubeck, 2017, p. 720; Kleinfeld, 2023; Cox & Weingast, 2018; Norris (2012, pp. 105-106)<sup>152</sup>.

Other strands in the literature have more focused causal reasonings along the state capture and rent-seeking lines, in the sense that political institutions generate

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<sup>150</sup> That is, government features that are not subject to the contingent preferences by the incumbent rulers: “North opened way for a literature on “non-policy characteristics of government performance on economic development” (security of property rights, the rule of law, expropriation, bureaucratic quality, red tape, and the quality of government regulation)” (Keefer, 2004, pp. 10-11)

<sup>151</sup> Some authors develop arguments along more than one line of reasoning; they will be mentioned accordingly in more than one point within this section.

<sup>152</sup> Another influential strand in that broader debate is the “reform-oriented” approach that infuses much of the literature on the political economy of development, especially regarding Latin America (Eaton, 2002a; Corrales, 2002; Altman & Castiglioni, 2008). Those authors select a subset of substantive policies under the label of “economic reform” or “market-oriented structural reforms” (consisting mainly of tariff reduction, privatization, deregulation, unification of exchange rates, elimination of tax exemptions, administrative decentralization, and managerial reforms that allegedly improve the competence of the state bureaucracy), and (explicitly or implicitly) label those measures as levers for good economic performance, and then take the role of assessing their links to institutional and political independent variables (such as previous state bureaucratic capacity, legislator’s behavior and interests, state relations with societal interests, or presidential strategies for pursuing those reforms). Since our theoretical reasoning is seeking for a straightforward connection between political environment and economic outcomes (without assuming any pre-ordained substantive policy content), we do not include those authors in our list of causal arguments.

good results by turning agents' incentives away from investing in capturing rents, monopoly and predation bounties, and turning them to investing in productivity and marketable resources (Keefer, 2004, pp. 5 and 14-16; Pinto & Timmons, 2005; Kaufmann & Kraay, 2002; Kleinfeld, 2023; Mahmood & Slimane, 2018; Cox & McCubbins, 2001, p. 21; Armijo & Gervasoni, 2010; Scartascini & Tommasi, 2010, p. 300; Holmberg et. al, 2009, pp. 139-149, bringing a wide review of several other studies; Besley & Mueller, 2018; Henisz, 2000; Hassan et. al., 2019)

Other authors adopt an informational perspective, emphasizing stability and uncertainty reduction as key elements to understand the policy effects on virtuous economic behavior (Peters, 2022; Pech, 2004, pp. 1-2 and 17; García-Uribe & Mueller & Sanz, 2021; Keefer, 2004, pp. 19-21; Henisz, 2004, pp. 1-2; Stasavage, 2002, p. 43, Feng, 1997, pp. 397-398; Diakonova *et. al.*, 2022; Passos & Cavalcante, 2021; Bloom, 2009; Besley & Mueller, 2018; Kleinfeld, 2023, pp. 15-16; Stöckl & Rode, 2021; Gasmi, Numba & Virto, 2006; Knutsen, 2021, pp. 1517-1518; Armijo & Gervasoni, 2010; Singh, 2006, pp. 5-7). Corroborating such association in practice, Amorim Neto (2006, p. 430) uses economic distress conditions such as inflation and low growth as proxies for social crisis situations; Meireles (2016, p. e0001 – 15/31) presents inflation as a proxy for presidential popularity, and Helms (2020, p. 653-655) and Murillo and Visconti (2017) point to economic performance as the key variable to explain citizens' attitude towards any incumbent government and – at least in recently democratized polities - to democracy itself.

Finally, another cluster of interpretations highlights potential indirect pathways from political institutions to economic results through intermediate sectoral variables: education (Adams-Kane & Lim, 2014; Alvarado & Bourguignon & Ferreira & Lustig, 2023, p. 39; Norris. 2012, pp. 105-106); organizational characteristics of the policymaking dynamics (Pagés; 2010; Scartascini & Tommasi. 2010, p. 300)

In short, taking macroeconomic outcomes as stemming – at least partially – from a given country's political features appears in the literature not only as a frequent empirical correlation, but as a theoretically-grounded process widely surveyed along several lines of causal reasoning.

### 3.2 Decisiveness and accountability as drivers for good policy performance in Latin American minority governments

Sections 3.2 and 3.3 are the backbone of our causal argument: the former describes the theoretical anchors to the two macro-conditions posited as causal drivers for good policy performance, while the latter lays out in detail the substantive composition of each of those concepts. So, for the broader conceptualization of decisiveness and accountability in this section 3.2, we begin by explaining why executive-legislative relations deserve to be in the limelight as far as policymaking features are concerned (section 3.2.1). Within this interbranch setting, we then single out those two major broad causal conditions to good policy results: government decisiveness is the object of section 3.2.2 (together with the reasons for not merely equating this institutional feature with the presence of a majoritarian coalition, as frequently claimed by the literature); accountability is presented as the second relevant factor in section 3.2.3, while section 3.2.4 builds the argument for prioritizing the legislatures as the main *loci* to assess accountability in action in any given polity.

### 3.2.1 Why focus on Executive-Legislative relations ?

First, there's the obvious point that a minority condition is a specific feature of executive-legislative relations, thus being closely associated with our main theoretical concerns.

More broadly, presidents and parliaments<sup>153</sup> are closely intertwined in at least two crucial processes who shape the most crucial public decisions: lawmaking and oversight<sup>154</sup> (Sieberer, 2011, p. 748; Melo, 2009, pp. 41-45). Legislation, under the rule of law, is the moment when a society's "general interest" is made concrete through a formal specification (Arbós & Giner, 1996, pp. 51-58) involving both actors (Amorim Neto, 1998, p. 2<sup>155</sup>), while legislative oversight is the moment where such materialization is more strongly and legitimately examined in its actual implementation (Lemos & Power, 2013, p. 386; Pereira & Melo, 2012, p. 167). Indeed, the comparative literature on executive-legislative relations, formerly

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<sup>153</sup> Exactly as cabinets and parliaments under parliamentary regimes.

<sup>154</sup> Notwithstanding other important roles of legislatures such as the *ex ante* selection of external officeholders, representation, legitimization and providing a forum for public debate, besides the recruitment, socialization, and training functions for political elites (Sieberer, 2011, p. 751).

<sup>155</sup> Amorim Neto (1998; 2006) stresses that policymaking by statute is one among several strategies available to the executive (deploying unilateral decree powers, or negotiating directly with private societal actors are other potential tools to the president, according to each country's specific institutional and social features). Even so, statutes are the most frequent and stable among those strategies, and even the other two involve some degree of consideration regarding the legislature's stance.

overemphasizing institutional differences between presidential and parliamentary formats, has recently converged in the view of both presidents and prime ministers as having a common central purpose of “managing the legislative branch to advance their policy goals” (Chaisty & Cheeseman & Power, 2020, p.421), a policy-centered approach which highlights that relationship as one of the main engines of any policymaking framework.

So, Executive-Legislative relations stand out as a most relevant feature to be heeded when assessing the political determinants of good public policy results.

### 3.2.2 Government decisiveness as the key answer in presidential theory – and its “capture” by the majority coalition-building theories

The traditional answer regarding policymaking effects in presidentialism stresses its capabilities to provide (or not) a government with decisiveness, that is, the ability to authoritatively make decisions: the ability of a government to enact and implement policy change (according to the framework by Cox & McCubbins, 2001)<sup>156</sup>. Its absence means ungovernability, which stems from several conditions: the inability to decide (undecisiveness), the inability to stick to a decision once made (irresoluteness), or the pursuit of inconsistent policies by different "subgovernments" (“balkanization”, whose actors may be legislative committees, or parties, or delegated corporatist interest groups, as well as their surrogates across the state decision-making structures). In our theoretical context, the relevant dimension of decisiveness is the effect of executive-legislative interaction, that is, the combined effects of both branches’ actions and powers in terms of the decisional outcomes (in the simple words of Melo, 2009, in terms of governments’ ability to approve their agenda)<sup>157</sup>, and the more common expressions of “gridlock”<sup>158</sup>.

So, decisiveness will be necessarily one pillar of our theoretical construction for the determinants of good policy results. The received wisdom in presidential

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<sup>156</sup> That study will be the reference to this whole section 3.2.2, unless otherwise specified.

<sup>157</sup> Which means discarding, for analytical purposes, other possible conflicts between empowered agents (e.g., involving the Judiciary), or even the sheer powerlessness of government as a whole (as in a civil war).

<sup>158</sup> The analogies with the classical “veto player” approach (Tsebelis, 1995) are very clear, and indeed “veto players” are a logical underlying feature to this framework. However, the main focus is not to gauge “policy stability” as a value in itself (as Tsebelis typically does), but to understand decisiveness factors as dynamically embedded in policy decisions and outcomes. That’s why a single analytical line from the existence of veto players to any theoretical outcome is unsuitable for our purposes here – something that must be laid out clearly.

literature equates such decisiveness attributes with majority coalition-building: the short version of it is that building – and keeping - stable majority coalitions by presidents are necessary and sufficient for reaching decisiveness, and that would mean good policymaking results<sup>159</sup>.

Majoritarian coalitions seem to emerge from the literature as the one path available to presidents to collaborate with the legislature and get policy made through statutes. This position is found both in the traditional first-generation strands that saw effective government as conditioned by the presidential party holding a majority in Congress (Negretto, 2004, p. 2) and in further research that emphasized the need for coalition-building as an unavoidable step to give presidents a legislative majority, offsetting their party’s minoritarian legislative share and the institutional limitations they face in unilaterally pursuing a policy agenda (Martínez-Gallardo, 2012; Chasquetti, 2006, 2008; Figueiredo & Canello & Vieira, 2012; Escobar-Lemmon & Taylor-Robinson, 2020; Chaisty & Cheeseman & Power, 2018; Bunker, 2019; Cavalcante, 2012; Cheibub & Przeworski & Saiegh, 2004; Chaisty & Power, 2018; Deheza, 1997; Schleiter, 2020). That’s the cutting edge of presidential literature nowadays, namely the “coalitional presidentialism” paradigm (Couto & Soares & Livramento, 2021), which stands precisely as “a strategy of directly elected minority presidents to build stable majority support in fragmented legislatures, specifically via the coordination of two or more legislative parties by the president” (Chaisty & Cheeseman & Power, 2018, p. 14)<sup>160</sup>.

There’s no doubt that such strong relationship between coalition-making and policy results is consequential: after all, defining who takes high office means, to a great extent, choosing who shapes policy (Araújo & Freitas & Vieira, 2018, pp. 32-33). However, it’s not the only thing that matters: the emphasis must be shifted from coalitions *per se* to their causal factors, that is, the embedded elements in the political system that conditioned coalition-building outcomes (Chaisty & Cheeseman & Power, 2020) - that is, coalition-building is only one step in coordinating interbranch relationship in the pursuit of presidential policies. That’s our proposed approach:

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<sup>159</sup> By coalitions, here, we mean the cabinet-based definition, as discussed in the definitional segment of section 2.1.

<sup>160</sup> It’s worth underlining the long distance that such a procedural, analytically sharp definition, holds to the original, historically-based contents to this expression when originally coined: [...] *o Brasil é o único país que, além de combinar a proporcionalidade, o multipartidarismo e o “presidencialismo imperial”, organiza o Executivo com base em grandes coalizões. A esse traço peculiar da institucionalidade concreta brasileira chamarei, à falta de melhor nome, “presidencialismo de coalizão” [...] (Abranches, 1988, p. 21-22)*

instead of concentrating on one (possible) intermediate decisiveness condition per se - the majority coalition itself -, we propose to cut straight to the requisites that might account for both that intermediate condition and for decisiveness at large.

### 3.2.3 The missing link: accountability

Decisiveness, however, is not the only game in town: policymaking success may require another twin dimension. Presidents must have decision powers, but those powers must be wisely used, and political institutions must provide conditions who strongly favor this wisdom to be shown.

Melo (2009, pp. 30-31) warns that concentration of powers in (and abuse of powers by) the executive ranks very high in the political problems of contemporary Latin America, including some very troublesome undemocratic drifts such as in Venezuela, Ecuador and Bolivia. Presidential abuse, unchecked, has meant clear de-institutionalization, under various forms: disintegration of party systems (Venezuela, Peru, Bolivia, Argentina); a surge in the number of street protests and premature ousting of presidents (Ecuador, Bolivia, Brazil, Argentina, Venezuela)<sup>161</sup>.

The classical theorization of such one-sided concentration of powers in the hands of presidents was forwarded by O'Donnell (1994, 1998), in his general model of "delegative democracy"<sup>162</sup>. Periodic elections are established and contestable, but in-between there are no institutional constraints to presidential will, leaving presidents to rule as they fit, subject only to "hard facts" of power relations (such as market or foreign exchange pressures) and unhindered by any influence by legislatures, courts or any other political institution.

O'Donnell's model offers a sobering view on the flaws that the absence of accountability introduces into good policymaking. It surely refers to extreme cases, more common to the newly democratized Latin America in the 1990's, but it's a first warning of what decisiveness alone can bring, when deprived of its counterweights. This hardball game of delegative democracy in presidential systems begins with

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<sup>161</sup> In this regard, reliance on street demonstrations to deter misuse of presidential or partisan powers does not mean stronger checks and balances, but the opposite ("spasmodic accountability"): institutions' failure in performing their duties - even when legislatures were the ones who, formally and eventually, performed the sanctioning acts (Melo, 2009 p. 45; for an attempt at mapping the extreme reliance on such last-resort arrangements in the Bolivian case and the institutional fragility it shows, see Mayorga, 2014, pp. 74-86).

<sup>162</sup> This model intended to assess the predicament of early third-wave democratic transitions, who added the absence of full-fledged democratic institutions to the heavy socioeconomic hurdles inherited from authoritarian rule, covering mostly the Latin American cases (Argentina, Brazil, Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia), but elsewhere as well (Phillipines, South Korea).

majoritarian elections leading candidates to pledges who raise high expectations among usually distressed citizens and businesses. That induces the winner into voluntaristic, high-risk policy packages, which are applied unilaterally and without neither consensus-building nor proper institutional feedback on implementation capacity. That's a perfect recipe for gross mistakes (by fraud or error), hazardous implementation and, eventually, blame-targeting in the presidential figure. The (likely) failure of such attempts induces, in a vicious cycle, uncooperative, unilateral short-term behavior in all agents, depriving social and economic reform attempts from the broad cooperation they need, and inducing adversarial responses from citizens and business (low private investment, excessive wage and price demands, overhauled efforts at tax and foreign exchange evasion) – all of which, in turn, generate more failure. As a matter of fact, presidents who are the sole actors in the policy process end up holding the sole responsibility (and blame) for the policy attempts, whose failure jeopardizes their legitimacy to try amendments or new initiatives. On the other hand, when occasionally successful in their attempts (at least in the short term<sup>163</sup>), the individualization of credit on the presidential figure may incentivize him or her to waste the added political leverage gained by any policy success into reforms aimed at reinforcing power concentration and on getting re-election franchises, instead of much-needed structural and conjunctural solutions for economic and social malaise.

The harmful logic of a unilateral decisionist policy process is expressed in more general terms by Nacif (2003)<sup>164</sup>. To be sure, decisions must be reached, and, in some circumstances, quick and intense changes may have to be produced (as in the 1980's and 90's crisis-ridden Latin America who epitomized O'Donnell's model). Indeed, deciding in a concentrated way by a cohesive majority may be occasionally necessary, and such majoritarian view still ensures the prevalence of the majority's will. However, democratic stability and public welfare will stem from favorable policy end results, not from mere swiftness in the adoption of any policies. And that's the crux: any majoritarian decisional model presupposes that policies can be designed, and implemented without negotiation, by a fully rational and disinterested

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<sup>163</sup> The classical example to that, although not nominally mentioned by O'Donnell, might be the first years of Menem's convertibility plan in Argentina - albeit such views are not espoused by Shugart & Haggard (2001, pp. 74 and 78).

<sup>164</sup> Another parallel contemporary view on that logic (although entirely grounded in US contextual features) is provided by Bolton and Thrower (2022), whose call for stronger constraints over presidential unilateral policymaking remarkably resembles O'Donnell's and Nacif's.

policymaker, and that this kind of behavior would accrue coherence, efficiency and accountability to government action. This is a wildly strong assumption, and hardly realistic in any setting (Henisz, 2004, p. 1). Indeed, every policy change is an experiment of sorts, facing extreme uncertainty between measures adopted and their consequences. Besides, adds Nacif, politicians and bureaucrats are too far away from benign do-gooders: left without restraints, they'll end up using power to pursue their own partial (individual or group) interests, twisting the policy results for the public at large<sup>165</sup>.

Now reframing the question in affirmative terms, the missing link seems to be the need for accountability in successful policymaking. The “microphysics” for accountable policymaking is suggested by Nacif (2006): incremental, negotiated, even muddling-through<sup>166</sup> approaches are the best to deal with unanticipated effects, to incorporate legitimate interests into policy design<sup>167</sup> and to prevent abuse from power. The dispersion of power moderates changes, multiplies stakeholders and even – for that matter - veto points<sup>168</sup>, translated in incremental changes who accumulate into great transformation. This step-by-step decision-making can acknowledge and tackle the actual limits to rational calculations, (for example, receiving information and experiences from all sides) while opening up checkpoints against abuse from powers along the way<sup>169</sup>.

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<sup>165</sup> Framing it in terms of fiscal policy results, Wehner (2004, p. 3) warns that:

*[..] where executive benevolence and integrity is not firmly entrenched in the culture of governance, and where electoral accountability is weakly developed, the absence of meaningful legislative checks and balances opens the door to waste and corruption and leads down the road of poor budget outcomes[..].*

<sup>166</sup> For original references to “muddling through” as a public policy framework, see Lindblom (1959, 1991).

<sup>167</sup> Preventing such stakeholders from an active or passive resistance to the policies enacted. In Schmidt's (1999, p. 291) words, “Furthermore, implementation costs tend to be higher in countries with majority rule. this is largely due to the exclusion, if not suppression, of minority interests in the process of deliberation and decision making.”. This kind of enlargement of the stakeholders' circle is not necessarily uniform across policy issues or aspects: Olson and Mezey (1991, pp. 203-204) suggest that legislative intervention in policymaking “center on those aspects of a complex policy that have the most obvious constituency implications”.

<sup>168</sup> It must be said that the mention to “veto points” in this argument is clearly different from the more widely known Tsebelis' “policy stability” framework: vetoes here are part of the negotiating process into change, and stability is not seen as the dependent variable to the analysis.

<sup>169</sup> Quoting O'Donnell himself, Nacif claims that this kind of inter-agent conflict in the political arena has for policymaking similar effects than those of competitive markets for economic activity.

From an institutional point of view, O'Donnell (1998, 2003)<sup>170</sup> unifies those traits under the concept of horizontal accountability<sup>171</sup>, a network of state agencies<sup>172</sup> who, working together in an integrated fashion, are legally empowered, hold the political incentives and possess the technical capabilities to act (either by routine supervision, by legal sanctions or even by removing the involved agent<sup>173</sup>) against actions or omissions from other state agents or agencies that may be qualified as unlawful or wrongful in terms of policy design or execution<sup>174</sup>. Those are the instruments for a polity to solve the fundamental (and universal) trade-off between two equally rational desires: decisiveness and control. In one hand, power must be endowed and deployed to solve collective action problems; on the other hand, those same powers must be kept at bay since its holder may abuse it in his own benefit<sup>175</sup>.

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<sup>170</sup> Some authors (Lindberg, 2013; Rock, 2020) focus on debating the concept itself, and the occasional existence of “core” and ancillary components to it. We take the broader, historically-based concept by O'Donnell as fully sufficient for our analytical purposes. For a broader presentation to the development of oversight theories, under the general perspective of principal-agent modelling, see McCubbins, 2014.

<sup>171</sup> Mainwaring (2003) posits also “oversight” or “superintendence” as roughly equivalent terms to horizontal accountability. For an abstract formal model of accountability within a principal-agent framework, see Brandsma and Schillemans (2013), and for brief literature reviews of legislative oversight built on that framework, see Griglio (2020, p. 19-20) and Velarde (2018, pp. 16-29). Such formal models are fully compatible with O'Donnell's more institutionalist design, but fail to disclose the concrete social and political links we're trying to highlight the context of Latin American presidentialism. That's why our approach will rely on the theoretical strand led by O'Donnell and Nacif, as described above.

<sup>172</sup> Melo (2009, p. 46-48) adds independent (non-state) media to that slate.

<sup>173</sup> Mainwaring (2003) plausibly establishes that the availability of sanction and removal powers is indispensable for the whole web of institutions to be able to perform its intended role, but is not a requirement to each and every one of them. So, an audit institution or a parliamentary inquiry committee may be effective as horizontal accountability agents by just having investigative powers, provided the whole system has other agents (such as prosecutors and judges) who can act upon their findings and pursue coercive measures to stop malpractices. On the other hand, the formalistic requirement that an institution must have to concur in a policy decision to be considered an “oversight” institution - such as the joint concurrence of executive and legislature for a bill to be signed into law (Arzuaga, 1999) - is not present at all under this framework here, remarkably when dealing with presidential systems. On the contrary, the whole idea to this theoretical build-up is that horizontal accountability arrangements help to offset presidential abuse of his own powers (not just the ones he occasionally shares with other branches).

<sup>174</sup> The original texts conceptualizing horizontal accountability (O'Donnell, 1998, 2003) frame those acts or omissions only as unlawful ones (i.e., acts of power encroachment or corruption). We follow here a broader version of the concept, already implicit in the author's argument for countervailing forces to delegative democracy to check fraud and illegality as well as errors in policy decisions (O'Donnell, 1994). That's also the scope given to the concept by Mainwaring (2003), Melo (2009), and Lemos (2005a).

<sup>175</sup> For a more minimalist fashion to this argument, see Croissant (2003).

On the ground, such mechanisms produce, first of all, information about the making and implementation of policy<sup>176</sup>; much more comes from them, though. This web of institutional actors may produce rather dramatic and visible intervention when agents at the top of the power chains (such as congress) react and contain other top-level decision-makers (such as the president); however, they may intervene also as routine checks when agencies with specific mandates locate and counter a plethora of “street-level” illegal or wrongful misdeeds, usually under more technical assessment parameters. Horizontal accountability effects can be felt also by the deterrent effect that the expectation of such checks has on public officeholders. Pereira and Melo (2012, p. 158-159) express in other, very simple terms, this convivial logic of accountability within the decision-making process in presidential systems:

Three things explain multiparty presidentialism’s unexpected success: the powers of presidents; the availability of trade-worthy coalition goods (cabinet posts, “pork,” patronage, and the like) that executives can use to gain legislators’ support; and the strength of institutional checks on the executive’s discretion. Good governance hinges on the delegation of extensive powers to both presidents and autonomous institutions that can and will check the executive branch. Where presidents concentrate powers without congress’s consent, what is happening is not delegation but usurpation.<sup>177</sup>

Such mechanisms may, potentially, slow down policy decisions, shape them much more incrementally, and even enlarge the possibility of gridlock<sup>178</sup>. Such risks, however, tend to be vastly offset by their roles as vaccines against gross mistakes and as catalysts to successful implementation (by way of enhancing cooperation amongst stakeholders and retrieving proper transaction-level information)<sup>179</sup>.

But horizontal accountability goes far beyond being information-gathering. It was born out of the very concept of checks and balances from classical democratic theory: putting overlapping competences in the hands of different institutions and agents with different motivations, so that one can contain others’ occasional abuses

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<sup>176</sup> Including the opportunity for the thorough discussion, explanation and justification for policy decisions which remains the core of the “deliberative” stances of accountability in parliament (Sanders et al, 2017, pp. 3-4; Grigio, 2020, p. 74).

<sup>177</sup> The same overall preeminence of power sharing between strong presidents and an assertive legislature as key to Latin America presidentialism’s institutional design is to be found in Negretto (2013, p. 8) and Payne & Zovatto & Florez & Zavala (2007, p. 87)

<sup>178</sup> In Mainwaring’s (2003) more analytical description, they always have transaction costs.

<sup>179</sup> See also Alston, Melo, Mueller and Pereira (2008, p. 15) for an association between stronger checks and balances, on one hand, and more public-goods oriented policy outcomes, and O’Donnell (1994) for his claims that accountable policymaking means sharing blame avoidance among several actors, which reduces the reputational charges from policy failures that fall only on executive heads (making them extemporaneous “lame ducks”)

of power (Madison, 2008, p. 256). It's also a requirement to the the core accountability in democracy, the one due to voters (Przeworski, Stokes & Manin, 1999; Strøm, Müller, & Bergman, 2006)<sup>180</sup>. Horizontal accountability supports vertical accountability not only through the information flows that are necessary to voters (Dahl, 2001, p. 111; Griglio, 2020, p. 77) and make retrospective voting possible ((Strøm, 1997, p. 51), but also by stepping in the material gaps that electoral mechanisms cannot overcome: elections are held in fixed time intervals, temporarily insulating elected officials from the effects of voters' reprimand; many state agents, such as most bureaucrats, are only indirectly submitted to electoral censorship (that is, they're responsible only to the elected government heads, and some, like judges<sup>181</sup>, not even to that); the sheer complexity of the state apparatus creates informational hurdles to overseeing government actions who are in practice unsurmountable to the most well-meaning and devoted citizen individually; in extreme cases, politicians' or parties' gatekeeping role on the supply of electoral offers may imply in collusive behavior which makes impossible to sanction or deter abusive acts relying only on electoral competition. (Lemos & Power, 2013; Maravall, 2009; Mainwaring, 2003; Alston et al, 2008, p. 15).<sup>182</sup>

### 3.2.4 Parliaments: the key nodes to horizontal accountability

Given that horizontal accountability is meant to be pursued by a web of institutions working together (including courts, prosecutors, audit offices, ombudsmen), what's the rationale behind assessing them along the axis of executive-legislative relations axis?

Basically, parliaments stand as the centerpiece of that web - not the least because they're simultaneously anchored in the vertical and horizontal accountability chains (Miller, 2002, p. 15; West, 2020; Eaton, 2002a, p. 6). Indeed, legislative oversight is a stronghold of formal and political legitimacy to the horizontal accountability circuit (Lemos & Power, 2013, p. 386; Griglio, 2020, p. 3 and 78-79), and parliaments are subjected to the vertical accountability to electors (which is hardly the case of any other organizations or authorities in the accountability web),

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<sup>180</sup> This responsiveness to voters is called vertical accountability under O'Donnell's framework.

<sup>181</sup> Or, as Griglio (2020, pp. 51-52) recalls, the growing number of independent regulatory authorities or agencies, such as central banks, whose statutory independence from the Executive is the very reason for their existence.

<sup>182</sup> For approaches based on the principal-agent framework, with fundamentally similar conclusions, see Gustavson (2015, pp.3-4), or Stapenhurst (2020a).

thus being almost the only direct link in the core delegation chain from voters to officials<sup>183</sup>. In practical terms, legislatures feature as strong stabilizers in the policymaking process, either by sharing its very inception acting as “arenas of perpetual fine-tuning of conflicts” (Alemán & Tsebelis, 2011, p. 25) through decision-sharing or policy influence, or by actively overseeing implementation (Kriner & Schickler, 2016; Griglio, 2020, p. 222; Pereira & Melo, 2012, p. 167; Melo, 2009, pp. 41-45; Sieberer, 2011, p. 748; Saiegh, 2010, pp. 4-5; Pellizzo & Stapenhurst, 2012, p. 87; Stapenhurst, 2020b, p. 209). They’re also endowed with institutional and organizational resources to run along both pathways of oversight described just above in section 3.2.3: the top-rank interbranch decision checks, as well as the routine, “street-level” supervisory routines over the administration (Griglio, 2020, p. 78).

In coalition governments, in particular, parliamentary scrutiny (*ex ante* and *ex post*) is seen as a critical adjustment mechanism for the smooth collaboration between coalition partners in generating coherent policies (Martin & Vanberg, 2004; 2014; Martínez-Gallardo & Schleiter, 2015, p. 5; Strøm & Muller & Smith, 2010, p. 524; Martin & Whitaker, 2019; Hohmann & Kraus, 2022; Freitas, 2013; Inácio & Rezende, 2015; Araújo, 2017; Silva, 2019).

Assertive parliaments both in policymaking and oversight are an empirical reality cross-nationally (Olson & Mezey, 1991, p. 6) and specifically in Latin America (Payne & Zovatto & Florez & Zavala, 2007, p. 103; Ishiyama, 2020)<sup>184</sup>

For all those reasons, parliaments represent a meaningful share of the horizontal accountability, and any assessment who focuses on their relationship with the executive under this perspective will profitably shed light on the polity’s government processes. That’s the reason we’ll operationalize the accountability factor in our model through the oversight activities of parliaments

### 3.3 Decisiveness, accountability and good policy results: causal relationships on the ground

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<sup>183</sup> Besides the fact that any other private stakeholder’s oversight action will be interest-based and issue-specific, while legislative assemblies have in their broad, election-based composition the best possible enticements for a pluralist approach to oversight action.

<sup>184</sup> That’s not entirely unanimous in the literature, though. Some studies see oversight in parliaments such as the Brazilian one as not relevant within the whole basket of legislative dimensions, either in absolute terms (Silva, 2021, or Centurione, 2012, for subnational legislatures) or compared to the US Congress (Lemos, 2005a).

The operational development to the theory will be presented along this section 3.3, following the main premise already sketched above: since good results in policymaking stem from the existence of both decisiveness and accountability, the specific causal propositions must implement the idea that the existence of decisiveness and accountability factors has causal impact on the existence of good policies. We must also highlight, at this very initial stage of theory-building, the full compatibility of such design with the causal complexity embedded in QCA and presented in detail in section 5.3: conjunctural causation (since we posit a combination of different conditions to generate causal impact); equifinality (since several pathways of decisiveness and accountability may give rise to the specific policy performance outcome) and causal asymmetry (since outcome and non-outcome will be assessed, from the beginning, as potentially deriving from different configurations).

Decisiveness and accountability factors will be recollected from different theoretical streams found within both traditions (presidential and parliamentary studies, the latter centered on minority parliamentarism). This heterogeneous sourcing relies on QCA methodological practice of developing theory through the integration of different theoretical strands in support of each causal condition to be joined in the proposed configuration. It's also attentive to the several warnings in the literature that the study of policy outcomes of presidential systems should take into account several contextual factors, institutional or agency-based, that jointly interact to produce governmental decisions, in a "policymaking system" as described by Haggard and McCubbins (2001, p. 319):

Further, the contributors to the volume shared the sense that many institutional analyses have operated in a vacuum, isolating particular institutional elements (such as legislative committees), without locating them within a context of other institutional actors with whom they interact. For example, critics of presidentialism worried about the effects of divided government. But the deleterious effects of divided government may be partially offset if the president has proactive and reactive powers. We have tried to avoid this problem by looking at the different elements of presidentialism as constitutive of a policymaking system; the various powers of the president interact not only with his legislative interlocutors but with the political parties in which both executive and legislative action is embedded.

To honor such claims, the causal modelling presented in the following sections will strongly adhere to Carey's view of a deliberative interaction within, and presidential bargaining with, legislatures, encouraged by presidential powers (Melo, 2009, p. 40), further refined by Melo himself (2009, p. 32) to present as "key to effective governance and democratic stability" precisely the "combination of strong

presidents<sup>185</sup> with robust checks and balances, and the rule of law”. Each component in the causal relationship will be defined in this section 3.3 in precise theoretical terms, while Appendix 2 accounts for their operationalization and data sourcing.

A common feature in many sections will be that conditions and outcome often are conceptualized as “synthetic” composites of several different empirical metrics. That choice has both methodological and substantive reasons. First, logical variables in QCA’s truth table should be kept as limited as feasible without hindering the completeness of their modelling the phenomenon of interest. So, it makes full sense to aggregate several related factors into a “macro-condition” (Mello, 2021) who can better reflect the various dimensions of our concepts<sup>186</sup>. And multidimensional they are, in substantive terms. Our end result, then, will include causal relationships involving high-level, relatively abstract constructs as “economic performance” or “presidential powers”, whose theoretical meaning will be construed according to the corresponding sections in this chapter.

### 3.3.1 Decisiveness conditions under minority governments

As already discussed at length in section 3.2, the capacity to enact and implement policy change (avoiding the inability to come to decisions, the lack of resolution to enforce them when reached, and the “balkanized” pursuit of different decisions by different actors inserted in governmental lines of authority) is recognized by the literature as one of the key drivers of good policy results (or, to many authors, the key driver of good policy). The ensemble of such capacities are called by us “decisiveness”.

Our perspective is focused on executive-legislative interaction dimensions, or the combined effects of both branches’ actions and powers in terms of the decisional outcomes (either in reaching decisions and in implementing them). The vast literature emphasizing decisiveness is mirrored in countless causal claims as to which other institutional and contingent factors mean a decisive government action. That’s the rationale behind our picking not one, but a cluster of several logical preconditions as

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<sup>185</sup> As will be clearly shown, our conceptualizing of government decisiveness will extend beyond the mere sum of presidential powers, although those are indispensable components to it.

<sup>186</sup> Strong examples of “built for purpose” multidimensional aggregates used to structure theoretical discussion are to be found in Albala (2017), featuring QCA conditions such as “Institutional conditions”, “Powers of the President” and “Context condition”, and Montero (2009) building the composite variable “Institutional Legislative Power Index” (IPII) for synthesizing presidential powers in the legislative arena.

the embodiment of decisiveness, putting them front and center in the analysis - that is, instead of “decisiveness” as an empirical concept, we’ll posit that a group of other antecedent causal factors are the conditions who must be reflected in the analytical model as the logical equivalent of a decisive government.

Since there may be countless decisiveness factors to heed, we must choose as relevant conditions as many as feasible to the analysis (Mello, 2021; Goertz & Mahoney, 2006<sup>187</sup>). In our case, the scope condition in itself (Latin American presidential minority cabinets) already “nudges” the analysis to a certain domain or level (institutional frameworks, leaving aside for now domains such as political culture). Moreover, similar or related factors are replaced by one of them who suffices for research purposes – in procedural terms, several independent factors are aggregated into indexes (“macro-conditions”) to consider various dimensions of higher-level concepts<sup>188</sup>.

The rest of this section 3.3.1 will be devoted to laying out each of the selected decisiveness conditions considered in our QCA analysis.

#### *Presidential powers: the “executive toolbox” of presidential influence on the legislature*

The first decisiveness condition to lay out is the set of instruments available to presidents to negotiate support for their policies. Coalition presidentialism, after all, means a strategy that minority presidents have at hand to build stable majority support in fragmented legislatures on behalf of their policy agendas<sup>189</sup>. And powerful they are: Morgenstern, Polga-Hecimovich, and Shair-Rosenfield (2013) place Latin American presidents among the most endowed with power resources, even when

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<sup>187</sup> *In qualitative research, investigators usually develop parsimonious theories in which the number of independent variables is relatively limited. For example, five or fewer independent variables often constitute the core of the theory, whereas it is rare for more than seven or eight independent variables to be included* (Goertz & Mahoney, 2006, p. 186)

<sup>188</sup> That’s a QCA-style implementation of the recommendations by Lijphart (1971, p. 687) to “reduce the ‘property-space’ of the analysis” by “combining two or more variables that express an essentially similar underlying characteristic into a single variable” and, in carefully justified circumstances, reducing “the number of classes into which the variables are divided (for instance, by simplifying a set of several categories into a dichotomy)”. This kind of *ex ante* tuning of conditions does not prevent neither over-specification (which will be worked out in logical minimization) nor omitted variables (which will show up in undecisive consistency values for cases, to be solved only by theoretical refinements); however, that’s an inevitable step in the first sketches of a proposed explanatory configuration (Radaelli & Wagemann, 2019).

<sup>189</sup> The following four sections regarding the “tools in the toolbox” will be essentially based in Chaisty, Cheeseman and Power (2018). Other sources will be specifically referenced in the text when appropriate.

compared to the (in practice, although maybe not formally) already strong US presidency.

That begins with one main instrument for coordination: the sharing of cabinet posts, which grants involved parties with at least partial control over policies and financial and administrative resources (Amorim Neto 2006; Sobrinho, 2018<sup>190</sup>). That instrument is essentially the starting point of coordination initiatives: after forming cabinets in day one of their term, presidents start or restart the game and, from then on, deal with the changed circumstances that follow (Raile & Pereira & Power, 2011; Amorim Neto, 2019); even if later reshuffles mean (as they frequently do) “safety valves” with which to adjust to strongly changing political and economic environments (Martínez-Gallardo, 2014), they’re the cut-off point for policies to start anew under new coalition settings. Cabinet nominations imply strong agency costs through party control of portfolios (which imply at least some party control of their policy and resource decisions<sup>191</sup>) and legitimacy costs in terms of identifying part of the presidential agenda with coalition partners in the eyes of the public.

For our comparative purposes, however, cabinet appointment powers – foundational as they are in what, after all, is *coalitional* presidentialism – are not especially adequate as causal conditions. First, because they play basically the same role in every country assessed, which would lead to less than remarkable variances for such causal factor<sup>192</sup>. In particular, the variance of formal presidential appointment powers to the cabinet is minimal in Latin America: 6 out of 18 countries

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<sup>190</sup> Amorim Neto (2019, p. 295) emphasizes that, in Brazilian coalitional presidentialism at least, cabinet nominations are a necessary condition for a majority coalition cabinet, but there are four other dimensions (roughly similar to the ones presented below) which are substitutable but still necessary for the fulfillment of a shared agenda among the president and his coalition partners.

<sup>191</sup> Meireles (2024) finds that Brazilian parties extract more discretionary central government transfers to subnational governments headed by their members, as compared to other parties, when another fellow party member occupies the corresponding cabinet ministry. This effect is found pervasive across administrations, and is only slightly greater when the party in question is the one the president himself belongs to.

<sup>192</sup> Not that there are not differences in the way such appointment powers are employed by presidents and perceived by legislators, as Chaisty, Cheeseman and Power (2018, Ch. 6) qualitatively describe, including the differences in each portfolio’s relative importance (Oppermann & Brummer, 2020). However, such differences are basically understood as much less pronounced than those between the cabinet appointment “tool” and other tools; countries (and presidential strategies within them) differ basically in the degree of usage of each different tool, and in the substitutability between them (that view of a somewhat homogeneous kind of coalition resource in the hands of presidents is explicit in the modelling by Raile, Pereira and Power, 2010, and Araújo, Pereira and Raile, 2010, 2008). As for the relevance assigned by Negretto (2006a) to extreme cases of cabinet appointment usage in interbranch strife, his main focus lies on the United States (conceptually excluded from our scope) and on Ecuador (which, circumstantially, is excluded from our sample for empirical reasons).

have some degree of parliamentary censure powers over ministers, while none has the previous requirement of legislative approval for nominations (Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo - PNUD, 2004, p. 74<sup>193</sup>). This clearly contrasts with Araújo, Silva and Vieira (2016), who see a continuum of “presidential dominance over cabinets” in Latin American polities, ranging from an almost “collegial” decision-making in cabinet (specially in Bolivia and Argentina) to a more “hierarchical” relationship between presidents and ministers in most other countries. However, we stick to our deselection choice, for several reasons. One, because while the formal constitutional features compiled in their index<sup>194</sup> may, indeed, raise somehow the political costs of controlling the cabinet, they end up overwhelmed by the appointment and removal powers<sup>195</sup>, who are indeed much more homogeneous<sup>196</sup>. Two, because we couldn’t find any mention, in the literature, as to the actual effects of alleged<sup>197</sup> formal restrictions on such appointment and removal powers over the

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<sup>193</sup> Sáez, Montero and Lopez (2005, p. 153-154 and 159-163) tally 13 parliaments in the subcontinent as having some capacity to issue censure motions on ministers. However only in two among them (Peru and Uruguay) such censure can bring the eventual mandatory removal of the involved minister - which can always be replaced by the president by someone else chosen by him again. Camerlo and Martínez-Gallardo (2017, p. 42) point to restrictions in appointment powers only in the United States and Uruguay, while “[i]n most cases, however, presidents can dismiss ministers at will.”

<sup>194</sup> Namely, the set of rules that limits or increases the presidential autonomy to dismiss cabinet ministers; any institutional rule that limits presidential power to appoint ministers; restrictions on eligibility for the cabinet offices; the requirement of a ministerial counter-signature for executive decisions; whether ministers have some legislative prerogative or not.

<sup>195</sup> That is, while a minister has, say, the capacity to veto a decision that requires his counter-signature, the presidential power to remove him or her and appoint someone else overcomes, in last instance, such power, although that may impose political costs. Even when removal powers are shared with the assembly, presidential nomination powers may render them insufficient to curb executive independence, since an impeached minister can be replaced by a new nominee.

<sup>196</sup> Negretto (2013, pp. 36-40) sees Latin American constitutions as evolving towards more “political control of cabinets by Congress”, a feature of power-sharing among branches. However, when measuring the presumed effects of such control, it scores among several other “government non-legislative” (e.g. basically appointment) powers in a composite index, and its actual metrics are congressional powers of summoning ministers for interpellating them (which is already considered, albeit implicitly, in our parliamentary oversight measurement) and several aspects of congressional powers to censure (and occasionally remove) individual ministers, something that will be discussed in the following lines.

<sup>197</sup> We say “alleged” since some of their empirical assertions over nomination powers seem not to be correct at all: they mention absence or restriction of appointment powers in cases where the respective constitutions do not assign those powers to anyone else than the president, as in Argentina (“*Artículo 99. El Presidente de la Nación tiene las siguientes atribuciones: [...] 7. [...] por sí solo nombra y remueve al jefe de gabinete de ministros y a los demás ministros del despacho, los oficiales de su secretaría, los agentes consulares y los empleados cuyo nombramiento no está reglado de otra forma por esta Constitución.*” – ARGENTINA, 1999) and Bolivia (“*Artículo 172. Son atribuciones de la Presidenta o del Presidente del Estado, además de las que establece esta Constitución y la ley: [...] 22. Designar a las Ministras y a los Ministros de Estado, respetando el carácter plurinacional y la equidad de género en la composición del gabinete ministerial.*” – BOLIVIA, 2019).

overall balance of power between presidents and legislatures. Indeed, contemporary description of the experience with such powers points to them causing significant political effects only in Ecuador, with all others being only latent at most (Payne & Zovatto & Florez & Zavala, 2007, pp. 92-95)<sup>198</sup>.

Third, appointment powers are not the best causal conditions because our empirical universe encompasses precisely minority governments, that is, those cases where the president hasn't been willing (or able) to use them as his or her main thrust towards majority support. So, cabinet appointment powers must be seen by us as institutional backgrounds for our causal analysis: subject, of course, to contingent presidential strategies in each instance, but not a condition per se.

Another relevant power might be the president's partisan powers, that is, the control they have over their own party members, including hierarchical, disciplinary and even harsher pressures (such as harassment of dissidents by party supporters). Together with the presidential party's size, those powers will determine the degree on which the president must rely on support from other coalition members or external supporters. Although very feeble discipline in his own backyard may be a severe weakening factor for any president<sup>199</sup>, there are strong analytical factors that recommend they be excluded from our causal model. As further discussed in the section below who deals with reconcilability of party goals, party discipline is not an assumption in our assessment: minority presidents may find fertile grounds for closing deals in a factionalized party system, where they hold a stronger hand due to their unified institutional capacities (Amorim Neto, 2006, p. 422). Besides, we're dealing with presidents who have already a minority share of seats under their belts, which decreases the main case for the centrality of party control on an analytical model (that is, the possibility of a hipermajoritarian party imposing by its own action the presidential will directly upon parliament, as in Mexico's PRI years or in Taiwan under Kuomintang dominance - Shugart & Haggard, 2001, p. 81). Moreover, the

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<sup>198</sup> In the same direction, Saiegh (2010A, p. 54): "*Given the difficulty of obtaining the majorities required for censure and the president's full discretion in naming a successor, this power has not been used to a significant extent in most countries.*" The other documented case of formal censure powers by the assembly is Uruguay; even there, such powers were very rarely exercised at all, and parliamentary pressure on ministers and presidents has found other ways such as interpellations, which are dealt with in another feature of our model (Chasquetti & Buquet & Cardarelo, 2013, p. 38). More recent overviews might possibly see some destabilizing effects of such features in Peru, but as one more factor in a bundle of instability factors in that country's politics in the last few years.

<sup>199</sup> We might recall the very recent predicaments of Alberto Fernández in the battle against the *kirschnerista* faction of his Peronist party in Argentina as a case in point.

party control variable would be strongly interlocked with electoral system variables (incentives to personal votes; reelection franchises; candidate selection mechanisms) who do not figure in our theoretical purview (Melo, 2009, p. 43; Saiegh, 2014, p. 500). As a consequence, that possible variable must also be dropped.

Quite a lot of other levers remain in the hands of presidents, though – that’s the idea of a “presidential toolbox”, seen by Chaisty, Cheeseman and Power (2018) as instruments of “coalition management”, that is, of rallying stable support on behalf of the president’s policies<sup>200</sup>. In the following sections, we’ll discuss three groups of such tools, later unifying them in a concept of “presidential powers”: “legislative”, “budgetary” and “informal exchange” powers. For the sake of clarity, we’ll present each subcomponent of each group individually, and a final section will explain their assemblage into one overall construct of “presidential power”.

### Legislative powers

The first instrument to be found in the toolbox regards the presidential legislative powers, that is, any formal legislative prerogative of the executive branch that enhances the president’s influence over the agenda of the elected assembly (Chaisty & Cheeseman & Power, 2018)<sup>201</sup>. These involve a very large array of different rules and instruments, of whom the main ones will be listed individually in the corresponding operationalization section (A.2.2) in Appendix 2.

Since the seminal work by Shugart and Carey (1992)<sup>202</sup>, legislative powers have been the focus of several studies regarding their policy influence (and, somehow less, their effects on coalition decisions), which is unsurprising, because they allow presidents to pursue many important political goals<sup>203</sup>. Chaisty, Cheeseman and

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<sup>200</sup> As exhaustively discussed all across the paper, we probe into them not as tools to build formal majority cabinet coalitions, but to rally stable legislative support for presidential initiatives. While our focus is exclusively on presidential coalition management, Field and Martin (2022b, p. 337) describe widespread usage of similar tools by parliamentary minority governments in several countries in order to rally and organize legislative support on behalf of their agendas.

<sup>201</sup> Some budget measures, as well as some procedures regarding the appointment of officials, involve decisional interaction with the legislature. However, those two specific domains will not be included here, the first one featuring a specific section and the second not considered in the model as exposed in the paragraphs immediately above.

<sup>202</sup> For a focused literature review on that specific relationship, see Montero (2009, pp. 29 *et seqs.*)

<sup>203</sup> Cox and Morgenstern (2001) present a broader typology of “presidential legislative strategies” according to the perceived attitude of parliamentarians towards presidential initiatives (“reactive”, “proactive”, etc.). We emphasize here the examples by Chaisty,

Power (2018) provide several examples where presidential powers were used to streamline the trustful implementation of previous within-coalition deals; to change or fine-tune executive bills to perceived strong preferences by floor coalitions, or adjusting them to yet unsolved intra-coalitional friction after the tabling of the bills<sup>204</sup>; buying time by blocking or retarding opposing measures, or by creating new "*faits accomplis*" in the hope to keep executive preferences afloat for a while until some time-dependent expectation realizes; or even to try to recompose some of the lost ground after significant defeats on the floor (usually out of intra-coalition conflicts). All those possibilities mean decisional leverage for the president in negotiating legislation piece by piece, as well as opening a strong avenue for the occasional parochial-oriented legislature to delegate to the president the authority on national policy issues (and the associated reputational costs for often unpopular measures)<sup>205</sup>. Compare that with the huge collective action problems faced by individual legislators and parliamentary groups in lawmaking, who usually face an uphill battle both to initiate and to respond to legislative initiatives (Morgenstern & Polga-Hecimovich, & Shair-Rosenfield 2013; Kriner & Schickler, 2016), and the salience for the president of legislative powers within the chambers' deliberative processes will be evident.

Besides all those interactions with parliament (that is, when presidential powers are used to influence within-parliament decisions and procedures)<sup>206</sup>, legislative powers have another very important potential effect: they provide some degree of unilateral action in lawmaking, either in response to time-sensitive demands

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Cheeseman and Power because they shed light precisely in the mechanisms by which legislative powers are employed to pursue those overarching strategies.

<sup>204</sup> Those two usages interact strongly with any "agenda cartel" strategy that the given president might be attempting (Chasquetti, 2013; Amorim Neto & Cox, & McCubbins, 2003; Freitas, 2013), specially when the cartel fails in the cabinet stage and bills go to parliament still as an object of intra-coalitional controversy. Under those circumstances, there may exist incentives for "defeated" coalition parties to try some unilateral attempts at reversing the final outcome of bills by their parliamentary parties (Inácio & Rezende, 2015), an obstacle that may be at least partially offset by the president through the usage of his legislative prerogatives. In a strong coalitional environment, presidential legislative powers can (and usually are) compounded by the coalition parties' joint agenda power in parliament, building an even stronger position for the coalition's agenda (Crisp & Shibber, 2014, p.633)

<sup>205</sup> The so-called "inefficient secret" model (Shugart & Carey, 1992; Negretto, 2004). Morgenstern, Negri and Pérez-Liñán (2008, pp. 173-174) develop that view, positing that constitutional designers in countries with weak and fragmented party systems have deliberately chosen stronger presidencies in order to free opposition legislators from direct responsibilities in national policy while simultaneously restricting their spending and policy powers as an attempt to prevent excessive spending.

<sup>206</sup> Our analysis is centered on Executive-Legislative relations, not including the possible interaction with other institutional players as the Judiciary in shaping and enforcing decisions enshrined into law, as found in Morgenstern & Polga-Hecimovich & Shair-Rosenfield (2013).

(such as dealing with emergencies and international, security, natural or economic crises), or in the risky (but empirically relevant) choice for unilateral enactment of some parts of the president's agenda (Carey & Shugart, 1998). Here, even if the decrees<sup>207</sup> are submitted to the legislature for ratification, they typically change the legislative *status quo* (and the corresponding reversionary state) immediately, which can change the balance of power around the bill in several occasions<sup>208</sup>. Regarding decree powers (unconditionally recognized in their importance - Amorim Neto, 2006, p. 421), there's a clear debate over the incentives they give presidents, whether to "go alone" and seek unilateral policy enactment (Amorim Neto, 1998, p.4) or to use them as facilitators of horizontal bargaining as coordinating mechanisms for intra-parliamentary decisions, still seeking to implement policy by legislative approval (Pereira, Power & Rennó, 2005). Following this line of reasoning, vetoes are also unilateral powers, since they directly affect legislation outcome (subject or not to later overriding by congress).

Unilateralism (usually combined with "paraconstitutional resources" such as direct appeals to the public for support – Riggs, 1988; Morgenstern & Polga-Hecimovich & Shair-Rosenfield, 2013, pp. 41-42) means the possibility of getting policy made in a fast and uncompromising way, giving presidents their preferred package immediately<sup>209</sup>, while risking loss of legitimacy<sup>210</sup>, as well as instability, since policies won't be embedded in formal statutes, and legislators weren't called into the decision process (Amorim Neto, 1998, 2006<sup>211</sup>). The overall trend in the literature is considering those unilateral powers as one more tool in the interbranch

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<sup>207</sup> Of course, "decree" is used here as the unilateral enactment of substantive decisions by the president. It does not involve "delegated" decree authority assigned to the president by parliament on an *ad hoc* basis (when used within the boundaries set by such explicit delegation), nor the duties of detailing and regulating the implementation of decisions already codified in statutes (Shugart & Carey, 1998; Montero, 2009, pp. 168).

<sup>208</sup> Negretto (2004, pp. 13-14) points to that prerogative as one of the relevant reasons in the presidential choice for minority coalitions, mentioning conclusions by Amorim Neto and Tafner (2002) and Amorim Neto (2002) showing a relationship between the use and existence of decree powers and coalition-making strategies. Shugart & Haggard (2001, p. 100) also state that decree powers' effectiveness is much more pronounced as coordinating devices for collaborative policymaking (citing examples such as Collor in Brazil and Yeltsin in Russia, which ended up badly when trying to go alone by force), while unilateral powers were effective only under a narrow range of circumstances.

<sup>209</sup> Something important in emergency circumstances, such as in economic crises (Amorim Neto, 2006, p. 420)

<sup>210</sup> Reeves and Rogowski (2022) find that American voters surveyed prefer that presidents implement their policies through legislation instead of any other unilateral measure, even if there's a risk of decision gridlock in Congress.

<sup>211</sup> Another risk is incompleteness: formal decree power may give cover to some of the policy measures deemed necessary, but not to others (Amorim Neto, 2006). Examples of unsuccessful unilateralism in US politics are available in Cox and Kernell (1991a, 1991b) and Ware (2001).

game, not solely a presidential attempt to impose his own will. Meireles (2016, pp. 20-31) finds that, empirically, presidents with strong legislative powers are more likely to form oversized coalitions (suggesting the possibility of those powers serving as coordination devices). Silva (2022) correlates higher institutional legislative powers by presidents to a higher share of cabinet portfolios held by his formateur party, suggesting that, under this situation, presidents will be less dependent on the legislature to legislate, so less in need to relinquish control of portfolios in order to get policies approved. Crisp and Shibber (2014, p. 640-641) present numerous relevant studies, besides the already mentioned Pereira, Power and Rennó (2005), showing the strategic usage of decree powers by presidents and legislators in their interaction patterns, instead of mutually excluding themselves from negotiation. However, they do open the possibility of occasional “going alone” presidential attempts (with all the risks and rewards they offer), besides the already mentioned strong impact on the negotiating dynamics under parliamentary procedures. For those reasons, they deserve to be operationally identified and pondered separately from the others.

### Budgetary powers

The next relevant presidential power relates to the budget. They’re mostly seen as a way to persuade legislators, as Kellam (2015a, p. 517) puts in simple terms:

When presidents control substantial material resources, including discretionary funds and budget appropriations, they have greater ability to entice cooperation in government (Amorim Neto and Santos, 2001; Mejía-Acosta and Polga-Hecimovich, 2011; Pereira and Mueller, 2004).

At stake here is the ability of presidents to decide on the delivery of resources to fund “pork goods”, that is, net benefits<sup>212</sup> that are perceived by voters as having been awarded by the intercession of a legislator or group of legislators<sup>213</sup>, and by that

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<sup>212</sup> “Net benefits” here means that the public’s perception is that the beneficiaries are not those who are directly paying for the accrued gains (which is the typical case when targeted expenditures are conceded to a region or sector out of a broader-based budget such as the national budget). Benefits that come with a perceptible direct price tag to recipients, instead of having diffuse costs (or otherwise obscured from taxpayers’ notice), can hardly be included in this concept.

<sup>213</sup> Classical pork in the literature is geographically targeted, “conferred on a specific geographical constituency small enough to allow a single congressman to be recognized as the benefactor” (Ellwood & Patashnick, 1993, p. 23). However, there may be broader allocations to special groups, such as regions, business interests or ethnic groups, who might be presented to

serving as a strong incentive for legislators to trade their floor votes for them<sup>214</sup>. A graphic description of the workings and impacts of such levers in the interbranch political games is provided for the Colombian case by Scartascini and Stein (2009, p 7):

For example, consider the case of the elimination of the “parliamentary slush funds” (*auxilios parlamentarios*) in Colombia in the 1990s. The budgetary rules in place before the 1991 constitution was ratified in Colombia allowed transfers to be made to lawmakers through parliamentary slush funds, which lawmakers could appropriate discretionally. Lawmakers could use these funds for projects with high political returns. These slush funds served as “tokens of exchange” when the president had to negotiate key votes with legislators. The constitutional elimination of these predetermined and transparent slush funds may have had the intention of increasing the efficiency of public spending, but their abolition took place in the context of a fragmented party system and a president with low partisan power. The continued need for the government to build coalitions gave rise to transfers that were not just less transparent, but also much greater in value, an undesirable result that was very different from the result anticipated<sup>215</sup>. This episode is also representative of another feature of budget processes that we will come back to later in this chapter: the fact that political actors do not always play by the written rules.

That’s a very powerful tool indeed<sup>216</sup>: as Chaisty, Cheeseman and Power (2018, ch. 8<sup>217</sup>) describe in detail, the delivery of pork under presidential control brings an immediate payoff to legislators, entails very little agency costs<sup>218</sup>, is very scalable in volume and adaptable to party, group or individual demands, and allows its recipients to benefit directly from cooperation with the president with less reputational exposure to presidential image<sup>219</sup>. In a word, pork disbursement is “coalition fine tuning” *par excellence*, available along the entire presidential term (although sometimes subjected to recurrent budgetary timetables). It must also be said

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the social-electoral basis of parties or factions as having been brought by them, just like an individual legislator claims a pork benefit to his or her district.

<sup>214</sup> For a broader literature review on the logic of pork bargaining as a way to rally legislators’ support, see Bittencourt (2019, pp. 28-33)

<sup>215</sup> “As a consequence, the average ‘assistance’ per law maker tripled in 1998 compared with the 1968–90 period”. (Filc & Scartascini, 2007, p. 177)

<sup>216</sup> Chaisty, Cheeseman and Power (2018) mention that, during the first years of his presidency, Putin kept a whole and stable parliamentary coalition majority in Russia based only on pork, with no cabinet sharing at all. Having the budget available to selectively disburse pork barrel allotments in exchange for policy support in votes is so relevant a power that even the powerful US Congress has been said to be being strongly affected by it, although its negotiation is controlled by party leaders acting on behalf of the presidential agenda (Evans, 2004).

<sup>217</sup> Among many other concrete and explicit examples on the presidential use of budgetary pork for bargains with legislators, see Filc and Scartasini (2004, pp. 13-14; 2007, p. 177) and Scartasini and Stein (2009, pp. 8-9).

<sup>218</sup> Raile, Pereira and Power (2010) conclude that presidents rationally prefer to share more cabinet posts with parties closer to their own policy preferences, and over-compensate more distant partners with pork, due to the smaller risks of agency loss from this instrument.

<sup>219</sup> Something important under unpopular or “lame duck” presidents.

that the leverage brought by budgetary powers does not depend on the “inefficient secret” assumption (Shugart and Carey, 1992, p. 167-205) of a president seeking nationwide public policy against particularistic parliamentarians (Santos

, 2003, p. 245; Amorim Neto & Santos, 2003, p. 662-663): presidents may have to design policies to contemplate partial interests in the negotiation with legislators, as well as use their budgetary powers to pursue their own particularistic interests (Shugart & Haggard, 2001, pp. 100-101).

Not less important is the fact that control over budgets can serve presidents also directly, by allowing them greater discretion to fund their own policy proposals, without having to deviate from their purposes to cater to legislators’ own policy or expenditure interests (Scartasini & Stein, 2006, p. 9). As Cheibub (2006) strongly emphasizes, presidents are directly held accountable by economic outcomes at the polls (since they’re clearly identified and selected by voters as the ones in charge, as opposed to prime ministers who often come to power out of deals among parties whose electoral support may stem from several other agendas); to deliver those results the way presidents seem fit, control over the budget is a crucial asset<sup>220</sup>.

By control over budget, or presidential budgetary powers, we mean here a range of institutional elements that determine control of public spending, which mutually interact, sometimes offsetting their individual effects, sometimes compounding them; those elements are spread along the steps of budget preparation and its approval by parliament, as well as its implementation (Scartasini & Stein 2009; Wehner, 2010). Those elements are listed in section A.2.2 in Appendix 2.

Most studies on budget institutions (including the ones who conceptualize and measure presidential and legislative control over the budget) have macro-fiscal outcomes, such as overall spending, deficits and debt levels, as their focus<sup>221</sup>. Here, we look at a subset of such institutions, those who tilt the balance of power in favor of the executive (or the legislature) on budget macro- and micro-outcomes.

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<sup>220</sup> Cheibub correlates this crucial role of the budget to surplus budget balances; however, his argument regarding the effects of control over budgets on presidential goals does not depend on the specific assumption that presidential policy objectives will be pursued (or achieved) only through conservative fiscal policies – that is, presidents may sometimes wish for budget authority not for generating surpluses, but precisely to spend more in their preferred expenditure packages, even if deficits arise.

<sup>221</sup> Remarkable in this literature are Alesina, Hausmann, Hommes and Stein, 1999; Alesina and Perotti, 1996; Hallerberg and Marier, 2004; a very comprehensive survey of such scholarship can be found in Wehner, 2010, p. 44

Three further clarifications are in order. First, studies usually translate the issue in terms of congressional (or legislative) control of budget; evidently, that's simply the specular image of presidential control, since the powers that one agent loses will be transferred to the other. Anyway, our recoding of some conditions will always reflect higher values to stronger presidential power vis-à-vis congressional ones, resulting in inverted scales when compared to the original sources. Moreover, control on "macro" budgetary features, such as spending levels, is necessarily interrelated with control on the "micro" allocation of resources such as pork disbursements, since the instruments to get the former will affect the latter (and, possibly, will be materially the same). Finally, for the sake of measuring presidential budgetary powers, president and legislature must be assumed as potentially independent agents, regardless of any numerical dominance in parliament by a disciplined presidential party that might give the president the reins to the budget process through his party as a conveyor belt even when congress formally holds the budget authority (as epitomized by some Mexican presidencies under the PRI described by Weldon, 2002): that's a contingent result, depending on parliamentary arithmetic, and cannot be considered an institutional system feature.

#### Informal exchange powers

One last presidential power to consider is the president's ability to dispense with a large array of particular material benefits for legislators which stem (directly or indirectly) from his actual executive authority (Chaisty & Cheeseman & Power, 2018, ch. 9). Those include: access to electoral resources (campaign finance and administrative assistance); favorable state treatment of allies' business interests (in the form of loans, contracts, tax breaks or exemption from due compliance); the awarding of lucrative or influential positions outside cabinet and first-level government hierarchies (such as appointments to parastatal companies or shareholder company boards)<sup>222</sup>; as well as plainly illicit forms of exchange (such as direct side

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<sup>222</sup> Siavelis (2018, p. 127, 131), quoting several other sources, includes legislators' "recommendations" to the president regarding patronage appointments in the whole public administration as a very important "informal influence" in Executive-Legislative negotiations in Chile. Velarde (2015, 2018a) argues that, in democratic multiparty Mexico, legislators' oversight of budgetary and policy execution (as well as the very ability of Congress to enforce the budgetary rules and decisions of its own making) is weakened or jeopardized by the impact of informal exchange offers by the executive agents (including food, pieces of clothing or money for distribution to constituents, or favourable treatment of individual constituents in getting public services such as access to hospital beds or medical treatments, or the privileged

payments)<sup>223</sup>. All of them are possible due to presidential influence over the collection and disbursements of resources and powers along the administration and the private entities who are dependent or strongly influenced by it<sup>224</sup>. All of them are all “informal”, in the sense that they’re not part of the official political system, are not regulated by the constitutional, legal or formal coalition documents<sup>225</sup>. When used systematically, however, this suite of resources can be a relevant “coalition tool”, even if many facets of them can’t be made public. In this sense, it’s plausible to think of them in terms of “informal institutions”, that is, “rules and procedures that are created, communicated, and enforced outside the officially sanctioned channels” and that, nevertheless, “shape how democratic institutions work” for they “reinforce, subvert, and sometimes even supersede formal rules, procedures, and organizations” (Helmke & Levitsky, 2006, pp. 1-2). There’s probably a correlation between strong formal presidential powers and the corresponding informal leverage over such exchange of favors, but the latter can’t be reduced to the former: on the contrary, informal exchange will tend to begin working where other resources (including customizable ones, like pork) stop; in the case of illicit favors (such as bribes and bid-rigging) they are, by definition, incompatible with the simultaneous exercise of formal powers.

They’re also basically targeted as individual favors to benefit MP’s or small factions, hardly perceptible (or claimable) as collective goods by any party – thus, serving as complementary tools for coalition management to be deployed *in tandem* with others in a wholesale strategy. However, their existence can’t be ignored in our model<sup>226</sup>: for one, several case studies describe specific “informal institutions”

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exemption to themselves from personal or corporate tax audits). Zubek (2022, p. 2540 mentions a Polish minority government that “[...] notoriously wooed opposition MPs with office payoffs, ranging from positions in state-owned enterprises, through parliamentary posts, to administrative posts at local level.”

<sup>223</sup> Some scholars model under that headings not only regulatory, policy or tax measures promoted by the executive within governmental discretion, but also directly illicit forms of exchange, such as direct payments to legislators (Pereira & Power & Raile, 2008, 2011; Calvo, 2014, pp. 206-207; Ponce, 2018, pp. 292-293) or a deliberately blind eye on the misuse of public resources by officeholders (Samuels, 2002).

<sup>224</sup> Including the sources for illicit payments, which wouldn’t be available from purely private sources unless those were forced to fund them by fear of government reprisals or expectation of government favors.

<sup>225</sup> Of course, formal presidential command over the state resources is the ultimate source for most of them. However, the discretionary deployment of such command to suit tailored bargains with politicians (instead of other, policy- or public-goods-oriented “ideal” criteria) is not formally inscribed in any law or regulation.

<sup>226</sup> Mello & Spektor (2018, p. 118-119) see those resources (appointments to state-owned companies and regulatory agencies with a grip on contract and regulation awarding) as

involving presidential administrative powers exchanged for coalitional stability or *ad hoc* congressional support in Latin America (Chaisty & Cheeseman & Power, 2018; Siavelis, 2006; Siavelis, 2018; Carey & Siavelis, 2006, Mejía-Acosta, 2006; Pereira & Power & Raile, 2011) or elsewhere as in Malawi (Patel, 2016) and post-Soviet Russia and Ukraine (Chaisty & Cheeseman & Power, 2018)<sup>227</sup>. Besides, as we're dealing with minority governments, any coalition resource that might be used in lieu of power sharing through cabinet nominations is even more important, since there's less of this starting point (i.e., cabinet posts) for presidential strategies.

### Composing the presidential powers condition

At last, with all disaggregated indicators laid out, we must merge them into a composite form of “presidential powers”. As Doyle (2020) extensively describes, the search for conceptualization and measurement of “executive powers” has been a strong focus of interest in the literature, still far from reaching consensus. For presidential systems, relatively more convergence has been established along the pioneering lines of Shugart and Carey (1992), but methodological debates are still pervasive (Metcalf, 2000) and a great many of proposed classifications can be found (see a compilation on Doyle, 2020, pp. 390-391). In a very wide landscape view, most frameworks admit to the multidimensional nature of such powers, roughly divided into “constitutional” or “entrenched” powers inscribed in formal legislation, partisan powers of command over party members in the legislature and the cabinet, and other behavioral practices that influence presidential grip on policy. Our indicators fall mostly within the “entrenched” division, which is compatible with such trends<sup>228</sup>, albeit some of them (“informal powers”, for instance) go beyond that. Most of all, we follow Doyle's advice (2020, p. 398) in “drawing upon the wide array of existing measures already out there”, while tailoring, as much as possible, the measures to the aspects of presidential power specified by the underlying theory (specifically, the

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unavoidable “pot sweetening” of coalition deals in search of legislative support in Brazil (without providing any empirical assessment, though)

<sup>227</sup> Anghel (2023) presents informal favours and corrupt offers as a possible factor in Romanian minority cabinet formation, although acknowledging that stating such connection as a causal one would require further studies.

<sup>228</sup> *The clear majority of studies focus on the formal constitutional powers of the president and so therefore, 'most of the unresolved debate in the literature focuses on which powers should be considered as defining features, rather than on a comprehensive approach to capturing the concept of executive strength'* (Fortin 2013: 92). (Doyle, 2020, p. 387)

“toolbox” notion by Chaisty & Cheeseman & Power, 2018). That adherence to previously drawn causal theories (who lay down clear causal links posited between each factor and president’s capacity to engage with legislators to capture their support), combined with a typological approach that takes into consideration multiple possible causal combinations, also withstand Fortin’s (2012) strong position against a unidimensional presidential power index built by mathematically aggregating or averaging individual factors<sup>229</sup>.

As for the possibility of year-to-year changes in the indexes, as compared to mostly static sources of formal constitutional power data (which provide results of one-off surveys), they’re a possible measurement error issue, to be mitigated by two factors. One is the relatively more stable nature of such rules as budgetary and legislative powers, since they have an institutionalized nature (Alesina & Hausmann & Hommes & Stein, 1999; Montero, 2009; Wehner, 2010)<sup>230</sup>. The other is the usage of every source available to our efforts, in order to cross-check the main repositories,

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<sup>229</sup> *Aggregation produces homogeneity claims, meaning that equal scores are substitutable or equivalent (Goertz, 2008: 110). But in reality, for presidential power indices, each score can be obtained through broad combinations of different powers, and should thus not be considered homogenous in terms of causal analyses. What also emerges from the present investigation is that when looking at individual indicators of presidential power separately, not all items hypothesized to capture the concept of presidential power seem to matter equally in accounting for composite scores. Conversely, not all potentially relevant items were tested. Moreover, even if we hypothesize that the concept of presidential power is unidimensional, which probably is not the case, some items might be too independent to warrant inclusion in a composite index. By introducing too much variance resulting from unrelated processes, the effects of core items are washed out in uninterpretable noise. It is perhaps more useful for some prerogatives to be examined separately than to use black-box composite measures that do not measure what they claim. (Fortin, 2012, pp. 107-108)*

<sup>230</sup> *Budgetary institutions are all the rules and regulations according to which budgets are drafted, approved and implemented. [...] However, budgetary institutions are relatively stable over time so that at least in the medium run measured in, say, up to a decade or more they can be considered fixed. Since it is costly and complex to change institutions, the existing ones have to be very unsatisfactory, before it is worth changing them; in other words, there is a strong ‘status quo’ bias in institutional reforms. If institutions are relatively costly to change, then they can be considered predetermined explanatory variables. (Alesina & Hausmann & Hommes & Stein, 1999, p. 256)*

*The fact that fundamental reform of parliamentary amendment powers is extremely rare suggests that they are very costly to change. Anecdotal evidence supports the argument that fiscal performance has to be extremely unsatisfactory in order to overcome the status quo bias of budget institutions (Stein et al. 1998: 21-5). This is also illustrated by the accounts of the reform of legislative budget institutions in the following chapter. In Sweden, the trigger was an unprecedented macroeconomic crisis, while South Africa’s redesign followed a fundamental regime change and even in these unique circumstances took more than a decade to negotiate. On balance, I conclude that the problems posed by the possibility of institutional endogeneity should not be exaggerated in this particular context. It is reasonable to treat legislative amendment powers as exogenous in at least the short to medium term (see also Alesina and Perotti 1996: 4). (Wehner, 2010, pp. 92-93)*

trying to capture occasional changes along time (according to the sources' collection and publication dates).

Given the methodological choices outlined above, our presidential powers index will be built on a particular interaction strategy among the different individual components presented in the previous subsections, grouping them into several combinations who make it possible to propose a typology of presidents according to their relative powers, who in turn will guide the assignment of fuzzy values to the “presidential powers” condition. This procedure also takes into account the accumulative (or sometimes substitutive) nature of such individual powers: they usually add up on behalf of presidents, but in some cases a number of individual powers can compensate for the absence of others. The first step will be to organize the individual components of presidential powers according to the mechanisms by which they affect the balance of powers between president and congress, that is, if they allow presidents to unilaterally implement decision and change the *status quo* (although potentially subject to some form of *ex post* ratification by parliament), and those who only change the relative bargaining position of presidents within the legislative decision-making process<sup>231</sup>. This is done in Table 9 below, whose contents are extracted from the operationalization results presented in sections A.2.2 to A.2.4 in Appendix 2.

Table 9 - Presidential powers - Individual components

UNILATERAL POWERS		EXCLUSIVELY BARGAINING POWERS	
LEGISLATIVE	Veto total powers	LEGISLATIVE	Exclusive initiative
LEGISLATIVE	Veto partial or line item powers	LEGISLATIVE	Agenda-setting in the floor – default procedure
LEGISLATIVE	Decree powers	LEGISLATIVE	Agenda-setting in the floor – requirements for overriding
BUDGET	Virement	LEGISLATIVE	Committee membership selection
BUDGET	budget “decree”	LEGISLATIVE	Direct recall of a bill to plenary vote
BUDGET	impoundment	LEGISLATIVE	Committee prerogatives on bills
		LEGISLATIVE	Presidential urgency requests
		LEGISLATIVE	Bicameral symmetry
		LEGISLATIVE	Resolution of disagreement between chambers
		LEGISLATIVE	Summons of extraordinary congressional sittings
		BUDGET	Reversionary state
		BUDGET	Amendment power
		INFORMAL	Informal exchange of favors

<sup>231</sup> We say “only”, because the first group or unilateral powers also strongly affect presidential bargaining powers in legislative decision-making processes.

The extensive discussion in the previous sections points to a special salience by the unilateral powers, since they allow both for direct presidential enactment (which is a very high-risk choice, generating either positive consequences or very negative downfalls) and strongly reinforce presidential bargaining power within parliament. So, those presidents who hold those powers to a considerable extent, besides strong levers in the other powers, might be considered the strongest between all. Correspondingly, a first category in our typology would include those very strong presidents: we propose that those who hold the highest possible value of membership (a fuzzy 1) in half or more of the unilateral powers (at least 3 out of 6) and hold positive<sup>232</sup> values in more than half (7 out of 13) of the others are the top category, followed by those who hold positive values in at least 3 unilateral and 7 bargaining components.

Then follows the category of presidents who do not hold all those unilateral powers but show strong bargaining powers (less than 3 unilateral positive values, but positive values in at least 7 bargaining ones<sup>233</sup>), being powerful negotiating players in parliament. Below that, the category of those who have positive unilateral powers (3 or more components) but not on bargaining powers (positive numbers in less than 7 components). This specific ordering of the two categories follows the theoretical findings pointing that the more relevant application of unilateral powers is to give an upper hand in negotiations rather than forcing lone action, so that a president whose incentives are only those for trying to go alone would be in a less favorable position than those who are expected to bargain with some weight in parliament.

In the lower strata are those who have some positive values for both kinds of powers (but not the majority in either of them), and those with definite negative membership in both. The precise specification to the typology is presented in the Table below, with the corresponding fuzzy value to the composite “presidential powers” condition.

*Table 10 - Presidential powers – Typology and composite condition’s values*

<b>ORDER</b>	<b>UNILATERAL POWERS</b>	<b>BARGAINING POWERS</b>	<b>Fuzzy value</b>
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<sup>232</sup> Fuzzy positive values, meaning a positive degree of membership (higher than 0,5).

<sup>233</sup> That might well be the Chilean case, as contrasted with the Brazilian one in Bittencourt (2016)

1	Highest possible value in at least 3	Positive values in at least 7	<b>1</b>
2	Positive values in at least 3	Positive values in at least 7	<b>0,75</b>
3	Less than 3 positive values	Positive values in at least 7	<b>0,33</b>
4	Positive values in at least 3	Less than 7 positive values	<b>0,33</b>
5	Less than 3 positive values	Less than 3 positive values	0

OBS: 1) Categories are not given qualitative names, being identified only by their ranking order;

2) “Values” mean the fuzzy values of each component, as specified in the previous sections; “positive” values mean numerical fuzzy values higher than 0,5

3) categories 3 and 4 yield the same fuzzy value because we found no reason to posit a substantive difference in the presidential powers compounded by them

4) “Fuzzy value” column means the fuzzy values assigned to the resulting composite “presidential powers” condition

Source: The author

### *Reconcilability of party goals*

A minority government needs to deal with parties: those in its own cabinet, those in outright opposition, and, crucially, those “support parties” who, not being in the government coalition, provide (regularly or on occasions) their votes for the executive’s agenda<sup>234</sup> (Field & Martin, 2022, p. 26). Some early influential models of government formation and maintenance in parliamentarism (classically represented by Riker, 1962, and Laver & Shepsle, 1991) rely on very restrictive assumptions regarding the motivation behind the choices by political parties as the main actors in the executive-legislative interaction. They are seen as exclusively policy-oriented unitary agents, whose payoff is only the grip on policy allowed by holding each cabinet portfolio<sup>235</sup>. After the bargain is struck, each cabinet has full control of policy outcomes, and each minister within it a very high degree of discretion over her own jurisdiction, while legislatures have nothing more than the ultimate check of breaking the government (that is, cabinets run the country subject only to the risk of a vote of no confidence)<sup>236</sup>. That approach has been put into question not only regarding the assumption of full and voluntary rendition of policy power within each portfolio to the party holding that office (Martin & Vanberg, 2004,

<sup>234</sup> And, in parliamentary systems, for the cabinet staying in office.

<sup>235</sup> Riker’s models of Minimum Winning Coalitions are specified in terms of office holding, but there’s no contradiction between this view and the understanding of it in terms of getting more powers to implement policy, and not only on direct office perks (Strøm, 1990, p. 34, calls it “the office-seeking or power-seeking assumption”)

<sup>236</sup> Such models are relevant to minority government, since that would be one possible equilibrium (when a divided opposition can’t agree on a new government, or – extending it to presidential settings as a metaphor – when the president remains in office but can’t pass legislation.

2014), but in terms of party goals themselves. More recent views have stressed that cabinet posts are far from being the only objective nurtured by the parties. In his seminal work on minority governments<sup>237</sup>, Kaare Strøm points that “political parties are not motivated solely by office (power) considerations, but also to a significant extent by opportunities for policy *influence*” (Strøm, 1990, p. 38<sup>238</sup>). And that’s not all: as already discussed in section 2.2, the literature has evolved to posit at least four dimensions in parties’ “objective functions”. Two of them are the fundamental motivations for being in politics at all: a) office (the ability to hold and command government portfolios, deployed along the twin lines of the corresponding benefits in terms both of power over policy and of other material perks stemming from the posts, as pork or patronage<sup>239</sup>); and b) policy (bringing government policy as close as possible to their own preferred features, which can be achieved either directly by ministerial powers, or indirectly through several other levers for influence<sup>240</sup>). The

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<sup>237</sup> "Virtually all research we are aware of on minority governments since 1990 has in one way or another built on Strøm's pioneering work". (Field & Martin, 2022a, p. 13

<sup>238</sup> The same author offers a more formalized analytical model covering some of his main conclusions on the issue (Strøm, 1997). However, the essential ideas and the core of his empirical analysis can be found in the more influential 1990 book, widely quoted in the literature covering minority government issues. Field and Martin (2022b, p. 336) stress that the several empirical case studies on parliamentary minority governments summarized by them “reaffirm the importance of distinct goals, including office, policy, and electoral” by support parties both for their willingness to play that role and for the types of support they offer and concessions they demand in return.

<sup>239</sup> Under this heading, the concept can be applied to any kind of electoral incentives that might be prevalent on any given country’s legislature and presidential areas:

*The participatory nomination procedures and single-seat districts in the United States drive legislators to “claim credit” for particularistic services to their constituents (see, for example, Shepsle 1986, Weingast 1984, and Weingast and Marshall 1988). If it is this type of credit that gets legislators reelected, then they will design their cameral rules to facilitate the provision of such services and their ability to claim credit for them. Presidents are held accountable for overall management of the economy and foreign affairs. Legislators, on the other hand, are held accountable to a large degree for distributive policies and pork-barrel rewards to their districts. The distinction between what legislative candidates and presidential candidates offer their voter-principals is significant in the United States, but the differences are even more stark in Latin America, where there is wide variation in legislative electoral incentives. Latin American electoral systems tend either to emphasize party even less than in the United States, as a result of easy access to the ballot and intraparty competition, or to centralize party control at the expense of individual legislators, as a result of tight control over access to the ballot and closed party-list systems (Carey and Shugart 1995; Shugart 2001). At the personal vote-seeking extreme, legislators have even less incentive to offer voters a commitment to a party and its national policy priorities than in the United States. At the party vote-seeking extreme, legislators are not individually accountable to their constituents at all. (Crisp & Botero, 2004, p. 335)*

<sup>240</sup> *Following Strøm (1990), parties can be either vote, office or policy seeking. We assume that parties are first and foremost policy-seeking actors. This is due to two reasons. First, policies are ‘the principal outcome of a political system’ (Tsebelis 2002: 6). Hence, influencing policies is at the very heart of the political process. Second, the fact that there are legislative support coalitions calls for the policy-seeking goal since we should not expect to see these sorts of coalitions if parties were mainly office seeking. (Kraus & Thürk, 2021, p. 5)*

last two are instrumental to the fundamental ones, and can be considered as potential driving forces under a dynamic perspective in time<sup>241</sup>: c) votes (the potential or expected support of voters in proximate elections); and d) party cohesion (required for the party's collective action, preventing internal fragmentation)<sup>242</sup>.

This is not only relevant for government formation, but to policymaking as well. The key point to our modelling is that the cultural and institutional environment under which policymaking occurs may allow more or less potential for reconciling those heterogeneous goals among parties. Such reconcilability of goals will allow presidents (crucially, but not exclusively, minority presidents<sup>243</sup>) to rally legislative support not only by handing out ministries, but by putting on the table every other possible factor who might entice the interest of potential partners in legislative coalitions. Deals can include multiple offers (along any of the four dimensions<sup>244</sup>), which multiplies the bargaining space and the odds that the president will end up with a package that induces parties to support his agenda and his decisions.

Under this framework, party discipline *per se* (essential to the original strict assumption of parties as unitary actors) is, oddly enough, not an expected condition for decisiveness in presidential systems. In parliamentary systems, Laver (1999) highlights theoretically the interlocking games of parliamentary leaders among themselves (in coalition formation and cabinet decision-making) and between them and their own parties' backbenchers: there are plenty of opportunities for party leaders to fail to enforce legislative discipline on behalf of collective cabinet positions

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<sup>241</sup> For instance, not holding office under an unpopular government in order to ensure a better share of votes in the following election.

<sup>242</sup> Field (2016) referring to the seminal work of Strøm and Müller (1999), who stress, precisely, "Policy, Office and Votes". The "cohesion" dimension is fully developed in Reniu (2011), which refers to Bergman (1995) as its original design (see also Aylott & Bergman, 2011). Multiple kinds of goals by parties are also stressed as possible causes for minority government formation by Field and Martin (2022, p. 21)

<sup>243</sup> Crucially because portfolio distribution is the theoretically expected "gold standard" for interested parties getting office benefits and increasing policy influence (for a brief review on that, Araújo & Freitas & Vieira, 2018, pp. 32-33), and minority governments by definition use less of that instrument.

<sup>244</sup> As already said, "cohesion" and, to a lesser extent, "votes" are more difficult to be directly deployed as a bargaining offer (except as openly expressed support for a party's electoral stances, which might be relevant when coming from a president enjoying high popularity). However, any party will probably consider how any explicit offer from the president reflects on those prospects. Strictly as far as the policy dimension is concerned, the emergence of new issue dimensions of party competition, such as the "libertarian-conservative" identitarian one, or the "center-periphery" one, make for the possibility of ample bargaining even if the presidential party is strongly centered on his main socio-economic policy agenda (Field & Martin, 2022a, pp. 13-14).

with which they<sup>245</sup> or their rank-and-file disagree, while coalition government keeps on as usual due to the fact that the issue is not enough to induce coalition partners to lose office by withdrawing from government<sup>246</sup>. Laver and Schofield (1990, p. 24) point out the delicate balancing act that parliamentary party leaders (and prospective ministers), inclined to policy compromises that may put them closer to going into government, must play with their parties' rank-and-file, more concerned with ideology and less with the spoils of office. Field and Martin (2022b, p. 338) summarize several examples in which intraparty politics led either to undermine or to shore up parliamentary minority governments, concluding that discipline per se can't be singled out as a necessary condition for their success.

In presidential settings, Amorim Neto (2006, p. 422; 1998, p. 7) refutes party discipline as a contributing factor for majority building in legislatures: in minority situations, weaker discipline helps presidents to co-opt legislators in non-presidential parties (while a disciplined oppositional majority can lead to deadlock). Indeed, if undisciplined parties make coalition support less predictable, they can make cross-party support-buying more likely<sup>247</sup>. Camerlino and Martínez-Gallardo (2017) ascertain that, in the absence of a parliamentarist-like vote of survival, party discipline tends to be lower, and the link between partisan ministers and their legislative parties much weaker. Besides, legislators are subjected to cross-pressures from other powerful influences beyond the Executive (their particular constituency interests, wealthy donors, party activists, other party elite members in charge of the candidate selection process); that is, the president is a powerful competing principal to legislators, but not the only one, and he may even face severe uncertainty in ascertaining precisely what the policy preferences of legislators are (Saiegh, 2009, p. 1345; Saiegh, 2014., p. 486; Carey, 2007, p. 106)<sup>248</sup>. Martínez-Gallardo and Schleiter (2015, p.6) see the potential

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<sup>245</sup> That's the case where a party's leaders disagree with a cabinet decision, but out of collective responsibility demand legislators' compliance, only to half-heartedly threaten dissidents with measures known or expected not to be enough to dissuade defections.

<sup>246</sup> Herzog and Benoit (2015) present a milder version to that movement: economic hardship (and the resulting austerity measures) generates tensions (expressed in verbal criticism, albeit not reflected in voting indiscipline) against major cabinet decisions even within solid majority coalitions in the disciplined Irish party system.

<sup>247</sup> Morgenstern, Negri and Pérez-Liñán (2008) see party fragmentation in Latin American as a force on behalf of presidential majority-building strategies, since it allows presidents to more easily co-opt ("divide and conquer") opposition legislators. This line of reasoning is analogous to our assessment of party discipline: the more divided are legislators (within or across parties), the easier it will be for the president to negotiate their support individually.

<sup>248</sup> Indeed, Carey (2007) finds that presidential parties show less voting unity than other major parties. Mustapic and Bieda (2018, pp. 225-226) remark that the more extreme right-wing policies of Menem in Argentina induced a strong rupture within the Peronist parliamentary party, causing some stealthy movements by officialist legislators to support – or not to obstruct

for an electoral disincentive for intraparty discipline: competing in separate elections, presidential and legislative candidates can campaign on and win election for different reasons, and even within different constituencies, which may split presidential parties internally. Morgenstern (2003, pp. 190-191) identifies different clusters of politicians as legislative “agents”<sup>249</sup> in Congress: parties and provincial legislative delegations in Argentina and Brazil, coalitions and parties in Chile, and parties and their factions in Uruguay. The same author finds that the less cohesive those agents, the more likely their member legislators cross the aisle to support legislative coalitions, which reduces the exchange ratio of concessions (such as ministerial posts) for votes in presidential attempts at rallying congressional support. In more general terms, Morgenstern points that there are no political or theoretical reasons to assume that the very same roles assigned by the conventional views to parties as a whole cannot be taken on by other groupings of legislators (factions, provincial delegations, coalition factions), according to the specific nature of the agency relationship they establish in their representative *personae*. This is not to be construed as an absolute or unconditional discharge of party discipline: Colomer (2005) shows on theoretical grounds that a complete abandonment of party discipline in congress would lead to the need of individual bargaining by the president with each legislator, abruptly raising transaction costs and the risks of inconsistent decision-making – a situation as extreme and dysfunctional as its opposite, the confrontation between two largely equivalent and highly disciplined blocs, the most probable candidate for gridlock. He identifies, instead, a large space in-between, both for two-party systems allowing for some considerable degree of indiscipline (attributed to the American system) and for multiparty systems with stronger internal discipline allowing for multiple possibilities for structured bargaining (which he correlates to Latin American polities<sup>250</sup>). That is, parties are not conceived as strictly unitary actors, but neither they are devoid of a

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- some oppositional oversight initiatives even facing the risks of retaliation by a very centralized political machine.

<sup>249</sup> Both in the sense of being perceived as such by voters when casting their ballots (a principal-agent perspective) and in the sense of being the groups that take the initiative and implement organized action in the legislatures.

<sup>250</sup> One possible example for this intermediate pattern of discipline is the operation of Uruguayan “fractions”, very cohesive and self-conscious clusters within the main parties (Chasquetti, 2018, pp. 167-168), whose feasibility stems from a specific feature in the electoral system (the “double simultaneous vote”, which allows party tickets – “*lemas*” - to divide into competitive fractions who even control candidate nominations – “*sub-lemas*” - while still summing up the votes for the party as a whole). Altman (2000) makes those fractions (instead of the parties they belong to) the very actors of his coalition-making theory – that is, his Uruguayan “coalitions” are made out of intraparty factions, instead of parties as a whole.

significant coordinating and aggregating role that gives material meaning to the support expectations underlying coalition agreements.

In sum, “[..] the extent to which political parties are unitary actors should be determined empirically rather than by assumption.” (Sieberer, 2011, p.733). That’s not saying parties will neglect the pursuit of cohesion or unity as a means to “for crafting a clear party image, cultivating support for party programs, and bolstering the party’s political power.” (Barnes & Jang, 2016, p. 302). Indeed, party discipline and cohesiveness may even be regarded as a possible influence on different policy outcomes between specific cases, as Eaton (2002a) suggests having happened in the fairly similar tax reform proposals attempted by Argentine and Philippine presidents in the early 90’s. In more general terms, Saiegh (2009, p. 1345) depicts as a reasonable assumption that party affiliation is a proxy to a legislator’s preference (so, most often, a majority among copartisans actually share preferences and voting behavior). The point here is that their success in reaching it is not a general requisite for the reconcilability of party goals in the presidential bargaining environment, nor for decisiveness at large<sup>251</sup>.

On a multilevel polity, this distribution of goals and priorities across dimensions for each party is compounded by different configurations along each dimension (i.e., a party can be moderately or partially policy-seeking in the national level and strongly office-seeking in the subnational arena<sup>252</sup>). However, we find no reason to posit that the reconcilability of party goals is any less important in unitary

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<sup>251</sup> Barnes and Jang (2016, p. 303), while focusing their research precisely on the issues of party unity, remind us that parties in a coalition (that is, those who joined the presidential administration) are exactly those who face less pressure to push their own party’s reputation and agenda, since the president himself has resources and incentives to pursue both reputational and policy objectives under an unified front (making it easy on the coalesced parties individually and on their legislators’ individual action); that’s the opposition, instead, who will face stricter pressures by their leaders to present a cohesive party unity, given that an opposition party’s leadership is the only agent with the means to promote its reputation.

<sup>252</sup> That’s the case Field (2016, 2022) claims for her main object of study, Spanish regional parties and their role in supporting minority governments by nationwide parties at the national level. Nikolenyi (2022) also emphasizes the somehow ambiguous role of regional parties in India regarding their participation in national governments, in spite of their ever-growing weight in national parliamentary dynamics. Godbout and Cochrane (2022) see a less ambiguous role of regional parties in allowing shifting legislative coalitions to strengthen Canadian national minority governments. It must be added that this kind of inter-level bargaining does not require strictly federalist rules for the polity - elected or appointed political posts in local communities suffice: in the *nec plus ultra* of unitary states, Rozenberg (2022, p. 174) explains that the French Communist Party were disinclined to join a coalition, acting instead as external support party to a minority Socialist government, among other reasons because “the Communist leaders had, at that time, local governments to take care of: they headed a number of cities and districts throughout the country and therefore were able to secure paid political positions for some of their members”.

states: the logical foundations for them to be a decisiveness condition in both unitary and federal states are absolutely the same. In this sense, the multilevel features may cause that condition to be empirically more frequent (as claimed by several studies quoted by Field & Martin, 2022, p. 24), but by no means logically distinct than in any other state structure. So, in conceptualizing this condition, we make no difference whatsoever between unitary or federal states.

So, we're left with an opportunity structure for presidents to initiate a game with parties in exchange for support to their policy agenda, which depends crucially on the potential party demands for each potential payoff<sup>253</sup>. This will not be a party system variable, that is, it can't depend on the individuality of party preference structures on any given circumstances. As the theoretical overview above shows, parties' goals are assumed to deploy along all four dimensions in different proportions at each moment in time (and those proportions may change in different moments) – that assumption gets even stronger under the perspective of the whole party system, which significantly raises the likelihood of different parties being available to trade in different dimensions, hence the number of possible bargains for the president, at any given time.

What's at stake here is the existence, at each moment in time, of environmental conditions who can make bargaining along each dimension more attractive to any party: when will the "votes" arena be more pronounced as a reason for accepting bargains, or when "policy" becomes more relevant? Given that the direct payoffs from being in cabinet are expected to be the same across any system, the differential factor will be whatever may affect parties' stance on the other dimensions. That's very similar to the main theoretical question posed by Strøm (1990) when asking why outside parties might persistently support a minority government in investiture and policymaking if they're not enjoying the direct benefits of cabinet membership. His answer involves the votes and policy dimensions. On one hand, the perceived electoral losses suffered by minor coalition partners in the following elections<sup>254</sup> and the expectation of gaining office in those same elections

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<sup>253</sup> As Araújo, Freitas and Vieira (2018) present it, the dynamics of coalition-making (and survival) in presidential systems (which is translated in parliamentary support for government) is dependent not only on presidential motives and calculations, but also on parties' incentives to join in.

<sup>254</sup> An empirical reality in the post-war Western European parliamentarism he studies, reiterated by Helms (2020), Salom (2003), Strøm, Muller and Smith (2010, p. 519), Anghel (2022, p. 94), Weeks (2022) and Thürk (2022). In presidential systems, Altman (2000, p. 261) points that, given the influence that the president's reputation has on voters' evaluations of government performance, "the president's coalition partners are less able to claim credible

makes cabinet sharing less attractive to many potential partners. How widely strongly this position holds among non-formateur parties depends basically on the perceived competitiveness of elections in a given country at a given time: if parties have little hope of surpassing the main coalition members for any reason<sup>255</sup>, they may be less discouraged from taking office; otherwise, their electoral bids in a competitive election induce their keeping away from joining cabinet even if they occasionally support the government.

Of course, non-government parties have also very strong motives to refuse cooperation on grounds of electoral immediate gains (“to eschew compromise and try to lay the blame for consequent policy failures on the other” – Goodin, 1996, p. 33<sup>256</sup>).

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credit for good government performance.” Alemán and Tsebelis (2011) finds these perceived losses in incentives to join and remain in coalition to be aggravated by the closeness to the next elections. Thesen (2015) finds that in Scandinavian parliamentarism the condition of external support party – as opposed to formal coalition membership - gives non-formateur party some hedge in vote losses, a strong degree of blame avoidance, and a considerable leeway in agenda-setting initiatives that suit their interests independently of the government’s. Martín, Tristán and Pereira (2023) point to one singular example of electoral success in regional elections by an external support party precisely because its opting out of cabinet membership prevented them from being identified by voters with a national party label (the regional formateur) which had become highly unpopular. Rozenberg (2022) mentions the French Communist Party’s belief that their role as minority partners in the 1981-1984 coalition cabinet (led by the Socialist Party under a Socialist president) caused a steep fall in their vote share (one of the reasons for the PCF to eschew taking part in a new Socialist coalition and to act as an external support party in the 1988-1993 Socialist minority governments).

<sup>255</sup> Strøm exemplifies this situation by Italy’s minor center-right parties, who felt little expectation of surpassing the Christian Democrats (for several idiosyncratic reasons) and, for that reason, were more than willing to join them as minor coalition partners even when the DC was just a plurality in parliament. Giannetti (2022) argues that this pattern changed radically after 1992, when changes in electoral rules, emergence of new issue dimensions relevant to the electorate (“structural instability of the policy space”, p. 218) and widespread judicial prosecution of prominent Christian Democrat leaders on corruption grounds made access to power a reasonable prospect to many new parties. From there on, new formateurs-to-be had to engage in very competitive coalition-making negotiations to assemble smaller parties’ votes in parliament, thus having to offer them real slices of cabinet power. This strengthening of smaller parties, thus, reduced the attractiveness of them being external supporters, which in turn acted as a significant factor in reducing the probability of of minority governments.

<sup>256</sup> Goodin’s example is the ferociously competitive bipartisan US politics, which reminds us that those non-cooperative motives are perfectly compatible with electoral competitiveness as discussed just above. Another example of such swinging electoral considerations to cooperate or not is given by Godbout and Høyland (2011a) and Goudbout and Cochrane (2022) when describing legislative voting in Canada during minority government tenures at the national level (although one of them, namely the fear of turning the government down on matters that might turn into non-confidence votes, out of fear of early elections for which the involved party is poorly positioned, is probably unrelated to presidential systems holding fixed-term mandates for both executive and legislative branches). Ganghof and Brauning (2006) mention the fact that non-cabinet parties may often see scarce credit-claiming opportunities for their support to government initiatives, as compared to the policy gains involved. Still another example is Nikolenyí’s (2010, pp. 88-89) description of smaller right- and left-wing parties’ outright refusal to coalesce or even cooperate with formerly dominant (and still pivotal) Congress Party in India after 1989, this time due to a strong and pervasive “anti-Congress Party” feeling generated by the previous decades under that party’s rule. Alemán and Tsebelis (2011, p. 14) also recall

Indeed, an “accommodating” position towards governmental agendas by oppositional parties shows strong empirical variance, and will require a balance of several factors to offset this first impulse of compromise refusal (Ganghof & Bräuninger, 2006; Mújica & Sánchez-Cuenca, 2006<sup>257</sup>). So, we must get back to Strøm (1990): cooperating outside the cabinet will be attractive only if the bargaining party can reach some influence on policy decisions, in order to reap either direct policy gains or changes in government decisions deemed more suitable to its electoral stances<sup>258</sup>, or both. This reasoning can also be applied to the support of “niche parties”, who are less interested on public office and more on influencing policies in their specific area of interest (Meguid, 2005, 2008), and within them for “ethno-regional parties” whose main interest is in transfers of policymaking resources to their regional spheres

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circumstances where parties may be more inclined to reject cabinet offers by a president: when the perceived costs of joining cabinet are higher than the corresponding gains in policy influence and office benefits (contexts such as an economic downturn or low approval ratings for the president). Zubek (2022) lays down several concrete instances of those circumstances through the chronicle of minority cabinet formation episodes along ten years (1997-2007) in Poland.

<sup>257</sup> Morgenstern (2003) points to several instances of relevant opposition support to major national policy initiatives in Argentina, Chile, Brazil and Uruguay. Here, one might wonder if sheer radicalism (a relevant factor in a polarized party system) would not influence opposition parties to an extreme permanent non-cooperation stance (either by refusing to join or support government or by being “opted-out” as pariahs by the other mainstream competitors – Weeks, 2002, for instance, gives examples for both in the Irish case). In this regard, we follow the synthesis that Field and Martin (2022, pp. 22-23) provide on the issue: radical parties can both self-exclude (or be excluded) from governing bargains, or they can be “mainstreamed”, and there are numerous examples for this in contemporary Europe. This heterogeneity discourages us to take polarization per se as a specific variable impacting party goal reconcilability.

<sup>258</sup> Araújo, Freitas and Vieira (2018) point out theoretically that any party who has some degree of policy interests (and sees no immediate prospects of gaining the presidency by open electoral opposition) will be strongly incentivized to join government coalitions if they have no or little chances of influencing policy outside the formulation and decision steps of policymaking within the executive. Helms (2020, p. 651-652) suggests that prospective leading parties (expecting to be the formateurs in parliamentary coalitions or to elect a president) will favor investments (education, health, infrastructure) with dispersed growth effects to appeal broadly to a large, heterogeneous pool of voters, while other minor parties might cater to more specific regional or sectoral clienteles in public spending. Mújica and Sánchez-Cuenca (2006, p. 89) recall another possibility in that, “by cooperating with government the opposition has a chance to influence government policies, thereby demonstrating to its voters that, despite its electoral defeat, voting for the party is not completely useless”. Fernandes (2022) argues that one important reason for the relative frequency and success of Portuguese minority cabinets, typically supported by the opposition parties without even formal written agreements, is the opportunity they provide to the delivery by the government of some important opposition electoral pledges (even if those opposition parties appear so extremely as leftist outsiders that their likelihood of joining any kind of government coalition seems null). Artés and Bustos (2008) describe how important the policy concessions, obtained by small regional parties in Spain (in exchange for support to the minority government at the national level), stand in those parties’ strategies, since they allow a degree of pledge fulfillment that they deem crucial to their ultimate electoral success.

(Anghel & Thurk, 2021<sup>259</sup>). In a minority situation, the odds of that factor being meaningful are even greater, since in most issues the government will need some outside support and, thus, is more likely to be willing to negotiate policy concessions (Christiansen & Damgaard, 2008). In this regard, Morgenstern, Negri and Pérez-Liñán (2008, p. 174-175) do find significant variance in the perception of Latin American opposition legislators on how much influence they feel having in the policy process (both in lawmaking and in budgetary allocation)<sup>260</sup>. Looking now to the other side of the aisle, some findings by Barnes and Jang (2016, p. 305-306) suggest that under a minority condition, “given that the reputation of the executive is already compromised, the opposition party members have less incentive to focus on party-oriented behavior aimed at damaging the incumbent’s popularity”, thus being more amenable to negotiate shared initiatives or policy compromises. All that is, evidently, a matter of degree: non-cabinet parties will stand between the two extremes of a typical Westminster bipartisan winner-takes-all exclusion from any influence and the full power sharing stemming from being in the cabinet<sup>261</sup>; that’s also a potential influence afforded by the environment that parties face, since in any given circumstances they may choose not to exert it<sup>262</sup>.

In sum, a given system will offer presidents a more favorable space for bargaining with parties along the votes and policy dimensions if it simultaneously shows electoral competitiveness and oppositional (or, more precisely, non-coalitional) policy influence, so as to give presidents the opportunity to make attractive policy offers to non-cabinet parties in exchange for support to the presidential agenda, and

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<sup>259</sup> The classical examples of such parties are, of course, in developed parliamentary democracies: regionalist parties in Spain (Field, 2016, 2022) and Canada (Godbout & Høyland, 2011a; Godbout & Cochrane, 2022) or Romanian parties sponsoring the interests of ethnic *Roma* or Hungarian populations (Anghel & Thurk, 2021; Anghel, 2022). However, one can’t rule out this perspective at least for the numerous indigenous parties, intra-party factions and movements all across Latin America (Martí i Puig, 2010). For a larger survey of “niche”, regional and ethno-regional parties in their relationship with minority governments, see Field and Martin (2022, p. 26).

<sup>260</sup> Their presentation of survey results distinguishes presidential supporters and opposition members’ responses, which do differ between them within the same country, but much more across countries (surveys were performed along the 1998-2001 period).

<sup>261</sup> *The higher the policy influence differential, the greater the power of the government vis-à-vis the opposition. The smaller the differential, the less of an advantage it is to be in office. The notion of a single system-specific measure of policy influence differential is of course a simplification of reality. [...] But we should think of the systemic policy influential differential as a summary measure of the expected marginal increase in policy influence potential of the typical party facing a decision whether or not to participate in government.* (Strøm, 1990, p. 42)

<sup>262</sup> *Note that the policy influence differential thus refers to a potential and not to the actual power exercised by parties in government or opposition. Even in systems where the opposition enjoys relatively generous opportunities for policy influence, some parties may deliberately or through incompetence fail to exploit them* (Strøm, 1990, p. 42)

to see them accepted by those same parties. In a way, that's the mirror-image of Strøm's rationale for minority governments forming in parliamentarism: if those bargains can be struck, prime ministers can arrange some support for their tenure without having to rally parties into the cabinet coalition. In presidential settings, and specially if one considers minority governments trying to reach policy decisiveness, tenure in presidential office is not at stake, but rallying support for presidential agendas definitely is.

Still on the conceptual point of view, our Latin American universe<sup>263</sup> requires consideration of another bargain dimension: direct benefits in terms of pork and other advantages to offer legislators. Those issues have already been extensively described in the "toolbox" approach in section 3.3.2, under the perspective of presidential capacity to offer them. However, presidential budgetary and informal exchange powers show basically the supply of such goods: without demand they would be irrelevant in any deal<sup>264</sup>. And demand, here, means a particularistic motivation in the party system, an important distinctive feature in any polity (Cox & McCubbins, 2001<sup>265</sup>; Chaisty & Power, 2018). Kellam (2015a, pp. 523-524) describes very clearly the logic of such party system feature:

These [particularistic] parties put their blocs of votes up for hire on presidents' initiatives in exchange for the pork, patronage and/or approval of local-oriented policies requested by their constituents. This makes them relatively cheap coalition partners in policy terms when presidents face programmatic disagreements with other parties. The result of particularistic party representation in the legislature is greater flexibility in presidents' choices of coalition partners and their governing strategies. The parties-for-hire argument identifies conditions that increase the likelihood that minority presidents will govern without forming majority cabinets and that shorten the lifespan of presidential cabinets.

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<sup>263</sup> But not only: Chaisty, Cheeseman and Power (2018) discuss the same features in several other presidential regimes in post-Soviet countries in Europe and Asia, as well as Sub-Saharan Africa. Anghel (2022) points them as relevant in minority arrangements in contemporary Romania.

<sup>264</sup> Santos (2003a) describes the last months of the Goulart government in Brazil (1963-64) as an example of party system who, despite having followed a highly particularistic behavior for decades, showed very little appetite for exchanging support for cabinet, patronage and pork, due to the extreme political polarization at that particular moment.

<sup>265</sup> Those authors (2001, pp. 36-38) associate such inclinations to electoral incentives for a personal vote (making it a rational strategy for reelection) and weak parties, and "weak parties mean that important collective goods go un- or undersupplied" (since individually legislators can't credibly claim credits for national public policies, they'll favor particularistic policies and services). The movement from non-particularistic to particularistic pattern was identified in Taiwan by Chen and Haggard (2001), while arguments regarding the pervasiveness of such transactions were made for Malawi (Patel, 2016) and Brazil (Mello & Spektor, 2018).

That is, when the party system presents strong party-voter linkages based on pork or patronage at large, as opposed to programmatic or universalistic-policy links, presidents can operate in a whole new dimension for bargains: exchanging policy support (in legislative votes) for such clientelistic goods such as pork, patronage or favors, regardless of sharing cabinet power or making major policy concessions<sup>266</sup>. In our reconciliation perspective, the party system doesn't need to be entirely composed of pork-seeking parties: it suffices that some relevant parties (or factions thereof) can be assessed through this channel, while others are strictly program-oriented in their political action. Programmatic, nationwide parties are much less inclined to lend support to a different presidential national policy agenda than particularistic ones, and the latter's existence increases the potential bargains available to the presidents. That's an explicit addition to the possibility of partial policy deals present in Strøm's original features of minority governments' management that began this section. In a way, that brings for the parties involved a subset of the classical "office" motive, that is, getting hold of some of the perks expected as a reward for holding high office (patronage at the lower administrative levels, awarding contracts and discretionary regulatory favors, handing out public money as grants and other outlays), without the need for occupying cabinet positions.

Mitchell (2001) suggests an alternative pattern for this possibility of particularistic benefits: in Ireland, the electoral system favors the election of independent (non-party-endorsed) candidates, who face strong electoral costs and get elected precisely for pledging differently from the mainstream parties' electoral platforms (whatever those might be). Those independent MP's were found much more likely to cooperate with the minority governments in exchange for mainly pork-based packages (and the deferral of any kind of election that might threaten their hard-won seats)<sup>267</sup>. Although that example (non-party-endorsed independent candidates) might be directly unobservable in Latin America, it represents a clear case for the logic of support rationales not based on policy but on individual particularistic payoffs. And, above all, it shows the analytical blueprint for the several possibilities of individual negotiation attempted by the president with legislators, circumventing

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<sup>266</sup> There's some degree of concessions in handling such particularistic goods, since they cost money after all, but appear to the president not as costly as to threaten their main policy goals. That's Shugart and Carey's (1992) "inefficient secret".

<sup>267</sup> Weeks (2022) suggests the same dynamics as being one of the key factors for the common occurrence of minority governments in Ireland.

parties altogether. That is, regardless of who sits at the table (either party leadership or individual legislators) to negotiate, the demand for pork and favors is to be considered a relevant factor. So, whether a given party system presents itself in the legislature as a centralized game whose dealers are party leaders or whips, or if negotiations are believed to be fragmented among the president and each individual legislator<sup>268</sup>, the logic is the same.

We will not focus here on the previous attempts made to find the probable causes of such demand for pork, usually involving centrifugal, constituency-centered electoral systems that promote incentives for legislators to cultivate a “personal vote” (Haggard & McCubbins, 2001; Cox & McCubbins, 2001; as a summary to that assessment in the literature, see Wehner, 2014) – whatever the underlying motives, what’s relevant to our purposes is that such demand exists. Nor such analytical endeavor should be seen as the consequence of expanding the model from parliamentary to presidential minority workings: we find no reason for particularistic parties or legislators not being present under parliamentarism<sup>269</sup>. In a Latin American background, however, where such general particularistic patterns have been already found as pervasive (Kellam, 2015a; Carey & Shugart, 1995), with extreme cases of clientelistic motives for major parties’ behavior (Ames, 2000; Levitsky, 2003) and claims about the relative weakening of programmatic party-voter linkages even in the most institutionalized party systems (Chile and Uruguay - Luna, 2008), we can’t leave aside the existence of significant particularistic motivation in the party system as a whole<sup>270</sup> as an independent factor in our assessment of a given country’s reconcilability of party goals.

### *Legislative support threshold*

Our literature review in section 2. 2 shows a remarkable finding by many scholars regarding minority presidentialism: the holding of a share of legislative seats

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<sup>268</sup> Those are the two opposite ways in which Figueiredo and Limongi (1999) and Ames (2000) portray Brazilian politics.

<sup>269</sup> Any occasional lack of empirical evidence of strong particularistic that might be found leaning in parliamentary case studies may instead reflect Strøm’s empirical universe of Western European democracies, whose party competition is essentially policy-driven and where even the “office” motive means basically the focus on the top cabinet decision-making powers to capture all of a government power share from above (Strøm & Müller, 1999).

<sup>270</sup> Again, not excluding the possibility of relevant policy- or ideology-centered parties existing within any such system.

beyond a certain threshold (although still a minoritarian one) by the president's party or coalition strongly affects presidential behavior. Chaisty & Power (2018) posit that presidents close to the majority share for their own party may opt to not incur in the agency loss involved in sharing cabinet posts and go on a single-party minority government, anticipating acceptable odds of surpassing the hurdles of gathering legislative support. Deheza (1998) shows that most post-electoral coalitions came from a presidential share of votes lower than 45%, a "critical minority threshold" beyond which governments might perceive the costs of getting outside support in such limited proportions as less onerous than the costs of sharing power with coalition partners; Albala et. al. (2023) also call coalitions with less than 45% of the legislature as "clearly in minority", as opposed to the "near-majority" cases above that threshold. Mustapic and Bieda (2018, p. 222) see in the literature a widespread tendency to consider presidents "almost-majoritarian" when they hold 45% of seats (which brings the possibility of getting support from *ad hoc* agreements with other parties, making such governments the "functional equivalents" to strictly majoritarian presidencies) Figueiredo, Canello and Vieira (2012) argue that most minority presidential governments hold beyond between 40% and 50% of lower house seats, and propose the same logic: the small amount of outside support to be conquered is found more interesting through other means than by adding partners to a cabinet coalition.

Those numbers concur, by the way, with Strøm's (1990, p. 62) finding that in his Western European post-war parliamentary democracies, "[t]he parliamentary basis of substantive minority governments<sup>271</sup> is on average only slightly above 40%". Cheibub, Przeworski and Saiegh (2004) also find that the holding between one third and one half of the seats by the formateur party decreases the frequency of coalitions, due to expected behavioral changes in the formateurs' expectations regarding the possibilities for advancing their agendas and the cost-benefit for expending cabinet nominations. Relying on the Indian case, Nikolenyi (2022) finds that "near-majority-sized" minority governments (those holding 40% or more of parliamentary seats) outperform more minoritarian ones and even single-party majorities in terms of duration and quantitative measures of legislative success; actually, their relative parliamentary size allowed for easy replacement of junior partners (both within the minority coalition and among the external support parties under a growingly

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<sup>271</sup> "Substantive" minority governments are, in Strøm's definition, those who haven't formal and binding support agreement with external parties amounting to a parliamentary majority seat share.

fragmented party system), keeping the government in place even when their partisan (and external support) composition suffered strong variance along the same mandate<sup>272</sup>. Negretto (2006a) suggests that a minority president having more than 40% of seats behind him and occupying a central location in the policy space enjoys the advantage of being indispensable to almost every successful vote in congress and, as such, being able to form shifting alliances to win legislative votes without a formal cabinet majority. Alemán and Tsebelis (2011, p. 17) classify the presidential support in congress, when equal or greater than 45 percent of seats in the lower chamber, as “strong”, meaning presidents with near majorities who tend to act as majority parties due to the supposed easiness with which they can find support among small parties and independents<sup>273</sup>. Godbout and Cochrane (2022, p. 161) exhibit the very frequent Canadian minority single-party governments as showcases for that mechanism: if their caucuses are big enough to be able to form a majority with each of the opposition parties they’ll surely be in a better position than if they needed to rely exclusively on one partner (or a given combination of partners) to pass legislation. Montero (2009, p. 72<sup>274</sup>) also labels as majoritarian any party or coalition which holds more than 45% of legislative seats. The same logic is applied by Jones and Whitaker (2022) to minority governments in the United Kingdom: their closeness to a numerical majority<sup>275</sup> means that they often need to procure support only from small, primarily policy-seeking parties (mainly regional-oriented ones), making it easier to reach external support agreement without too much compromise on major policy issues<sup>276</sup>. Summing up the results of their case studies in parliamentarism, Field and Martin (2022b, p. 328) make a more generalized point: “In countries with a dominant party and/or with two-party dominant systems in which one party wins a near majority, such strong parties appear to be well positioned to resist coalitions and instead govern

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<sup>272</sup> The same reliance on “almost winning” seat shares is recorded for minority federal governments in Australia, although without a precise numerical threshold, by Crowley and Hughes (2022).

<sup>273</sup> Since those parliamentarians have less clout in bargaining against the president, can be “bought” or “co-opted” more easily through other negotiating tools, and played off one another more frequently, all without requiring the politically expensive concession of cabinet seats by the president.

<sup>274</sup> Quoting similar criteria from Chasquetti (2008).

<sup>275</sup> Those authors do not establish a tentative numerical threshold of what means to be “close to a majority of seats” (p. 315).

<sup>276</sup> This near-majority condition also influences the effect of strong government agenda-powers: cabinet legislative proposals have precedence in the House of Commons’ business order, but that can be reversed by simple majority vote on the floor. If government support approaches the majority threshold, overriding government business’ tabling precedence would require a strongly unified and coordinated action by opposition parties.

alone in minority” – and such a configuration would render very unlikely for smaller parties to get more than a minimal share of government office, which makes joining a coalition even less attractive for them.

All those authors were dealing with coalition formation, that is, the presidential choices between forming a coalition or not, and on how large to make it. For our focus on policy decisions, however, these findings also shed a relevant light on the underlying issue: coalitional decisions are shaped by their seat shares because the perceived possibilities of building support in parliament are seen as also shaped by them. In other words, a smaller presidential formal share of votes is seen as an obstacle to his decision-making, which entitles it to consideration as a (negative) decisiveness condition. By doing that, we’ll not be acquiescing to the simplistic view to equate decisiveness with majority coalition-building, as we discussed in section 3.2.2; it’s only about acknowledging the potential effect that a very low share of seats may individually have in determining decisiveness (interacting with all the others). That’s why the holding of a legislative share of seats above this “critical threshold”<sup>277</sup> might be in itself a condition to be assessed (together with its negation) in our QCA model.

### 3.3.2 Accountability condition – legislative oversight

#### *Which legislative accountability dimension to track ?*

In sections 3.2.3 and 3.2.4, we presented the grounds for considering accountability through parliamentary actions an essential part among the drivers for good policy outcomes: without disregard for the idea of accountability as the result of a set of institutions, including elected and unelected ones (such as courts and audit offices), legislative oversight will be the most potentially affected (especially in the short-run) by our scope conditions of minority governments; besides, in a longer time span, the powers and resources of any other non-elected institutions will most probably be created and kept by legislative mandate; so, parliament’s position towards accountability will potentially shape the whole design of a country’s accountability framework.

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<sup>277</sup> Valuated at 40%, as explained in section A.2.6 in Appendix 2.

Since the “oversight function is hard to define and frame due to its multifaceted nature”, with multiple conceptualizations in the literature (Griglio, 2020, p. 56), we must now lay down precisely what can be taken as parliamentary accountability for the purposes of our analysis. Our approach will be based on Sieberer’s (2011) specification of a three-legged standing of the nature of parliamentary influence on policy<sup>278</sup>.

The first understanding for legislative accountability is the “making and breaking” of governments (Laver & Shepsle, 1996), considered the core power of otherwise relatively weak Westminster parliaments (Mitchell, 2001<sup>279</sup>). Under this view, parliaments would have one, and one only, ultimate role in controlling governments, that of pushing them out of power to be replaced by another cabinet<sup>280</sup>. Even in the parliamentary literature, this mechanism is strongly criticized as having a scarce empirical footprint due to several reasons that significantly compromise its effectiveness (Strøm & Muller & Smith, 2010; Cox & Weingast, 2018, p. 292, 296)). In presidentialism, evidently, the expectation of control by disposing of the executive wouldn’t be a reasonable assumption under any circumstances: here, executive removal<sup>281</sup> should be subject to very specific (and costly) legal requirements regarding previous presidential misconducts and procedural rites (Field & Martin, 2022a, pp. 7-8; Hochstetler & Samuels, 2011, p. 131; Griglio, 2020, p. 31; Saez, Montero & Lopez, 2005, p. 163). Worst, the mishandling of such procedures on behalf of all kinds of partisan motives is always a strong risk (Llanos & Marsteintredet, 2023; Helmke, 2017; Siavelis, 2018). Whatever their underlying reasons, though, impeachments cannot but signal the occurrence of deep political instability who means precisely the opposite of good government results (Pérez-Liñan, 2009; Shugart & Haggard, 2001, p. 64; Hochstetler & Samuels, 2011).

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<sup>278</sup> For a long historical comparative overview to the issue, see Griglio (2020, chapter 2).

<sup>279</sup> For different shades of this “control by removal” interbranch relationship, see also Sáez, Montero and Lopez, (2005, pp. 136-137), Pennings (2003) and Griglio (2020, pp. 57-61)

<sup>280</sup> Not without some controversy, though, even in parliamentary systems: Griglio (2020, pp. 7-8) questions the apparent legal-logical paradoxes (and the multiple concrete political problems) embedded in the so-called “external” oversight of an executive branch by the very parliamentary majority who chose it and has the ultimate say over it. She ends up by emphasizing the extreme character of this sort of control *à outrance*, as compared to another, more frequent engagements aimed at influencing executive policy: “*Switching between these two conceptions, parliamentary oversight may either trigger legally binding sanctions to address governmental responsibility or act as a non-binding power that nonetheless may result in strong political commitments. Whereas the possibility to overthrow the government is the ultimate weapon in the Parliament’s armoury, soft oversight powers are at the very heart of legislative–executive daily interaction.*” (Griglio, 2020, p. 220).

<sup>281</sup> Impeachment of other authorities such as judges and supreme court justices (Palanza, 2005, and Hidalgo, 1997, for the Argentine case; Helmke, 2017, for the whole array of Latin American countries) is beyond our study’s purview.

The second possible understanding of parliamentary accountability might be the scrutiny devoted by legislators to lawmaking, by screening and debating government initiatives before they become laws and statutes. That would be entirely compatible with the accountability framework advanced above: indeed, parliamentary authoritative input on policy decisions fosters debate, opens channels for participation and information-gathering, serves both as oppositional and intra-coalitional monitoring resource (Strøm, Muller and Smith, 2010, p. 528), and reduces opportunities for abuse. However, as conceptually strong as it may be, using parliamentary influence in lawmaking as a benchmark for accountability has huge implementation problems. Measurement is one of them: most studies on executive-legislative balances still rely on old-style legislative success and dominance rates (Badillo, 2002; Strøm, 1990; Cheibub et al, 2004; Field 2016; Pereira, 2017; Montero, 2009), where legislative input can't be measured not even indirectly; others, even trying to gauge specifically the level of parliamentary scrutiny in decision-making, must resort to indirect measures such as the length of congressional decision-making process as proxies for the intensity of legislator's involvement on the decision (König & Lin, 2020; Martin & Vanberg, 2011; Sieberer, 2011; Hiroi & Rennó, 2014<sup>282</sup>). There are also conceptual risks: too much scrutiny might end as frictional interference or excessive veto pressure - after all, the legislature is precisely an institutional veto point. If taken to extremes, such role might engender precisely the gridlocked decision-making process that early presidentialism theories abhor - and there's no clear theoretical guidance as to exactly how much policy veto is excessive. Moreover, Mayhew (1991) warns that lawmaking is, to a certain extent, a reaction to (partially random) external circumstances<sup>283</sup> and to the different presidential policy agendas, which might induce researchers to assign a higher degree of activism to a legislature based on its reaction to more bills introduced to cope with particularly conflictive conjunctural settings or to convey a particularly ambitious presidential legislation programme. All those reasons actually preclude considering pre-legislative scrutiny as an adequate dimension for assessing parliamentary oversight.

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<sup>282</sup> A notable exception is found in Skazlic (2021), who employs an impressive number of metrics based in lawmaking procedural data. However, such complete array of data tools could only be used for comparative purposes on one issue who has very standardized procedures across parliaments due to the European Union rules. It's completely out of question, thus, for a cross-parliament comparison in non-standard, all-encompassing policy areas as we're brought to do here.

<sup>283</sup> "External" to the government, that is, they may be public opinion trends in favor of more governmental activism or more general factors such as wars and economic crises.

So, we must look at the third main thrust of strong parliamentary activity: oversight. Kriner and Schikler (2016)<sup>284</sup> point out from the experience of the all-powerful US Congress<sup>285</sup>, that oversight and investigations are the most relevant countervailing power available to congressmen to face the presidency, because oversight is both feasible and effective.

On the feasibility side, oversight appears as much more reachable than the traditional lawmaking role for individual parliamentarians. Indeed, legislators face an uphill battle when confronting presidents through legislation: strong collective action problems, heavy information asymmetries, harsh majority thresholds for lawmaking and veto overriding, and even the inability to overcome the occasional maneuver by the president to circumvent formal congressional powers such as budgetary authorizations during implementation<sup>286</sup>. Presently, this perception is far from being restricted to the United States congress; instead, this limitation of lawmaking effectiveness by legislators is seen as pervasive among democratic countries (Akirav, 2022; Griglio, 2020, p. 4). On the other hand, congresses can investigate even when they can't legislate: several investigations and other surveillance measures can be decided and enforced by committees, which are not necessarily subject to the same preferences and arithmetics than on the floor (Lemos (2005, p. 42)<sup>287</sup>; supermajorities are hardly required to deliberate on them, and bicameral assent is also very rare as a requirement (Mayhew, 1991<sup>288</sup>); as for incentives, investigations can be very salient for individual or party credit-claiming, much more than failed legislation attempts (Kriner & Schikler, 2016; Caro, 2003, p. 320; Waxman & Green, 2010).

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<sup>284</sup> Kriner and Schikler (2016) will be the essential methodological source for this whole section. Although their empirical research involves only oversight activities regarding wrongdoing, mismanagement and abuse, there's nothing in their inherent logic to prevent us from using them also for policy-related screening.

<sup>285</sup> There are, indeed, respectable warning against using US-based "parámetros de referencia y modelos conceptuales" to analyse Latin American legislatures (Ferraro, 2018), some few studies on Latin American parliamentary oversight (Velarde, 2018; Llanos and Mustapic, 2005; and Lemos and Power, 2013) seem quite pessimistic about its overall effectiveness. However, the lines of reasoning presented here do not depend on any institutional feature which is specific to US presidential settings. Moreover, studies on Latin American parliaments when exercising oversight still lag behind, in amount and coverage, those assigned to the other dimensions of their power, such as lawmaking and representation (Velarde, 2018, pp. 12-13; Siavelis, 2018, pp. 108-109), which creates another window of opportunity for flexing out extant models in another relevant political context.

<sup>286</sup> Besides, any president will probably hold a strong grip on a party, coalition or parliamentary group which holds a relevant share of the votes in committees and on the floor. For similar arguments on the uphill battle of legislators in pursuing lawmaking, see Ogul and Rockman (1990, p. 18-19), and Owens and Loomis (2006, pp. 267-269).

<sup>287</sup> Or even sometimes by their chairmen: Mayhew (1991) recalls that Joseph McCarthy led his high-octane far-right investigative purges under Democratic-controlled Congresses

<sup>288</sup> That means the possibility of full effects of minority condition on oversight when the president is not majoritarian in only one of the chambers (Christiansen & Damgaard, 2008, p. 54).

On the effectiveness dimension, oversight can be very impactful (Arter, 2006, pp. 469-470; Benton & Russel, 2013; Griglio, 2020, pp. 105-111). Legislative scrutiny can raise the salience of some issues (mainly by short-circuiting their access to broader public awareness through media coverage), as well as erode presidential public support by sustained criticism or simply by making known to the public facts or conducts that may themselves be conducive to unpopularity (Christiansen & Seeberg, 2016, p. 17; Helms, 2020, p. 653). Thus, investigative and oversight efforts can push presidential initiatives back, and even induce strategic behavior in dumping initiatives thought to be a target for congressional investigative thrust (Alemán & Tsebelis, 2011, p. 12). Even more important, those effects can be felt by presidents during the whole process of consideration of bills, forcing them to make policy concessions before or during legislative procedures, or to refrain from using unilateral devices such as vetoes – all of which allow legislators to intervene in the substantive core of policymaking. There may be direct impacts of oversight too (Griglio, 2020, pp. 53-54) Political responsibility pursued in parliament is exerted over the whole executive machinery, all the way down from the high-ranking executive heads to implementation bureaucrats, and follows a gradient of severity as to its consequences – both features acting as strong enticement for all executive agents to be directly responsive to oversight initiatives. Besides, “soft” enforcement mechanisms, such as public exposure<sup>289</sup> or negative publicity, will probably affect those agents as well in different degrees (Benton and Russel, 2013, pp. 788-789; Geddes, 2018).

Moreover, the range of objects for oversight is very wide: parliament does not need to self-restrain its watch to big scandals – on the contrary, knitting the small thread of daily government operations is also prone to unveiling relevant facts and adding to the system’s stronger policy review capability (Rennó & Lemos & Power, 2018, p. 349). In fact, although the most celebrated US-inspired theories on oversight centered on major misconduct investigations (Kriner & Schikler, 2016; Mayhew, 1991), combating malfeasance and corruption has itself a very strong impact on good policy results (Power & Taylor, 2011; Stapenhurst & Draman & Larson & Staddon, 2020, pp. 36-37, 47). Besides, pressing on any kind of issue through oversight may leverage legislators’ log-rolling in other, unrelated lawmaking initiatives, as well as generating information and policy expertise that become available to lawmaking

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<sup>289</sup> “Likewise one civil servant suggested that compared to committee reports and recommendations, the ‘much bigger influence is the fear of having to appear in front of them.’” (Benton & Russel, 2013, p. 792).

activities (Sanders, Lisi & Schonhardt-Bailey, 2017, pp. 3-4. Griglio, 2020, p. 89; Lemos, 2005a, p. 19)

A last argument on behalf of oversight as a marker for accountability is that, in minority governments, oversight was found to be particularly enhanced (Kriner & Schickler, 2016; Parker & Dull, 2009; Kriner & Schwartz's, 2008)<sup>290</sup>.

### *Which patterns of oversight, precisely?*

It's necessary to clearly state that, by oversight, we mean "police patrols", that is, when "at its own initiative, Congress examines a sample of executive agency activities, with the aim of detecting and remedying any violations of legislative goals and, by its surveillance, discouraging such violations" (McCubbins & Schwartz, 1984, p. 166). Crucially, those are deliberate actions (not merely hearing the result of others' actions defined by others' choices and priorities) based on legislative goals (mainly codified legislation, but not limited to it) as criteria for searching and evaluating any findings (Mustapic & Bieda, 2018, pp. 208-209).

That choice deliberately discards comparing congressional oversight through the "rules, procedures, and informal practices" triggering "fire alarms [...] that enable individual citizens and organized interest groups to examine administrative decisions [...], to charge executive agencies with violating congressional goals, and to seek remedies from agencies, courts, and Congress itself" (McCubbins & Schwartz, 1984, p. 166). No disputing McCubbins' and Schwartz's claims that fire alarms can be effective tools in modern governmental circumstances<sup>291</sup> (something also suggested by Ponce, 2018 for the Peruvian case, precisely to overcome legislative shortcomings in performing *ex post* oversight). Our two points here are of another nature. Operationally, measuring "fire alarms" would by any means be an unsurmountable challenge for a comparative study with any but the narrowest scope, for it would require conceptualizing what would be a "fire alarm footprint" across the whole spectrum of governmental activities, and then measuring them (Ogul & Rockman, 1990, p. 14). Conceptually, it would be misleading: we're looking at legislative

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<sup>290</sup> Even if considering the difference between the kind of "divided" chamber (with an oppositional majority), found in those studies, and multiparty minority governments (where the minority cabinet may face a divided chamber who doesn't necessarily is on the other side of the aisle), that raises the expectations for a more intense influence of such conditions on the dynamics of government in our sample of minority governments

<sup>291</sup> Although Lupia and McCubbins (1994), and Balla and Deering (2013, p. 29), softened some of those statements.

oversight activity, that is, that performed directly by congresses, as discussed in sections 3.2.3 and 3.2.4 above. To that end, typical fire alarm devices such as the creation of an administrative court for complainants or the enactment of tort legislation for citizens to seek redress directly at courts would be meaningless<sup>292</sup>. What's more, that subset of fire alarms directed at allowing interested parties to directly warn congress will probably result in direct congressional activities (such as hearings or investigations) which are, by their turn, police patrol ones (following West's, 2020, expression, fire alarms would be irrelevant if not followed by "firefighting" activities by Congress). Similarly, we're not proposing to consider the "informal" or "latent" kind of oversight that emerges from the indirect pressure that oversight activities (or the expectations thereof) exert on the bureaucracy (Ogul & Rockman, 1990; Lemos, 2005a), not out of denying their existence or relevance, but due to the conceptual unfeasibility of setting its boundaries (Lemos, 2005, p. 28).

Another necessary specification is that those "police patrols" cannot be evaluated merely by the formal availability of whatever oversight instrument (Berríos & Gamboa, 2006, p. 100), nor by the material availability of the capabilities to deploy them (Griglio, 2020, pp. 103-104). Instead, what must be tracked is their effective usage by parliament.<sup>293</sup> Having the resources is, obviously, a logical requirement to using them: however, actual usage depends on a specific parliamentary decision to do so<sup>294</sup>: between the set of formal powers and instruments available for oversight

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<sup>292</sup> Besides, as Siavelis (2018) argues - using Chile as an example - the "wires" connecting the alarm to any legislative response will strongly depend on country-specific social infrastructure (in the Chilean case, before 1973 a strong party system allowed for societal pressures to be inducted and acted upon by formal oversight institutions; since during the dictatorship most connections between parties, citizens and societal organizations were broken, after the 1990's democratization process the same alarm features were unable to provide effective action). The same reasoning applies to the usage of informal networks linking opposition parliamentarians and top bureaucrats to collect information and leverage formal oversight roles, as described by Chasquetti (2018) for the Uruguayan case. Such context-specific heterogeneity is hardly a good starting point to large-n comparative assessments.

<sup>293</sup> Choosing actual implementation in lieu of formal availability is seen as a less common approach in the literature (West, 2020, p. 2). Most studies on oversight (Stapenhurst et.al, 2020; Sáez & Montero & Lopez, 2005; Llanos & Nolte, 2006), including the one that is probably the most complete empirical survey of parliamentary oversight so far (Pellizzo & Stapenhurst, 2012), operationalize the concept of oversight capacity through the number of different oversight tools are available to each parliament (or are reportedly being used by them to some undefined extent), even if they recognize that the relationship between oversight capacity (measured in oversight tools available) and the effectiveness of oversight activity was something that must be put to hypothesizing and testing (Pellizzo & Stapenhurst, 2012, p. 88)

More recently, Stapenhurst introduced more sophisticated causal arguments around "enabling factors" of political and administrative nature in the oversight index-building (Stapenhurst & Jacobs & Eboutou, 2019, p. 124).

<sup>294</sup> And, as an intermediate step, a previous parliamentary decision to endow the legislative chambers with the organizational means necessary to it (Griglio, 2020, p. 103; Palanza & Scartascini & Tommasi, 2016; in a Mexican case study, Puente, 2020, pp.161-166).

and the actual oversight output, there's usually a wide gap (Bonvecchi, 2010; Pellizzo, 2008<sup>295</sup>; Figueiredo, 2003; Winzen, 2012; Alemán & Tsebelis, 2011; Melo, 2009; Arter, 2006, p. 477; Griglio, 2020, p. 14). That gap between formal power and actual relevance is strongly influenced by the incentives parliamentarians face in promoting oversight, in face of usually powerful presidents and party machines (Saiegh, 2010, p. 23; Thompson & Staddon, 2020; West, 2020; Pellizzo, 2008; Bonvecchi, 2010; Pellizzo & Stapenhurst, 2014; Griglio, 2020, p. 21). Those incentives may be sometimes very conducive to pursuing such initiatives (Kriner and Schikler, 2016; Lemos & Power, 2013) or may be overridden by other opposite interests (Figueiredo, 2003; Taylor-Robinson, 2010; Buzogány & Häsing, 2018; Velarde, 2015, 2018a). For our enquiry into the consequences of oversight on government policy results, whatever reasons for the oversight potential not to be put into effect are irrelevant: if the legislature didn't control, any effect would stem from this very absence, regardless of what has caused it

As for actual operationalization, severe empirical difficulties discussed at large in section A.4.2.8 in Appendix 2 prevented us from being able to use empirical tallies on the amount of oversight activities performed as an operationalization for the intensity of legislative oversight. So, we should divert to other, more indirect means of gauging the actual oversight achieved by parliaments. One possible way to find this is by hearing how relevant stakeholders outside legislatures perceive the effects of this oversight activity, since an actual effort by legislators in enabling and performing their oversight duties is at least a necessary condition for all those duties to happen (thus, to be perceivable by external stakeholders). In the words of Palanza, Scartascini and Tommasi (2016, pp. 15-16), societal perceptions of parliaments can be considered as relevant measures of their institutionalization and broader political effect: relevant political actors invest in the several dimensions of congressional institutionalization knowing that are they will profit from those investments only if these actors believe that Congress is a relevant arena for politics and for policymaking<sup>296</sup>.

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<sup>295</sup> Pellizzo mitigates somehow this statement, suggesting that sometimes strong oversight potential may preempt government action and allow parliaments to better focus their resources (arguments he attributes to Sartori), and sometimes too much exercise of low-intensity tools may dissimulate lack of actual impact under too much noise. Later on, however, Pellizzo and Stapenhurst (2014) concede that oversight capacity is not a significant determinant of the effectiveness with which oversight is actually performed, quoting several empirical studies who point out that the ability of legislatures to perform their oversight function has generally little to do with the range of formal powers they hold.

<sup>296</sup> Naturally, any surveys or polls used to that effect should be as much specific as possible in associating respondents' views to oversight dimensions of congressional activities in the sense we're assigning to that

There may be, of course, confounding factors that affect oversight activities' outcomes, no matter how intensely they are pursued, so as to render the strongest parliamentary efforts fruitless<sup>297</sup>, or to prevent oversight results to be known to society at large (both of which might negatively bias public perception against parliament as an agent of oversight). However, it's plausible to assume that, among legislatures which are willing and capable of performing their oversight duties and actually decide to do so, at least part of them will succeed in bringing those activities to fruition and in keeping concerned citizens informed about that.

We can even consider a methodological upside to using public perceptions regarding congresses' oversight effectiveness, helping offset some of its disadvantages. That strategy may capture the effects of "informal" means of engagement between parliamentarians and the administration, which may complement or even substitute for some formal oversight initiatives (Aberbach, 1990, pp. 131-132; Bezerra, 1999; Siavelis, 2018; Chasquetti, 2018<sup>298</sup>) but are not readily measured by counting formal instruments' usage. It may also incorporate some pass-through effects of "fire alarms" embedded by parliaments in legislation, to the extent that those warnings are used by parliamentarians to resonate and influence policy (including some very powerful resources such as mandated tabling in Congress of audit reports autonomously produced by independent audit offices).

### 3.3.3 What can't be considered yet

Some political and institutional features have been the object of scholarly attention and can be considered, in one way or another, potentially related to our main theme of minority government's policy results (at least in the sense that they affect coalition theories as a whole). Notwithstanding, we don't see how to connect those issues directly with our causal assessment. For full disclosure, we must briefly discuss in this section the reasons behind each such decision.

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expression in our research. That rules out many of the relevant surveys regarding "trust in parliament" and similar objects that encompass in one broad perception the whole portfolio of congressional roles and activities, so as to avoid the "halo" effect" that the multifarious domains of legislatures' actions ("voice", representation and legitimacy-building; lawmaking decision-sharing; assent to government nominations) may have in respondents' appreciation. As shown in section A.4.2.8, the chosen source of opinion surveys does comply with those requirements.

<sup>297</sup> Such as short-term alliances by the executive and judiciary in collusion to obstruct parliamentary oversight initiatives by means of judicial injunctions based on procedural grounds.

<sup>298</sup> Those last two authors refer to rather institutionalized links between parliamentary parties and executive authorities by way of appointment negotiations.

The first relevant theme is congruence between cabinet and congress, an instance of positional theories (that is, taking governmental and parliamentary parties' policy preferences as a causal factor), which have had a considerable influence in the study of minority governments, especially because of the flexibility attributes they posit for their negotiations. The general argument is that a minority government can choose between more bargain options due to more legislative coalitions available for ad hoc alliances according to each issue at hand, increasing the odds of finding a deal which is closer to their desired preferences than the *statu quo* - specially if those governments are formed by pivotal, relatively large and centrally-located parties (Laver & Shepsle, 1996; Green-Pedersen & Thomsen, 2005 p. 156; Thürk, 2022, p. 5; Negretto, 2004, p. 4; Field & Martin, 2022, p. 22; Godbout & Cochrane, 2022; Klüver & Zubek, 2018, pp. 722-723; Field, 2022, p. 124; Giannetti, 2022; König & Lin. 2020; Nikolenyi, 2022, 2010, p. 88; Sridharan, 2012)<sup>299</sup>,<sup>300</sup>.

Pereira, Bertholini and Melo (2022)<sup>301</sup> reconceptualize positional models in multiparty presidentialism as the congruence between the median ideological preference of the presidential coalition and the median ideological preference of the whole congress<sup>302</sup>. In other words, designing a coalition to raise congruence with

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<sup>299</sup> It's true that such general pattern may be enfeebled by political polarization, which restricts the several identified levers for positional bargaining by minority governments (Thürk, 2022, p. 17; Chaisty & Cheeseman & Power, 2020, p. 425; Field & Martin, 2022, p. 22; Amorim Neto, 2006, p. 435). Nevertheless, the possibility of variable-geometry bargains is found to exist even in such restricted conditions (Matthieß, 2018; Ganghof, 2012, p. 657).

<sup>300</sup> This kind of argument resembles an emerging feature in the analysis of parliamentary minority governments, the so-called "bloc parliamentarism" (Green-Pedersen & Thomsen, 2005; Fitzmaurice, 2001; Narud & Strøm, 2011, pp. 71, Arter, 2016; Anghel, 2022, p. 94; Aylott & Bergman, 2011; Nikolenyi, 2010, p. 88-89), that is, when a minority government has on its side of the left-right spectrum enough non-cabinet parties to form a majority in favor of his proposals (or at least a good many of them) due to the fact that such proposals are, anyway, closer those other "bloc" members than any *statu quo* that might be on the other side of the spectrum (circumstances which generate strong incentives to both government and opposition parties to negotiate on a systematic basis). This particular strategy, however, requires some contingent parliamentary and party system features to be successful (Elgie, 2001a, pp. 214-215; Green-Pedersen & Thomsen, 2005; Thürk, 2022, p. 17; Fernandes, 2022; Christiansen & Damgaard, 2008, p. 56-62; Fitzmaurice, 2001; Ganghof & Eppner & Stecker & Heeß & Schukraft, 2019

<sup>301</sup> A previous, somewhat extended version of that paper is available at Pereira, Melo and Bertholini (2018).

<sup>302</sup> It's clearly distinguished from the highly regarded concept of "coalescence" (Amorim Neto, 1998, 2006, 2019), which compares the share of portfolios held by parties in a coalition (weighed or not by the importance of each portfolio, typically measured by the share of the budget it controls) with their respective share of legislative seats (for a discussion of the theoretical antecedents to this concept, see Couto and Albala, 2023, pp. 8-15). Those concepts are made for different purposes: coalescence is essentially an intra-coalitional tool,

congressional preferences is another way to institutionalize policy concessions. Those authors claim that such congruence is, in executive-legislative negotiations, as important as the presidential coalition size in seat shares, its partisan cohesiveness or the executive's formal powers (constitutional, budgetary and agenda-setting), and significantly explains (when regressing for the Brazilian case) both the legislative success (number of bills approved)<sup>303</sup> and the costs (in terms of the volume of pork disbursed and the number of cabinet posts assigned to coalition parties), as well as the probability of initiation of highly contentious parliamentary enquiry procedures. Empirically, Pereira and Bertholini (2019, p. 326) claim that, from 1990 to 2019, most Latin American presidents have been able to keep the preferences of their coalitions very close to the preferences of the floor (except for a few very deviant cases)<sup>304</sup>. It's clear that such congruence cannot be the only instrument in presidential hands; after all, too much drift towards a distant congress may lead presidents, in practice, to policy abdication (Pereira & Bertholini & Melo, 2022) or "policy switch" (Stokes, 2001). However, whatever *rapprochement* he may find acceptable raises the probabilities of enacting his actually proposed policies. Such possibility unlocks many bargaining possibilities and prevents a high-risk "take it or leave it" strategy (while preserving the president's interests, in that whatever concession made must be acceptable to him)<sup>305</sup>. Any coalition congruence would be only the starting point to this process of influencing policy decisions, that is, generating the potential for the

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associated with the tightness or the coordination between those parties in the coalition (which, for a majority coalition, might be the main object of interest). Congruence, on the contrary, explicitly incorporates all parties in congress (including opposition ones, whose support is necessary in one way or another for policy enactment by minority governments), and is not limited to seat numbers (since they must be compounded by each party's position in the preference scales). The meaning of that word "congruence" here also differs from the one adopted by Borges, Thurgeon and Albala (2020, p. 3) as "the extent to which cabinet coalitions contains the same parties as pre-electoral coalitions" (which focuses on another phenomenon entirely.)

<sup>303</sup> This first variable is assessed only in the first paper (Pereira & Melo & Bertholini, 2018).

<sup>304</sup> The plausibility of that argument is sustained by its conceptual inception: in a multiparty system like the Brazilian one, presidents are elected by the median voter in the whole electorate, but legislators are chosen by clusters of voters which in turn have each their own median preference (Pereira, 2022; Pereira & Bertholini & Melo, 2022, p. 4). For sure, electoral incentives do affect it: party-controlled access to the ballot, as well as party-centered voting rules (as in Argentina - Jones, 1997; Eaton, 2002 - and Venezuela - Crisp, 1997), push strongly towards a forced alignment of legislators' voting position to their parties' centralized directives, presumed aligned with the presidential coalition's. The "double electorate" argument has more clout on more individually-oriented electoral systems, like in Colombia (Archer & Shugart, 1997) and Brazil (Ames, 2002; Carvalho, 2003);

<sup>305</sup> Some examples of successful policy *rapprochement* between presidents and congress are forwarded by Chasquetti (2013, p. 69) in the Uruguayan minority cabinets, Siavelis (2018, p. 127) for Chilean presidents right after the fall of the previous dictatorship (in order to prevent a much-feared backlash from the previous dictatorship's establishment), and for Latin America as a whole (Amorim Neto, 2006, p. 422; 1998, p. 7). Pérez-Liñán and Rodríguez-Raga (2009, p. 717) warn that many institutional variables usually considered relevant to policy change have different impacts according to the distances held by the president and the congressional majorities *vis-à-vis* the *status quo*.

sharing of power in exchange for more favorable legislative votes to the whole governmental policy package (a kind of “concession infrastructure” or suitable platform for policy negotiations).

Given this strong analytical thrust offered by the notion of congruence, why shouldn't it figure in our model? Basically, because its operationalization here would find very strong hurdles in terms both of method and data sources. Methodologically, the suggested measure of congruence in the literature<sup>306</sup> is the difference (both in nominal and in absolute values) between the average congress ideology and the average coalition ideology; its inputs are information on party ideology (that is, congress and coalition ideologies mean parties' ideology scores weighed by the party composition of each institution) and on party seat shares. That brings at least two big stalemates. First, in section 3.3.1 we clearly admitted to a certain degree of party indiscipline as consistent with the overall causal model. So, turning to parties now as the vectors to such fine-grained measure of collective policy preferences is a risky endeavour, since it would assume that there's a degree of cohesiveness or discipline in party members appointed to cabinet posts or holding parliamentary seats to such an extent that it actually predicts their members' preferences so as to be adequately recorded in congruence computations. The second caveat is how to incorporate in the ideology scoring the role of non-party or “independent” cabinet members, for those are chosen by the president for very clear and specific reasons (already discussed in depth in the corresponding passage in section 3.3.1), all of which reflect on the cabinet's overall policy position (Camerlo & Martínez-Gallardo, 2017, pp. 34-36; Camerlo & Pérez-Liñán, 2015). Since all those different and relevant motives are, by definition, independent of party affiliation, the cabinet's policy position estimate will be systematically biased if those members are discarded from the equation, or even if their position is proxied by one fixed rule (such as assuming they have the same policy position as the president's party). Finally, as for data sourcing, we couldn't find any source able to cover the expected range of our sample in country-years seems potentially covered by only one source<sup>307</sup>. Every repository has some methodological limitation preventing them being used to our purposes - given that, contrary to other factual variables such as parliaments' and cabinets'

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<sup>306</sup> See Pereira, Melo and Bertholini (2018); Pereira, Bertholini and Melo (2022); Pereira and Bertholini (2019). Meireles (2016) has a different operational measure of polarization in Congress and presidential distances to Congress.

<sup>307</sup> As explained in the last segment of section A.2.8 in Appendix 2

composition, ideological or policy position scales cannot simply be collated from several sources across different countries or years.

### *Pre-electoral coalition-building*

Pre-electoral coalitions are seen in the literature as influencing cabinet composition and enhancing the proportionality of portfolio allocations in government formations (Christiansen & Damgaard, 2008; Freudenreich, 2016; Peron, 2018; Borges, Thurgeon & Albala, 2018), the timing and duration of coalitions (Albala, 2020; Albala, Borges & Couto, 2023; Albala & Couto, 2023), cabinet size (Albala & Clerici & Olivares, 2023), the likelihood for forming minority governments (in India, as described by Nikolenyi, 2022) and the likelihood of parties joining the government (Albala & Borges, 2017; Borges & Thurgeon & Albala, 2020; Albala & Couto, 2023; Albala & Borges & Silva, 2024). All those very relevant consequences, however, belong in the specifically political domain, and we could find no explicit association of those consequences with any policy result<sup>308</sup>. Therefore, the issue did not seem relevant to our purposes.

### *Contract parliamentarism and formal support agreements*

“Contract parliamentarism” is another feature considered extremely relevant in recent minority studies in parliamentary regimes: minority governments enter into formal agreements with external support parties that make their joint action “so institutionalized that they come close to being majority governments” in legislative success and cabinet duration and stability (Bale & Bergman, 2006; Christiansen & Pedersen, 2014; Christiansen & Damgaard, 2008; Matthieß, 2018; Field & Martin, 2022, p. 25; Bäck & Hellström, 2022; Nikolenyi, 2022; Crowley & Hughes, 2022;

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<sup>308</sup> Some studies mention that, both for parliamentarism (Chiru, 2015) and presidentialism (Albala & Borges & Couto, 2023), pre-electoral bargaining brings the opportunity and the skills for more cooperation among associated parties during the campaign, which might entail better mutual understanding, loyalty and reliability once in government; their signalling effect potentially brings predictability to voters and outside agents (such as financial markets), which might also bring a more stable policy environment. Yet, all those factors, while potentially relevant for policy results, are causally developed and tested only for the sake of cabinet survival and the reasons for its demotion (as a proxy for intra-coalitional cooperation and reduced conflict). So, we don't find in those sensible arguments a wide enough theoretical reasoning to reliably connect pre-electoral coalition-making to good policy results.

Moury, 2013; Weeks, 2022; Cowley & Hughes, 2022). However important that might be, support agreements have been recorded only in parliamentary systems, and even not all of them (Field & Martin, 2022b, p. 334; Bale & Bergman, 2006; Field, 2016, 2022, pp. 110-111; Strøm, 2022, seems to be the only divergent claim on this regard), with no empirical record of presidential experiences that we could find<sup>309</sup>. Besides, any written agreement is only enforceable (therefore, credible) by the involved external supporters by voting down the delinquent government<sup>310</sup>, something which is quite meaningless in presidential systems (Kellam, 2015b). The main factors associated in the literature with formal minority government formation (that is, with formal support agreements) are “positive” rules for cabinet investiture, the existence of a large formateur party close to the majority threshold, and the availability of potential support parties whose core interests are ethno-regional in nature (Thurk & Krauss 2023). The first factor is exclusively a parliamentarist feature, and the other two are explicitly considered on their own by our modelling. For all those reasons, we don’t find empirical or analytical reasons for considering formal support agreements as a relevant causal factors in our Latin American presidential context.

#### *“Administrative decree” powers*

A detailed assessment of presidential powers (one of our decisiveness factors) might wish to incorporate not only “legislative decrees”, as described in section 3.3.1, but also those decrees of an administrative or regulatory nature, explicitly discarded by Montero (2009, p. 168). Indeed, that’s an important component of policymaking capacity, and they vary institutionally among Latin American countries. However, those kinds of policy instruments in Latin America are very scarcely touched by the

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<sup>309</sup> Albala and Couto (2023) point that “the conditions, terms, and contents of the coalition agreements (in terms of policy, office distribution, among others), and their ‘quality’ (detailed/vague, broad/narrow)” have never “received adequate attention from studies on presidential regimes, apart from a rare exception (Borges & Albala & Burtinik, 2017).” Even in that only quoted exception, the focus lies in agreements over candidate nominations, without further referral to any kind of post-election policy commonalities (Borges & Albala & Burtinik, 2017). That relative absence of coalition agreements in presidentialism becomes even more important theoretically given that studies in parliamentary systems suggest that “much of coalition ‘contracting’ is driven by path dependency. Once a certain set of governance institutions has evolved in a particular country, these institutions tend to get replicated in subsequent coalitions” (Strøm & Muller & Smith, 2010, p. 530). In other words, the less frequent they’ve been in the past for presidential governments, the less likely they’re to emerge now.

<sup>310</sup> Indeed, Bale and Bergman (2006) point to some specific prerequisites which are required to a successful deployment of such tools, and almost all of them involve in one way or another the cabinet’s investiture or demotion.

literature, both theoretically and empirically. The study which is possibly the first specific study of the issuance of unilateral actions by Latin American presidents executed through administrative decrees is seen by their own authors as exploratory (Inácio & Recch & Valencia, 2023, p. 102), far from advancing any theoretical finding besides the clear indication that this kind of tool is somehow relevant for presidential strategies. So, there's very little leverage, both in theory and in available data, for building the issue into a causal model.

### *Bicameralism and federalism*

Finally, two other major institutional features are currently in a formative moment to their research agenda regarding presidential governments: bicameralism and multilevel (federal) features of a polity (Couto & Soares & Livramento, 2021). Both are still facing very few sedimented causal hypotheses across that pioneering work (at least when compared to the other factors here included<sup>311</sup>). By no means we depict them as irrelevant in policymaking: for strong claims to the significance of bicameralism, see Vatter (2005); Ganghof (2012); Scartascini (2010, pp. 52-54); for the specific interaction of bicameralism and presidential minority status in each chamber, see Deheza, 1997, pp. 52-53). The point here is that they require further theory-building to be applicable as causal factors in our present assessment. Bicameralism has another caveat in its low variance in terms of chamber's relative balance of powers across Latin America (Neiva, 2008; Couto & Albala, 2023, p. 39; Saiegh, 2010A, pp. 51-52; Llanos & Nolte, 2003). That means very little probability of finding relevant differences among countries that can affect our causal reasoning in the scale of the other factors inserted in the truth table, at least between those who are bicameral<sup>312</sup>. The bicameral nature of so many among Latin American polities,

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<sup>311</sup> For a brief attempt at discussing how the literature is beginning to assess bicameralism as an explanatory factor in multiparty presidentialism, as well as a strong case for considering it when studying its governments' formation, duration and policymaking, see Couto and Albala (2023).

<sup>312</sup> Contrasting with studies in other contexts where second chambers vary largely in their relative powers, such as advanced democracies (Lijphart, 1999), or present outlier cases of the Senate having extremely singular decision-making procedures, as in the German Bundesrat (Sturm, 2001). Freudenreich (2016, p. 91) suggests that Latin American electoral systems are more likely to endow presidents with a majority in the upper chamber, which is clearly a distinctive effect of bicameralism; however, her object of study is the likelihood of cabinet formation patterns (including, potentially, minority ones). Since for us the president's minority condition is a scope condition, and cabinet nominations to form coalitions are a common starting point, this last caveat also does not apply to our considerations.

though, has not been overlooked: in all situations where the existence of a second chamber might affect a condition's operationalization, it has been taken into account as precisely as possible (that is, absolutely no variable has had the lower chamber imputed as the whole footprint of parliament in a bicameral country).

As for federalism, its huge influence on the possibilities for negotiation that are the core of minority governments' fate is indisputable (as we already pointed out in describing the frameworks in section 2.2, and in emphasizing its effect in multiplying opportunities for reconciliation of party goals – section 3.3.1). Subnational governments can also be an important sandbox for national parties to experiment and learn how to manage minority situations (Crowley and Hughes, 2022). Besides, individual legislators' incentives themselves are strongly affected by the existence of multilevel election tracks available, which reflects on their relationship to parties' leadership and whips in Congress (Micozzi, 2014). Federalist-minded analyses are even described as the recently introduced “fourth generation of coalition theories” (Albala & Reniu, 2018, p. 13), having to cope with huge heterogeneity in party system structures, electoral rules and intergovernmental relations, among other crucial cleavages. Possibly because of that, even in the most outstanding examples of research in the relationship between coalition government and federalism (see for instance Albala & Reniu, 2018; Field, 2016; Field & Martin, 2022, p. 19-24<sup>313</sup>), we haven't found attempts at generalization, but only in-depth countrywide studies. So, as much as it certainly has strong impact on possibly every national case, we haven't been able to select from the extant theories some general features to include in our comparative model<sup>314</sup>.

### 3.4 Emergency and enfeebled mandates – a contingent but unavoidable condition

Another contingent factor must be explicitly assessed, even when it's not specific to the theoretical background chosen: the role of exceptional circumstances - of a political nature – that might jeopardize policymaking efforts, overriding all the other factors. We refer here to occasional circumstances in which the executive might see its decisional capacity compromised regardless of any previously studied causal

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<sup>313</sup> For other country case studies touching the same subject, see Nikolenyi (2022), Godbout and Cochrane (2022) and Crowley and Hughes (2022).

<sup>314</sup> Although differences in the multilevel dimension stand as prime candidates for further explaining discrepancies that we may find at the country level, and a growing body of literature has been published on minority and other forms of government at the subnational level

condition. Those are the emergency moments where regularly elected presidents are replaced by caretaker authorities due to impeachments, resignation or other involuntary pressures<sup>315</sup>, as well as the specific condition of presidents in the last year of their full mandate. Methods for tracking those cases in our sample and the results are provided in the last tranche of section A.2.8 in Appendix 2.

In the former cases, literature on Latin American contemporary democracies (Hochstetler, 2006 2011; Llanos & Marsteintredet, 2010; Pérez-Liñan, 2009, 2014; Pérez-Liñán & Polga-Hecimovich, 2016) emphasizes the recurrence of presidential instability episodes in which tensions in the political system are so strong as to render impossible for elected presidents to remain in office, albeit this outcome is produced according to institutional procedures that follow legal strictures and do not represent (both formally and in practice) a breakdown in democratic regimes – which is reflected in the stability of their countries’ democracy scores well within the full democracy thresholds used for selecting our sample.

However, even if presidential replacement is provided according to previously existing rules and democratic institutions are not compromised, such episodes of “presidential breakdown” are manifestations of underlying political instability features that exact a heavy toll on governments’ policymaking capacity: they emerge from a combination, in varying proportions, of massive popular protests (which themselves originate from severe economic crises or deep disaffection with some aspect of presidential attitudes, such as corruption scandals) and elite infighting (manifested as press campaigns, unification of parliamentarians around extreme oppositional positions such as claiming impeachment, or high-profile court prosecutions against executive authorities). In such dire straits, regular political and economic activities are strongly affected either directly in political decisionmaking arenas (by closing down ordinary negotiating arenas within parliament for decision-making, or by inducing congressional blockage to policy measures on purely oppositional grounds) or in broader societal domains (through investment shirking, product seizures, and disruption of supply chains).

Those exceptional circumstances should not be automatically assumed for cases where a regularly elected vice-president steps in after his running mate’s unvoluntary ousting. However, in our sample, most one-year minority presidential mandates held by such successor authorities happened precisely under that stressful

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<sup>315</sup> Our sample has no instance of such replacements due to non-political causes such as health issues or natural deaths.

and destabilizing context: the cases of Bolivia's Carlos Mesa in 2004 (Klein, 2011, p. 287; Ballivián, 2006; Lehoucq, 2008., pp. 115-116; Arredondo, 2005, pp. 267-280; Centellas, 2007, pp. 256-286) and Peru's Martín Vizcarra in 2018 (Murakami, 2021, pp. 392-405; Dargent & Rousseau, 2022; Pastor, 2019, Llanos & Marsteintreded, 2023, pp. 26-28). Due to those case-specific, factual reasons, those two cases were considered as instances of emergency tenures such as the other interim authorities<sup>316</sup>.

A second circumstance that has similar effects on causal reasonings is the pre-electoral condition of a president in the last year of his regular mandate. Every coalition member but the presidential party (as well as every prospective outside supporter to the president) is expected to reappraise its position *vis-à-vis* the president when the elections come closer, defecting from the coalition in order to differentiate itself from the president (Chasquetti, 2006, pp. 171-172; Altman, 2000)<sup>317</sup>. This kind of calendar-induced coalition breaking is followed by increased legislative indiscipline and decisional gridlock (Chasquetti, 2006, pp. 171-172), which has no direct relationship with any of the previously discussed decisiveness and accountability motives. Even worse for our purposes, such formal defections might cover up another kind of "shadow coalition" other than the Ecuadorean case remarked in section A.2.9: pre-electoral moments when parties formally leave the cabinet for pure position-taking purposes (thus shaping a numerically minority cabinet) but remain committed to the presidential overall policy direction. In more general terms, Amorim Neto (1998) points to the time lapse between cabinet formation and the next election as a relevant variable for explaining cabinet membership, and Caicedo, Gutiérrez, Navia and Aburto (2024, p. 32) convey precedents in the literature showing that government bills have the lowest chance of success when introduced at the end of the presidential term.

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<sup>316</sup> The only other instance of a post-impeachment successor vice-president with a one-year term segment to be considered was Michel Temer in Brazil (2018), a case which might hardly be equated to the other two in terms of political instability. However, since it falls under the following category (presidents holding a one-year mandate segment in election year), its inclusion in that exceptional list does not depend on instability-based considerations.

<sup>317</sup> As pointed out in section 2.3.2, junior coalition partners are seen by the parliamentarist literature as paying a heavy toll in terms of electoral losses in the following elections. The other way round, that is, former opposition parties closing ranks with a highly popular president in order to navigate in coattail effects, is theoretically possible, but we found no precedent in the literature pointing to it. Indeed, Chasquetti (2006, pp. 173) claims that in presidential systems the electoral tailwinds from a well-regarded administration blow in the presidential party's sails, not in coalition partners'; unpopular presidents, on the other hand, strongly induce differentiation efforts, and those are epithomized by leaving the cabinet and denying support for the government in parliament.

Disregarding all those settings would bias our methodological usage of minority government as a scope condition, for the apparently minoritarian president (labelled as such by the metrics of cabinet-holding parties) would have the sustained support of its former coalition partners for the bulk of his policy measures<sup>318</sup>. In other words, a minoritarian government in its election year can have such attribute due to a contingent event not related to the actual dynamics of policymaking support (thus biasing the measurement parameter chosen for the minoritarian condition, which is party-affiliated cabinet membership, as described in section 2.1). It's worth noting that those effects are not exactly the traditional "lame duck" effect, that is, the presidential weakening due to the normative impossibility for him to seek reelection (Chasquetti, 2006, pp. 184-185; Korzi, 2019, pp. 420-422). Although non-reelectability might obviously increase the distorting effects assigned to the electoral calendar, the mechanisms described above do not depend on such particular feature to take effect<sup>319</sup>.

For all those consequences, such episodes cannot be assessed together with "ordinary" country-years without some consideration to their specificity, since they probably show a systematic effect against positive outcomes that is predictable with high plausibility. Ignoring that specificity would unnecessarily weaken the consistency of our causal model and blurr any causal reasoning that might emerge.

The caveats developed in this section deepen and expand the one already introduced in section 5.1.4 for selecting minority governments. There, we discarded as such any cabinet whose tenure is smaller than six months, which already would include many pre-electoral "compressed" cabinets. Now, by targetting minority governments during whole election years (that is, even those who surpassed six months in office), we cope with possible large regulation-imposed quarantines<sup>320</sup> as well as more protracted effects of coalition breakdowns.

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<sup>318</sup> There are at least some historical possibilities for that: the defection of PFL party from the Cardoso cabinet in Brazil in 2002 (Chasquetti 2006, p. 163; Abranches, 2018, pp. 4668 *et. seqs.*), which made this cabinet formally a minoritarian one; the continued support in the Argentinian Congress to the De La Rúa government by the *Frepaso* even after the resignation of Carlos *Chacho* Alvarez as vice-president in 2000 (Chasquetti, 2006, p. 182); several Uruguayan and Bolivian coalitions breakdowns short before the following elections (Chasquetti, 2006, pp. 173-174).

<sup>319</sup> Notwithstanding, the corresponding data tables and script variables processing this condition still use the name "LAME", conceptually close to its reality, in order to avoid possible misinterpretations that might emerge if used other acronyms such as "ELECT" or "LAST\_YR".

<sup>320</sup> Such as in Brazil, where candidates must be out of previous office at least six months before the elections.

In order to properly target those conditions, we first pick those one-year presidential term segments (or mandates)<sup>321</sup> exercised in election years. We deliberately chose not to include term mandates which lasted for more than one year and included election years<sup>322</sup>, on the grounds that the persistence of minority conditions and the causal configurations for a longer period make much less plausible to infer any significant changes only from the pre-electoral circumstances. That is, those exceptional reasons for being singled out apply to those “short” mandates, while all others are to be considered “long” mandates for causal purposes.

Those selected mandates will then be assigned the value “0” in one specific causal condition (“LONG”), while all others get coded “1”. Adding another causal condition allows us to deal with the singularity of those “short” mandates without discarding the cases completely (which would happen if we merely purged them from the empirical sample).

There remains the challenge of inserting such conceptual reasoning into any model, given that no direct linkage to the other causal streams surveyed. We’re not entering into a dialogue with the strands of the literature who deal with “end of mandate” or regime instability phenomena *per se*, but the instability effects that they generate in the political and economic landscape might be influential on the policy results achieved. Indeed, if proven reasonable, that expectation will be overwhelmingly present in the resulting solutions in a coherent sense (that is, solutions for good outcome will have consistently “LONG” positive values, and occasional solutions for bad outcome will include “~LONG” terms or no such attribute at all). So, we must find an intermediate position between disregarding the instability condition altogether<sup>323</sup> or inserting the LONG condition straight into the model that encompasses the other causal conditions. This compromise will be reached by positing an isolated hypothesis containing a parsimonious assumption on the effect of the LONG condition.

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<sup>321</sup> The precise specification of “mandates” in our causal modelling will be discussed in section 5.1.4.

<sup>322</sup> Such as the Lagos minority government in Chile, spanning the whole constitutional term from 2000 to 2005.

<sup>323</sup> Or, for that matter, simply deselecting those cases from the sample, thus losing all information contained in them.

## 4 – Hypotheses

### 4.1 Formalizing the hypotheses

We can now present a more structured view, in logical terms, of the causal relationships described along this study, deriving the hypotheses from that<sup>324</sup>. We gathered from theory that, first, decisiveness is widely regarded as correlated to good policy results under any governments (so, also to the minority governments who make up our scope condition). This correlation is not explicitly pointed as a sufficiency claim, but our understanding of that association as presented in chapter 3 is that the authors are trying to highlight the existence of decisive conditions<sup>325</sup> and the resulting corollary of “political good health” in that country. In other words, when an author points to the correlation between, say, presidential powers<sup>326</sup> as an independent variable and the maintenance of a stable coalition as the dependent one, he or she is putting those powers as an antecedent to a stable coalition and positing that, if they exist, the latter will somehow yield favourable government results. This is not explicitly structured in most studies, as they develop correlational analysis, but we couldn’t find arguments shaped in another propositional line<sup>327</sup> (specially arguments pointing to clearly associate the lack of decisiveness conditions with democratic or overall policy failures, so as to suggest that decisiveness might be formally regarded as a necessary condition for good government<sup>328</sup>).

When it comes to accountability, the reviewed scholarship (especially O’Donnell) points to a different logic: its absence engenders bad government. So, it’s put as a necessity condition, without the claim that accountability by itself might ensure a good turn to the country’s condition.

If we take both together, the joint theoretical claim ends up being that: 1) decisiveness implies good government policy results; and 2) no accountability implies bad government policy results. The most parsimonious way to check those

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<sup>324</sup> First, considering the potential challenges involved in deducing hypotheses regarding multiple conjunctive causality, we emphasize that large-N studies following a hypothetico-deductive logic must clearly specify hypotheses about predicted relationships of causal necessity and/or sufficiency. (Greckhamer & Misangyi & Fiss, 2013, p. 67)

<sup>325</sup> Mainly conveyed through the “intermediate variable” of a majority coalition, as pointed in section 3.2.2.

<sup>326</sup> Taken as an example, as any of the decisiveness conditions discussed.

<sup>327</sup> Even studies who focus on specifically negative events, such as democratic breakdowns, associate the existence of some factors (such as coalitions) to the survival of democracies.

<sup>328</sup> Which means that no claim has been made that, decisiveness lacking, no other independent cause might occur and ensure good results.

expectations against reality, then, is a proposition stating that decisiveness and accountability, jointly, are sufficient conditions for good results. This way, both the decisiveness and the accountability claims are to be stretched out: good results arising either from a situation of no decisiveness or from lack of accountability will falsify one of them directly<sup>329</sup>.

So, our first step in hypothesizing the model (at this point, only as an intermediate step for deploying the actual solution) will be:

H0-1: Decisiveness and accountability, together, are sufficient conditions for a minority government to reach good policy results.

DECISIVENESS AND ACCOUNTABILITY → GOOD POLICY RESULTS

Note that “decisiveness”, here, is not an empirical measurable condition, but an abstract construct used to represent an end result of several different causal components, who substitute for one another to a great extent, in a still unknown way; so, decisiveness may be achieved by several different (and still unknown) configurations of those components, not necessarily requiring the presence of every one of them to yield a logically true value for decisiveness (and neither allowing us to assume that any one of them individually will be enough for achieving decisiveness). Since those configurations are still unknown, every one of those component (presidential powers, reconcilability of party goals and legislative support threshold) may be a INUS condition, that is, “an insufficient but necessary part of a condition, which is itself unnecessary but sufficient for the result”; they’re precisely in a situation where “multiple conditions can plausibly be conceived of as elements in combinations that are jointly sufficient for the outcome, but where it is not possible to derive more specific expectations from theory, prior to the empirical analysis”

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<sup>329</sup> We might consider a second hypothesis, centered on accountability, stating that decisiveness and no accountability are sufficient conditions for bad results (under which cases of no decisiveness would generate indeterminate results). That statement would reflect findings in the literature on “delegative democracies”, who have decisiveness, but where the lack of accountability derails overall results. However, that would not be theoretically advantageous. First, because adding this statement to the first hypothesis might mathematically resemble the simple statement of accountability being a necessary condition to good results (which would not advance theory, in that, by disregarding decisiveness in the empirical verification, there would be the case where there’s simultaneously no decisiveness and no accountability, hence wouldn’t be able to distinguish between the causal conditions’ effects). Second, because the theoretical argument we would be testing (that is, missing accountability miscarries government results) will already be corroborated or falsified by the proposed H0-1 when testing empirical causal configurations of decisiveness and no accountability.

(Mello, 2021, p. 68)<sup>330</sup>. The “outcome” at this point is DECISIVENESS itself, not the result of its combination with accountability. The results of the truth table minimization will point exactly at the configurations the data suggest that are those who engender decisiveness to a minority government in such a degree that it can reap its benefits and produce good policies<sup>331</sup>.

So, the previous temporary hypotheses must be rewritten to indicate that one of the variables is this configuration resulting from a series of INUS conditions, still to be generated among the causal factors discussed (PWRP – powerful presidents holding significant presidential powers; RECP – reconcilable goals among the parties involved in the legislature; 40PC - the holding of at least 40% of the chamber seats by the cabinet coalition), which will interact with legislative accountability (ACCT). That way, a final format to the previous hypothesis might be:

H1: Decisiveness and accountability, together, are sufficient conditions for a minority government to reach good policy results.

$f \{PWRP; RECP; 40PC\} \text{ AND } ACCT \rightarrow \text{GOOD POLICY RESULTS}$

where  $f \{...\}$  means several possible combinations that include the presence of at least one of the listed conditions

And a second hypothesis is to be added

H2: Powerful presidents holding significant presidential powers (PWRP), reconcilable goals among the parties involved in the legislature (RECP), and the holding of at least 40% of the chamber seats by the cabinet coalition (40PC) all are INUS conditions to the outcome.

Finally, the treatment of the effects of the provisional or emergency conditions faced by stopgap mandates (deriving from presidential interruptions, including vice presidents standing in for the elected head of their slates, and the “electoral year” situation), as sketched in section 3.4, must be dealt with through a cautious additional hypothesis. As already pointed out in that section, the hurdles generated by those

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<sup>330</sup> “INUS conditions are the nuts and bolts of QCA solutions, as we typically find combinations of two or more conditions that are individually insufficient but jointly sufficient for the outcome.” (Mello, 2021, p. 68)

<sup>331</sup> For a similar procedure applied to the analysis of Executive-Legislative relations in Latin America, see Santos et al (2014).

conditions are seen by extant theory as pervasive in several legislative arithmetics (minority or not), and cannot be associated with any given institutional choice (or even with any given electoral landscape, such as a legislative threshold for the presidential coalition); so, we see no point in including them in the core of our theory-testing efforts (that is, the previous hypotheses). The way forward is to generate a new, very modest hypothesis stating that the absence of those exceptional circumstances<sup>332</sup> (alone or in presence of other conditions) is to be expected for positive outcomes. In other words, LONG must be tested as an INUS condition for the outcome<sup>333</sup>. The last hypothesis, then, is shown here as:

H3: The absence of emergency moments where regularly elected presidents are replaced by caretaker authorities due to impeachments, resignation or other involuntary pressures, as well as the specific condition of presidents in the last year of their full mandate (LONG) is an INUS condition for a minority government to reach good policy results.

So, the testing of the abovementioned hypotheses will thus be performed according to the conceptual and operational framework described in chapter 3 and detailed in Appendix 2, summarized in Table 11 below..

Table 11 - Outcome and conditions overview

	DESCRIPTION	CALIBRATION
Outcome  GOOD POLICY RESULTS	Economic policy results, as compared with the Latin American average for the same mandate or term segment (% GNP growth, % of change in income inequality).	1 = both indicators score 1; 0,66 = just one of the indicators scores 1; 0 - no indicator scores 1. Each indicator scores 1 if better than Latin American average (higher, for % GNP growth; smaller, % change in income inequality), or 0 otherwise (section 3.1)

<sup>332</sup> Expressed in our set of conditions as “LONG”.

<sup>333</sup> By doing so, we avoid both the more stringent claim of necessity (that is, postulating that no minority government in such emergency status can reach good policy results) and the merging of this somewhat isolated line of causal argument with the other highly interconnected theoretical claims that are tested in the previous three hypotheses.

Decisiveness conditions (H1, H2)	PWRP	Institutional instruments and opportunity structures available to presidents to negotiate legislative support for their policies	5 fuzzy values spread from 0 to 1, according to the mix of legislative, budgetary and informal exchange powers available to the president, clustered as "unilateral" powers, that allow presidents to unilaterally implement decision and change the status quo (with or without the need of <i>ex post</i> ratification by parliament), and "bargaining" powers, leverages to the relative bargaining position of presidents within the legislative process (section 3.3.1) Averaged country-year values for the mandate or term segment (according to the procedure and criteria laid out in section 5.1.4)
	RECP	potential party demands for each kind of potential payoffs (other than holding cabinet office), which creates the opportunity structure for presidents to initiate a game with parties in exchange for support to their policy agenda	A fuzzy value generated by the logical composition of two indexes: "electoral policy bargaining potential" (a measure of electoral volatility combined with a survey perception of oppositional influence on policy) and "particularistic orientation" (an expert survey perception of political system demands for particularistic policies) (section 3.3.1) Averaged country-year values for the mandate or term segment (according to the procedure and criteria laid out in section 5.1.4)
	40PC	Presidential coalition holding of a share of legislative seats beyond a certain threshold close to the majority (although still minoritarian)	1 = the government coalition holds more than 40% of the seats in each of the relevant chambers during the mandate or term segment; 0 = otherwise (crisp condition) (section 3.3.1)
Accountability condition (H1)	ACCT	A surveyed preception from experts regarding the efficacy of parliaments in their role as oversight actors	A fuzzy variable resulting from the direct calibration to the "Effective parliament" indicator from International IDEA, which combines three expert survey variables from V-DEM focusing on specific oversight activities by legislatures with other two (one from V-DEM and another from Polity V) who cover broader views on the overall web of accountability institutions in each country. (section 3.3.2) Averaged country-year values for the mandate or term segment (according to the procedure and criteria laid out in section 5.1.4)
Exceptional circumstances (H3)	LONG	An indicator of possibly exceptional circumstances arising from electoral calendars or political instability regarding the presidential mandate	A crisp variable coded 0 if (i) the incumbent president for any <u>one-year</u> mandate or term segment is the vice president standing in for the previously elected head of state, or (ii) the incumbent president is any person chosen to legally replace both the previously elected president and vice president for whatever reason, or (iii) if a presidential election is held in the country that same year.

Source: the author

## 4.2 What about minority ? Minority governments as a scope condition

In section 3.2.2 we argued that the “majority coalitions” assumption, pervasive across the literature, might profitably be replaced, as far as decisiveness explanatory variables are concerned, by their underlying causal factors. First, such coalitions are not always a necessary condition for good government, since there are multiple instances of democratic survival, under regular operations, other than in majority situations. Second, none of the assessments regarding coalitions in presidentialism portrayed any linkages between coalition-building and horizontal accountability – on the contrary, judging by O’Donnell’s accounts, the concentration of powers in the president who could be achieved by securing a strong majority status in parliament could only throw governments into the risks of delegative democracy. So, we now need to establish clearly the reasons for choosing the universe of minoritarian governments to study decisiveness and accountability in presidential governments.

The overall logic is simple: under minority contexts, decisiveness is subject to a harsher benchmark, since (at least *ex ante*) not having a formal legislative majority on behalf of a president or cabinet is clearly a least favorable condition for them to enact any kind of policy<sup>334</sup>. The emphasis of the extant literature on the need for majority coalitions suggests that authors see at least a strong correlation between them and decisiveness – so, when we examine situations where, *prima facie*, this variable doesn’t exist, the bar imposed on any other decisiveness factor is set much higher.

The accountability side is expected to be the opposite: in a majoritarian coalition status, parliament will probably check the government in a less intense way than if the executive faced minority conditions<sup>335</sup>. The point here: the more active a

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<sup>334</sup> Ansolabehere, Palmer and Schneer (2018), for instance, see a minority condition for a US president (in their case, an oppositional majority against the president in one or both chambers) as clearly associated with reduced numbers of significant legislative decisions adopted by the national government. Olson and Mezey (1991, p. 206-207) see legislative policymaking activity clearly growing as one moves from political systems under hegemonic party control towards those in which no one party or coalition is dominant. Griglio (2020, p. 39) point that “the opposition may be considered as the more authentic oversight actor”, since not being politically aligned to the government means that its role and its interests will better serve the purposes of independent parliamentary oversight (even when opposition legislators are in a minority condition, those roles can be strongly exercised through non-deliberative mechanisms whose effects are limited to fostering public awareness and debate of governmental issues) – mentioning (pp. 44-45) the frequent minority government experiences in Denmark and Sweden as benchmarks in intense parliamentary oversight effectiveness.

<sup>335</sup> That’s the theoretical expectation inherited from the US literature for the study of Latin American parliaments. In general terms, Santiso (2005, p. 32) points that “[w]hat matters is the

parliament is, and the more effective its control, the clearer the horizontal accountability in the system and the better are the policy outcomes. So, if majority coalitions enfeeble the oversight activity of parliament, they'll be less prone to yield accountability in policymaking. According to Lemos and Power (2013, pp. 383-384), a relevant part of the literature based on the concepts of horizontal accountability is highly pessimistic regarding the possibility of achieving it through the legislature, since institutionally powerful executives are prone to eliminate, co-opt or neutralize formal oversight agencies<sup>336</sup>. So, among minoritarian governments, we expect to face a greater *ex ante* probability of finding cases where parliaments perform strong accountability duties<sup>337</sup>. That does not imply, by any means, the removal of negative

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*degree of congruence between the legislative majority and the ruling party in government. When the ruling coalition holds a disciplined majority position in parliament, such as in parliamentary systems and presidential systems with unified government, there exists a possibility of control dilution. Indeed, presidential systems marked by fused executive and legislative majorities tend to have inoperative systems for enforcing government accountability".* Generalizing from the US experience, Pasquino and Pelizzo (2023, p. 44) remind that: "[u]nified party control, especially in a situation of polarization, [...] is bound to significantly and negatively affect interinstitutional accountability". Ponce (2018, pp. 327-328), arguing from the Mexican experience, emphasizes that less fragmented Congresses endowed with better organizational capacities and disciplined opposition parties are the ideal context for passing legislation implementing stronger monitoring and control over bureaucracies (precisely what happened when Mexican opposition parties gained a joint congressional majority from 1997 on, according to Santiso, 2005, p. 32). Rennó, Lemos and Power (2018, p. 359) argue, for Brazil, their empirical findings that "[l]as coaliciones más grandes y con mayor grado de coalescencia disminuyen la probabilidad de instrumentar acciones de supervisión. Sin embargo, el impacto de la coalescencia se reduce en las coaliciones de tamaño mayor a lo normal [...]". Notwithstanding, other features that might override this tendency are mentioned in the literature, such as institutional supermajority requirements for putting in place oversight acts, or for tabling them in the floor for final decision (Mustapic & Bieda, 2018, p. 217). Those authors see that happening in the Argentine case, refuting the association between divided government and a stronger oversight activity in that parliament.

<sup>336</sup> For an extreme version of that argument in the Brazilian case, see Figueiredo (2003). For a generalized theoretical assumption that this congressional powerlessness stems from the alleged lack of tools for parliamentarians (and parliamentary party leaders) to decide on national policies, condemning them to operate exclusively on the brokerage of particularistic goods, see Mello and Spektor, 2018 (albeit those authors present very little in terms of empirical support or testing for their argument).

<sup>337</sup> "*Conversely, under conditions of minority government or divided government, scrutiny of the executive is likely to be more intense, and the potential for legislative effects on budgets can be greater [...].*" (Wehner, 2014, p. 520). Wehner (2010, p. 73-75) provides historical examples of such association between divided government and a congressional effort to strengthen legislative tools and prerogatives for oversight in the United States, Mexico, South Korea and Canada. Moury and Fernandes (2016, p. 350-351) point to testimonies on behalf of stronger oversight on the governments under minority situations in Portugal. Sieberer (2011, p. 747) explains an otherwise unexpected strength of the Danish parliament's oversight activities by mentioning that Denmark's minority cabinets were quite frequently confronted with an 'alternative majority' in parliament that had strong incentives for *ex post* control. For a review of theoretical expectations that a divided government would create a favorable environment to horizontal oversight, see Lemos (2005a, p. 154). By comparing a minority parliament in Canada with its two immediate predecessors, Thomas (2007, p. 30) finds that "[...] *Parliament's ability to hold the executive accountable was also much improved, with standing committees*

cases from the assessment: there's concern in the literature about the effects of majority coalition-building on accountability<sup>338</sup>, but the issue is far from settled. There are even authors who associate minority governments to weaker legislative oversight, on the grounds that, in the absence of oversight mechanisms, legislators lack tools to demand and get cabinet participation (Freudenreich, 2016, p. 4), as well as those who see little impact of a very difficult minority condition (an oppositional control of the US Congress) on oversight activities (Mayhew, 1991). In their recent survey of the relevant literature, Chaisty, Cheeseman and Power (2020, p. 433) stress precisely the missing points that need to be addressed, advocating for an approach very similar to what we are advancing:

However, while fascinating, the attitudes of members of parliament towards coalitional politics raise as many questions as they answer. One question is whether our informants are correct to believe that coalitional presidentialism reduces accountability. It could be that our legislators, all of whom operate in coalitional contexts, exaggerate the impact of coalition formation and maintenance, blaming it for a range of ills that may actually have other drivers. To rule this out, it will be necessary to collect objective indicators of legislative scrutiny and presidential ease of governance to compare our cases with similar political systems in which minority presidents seek to govern without a coalition, and those in which the president enjoys an absolute majority and so does not need to form coalitions at all.

That's why minority contexts are useful testing grounds for propositions regarding both decisiveness and accountability. In the first domain, the persistence of decisional capacity without formal numerical majority will strongly illuminate those determinants that persist and thrive even in such dire straits. In the second, minority conditions will provide more opportunities to actually find and test cases where strong oversight is present. That's far from "selecting on the variables" (either dependent or

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*able to amend budgetary estimates, review candidates for appointment and pass many motions calling for government action. Likewise, the House of Commons was able to exercise accountability by negating legislation, amending the budget and the throne speech and by withdrawing its confidence from the government."* Reviewing seminal literature on the US Congress' role regarding political control over the bureaucracy, Velarde (2018, p.29) summarizes that "*algunos politólogos declaran que los gobiernos divididos tienden a generar conflictos entre los partidos sobre las políticas públicas los cuales aumentan la supervisión legislativa*".

<sup>338</sup> *There is also an emerging debate over macropolitical externalities generated by coalitional presidentialism. Does the co-optation of opposition parties weaken their development and so undermine the evolution of the party system? Does the continual need to convert a minority of seats into a majority of votes lead to dubious exchanges of favours, perhaps shading into political corruption? Do minority presidents who resort disproportionately to their own agenda-setting powers undermine parliamentary scrutiny and hence political accountability? In other words, does coalitional presidentialism involve a tradeoff between governability and accountability' (Chaisty et al. 2014), that is, generating stability while undermining the quality of democracy? (Chaisty & Cheeseman & Power, 2020, p. 424-425)*

independent), since we simply direct the empirical tests to a universe where some relevant conditions will more likely to be found.

So, minority status for presidential government is treated here neither as a dependent nor as an independent variable, but instead as a scope condition for the general propositions based on decisiveness and accountability<sup>339</sup>. That's a very cautious approach: scope conditions, after all, are those outside which theory is not assumed valid (Mello, 2021, pp. 20-21; Gertz & Mahoney, 2006, p. 193), or those who define irrelevant cases as those where causal processes are not homogeneous (Goertz & Mahoney, 2006, p. 182). In choosing such scope, we're by no means arguing the irrelevance of any of the mentioned causal conditions and mechanisms in another context, namely that of majority governments (in fact, few – or none - of them would be expected to become irrelevant by the mere fact of a majoritarian situation for the president). The boundaries established here serve only to prevent formal generalization outside the strict universe of minority government cases, where the above circumstances offer a privileged observation point to the causal processes of interest. However, heeding Peters' (1998) advice that comparative politics requires the selection of particular cases in the pursuit of general theory, prospects for potential generalization are also privileged: choosing minority instances means that whatever factors found for good government performance won't be conditioned by a particularly favorable parliamentary arithmetics (allowing for stronger generalization)<sup>340</sup>. Indirectly, this may mimic the effects of a selection of "influential cases" in Seawright and Gerring's (2008) typology of techniques, that is, those leveraged *vis-à-vis* some larger cross-case theory (here, the prevalence of majority-

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<sup>339</sup> *Thinking about additional variables as a scope condition is very congenial to a causal mechanism view of case studies because it encourages the researcher to evaluate where and when the causal mechanism is likely to work or not. If the case study is more exploratory, then the researcher may choose S to be those instances where the causal mechanism is easy to see or more likely to have the predicted effect. If the researcher feels pretty convinced of the validity of the causal mechanism then she might choose S to be as broad as possible. This makes sense of the "crucial" or "most difficult" case idea that occurs often in case selection justifications. The argument is that if the case study works for S near 0 (assuming for the moment that S runs from 0 to 1) then it is certain to work for cases of S near 1 (Goertz, 2017, p. 82)*

*Too many conditions complicate internal validity. [...] The best remedy against these problems is to limit the number of conditions to 'a few' causally relevant ones and to use other (context) conditions as selection criteria and scope conditions. (Rutten 2020, p. 10)*

<sup>340</sup> In the same fashion, Camerlo (2013) investigates minister selection criteria by Latin American presidents under single-party governments (his scope condition), hoping to find in those very particular cases more nuanced evidence that might be blurred by the strength of party influence in coalition governments, but do exist nevertheless.

based reasoning)<sup>341</sup>. Last but not least, this case selection criterion, not being based on the values of neither dependent nor independent variables, allows for variance in both dependent and independent variables, avoiding any pitfall of choosing cases on the outcome values as pointed out by King, Keohane and Verba (1994, ch. 4)<sup>342</sup>.

There's another corollary for this methodological choice of assessing minority governments: if good policy results are found and explained in their settings, the mainstream argument that majority coalitions solve presidentialism's performance and democratic stability problems will be strongly weakened, since other causal paths to good government will be shown who dispense with the need for co-opting a formal cabinet majority.

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<sup>341</sup> In a slightly different typology, a "critical cases" selection strategy aimed at getting cases that "if theory is not valid for this case, it won't apply for any" (Flyjberg, 2006). At first sight, choosing minority governments might be seen as using the "extreme case" hypothesis (present in both typologies). However, that's not true: "extreme" cases are measured on the values of dependent or independent variables, and the minority criteria is not related to any one of them (neither policy performance nor decisiveness and accountability factors).

<sup>342</sup> As the development of the empirical analysis will show, the search for good policy determinants will be pursued by aligning causal configurations along all kinds of minority governments (with better or worse policy outcomes), as is inherent in QCA research designs.

## 5 – Data and methods

This chapter presents the essential issues in selecting the scope conditions (section 5.1), as well as the time frames adopted for structuring the units of analysis at each step of the research (section 5.2). Section 5.3 brings a brief reference to data sources employed and the strategies for managing and disclosing data. Finally, section 5.4 discusses some methodological issues that emerge from the chosen research design (specially in QCA terms).

### 5.1 Minority cabinets – a scope condition

The cases (or, more precisely, units of analysis<sup>343</sup>) are minority cabinets in Latin American presidential systems<sup>344</sup> under democratic conditions in the last “third wave” of democratization after 1978 (Huntington, 1994; Mainwaring & Hagopian, 2005)<sup>345</sup>. That’s one among other possible case selection strategies: the imposition of scope conditions to bring the range of cases in line with theory, which will be assumed valid to these boundaries - not assuming its validity elsewhere (Mello, 2021, pp. 20-21; Gertz & Mahoney, 2006, p. 193). As in any case selection, it must be justified. Minority government settings are the scope condition for our study, as discussed further in section 4.2 above. Following that line of reasoning, and the conceptual discussion in section 2.1, a minority government will be considered as such if the parties who have ministers represented in the presidential cabinet<sup>346</sup> hold less than 50%

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<sup>343</sup> Following King, Keohane and Verba (1994) in considering “observation” as the conveyor of one measure on one unit for one dependent variable, with information on the values of the explanatory variables; “unit of analysis” as the grouping of observations according to their nature, and “case” as a domain of study that contains multiple potential observations and defines the boundaries within which a large number of observations are made.

<sup>344</sup> With one country *ex ante* exception, Ecuador, for theoretical reasons to be explained in the corresponding section.

<sup>345</sup> Given that some countries, like Colombia or Costa Rica, have enjoyed a considerable time frame with a continuously functioning electoral democracy before such “third wave” movement, and so as not to include in the sample governments who held office too long ago (and whose socioeconomic environment is clearly distinct from the one prevailing in Latin America’s later decades), the selection will take as the left boundary to the overall time series the year 1978, identified by Mainwaring & Hagopian (2005, p. 1) as the beginning of such wave of democratization (given that “since 1978 democracy has been far more extensive and also more durable than ever before”).

<sup>346</sup> Some guidelines regarding the implementation of “coalition” concepts (following Albala & Couto, 2023, p. e-0001/11) must be laid down: ministries co-opted or “independent” (ostensibly non-partisan) are not to be considered representatives of a “coalition partner” (although their existence does not preclude considering the given cabinet a coalition if there

of the seats in any chamber of parliament<sup>347</sup> during all its tenure. The detailed reasons for this particular choice of cases are exposed in section A.2.9 in Appendix 2.

## 5.2 How cabinets and their tenures are identified

All that considered, there are more required theoretical benchmarks regarding what precisely is a cabinet – a question which extolls many different answers (Salom, 2003; Lijphart, 1999; Schleiter, 2020). The main reference for us will be the criteria laid by Amorim Neto (2006, p. 425; 2019, p. 295) for Latin American presidential cabinets (also employed in Martínez-Gallardo, 2012; Figueiredo & Canello & Vieira, 2012; Meireles, 2016; Figueiredo, 2017 or Couto & Albala, 2023<sup>348</sup>): a new cabinet comes only with the inauguration of a new president or a change in the party composition of the cabinet<sup>349</sup>. Consequently, there's no requirement for the

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are parties involved in other posts); governments of a single party comprising several internal factions, irrespective of their degree of autonomy, and governments formed by a dominant party and 'satellite' parties, only formally independent, will not be considered as such (the formal record of ministers' parties in the sourced data repositories will be assumed as the actual functioning of such parties as coalition partners); governments of a single party who is a result of a previous party merger will be considered according to the formal number of parties in a given year (this last case is mentioned only in relation to South Korea, without reference to any Latin American case). The reason for those choices is essentially empirical: weighing each one of those situations (and even considering the possibilities for their occurrence) would require case-based studies which are beyond the scope of our research, and risks using different, judgmental criteria for assessing the same data from the repositories. In the case of non-partisan ministers, there's still a strong theoretical reason for not including them as coalition representatives: they are considered presidential instruments precisely to mitigate the agency loss provoked by the appointment of ministers whose party preferences (or even factional preferences within the president's party) may be found too far away from the president's own (Martínez-Gallardo & Schleiter, 2015). Under those assumptions, there's no point in considering their number as part of any legislative-support buying strategy.

<sup>347</sup> That bicameral overreach in the definition is not the most frequent choice in studies of parliamentary government, who focus on the arithmetics of the chamber to which the government is politically responsible to (that is, the chamber that can ultimately remove it in ordinary procedures), although more recent ones have taken into account bicameralism when there's political responsibility to both chambers (Field and Martin, 2022b, p. 326). That kind of unilateral removal of a chamber would make no sense in Latin American presidential systems where parliamentary chambers hold no ordinary removal powers over the president, and where very symmetrical bicameralist designs make executive-legislative relations institutionally very similar in both lower and upper houses.

<sup>348</sup> This definition will operationally coincide with the one considered by Field and Martin (2022a, p. 8) "the conventional method in the comparative politics literature" for parliamentarism, that is counting as a new cabinet "a change of prime minister, change of the partisan composition of the cabinet, and a general election", given that the equivalents to first and the third conditions in presidentialism lead to the inauguration of a new president.

<sup>349</sup> Amorim Neto includes the adjustments (in the 2006 study) of counting only one branch of the armed forces, if they are formally represented in the cabinet and are headed by a military officer (as in Brazil and Peru during some time frames), naturally computing them as nonpartisan ministers, and the additional criteria of a change of more than 50% in the identity of individual ministers, previously mentioned in the 1998 study (p. 17) but dropped in his 2006

presidential inauguration to be the result of a new election (otherwise a great number of cases of resignation and impeachment, very common in the 90's, would be unheeded); moreover, the cabinet composition (for the sake of identifying periods) will be unaffected by changes in the proportion of seats among parties, whenever the same parties remain in the cabinet. On the downside, applying this criterion can be operationally misleading for the purpose of pinpointing minority cabinets in the cases where a sitting cabinet gains or loses chamber majorities by non-electoral changes in the seat composition (as the resignation, death, expulsion or party-switching by MPs)<sup>350</sup>. However, our procedures will put side by side, in pre-defined time frames, both cabinet and legislature compositions, so any such changes that might occur will eventually be captured by that numerical comparison (to the extent that available data sources on both partisan compositions are able to reflect year-to-year changes, especially in the case of legislatures). More detailed descriptions of assessment strategies and data sourcing on cabinets and legislatures are available in section A.2.8 in Appendix 2.

#### *Time frames for the empirical, descriptive assessment (country-years)*

It must be established, also, the time in office for a given government to be considered into the analysis – since we're studying policy effects of cabinets in action<sup>351</sup>. The first time frame, which will structure the descriptive overview in section 6.1, is the most granular we can devise: country-years of tenure, that is, the prevailing cabinet in each year for each country. This choice stems from the core goals to the descriptive analysis, that is, to give as detailed a picture as possible of minority government practice in Latin America. Under that perspective, it's entirely

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paper. However, the "military amalgamation" criterion was reintroduced in his 2019 chapter, which is our chosen source for Brazilian cabinet data. To keep our criteria in line with the majority of studies mentioned, we do not impose neither caveat for any other country, but the first one is embedded in the data from Brazil (although the only predictable effect might be some decrease in the amount of non-partisan ministers up to 1999, when the Defence Ministry was created).

<sup>350</sup> Field and Martin (2022a, pp. 11-12; 2022b, p. 326), who raise this issue, had no alternative but to ask country case studies' authors in their volume to assess this empirical question individually in their in-depth primary data compilation, reiterating the empirical nature of this shortcoming.

<sup>351</sup> "Cabinet changes allow presidents to change policy by changing the individuals in charge of making policy, and can also help presidents adjust their support coalition by giving them a resource they can use in their negotiations with other actors." (Martínez-Gallardo, 2014, p. 5)

relevant to highlight a minority cabinet's duration<sup>352</sup>. Even so clearly defined, though, building a time series of minority government in country-years raises substantial conceptual challenges.

Krauss and Thurk (2022) remind us that low levels of cabinet duration worsen the representation of citizens' preferences, since they must be honoured by being translated into authoritative and sustained action, while the enactment of legislative proposals is critically dependent on the time a government is in office; besides, the literature shows a strong association between political instability (as reflected in cabinet changes) and less economic growth. Martínez-Gallardo (2012) also links coalition instability with less successful policy achievements and a shorter time horizon for policies, due both to ever-changing concessions in policy and in costly pork funds, and to the discontinuity arriving from excessive rotation of key policy managers in the cabinet<sup>353</sup>. Milio (2008) also finds empirically that cabinet instability brings strongly negative administrative impacts, generated by multiple factors: politician's incentives to extract short-term benefits from their tenure; conflicts between those politicians seeking only immediate-effect money allocation and their bureaucratic counterparts focusing on longer-term planning; and the loss of administrative experience in higher cabinet turnover<sup>354</sup>.

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<sup>352</sup> That is, a minority president who chose or was forced to go on for his entire term without a majority coalition is substantially different from a president who opted for raising a majority coalition in part of this mandate (or was endowed with a single-party majority from the start).

<sup>353</sup> This is not an unconditional statement against cabinet changes at large: the same author (2014, p. 26) warns that "that the use of cabinet changes is not always negative. Weak presidents who would otherwise find themselves severely limited in their ability to cope with political and policy crises resort to reshuffles precisely as a way to overcome their political and institutional limitations", that is, they may change ministers "to renew the talent pool or to innovate". In other words, too much ministerial reshuffling might be detrimental to the stability and quality of policies, as well as the ability of politicians to make the bureaucracy accountable, which justifies our duration threshold for a cabinet to be considered; however, this is not to be construed as equating cabinet duration with virtuous policymaking.

<sup>354</sup> Some authors suggest some qualifications to that opinion. Huber and Martínez-Gallardo (2004) posit that what might be relevant to policy performance is not cabinet stability per se, but the accumulation of experience by individual cabinet ministers (both in the specific portfolios that they hold and the political experience at large, in any significant portfolio). So, if cabinet changes involve only moving qualified ministers in and out, the negative effects wouldn't be so strong (empirically, they see no conclusive results of government duration on cabinet turnover in 19 parliamentary democracies). Besides, cabinet reshufflings can be desirable mechanisms for improving ministerial performance (that is, the outcome of any given cabinet allocation is not necessarily optimal from the policy point of view). However, this counter-argument only addresses the policy expertise domain, and doesn't touch neither the short-term incentives for ministers nor the short-termism coming from changes in policy priorities emerging from different partisan compositions of successive cabinets. So, we maintain the point of cabinet duration as theoretically relevant. Baturo and Elgie (2019, pp. 616-617), analysing the political effects of presidential term limits, report opposing views on the effects of longer tenures on policies that emerge from different country case studies

So, some of those cases of minority cabinets' tenure can be misleading: if a minority government is in office for a whole year, there's no doubt that it must be held responsible for the policy results thereof; on the other hand, if a government takes office, say, a few weeks before the end of that term, there would be few possibilities for such government to affect the yearly policy outcome.

But how much time is too little time in office? We could not find in the literature any such threshold to separate expected relevant influence and its absence due to insufficient time in office – and whatever arbitrary assumption would be misleading (especially in so relevant a parameter for case selection). So, we must rely on the actual observed duration of minority cabinets, summarized in Table 12 below, in order to extract from it some grounded expectations regarding the issue<sup>355</sup>.

*Table 12 - Duration of minority governments – estimates in the literature*

Source	Scope	Average time in office for minority governments (in months)
Deheza (1997)	9 Latin American presidential systems 1958-1994	1958-1994: single-party minority government, 26,95 months (n = 25); minority coalition, 14,08 months (n = 23) <sup>356</sup> 1976-1994: single-party minority government, 30,28 months (n = 11); minority coalition, 11,67 months (n = 12)
Strøm (1990)	15 Western European parliamentary systems, 1945-1987	Formal minorities: 13,2 months (std. dev. 9,3; n = 14) Substantive minority: 14,1 months (std. dev. 12,9; n = 107) <sup>357</sup>
Field, 2016 <sup>358</sup>	Western European parliamentary systems in the	Single-party minority: 17,76 months (533 days); minority coalitions: 11,7 months (351 days)

<sup>355</sup> The empirical parameters are extracted both from parliamentary and presidential systems where they're available. That's a coherent choice, since the underlying variable of relevance is the impact of cabinet duration on enacted policy; since by definition a cabinet is the bearer of executive power and the mover of administrative levers of policymaking (regardless of being under a presidential or a parliamentary system), there are no theoretical grounds for dropping any of them from the comparison.

<sup>356</sup> The somehow contradictory results are attributed to the added difficulty of managing a coalition within already harsh minority conditions (under single-party minority, any reshuffles or policy changes won't risk bringing down the coalition, which would be then counted as the end of a cabinet and the beginning of another). Those numbers, however, are averages with a very large variance across countries (Deheza, 1997, pp. 139-140). The same reasoning can be found in Martínez-Gallardo, 2012, pp. 69-70.

<sup>357</sup> Formal minority governments are those minority governments who are backed by a formal written agreement with external (non-cabinet) support parties that ensure them consistent legislative support; other cabinets are called substantive minorities. At first sight, those seem very unstable conditions for both kinds of minority government, but the average tenure of all governments in Strøm's sample (n = 342) is 17,5 months (st. dev. 15,00), not very far from minority ones.

<sup>358</sup> Quoting results in Saalfeld, 2008.

Source: The author, compiled from the references in the first column

So, even in the harshest conditions, the available data point to precedents of an average tenure close to one year (although with a very high variance), as compared to some overall assessments of around two and a half years for all cabinets in Latin American presidentialism<sup>360</sup>. Applying that to our problem, if that time frame coincides with each country-year, there would be no problem; however, if those average yearly tenures are divided among years, the fragmented periods might be overlooked (if discarded at all), or overstated (if considered as a full minority government period that year).

To try to tackle that, we must pick all cabinets whose tenure extends along one full year, as well as those cabinets who have been at least 6 months in office. This criterion allows us to automatically circumvent one potential flaw in selecting cabinets: fixed terms of office in presidential systems have given way to a recurrent movement of defections close to the next presidential elections, as non-presidential coalition partners try to better position themselves for the national race (Chasquetti, 2006; Altman, 2000<sup>361</sup>). That means an electoral *volte-face* that not necessarily correlates with an actual disembarkation from government, which means that those parties may inertially support the sitting president during his residual term even if they're not in the cabinet any more<sup>362</sup>. So, under those circumstances, an apparently minority government will be in fact a majority coalition in disguise. When we select only cabinets which hold at least six months in office, we automatically avoid choosing most short-term occurrences like those (namely, of formally minority

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<sup>359</sup> The French governments included in the sample are from the Fifth Republic, where the classification of "pure parliamentary regime" is disputable.

<sup>360</sup> For contemporary Latin America (from the beginning of each country's third wave democratic period to 2002, 2003 or 2006, according to each country), Martínez-Gallardo (2012, p. 65) estimates an average duration for all types of cabinet of 29,73 months (std. dev. 5,2, n = 121). The same author (201, p. 14) estimates that in "core" ministerial portfolios (that is those whose existence is more stable along time) the average ministerial tenure is 19.6 months, which is also compatible with the cabinet duration estimates.

<sup>361</sup> Chasquetti and Altman independently point to a gradual erosion of coalitions along time, which collapses into larger defections in the few months before the elections.

<sup>362</sup> Besides, some electoral regulations require that candidates resign from public office sometime before the polls ("desincompatibilização", in Brazilian vocabulary). So, political heavyweights may be forced to exit their cabinet posts to run for office, leaving caretakers in place who, although not formally party representatives, act like that in practice.

cabinets inaugurated less than six months before a national general election) and exclude them from consideration<sup>363</sup>.

*Time frames for causal modelling (the meaning of “mandates” in the context of causal analysis)*

While country-years are the obvious choice for descriptive assessments (both to reach the most detailed coverage of the facts on the ground and to be as comparable as possible with majority governments), our causal analysis recommends reshuffling those units of analysis into longer time spans. This is due essentially to the nature of the outcome: policy results in any given year are affected by the governments’ actions during that year, or during the preceding one, but much more so by the compounded actions during the whole government tenure (which, in turn, are conditioned by institutional conditions and by the environment it faced during such tenure). Indeed, as already stressed in the previous section, the literature shows several pathways linking a larger period in office (within usual presidential term limits, at least) and stronger administrative and policymaking achievements.

So, in order to evaluate a given set of causal conditions which enabled a government to rule (the core of our causal analysis), it’s conceptually more precise to do so along the whole period under which those set of conditions was in place.

To do so, we clustered minority governments’ country-years in “mandates”, or variable-length segments of presidential mandates. Those segments were first circumscribed by a president’s tenure (in each electoral contest<sup>364</sup>) and its minoritarian condition. Within that time span, any substantial change in the causal conditions posited in the model entitles a new segment; a “substantial” change is assumed to happen when any given condition has its fuzzy valued changed from membership to non-membership (fuzzy values change from more than 0,5 to less than 0,5), or vice versa. For instance, if a president changes the size of his minority cabinet

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<sup>363</sup> That means also addressing the case of purely caretaker governments installed after the impeachment or unplanned resignation of presidents (Freudenreich, 2016, p. 8), when they represent a truly stopgap measure. The case of successor governments (such as vice-presidents standing in for the rest of an impeached or deceased president’s mandate, as in the Brazilian cases of Itamar Franco and Michel Temer, or the Bolivian cases of Jorge Quiroga and Carlos Mesa) will not be captured by this initial treatment, as they shouldn’t be, for those governments have – at least potentially – the same policy horizons as any cabinet under the original head of State. For causal analysis, some of those successor cases will be treated differently out of theoretical reasons, but the baseline time series of minority government in country-years encompasses them.

<sup>364</sup> So, a reelected president had his two terms considered separately.

coalition from 30% to 45% of the relevant chambers, one of the causal conditions (legislative share above 40%) changes from non-membership to membership, thus generating a new segment (“mandate”) for this cabinet.

Those term segments frequently encompass more than a year, which requires their components (causal conditions and outcome) to be adjusted from the country-year basis in which they were compiled towards this new multi-year framework. As for causal conditions, their value for a term segment or mandate was converted through averaging the yearly values corresponding to the period. It must be stressed that this procedure means averaging membership (or non-membership)-only amounts: that is, by definition, only fuzzy values above 0,5 (or below 0,5) are averaged on any given mandate, since any change across this threshold meant the creation of a new mandate or term segment. In other words, the whole clustering procedure prevents the inputting of membership and non-membership fuzzy values into the same calculation, using averages only to assess the combined changes in degree along the same term<sup>365</sup>. As for the outcome, the fuzzy values were generated according to the methodology sketched in section 3.1.3, but directly comparing the average yearly values of the baseline indicators (GDP growth and income distribution) in the country and in the region along the given mandate’s time span<sup>366</sup>.

### 5.3 Data sources, management and disclosure – a summary

The conceptual model designed in chapters 3 and formalized in chapter 4 is operationalized according to the detailed specifications contained in Appendix 2, including data sources. This section will provide a very brief summary to that operationalization, in order to facilitate the reader in following the analytical chapters that follow.

The first stepping stone for the analysis is the configuration of cabinets and legislatures in terms of party composition, along which the causal model will be

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<sup>365</sup> In practice, only conditions with fuzzy values who occasionally changed in intensity during the mandate (within the boundaries from 0 to 0,5, or from 0,5 to 1) had their condition values changed by this procedure. In absolutely no instance there were averages drawn from different values in crisp conditions, nor from years where the fuzzy condition was below 0,5 and others when it was above 0,5.

<sup>366</sup> For instance, the outcome in the mandate “CL-AYLWIN-1-1990-1993” was obtained by comparing the Chilean average growth and income distribution measures for the years 1990 to 1993 to the Latin American average in that same period, according to the procedure laid down in section 3.1.3.

deployed. Those data were assembled directly from primary sources regarding ministerial portfolios and legislatures' composition, according to the logical blueprints shown in section 5.1 and the procedures and sources described in section A.2.8 in Appendix 2.

Our outcome is embodied in an economic policy results index (conceptualized in section 3.1) which joins the percent rate of economic growth, on an year-on-year basis over the previous year, and the percent of change in household consumption share of GDP, also on an year-on-year basis over the previous year (details in section A.2.1 in Appendix 2). For each of those dimensions a simple yardstick of good performance is extracted if the government in question yields higher results than the region's average rate, and zero if that condition doesn't hold. Then, those dimensions are fused into one variable with fuzzy values 1 (if both components amount to 1), 0,66 (if only one is so) or 0 (if none happens to be positive).

Moving on to causal factors involving decisiveness, the first one regards presidential powers, whose individual components (legislative, budgetary and informal) will be aggregated according to the composition algorithm already presented in section 3.3.1. We operationalize its legislative powers components by using the variables already found in Montero (2009, mostly ch. 4), which comprise a full description of 14 powers and regulations (either constitutional or granted by congressional by-laws) that directly or indirectly affect presidential capacity to influence legislative activity (section A.2.2 in Appendix 2). As for budgetary powers, we follow mostly the conceptual structure of Wehner (2010), who advances "a critical number of institutional prerequisites", grouped in "formal authority" and "organisational characteristics" (p. 46), all of which affect the presidential control on the disbursement of public funds (section A.2.3 in Appendix 2). Informal exchange powers, being essentially an informal institution (Chaisty & Cheeseman & Power, 2018, ch. 9; Helmke & Levitsky, 2006, pp. 1-2), will be assessed through some results of expert surveys contained in V-Dem (Coppedge et. al., 2022a, pp. 151 and 296), which probe on corruption at large (the engagement of legislators in corrupt practices and the pervasiveness of illicit transactions) and on patronage powers (capacity for handing out public sector jobs outside cabinet posts, either for personal advantages or for ensuring loyal party agents a stake on policy decisions)<sup>367</sup>- section A.2.4 in Appendix 2.

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<sup>367</sup> If any of those two traits is found, informal exchange powers are present as a relevant causal factor.

The “reconcilability of party goals” condition (section A.2.5 in Appendix 2) is a fuzzy combination of two theoretical indicators, the “electoral policy bargaining potential” and the “particularistic orientation” to the party system. The former is made by the joint existence of electoral competitiveness (measured by the index of electoral volatility – Pedersen, 1983 - in lower chamber elections, empirically available as supplementary material to Mainwaring and Su, 2021) and oppositional policy influence (gauged by expert survey variables regarding the openness and depth of elite consultation in decision-making, extracted from the V-Dem database - Coppedge et. al, 2022a, p. 163-164). As for the the particularistic motivation of the party system, it’s also measured by V-Dem variables measuring perceptions on the nature of social and infrastructural government spending (i.e., either "particularistic" or "public goods" expenditure) and on whether the explicit nature of party linkage to constituents relies on individual or pork rewards in exchange for votes, or instead on the offer of national policy platforms (Coppedge et. al., 2022a, pp. 65, 94-95, 164, 295).

The minimum support threshold, set in 40% of seat shares for the presidential coalition in each relevant chamber, is extracted directly from our cabinets and parliamentary composition database generated according the specifications of section 5.1 from the data sources described there (section A.2.6 in Appendix 2).

Finally, the accountability condition is operationalized by the calibration into fuzzy values of the “Effective parliament” variable (Tufis & Hudson, 2022, pp. 108-115), available in IDEA’s Global State of Democracy Indices (International IDEA, 2022). The original series combines three V-Dem expert survey questions (on the efficacy of parliaments specifically on their oversight roles) with two other questions (one from V-Dem and another from Polity V) regarding the effectiveness of the web of accountability institutions as a whole in curbing malfeasance initiatives and in posing constraints on the executive power at large (section A.2.7 in Appendix 2).

Some relevant general features of our data management and disclosure must also be assessed now. First, all data collected are displayed in corresponding Excel files in the supplementary online repository. Those files comprise both the primary collection worksheets, with the necessary comments on selection and coding decisions, and their intermediate processing into more structured tables until reaching the truth tables inputted into the analysis. R scripts used for all steps are also included in the repository.

Turning to general aspects of data sources, V-Dem repository is used in its version 12; although a new version 13 has been launched in March 2023, our empirical work was already in movement and the extant version covered all the time frames and variables required by this piece of research. Our chosen V-Dem variables are most frequently presented in a “Scale: Ordinal, converted to interval by the measurement model” (Coppedge et. al., 2022a). That means that an ordinal measurement scale presented to the individual experts for their response will have its ordinal results will be converted, through Bayesian item response theory (IRT) modeling techniques, into median point estimates to the variable within a normal “Z” score (Coppedge et. al., 2022a, pp. 22-24 and 27<sup>368</sup>). However, the repository also offers, for most variables, another version who “brings the statistical measurement model estimates back to the original ordinal scale of a variable (as represented in the Codebook) after taking coder disagreement and measurement error into account” (that is, a V-Dem value who is already “the most likely ordinal value on the original codebook scale into which a country-year would fall, given the average coder’s usage of that scale” – Coppedge et. al., 2022a, p. 28<sup>369</sup>). Whenever this facility is available, it will be our preferred choice to proceed to the conversion into a crisp or fuzzy logical condition, since it allows us to reason directly into the intrinsic theoretical logic embedded in the questions posed to the expert coders.

In a more general way, we must report the adherence to basic data quality guidelines exposed by Mello (2021, p. 98): causal conditions used in the model, as well as data sources and coding decisions are all individually recorded in the spreadsheets and tables made available at the supplementary open data repository, as well as the corresponding R Scripts. All calibration thresholds, as well as the qualitative conversion procedures (when directly calibrated) and the plots for raw and

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<sup>368</sup> *This version of the variables provides country-year (country-date in the alternative dataset) point estimates from the V-Dem measurement model described above. The point estimates are the median values of these distributions for each country-year. The scale of a measurement model variable is similar to a normal (“Z”) score (i.e. typically between -5 and 5, with 0 approximately representing the mean for all country-years in the sample) though it does not necessarily follow a normal distribution. For most purposes, these are the preferred versions of the variables for time-series regression and other estimation strategies. (Coppedge et.al., 2022a, p. 27)*

<sup>369</sup> Here, the variable in question has the suffix “\_ord” added to its name. A more detailed explanation of such conversion is given in Pemstein et. al. (2022, pp. 20-21):

*We can use the difficulty parameters to generate latent trait estimates on the original ordinal scale described for each indicator in the V-Dem codebook. Specifically, for each indicator, we generate samples from the posterior distributions of the classifications a typical rater would give to each case on the original codebook scale. The core V-Dem dataset includes both a point estimate (the integerized median score across posterior draws) and integerized ordinal 68 percent HPD intervals.*

calibrated data (when the software calibration was chosen) are discussed in the corresponding sections in the Appendixes. Due to the monotonic ascending or descending nature of every measured concept whose fuzzy values were calibrated, the automated calibration option was always the “s-shaped”, logistic calibration function (Duşa, 2019, p. 88). Still on calibration, we carefully avoided using different set-membership levels for different sets, that is, performing direct or automatic calibrations to non-continuous raw datasets; each and every original dataset organized into ordinal scales was converted straight into fuzzy values according to substantive guidance, leaving the automated functions to continuous observations (Rutten, 2020, pp. 8-9). Lastly, as the description of data collection and conversion procedures for each condition will show, all conditions and the outcome were structured into logical categories (fuzzy values) straight out of theoretical reasoning, regardless of the particular empirical distribution of raw values<sup>370</sup>.

In terms of technological resources, data analysis was performed in R Scripts (replicated at the supplementary data repositories), using the QCA package available in Duşa (2019).

#### 5.4 Discussing QCA theoretical features' appropriateness to the research objectives and characteristics

To assess the joint effects of those many candidate causal factors on policy outcomes, we propose a clearly multifactor design, under which the hypotheses will be fully specified using a Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) framework. This methodological choice is particularly well vocationed to convey designs like this one (Mello, 2021; Schneider & Wagemann, 2012). Our research aims are fully compatible with the causal complexity paradigm embedded in QCA (Mello, 2011; Albala & Leal, 2022): we see conjunctural causation, since the outcome is related to specific combinations of conditions (not partially correlated to any of them irrespective of the

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<sup>370</sup> *The approach is explicitly theoretical in this particular sense rather than inductive (though some may be tempted to finesse calibrations in an ad hoc manner in order to raise consistency and/or coverage figures). The key point is that the distribution of fuzzy scores over the cases does not determine the classification itself, only membership in the configurations comprising it. (Cooper & Glaesser, 2011, p. 45). In other words, causal configurations were built as (theoretically derived) typologies, not as (empirically derived) taxonomies (Fiss, 2011, p. 395)*

others)<sup>371</sup>, and equifinality, since within this array of decisiveness and accountability, multiple pathways can lead to a given performance outcome. Besides, causal asymmetry will be considered by the separate pondering of positive and negative outcomes.

In this sense, the study will be fulfilling the explanatory usage of QCA, mostly by integrating various theoretical strands who support the specification of each causal condition, to arrive at better explanatory accounts<sup>372</sup>. On doing this, those expectations will be testable, thus enabling the theory testing role of QCA (Greckhamer & Misangyi & Fiss, 2013, p. 68). In order not to jeopardize this goal, the choice of 5 causal conditions (see section 4.1) follows the theoretical recommendation on behalf of “being serious about substantive interpretation” by “taking serious the limits of interpretability” that might be strongly affected by anything with more than six conditions (Rutten, 2020, p. 10<sup>373</sup>). To reach those purposes, hypotheses will be shaped here not in the rigid deductive statistical form, but in the looser sense of a tentative assessment of whether and how empirical results match theoretical expectations, in a dialogue between theory and evidence.

After those first expectations are checked against empirical data, the results of logical minimization may allow further refining in terms of stricter necessity/sufficiency formats. So, dialogue between theory and data begins with modest directional expectations anchored in extant theory, to be examined set-theoretically in order to confirm expectations or – more likely – to discover specific combinations of conditions who deserve consideration to overhaul theory.<sup>374</sup>

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<sup>371</sup> On the specific issue of minority government formation and performance, Field and Martin (2022, p. 21) emphasize that there are parliamentary countries where such governments are common (such as Norway), and those where they're rare (as in Australia), which signals multiple pathways for their existence and functioning, an approach yet to be explored.

<sup>372</sup> In other words, conditions are explicitly drawn from different theories and integrated into a single stable set of conditions. Advocating for QCA appropriateness precisely towards such goals, Greckhamer, Misangyi and Fiss (2013, p. 56) “*considering the difficulty in interpreting multi-way interactions (e.g., 3-way, 4-way, etc.) in regression-based analyses (e.g., Aiken & West, 1991), another avenue forward for large-N QCA studies could be to build on more micro-oriented theories that have theorized such interactions (e.g., Oldham & Cummings, 1996; Skarlicki & Folger, 1997; Wood, Michela, & Giordano, 2000).*”

<sup>373</sup> *Any attempt to quantify ‘a few’ is arbitrary but Greckhamer et al.’s (2013) suggestion to use 6-12 conditions (p.54) seems very generous. Interpreting any configuration of six or more conditions will always be a daunting task. Being serious about substantive interpretation implies taking seriously the limits of interpretability.* (Ruttenm 2020, p. 10)

<sup>374</sup> This incremental way of structuring research is suggested by Mello (2021) as a hedged, cautious approach which nevertheless provides a directional and clear way to formulate theoretical expectations. For other examples of QCA being used in the study of coalition theory, see Moury (2004), Albala (2020), Oppermann and Brummer (2020) and Santos, Pérez-Liñan and Montero (2014).

Exploring those “limits of interpretability” under another viewpoint, all those previous considerations add to the choice of an admittedly very large time span, resulting in an unequivocally large-N QCA design (as will be clear in section 6.1<sup>375</sup>). Sample size in itself neither contradicts nor jeopardizes the fundamental assumptions underlying the QCA approach (Greckhamer & Misangyi & Fiss, 2013, p. 51), but that circumstance brings another cautious warning to heed: in such endeavors, in-depth case knowledge (one of QCA’s cornerstones) might appear diluted as if “cases are no longer analytically relevant but decomposed into conditions in much the same way that regression analysis decomposes cases into variables” (Rutten, 2020, p. 17<sup>376</sup>). To avoid that, we must focus on a critical point: “cross-case regularities (consistent set-relationships) are not themselves causal mechanisms; they are empirical manifestations of underlying causal mechanisms that must be interpreted into statements of sufficiency by ‘going back to the cases’”, which means “the presence of conditions [that] allows agents to act in ways that achieve the outcome”.<sup>377</sup> (Rutten, 2020, p. 5) – that is, “results of causal analysis of sufficiency and necessity are interpreted primarily as patterns across many cases”, relying “to a great extent on the knowledge of conceptual relationships” (Greckhamer & Misangyi & Fiss, 2013, p. 54, 70). So, ultimate minimization results are to be seen not as an exhaustive list of all the possible relationships between conditions and outcome, but as proposed slates of mechanism-enabling configurations that, empirically, have shown to be consistent with theory and deserve to be further exploited<sup>378</sup>. More simply put, we collect minimization results as statements who could be truthfully extracted from the tests as possible solutions among the many posited by theory.

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<sup>375</sup> The ratio between conditions and cases is extremely favored by such large-N settings, as will be clear when the empirical universe is described in section 6.2.1;

<sup>376</sup> Although the resemblance stops there: “[u]nlike in correlational analysis, in which “measures vary around an inductively derived, sample-specific mean” (Ragin, 2008, p. 8), the set memberships of each theoretical attribute in the QCA approach must be calibrated”, and such calibration is to be performed based exclusively on each case’s substantive features as compared to independent qualitative anchors (Greckhamer & Misangyi & Fiss, 2013, p. 57).

<sup>377</sup> To the point that inconsistent cases are not to be assigned automatically to measurement errors, but rather seen as the presence of unknown causes which had prevented agents to fulfill the expected results even when the expected conditions are present.

<sup>378</sup> Such perspective even allows the researcher, facing some (not most) of his minimization results, to discard some potential solutions out of the unavailability of plausible interpretations to the mechanism for the presence of the outcome (Rutten, 2020, p. 9)

## 6 – Empirical results, tests and discussion

### 6.1 The empirical landscape on minority governments’ policy outcomes

#### *In country-years*

To reach the intermediate goal of empirically compiling minority governments in Latin American contemporary democratic presidentialism and their performance in terms of economic policy results, we produced a map of policy outcomes fully disclosed in Table 22 (section A.1.1 in Appendix 1) and analytically summarized in this section. Besides serving as the main springboard for the causal analysis, the data presented here will enable us to assess the actual possibility of good policy performance among minority governments in presidentialism, that is, to disclose in a systematic way if there are significant instances of good policy results among the minority presidential governments studied. As already discussed in section 5.1.4, the prevailing unit of analysis for this descriptive comparison will be the prevailing cabinet in any country-year of democratic rule.

Indeed, when viewed through the lens of their governmental results, that is, according to the “good policy performance” framework conceptualized in section 3.1, minority governments show a nuanced pattern.

The gross totals of assessed minority government performances and its distribution according to the different performance levels (as measured by their fuzzy values) is shown in Table 13 below.

*Table 13 - Minority governments’ policy performance – empirical assessment – in country-years*

Total number of minority governments (A)	228		
		As % of A	As % of B (or C)
Minority governments with assessed same-year performances (B)	223	97,81%	
Performances scoring fuzzy 0	56	24,56%	25,11%
Performances scoring fuzzy 0,66	107	46,93%	47,98%
Performances scoring fuzzy 1	60	26,32%	26,91%
Minority governments with assessed lagged performances (C)	216	94,74%	
Lagged performances scoring fuzzy 0	54	23,68%	25,00%
Lagged performances scoring fuzzy 0,66	108	47,37%	50,00%
Lagged performances scoring fuzzy 1	54	23,68%	25,00%

*OBS: All governments counted as country-years*  
*Source: The author*

Beginning with the outcomes for the same year the government has been in office, we've been able to track the policy performance of 223 (97,81%) out of the 228 minority governments identified. Among those whose results were found, 25,11% showed bad results (fuzzy value 0, with no variable scores better than Latin American averages); 47,98 % had somehow good results (fuzzy value 0,66, where one out of two variables performed above average), and 26,91 % delivered very good results (displaying fuzzy value 1, for both variables were over the regional average). In set-theoretical terms, bad results (fuzzy 0) mean non-membership in the "good results" set; somehow good results (fuzzy 0,66) equates to partial membership; finally, very good results (fuzzy 1) is equivalent to full membership in the "good results" set. If, for purposes of portraying a simplifying view, the two latter outcomes are designated "good" policy performance<sup>379</sup>, 73,09 % of minority governments acted like that, delivering "good" results the same years when they acted. Those results, moreover, converge to the center: somehow good results (that is, fuzzy value 0,66, or partial membership in the "good results" set), is the modal value, or the most frequent occurrence.

As for the lagged effects (correlating a minority government during a given year with the economic results found the following year), the number of assessed performances is slightly less (216, or 94,74% of all minority governments)<sup>380</sup>, but proportions among assessed country-years seem very close to the "simultaneous" effects: 25%, 50% and 25% for each fuzzy value from 0 to 1. That means that generally "good" lagged results showed up in the 75% of the instances, of which two-thirds of the cases point to partial 0,66 membership.

That means a reasonable variety of performances for minority governments, mostly concentrated in intermediate scores, as reflected graphically in Figure 6 below. In other words, the three performance levels are not concentrated in one or other extreme, but rather centered in the intermediate value (0,66).

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<sup>379</sup> As conveyed by the very meaning of our fuzzy measurement.

<sup>380</sup> That smaller amount is mostly due to the forcible suppression of any results for 2018 that might have occurred (there are no performance data for 2019, which is outside our time range). The detailed account of such tallies is provided in Appendix A.3.2

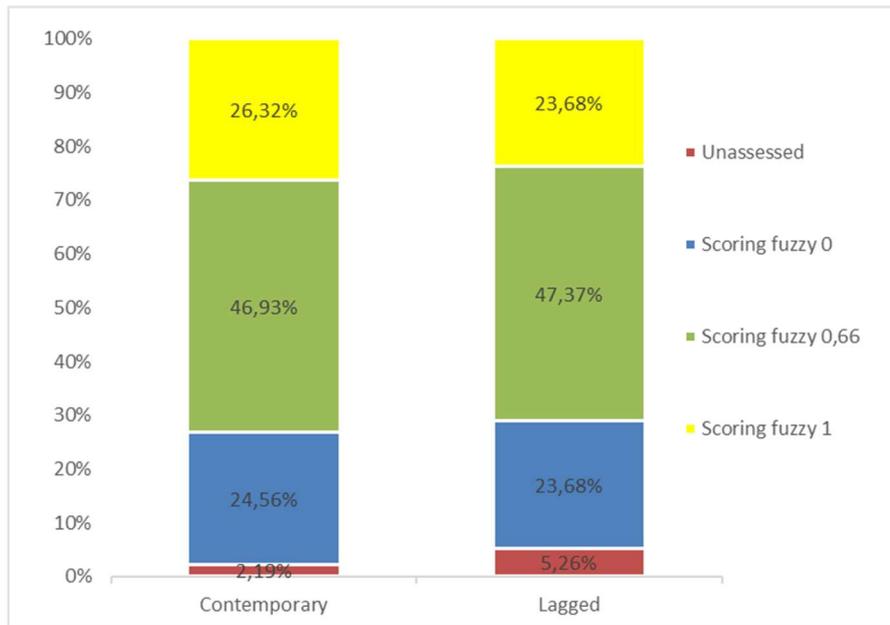


Figure 6 - Minority governments' performance – Contemporary (in the same year) and Lagged (in the following year) - Share of each performance level – in country-years

OBS: All governments counted as country-years  
 Source: The author

This overall pattern is also found in broadly every country: Figures 7 and 8 below show, for each one, the number of instances of “good” performance (that is, fuzzy values 0,66 and 1) above the horizontal axis, and those of “not good” results (fuzzy 0) below that line<sup>381</sup>.

<sup>381</sup> The distributional pattern along time is not presented here, since the performance values that could be retrieved were unevenly concentrated in more recent years: that would generate a misleading impression of ascending numbers for performances, while the smaller amounts in the beginning of the period studied were mainly due to data availability gaps.



Figure 7 - Minority governments' performance in the same year, in country-years – number of positive (fuzzy 0,66 and 1) and negative (fuzzy 0) results, by country

OBS: All governments counted as country-years  
 Source: The author

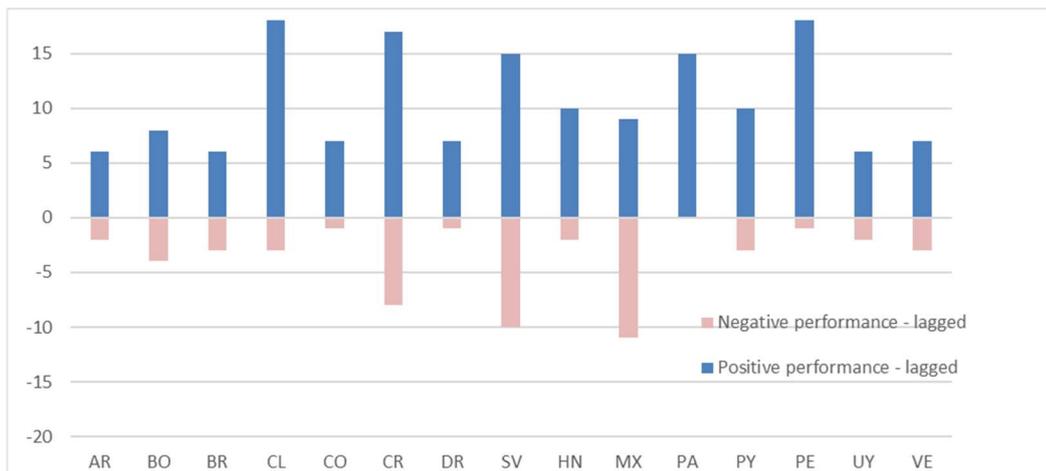


Figure 8 - Minority governments' lagged performance (in the following year) in country-years – number of positive (fuzzy 0,66 and 1) and negative (fuzzy 0) results, by country

OBS: All governments counted as country-years  
 Source: The author

Empirically, then, the difference between the share of good performances in the same year of government and those recorded one year after is very small (both in the regional average and within each country). Besides, the aggregate proportion of around 25% of “not good” performance seems strongly influenced by a high number of country-years shown in El Salvador and Mexico<sup>382</sup> - which suggests that there's a potential for even greater performance in minority settings that might be

<sup>382</sup> When excluding those two cases, minority governments would score negatively in 15,70% of country-years considered (15,28% in the case of lagged performance).

overshadowed by idiosyncratic factors in only two cases. This concentration of bad outcomes in Mexico, by the way, refutes the highly favourable expectations held by the case studies for that country (described in the last tranche of section 2.3.1), at least as far as macroeconomic results are concerned (although those failures do not necessarily affect other expected positive features of post-democratization minority expectations, such as political openness and inclusiveness).

If we then compare those findings with the performance of non-minority governments<sup>383</sup> reflected in Figure 9 below, the proportion of very good performances (fuzzy value 1) remains roughly the same *vis-à-vis* the minority ones, but the share of intermediate value rises around 10 % (fuzzy 0,66) at the expense of the lower results. That means majority governments show, in overall terms, grossly the same top performance, but they have significantly less negative performances (showing a bigger share for the intermediate stage). That shows that majority governments do outperform their minoritarian counterparts, but for a slight margin (around 10%) of intermediate results. Although other interpretations might be given to this number, it seems to us that this tiny difference is far from supporting the claim that majority governments *per se* are clearly advantageous in terms of policy results.

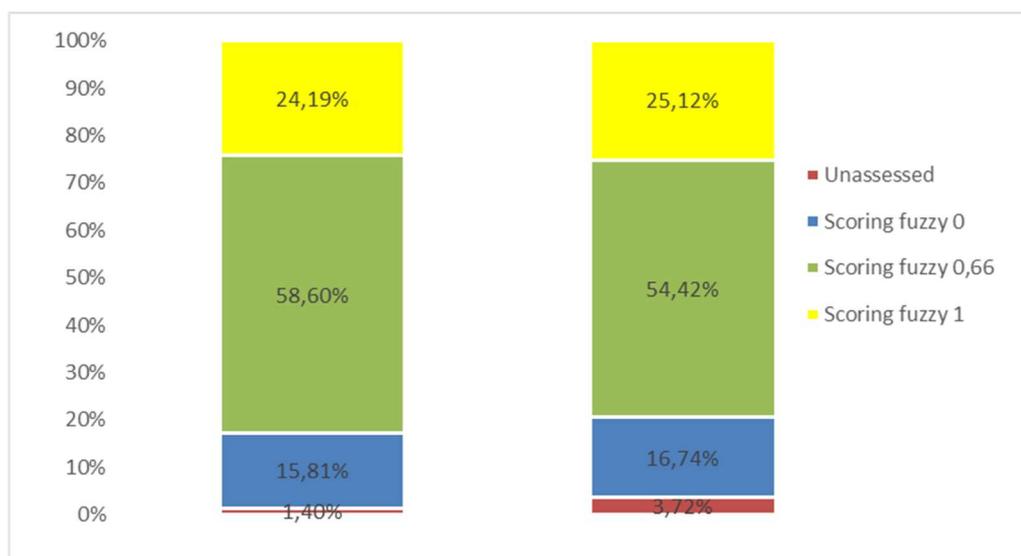


Figure 9 - Majority governments' performance – Contemporary (in the same year) and Lagged (in the following year) - Share of each performance level – in country-years

<sup>383</sup> That is, according to our criteria, those where the presidential cabinet coalition has more than half of the legislative seats both chambers (or in the only one, in unicameral systems). In our sample, those amount to 215 country-years (of which 212 had the available data for contemporary performance assessment, and 207 for lagged one). The comparison is therefore established on a very similar number of units of analysis, both for minority and non-minority governments.

Section 2.3.3 already stressed the regularity of minority governments as an empirical phenomenon and its frequent occurrence in Latin American presidentialism under normal circumstances. When we look into the policy results of those governments, assumptions around crisis and stalemates definitely collapse: besides existing in a considerable proportion of all presidential terms, minority governments do not show any particular tendency towards better or worse policy results (given the relatively balanced distribution of better- and worse-than-average results, which, perforce, is also the overall distribution of presidential governments at large). Those findings resist the comparison with majority governments' results, which accrue a very similar proportion of clearly good results than minoritarian ones, differing only in that they deliver some 10% less "bad" performances (that is, that 10% edge is filled with intermediate results). In other words, minority governments seem to govern and deliver diversified outcomes that cannot be associated with particularly good or bad circumstances emerging from this minority condition.

To that effect, we cannot measure our results against any previous theoretical expectations, since – as shown in section 1.3 – we found no more than a handful of studies that dealt with minority governments' substantive outcomes beyond fiscal deficits (and, among them, none covered presidential systems).

#### *In mandates*

Finally, it's relevant to show a similar descriptive assessment of minority governments' results when grouped into the continuous term segments (or "mandates") described in section 5.1.4, during which the office holder remained the same, and the causal conditions remained within the same membership range. Although some of the drills available for country-year results are not possible here (given the heterogeneity of time spans for each unit of analysis), a more general overview will still shed some light on the characteristics of such relationship.

*Table 14 - Minority governments' policy performance – empirical assessment – in mandates*

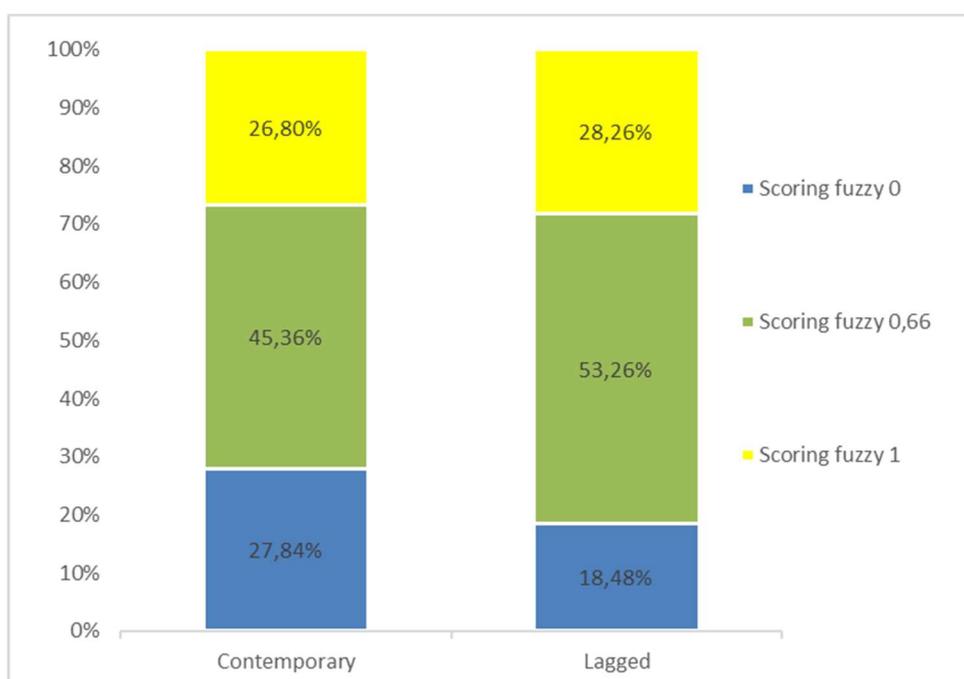
Total number of minority governments (A)	97
	<b>As % of A</b>

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Minority governments with assessed same-year performances (B)	97	100,00%
Performances scoring fuzzy 0	<b>27</b>	27,84%
Performances scoring fuzzy 0,66	<b>44</b>	45,36%
Performances scoring fuzzy 1	<b>26</b>	26,80%
<hr/>		
Minority governments with assessed lagged performances (C)	92	100,00%
Lagged performances scoring fuzzy 0	<b>17</b>	18,48%
Lagged performances scoring fuzzy 0,66	<b>49</b>	53,26%
Lagged performances scoring fuzzy 1	<b>26</b>	28,26%

*OBS: All governments counted as mandates or term segments, as specified in section 5.1.4. All available mandates had their respective values for the outcome, since the procedure for generating them inputted only the country-years that had available performance results.*

*Source: The author*



*Figure 10 - Minority governments' performance – Contemporary (in the same year) and Lagged (in the following year) - Share of each performance level – in mandates*

*Source: The author*

Table 14 and Figure 10 above show roughly the same distribution of policy outcomes as in country-years, even a little more concentrated in the middle point (fuzzy 0,66). Indeed, the share of low tail values (“bad” performance with fuzzy 0) component grows slightly (from 25,11% to 27,84%) in contemporary performance, but decreases in a significant proportion in lagged results (from 25,00% to 18,48%, with the increased shares evenly splitted between the intermediate and the top performance values), suggesting that adding a few more years to develop their policies enables minority governments to enhance their economic outcomes. This

reinforces the insights from the previous section: minority governments can perform as efficaciously as majority ones. In the next section, we begin the deployment of the empirical tests for possible enabling factors to that finding.

## 6.2 Empirical results for the causal analysis

As pointed in section 5.1.4, causal analysis is to be performed within a “mandate” or term segment framework, where the unit of analysis is not a fixed chronological variable (as in country-years), but a time span delimited, within each country, by the formal presidential term limits as well as the persistence of significantly similar values for the causal conditions.

### 6.2.1 Truth table inputs

Data on conditions and outcomes, both for the contemporary ones (outcomes produced in the same country-year as the government tenure) and for the lagged ones (those generated in the following year after the government acted) were codified in fuzzy values along two corresponding worksheets. The case matrixes with the composition of each of the four contexts<sup>384</sup>, as well as histograms for every condition and the outcome and scatterplots of conditions against the outcome (Mello, 2021, p. 113), are shown in section A.1.2 in Appendix 1, both for our chosen framework of mandates or term segments (as discussed in section 5.1.4) and for country-year. An exploratory look at the graphical display shows material variance to each condition and outcome among the periods considered.

*Prima facie*, the availability of 97 data points (92 for lagged performance) from where to assess causal pathways to policy performance is a promising starting point<sup>385</sup>. That seems compatible with the boundaries of extant QCA literature: in absolute terms an amount of 150 is considered a large-N QCA (Albala & Leal, 2022, p.100), while Melo (2011), in his survey of 120 contemporary QCA-based studies, finds that the median number of cases reaches the range of 20 to 30. Theoretically more important than the absolute number of cases is the ratio between cases and conditions, an essential factor to raise the possibility of the empirical distribution of

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<sup>384</sup> That is, contemporary results for the outcome, contemporary results for the negation of the outcome, lagged results for the outcome and lagged results for the negation of the outcome.

<sup>385</sup> Those values would be respectively 223 and 216 if the country-year time span was chosen.

cases across truth table rows not to generate too many empty rows (logical remainders). Mello (2021) finds that the ratio between cases and conditions in the literature oscillates from 4.1 to 5.3<sup>386</sup> from a sample of 50 or more cases using 5 “variables” (conditions). Since we’ll work on no more than 5 conditions, we may be reasonably confident that our study will keep well within the recommended limits.

### 6.2.2 Analysis of Necessity

Previously, we must analyze necessary conditions in a separate step before engaging in the truth table procedure (Mello, 2021 p. 117). To that end, the consistency threshold was set at the conventional 0,9 (Mello, 2021 p. 117; Duşa, 2019, p. 122; Albala & Leal, 2022, pp. 117-118)<sup>387</sup>; coverage and relevance of necessity (RoN) were set at the 0,6 level (Duşa, 2019, p. 122). The detailed results are shown in section A.1.3 in the Appendix 1.

As the tables show, there are no results that surpass the thresholds: isolated conditions do not overcome consistency; as for combinations, although a very few among them might outnumber the coverage standard by a slight margin, absolutely none could overcome the RoN parameter<sup>388</sup>, which formally denotes a trivialness of conditions<sup>389</sup>.

Looking at the data, it’s worth noting that combinations for the outcome (either contemporary or lagged) systematically score higher values than those who appear for its negation for both coverage and RoN.

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<sup>386</sup> Which fully applies to large-N QCA as well (Greckhamer & Misangyi & Fiss, 2013, p. 60). Marx (2010, p. 152-153) estimates in 0 the probability of finding a crisp-set QCA model simply on random data - that is, the model being unable to distinguish random from real data – where more than 50 cases deal with 6 “variables”.

<sup>387</sup> That is, no assessment of coverage and RoN was performed to any solution with consistency less than 0,9.

<sup>388</sup> Those same conclusions hold if we take the lighter hurdle of 0,5 for both parameters as suggested by Mello (2021, p. 118).

<sup>389</sup> There’s an interesting remark in that “the truth table algorithm in fsQCA, although it allocates cases to a unique row of the truth table on the basis of their having a score of over 0.5 in just one configuration, actually calculates the consistency and coverage indices for each configuration for all cases with non-zero membership, not just these strongest ones (Ragin, 2004)” (Cooper & Glaesser, 2011, p.42). We do not implement our analysis in Ragin’s fsQCA software, but we found no clear statement on whether Dusa’s QCA package in R uses the same procedure. So, it’s possible that the calculations arising from the package show the same leanings – what’s to say, these consistency scores found here may be numerically overestimated in face of the actual coexistence of causal conditions and outcomes. The empirical relevance of our causal conditions may be at least a bit larger than the numerical results provided by the QCA package.

The slate of conditions advanced by the hypotheses, organized into different configurations, is indeed present at more than half of the mandates where good results were produced (and at between 30% and 40% of term segments with bad results), in a quite regular fashion. Substantively, that suggests that the decisiveness and accountability factors are a non-negligible feature in the landscape of policy achievements, but not indispensable to reach them – in other words, other societal factors may instead be present that override the need for full decisiveness and accountability presence to generate good policy results. The difference in coverage between outcome and negation also suggests that those conditions are more closely associated with good results than with bad ones<sup>390</sup>. Here, a special remark can be made about two conditions that our modelling efforts stopped short of positing as necessary conditions to good policy outcomes: accountability (ACCT) did not emerge as such, neither did the absence of emergency conditions (LONG). That means a non-negligible share of good policy results happening even without accountability, or under exceptional mandate circumstances. This will have further analytical consequences that are discussed in section 6.3.3 (specially for the accountability condition).

### 6.2.3 Truth table construction – the cases and their demography

The final shape of the truth tables is deployed in Appendix A.1.4. Frequency threshold<sup>391</sup> was set as 3, following the theoretical advice to raise it in large-N studies, up from the usual value of 1, to “guard against the chance of misclassified cases” (Mello, 2021, p. 128; Greckhamer & Misangyi & Fiss, 2013, p. 54<sup>392</sup>), or to increase the likelihood of freeing truth table analysis from “exceptional cases or measurement errors” and include only empirically relevant rows (Rutten, 2020, p. 12<sup>393</sup>).

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<sup>390</sup> Greckhamer, Misangyi and Fiss (2013, p. 54) reckon that in large-N QCA studies coverage is “Relatively lower – large coverage desirable but not necessary”. Indeed, if coverage is seen – at least metaphorically – as “roughly as analogous to an overall R<sup>2</sup> in a regression analysis, it is worthwhile to remember that the explained variation is frequently quite low in regression-based organizational research – for the overall model specifications and particularly so for the substantive variables under study.” (p. 65) – a feature that may possibly be expected also in many other fields of study.

<sup>391</sup> “[T]he frequency cut-off *n.cut*, the minimum number of cases under which a configuration is declared as a remainder (the output value is assigned a “?” sign), even if it has a consistency score above the inclusion cut-off.” (Dusa, 2019, p. 157)

<sup>392</sup> As a precedent for the value (3 cases), see Fiss, 2011, p. 403.

<sup>393</sup> A simple inspection of the tables in section A.1.4 in Appendix 1 confirms that the frequency threshold chosen heeds Rutten’s (2020, p. 12) advice that its effects should “include at least 80 per cent of the cases but to always exclude sparsely populated truth-table rows”. Neither there

An exploratory glance at the distribution of cases in each of the four tables does not suggest the potential data-level traps mentioned by Mello (2021, p. 122): neither “many cases cluster in just a few rows of the truth table and the remaining rows are empty”, nor “each case has a ‘row of its own’ ”. Cases seem reasonably distributed among the rows: while there are some empty rows and others with one or two cases, a similarly large number of rows encompasses a considerable number of cases. As for the composition of those “crowded” rows, very few of them are packed with only one or two countries; most of them do encompass multiple mandates of the same country (usually in an uninterrupted sequence), but always with such clusters coming from two or more countries.

#### 6.2.4 Truth Table analysis

Sufficiency threshold was set as 0,8 (following guidance in Albala & Leal, 2022, pp. 117-118, Rutten, 2020, and Greckhamer & Misangyi & Fiss, 2013, p. 54). Preliminary results for sufficiency analysis are shown in Table 40 (section A.1.5 in Appendix 1), which encompasses all causal combinations that overcame the consistency threshold<sup>394</sup>. All solutions show strong proximity between the PRI indicator and the consistency value (PRI never being less than 80% of consistency), with little to suggest the simultaneous subset relations that might bring contradictory statements of sufficiency to an outcome and its negation at the same time (Mello, 2021, p. 113). Anyway, the threshold for PRI was set in 0,6<sup>395</sup>.

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are any theoretical reasons to postulate that any excluded case would represent cases that may be warranted due to a singularity in their empirical settings that might be important for the overall causal reasoning in a large-N QCA design, such as “vital niches or populations of relatively newly created” units of analysis (Greckhamer & Misangyi & Fiss, 2013, p. 67).

<sup>394</sup> Those who stayed short of the frequency threshold are marked with a “?” for outcome.

<sup>395</sup> Greckhamer, Furnari, Fiss and Aguilera (2018) suggest a 0,7 threshold. A few of the solutions listed fall short of that benchmark. However, the difference to that value was minimal in the solutions found (none below 6,5) and even those cases were equivalent to more than 80% of already high (> 0,8) consistency scores (which is another criterion offered by the same authors). For those reasons, we stick to the 0,6 threshold.

*In fuzzy set analysis, it is also important to consider PRI (proportional reduction in inconsistency) scores to avoid simultaneous subset relations of configurations in both the outcome and its absence. PRI consistency scores should be high and ideally not too far from raw consistency scores (e.g. 0.7); configurations with PRI scores below 0.5 indicate significant inconsistency. (Greckhamer & Furnari & Fiss & Aguilera, 2018, p. 489)*

Table 15 below brings a summary of the consistent solutions found in the truth table (all those who surpassed consistency and PRI thresholds), already discarding those that did not overcome the frequency threshold. This first table is not the overall solution to the truth table, but only a preliminary glance at its results, highlighting every individual line (that is, every empirically observed causal configuration) that overcame consistency, PRI and frequency requirements.

Table 15 – Truth table analysis - Consistent solutions found - summary

CONSISTENT SOLUTIONS FOUND – OUTCOME - CONTEMPORARY RESULTS				
CONSISTENT SOLUTION	n	incl	PRI	CASE LIST
(~PWRP* RECP * 40PCT)*~ACCT *LONG	7	0,9122	0,861	AR-MENEM-1-1-1990-1994,DR-MEJIA-1-2003-2004,MX-PENA_NIETO-1-2013-2017,MX-ZEDILLO-1-1998-1999,PE-BELAUNDE-1-1984-1984,SV-CALDERON_SOL-1-1994-1996,SV-SACA-2-2006-2008
(PWRP*RECP*40PC)*~ACCT*LONG	5	0,8755	0,8093	BR-SARNEY-1-1986-1986,HN-HERNANDEZ_ALVARADO-1-2-2018-2018,HN-MADURO_JOEST-1-2002-2005,HN-ZELAYA-1-2006-2008,PY-CARTES-1-2017-2018
(PWRP*RECP*40PC)*ACCT*LONG	8	0,8238	0,7385	CL-AYLWIN-1-1990-1993,CL-FREI-1-1994-1996,PA-PEREZ_BALLADARES-1-1995-1996,PA-PEREZ_BALLADARES-2-1997-1998,PE-HUMALA-1-2012-2013,PE-TOLEDO-1-2001-2004,PY-LUGO-1-2010-2011,PY-WASMOSY-1-1994-1997
CONSISTENT SOLUTIONS FOUND – OUTCOME – LAGGED RESULTS				
CONSISTENT SOLUTION	n	incl	PRI	CASE LIST
(~PWRP* RECP * ~40PCT)*~ACCT *LONG	8	0,8173	0,6689	BO-ESTENSORRO-1-1986-1989,BO-SUAZO-1-1984-1984,DR-FERNANDEZ_REYNA-1-1-1997-2000,DR-FERNANDEZ_REYNA-2-1-2005-2006,SV-CALDERON_SOL-2-1997-1999,SV-DUARTE_FUENTES-1-1988-1988,SV-FLORES_PEREZ-1-2000-2003,SV-SACA-1-2004-2005
(~PWRP*RECP*~40PC)*ACCT*LONG	4	0,857	0,6724	CR-PACHECO-1-2002-2003,CR-PACHECO-2-2004-2005,CR-SOLIS-1-2017-2017,VE-CALDERA-1-1994-1994
(~PWRP*RECP*40PC)*~ACCT*LONG	7	0,8059	0,7326	AR-MENEM-1-1-1990-1994,DR-MEJIA-1-2003-2004,MX-PENA_NIETO-1-2013-2017,MX-ZEDILLO-1-1998-1999,PE-BELAUNDE-1-1984-1984,SV-CALDERON_SOL-1-1994-1996,SV-SACA-2-2006-2008
(PWRP*~RECP*40PC)*ACCT*LONG	7	0,8234	0,7504	CL-BACHELET-1-1-2006-2009,CL-FREI-2-1997-1999,CL-LAGOS-1-2000-2005,CL-PINERA-1-1-2010-2010,CL-PINERA-1-2-2011-2012,CL-PINERA-1-3-2013-2013,UY-SANGUINETTI-1-1-1985-1989
(PWRP*RECP*~40PC)*ACCT*LONG	14	0,9178	0,8634	BR-COLLOR-1-1990-1991,BR-COLLOR-2-1992-1992,BR-COLLOR-3-1993-1993,CO-URIBE-1-1-2003-2003,CO-URIBE-1-2-2004-2006,CO-URIBE-2-1-2007-2008,PA-MARTINELLI-1-2012-2013,PA-MOSCOSO-1-2000-2003,PA-VARELA-1-2014-2016,PE-GARCIA-2-1-2007-2011,PE-HUMALA-2-2014-2016,PE-KUCZYNSKI-1-2017-2017,PE-TOLEDO-2-2005-2006,PY-DUARTE_FRUTOS-1-2004-2008
CONSISTENT SOLUTIONS FOUND – NEGATION OF THE OUTCOME - CONTEMPORARY RESULTS				
CONSISTENT SOLUTION	n	incl	PRI	CASE LIST
(~PWRP*~RECP *~40PCT)*~ACCT *LONG	3	0,8977	0,8252	SV-FUNES-2-2012-2012,SV-FUNES-3-2013-2013,SV-SANCHES_CEREN-1-2014-2018
CONSISTENT SOLUTIONS FOUND – NEGATION OF THE OUTCOME - LAGGED RESULTS				
CONSISTENT SOLUTION	n	incl	PRI	CASE LIST

*Source: The author*

*Obs: PWRP: Powerful President (condition regarding Presidential Powers); RECP: Reconcilable Party Goals (condition regarding Reconcilability of Party Goals); 40PC: Government holds 40 pct or more of relevant houses (condition regarding Legislative Thresholds); ACCT: Accountability (condition); LONG: Excludes one-year mandates: in election years; or headed by vice-presidents in lieu of the elected president; or headed by nominees chosen by any method to replace an elected slate who didn't finish its full term; OUT = OUTCOME (outcome); n: number of cases in each line; incl: consistency score; PRI: proportional reduction of inconsistency score)*

Those first results may, on a preliminary basis, shed some light on the substantive issues at hand (to be further refined by sufficiency analysis)<sup>396</sup>, generating a few insights for substantive theory assessments. The first snapshot is the relatively small number of situations in which the causal factors were consistently found in association with the outcomes (which will appear in a more precise way in the low coverage findings explained below). That is coherent with the absence of necessary conditions already pointed on section 6.2.2, and suggests that other social and economic factors, other than government decisiveness and accountability, may prevail in a significant share of instances of economic policy performance.

For positive outcomes, several configurations repeated in the contemporary and lagged assessments, suggesting factors with immediate and persistent effects on results; however, the most populated one appears only in lagged settings, which clearly pointing out that there are combined causal combinations that have different time requirements to prevail. It becomes evident that the “LONG” condition (that is, the absence of exceptional circumstances in presidential tenure) is extremely important, showing up in all consistent solution – more clearly, those exceptional circumstances are symptoms of unsurmountable hurdles to consistent good policy performance in the given country whenever they happen. Another clear trend is that at least one of the decisiveness factors is present in each configuration (while accountability is present on part of them, being majoritarian in the number of cases for lagged results, but not for contemporary cases), which broadly concurs with the general bearings of the hypotheses.

Consistent negative results are solely populated by Salvadoran cases, repeating configurations in contemporary and lagged settings (suggesting that maladjustment features have both immediate and persistent features). Configurations conform to theoretical expectations: both accountability and decisiveness are

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<sup>396</sup> Those preliminary comments, based on substantive features of the configurations, follow the practice of Fiss (2011).

empirically absent in the cases found<sup>397</sup>. The fact that the only three cases found are limited to one single country jeopardizes any preliminary attempt at generalization at this point, though.

### 6.2.5 Analysis of Sufficiency

The minimized solutions extracted from the truth table are fully displayed in Tables 41, 42, 43 and 44 in section A.1.5 in Appendix 1<sup>398</sup>. Parsimonious and intermediate solutions were obtained through ordinary Standard Analysis (SA), which incorporates into the minimization algorithm all possible combinations for the counterfactuals (Mello, 2021, p. 127; Duşa, 2019, pp. 183-184)<sup>399</sup>. The combined minimized solutions show a decrease in consistency and PRI scores vis-à-vis the individual truth table lines (configurations), which can bring some combined solutions below the 0,8 consistency scores that the algorithm enforces for truth table lines (consistency, however, never falls under 0,7; PRI never falls under 0,58, except in the negation analysis of lagged results where it falls to around 0,472; PRI values amount always to at least 65% of the correspondent consistency score)<sup>400</sup>. Thus, while we draw conclusions initially from those solutions surpassing the chosen thresholds, we further complement the analysis using the other combined solutions.

The “intermediate” solution includes remainders in the minimization making the implicit assumption that, should it be possible to empirically observe these configurations, they would have a positive output, given the established theoretical

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<sup>397</sup> Here, the “LONG” factor is trivial, since there are no exceptional conditions recorded for any recorded mandate in El Salvador.

<sup>398</sup> The list of cases for each minimized solution is shown only in this section, though.

<sup>399</sup> Minimization by Enhanced Standard Analysis (ESA) was attempted using theoretical expressions to portray untenable assumptions, with very marginal changes in the overall results. So, we chose to pursue analysis through the ordinary Standard Analysis framework. Details of ESA assessments and its minimization results are displayed in the last tranche of section A.1.5 in Appendix 1.

<sup>400</sup> In dealing and accepting such apparent discrepancy we follow Mello (2021, p. 127), who warns that threshold cut-offs are to be set “before the minimization” specifically to “indicate which rows of the truth table should be treated as positive instances of the outcome and included in the analysis”. This acceptance of only one gatekeeping point for parameters of fit (that is, when building the truth table) is reflected also in the implementation procedure followed by the authors of R QCA package, when they reiterate that “[p]revious versions of the package QCA placed the exclusion process in the minimization phase itself, as an argument called `exclude` in function `minimize()`. Starting with version 3.7, this argument has been moved to function `truthTable()`, where it more naturally belongs.” (Dusa, 2025A, webpage “7.6 Excluding configurations”). In Tables 16 to 19, minimization solutions produced by the QCA package that did not reach 0,8 consistency ratios are printed in italics.

corpus that guides the research. (Duşa, 2019, p. 173). Those assumptions are called directional expectations, and were specified here through conditional expressions directly reflecting the hypotheses sketched in section 4.1 above. They are, for positive outcomes: ["PWPR+RECP+40PC" \* "ACCT" \* "LONG"]; and for their negation: ["PWPR+RECP+40PC" \* "~ACCT" \* "~LONG"]<sup>401</sup>. Those logical expressions convey our best assessment of the plausibility of all included simplifying assumptions, on which we claim their inclusion on theoretical grounds (Greckhamer & Misangyi & Fiss, 2013, p. 69), including the joint insertion of all decisiveness factors (PWPR, RECP, 40PC) as mutually substitutable, tending to their hypothesized INUS status. By adhering strictly to the hypotheses, we make as parsimonious a set of assumptions as possible, avoiding to postulate anything but the core of our theoretical reasoning.

Under the abovementioned settings, the minimization procedure for those eligible configurations yielded the results shown in the Tables 16 to 19 below, which sequentially summarize the outputs for the conservative, the parsimonious and the intermediate solutions (the full minimization results, including printouts from the R package, are displayed in section A.1.5 in Appendix 1). Those combined solutions who fall below either the consistency or the PRI thresholds, as discussed above, are printed in italics.

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<sup>401</sup> So, the directional expectations do not incur in the risk of inadvertently using contradictory assumptions for the same counterfactual treating them as sufficient for the outcome and the non-outcome (Dusa, 2019, p. 193). Besides, this study encompasses no “impossible” counterfactuals in the form of causal configurations that could not be found empirically due to some substantive reason (Dusa, 2019, p. 137), neither “incoherent” counterfactuals (remainders that do not contain non-trivial necessary conditions or a necessary condition for the outcome having its negation as sufficient for the same outcome - Dusa, 2019, p. 138, 182, since no necessary conditions were actually found.

Table 16 - Minimization for the outcome – contemporary results

CONSERVATIVE SOLUTION				
	ConS	PRI	CovS	Cov.u
PWRP*RECP*40PC*LONG <sup>402</sup>	0.850	0.780	0.232	0.093
RECP*40PC*~ACCT*LONG <sup>403</sup>	0.887	0.844	0.179	0.040
<b>Overall solution ( "-&gt; OUTCOME")</b>	<b>0.861</b>	<b>0.807</b>	<b>0.272</b>	
PARSIMONIOUS SOLUTION				
	ConS	PRI	CovS	Cov.u
40PC*~ACCT <sup>404</sup>	0.726	0.643	0.228	0.069
PWRP*RECP*40PC <sup>405</sup>	0.782	0.673	0.260	0.102
<b>Overall solution ( "-&gt; OUTCOME")</b>	<b>0.743</b>	<b>0.655</b>	<b>0.329</b>	
INTERMEDIATE SOLUTION				
	ConS	PRI	CovS	Cov.u
PWRP*RECP*40PC*LONG <sup>406</sup>	0.850	0.780	0.232	0.093
RECP*40PC*~ACCT*LONG <sup>407</sup>	0.887	0.844	0.179	0.040
<b>Overall solution ( "-&gt; OUTCOME")</b>	<b>0.861</b>	<b>0.807</b>	<b>0.272</b>	

Source: The author

Obs: PWRP: Powerful President (condition regarding Presidential Powers); RECP: Reconcilable Party Goals (condition regarding Reconcilability of Party Goals); 40PC: Government holds 40 pct or more of relevant houses (condition regarding Legislative Thresholds); ACCT: Accountability (condition); LONG: Excludes one-year mandates: in election years; or headed by vice-presidents in lieu of the elected president; or headed by nominees chosen by any method to replace an elected slate who didn't finish its full term; OUT = OUTCOME; inclS: consistency score; covS: raw coverage for the coverage score for the individual solution and the solutions taken as a whole.

Obs: Full minimization results, including printouts from the R package, are displayed in section A.1.5 in Appendix 1

<sup>402</sup> CASES: BR-SARNEY-1-1986-1986,HN-HERNANDEZ\_ALVARADO-1-2-2018-2018,HN-MADURO\_JOEST-1-2002-2005,HN-ZELAYA-1-2006-2008,PY-CARTES-1-2017-2018; CL-AYLWIN-1-1990-1993,CL-FREI-1-1994-1996,PA-PEREZ\_BALLADARES-1-1995-1996,PA-PEREZ\_BALLADARES-2-1997-1998,PE-HUMALA-1-2012-2013,PE-TOLEDO-1-2001-2004,PY-LUGO-1-2010-2011,PY-WASMOSY-1-1994-1997

<sup>403</sup> CASES: AR-MENEM-1-1-1990-1994,DR-MEJIA-1-2003-2004,MX-PENA\_NIETO-1-2013-2017, MX-ZEDILLO-1-1998-1999, PE-BELAUNDE-1-1984-1984,SV-CALDERON\_SOL-1-1994-1996,SV-SACA-2-2006-2008; BR-SARNEY-1-1986-1986, HN-HERNANDEZ\_ALVARADO-1-2-2018-2018, HN-MADURO\_JOEST-1-2002-2005,HN-ZELAYA-1-2006-2008, PY-CARTES-1-2017-2018

<sup>404</sup> CASES: AR-MENEM-1-1-1990-1994,DR-MEJIA-1-2003-2004,MX-PENA\_NIETO-1-2013-2017, MX-ZEDILLO-1-1998-1999,PE-BELAUNDE-1-1984-1984,SV-CALDERON\_SOL-1-1994-1996,SV-SACA-2-2006-2008; BR-SARNEY-1-1986-1986,HN-HERNANDEZ\_ALVARADO-1-2-2018-2018,HN-MADURO\_JOEST-1-2002-2005,HN-ZELAYA-1-2006-2008,PY-CARTES-1-2017-2018

<sup>405</sup> CASES: BR-SARNEY-1-1986-1986,HN-HERNANDEZ\_ALVARADO-1-2-2018-2018,HN-MADURO\_JOEST-1-2002-2005,HN-ZELAYA-1-2006-2008,PY-CARTES-1-2017-2018; CL-AYLWIN-1-1990-1993,CL-FREI-1-1994-1996,PA-PEREZ\_BALLADARES-1-1995-1996,PA-PEREZ\_BALLADARES-2-1997-1998,PE-HUMALA-1-2012-2013,PE-TOLEDO-1-2001-2004,PY-LUGO-1-2010-2011,PY-WASMOSY-1-1994-1997

<sup>406</sup> CASES: The same as the corresponding configuration in conservative solution

<sup>407</sup> CASES: The same as the corresponding configuration in conservative solution

Table 17 - Minimization for the outcome – lagged results

<b>CONSERVATIVE SOLUTION</b>				
	<b>ConS</b>	<b>PRI</b>	<b>CovS</b>	<b>Cov.u</b>
~PWRP*RECP*~ACCT*LONG <sup>408</sup>	0.812	0.704	0.180	0.118
RECP*~40PC*ACCT*LONG <sup>409</sup>	0.924	0.875	0.230	0.200
PWRP*~RECP*40PC*ACCT*LONG <sup>410</sup>	0.823	0.750	0.178	0.146
<b>Overall solution ( “-&gt; OUTCOME_LAGGED”)</b>	<b>0.877</b>	<b>0.819</b>	<b>0.527</b>	
<b>PARSIMONIOUS SOLUTION</b>				
	<b>ConS</b>	<b>PRI</b>	<b>CovS</b>	<b>Cov.u</b>
PWRP*~RECP*LONG <sup>411</sup>	0.836	0.713	0.346	0.166
RECP*~40PC*LONG <sup>412</sup>	0.894	0.838	0.313	0.146
~PWRP*RECP*~ACCT <sup>413</sup>	0.791	0.671	0.216	0.016
~PWRP*40PC*~ACCT <sup>414</sup>	0.819	0.744	0.130	0.018
<b>Overall solutions ( “-&gt; OUTCOME_LAGGED”)</b>	<b>0.844</b>	<b>0.772</b>	<b>0.606</b>	
	<b>0.853</b>	<b>0.788</b>	<b>0.608</b>	
<b>INTERMEDIATE SOLUTION</b>				
	<b>ConS</b>	<b>PRI</b>	<b>CovS</b>	<b>Cov.u</b>
~PWRP*RECP*~ACCT*LONG <sup>415</sup>	0.812	0.704	0.180	0.118
RECP*~40PC*ACCT*LONG <sup>416</sup>	0.924	0.875	0.230	0.200
PWRP*~RECP*40PC*ACCT*LONG <sup>417</sup>	0.823	0.750	0.178	0.146
<b>Overall solution ( “-&gt; OUTCOME_LAGGED”)</b>	<b>0.877</b>	<b>0.819</b>	<b>0.527</b>	

<sup>408</sup> CASES: BO-ESTENSORRO-1-1986-1989,BO-SUAZO-1-1984-1984,DR-FERNANDEZ\_REYNA-1-1-1997-2000,DR-FERNANDEZ\_REYNA-2-1-2005-2006,SV-CALDERON\_SOL-2-1997-1999,SV-DUARTE\_FUENTES-1-1988-1988,SV-FLORES\_PEREZ-1-2000-2003,SV-SACA-1-2004-2005; AR-MENEM-1-1-1990-1994,DR-MEJIA-1-2003-2004,MX-PENA\_NIETO-1-2013-2017,MX-ZEDILLO-1-1998-1999,PE-BELAUNDE-1-1984-1984,SV-CALDERON\_SOL-1-1994-1996,SV-SACA-2-2006-2008

<sup>409</sup> CASES: CR-PACHECO-1-2002-2003,CR-PACHECO-2-2004-2005,CR-SOLIS-1-2017-2017,VE-CALDERA-1-1994-1994; BR-COLLOR-1-1990-1991,BR-COLLOR-2-1992-1992,BR-COLLOR-3-1993-1993,CO-URIBE-1-1-2003-2003,CO-URIBE-1-2-2004-2006,CO-URIBE-2-1-2007-2008,PA-MARTINELLI-1-2012-2013,PA-MOSCOSO-1-2000-2003,PA-VARELA-1-2014-2016,PE-GARCIA-2-1-2007-2011,PE-HUMALA-2-2014-2016,PE-KUCZYNSKI-1-2017-2017,PE-TOLEDO-2-2005-2006,PY-DUARTE\_FRUTOS-1-2004-2008

<sup>410</sup> CASES: CL-BACHELET-1-1-2006-2009,CL-FREI-2-1997-1999,CL-LAGOS-1-2000-2005,CL-PINERA-1-1-2010-2010,CL-PINERA-1-2-2011-2012,CL-PINERA-1-3-2013-2013,UY-SANGUINETTI-1-1-1985-1989

<sup>411</sup> CASES: CL-BACHELET-1-1-2006-2009,CL-FREI-2-1997-1999,CL-LAGOS-1-2000-2005,CL-PINERA-1-1-2010-2010,CL-PINERA-1-2-2011-2012,CL-PINERA-1-3-2013-2013,UY-SANGUINETTI-1-1-1985-1989

<sup>412</sup> CASES: BO-ESTENSORRO-1-1986-1989,BO-SUAZO-1-1984-1984,DR-FERNANDEZ\_REYNA-1-1-1997-2000, DR-FERNANDEZ\_REYNA-2-1-2005-2006,SV-CALDERON\_SOL-2-1997-1999,SV-DUARTE\_FUENTES-1-1988-1988,SV-FLORES\_PEREZ-1-2000-2003,SV-SACA-1-2004-2005; CR-PACHECO-1-2002-2003,CR-PACHECO-2-2004-2005,CR-SOLIS-1-2017-2017,VE-CALDERA-1-1994-1994; BR-COLLOR-1-1990-1991,BR-COLLOR-2-1992-1992,BR-COLLOR-3-1993-1993,CO-URIBE-1-1-2003-2003,CO-URIBE-1-2-2004-2006,CO-URIBE-2-1-2007-2008,PA-MARTINELLI-1-2012-2013,PA-MOSCOSO-1-2000-2003,PA-VARELA-1-2014-2016,PE-GARCIA-2-1-2007-2011,PE-HUMALA-2-2014-2016,PE-KUCZYNSKI-1-2017-2017,PE-TOLEDO-2-2005-2006,PY-DUARTE\_FRUTOS-1-2004-2008

<sup>413</sup> CASES: BO-ESTENSORRO-1-1986-1989,BO-SUAZO-1-1984-1984,DR-FERNANDEZ\_REYNA-1-1-1997-2000,DR-FERNANDEZ\_REYNA-2-1-2005-2006,SV-CALDERON\_SOL-2-1997-1999,SV-DUARTE\_FUENTES-1-1988-1988,SV-FLORES\_PEREZ-1-2000-2003,SV-SACA-1-2004-2005; AR-MENEM-1-1-1990-1994,DR-MEJIA-1-2003-2004,MX-PENA\_NIETO-1-2013-2017,MX-ZEDILLO-1-1998-1999,PE-BELAUNDE-1-1984-1984,SV-CALDERON\_SOL-1-1994-1996,SV-SACA-2-2006-2008

<sup>414</sup> CASES: AR-MENEM-1-1-1990-1994,DR-MEJIA-1-2003-2004,MX-PENA\_NIETO-1-2013-2017,MX-ZEDILLO-1-1998-1999,PE-BELAUNDE-1-1984-1984,SV-CALDERON\_SOL-1-1994-1996,SV-SACA-2-2006-2008

<sup>415</sup> CASES: The same as the corresponding configuration in conservative solution.

<sup>416</sup> CASES: The same as the corresponding configuration in conservative solution.

<sup>417</sup> CASES: The same as the corresponding configuration in conservative solution.

Source: The author

Obs: PWRP: Powerful President (condition regarding Presidential Powers); RECP: Reconcilable Party Goals (condition regarding Reconcilability of Party Goals); 40PC: Government holds 40 pct or more of relevant houses (condition regarding Legislative Thresholds); ACCT: Accountability (condition); LONG: Excludes one-year mandates: in election years; or headed by vice-presidents in lieu of the elected president; or headed by nominees chosen by any method to replace an elected slate who didn't finish its full term; OUT = OUTCOME; inclS: consistency score; covS: raw coverage for the coverage score for the individual solution and the solutions taken as a whole;

Obs: Full minimization results, including printouts from the R package, are displayed in section A.1.5 in Appendix I

Table 18 - Minimization for the negation of the outcome – contemporary results

<b>CONSERVATIVE SOLUTION</b>				
	<b>ConS</b>	<b>PRI</b>	<b>CovS</b>	<b>Cov.u</b>
~PWRP*~RECP*~40PC*~ACCT* LONG <sup>418</sup>	0.898	0.825	0.122	-
<b>Overall solution ( "-&gt; ~OUTCOME")</b>	<b>0.898</b>	<b>0.825</b>	<b>0.122</b>	
<b>PARSIMONIOUS SOLUTION</b>				
	<b>ConS</b>	<b>PRI</b>	<b>CovS</b>	<b>Cov.u</b>
~RECP*~ACCT <sup>419</sup>	0.745	0.584	0.340	-
<b>Overall solution ( "-&gt; ~OUTCOME")</b>	<b>0.745</b>	<b>0.584</b>	<b>0.340</b>	
<b>INTERMEDIATE SOLUTION</b>				
	<b>ConS</b>	<b>PRI</b>	<b>CovS</b>	<b>Cov.u</b>
~PWRP*~RECP*~ACCT*LONG <sup>420</sup>	0.801	0.680	0.279	-
<b>Combined solutions ( "-&gt; ~OUTCOME")</b>	<b>0.801</b>	<b>0.680</b>	<b>0.279</b>	

Source: The author

Obs: PWRP: Powerful President (condition regarding Presidential Powers); RECP: Reconcilable Party Goals (condition regarding Reconcilability of Party Goals); 40PC: Government holds 40 pct or more of relevant houses (condition regarding Legislative Thresholds); ACCT: Accountability (condition); LONG: Excludes one-year mandates: in election years; or headed by vice-presidents in lieu of the elected president; or headed by nominees chosen by any method to replace an elected slate who didn't finish its full term; OUT = OUTCOME; inclS: consistency score; covS: raw coverage for the coverage score for the individual solution and the solutions taken as a whole;

Obs: Full minimization results, including printouts from the R package, are displayed in section A.1.5 in Appendix I

<sup>418</sup> CASES: SV-FUNES-2-2012-2012,SV-FUNES-3-2013-2013,SV-SANCHES\_CEREN-1-2014-2018

<sup>419</sup> CASES: SV-FUNES-2-2012-2012,SV-FUNES-3-2013-2013,SV-SANCHES\_CEREN-1-2014-2018

<sup>420</sup> CASES: SV-FUNES-2-2012-2012,SV-FUNES-3-2013-2013,SV-SANCHES\_CEREN-1-2014-2018

Table 19 - Minimization for the negation of the outcome – lagged results

<b>CONSERVATIVE SOLUTION</b>				
	<b>ConS</b>	<b>PRI</b>	<b>CovS</b>	<b>Cov.u</b>
$\sim$ PWRP* $\sim$ RECP* $\sim$ 40PC* $\sim$ ACCT* LONG <sup>421</sup>	0.866	0.706	0.146	-
<b>Overall solution ( “-&gt; <math>\sim</math>OUTCOME_LAGGED”)</b>	<b>0.866</b>	<b>0.706</b>	<b>0.146</b>	

<b>PARSIMONIOUS SOLUTION</b>				
	<b>ConS</b>	<b>PRI</b>	<b>CovS</b>	<b>Cov.u</b>
$\sim$ RECP* $\sim$ ACCT <sup>422</sup>	0.720	0.472	0.384	-
<b>Overall solution ( “-&gt; <math>\sim</math>OUTCOME_LAGGED”)</b>	<b>0.720</b>	<b>0.472</b>	<b>0.384</b>	

<b>INTERMEDIATE SOLUTION</b>				
	<b>ConS</b>	<b>PRI</b>	<b>CovS</b>	<b>Cov.u</b>
$\sim$ PWRP* $\sim$ RECP* $\sim$ ACCT*LONG <sup>423</sup>	0.736	0.501	0.235	-
<b>Overall solution ( “-&gt; <math>\sim</math>OUTCOME_LAGGED”)</b>	<b>0.753</b>	<b>0.538</b>	<b>0.300</b>	

Source: The author

Obs: PWRP: Powerful President (condition regarding Presidential Powers); RECP: Reconcilable Party Goals (condition regarding Reconcilability of Party Goals); 40PC: Government holds 40 pct or more of relevant houses (condition regarding Legislative Thresholds); ACCT: Accountability (condition); LONG: Excludes one-year mandates: in election years; or headed by vice-presidents in lieu of the elected president; or headed by nominees chosen by any method to replace an elected slate who didn't finish its full term; OUT = OUTCOME; inclS: consistency score; covS: raw coverage for the coverage score for the individual solution and the solutions taken as a whole;

Obs: Full minimization results, including printouts from the R package, are displayed in section A.1.5 in Appendix 1

## 6.3 Discussion

### 6.3.1 Substantive results

Following the theoretical trend described in Mello (2021, pp. 128 *et. seqs* , 174 *et. seqs.*), we concentrate on the “intermediate” solutions for causal analysis, since it has the potential to capture the most of “context and background conditions” in the specific empirical reality available to our observation<sup>424</sup>. Having said that, any

<sup>421</sup> CASES: SV-FUNES-2-2012-2012,SV-FUNES-3-2013-2013,SV-SANCHES\_CEREN-1-2014-2017

<sup>422</sup> CASES: SV-FUNES-2-2012-2012,SV-FUNES-3-2013-2013,SV-SANCHES\_CEREN-1-2014-2017

<sup>423</sup> CASES: SV-FUNES-2-2012-2012,SV-FUNES-3-2013-2013,SV-SANCHES\_CEREN-1-2014-2017

<sup>424</sup> "Published studies typically emphasize a single solution type in their substantive interpretation - most often the intermediate solution because it allows researchers to determine the treatment of logical remainders based on their theoretical expectations and substantive knowledge of the research area." (Mello, 2021, p. 133)

Distinguishing between easy and difficult counterfactuals allows establishment of two kinds of solutions. The first is a parsimonious solution that includes all simplifying assumptions regardless of whether they are based on easy or difficult counterfactuals. The second is an

significant differences with the other two solutions (specially the most restricted “conservative” one<sup>425</sup>) will be appraised for final analysis<sup>426</sup>. Section 6.3.2 below will display some empirical examples to the main causal paths assessed here.

### *Positive outcomes show causal relevance*

Positive outcomes (contemporary and lagged) show extremely relevant causal features, in which intermediate and conservative solutions fully overlap<sup>427</sup>. First, LONG is present in every sufficient configuration found in the sample, meaning that exceptional mandate circumstances that entail political instability<sup>428</sup> mostly jeopardize good policy results<sup>429</sup> (although in necessity tests that condition does not overcome the RoN parameter, which precludes calling LONG a formally necessary condition). Besides, all solutions have widespread case lists across countries, discarding fears that idiosyncratic features of any given polity might bias the analysis towards specific explanations.

### *Contemporary positive outcomes*

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*intermediate solution that only includes simplifying assumptions based on easy counterfactuals.*  
[3]

[3] *A third solution, of course, is the most complex one that includes neither easy nor difficult counterfactuals. However, such a solution is usually needlessly complex and provides rather little insight into causal configurations.* (Fiss, 2011, p. 403)

*To be short, we focus on the intermediate solution, as it is the most frequently used solution type. It is also a good starting point to investigate stability of the solutions given that the intermediate solution is a midpoint between the parsimonious and the complex solutions.* (Emmenegger & Schraff & Walter, 2014, p. 21)

*En cuanto a las soluciones, la tendencia actual se inclina a aceptar la solución intermedia como la más apropiada. No obstante, ello no reduce de ninguna manera el valor explicativo de las soluciones complejas y más parsimoniosas, que deben incluirse en los resultados del trabajo, aunque a efectos de interpretación se opte por prestar mayor atención a la solución intermedia.* (Medina & Ortiz & Álamos-Concha & Rihoux, 2017, p. 185)

<sup>425</sup> The one emerging only from the empirical rows that are associated with a positive outcome - i.e., making no assumptions on empty rows or counterfactuals and thus treat all remainder rows as false (Mello, 2021, p. 128).

<sup>426</sup> Much less emphasis is given to the “parsimonious” solution, due to its reliance on automatic assignment of values to counterfactuals, solely on the basis of whether the remainders enable further minimization, aiming for the least complex solution in mathematical terms (Mello, 2021, p. 129)

<sup>427</sup> That saves us from any concern about the occasional unplausibility of simplifying assumptions biasing the interpretation of results (Greckhamer & Misangyi & Fiss, 2013, p. 69)

<sup>428</sup> As we explained in section 3.4, that means “lame duck” presidents and those who stood in to fill in the position after extreme instability forced the ousting of the elected president (which, in our specific sample, includes the vice-presidents who took over their running mates’ position).

<sup>429</sup> In practice, no instance of that kind of exceptional tenure will have to be submitted to further consideration.

For contemporary results, two alternatives were found for getting good policy results in the same years as the mandates: one which featured all decisiveness factors together (PWRP, RECP, 40PC), irrespective of accountability considerations, and a second one where only two were present (RECP and 40PC) but accountability was conspicuously absent ( $\sim$ ACCT). Those two paths together produced a 0,272 coverage, and they concur in emphasizing the prompt ability for swift, decisive action; that might happen either by the president having all tools to deal with congress, even a powerful one who provides accountability, or with a weak parliament (unable to generate accountability) amenable to policy-based or other kinds of negotiation under conditions not too much stringent for the executive (that is, the president having to add less than 10% of the chambers to get majorities, among parties who are open to trade-offs and not very keen on pushing the executive by oversight actions). Indeed, presidential powers and (lack of) accountability substitute for each other in the configurations, which reinforces the association of these kinds of solutions with the space for quick president-driven action: either the president has the levers to agenda-setting or the parliament is less able to articulate itself as a countervailing power (or both)<sup>430</sup>. The list of cases does not point to any discernible pattern of crisis-ridden, acute moments (in fact, most of the mandates under consideration spread across several years, often the whole presidential terms).

As for coverage, the 0,272 score might at first glance suggest a limited empirical relevance. However, this first approach deserves a closer assessment. In the literature, Keudel-Kaiser (2016, p. 357) collates several fsQCA studies where coverages ranging from 60% to 79% were considered as “satisfying” and “fairly good” results, but other far more modest scores are seen with respect: Cooper and Glaesser (2011, p. 34) settle for solutions around 40% in coverage; Ragin (2008, p. 64) assigns to a score of 0,2219 the nature of “a substantial proportion of the outcome”; Pérez-Liñan (2006) offers substantive interpretation out of solutions showing a 0,26 coverage. In a broader theoretical sense, Greckhamer, Misangyi and Fiss (2013, pp. 54 and 65-66) warn that in large-N QCA a large coverage is desirable, but not necessary, due to greater likelihood of other causal paths to emerge in larger sets of potentially more diverse cases<sup>431</sup>. Looking at the concrete results found here, it’s

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<sup>430</sup> Indeed, most cases overlap: the president does have significant powers, but also congress is not active in oversight.

<sup>431</sup> *Given the primary objective of small-N QCA studies to build or elaborate theory as well as the more intimate relationship the researcher has to cases in these settings, it is desirable and*

plausible to infer that this brand of one-sided policymaking, with decisions relying most on the president without much parliamentary interference or even follow-up, is the embodiment of just one of the several mechanisms that can bring good policy results, one that entails quick responses from the economy – that is, we’ve uncovered one possibility among many. Another angle from which to consider the partial coverage in the absence of accountability is that several attempts might be made at quick decisionist actions unchecked – a few of them might in fact generate good policy, but not many of them<sup>432</sup>.

### *Lagged positive outcomes*

Lagged results show different drivers. Three consistent minimized solutions emerge, with remarkably high joint consistency and coverage when compared to the other tables: 0,527 (more than half) of the cases fall under them. Two of them have a diversified base of cases. The first clearly opposes the literal form of our theoretical expectations, showing a weak president (~PWRP) facing an equally disinterested parliament (~ACCT), in a context where transactions are possible (RECP) – regardless of the coalition size in seats<sup>433</sup>. Under those settings, some kind of consensus appears to be reached, consolidating policies that will be fruitful in a longer time perspective. The second configuration is also a forcibly cooperative one: an active parliament, strong on oversight (ACCT) faces a highly minoritarian president (~40PC) but the party system allows for negotiation (RECP). Here, presidential powers do not show up, indicating that substantive negotiation is required (that is, even without high presidential leverage for negotiation or for unilateral action, consensus on policies can be reached)<sup>434</sup>.

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*usually possible to attain near perfect solution coverage. [...] To the extent that large-N QCA studies are more deductive in their focus, researchers likely have to settle for lower levels of solution coverage. Imperfect solution coverage indicates incomplete causal evidence that leaves some paths to the outcome unaccounted for. However, considering solution coverage roughly as analogous to an overall R<sup>2</sup> in a regression analysis, it is worthwhile to remember that the explained variation is frequently quite low in regression-based organizational research—for the overall model specifications and particularly so for the substantive variables under study. (Greckhamer & Misangyi & Fiss, 2013, pp. 65-66)*

<sup>432</sup> The multifarious elements that may affect short-term economic events make very improbable that the found coverage of 27,2% may be attributable to random causes, which reinforces the found solutions’ explanatory potential.

<sup>433</sup> Is low unique coverage (covU) of 0,118 might also mirror the path discussed in the contemporary results: unchecked negotiated actions, made possible either by a policy-oriented, content-based open environment or by intense pork-based enticements buying out unilateral presidential decisions, may occasionally generate good decisions – but not very often.

<sup>434</sup> Here, the unique coverage (covU) is 0,200, almost twice that of the first solution.

The last causal path for lagged results is very specific to Chile<sup>435</sup>: presidents with important negotiation tools (PWRP) can negotiate with activist parliaments (ACCT) where a strong cleavage is set between two similarly powerful opponents (~RECP and 40PC)<sup>436</sup>. This is also a negotiating environment, albeit in a less fragmented way: centralized discussion of policy agreements make for the bread-and-butter in that configuration (clearly not as big comprehensive and formalized treaties that might resemble some kind of “contract parliamentarism” as discussed in section 3.3.3, but instead as day-to-day muddling through of isolated but relevant decisions negotiated on a case-by-case basis).

A much bigger coverage than the one found for good contemporary outcomes, featuring a remarkable heterogeneity of cases, suggests that this brand of policymaking strategies may in fact be a sustainable way to pursue government goals by minority presidential governments in longer time frames. Still regarding coverage, the fact that individual solutions’ values<sup>437</sup> are far smaller (0,118, 0,200 and 0,146, respectively) than the overall coverage (0,527) shows that those cases do not overlap; on the contrary, they represent clearly distinct governing strategies, pursued by different presidents facing different challenges.

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<sup>435</sup> There’s only one Uruguayan case, the first Sanguinetti government (1985-1989), just after the reinstatement of democracy, when presidential party held an above 40% minority but the other center-right parties almost completed the two chambers. Sanguinetti’s tenure was also distinctly shaped by pragmatic consociational agreements on policy matters (epithomized by the “*Concertación Nacional Programática*”, a consensus-seeking forum between parties and societal actors whose existence surpassed the transition period and advanced well into the first democratic term, but not limited to it; in fact, the main feature of this negotiating stance was the parties’ willingness to strike case-by-case deals along the presidential term). Those agreements were implemented in Congress by a strongly independent opposition whose major actor (Partido Nacional, tightly led by Wilson Ferreira Aldunate, who held far more radical policy positions than Sanguinetti) was decided to settle on issues of relevance to governing performance - as well as by the other minoritarian group, the leftist *Frente Amplio*, which also accepted specific policy-based settlements (Buquet & Chasquetti & Moraes, 1998, pp. 63-65; Caetano, s.d., pp. 165-167; Sáez & Martínez & Mieres, 1992, pp. 167-170; Finch, 1999, pp. 227-230). So, the same elements as in the Chilean case are present: a clear cleavage reflected in parliamentary activism; an institutionally powerful president (whose veto powers could be sustained by the above 40% seat shares in parliament against override attempts); and a favourable attitude of major party players towards a path of settlements around the more relevant policy matters.

<sup>436</sup> Those features are clearly outlined as the main decision-making architecture for the Chilean case in Huneus (2005), Siavelis (2014, specially pp. 26-30) or Moreno (2007). Some authors refute the idea of structured and disciplined programmatic parties in Chile, but still emphasize the hierarchical nature of their inner workings that does impose a strong degree of obedience and stability due to gatekeeping powers over prospective electoral candidacies by national leadership (Luna, 2008; Weeks & Borzutzky, 2012, p. 109).

<sup>437</sup> Found on Table 40 in section A.1.5 of Appendix 1

Summing up, those results suggest firstly that positive outcomes (good policy results) seem to be produced in the short term for a limited share of cases (around 27%) basically under unilateral conditions that favor the executive in its decisiveness (either strong bargaining powers or the weakness of parliamentary activism which transcends in feeble oversight). This is still coherent with the accountability views discussed in sections 3.2.3 and 3.3.2: presidents may resort to unilateral decisionism, and they may even reach good results for that, but that auspicious forecast tends to happen in a minority of cases.

On the other hand, a far more significant result stems from the lagged outcomes, that is, the results of policy measures that had more time to settle down and produce their effects. Here, the key driver is negotiation and consensus-seeking: weak presidents (either by holding a weak set of influencing tools or by holding an hiperminoritarian parliamentary hold of less than 40 %) may face congresses and fruitfully negotiate policy packages that yield lasting good results, provided the political landscape offers bargaining leeway to reach deals across several dimensions.

In the absence of such bargaining space (that is, under strong cleavages in parliament that reflect a politically polarized environment), good and lasting results can also be achieved, but with two caveats: presidents were found to have strong bargaining leverage (both in their institutional toolset and by holding a non-negligible share of congressional votes), and – simultaneously - congresses showed up as being able and willing to act on oversight to check on the usage of those powerful resources by the executive. In other words, some kind of pact seems to have been achieved by those two powerful actors in order to successfully pursue any kind of policy agenda<sup>438</sup> This last configuration is found in a considerable number of mandates; however, all but one of them correspond to Chilean presidents. In and of itself, that does not compromise that finding's validity (quite the opposite: it shows a stable, resilient style

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<sup>438</sup> Formal and detailed *ex ante* agreements that shape an overall government strategy might be thought of as an alternative to those features. However, no empirical record was found for neither Chile nor Uruguay in the mandates considered. Besides, in the context of political polarization (~RECP) and a reasonably even split between government and opposition (40PC) without notice of any considerable fragmentation within the opposition parties, any such “blanket pact” would resemble much more a kind of German-style “grand coalition” (Banaszaka & Doerschler, 2012; Scarrow, 2012; Nikolenyi, 2003; Lees, 2010), and a formalized one at that (not even an informal, emergency coalitional implicit pact, as Marangoni & Verzichelli, 2014, describe in a post-crisis Italy). Alas, we found no empirical or theoretical mention to any such endeavor for multiparty presidentialism, inside or outside Latin America.

of policymaking consistently generating good results); however, it warns us that some specific features of Chile's polity may be needed for this solution to be analytically considered in a broader context. Besides the two institutional features (powerful sets of presidential leveraging powers and congressional accountability), we may put forward the key aspects of centralized, structured decision making by parties in parliament (indispensable for the repeated game of *ad hoc* relevant and credible bargains on policy) and a relatively bipolar configuration of the policy space (without which the continuous reconciliation among many different players might not be feasible in practice<sup>439</sup>). That is, those case-based observations must add and complement the formal causal modelling in order to establish more precise boundaries to that theoretical claim.

Those conclusions on lagged positive results are coherent with the simple fact that negotiations take time: when this time is made available and actually used for consensus-building, good results may show up in a consistent way. And they show up remarkably more often than when actions are pursued in a short-term perspective: Table 14 shows that good performance indicators are more frequent in the year after the minority government has been in charge (28,26 % for fuzzy values 1, and 53,26% for fuzzy values 0,66, as opposed to 26,80% and 45,36 % respectively); more importantly, the combined coverage value for the negotiated solutions in lagged performance (0,527) almost doubles the coverage for more unilateral strategies aiming at immediate results in the same year (0,272). Bargaining or consensus-seeking strategies, then, appear to be the way forward *par excellence* in minority presidentialism – and, more than that, they appear to have reasonable odds for success. This finding is consistent with the overall conclusions by Alemán and Tsebelis (2014), built on several case studies from major Latin American countries, that a minoritarian condition for the president “increases the complexity of bargaining and makes changing the status quo more difficult” in congress (p. 225), generating more

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<sup>439</sup> The Uruguayan case apparently differs from this bipolar configuration, given that the leftist *Frente Amplio* had a non-negligible legislative share and held preferences that were substantively distinct from the main opposition party (*Partido Nacional*). However, the historical reports (Buquet & Chasquetti & Moraes, 1998, pp. 63-65; Caetano, s.d., pp. 165-167; Sáez & Martínez & Mieres, 1992, pp. 167-170; Finch, 1999, pp. 227-230) emphasize the moderate approach by that newly arrived party and its willingness to join the consensual approach (specially on the grounds of a necessary democratic stability just after the ousting of the previous authoritarian rulers). As for the centralized decision-making within parties, the same sources are particularly emphatic on the very time-specific feature of both party leaders (Sanguinetti for his presidential *Partido Colorado* and Aldunate in the main opposition party) holding a very unusual clout over their parties' many - and usually unruly - factions during those first years of reinstated democratic rule.

stringent negotiations, more amendments and other parliamentary interventions in lawmaking processes, and an increased need for reciprocal concessions<sup>440</sup>; under those added difficulties, more favorable conditions for those exchanges (either by way of more leeway for consensus allowed by reconcilable party goals or out of stronger negotiating levers in the president's hands) will probably be a valuable asset for a successful policy program.

*Negative outcomes: no way out*

Turning now to the negation of the outcome (that is, consistent causal configurations leading to lower-than-average policy performance), we see a much more limited explanatory result. Indeed, for both contemporary and lagged outcomes, Tables 18 and 19 show only three cases in 21<sup>st</sup> century El Salvador<sup>441</sup>, with coverages below 0,15 for conservative solutions<sup>442</sup>. That means very scarce empirical relevance, signaling that those causal conditions may generate a coherent causal mechanism for a very small share of cases. Indeed, all solutions are deprived of any of the factors that, according to the theory, might enable good government results. Conservative solutions (not making any assumption on counterfactuals) for both contemporary and lagged results point to a staggering denial of every postulated policymaking device (simultaneously,  $\sim$ PWPR,  $\sim$ RECP,  $\sim$ 40PC and  $\sim$ ACCT<sup>443</sup>) – that is, those presidents have had weak instruments, faced an adversarial opposition that offered little or no bargaining space, held less than 40% of the chamber, and could not benefit from the effects of strong oversight<sup>444</sup>). Intermediate solutions take advantage only from counterfactuals regarding the hiperminoritarian condition<sup>445</sup>, which does not

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<sup>440</sup> Or even, as in the Mexican case, the reliance on congressional parties themselves to introduce and shape legislation that is relevant to the president's policy goals.

<sup>441</sup> Two one-year mandates of Mauricio Funes in 2012 and 2013, and a full term by Sanchez Ceren from 2014 to 2018.

<sup>442</sup> The intermediate solution for contemporary results, with a coverage of 0,279 and consistency 0,801, includes the same Salvadoran cases as the conservative, and drops the factors  $\sim$ ACCT and  $\sim$ LONG from the equation. The raised coverage *vis-à-vis* the conservative one is trivial (the exclusion of cases with LONG automatically reduces the denominator, while no case in that configuration is a case of emergency mandates). The intermediate solution for lagged results stops short of the consistency and PRI thresholds, showing respectively 0,753 and 0,538).

<sup>443</sup> The underperforming intermediate solutions also show the negation of at least three among those factors.

<sup>444</sup> Which in itself might mean an ill-equipped, abstentious parliament, unable to offer inputs to of policy decision-making and oversight.

<sup>445</sup> Besides the previously mentioned absence of any mandate under the unstable circumstances that would refute the dropped LONG condition.

figure in the final solution (that is, a president without any of the governing factors might well not be successful even if he had between 40% of the chamber); even so, those added counterfactuals decrease the solutions' consistency score (in the case of lagged negation, below the acceptable 0,8 threshold). The attempted Enhanced Standard Analysis (ESA) solutions<sup>446</sup> did not do any better neither in terms of substantive plausibility nor in parameters of fit.

In a sense, that's a somewhat trivial result, adding little to causal reasoning: countries devoid of every policymaking tool for the administration (~PWPR), and whose branches show little in the way of engaging in negotiations (~RECP) and managerial attention (~ACCT) will probably harvest few beneficial consequences anyway. Besides, those cases are very few, and concentrate in only one country with a highly idiosyncratic historical trajectory even within Latin America<sup>447</sup>, which severely limits their standing as analytical benchmarks. In fact, the drastic shortcomings for democratic governance found empirically in El Salvador, in spite of its keeping the basic electoral features to still be considered in the sample, brings this case closer to the "logically irrelevant" cases mentioned in section A.2.1 in Appendix 2 – that is, cases in which the causal conditions might probably have little or no impact on the outcome, due to obstacles coming from other contextual factors. So, although there are, formally, logical-numerical solutions to the truth table built around negative outcomes, those numbers fall short of providing any explanatory leverage for our theoretical endeavor. No combination of the causal factors assessed in this study can be consistently posited as sufficient to generate a negative outcome, which brings us to a kind of – not entirely uncommon<sup>448</sup> - dead end also found by Fiss (2011, p. 410), who eloquently described it as:

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<sup>446</sup> Section A.1.5, last tranche.

<sup>447</sup> Indeed, studies on Salvadoran politics since the agreements that formally ended the civil war in 1994 stress the incomplete nature of democratization: parties' competition remained extremely polarized, centered around the conquest of the spoils of the state through electoral victories; checks and balances were formally in place but scarcely implemented; the spoils-based competition prevented broader agreements on policy changes (thus blockading anything but the most reactive and precarious initiatives to overcome economic and social fragilities); finally, the compounded effect of incomplete democratization, state capture and extreme underdevelopment made public security the main policy issue, crowding out time, resources and focus that would be needed to address economic and welfare policies (Artiga-González, 2015, p. 195 *et seqs.*; Hume, 2014; Martí i Puig, 2020, pp. 651-651).

<sup>448</sup> *Do not be surprised, however, if analyzing the absence of the outcome yields indeterminate results and/or low consistency scores. Cases lacking the outcome are often quite heterogenous. In such instances, it is appropriate to focus on explaining the presence of the outcome and simply acknowledge that understanding the absence of the outcome will require further research* (Rubinson & Gerrits & Rutten & Greckhamer, 2024, p. 5)

These findings indicate the absence of a clear set-theoretic relationship when either the absence of high performance or the presence of low performance is used as the outcome. In other words, there are many ways to be nonperforming here, but no consistent pattern.

### 6.3.2 Some empirical examples

This section brings some empirical examples to the main causal paths discussed in section 6.3.1 above, brought from secondary sources with the sole purpose of illustrating their occurrence on the ground. As such, those cases display policymaking activities with similar features as those suggested by the causal configurations found in the minimization, but they're not assessed on their substantive merits regarding the specific contribution they may have made to the overall macroeconomic outcome (both because they're not full case studies and because no claim is made on this study as to the causal link between any single policy decision or implementation, on one side, and the composite economic end results on the other).

*All decisiveness factors together (PWRP\*RECP\*40PC\*LONG, contemporary results)*

In the first pattern for contemporary resources, that of a relatively strong president trading with congress (either a weak one or a strong, assertive assembly) while having bargaining spaces, one first instance is provided by the narratives of Paraguayan politics since the 1993 democratic Constitution (Molinas & Pérez-Liñán & Saiegh & Montero, 2008). Presidents inherited from the transition a much more limited set of formal legislative powers than in the previous dictatorial regime, but still kept a very strong grip on patronage and pork resources; on the other hand, the constitutional option for mandated primaries for candidate selection at the district level, cumulated with increasingly competitive elections<sup>449</sup>, raised political agents' thirst for pork and patronage to very high levels. Moreover, some relevant opposition

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<sup>449</sup> Increased competitiveness originated both from the increase in opposition parties' electoral strength and from the growing factional infighting within the formerly dominant *Colorado* party (where a protracted national leadership contest between former army commander Lino Oviedo and civilian faction leaders headed by Luís María Argaña took place along the whole 1990 decade, besides a long-lasting tradition of lower-level competition for control of district-level appointments and loyalties).

parties<sup>450</sup>, catering to urban educated voters who demanded substantive political change, did have an electoral interest in getting position-taking (in some cases, symbolic) advances in the political-institutional and social-cultural dimensions – i.e., those parties had an interest in exchanging support in major presidential nationwide policies (over which they could not influence anyway) for concessions in those orthogonal dimensions. Under those conditions, Paraguayan presidents mostly engaged in incremental measures, being generally unable to perform major reforms or nationwide policies<sup>451</sup> (on the contrary, policy outcomes frequently included corruption and particularistic orientation of public policies<sup>452</sup>), but sometimes being able to enact some specific measures they found relevant to their immediate agenda. A case in point is the Wasmosy presidency's economic agenda: following in former president Rodríguez's initial push of liberalizing reforms<sup>453</sup>, the first democratic president managed to release some formerly state-controlled financial flows (allowing public companies and the Social Security Institute to transfer their deposits to the private banking system) and to complete privatization of a few medium-sized public companies (the national airline, the merchant fleet, a steel company and the monopoly on sugar-cane spirits). Albeit modest, those measures were then followed by a long period of stalled nationwide policymaking, with the subsequent administrations mostly stuck in handling day-to-day problems and getting from congress little more than particularistic legislation (involving pork disbursements, public employment, and the like). Wasmosy seized a window of opportunity where internal factionalism in his *Colorado* party was still manageable<sup>454</sup>, and deployed every trade-off at hand<sup>455</sup>: extensive pork and patronage disbursement; policy

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<sup>450</sup> Namely, the newly created ones besides the two major parties that already existed under the dictatorship, the ruling *Colorado* party and the Liberal party (later relabeled *Partido Liberal Radical Auténtico* – PLRA) which then performed a “consented opposition” role that nevertheless could not achieve power due to authoritarian repression and election meddling.

<sup>451</sup> An exception will be seen in the next configuration (Duarte's tax reform).

<sup>452</sup> *Despite all the changes in the post-1993 PMP, there is a feature of public policies that has remained constant since the Stroessner period, the low level of public regardedness. This problem has taken two forms, corruption and particularistic policy (including the distribution of public jobs and pork).* (Molinas & Pérez-Liñán & Saiegh & Montero, 2008, p. 363)

<sup>453</sup> Those involved measures on balance of payments liberalization, financial liberalization, and price deregulation; it must be clearly understood that Rodríguez was the transitional president (he was the general who overthrew the former dictator Stroessner by a military coup) who ruled under the previous authoritarian constitution and, thus, had to deal with another power configuration entirely. Wasmosy was the first president to be elected and to govern under the democratic 1993 constitution.

<sup>454</sup> During Wasmosy's tenure, the civilian leaders hadn't yet launched the full-blown challenge against Oviedo for the top-down control of the party.

<sup>455</sup> *In this context, presidents eager to pass broad legislative agendas are forced to build legislative coalitions using selective incentives. Four resources stand out for this purpose. First,*

concessions to emerging urban parties in political/symbolic matters; vote “scaremongering” to rally his own party’s factions around his agenda (thus securing the advantage of holding his significant plurality in both chambers<sup>456</sup>). Thus, he fully exploited the multidimensional bargaining space for each party (in the votes and office (pork/patronage) dimensions with his own party; mostly in the office dimension with the main oppositional one, PLRA; in the votes dimension with the other opposition parties), taking full advantage of their goals being reconcilable (RECP) and, by managing to get his party’s unity, of the leverage given by the quasi-majoritarian threshold (40PC). In this example, his powers (PWRP) involved basically the control of pork and patronage, which were the key resource for most bargains.

A more radical example of the weight of extra-legislative presidential powers to shift the balance towards executive decision-making is given by the Honduran case (Taylor-Robinson, 2014; Sanz, 2015). The country has “one of the oldest, most stable party systems in Latin America” (Taylor-Robinson, 2014, p. 420), in which the two parties (PLH and PNH) that have shared power represent elite parties, not much different from each other in policy preferences, that reach their electorate and compete electorally through clientelistic networks; the plurality rule in presidential elections means that the internal factionalization within the two parties will not result in spin-off parties since leaving the big-party slate would mean automatic electoral failure. From the 1990’s onwards, a few small urban-based, programmatic parties began to conquer some limited shares of the popular vote and a handful of seats in the unicameral assembly.

But the core background issue remains the fact that the population and the state are extremely poor. Clientelism is then the lifeblood of political life: for voters, being under clientele relationships with the winning party is often the only way to access at least a modicum of assistance, since public services are scarce and delivered not universally but according to governmental discretion; for politicians at all levels, controlling their share of clientelistic linkages to any segment of the electorate means

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*presidents can use patronage positions (particularly in administrative areas of wide regional coverage such as education or public health) to benefit the constituents of loyal legislators. Second, they can accelerate or delay the disbursement of funds for legislators’ particularistic projects. Third, they can grant limited voice and visibility to small middle class parties, always eager to convince their urban constituents that they have leverage in the PMP. Fourth, in extreme circumstances they can blackmail their fellow ANR leaders, arguing that in the absence of cooperation, policy failures will end the era of Colorado rule in the near future. (Molinás & Pérez-Liñán & Saiegh & Montero, 2008, p. 354)*

<sup>456</sup> Respectively 46,91% & and 44,44% in the lower and upper houses.

often the only way to compete for power within each party (and, of course, for the two parties, clientelistic pledges are the bulwark of their electoral platform in every election). In such rigid settings, the key resource for every politician (including legislators) is the access to the limited public resources for the disbursement of pork and patronage – and the executive is the gatekeeper for those resources<sup>457</sup>. So, although the constitution grants very few formal powers to the president, the informal exchange and pork components are solely in his hands, and they ensure him an almost undisturbed control of congressional decisions (for through the clientelistic concessions he has by far the most powerful influence on the political career of any legislator)<sup>458</sup>. The presidential monopoly on pork supply must be underlined. In a previous paper, Taylor-Robinson (1999) shows that this pork-seeking behavior by Honduran legislators is not operationalized by sponsoring locally targeted legislation in congress (something that could notionally be partly independent from the Executive) – on the contrary, this finding implies that assembly members have to “lobby to get local pork items included in the national budget and contact ministers and heads of government agencies and companies to attend to constituents’ needs” (p. 610), activities who mean pleading with executive actors who have the ultimate decision over the disbursement of benefits. Until the 2002 elections, legislators were elected in a closed list “fused” with the presidential ballot (a single vote was used for both choices), which annulled any incentive for legislators to seek personal votes through initiatives independent from their party alignment (even if they were pork- or local-oriented). From then on, this association was gradually relaxed (first to “unfuse” ballots, then to introduce open-list PR), which might have changed incentives to a certain extent. However, we found no report that this top-down control of particularistic supply by the president (through the ruling party) had significantly changed. Quite the opposite: Balmaceda (2022) finds that the most relevant ministerial posts in the Honduran cabinet, from 1982 to 2020, included precisely

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<sup>457</sup> And the national executive at that, since Honduras is a unitary state with very limited financial decentralization to municipalities, whose mayors are elected (regional governors are appointed by the central government).

<sup>458</sup> *The need for access to state resources for clientelism prompted deputies to support the president’s policy initiatives and to pass the president’s budget. As explained above, Honduras’ Constitution gives the Congress stronger powers than the president, but the incentives clientelism creates for career-seeking politicians prompt deputies from the president’s party to follow the president’s cues. As a result, the president’s bills are passed, typically without question.* (Taylor-Robinson, 2014, p. 427-428).

those who had control over the discretionary funds that enabled clientelistic policies to be deployed<sup>459</sup>.

Were that a strictly bipartisan system with disciplined programmatic parties, such as the notional US model, presidential control by minority presidents would be insufficient for easy approval of governmental agendas (since they would influence only the presidential party); however, neither parties is entirely unified (as pointed earlier, factions remain in party slates for electoral reasons even when diverging from each other, which makes them open to clientelistic advances coming from a president across the aisle) nor they are the only players in the assembly (smaller parties' votes can have a sizeable effect when there's a close split between major parties' seat shares). Indeed, that's what happened in the Honduran mandates captured under that configuration: powers over clientelistic resources (PWRP) allowed presidents with no less than 47% of the seats (40PC) to entice a few votes from smaller third parties (or even defections from the other major party) in order to pass government bills with little or no resistance. Reconcilability of party goals (RECP) here is basically a huge demand for pork, patronage and other favors, who make the currency for which legislative support is eagerly traded. This bargaining pattern shows a remarkable stability and continuity, which is made even more prominent by the one big exception to the rule: in 2008-2009, president Zelaya intended to break with shared elite preferences (expressed by both PNH and PLH) and join Venezuela's economic and political integration initiatives promoted by Hugo Chavez's far-left regime, the assembly strongly reacted and created the political conditions to the president's ousting<sup>460</sup>. Before and after that exceptional crisis, however, presidential imposition on the legislative agenda was the all-pervasive norm (Taylor-Robinson, 2014, p. 425).

*Negotiating with an overlooking congress (RECP\*40PC\*~ACCT\*LONG, contemporary results)*

For presidents (regardless of their power) facing a non-activist congress in an environment that allows for negotiation across dimensions

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<sup>459</sup> *Los hallazgos de esta investigación pusieron de manifiesto que la relevancia ministerial en este país está vinculada a aquellas carteras que además de contar con valor estratégico e impacto, tienen potencialmente la posibilidad de disponer de fondos discrecionales para desarrollar políticas clientelares que han permitido a los partidos tradicionales mantenerse en el poder a lo largo de todo el periodo analizado.* (Balmaceda, 2022, p 29)

<sup>460</sup> The actual measures for presidential interruption were spearheaded by the Supreme Court, but couldn't plausibly be attempted without the clear political support brought by the legislature (Sarro, 2016, p. 36; Sanz, 2015).

(RECP\*40PC\*~ACCT\*LONG), the Mexican experience exposed by Velarde (2018a) displays a somewhat dystopic landscape for policymaking<sup>461</sup>: a complete delegation of powers to the Executive, produced precisely by individual governmental bargains with legislative parties' members through exploring other dimensions of interest to them. Examining the whole array of policies in the public health sector<sup>462</sup>, Velarde stresses how a restrained and ambiguous health legislation, inherited from the pre-transition regime, persisted along the democratic years: the whole health sector is regulated only by conceptual, "framework" laws, which delegate almost every policy decision to executive authorities (at the federal and, growingly, the state and local levels). Under those circumstances, congressmen do not intervene neither in designing health policies, nor in the deals for financial decentralization toward states (*gastos federalizados*, in Mexican budgetary parlance) nor in controlling their implementation. And the reason for such abdication is a textbook example of cross-dimension bargaining: almost absolute discretion by executive authorities<sup>463</sup> gives them a gatekeeping role in the provision of individually targeted benefits (transfers to specific states, hospitals or clinics; implementation of geographically targeted special measures, such as vaccination campaigns, that are of utmost importance to legislators; individually targeted privileges to voters, friends or family members, such as admission to better hospitals, exemption from copayments or direct employment in health administration offices) that are of the utmost importance to legislators, since they are extremely relevant to their political career prospects<sup>464</sup>.

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<sup>461</sup> In this Mexican case, as will be seen, the holding of a considerable portion of the chamber (40PC) is somehow circumstantial; there are no plausible reasons for arguing that its absence would significantly affect the described mechanism.

<sup>462</sup> That means the direct provision of the whole range of health services by public bodies. Velarde's assessment does not encompass the issues of government regulation over the private provision of health services.

<sup>463</sup> The mechanism is described as a direct interaction between legislators and executive officials, not mentioning a centralized management by the presidency. However, the very hierarchical nature of executive administration at each level makes it plausible that this decentralized engagement is at least monitored and, when necessary, intervened by the higher executive ranks.

<sup>464</sup> This relevance is demonstrated by the official recording and publishing of the amounts of such pleas and interventions (denominated "*puntos de acuerdo*" and "*gestorías*") by the legislative committees and reports. A remarkable point made by Velarde is that the non-re-election clause makes legislators very keen on trading such kinds of favors in order to get further career opportunities (in politics or outside it) after the end of their terms (especially as the previous absolute control of the state machinery by a centralized dominant party – the PRI – began to fade away since the democratization process, increasing the need for direct constituency links for legislators to bid for other attractive positions by threatening to defect to other parties – Klesner, 2001, p. 75).

An unwritten agreement is then reached: deputies and senators do not engage in regulating health policies nor in checking health officials' performance (thus making way for the unhindered decision capacity by the executive), in exchange for their clientelistic demands being satisfied by those same officials in the day-to-day workings of health administration. This implicit tradeoff explains why the pre-democratic legislation did not undergo significant renovation even after congressional empowerment since the dawn of democratic politics; it also explains why the several gross irregularities in budgeting, financial integrity and operational management uncovered by the (very few) oversight initiatives by the higher audit institution (*Auditoría Superior de la Federación*) found no response or reaction whatsoever by the legislature.

In terms of our theoretical framework, RECP is clearly present (since presidential policy gains are exchanged for legislators' gains in clientelistic goods that enhance their vote dimensions<sup>465</sup>); the same bargain is itself the origin of an explicit absence of any accountability whatsoever (~ACCT); the particular arithmetics of the 40% threshold is circumstantial, since the clientelistic trade-off affects legislators from all parties. The decisional abdication by the legislature that seemed embedded in the low coverage of such configuration is also reinforced: unilateral, unchecked policymaking by the executive may randomly generate the right answers to public problems, but hardly in a systematic fashion.

Yet, Klesner (2001) offers another entirely different perspective to the Mexican policymaking during the same period (the Zedillo presidency), only in a different policy arena, the shaping and approving of yearly budget bills. This kind of decision typically affects directly the following year's economic numbers, and its cumulative effects have also strong impact on the path of economic development along the years. Zedillo faced a divided Chamber of Deputies<sup>466</sup>, holding 239 seats for his PRI legislators while the two main opposition parties (PAN and PRD) had 208 and 53 respectively (other minor parties occupied other 30 additional seats). Since the time chart for budget approval was extremely short (30 days from tabling the bill to a final vote, with exceptional summons no larger than two weeks before the

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<sup>465</sup> Or, in terms very specific to this case, a version of their "office" dimensions, since they affect individual parliamentarians' prospects for further career advancement.

<sup>466</sup> For this particular case, the lower house (Chamber of Deputies) is the only relevant chamber, for the Constitution endows it with the sole power of budget approval (which does not require senatorial assent), except for the revenues bill. Even so, the presidential party PRI held a majority in the Senate.

beginning of the corresponding fiscal year), and no exceptional presidential decree or virement powers were available to circumvent the absence of an approved budget, credible agreements had to be reached in a streamlined way in order to enable the executive to enact any policy whatsoever<sup>467</sup>. What Klesner describes is a textbook example of policy-based trade-offs, where the opposition parties were able to trade their consent for several other kinds of substantive decisions (no mention was made to pork-based concessions to individual legislators). For the 1998 budget, the executive split the opposition by getting PAN to agree on its proposal for not reducing VAT rates in exchange for the decrease in the the discretionality of presidential management of outlays (cutting down a "secret slush fund" and limiting presidential virement and impoundment powers) and a massive transfer of resources formerly assigned to a bank resolution fund into direct transfers to municipalities (most major cities had mayors elected by PAN who until then had a very fragile revenue base for their own policies). In the 1999 bill, PAN had broad agreement with the government regarding the overall fiscal equation, but exacted concessions by changing the financing (insisting on a mix of expenditure cuts and partial increase across several kinds of revenues, instead of the government proposal of a widely based tax raise on telephone bills), as well as mostly symbolic governance provisions regarding the financial management of the large expenditures on bank bailouts. The 2000 bill, with the next elections only six months ahead, saw lots of position-taking by both government and opposition<sup>468</sup>, but hen push came to shove all parties converged in a significant logrolling in expenditure increases aimed at their electoral interests (transfers to states and municipalities, pensions, health care, and other social programmes). Here, we see negotiating (RECP condition) at its best: for one, the presidents' policy interests in the bill were mostly preserved through concessions on other "orthogonal" interests that parties cultivated (especially institutional changes to decrease presidential grip on public resources on behalf of congress and subnational governments where opposition parties had a significant power share); moreover, the preference alignment in the socioeconomic dimension between the main opposition party (PAN) and the technocratic wing of the PRI gathered around the presidency,

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<sup>467</sup> In other words, even if unable or unwilling to perform oversight duties, the Mexican congress had particularly salient decisional leverage at least on those issues, since its explicit approval was needed for any budget to be enacted.

<sup>468</sup> By means of attempting to unilaterally steamroll their own entire bills (although both the president's and the unified opposition's were remarkably similar to each other).

both catering to center-right electorates<sup>469</sup>, was fully explored by the president through concessions in the institutional arena (further decentralization and deconcentration of powers from the presidency) that enticed PAN as they raised its future electoral prospects<sup>470</sup>. As a result, even in the absence of presidential legislative powers to push bills through legislative process:

[e]ach year the Chamber has passed the budget in time for it to be put in place for the coming fiscal year. The debates have been long and loud, and the opposition has endeavoured to win symbolic victories over the president that suggest that the Chamber is now the president's equal. However, the bottom line is that, so far, divided government has not forced government to shut down in Mexico as it sometimes has in the US. By giving up some symbolic victories to the opposition and yielding some material gains to their constituencies, Zedillo saw his budgets passed. (Klesner, 2001, p. 83-84)

*Pure bargain between weak partners (~PWRP\*RECP\*~ACCT\*LONG, lagged results)*

The “purely negotiated” lagged result (~PWRP\*RECP\*~ACCT\*LONG) from a president endowed with few political resources dealing with a clearly non-assertive congress includes different possibilities.

Among them, both Mexican concrete examples applicable to contemporary results are also relevant for this new configuration - and such concurrence is consistent with theory. First, there's the original configuration of full congressional abdication in health policy (already seen in the contemporary solutions above): contemporary and lagged configurations differ in the presence of 40PC in the former (which, as already discussed, seems circumstantial) and in the presence of ~PWRP in the latter. The absence of presidential powers might seem at first glance at odds with the model, since the essence of the mechanism is the trading of policy discretion for the clientelistic favors that only the executive can dispose of. However, that composite indicator grows out of many components, of which the control over informal benefits to be granted to individual parliamentarians is only one of them; so,

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<sup>469</sup> Like other catch-all parties (as the Peronists in Argentina), the PRI had another clientelist, state-interventionist faction, but since the economic crises of the 1980's the more neoliberal-oriented wing rallied around the presidencies (Salinas de Gortari and Zedillo) and held the power in the party, being able to keep its discipline in supporting right-wing adjustment policies.

<sup>470</sup> Indeed, the PAN candidate (Fox) actually won the next presidential election.

whereas Mexican presidents can still hold those cards who are crucial for the deals in that case, they remain deprived of most of the other formal leverages for negotiations. Here, too, the essence of policymaking is in the exploration of different dimensions open to bargain (RECP), as already explained in the contemporary case; similarly, the occurrence of good results in lagged terms may have in this case the same happenstance nature of unchecked unilateral executive decisionism that was noted in contemporary configurations above.

Second, the successful example of president Zedillo's negotiations for passing his budget bills (which might be considered quite a short-term instrument) was not circumscribed to this specific kind of legislative decision. Klesner (2001) depicts a whole array of broad policy reforms in which the same cross-dimensional trade-offs were attempted, taking advantage of both the different (and reconcilable) goals among parties in the legislature and the relative closeness of the major non-coalitional party (PAN) to the president's own policy preferences on economic affairs. General patterns involved presidential attempts to forge *ad hoc* majorities by changing alliances according to the issues at hand: on economic issues, PAN's votes were frequently supportive of government initiatives, counting among them the beginning of the highly regarded PROGRESA-Oportunidades conditional cash transfer programs (Lehoucq & Negretto & Aparicio & Nacif & Benton, 2008, p. 295-296 and 307)<sup>471</sup>; on non-divisive issues (or in public security matters, which were already a point of major concern in Mexican society), a common result was a near-unanimous vote. Of course, this pattern of piecemeal negotiations did not mean the president wins every time: some elements of his agenda stalled or significantly modified, like social security reforms, the sale of petrochemical plants owned by the state oil firm, and the establishment of a new position of federal comptroller<sup>472</sup> (mostly as a result of defections from fractions in his own PRI that did not follow the technocratic approach that controlled the government from the presidency<sup>473</sup>). In configurational

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<sup>471</sup> This PRI-PAN association occurred also in political-institutional matters (basically the process of decentralization and deconcentration of powers from the presidency that embodied the whole Mexican transition to democracy), but there were few and minor instances, because most major issues in this arena had already been dealt with by the previous administration.

<sup>472</sup> The same slate of failures, plus the persistence of a flawed tax system that generated very little revenues beyond a share of oil exports, is listed in Lehoucq, Negretto, Aparicio, Nacif and Benton (2008, p. 296) not only for the Zedillo administration, but for its two successors from PAN.

<sup>473</sup> Those defeats occurred more in the first half of the presidential term, during which Zedillo tried to keep some institutional distance from party interests; PRI discipline increased towards the end of the term, when – in view of approaching elections – the president began to act in a more partisan way in policymaking.

terms, the absence of the 40% threshold for that kind of policy-based bargaining is more delicate: the QCA algorithm did not consider it a necessary condition for including the case in the minimized solution, although in this particular historical instance the seat share by the PRI was precisely 47,8%<sup>474</sup>; the mechanism depicted in this illustration would probably be much more fragile if the president had less votes in his own caucus and needed more than one additional partner to each legislative coalition. As for the lack of formal presidential powers ( $\sim$ PWRP), it's clearly absorbed by the strategy in question: policy bargains (specially by leveraging closeness in economic preferences to the major opposition party the latter and by presidential preferences for the gradual opening of formerly concentrated powers which concurred with all other parties<sup>475</sup>) are made to entice mutually beneficial cooperation and overcome the numerical and procedural barriers for Zedillo to force his will upon the chambers. The fact that other, more consequential deals were struck through this negotiation strategy is also coherent with the achievement of longer term results that is implied by lagged positive outcomes.

*Skilfull uphill bargaining (RECP\*~40PC\*ACCT\*LONG, lagged results)*

The dynamics of a hiperminoritarian president facing an activist parliament that, nevertheless, has room for manoeuver in several bargaining dimensions (RECP\*~40PC\*ACCT\*LONG) can be viewed in the tax reform efforts by Duarte Frutos (2004-2008) in Paraguay. Belonging to a reformist, pro-market faction within the traditionally clientelistic Colorado Party, the president relied on just a fraction of his party's caucus (which itself wasn't majoritarian in congress) to initiate the overhauling of a tremendously backward fiscal system (extremely low overall tax burden, no income tax at all, too many loopholes, widespread economic informality, high levels of tax evasion and a deficient and poorly financed tax agency). (Stein, 2007, pp. 197-199; Molinas & Pérez-Liñán & Saiegh & Montero, 2008, p. 361). After gathering a strong societal coalition in favor of his proposals, shared by major business and trade union associations<sup>476</sup>, and tailoring them to get explicit support

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<sup>474</sup> Our empirical survey concurs with that figure by Lehoucq, Negretto, Aparicio, Nacif and Benton (2008, p. 302); Klesner (2001, p. 67) puts the share in 45%.

<sup>475</sup> Here, the divergences occurred basically within the PRI itself, whose more traditional factions resisted giving up advantageous power imbalances that previously favored the party in winning elections.

<sup>476</sup>In an innovative move towards public engagement (bringing new, more modern societal actors to the limelights), since until then the only voice from outside the political arena that had

from the IMF and other international organizations (including their promise of financial backing for the country if the reforms were enacted), the government could rally the full support of his own backbenchers and reach a deal with a third party (*Patria Querida*), sustaining the main lines of the executive package (substantial enlargement of the tax base and elimination of the most outrageous tax exemptions and privileges), in exchange for targeted concessions that lowered the tax burden on farmers (which allowed *Patria Querida* to claim credits with their most relevant constituencies).

A less successful experience of tax reform for the same pattern of causal configuration (Stein, 2007, pp.188-190; Cárdenas & Junguito & Pachón, 2006, pp. 45-46) were the several attempts by Colombian presidents to shift the main taxation effort towards value-added taxes (bigger rates collected from larger tax bases), against a pronounced congressional preference for formally progressive tax designs hard-wired into the structure of the tax system (multiple VAT rates and taxes on wealth). Revenue increases were repeatedly introduced by a plethora of emergency decrees (usually ascribed to a worsened security situation in the country's struggle against guerrilla insurgencies); that generated improvised tax devices that had to be validated by parliament after the few months of emergency, not always successfully, and almost never in a coherent fashion<sup>477</sup>. Notwithstanding a parliamentary structure that gave strong influence in fiscal matters to seasoned and technically qualified ranking members operating under rules that give permanent committees a strong gatekeeping power (Cárdenas & Junguito & Pachón, 2006, pp. 19-20), Colombian presidents had to rely on several *quid pro quo* strategies to achieve such parliamentary *ex post* endorsements, such as assigning several sponsors to each bill (thus increasing the amount of policy or clientelistic concessions made in exchange for their sponsorship<sup>478</sup>) and accepting the dilution of more substantive reforms (thus deeply

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had any clout on policymaking were the public employees trade unions and the *Campesino* organizations of agricultural smallholders, and those only as last-resort veto players whose occasional street mobilizations (and threats to individual legislators' reelection bids in their constituencies) were able to block attempted deals by political agents parties, such as president Cubas' more ambitious privatization plans in 2000-2001 (Molinas & Pérez-Liñán & Saiegh & Montero, 2008, p. 365-366)

<sup>477</sup> A strategy that became harder to pursue after the 1991 Constitution restricted the scope and discretionality of presidential decree powers, but even so provided some opportunities for presidential decision-making (Cárdenas & Junguito & Pachón, 2006, pp. 14-15 and 30-32).

<sup>478</sup> Sponsorship implies a decisive brokerage role in the decision flow regarding the bills, and brings with it considerable amounts of pork, patronage and regional targeting of projects to the individual legislators that act as sponsors. So, the more sponsors a bill has, the more likely its approval is expected to be (Cárdenas & Junguito & Pachón, 2006, pp. 21-24 and 29-30)

exploiting the RECP condition, both along the particularistic benefits axis and along policy-oriented bargains). In face of this raised political costs, the Uribe government withdrew its VAT reform bill in 2004, to avoid having it converted into an increase in wealth taxes which would thwart presidential policy goals. More generally, this pattern of policymaking produced frequent, incomplete, mutually inconsistent and often distortionary taxation measures that were unable to tackle revenue volatility and to solve long-term fiscal imbalances (Cárdenas & Junguito & Pachón, 2006, p. 42).

Among the cases depicting this configuration, there are also two Costa Rican presidents (Pacheco, 2002-2005, and Solís, 2017), and this country offers a policymaking pattern that may illustrate another face to this configuration. As well as in Chile, Costa Rica lived since the 1980's a strong transformation while keeping a large part of the former social economic regime's imprint, but under reverse signs. After decades of a very successful developmentalist economic policy (which produced one of the least unequal countries in Latin America), fiscal and current account imbalances peaked at a balance of payments acute crisis in 1982 (Capitán, 2003, pp. 149-327; Franzoni & Sanchez-Anochea, 2013, pp. 103-104), and from then on policymakers had to pursue a hurried and pragmatic conversion into an export-led economy while trying not to dismantle the core of the social protection devices that existed during the previous decades. That U-turn had strong political effects: its formerly structured two-party system (with a social democratic pole that was remarkably strong for Latin American settings) gradually eroded and opened up competition opportunities for third parties (both from the left and the right) to conquer a relevant share in parliament, a trend that fully blossomed in the 2002 elections (Ramos & Naranjo & Sánchez-Ancochea, 2014, pp. 374-375). From 1982 on, executive-legislative relations growingly relied in the same multiparty dynamics as in other Latin American countries, to which Costa Rica fully converged since the landmark 2002 electoral results<sup>479</sup>. The inherited decision process, though, was one of very slow, incremental muddling through (Lehoucq, 2006): presidents had very limited formal powers, and the full ban on reelection (both for presidents and legislators) shortened their time horizon to just one or two years, beyond which they became virtual lame ducks unable to offer credible commitments or payoffs. So, outside the pre-crisis framework of structured long-term agreements under a bipolar

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<sup>479</sup> That is, the expected reconcilability of party goals (RECP) was slowly built until the 2002 configuration (the first one to score a positive value for that condition in the truth table).

system<sup>480</sup>, there was only the possibility of piecemeal bargains (greased by a significant share of the budget that might be allocated by the president to particularistic deals with legislators, and the usage of appropriation riders to convey substantive legislation in the budget bill circumventing standard legislative procedures<sup>481</sup>). Congress, then, had quite a negative role during this new multiparty pattern: facing procedurally weak presidents, minority parties had significant filibuster and other delaying resources; that, compounded by ever more aggressive judiciary review from the Constitutional Chamber of the Supreme Court and the very short time span for presidents before they became lame ducks, meant Congress would mostly act as veto agent for crucial decisions (Ramos & Naranjo & Sánchez-Ancochea, 2014). This kind of clogged decisionmaking was particularly felt in taxation issues: Congress was keen to legislate (and the Constitutional Chamber to enforce legislation) the granting of new rights and the corresponding obligations by the state, but it did not approve the taxation to fund such new obligations – which ended up severely compromising the effectiveness of public institutions and generating unsustainable public finances (Franzoni & Sanchez-Ancochea, 2013, p. 130-131). Under those constraints, consequential decisions were reached in a piecemeal fashion, through unstable and ever-changing political alliances formed to deal with each topic. This reactive but decisive role was felt mostly in lawmaking: the police patrol activities performed by the audit institution (*Contraloría General*) and occasionally brought to the assembly had a narrow focus on bookkeeping and formalistic criteria; the most salient irregularities – like the bankruptcy of the state-owned *Banco Anglocostarricense*, which had a huge fiscal cost, were conspicuously absent from the legislative surveillance (Lehoucq, 2006)<sup>482</sup>. We found no remarkable policy achievements by the presidents in our sample (Pacheco and Solís), but one

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<sup>480</sup> The intertemporal consistency of decisions from this former framework, together with a peculiar institutional structure that kept many policy areas insulated from the mainstream political divide under the purview of “independent agencies” (that did not have their funding nor their main management goals subordinate to presidential or congressional decision), is regarded by many scholars as the main driver for the good results (growth, inequality reduction, rule of law) achieved by Costa Rica in the decades spanning from 1949 to 1980, as well for the feasibility of coining such ample export-driven reform in the 1980’s (Lehoucq, 2006, 2012; Franzoni & Sanchez-Ancochea, 2013, pp. 102-103).

<sup>481</sup> Those “atypical norms” were later struck down by the Constitutional Chamber of the Supreme Court (Ramos & Naranjo & Sánchez-Ancochea, 2014).

<sup>482</sup> Franzoni and Sanchez-Ancochea (2013 p. 129-130) partially contradict this assessment, mentioning legislation granting growing surveillance powers for oversight agencies such as the *Contraloría General*, albeit they emphasize the diffuse role of control played by the Constitutional Chamber of the Supreme Court in a typical “fire alarm” fashion.

instance from the previous Rodríguez presidency in 1999-2000<sup>483</sup> shows how policy could be done in that overall environment: the pension reform (Jiménez, 2000) involved a laborious process of previous social consultation, during which business associations, trade unions, civil society representatives and the opposition parties themselves were given the opportunity to discuss and propose changes to the executive's draft proposal. The resulting pre-agreement was also open for debate and amendments when it came to the legislature as a bill, with significant concessions to the center-left opposition in its policy contents. The end results pointed to an intermediate point between the fiscally restrictive stance by the government and the distributive inclination by the opposition: favored retirement conditions to many professional categories were mostly unified into a single general regime of a contributive nature, and partial private participation in the management of funds was allowed, but universalization was greatly expanded by means of budgetary funding from general revenues. All in all, the possibilities of reconciling the president's and the legislative parties' goals seemed to be fully explored at least in the policy dimension (and probably in the votes dimension, since the previous social consultation allowed for parties' protagonism in the view of their constituencies)<sup>484</sup>.

*Structured negotiation among equals - the Chilean way  
(PWRP\*~RECP\*40PC\*ACCT\*LONG, lagged results)*

As for the distinctly Chilean configuration for lagged results (PWRP\*~RECP\*40PC\*ACCT\*LONG), involving powerful presidents, activist congresses and pronounced cleavages between the two sides of congress, several important features are empirically described as pervasive in that specific policymaking style for relevant decisions during the first twenty years of democratic governments in Chile by the *Concertación* coalitions between Socialists and Christian Democrats (Stein & Tommasi & Echebarría & Lora & Payne, 2007, p. 158). In that process, intracoalitional negotiations for executive proposals are held first within cabinet members (mediated by the presidential office) and then by bringing coalition

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<sup>483</sup> That is, on the brink of the qualitative change assigned by the literature to the 2002 election, indicating that the conditions that emerged thereafter had already accumulated almost to the point of changing. The truth table shows that the Rodríguez administration was minoritarian, but not below 40% in the assembly (the 40PC condition was not present), and the RECP condition was coded as negative (which probably reflects the lagging prevalence of the two main parties in the chamber, soon to be swept by the 2002 election).

<sup>484</sup> We found no mention to other kinds of payoffs being offered to legislators to facilitate approval in this matter.

party leaders into discussions; when a deal has been reached within the presidential coalition, the draft that embodies it is formally tabled at Congress, and open negotiations start with the opposition legislators (involving both policy concessions and, sometimes, particularistic benefits as an additional lever to be pushed in extreme circumstances). Such concessions were made easier by the *Concentración* parties' relative insulation from social mobilization<sup>485</sup> and the leadership's top-down approach to decision-making, which emerged from the historical processes of party formation in the prologues to the democratic transition; on the other side of the aisle, right-wing coalition *Alianza* held a very energetic, oftentimes intransigent, stance on behalf of the *status quo ante* (Huber & Pribble & Stephens, 2010, p. 96). Parliamentary negotiations are undoubtedly framed by formal presidential legislative powers; their usage is understood matter-of-factly (as a regular and expected component of legislative bargaining, not an attempt at unilateral circumventing of Congress<sup>486</sup>). That gave legislators a strong say in shaping the final design of major policy decisions<sup>487</sup>.

Substantively, this decision-making style resulted in set of very significant policy enactments who simultaneously meant significative change and remarkable

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<sup>485</sup> Also remarked by Siavelis (2018, p. 137)

<sup>486</sup> Indeed, as will be shown in the next section, the strong presidential powers held by the Chilean president are basically aimed at structuring congressional agenda and bargaining, not at unilaterally imposing presidential will by decree or similar instruments. Moreover, historical reports praise presidential moderation in using those powers, acceding to congressional demands when it comes to delaying urgency requests or including legislators' priorities in the agenda or in the contents of bills where the executive has sole initiative (Siavelis, 2000, pp. 59-60; for this kind of openness in budgetary negotiations, Montecinos, 2003, p. 32, or Ferraro, 2008, pp. 109-110).

<sup>487</sup> Siavelis (2000, p. 57) gives a relevant description to this practice. Although it's mostly based on president Aylwin's behavior (previous to the cases listed in our solution, more strongly affected by the early post-transition challenges, and widely held as the more flexible and negotiation-prone among *Concertación* presidents), Siavelis' analysis covers also his successor's government (Frei), and can illustrate a general style for the historical period considered in our solution:

*This pattern of cooperation has not been limited to relations between parties of the governing coalition. The parties of the center-right also played a vital role as members of the loyal opposition willing to broker negotiations between the military and the Concertación, both in regard to the reforms of the 1980 constitution and later through participation in the democracia consensual, which characterized the first government. Indeed, President Aylwin and representatives of the executive branch often entered into negotiations directly with the center-right in order to reach solutions to controversial legislative issues, some would say going over the heads of Concertación members of Congress. This occurred most notably during negotiations on the proposal for Aylwin's Reforma Tributaria. Aylwin negotiated directly with business leaders and legislators on the Right to reach an agreement on the most controversial aspects of tax reform. Despite occasional criticisms by members of the governing coalition, this type of executive behavior moderated many of the Concertación's proposals, making them more acceptable to a broader range of political parties and more likely to pass in Congress.*

stability *vis-à-vis* the authoritarian legacy<sup>488</sup>: the basic features of the inherited neoliberal economy and state were kept (and even deepened) by the democratic governments, while impressive achievements in reducing its inequitable character and extending social protection were introduced by them (Huber & Pribble & Stephens, 2010; Navia, 2009, pp. 28-37; Pribble, 2013, pp. 51 *et seqs.*). So, for instance, President Lagos tried to significantly raise tax rates to pay for social spending, but had to settle for a 5% royalty tax on private copper mining and a modest raise in corporate tax rates from from 15% to 17%; labor law reforms (unsuccessfully attempted by Frei, and partially enacted by Lagos after a protracted struggle) managed to introduce partial protection for unionization and reduction of work weeks, although it had to keep on the books the crucial anti-strike provisions inherited from the dictatorial regime. The two *Concertación*'s flagship social programs had also this half-full-glass nature: the *AUGE* scheme of public-funded universal health coverage for major illnesses (introduced by Lagos and then extended by Bachelet) had to accept a significant curtailment in scope and a much less equitable funding pool, as compared to the original governmental proposal<sup>489</sup>, even if it represented a huge step towards a previously non-existent universal health care; as for pension reform, Bachelet's attempts at mobilizing general revenues and fiscal reserve fund resources to mitigate the nefarious effects from the hugely inequitable and dismally ineffective private financing inherited from the Pinochet years was partially successful, but still

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<sup>488</sup> Navia (2009, p. 18) calls the end results of *Concertación*'s policies "neoliberalism with a human face".

<sup>489</sup> Pribble (2013, pp. 51-52) gives a vivid description of congressional interference in the core decisions involving the design of the *AUGE* scheme, coming from both the coalition supporters and the opposition:

*While the Lagos administration was able to successfully overcome opposition to AUGE from the CM, Confusam, and Congress, it was less successful in defending one key element of the reform: the creation of the so-called solidarity and maternity funds. The two funds would have pooled a share of contributions made to the public and private sectors into a unified national account to be used to offset the cost of covering high-risk individuals. [...] First, in the Senate Health Committee, removal of the fund was approved in unanimity by senators from the UDI, RN, PDC, and PS [...]. Moreover, when the reformed bill was voted on by the Senate, the only legislator to oppose the bill was from the PRD. While it is true that in deliberation in the lower house, it was the PDC, PPD, and rightist parties that voted to eliminate the solidarity fund, the only votes explicitly against eliminating the fund also came from the PDC, the PRD, and PPD [...]. The PS, by contrast, abstained from voting on the solidarity fund [...]. Importantly, however, during discussion in the lower chamber, Concertación representatives from all of the parties voiced disapproval for the elimination of the solidarity fund [...] Liberal sectors of the Concertación were not, however, the only actors to oppose the president's solidarity and maternity funds. The right-wing UDI and RN parties opposed the overall health care reform, including the articles related to the funds. In interviews with members of the reform team, including President Lagos himself, I was told that the conservative party opposition influenced AUGE's contents during Congressional debate, but also during the initial phase of formulating the proposal [...].*

had to accept a strong degree of workers' self-financing<sup>490</sup> and drop some important components (such as a state-run pension fund manager) out of a defeat on a Senate vote. The Bachelet government saw its popularity plummet after the failure of the *Transantiago* urban transport infrastructure project, partly due to legislative opposition following the first haphazard implementation stages (an opposition that ended up dropping the authorization for additional public funding for overhauling the project<sup>491</sup>). Another salient project by the same government, education reform, had to incorporate caveats or provisions that partially contradicted or watered down the original proposition (such as allowing publicly-subsided private schools to keep charging additional fees and select students, thus excluding the poor from them, in the context of an education reform whose main goal was to reduce inequalities in access to schooling). This education reform, by the way, unsuccessfully struggled to cancel out the same inequitable private financing mechanism that was offered to the opposition parties by a former coalition government (Aylwin) in exchange for the maintenance of VAT tax rates. In both cases (the 1996-1997 tit-for-tat that created the financial subsidies for private schools and the 2006-2009 abandonment of their abolishment by later reform efforts) the crucial decision hub was precisely the policy-based bargain in congress (Pribble, 2013, pp. 100-105)<sup>492</sup>.

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<sup>490</sup> That feature was not rejected by the technocratic wing of the coalition for fiscal reasons, since it kept incentives for workers to save for pension purposes and eased the burdens on public finance.

<sup>491</sup> This legislative defeat involved also the defection of some Christian Democrat senators from the presidential coalition, which in chambers so closely divided amounts to utter impossible odds for the presidential agenda to prevail.

<sup>492</sup> *Finally, in August 1997, the government reached an agreement with the right/center-right UDI party to maintain the VAT at 18 percent in exchange for two concessions. First, the reform made the full day optional for institutions that could demonstrate high-quality results in their education outcomes. Second, the law provided state subsidies to private voucher schools for the implementation of the law (El Mercurio 1997, 1C). In this way, the government agreed to cover the cost of transitioning to a full school day in both the public and private sectors (El Mercurio 1997, 1C). The fact that the UDI fought to secure special privileges for private schools is illustrative of the party's coordinating relationship with its business constituency. Some members of the PS and the PPD parties resisted these accommodations but were unable to mobilize opposition. [...] In the end, the bill passed by a nearly unanimous vote in both the upper and lower chambers. (Pribble, 2013, pp. 103-104)*

*The next significant push for education reform did not come until March 2006, when Santiago was rocked by a wave of intense and well-organized student protests. [...] In 2007, after Bachelet's original proposal encountered strong opposition from the parties of the right, the president assembled representatives of all the main political parties to negotiate a "social pact" on education. The pact, which student organizations and the teachers' unions opposed, was necessary because of the fact that the proposed bill required a special (four-sevenths) majority for passage, because it sought to replace a constitutional law. In return for the support of the right, Bachelet agreed to allow admissions requirements at subsidized private high schools and to allow subsidized private schools to function as for-profit entities (El Mercurio 2007). The agreement facilitated the 2009 approval of a new general education law, which replaces the*

It's clear from what's reported above that many instances of countervailing actions by the Chilean parliament happened in the lawmaking arena (under conditions that imply scrutiny and decision sharing, not stalemate or blockade). Not that typical "police patrol" accountability was absent: parliamentary enquiries were instrumental in enabling and framing the strong reactions over the failures of *Transantiago* (Parra, 2009; Siavelis, 2018, p. 145), and in uncovering and resonating the systemic failures in the immediate responses to the 2010 earthquake (Moreno, 2010)<sup>493</sup>. Instead, as clearly noted in section 3.3.2, oversight is one of the several resources that assertive and empowered congresses employ to perform accountability, and the absence of lawmaking assessment in our model stems basically from the absence of any feasible metrics for credible operationalization. In other words, the high accountability scores for this specific solution are markers that identify legislators that not only are active overseers, but also make strong lawmaking scrutinizers.

### 6.3.3 Turning back to theory: hypotheses and meaning

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*education constitutional law (LOCE) and outlines the rights and duties of the state, students, parents, and providers with regard to education. [...] For this reason, the general education law was opposed by sectors of the Concertación, teachers' unions, and student organizations, which saw the initiative as little more than the entrenchment of the military-era education system. The general education law passed the senate by a vote of 27 to 2. The opposition came from two of the Concertación's own senators (PS and PPD). In the house, the bill passed with 70 votes in favor and 26 against. Much like in the upper house, the bulk of the votes against the bill came from the PS and PPD (El Mercurio 2009). The nature of the legislative vote reveals that Bachelet's education reform was heavily influenced by the country's conservative parties. In particular, the right/center-right UDI was strongly committed to the need to maintain the for-profit character of private schools. (Pribble, pp. 104-105)*

<sup>493</sup> Indeed, the interest in oversight caused the Constitution to be changed in 2005 to explicitly assign the prerogatives for creating enquiry committees to the Chamber of Deputies, thereby formalizing an intensely used mechanism previously reliant only on Chamber bylaws (Barzelatto, 2012; Siavelis, 2018, pp.143-147 reckons the existence and intense activity of enquiry committees in the Chamber, but argues that, for several political reasons, their end result does not contribute significantly to public institutions' effectiveness and integrity). Moreover, some observers point that Senate committees (which, by explicit constitutional mandate, have no oversight powers) perform activities that clearly represent police patrol initiatives, disguised as fact-finding measures to enhance deliberations in lawmaking:

*La misma situación se repite en la actualidad y un ejemplo lo encontramos en la Comisión de Obras Públicas del Senado, que en fecha reciente ha observado que subsisten en el Ministerio de Obras Públicas problemas de sobresueldos y en la modificación de ejecución de obras ya contratadas. Los senadores, como es lógico, siempre tienen el cuidado de advertir que se trata de estudios dirigidos a preparar una intervención legislativa, lo que no impide ver su claro contenido fiscalizatorio.*

*[..] Reflejado no sólo en el tenor del texto periodístico citado, sino en el hecho que sus contenidos coinciden con los planteados por la Cámara de Diputados en ejercicio de sus facultades fiscalizadoras. Hay más ejemplos. La Comisión de Medio Ambiente del Senado anunció su intención de constituirse en la zona del Parque Pumalín, para recibir opiniones de los colonos acerca de un acuerdo que pretende suscribir el Gobierno con el norteamericano Douglas Tompkins [...]. No parece existir ningún proyecto de ley sobre la materia. (Bronfman, 2003, p. 139)*

### *Checking hypotheses*

Minimization results allow us to assess the hypotheses extracted from extant theories, as presented in section 4.1.

Beginning with the more limited H2, it seems vindicated by the solutions found: in every causal pathway for positive outcomes, both contemporary and lagged, there appear one, two or even three of the expected INUS conditions (PWRP, RECP and 40PC). Decisiveness is present through some or all of its posited elements every time a consistent row of positive outcomes is reached, and those elements substitute for each other across configurations. In other words, for those causal pathways to be applicable, some degree of that decision-making space is to be available to presidents, who cannot expect to be successful if they have none of their elements available<sup>494</sup>. Another significant corollary is that the mere numerical threshold (40PC) is not present alone in any configuration – that is, having a less minoritarian status adds to a president's negotiating stakes, possibly to a significant extent, but doesn't ensure successful results *per se*<sup>495</sup>.

Similarly restrained H3 is also sustained by the empirical record: the condition LONG was invariably present in all minimized sufficient solutions, although it's not the only component of those solution terms, nor a necessary condition at large. Therefore, it appears exactly as an INUS condition (see definition in the above paragraph), and that corroboration of H3 allows us to assess the causal effects from the conditions with full confidence that there will be no influence from the emergency condition (since it does not vary across the empirical solutions found).

As for H1, it's refuted in its universal sufficiency claims. Although there are several instances of this configuration that correspond to empirical reality, some other

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<sup>494</sup> That is precisely what's expected from an INUS condition:

*Una condición INUS se caracteriza, pues, por cuatro aspectos: a. Forma parte de una configuración de condiciones que es suficiente para producir el resultado. b. Esa configuración, sin embargo, no es necesaria para producir el resultado, puesto que puede haber otras configuraciones que también conduzcan a él. c. La condición INUS no es suficiente por sí misma para producir dicha configuración suficiente pero innecesaria, puesto que por definición deberá estar combinada con otras condiciones. d. Sin embargo, al mismo tiempo, la condición INUS es necesaria para producir la configuración suficiente pero innecesaria, puesto que, conceptualmente, sin ella la configuración no podría existir. (Medina & Ortiz & Álamos-Concha & Rihoux, 2017, p. 185)*

<sup>495</sup> That's coherent with the theoretical views described in section 3.3.1, who emphasize that near-majority presidents are basically incentivized by such conditions to deploy their tools and negotiating strategies. A legislative threshold is then a facilitator, not a substitute for other policymaking tools.

configurations were found where decisiveness conditions appear but accountability is negated<sup>496</sup>, both in contemporary and in lagged settings. Accordingly, we can't say that strategies without an active congressional oversight will not engender positive results. There's one important point to stress in those low accountability cases, though: whenever accountability is negative, the reconcilability of party goals (RECP) is always present. This suggests two possible causal pathways consistent with theory: one is the "random" choice of good policies by executives entirely unchecked by a bought-up congress<sup>497</sup> (the possibility of which we discussed in the contemporary cases, emphasizing precisely the lack of empirical comprehensiveness); the other is that negotiations among parties in parliament include a significant degree of policy-based bargaining that "chisels out" decisions during the deliberation process, having similar effects as those generated by strong *ex post* oversight.

Additionally, it's also clear that the insertion of the exceptional circumstances captured in the condition discussed in section 3.4 (~LONG) in one isolated hypothesis is analytically sustainable: for positive outcomes, strictly all solutions feature the condition LONG, meaning that no consistent outcome was reached including the exceptional mandates; simultaneously, the condition was not found necessary according to the logical rules. As for negative outcomes, no solutions were posited with logical and theoretical strength; so, there's no support for any claim regarding those cases<sup>498</sup>. Therefore, the hypothesizing of LONG as an INUS condition (decided on purely theoretical grounds) is vindicated: it appears (jointly with other factors) in several sufficient configurations to the good outcome (although, theoretically at least, there may be others where it's not present).

To properly frame those ultimate conclusions from research findings, we must reiterate the methodological point already discussed in section 5.3 for such a large-N QCA design: minimization results are not a combinatorial roll call of all possible links between conditions and outcome. Instead, they emerge as empirically plausible configurations that are consistent with theory and amenable to proposed causal mechanisms. They shed light on some causal pathways to good policymaking, those that may be empirically discerned as cross-case patterns reflecting expected

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<sup>496</sup> That is, not only absent from the expression, but present with a negative sign.

<sup>497</sup> That is, a congress who bargain strictly on spoils and pork, realising through those payoffs its members' own goals in terms of policy, office and votes.

<sup>498</sup> That is, while it might be intuitively expected that those cases could influence bad outcomes due to their unstable characteristics, no statements can be extracted from data to support or refute that assumption.

conceptual relationships” (Greckhamer & Misangyi & Fiss, 2013, p. 70). Indeed, every minimization solution found in section 6.2.5 mean “the presence of conditions [that] allows agents to act in ways that achieve the outcome” (Rutten, 2020, p. 5), ways that we tried to assess in the discussion held in section 6.3.1, i.e., to have them “interpreted and verbalized into causal mechanisms based on substantive knowledge”. (Rutten, 2020, p. 1)

#### *Drilling down each condition*

Formulating the same conclusions in terms of theoretical streams as aligned in section 3.3.1 for decisiveness, we may say that our findings corroborate some features in the “executive toolbox” approach to presidential powers. First, under the stringent conditions for presidents in Chile (in a minoritarian condition and facing an activist congress under a strong cleavage in the policy spectrum<sup>499</sup>), those powers do help to generate good outcomes in longer time horizons. It must be noted that Chilean presidential powers are strongly based in “within-parliament” legislative prerogatives (Bittencourt, 2016) which matches the policymaking pattern of centralized bargaining between parties in parliament (that is, with little room for individual co-opting of rogue votes through budgetary pork or informal perks) suggested by the low reconcilability of party goals and the sustained congressional interest in performing oversight tasks. That is, presidential powers do play a specific role in a specific negotiating strategy that has been successfully deployed for longer-term policymaking (with no suggestion of a unilateral or decisionist role). The substantial changes introduced in the neoliberal model inherited from the authoritarian regime, as described in the corresponding segment of section 6.3.2<sup>500</sup>, testify to that.

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<sup>499</sup> *Por ejemplo, con el propósito de legislar, los presidentes de la era posautoritaria a menudo tenían que lidiar con una oposición poco amigable cuya influencia se amplificaba mediante la ingeniería electoral e institucional. Más aún, el ambiente posterior a la transición era extraordinariamente frágil y toda modificación sustancial que se pretendiera hacer al modelo económico neoliberal de Pinochet o al legado de su Constitución se percibiría como una amenaza directa a la comunidad militar y empresarial. Por lo tanto, el éxito legislativo de los presidentes dependía de su habilidad para persuadir, lo que a menudo implicaba negociar con los legisladores de la oposición, dándoles mucha influencia e insumos en el diseño de las políticas públicas.* (Siavelis, 2018, p. 127).

<sup>500</sup> “Structured negotiation among equals – the Chilean way (PWRP\*~RECP\*40PC\*ACCT\*LONG, lagged results)”

That first instance of corroboration cannot, however, bet on the alleged substitutability among tools, since our empirical basis is highly concentrated on just one country, thus allowing for just one set of weights between the several components of legislative, budgetary and informal powers. Besides, given our scope condition, those tests could never shed any light on the posited complementary role of those presidential powers *vis-à-vis* the power-sharing agreements embedded in a majority coalition.

The results say something more about the toolbox: even for the unfrequent short-term impacts (contemporary results), presidential powers alone could not consistently yield good results - they were unable to provide sound policymaking on their own, relying on the simultaneous existence of a party system engaged in legislative trade-offs. That seems a strong indictment of the decisionist, stand-alone claim that a president, being minoritarian, could successfully rule by *diktat* when his coalition's minority legislative status shows the absence of broad consensus in the political system<sup>501</sup>. This finding does not extend to majority coalitions, though; a legislative majority may signal a broader alignment between the two decisionmaking powers (which might, in turn, be the sign of a broader societal alignment<sup>502</sup>) that could offer other conditions for short-term (or emergency) policymaking that are not covered by our scope condition.

Legislative “quasi-majoritarian” thresholds, as frequently mentioned in the literature, do appear as a reinforcement for negotiating strategies: in the short run, contemporary good results were consistently found only when the 40% share of seats was held by the presidential supporters (that is, no “hiperminoritarian” set of decisiveness attributes might claim consistent success in short-term measures). As for lagged results, this is no longer true: while the Chilean-style centralized negotiations do require that minimal support<sup>503</sup>, no other solution does; on the contrary, when a

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<sup>501</sup> That might mean a stronger societal division across policy options, or simply the product of institutional rules (such as non-concurrent elections bringing either the president or the legislature under a new majoritarian choice by the electorate against the other chosen under previous circumstances). Whatever the source of such division, abiding to democratic institutions would engender such deadlock.

<sup>502</sup> Although this broad societal consensus is not to be assumed as necessary for good emergency policymaking; it may or may not follow the political-institutional alignment between executive and legislative.

<sup>503</sup> The concentrated pattern on Chilean cases makes it difficult to generalize that requirement, since the main rationale for the threshold is the possible capture of smaller slices from the opposition camp by the president, something less plausible in a very pronounced bipartisan cleavage between the *Concertación* and the *Alianza por Chile* coalitions. So, the most plausible mechanism seems not the standard “defector’s chase” posited by theory, but instead a real substantive exchange between the two great blocs (in which the holding of more than 40% by

weak president facing a weak congress can negotiate regardless of his vote share<sup>504</sup>, an activist although open-to-negotiation parliament<sup>505</sup> yielded good results only in the presence of a less-than-40% presidential share of congress. Those cases are consistent with the posited theoretical mechanisms: while the former may involve either congresses in which log-rolling is pervasive and party affiliation does not significantly weigh in voting behavior or a more policy-based pattern of *ad hoc* alliances made easier by the leverage given by the presidential seat share threshold, the latter opens the clear interpretation that hiperminoritarian presidents are the ones who acknowledge their fragility and take advantage of the possibilities open by the reconcilability of party goals to engage in serious negotiations over policy (sometimes making use of societal mobilization not as pressure for congressional surrender, but as a way of broader consensus-building that could not be ignored by parliament).

The one decisiveness condition to be singled out is the reconcilability of party goals. Indeed, it's present in all contemporary and lagged solutions, but for the very specific Chilean case of centralized bargaining among two equally powerful coalitions in parliament. So, the empirical findings are strongly suggesting that the most consequential presidential strategy in minority settings is to explore the bargaining space available among parties to reach agreements in parliament on behalf of a given policy agenda. Those agreements may include co-opting by pork and other benefits, presaged by strong presidential powers (as in the first solution for contemporary results); however, most solutions do not require such powers<sup>506</sup>, at least as the bulwark of presidential push for his agenda, which strongly suggests the incidence of policy-based or electoral-support bargaining (which is coherent with

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the presidential coalition may act as just another presidential power, in that it dissuades opposition from trying high-risk roll-call confrontations). In other hypothetical environments where irreconcilable parties are more fragmented, it's possible that the threshold might have a more instrumental role (in that presidents might really try to capture defectors in the opposition), but it's also possible that political bitterness is so widespread among different parties that the president cannot even collect such occasional outside support (that might have been the case of the Allende government, also in Chile, in a previous historical time frame from 1970 to 1973)

<sup>504</sup> The solution (~PWRP\*RECP\*~ACCT\*LONG), exemplified by the Mexican cases of presidents completely circumventing congress through direct log-rolling (as in health policy) or, in more transformative issues, president Zedillo's shifting policy-based legislative alliances (specially with the main opposition party), as described in the corresponding segment in section 6.3.2)

<sup>505</sup> The solution (RECP\*~40PC\*ACCT\*LONG). Remarkable among those cases are the Paraguayan tax reform by President Duarte Frutos and the Costa Rican pension reform in the Rodríguez presidency, both depicted in the corresponding segment of section 6.3.2.

<sup>506</sup> Namely, (RECP\*40PC\*~ACCT\*LONG) for contemporary results and (~PWRP\*RECP\*~ACCT\*LONG) and (RECP\*~40PC\*ACCT\*LONG) for lagged results.

Strøm's framework of external support gathering by exploiting the circumstances of electoral competitiveness and non-cabinet policy influence). By the way, that might be the only possibility for those presidents who face a strong and activist congress, who aggressively oversees the administration, and have less than 40% in the chambers – hardly a situation when vote-buying could be effective by itself (or, for the matter, could be even affordable at such large scale). In a way, that reinforces the plausibility of arguments on the enhanced flexibility that minority governments may reach, as recalled in section 3.3.3, enabling them to negotiate along the whole policy spectrum on several dimensions. The brief review of some instances of successful reform performed in section 6.3.2 also suggests that among the instruments in that bargaining, the assembling of a wider societal coalition through a process of public consultation and bargaining held previously to the tabling of a bill in congress (as illustrated by the Paraguayan tax reform or the Costa Rican pension reform bills) may activate other levers in the policy and vote dimensions that streamline further within-parliament negotiations – that is, the inception of societal actors in the decision process is not necessarily a confrontational “going public” strategy as deplored by coalition management theory<sup>507</sup>.

This extreme relevance of the RECP condition highlights the convenience of deepening in the theory-building regarding such bargains in presidential settings: as the corresponding review in section 3.1.1 shows, the bulk of working theories on this feature was built on parliamentarism literature (from the iconic Strøm, 1990, to the multilevel, multi-arena models epitomized by Field & Martin, 2022, and Field, 2016, 2022). Although some facts and arguments around “non-coopted” outside support were mentioned for presidential systems (Morgenstern, 2003; Araújo, Freitas & Vieira, 2018), those points were not at the core of any presidential minority government model that we may recall. Some hints at it have been raised, as we review in the “congruence” cluster of section 3.3.3: the rationale for the cabinet-congress congruence hypothesis (Pereira, Bertholini & Melo, 2022), in the sense that presidents are more successful if they build coalitions by fine-tuning their composition to the median preferences of congress, indirectly implies an *ex ante* policy-based negotiation, in which the very process of cabinet-making is a conveyor of bargaining along the parties; Araújo, Pereira and Raile (2010) include in the “executive toolbox” the possibility of negotiating the policy content (or at least part

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<sup>507</sup> As sketched in the “Legislative powers” segment of section 3.3.1.

of it) in presidential initiatives, being the closest argument to the idea of negotiating over reconcilable goals with the opposition<sup>508</sup>. None of them, however, attempted to incorporate into their causal reasoning the full scaffolding for such negotiations (i.e., their main drivers as far as outside parties' demand is concerned, or the effects of contingent factors, such as electoral competitiveness, on the availability of potential bargaining partners). So, this crucial causal condition for minority governments' success remains still to be internalized by presidentialism studies (most likely by making use of the extant knowledge already available for parliamentary systems, taking into account the effects of institutional differences).

The most hardly hit among theoretical assumptions is accountability through parliamentary oversight, as discussed in sections 3.2.3 and 3.3.2. In contemporary, short-term policy results, it's conspicuously absent (indeed, one of the solutions requires it not to be present); in lagged results, it's required by two of the solutions, one where parties are amenable to negotiate as well as the president (who has less than 40% of the chamber), and the other where a divided congress must face a powerful president with a clearly opposed agenda and little space for negotiation along other dimensions. Those results, taken together, clearly negate the "quasi-necessary" nature of accountability for good policy outcomes that underlies the first hypothesis (that is, the empirical lesson is that good results can be consistently found without accountability in the equation). However, their overall theoretical unfolding is more nuanced, and somehow less drastic.

The first findings, on contemporary results, do not openly refute O'Donnel's (1994, 1998, 2003) rationale: unaccountable policymaking can yield random results, sometimes ending up well, but not always – in our sample, only in 27% of the cases. However, the absence of cases in the extreme manifestation of that "delegative democracy" model (when a purely unilateral president uses his powers to roll over an opposed, irreconcilable assembly, which in turn is unable to articulate effective oversight activities)<sup>509</sup> prevents us from fully discarding such assumptions: if the assembly is open to negotiation (RECP is always present), and presidents require legislative assent to policymaking, some sort of *ex ante* accountability may be extracted by means of previous legislative bargaining over policy. Under those

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<sup>508</sup> In the same section 3.3.3, we mention presidential studies who describe actual instances of policy-based negotiation by the Executive along those lines (Chasquetti, 2013; Siavelis, 2018)

<sup>509</sup> That is, lines 18 and 22 of both contemporary and lagged outcome truth tables (Tables 32 and 36 in Section A.1.4 in Appendix 1), when simultaneously happen PWPR, ~RECP, ~ACCT and LONG.

circumstances, the accountability mechanism would not be the one posited by O'Donnel (a strong *ex post* scrutiny of mostly presidential decisions), but rather the muddling through decision process, negotiated bit by bit, and involving congress in the decision before it happens, as pointed out in Nacif (2006). Indeed, most of our examples of positive ACCT conditions in section 6.3.2 involve mainly (or entirely) cases of congressional engagement in lawmaking, instead of purely *ex post* oversight. In and of itself, it does not imperil our theoretical foundations: section 3.3.2 clearly states that legislative accountability ordinarily involves at least two faces, lawmaking involvement (which is not to be mistaken as mere vetoing or blockage) and active oversight; the reasons for choosing an oversight-centered metric were strictly instrumental – that is, the unavailability of measurement strategies that could capture lawmaking engagement without mixing it up with stalemate or obstructionist behavior. There's even the possibility that the questions included in V-DEM survey for the measurement of oversight (however explicit they may be in circumscribing their scope to oversight, i.e., detecting and rectifying wrongful executive actions) might be affected by some kind of “halo effect” that blends respondents' views on this specific ramification of legislative incidence and their overall perception regarding the legislature's policy role (which, at least in the cases recalled, is prominently centered in changing and amending proposed policies before their enactment). Hence, for a full-fledged test of legislative accountability that also captures those frequent cases, it should be operationalized by something more than just the “classical” police patrol oversight activities modelled by Kriner and Schickler's after the US Congress – a theoretical overhaul that requires developing more finely grained conceptualization and measurement strategies for *ex ante* legislative scrutiny, in order to differentiate it from mere veto playing, foot-dragging or stalemate (as discussed in section 3.3.2)<sup>510</sup>. Under our more limited measurements of accountability as oversight, a plausible testable implication would be that it's more crucial as a deterrent against majoritarian presidents, whose proposals are less likely to be scrutinized and negotiated beforehand<sup>511</sup> - which concurs also with Kriner and

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<sup>510</sup> Those limitations are commensurate with the current shortcomings in the study of legislative oversight in Latin America, where much more research is found necessary regarding the political incentives for the usage of oversight mechanisms by legislators, the balance between *ex post* patrols and *ex ante* scrutiny embedded in lawmaking, and the relationship between the oversight activities and the broader contexts of parliamentary balances of power (Velarde, 2018b, pp. 379 *et. seqs*).

<sup>511</sup> The showcases for the shortcomings of an unaccountable majoritarian presidency are the two Menem administrations in Argentina (Melo, 2007; Verbitsky, 1991, 1993; Llanos, 2002; Larkins, 1998; Stokes, 2004, p. 91): his deliberate assault on each and every horizontal

Schickler's (2016) modelling of oversight in US politics (given the bipartisan nature of American congressional dynamics, which places the minority party under unified government in a position of extreme fragility along the decision process).

This reasoning seems reinforced by the lagged outcome results: here, two causal paths do require accountability, one of them closer to the dynamic of majoritarian presidencies (a powerful president with more than 40% of the chamber and very distant from the opposition in the policy space<sup>512</sup>), while the other stands for the biggest share of parliamentary scrutiny (hiperminoritarian presidents facing an activist congress who, regardless, is open to negotiation<sup>513</sup>). In both cases, the role of oversight seems to be precisely that posited by O' Donnell and Kriner and Schickler: preempting and correcting executive decisions to a considerable extent (although in the latter pathway some previous joint negotiation may have occurred) – something that is compounded by the larger time span for decisions to take effect, which allows for the actual workings of oversight procedures to be deployed. The third causal configuration for lagged results, also well populated with cases<sup>514</sup>, seems like the absolute reliance on *ex ante* scrutiny by parliament: presidents with limited powers finding negotiating space with a lenient parliament who is not interested in engaging

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accountability institution (including the court-packing in the Supreme Court, disbanding the Court of Accounts, intervening in the General Prosecutors' Office and in several lower-ranking prosecution and legal offices across the administration) allowed a strong decisionist sequence of deep reforms and heavy macroeconomic interventions in the short term, but paved the way to countless severe corruption cases (Verbitsky, 1991; Eaton, 2003), to the issuance of several administrative rulings and regulations that, although not inherently corrupt, had a radical pro-business bias, increasing the deep income inequalities already amplified by economic recession (Verbitsky, 1993), and to the whole monetary "convertibility" package with its imbalances that culminated in the spectacular *débauche* of the country's economic policy in the early 2000's (mostly inherited by the successor De La Rúa government) and in one of Argentina's deepest economic crisis in all its history (Cantelmi, 2000; Schamis, 2002; Undurraga, 2015; Malamud, 2015; Llanos, 2002, pp. 187-190, argues that convertibility and labor policies were partially stalled by Congress after much effort, but what remained still had the characteristics of an executive diktat). Stein (2007, pp. 207-209) describes how the rush to take advantage of an extant parliamentary majority in the early 90's by hurriedly enacting a full-blown privatization of telecommunications (thus avoiding any kind of parliamentary scrutiny) engendered a disfunctional regulatory framework (unbalanced price rates, rigid price indexation denominated in a foreign currency, a privately captured regulator, and a model that did not cope with the competition opportunities enabled by technological changes). The result of such measures was one decade of viciously contentious relationships between consumers, operators, regulators, government and the courts, with high social and economic costs and slow incorporation of new technologies and competitors into the market. As for all privatizations, Llanos (2002, p. 187) sees this specific period as a "critical conjuncture" of "congressional subservience" epithomizing the case of "delegative democracy" (which did not correspond to the whole period of democratic rule in Argentina).

<sup>512</sup> The solution (PWRP\*~RECP\*40PC\*ACCT\*LONG). It must be reminded, once more, that this kind of configuration is restricted to practically one single country among minority governments.

<sup>513</sup> The solution (RECP\*~40PC\*ACCT\*LONG).

<sup>514</sup> With 15 instances involving 6 different countries.

in oversight<sup>515</sup>. Accountability here, if any, could only be found on the “Nacif model” of incremental, shared decision processes. Here, two pathways may emerge: either negotiation is limited to logrolling, exchanging votes by pork and other targeted benefits without any policy scrutiny, or the negotiating space involves actual parliamentary scrutinizing of policy decisions at this earlier stage. This last pathway of shared policymaking style, adding *ex ante* negotiations to *ex post* scrutiny, may be an outstanding testing ground for the whole set of accountability theories (as well as in minority governance, since it encompasses hiperminoritarian governments): our empirical appraisal shows that several possible instances of it are observable on the ground<sup>516</sup>.

In sum, our findings do not refute the theoretical calls for horizontal accountability at large. However, under minority presidential settings, they must be put into perspective: the traditional model of horizontal accountability by way of *ex post* legislative oversight – which underlies our own operationalization of legislative accountability - has only partial empirical relevance to minority presidential governments, supporting sustained good results when presidential powers are strong (in a similar way as oversight is supposed to act in majority situations) or when congresses tend to share decisionmaking with weak presidents. Under minority conditions, instead, the *ex ante* pattern of decision sharing (embedded in the potential for negotiating support in parliament based on the reconciliation of parties’ main goals) seems to be the dominating pathway by which congress may exert its countervailing power. This other preliminary finding, however, requires empirical testing by way of developing oversight models that include in lawmaking “leg” of parliamentary influence on policy; we did not pursue such assessment in this study due to implementation hurdles, pointed out in section 3.3.2, who were unsurmountable to our research design and resources.

#### 6.3.4 Limitations and shortcomings

Several caveats must be explicitly formulated as to the internal validity of this study’s causal conclusions<sup>517</sup>, as well as to their potential generalization.

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<sup>515</sup> The solution ( $\sim$ PWRP\*RECP\* $\sim$ ACCT\*LONG).

<sup>516</sup> Indeed, the solution (RECP\* $\sim$ 40PC\*ACCT\*LONG) was found in 18 mandates across 7 countries.

<sup>517</sup> *Conceptually, internal validity in large-N QCA is about the conditions being causally connected to the outcome. Internal validity thus has an important theoretical and substantive*

### *Internal validity*

First and foremost, the partial coverage values (plus the absence of necessary conditions) in the sufficiency solutions found for positive outcomes<sup>518</sup> (0,272 for contemporary results, and 0,527 for lagged ones) bring to the limelight that, probably, other causal factors can bring positive outcomes independently of how our posited causal conditions work (putting it differently, their effects can override any possible effects of our causal conditions) in given circumstances. That's fully coherent with the QCA approach, centered in exploring the effects of complete configurations instead of testing marginal net variable effects: adding more "controls" to try to capture more causal factors would only add complexity to the logical solutions that must support theoretical reasoning, while hindering their full exploitation by means of substantively interpreting a tractable number of conditions<sup>519</sup>.

The first and probably most important array of alternate causal factors is the "multifaceted nature of governance capacities": indeed, the ability for a state to implement goals requires not only high-end political decisiveness and accountability (which influence the quality of decisions), as presented in chapter 3, but also a whole array of material and cultural resources that include elements like fiscal capacity; the state's ability to effectively use it, the compliance of societal actors with government

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*component. The conceptual aspect of internal validity is also directly related to agency. A causal mechanism implies agency, which means that conditions relevant for explaining the outcome should affect (enable or constrain) agency. [...] By implication, the tighter the connection between condition (configuration) and agency, the more plausible the causal mechanism that is interpreted from the condition (configuration) (Rutten, 2020, p. 10)*

<sup>518</sup> Given that no conclusions regarding sufficiency were found to be significant to negative outcomes.

<sup>519</sup> *We foresee another implication that will directly impact researchers conducting large-N QCA studies: following the prevailing logic in research applying general linear regression approaches (e.g., Davis, 2010; Edwards, 2008; Williams, Vandenberg, & Edwards, 2009), it is likely that reviewers (and peers) will request the inclusion of more "control variables" in their QCA models. This extant expectation for the use of control variables constitutes a potential (and perhaps formidable) barrier for the acceptance of large-N QCA research in highly regarded journals. [...] To navigate these hurdles, large-N applications of QCA may (at least initially) need to clearly articulate why their specifications of perhaps 7–8 (or fewer) conditions is not only adequate but appropriate. Methodologically, this will require a shift away from conventional "net effects" notions to configurational thinking in the evaluation of large-N QCA research. At the same time, large-N QCA researchers who are prepared to provide theoretical arguments for the conditions included (and excluded) from their specifications and are able to enhance a study's validity by ruling out alternative explanations via remedies other than control variables (e.g., Cook & Campbell, 1979) or through alternative tests (e.g. Fiss, Sharapov, & Cronqvist, 2013) will be better positioned to overcome expectations and requests to include more control variables in their QCA specifications, in addition to developing more soundly specified causal models. (Greckhamer, Misangyi and Fiss, 2013 p. 60-61)*

decisions that go against their interests, and even the availability of international support (or non-opposition) to the stated policy goals (Fernandes & Fernandes, 2025<sup>520</sup>). A very significant share in each and every one of those variables is composed of accumulated capacities and resources who interact with high-level political variables but are not determined by their current state at any given country-year<sup>521</sup>. As already discussed in section 3.1.2, those conditions are typically long-term ones, and their variance would not be affected by the short-term changes in political-institutional features such as our chosen causal conditions. However, their actual presence cannot but affect the end results of governmental actions, potentially overriding other causal conditions: in other words, all those outside features may form other causal configurations by themselves for positive outcomes, which do not overlap with the ones we've found and may affect the result in other truth table lines where consistency was not reached in our model. A further enhancement of this reasoning would be perfecting how the very notion of good policy performance is operationalized: macroeconomic results are at the very far end of the causal chain (accordingly, affected by all the potential causal impulses, come they from governmental actions or not); there might be other intermediate points in that causal chain that correlate more closely with the political-institutional factors involved in political theory. This theoretical upgrade, however, still remains to be built by social sciences; meanwhile, as we discuss in detail in section 3.1, this large leap from politics to macroeconomics seems, as of now, the best available approximation to an assessment of the substantive results of a given polity<sup>522</sup>.

Another relevant factor that could possibly affect the causal mechanisms in place is suggested by the centrality of the “reconcilability of party goals” variable to minority government outcomes. Given the need for open and wide-ranging negotiations between presidents and legislative parties for that variable to bring its

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<sup>520</sup> There's copious literature on the several possible conceptualization of such “state capabilities”, as mentioned in section 3.1.2.

<sup>521</sup> Of course, the chosen conditions may affect in the long run the outcomes on development goals, capacity-building and political trust. But that's an accumulated effect that can't be captured by a cross-section of yearly values of variables in any assumed relationship, such as in our research design.

<sup>522</sup> There exists also the multidimensional nature of governmental action: one might wish to benchmark government results against health achievements (as Fernandes & Fernandes, 2025, who correlate “governance capacities” to epidemiological metrics in the response to Covid-19 pandemics), environmental conservation outcomes, or virtually every sectoral policymaking arena. Yet, we see no plausible reason to privilege any one of those partial arenas over the broader macroeconomic one, who has received the most extensive attention by the political literature.

observable effects (the condition means a latent opportunity space that must be filled by actual consensus-seeking behavior by both sides), any phenomenon that might obstruct their propensity to negotiate over their compatible goals can deeply affect the causal mechanisms. And that's precisely the case of "affective polarization", that is, the degree in which the "standard ingredients of vibrant democratic competition" of ideological discord and affective aversion between segments of a given polity grow so strong as to "give rise to political intolerance, that is, when political contenders turn from rule-bound agonism among adversaries to unbound antagonism among enemies" (Schedler, 2023, p. 358)<sup>523</sup>. Under such pressures, the most basic trust required for democratic negotiations may well be absent (since parties see opponents' claims and motives as threats against democracy and their own fundamental rights), and democratic channels such as parliamentary bargains are discarded upfront as being risky, disingenuous or untrustworthy (McCoy & Somer, 2019)<sup>524</sup>. Therefore, affective polarization might render ineffective the posited mechanism on which our theoretical choice relies for selecting this specific causal condition, since whatever potential reconciliation of party goals has to be implemented through overt, credible negotiating procedures who become exogenously blocked. For Latin America, there might even be an added hassle underlined by Moraes and Béjar (2025): affective polarization's axis frequently is not parallel to party lines (that is, cleavages might emerge around personalistic leaderships or other specific identity issues that cut across or ignore parties<sup>525</sup>); as a consequence, negotiations will require different stakeholder management strategies than the traditional negotiating table with parliamentary party caucuses.

That affective polarization caveat might sound, at first glance, extemporaneous to the point of irrelevance, if one considers the recent polarization

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<sup>523</sup> A more focused definition to it is "the extent to which partisans or rival socio-political camps view each other as a disliked and distrusted out-group" (Sarsfield, Moncagatta & Robert, 2024, p. 6). We employ Schedler's notion (which does not even use the term "affective") to emphasize the corrosive effects on democratic practice that such kind of polarization engenders (see also McCoy, 2024, p. 167). This notion of affective polarization is clearly not to be mistaken by the more traditional idea of ideological polarization as the widening of the differences between parties and politicians along the preference scales of policy spaces, which is a regular feature of democratic politics (besides the explicit statement of Schedler, 2023, see also Moraes, 2015; Sarsfield, Moncagatta & Robert, 2024; Lupu, 2015; Jones, 2012)

<sup>524</sup> Anecdotal evidence in the Brazilian Congress shows how affective polarization may introduce such interpersonal friction in legislative gatherings that they are rendered completely hopeless for whatever purpose other than mere posturing (Caetano, 2025).

<sup>525</sup> Moraes and Béjar mention the peronism vs. anti-peronism polarization in Argentina as an example to that identity disjunctive: it plays out regardless as to how the formal peronist umbrella label (*Partido Justicialista*) is structured among factions, and how the other parties are split or acting together at any given moment of time.

upsurge seen in Latin America and the world<sup>526</sup>, as if this phenomenon had not occurred in the period comprised by our sample. However, that should not be assumed: besides the several studies that linked potentially similar extreme polarizations to previous democratic breakdowns in the same polities (see Santos, 2003a, for the Brazilian 1964 coup, and a brief review of other similar claims in Pereira, 2016, p. 116), the succinct overview of affective polarization data displayed in section A.2.10 in Appendix 2 shows a different picture<sup>527</sup>. On this regard, we may clearly assert a strong variance in affective polarization values (measured by the best available proxies for comparative purposes along time series), both in a country-specific mode and in different “waves” along time. Even more important, those measurements do not show, by any means, a discernible cross-country cleavage between more polarized “later” years (regardless of the chosen landmark years) and earlier moderate plateaus: although there’s a general trend of increase in affective polarization around the late years of the 2010’s, each country shows a specific year when such trend begins, a specific slope to such increase (from a gentle raise to a breakneck upsurge) and – remarkably – previous periods of similar or higher polarization within formally democratic boundaries. That refutes the argument that such causal condition should be considered only as a contemporary phenomenon, thus dismissing its suitability for longer time spans such as in our sample.

So, due to those reasons stated above (especially its negative impact on the essential political feature of reconcilability of party goals), affective polarization may have a clear interaction with our causal model, and developing such interactions is a fruitful endeavor to enhance the explanatory powers of extant theory regarding minority presidential government. This might be attempted, for instance, through selecting the subsample of cases where reconcilability of party goals (RECP) is present, followed by inserting a causal condition regarding the presence of affective polarization<sup>528</sup>. One last remark should be added: such protagonism of affective polarization as a potential causal factor is in itself a finding, since we could not foreshadow it from any of the surveyed theories on presidential government and its logical plausibility depends on the previous finding that highlights the centrality of

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<sup>526</sup> To be further discussed in the generalization segment of this chapter, just below.

<sup>527</sup> Those findings concur with the empirical outlook shown in Moraes and Béjar (2025) regarding the significant variation in affective polarization across space and time in Latin America.

<sup>528</sup> That might be produced from the already existing long-term time series in the V-Dem repository, or using other sources that cover shorter time spans, such as Latinobarómetro.

negotiation between presidents and legislative parties for several causal mechanisms conducive to good policy results.

Still on internal validity, some of the issues (discussed in section 3.3.3) that were left out of the causal reasoning may have plausible effects in further differentiating policy results, and those effects may - at least partially – be felt through the components in our conceptual framework. At least two of them plausibly interfere with reconcilability of party goals. The first is congress/cabinet congruence, that should have a noticeable effect on the policy dimension of party goals at the negotiating table; the second is a federalist structure, which clearly multiplies the opportunity for bargains along every dimension, since there are “more negotiating tables” in which to exchange policy, office and votes besides the national level<sup>529</sup>. A bicameral legislature can also add some nuances that go beyond those effects already captured in our model. We already factor in the higher costs in reaching the minimum legislative threshold in two chambers instead of one, as well as the greater procedural hurdles for dealing with two stakeholders in lawmaking<sup>530</sup>. Yet, presidential powers for disbursing pork or informal favors may be somehow diluted if two independent and equally powerful slates of beneficiaries are to be tended to.

### *External validity*

Turning now to the issue of generalization, the first point to highlight is what has already been explicitly stated several times: causal claims are absolutely limited to the scope condition, i.e., minority cabinets in Latin American multiparty presidentialism. Results in Latin America can be fruitful when suggesting analytical possibilities for other multiparty presidential systems, like in East Asia and a few scattered democratic cases that might still remain in Central Asia and Subsaharan Africa; yet, whenever such extension happens, one must heed specific societal and institutional features that either change the working mechanisms posited for Latin America or introduce new ones that may be relevant in those new contexts. As for the minority condition, the very finding regarding their wide occurrence in the region makes for strong empirical relevance even when circumscribed to the scope condition;

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<sup>529</sup> Besides generating more potential attractiveness to some elements in the presidential “toolbox”: the disbursement of pork, for instance, will entice not only legislators individually in their specific geographical district, but also parties in their collective nature, when targeted at regional or local governments they control.

<sup>530</sup> Through specific criteria in the index for presidential legislative powers.

besides, the study of majority governments can profit from insights into how minoritarian presidents might negotiate their way out of deadlock or paralysis under uphill arithmetics.

Another rigid limitation to generalization is the inherent logic of QCA analysis, who “trades off generalizability for contextual realism and complexity” (Greckhamer & Misangyi & Fiss, 2013, p. 68): the found causal configurations are, by definition, a few among several other potential possibilities. Indeed, coverage parameters are modest (around 27% and 51% for contemporary and lagged outcomes, respectively), meaning that some causal pathways have been identified and their logic flexed out, but other mechanisms still remain uncovered. Having that in mind, the explanatory and forecasting value of each explored causal configuration can be exploited for any other case of minority presidential government in the region or (provided country-specific features are considered) elsewhere. In more general terms, the logic of conclusions regarding the mechanisms explored is not context-specific (at least within the scope condition), which offers ample room for applying it to new cases or build new research avenues upon the extant findings. (Fiss, 2011, p. 411).

A more fundamental critique to the conclusions reached by this study is putting into question the time in which they appear: would coalitional presidentialism have been turned in the current decade into an object of study for archeologists? The concern is not unrealistic, for there’s a lot of headwind coming over democratic theory. In late years, democracies in the world in general, but also specifically in Latin America, have been subjected to restless processes of erosion and backsliding (Haggard & Kaufman, 2021; Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018; Llanos & Marsteintredet, 2023a), which affected the workings of almost every decisionmaking mechanism studied here. The electoral growth of a particular brand of extreme right-wing party, one that relies on radical polarization both in society and within political institutions (Guedes, 2019; Halikiopoulou, 2024; and Thürk & Hellstrom & Doring, 2021, for the European and international backgrounds; Borges & Lloyd & Vommaro, 2024, for the Latin American cases), is likely to significantly change the dynamics of interbranch relationships, since those new players have electoral and policy rationales, as well as parliamentary behavior, that strongly differ from the traditional center-right and right-wing parties that have shared the steering of presidential government with the left throughout the last 40 years of Latin American politics. Effects as strong as those will probably be felt from the swell in identity voting that fuels much of this right-wing upsurge (as described by Gulías & Martín & López, 2020, in the Spanish case, or

Nunes & Traumann, 2023, for Brazilian voters<sup>531</sup>), a powerful undercurrent that might fundamentally alter the office/votes/policy dimensions of partisan logic, thus changing the structure of the negotiating space among parties.

All those fundamental changes do exist and must be acknowledged. However, studying one specific view into multiparty presidentialism as it worked along time, from the early and troublesome formative years to its zenit to the late troubles, has analytical purposes that go well beyond historical interpretation. First, our long-range sample allows the singling out of mechanistic components that operated over time, regardless of the general trends in the political system: there's at least a reasonable expectation that those components will continue to have a non-negligible role in the system as long as the main institutional features of a democratic, multiparty presidentialism<sup>532</sup> are kept unchanged. Second, unveiling processes and interactions that provided reasonable solutions to social demands in historically different, but structurally similar experiences is surely a valuable resource for understanding contemporary realities (paraphrasing Maurice Dobb, scholars and policymakers concerned with present day problems have certain questions of their own to put to historical data)<sup>533</sup>. Finally, the empirical and analytical results achieved in this pursuit serve as building blocks and warning signals to further research that might be able to fully incorporate the specificities of incoming challenges to democratic presidentialism.

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<sup>531</sup> Those last authors stress that right-wing parties not only establish identity-based links with voters, but they also influence their leftist adversaries to operate in similar ways creating their own identity voters.

<sup>532</sup> That is, all those presidential systems which are not strictly bound to almost absolute bipartisanship like the US.

<sup>533</sup> *He has, nevertheless, been encouraged to persevere by the obstinate belief that economic analysis only makes sense, and can only bear fruit, if it is joined to a study of historical development, and that the economist concerned with present-day problems has certain questions of his own to put to historical data.* (Dobb, 1950, p. vii)

## 7 General conclusions

### 7.1 Research goals and contributions to scholarship

From a research design point of view, the dissertation's main focus on discussing minority presidential governments under the perspective of their substantive results in policymaking is developed through two research goals. The first one is to point out factors that are positively associated with better policy performance under minority governments in Latin American presidential systems, reflected in the research question "which sets of political and institutional determinant factors can account for good policy outcomes in minority governments"? The fulfillment of this goal, as well as the answer to the research question, is reached through the assembling of a configurational causal model using components drawn from the different strands in the literature (Chapters 3 and 4), followed by its empirical testing (Chapters 4 and 6). A secondary goal is required to provide the empirical basis to the causal analysis: to collect and organize data on the empirical footprint of minority governments in Latin American contemporary democratic presidentialism, including their performance in terms of economic policy results. This ancillary or instrumental goal was catered to by means of the empirical surveys summarized in sections 2.3.2 and 6.1 and fully deployed in Appendix 1 and on the online repository.

This dissertation contributes to the knowledge on minority governments in multiparty presidentialism in a few different ways. First, we assess in Chapter 2 how the current literature portrays minority presidential governments, both analytically (that is, what are the main patterns identified in their workings and their logic of operations) and empirically (including the main cross-national surveys and case studies regarding presidential governments in minority situations).

Then, the study offers a wide and structured data repository to support further research on minority governments. We produce an original data set with the presidential minority governments found in Latin American democracies from the early years of "third wave" democratization (since 1978) until 1978. This data set has several important innovations who may offer promising prospects as an empirical foundation for studies on the subject: it includes minority conditions in both lower and higher chambers, while most other surveys take into account only the arithmetics

of lower houses, ignoring senates; it transparently displays cabinet and legislative party shares for each country-year, together with complete sourcing references and disaggregated data on party composition in the supplementary material contained in Appendix 1 and on the online repository; it also contains information on the substantive policy results to each country-year considered. Section 2.3.2 contains the aggregate results extracted from the dataset, including the frequency of minority governments, the share of seats held by those minority cabinets, and their distribution by country and along time, besides comparing those results with previous assessments available in the literature.

Another contribution is the exploration of political-institutional variables from the viewpoint of policy results, something that has drawn very little attention from political science literature, who concentrates heavily on specific political variables such as government tenure or electoral outcomes. Section 3.1 presents the case for using macroeconomic variables (GDP growth and income distribution) as the best available proxy to good policy outcomes in the circumstances surrounding this study, reviews exhaustively the literature associating political features and economic outcomes through specific causal mechanisms, and explains the conversion of macroeconomic data into a fuzzy logic variable for good policy outcomes. The empirical deployment of such construct is then associated with the minority governments database, generating in Section 6.1 a complete data table which links each minoritarian unit of analysis (country-year) to its corresponding policy outcome, both for contemporary results (outcome generated in the same year the government has been in office) and lagged ones (outcome recorded in the year following the cabinet's tenure). Comparative design allows us to use aggregate Latin American data as a benchmark against which to appraise each government's performance in a given year, thus providing an objective standard to the concept of "good policy results".

Causal analysis is the last endeavor in contributing to scholarship with an enquiry into the potential enablers of good policy outcomes in minority presidential governments (an enquiry that uses minoritarian governments in Latin America as a scope condition for the causal model<sup>534</sup>). Sections 3.2 and 3.3 organize a systematic recollection of the several theoretical streams who posit the relationship between some political-institutional features of a given country and its political development

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<sup>534</sup> Such scope condition does not preclude further reflections on the deployment of findings to other multiparty presidential settings, but it definitely rules out any attempt at theorizing about "divided governments" in bipartisan polities like the United States.

and stability. Those streams, whose origins lie in the coalitional presidentialism theories on one hand, and in the minority parliamentary government studies on another, typically emphasize specific, isolated, causal factors (such as presidential powers, or political incentives for outside legislative support from non-cabinet parties); our study integrates them in a single analytical framework, culminating in a proposed causal configuration for good policy results that involves a broad “decisiveness” condition (encompassing presidential powers, reconcilability of party goals and a presidential legislative threshold) and another “accountability” condition (operationalized by the parliament’s intensity on oversight activities)<sup>535</sup>. This posited configuration is translated into formal hypotheses (Chapter 4) that are then tested against Latin American data by means of a QCA model (Chapter 5 for data and method specification, and Chapter 6 for the presentation of test results and their discussion)<sup>536</sup>. Such procedure achieves joint testing, under a configurational approach, of several isolated theories stemming from very different traditions, exploring the joint or reciprocal effects that their variables and causal mechanisms might produce over one extremely important historical trait of a polity, the substantive policy outcomes reached by its government’s actions (section 6.3.3). As an end result, QCA analysis extracts from the historical data a number of logical solutions consistent with the cases in the database. Such solutions do not cover every empirical instance, nor claim to explain the whole phenomenon of minority presidentialism’s policymaking. Instead, they point to a few potential causal mechanisms that offer consistent – and empirically verifiable – possibilities to good policymaking under minority conditions for presidential governments.

On doing so, we help to fill some of the theoretical voids and shortcomings mapped in section 1.3: minority governments still do not benefit from strong comparative efforts, and even less so when minority presidential governments are considered<sup>537</sup> (regardless of their already widespread empirical reality). Besides,

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<sup>535</sup> This joint assessment of independent theoretical streams through a single QCA-based model is another contribution to scholarship, since few studies in the field seem to have attempted that strategy (a remarkably precedent is Keudel-Kaiser, 2016, which also uses QCA to join several literature strands on the causes of minority parliamentary government formation in Central and Eastern Europe).

<sup>536</sup> For causal testing purposes, original data organized in country-years are reshuffled into “mandates”, which encompass one or more years, corresponding to segments of a president’s formal tenure in which the main causal conditions remain logically the same in terms of membership or non-membership to the corresponding sets.

<sup>537</sup> Except, maybe, when it comes to the bipartisan idiosyncracies of US “divided government”, which, as already stressed, is explicitly absent from our analytical landscape.

those few theories regarding minority presidential governments lack the full incorporation of analytical resources heretofore applied only to parliamentary cabinets under those minoritarian circumstances. Finally, within the existing literature, the overwhelming majority focuses either on the causes of minority governments' existence or on the impacts of minority government on political institutions or on specific results regarding politics and political competition: very few studies probe on their substantive policy outcomes. This study tackles all those shortcomings, since it's a fully comparative effort to fuse the main theoretical tools used to explain presidential as well as parliamentary minority governments in one single configurational framework, and to use them to explain substantive policy outcomes in minority presidential governments.

## 7.2 A summary of the main findings on how often and how well Latin American minority governments perform their duties

*Y si el Sueño finge muros  
en la llanura del Tiempo,  
el Tiempo le hace creer  
que nace em aquel momento. (Federico García Lorca)<sup>538</sup>*

Minority governments, our object of study, are being progressively recognized by the literature as entirely normal features of presidential regimes, mostly brought up by deliberate choice from involved presidents and parties (section 2.2.1). Their frequent occurrence hasn't meant decisional gridlocks or regime breakdown risks, neither has necessarily implied some kind of congressional abdication of power (in exchange for pork or favors, for instance) – those historical cases have shown, instead, intense legislative involvement in policymaking.

Some discernible patterns emerge in the literature regarding how minority presidential governments operate in multiparty settings. Those patterns aggregate similar views on what are the factors that account for a given government's ability to make significant, authoritative decisions regarding the country's public policies; in other words, how supply and demand for outside legislative support bargains (indispensable for a minority government's legislative policymaking) are shaped, and which are the currencies in which they're negotiated. Most individual models in the literature focus on one or more of these elements; in section 2.2.2, we collate and

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<sup>538</sup> Lorca (2025, p. 354)

display them in systematic fashion. Briefly reviewing them, we may recall three main groups of factors.

The first one refers to the whole array of institutional features who shape a government's bargaining power in parliament. Those features may have a very indirect effect, through shaping a country's degree of multipartism, party discipline, and the timing of its elections (which will, in turn, affect all the other factors). Other institutional features are more direct, since they represent formal and informal rules that condition the balance of powers in lawmaking<sup>539</sup> and in legislative-executive relations at large (presidential powers over cabinet appointments, over patronage, over budget disbursements and over informal licit and illicit exchanges involving state powers). The last institutional trait involves the unitary or multilevel structure of the polity, which compounds the number of possible bargains to be struck by creating multiple sources of payoffs to be exchanged between presidents, their own parties and the other negotiating actors.

The second array of factors involves parties' goals and their potential for reconciliation (or mutually beneficial settlement) – a pattern that, up to now, has been more cultivated in studies of parliamentary minority governments, but fully applies to presidential ones. This settlement is arranged along the several issue dimensions that offer parties the payoffs in any of the dimensions they may aspire to reach gains (the already classical dimension structure of office, policy, votes and cohesion structure laid down by seminal theoretical frameworks such as Strøm & Müller, 1999, and Bergman, 1995<sup>540</sup>). Presidents and parties can engage in multiple deals along one or more of those dimensions, which allows for support gathering on behalf of the president's agenda.

The last cluster of decision factors regards the contingent circumstances that shape each particular historical moment in which the game must be played: in each country-year there's a specific parliamentary arithmetics (the seat share of the president's party or coalition in the relevant chambers, the shares held by his potential allies and his potential opposition), a particular spatial configuration of the policy space (setting policy distances among parties' policy preferences, and between theirs

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<sup>539</sup> Formal legislative rules and procedures: reactive and proactive presidential veto powers; centralization of decision rights and gatekeeping powers within parliaments; numerical thresholds for legislative approval of different matters.

<sup>540</sup> Those more general theories are applied to specific minority circumstances in parliamentary systems by Strøm (1990), whose analytical design and conclusions pervade most further studies on minority governments, as well as our own theoretical framework.

and the government's), and a very clearly felt election timing (since the proximity to an election will strongly affect the balance between parties' expected payoffs from every bargain).

All those theoretical arguments support a considerable batch of empirical studies specifically targeted at minority governments, almost all of them reinforcing the main conclusions of their being both normal and frequent phenomena in modern democratic politics. Those studies, reviewed in section 2.3.1, follow different designs as far as causal claims are concerned (assessing minority governments under different lenses), and show a very wide range of empirical coverage: cross-country, large-n studies with multi-regional scope<sup>541</sup>; Latin American comparative studies, also with a broad range of countries in their samples<sup>542</sup>, and important case studies<sup>543</sup>.

Our own empirical examination of Latin American minority governments<sup>544</sup> is shown in detail in section 2.3.2 for their incidence across countries and along time. Such minority cabinets happened in 51,46% of country-years examined. Although there are differences for the numbers of each country, all of them show a non-negligible number of minority cabinets; in 9 out of 15 countries, more than 50% of their time was spend under minority cabinets (for some, like Mexico and Chile, more than 80%).

Besides, minority governments increase their presence as time advances, although keeping a remarkably stable growth line: the average value is 50,23% of countries for each year with a very modest 0,3254 coefficient of variation. All those figures strongly refute the idea of minority governments being only emergency resources or a temporary trend due to some specific regional circumstance; instead, they emerge as a persistent feature of presidential coalition management. Those

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<sup>541</sup> Remarkably, Cheibub, Przeworski and Saiegh (2004), Cheibub (2002), and Elgie's (2001a), including in their samples both presidential and parliamentary systems, and Chaisty & Power (2018), limited to presidential governments.

<sup>542</sup> Most notably, Deheza (1997) – whose object is Latin American presidential coalitions in general, but who brings strong substantive results specifically on minority governments -, Figueiredo, Canello and Vieira (2012) and Negretto (2006a).

<sup>543</sup> Clearly, the most focused (and optimistic) case studies highlighting the effects of minority conditions on presidential governments are those covering the Mexican experience (Badillo, 2007; Nacif, 2006; Klesner, 2001). Another very optimistic outlook, based on the post-soviet Ukrainian developments, is found in Chaisty and Chernykh (2017).

<sup>544</sup> Data cover all Latin American Countries considered democracies after 1978 according to both Polity IV and Freedom House criteria, except Ecuador, Guatemala and Nicaragua, and partial exclusions in Argentina (after 1996) and Venezuela (after 1999). Recalling the "minority government" definition, that's the one where the the parties whose members formally enter the executive cabinet as first-range ministers do not enjoy a combined majority support (50% plus one of the members) in at least one working house of the legislature (regardless of the unified or fragmented nature of the other non-cabinet legislative parties).

findings are mostly concurrent with extant literature, in which several previous quantification attempts produced shares that ranged from 40% to 48% for minority presidential governments<sup>545</sup>. While our empirical scope is clearly greater than every other research we could find in the number of countries and in the years considered, the most probable reason for our biggest average of 51,46% of cabinets being minority ones is that we include the seat shares of senates and upper houses (which alone made for 16,66% of our minority situations), a selection criterion that is absent in all other surveys.

This first batch of empirical results helps also to shed some light on a related political feature that has generated some argument in recent literature: the prevalence of non-partisan ministers<sup>546</sup> in presidential cabinets. We could find that non-partisan ministers serve under 76% of all governments, minoritarian or not, in our sample of country-years (among minority governments this proportion is higher, 85%). They held, in average, 24% of all cabinet posts, while the share of cabinets with a majority of non-partisan ministers is 8% among all governments, and 12% among minority governments. The share of non-partisan ministers for each government, however, varies wildly (the absolute majority of cabinets has less than 10% of non-partisans, though), suggesting a heterogeneous set of strategies in the usage of this kind or appointment by presidents. There's little room for causally associating non-partisan cabinets to minority governments per se, since both minority and majority-based presidencies have non-partisans with high and not dissimilar frequencies<sup>547</sup>, and absolutely no grounds to postulate that minority governments follow a "going alone" strategy for unilateral decision-making through technocratic cabinets.

Summing up, the frequency examination performed so far corroborates the previous findings in the literature which concur in that minority presidential governments do exist regularly and can perform government business and advance legislative agendas under normal circumstances.

Our empirical overview then adds a crucial feature of our dataset, which will structure our causal analysis downstream: the policy performance of minority governments. To that effect, we present in section 3.1 the case for operationalizing

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<sup>545</sup> Except for Montero (2009), that suggests a ratio clearly above 50%.

<sup>546</sup> A non-partisan minister is one with no party affiliation or, even when affiliated, whose appointment is reckoned by parties as an individual presidential choice and discarded as co-participation in the government.

<sup>547</sup> Although their overall presence is bigger, in average, in minority cabinets, which might support interpretations that relate minority conditions to an increased likelihood of appointing non-partisan ministers.

the idea of good policy performance (that is, assessing the workings of a given country's political mechanisms as translated in concrete policies) through an ensemble of macroeconomic results, namely, GDP growth and reduction of income inequality.

This set of outcomes is assumedly distinct from the several long-range, highly transformative tasks that usually embody the notion of economic development<sup>548</sup>; indeed, we aim at relatively short-term results that might be associated (at least partially) to a given cabinet's policy measures<sup>549</sup> as compared to others' - given the short-term scope condition of minority cabinets that is the focus of our study<sup>550</sup>. The selected indicators measure social realities that are within the action range – and expected influence - of individual cabinets' policy decisions; they represent the comprehensive end result of a whole array of cross-government decisions and actions, and are conceptually and empirically feasible to handle (which includes data availability in a reasonably uniform way across countries and for long time ranges).

Indeed, taking economic outcomes as significant indicators of good policy performance by incumbent governments is strongly supported by the extant literature, where several causal pathways are presented to causally link political variables to those economic outcomes. A considerable body of research (as reviewed in section 3.1.1) claims a general relationship between usually broad political-institutional variables, such as democracy or political stability at large<sup>551</sup> and economic outcomes, and another extensive slate of other studies elaborate on the causal mechanisms for such relationships (as shown in section 3.1.4). So, we find ample theoretical grounds for the choice of a macroeconomic set of indicators as a relevant proxy for the

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<sup>548</sup> Such as nurturing sustained capital accumulation, eliciting entrepreneurship, facilitating the creation of new productive capacities, cushioning large segments of society from the economic hardships and inequalities brought by those very changes, articulating a developmentalist coalition across political interest groups, or redefining the relation between local productive capacity and a changing global array of sectors in order to change the country's insertion into international division of labor.

<sup>549</sup> Such as tax systems design and enforcement, economic diversification policies, income transfers, labor market regulation and active employment policies, or fiscal decentralization.

<sup>550</sup> Besides, the choice of short-term variables mitigates the risks of endogeneity in explaining economic development through institution-building, which might imply several instances of feedback loops, autocorrelation, and path dependency.

<sup>551</sup> Precedents to the association of macroeconomic results to more specific, shorter term variables within the direct influence of a cabinet's policy, along the lines proposed here, are a minority among such general studies (most notably Scartascini & Spiller & Stein & Tommasi, 2010; Fernandes, 2022; Kaufmann & Kraay, 2002; Palanza & Scartasini & Tommasi, 2012, 2016; Aisen & Veiga, 2013, and Cox & Weingast, 2018)

conceptual construct of good policy results for a given minority government in a given year<sup>552</sup>.

In operational terms, whose logic is displayed in section 3.1.3, this theoretical choice is operationalized by a fuzzy variable composed of two aggregate measures of economic performance: GDP growth, and income inequality reduction<sup>553</sup>, generated on a country-year basis<sup>554</sup>. Every country value is compared to the Latin American average<sup>555</sup> in the same year, as a way to level off, at least to some degree, the common effects of international economic cycles (either commodity-based or of a financial nature). If all two indicators are above the regional average, 1 is assigned to the fuzzy value (full membership in the “good outcome” set); if only one surpasses Latin American average performance, the assigned value is 0,66 (partial membership); finally, if none of them is higher than the average, value stays at 0 (non-membership). Choosing the composite of two variables, instead of the more frequently used unidimensional GDP growth, comes from the fact that economic policy often has competing and contradictory objectives, and solely using growth figures might seriously bias any assessment towards the implicit (and completely unrealistic) assumption that any economic growth would eventually “trickle down” onto the majority of the population<sup>556</sup>; on the opposite side of that, we focus on the need to consider poverty reduction as a key feature of development and a key goal for good government policy, which requires considering not only economic growth but also decreases in income inequality.

Under that conceptual structure, we assessed in section 6.1 how did minority cabinets in Latin America performed in terms of policy results. Taking the country-

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<sup>552</sup> In section 3.1.2 we explain why this concept of good policy performance differs from the other relevant concepts in the literature, such as “governance” as a kind of state infrastructure for policy implementation, or culturally-oriented “quality of government” (understood as impartiality in the exercise of government powers, openness in the access to government outputs and restrictions and universalist political culture), or the social statistics on poverty, health, gender empowerment and education that try to gauge notions of “well-being” or “human development”.

<sup>553</sup> More precisely, the percent rate of economic growth, on a year-on-year basis over the previous year; and the percent of change in the household consumption share of GDP. The latter is a blunt, less sophisticated metrics than the classical concentration indexes like Gini, but measurement and availability limitations (described in section A.2.1 in Appendix 2) distort the usefulness of empirical data to an unacceptable extent within our sample. So, we had to settle for the more simplified national accounts-based measurement.

<sup>554</sup> When causal analysis requires the aggregation of country-years on term segments or mandates, these calculations will be adapted accordingly.

<sup>555</sup> Encompassing all the countries studied, regardless of their being included in the sample of democratic countries during that year.

<sup>556</sup> Such reductionist bias is one of the key debates in development theory (Galván, 2015, pp. 70-71; Medina & Galván, 2014; for a focused political view on it, see Stokes, 2001).

years as units of analysis<sup>557</sup>, we find that among the assessed country-years<sup>558</sup> 25,11% showed fuzzy 0, while 47,98 % produced fuzzy 0,66, and 26,91 % performed as fuzzy 1 in the same year where they acted (contemporary results). The two latter fuzzy values, broadly meaning “good” policy performance, are reached by 73,09 % of minority governments (mostly in the modal value of 0.66). As for the lagged effects (outcomes in the following year), proportions remain largely the same (25%, 50% and 25% for each fuzzy value from 0 to 1). That means that generally “good” lagged results showed up in the 75% of the instances, of which two-thirds of the cases point to partial 0,66 membership.

In other words, there’s a reasonable variety of performances for minority governments, mostly concentrated in intermediate scores, both for contemporary and lagged results (a general pattern which is quite evenly distributed in every country)<sup>559</sup>. Comparing those numbers with the performance of non-minority governments, the proportion of very good performances (fuzzy value 1) is roughly similar as minoritarian ones, but intermediate values’ share rises around 10 % at the expense of the lower results. Majority governments show grossly the same top performance, but they have significantly less negative performances – which suggests that majority governments do outperform their minoritarian counterparts, but for a slight margin (around 10%) of intermediate results.

The great takeaway from this empirical analysis is that it openly refutes whatever assumptions around crisis and stalemates that may be assigned to minority presidential governments. They exist in a considerable proportion of all presidential terms, being a regular feature of Latin American political landscape. Not only do they exist, but they don’t show any hint of particularly bad or unbalanced results. On the contrary, they can deliver clearly good results as often as majoritarian governments; their share of bad performances surpasses majority cabinets in roughly 10% of the cases (at the expense of their intermediate performance, which is smaller by the same

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<sup>557</sup> Section 6.1 brings also the evaluation based on the “mandates” or term segment time lines, which is then used for the subsequent causal analysis. Since the results are much similar to the country-year based analysis, and for the sake of simplicity in presenting the main findings, those additional results are not replicated in this summary chapter.

<sup>558</sup> Those percents differ slightly from the ones shown in Figure 6 of Section 6.1 because here we mention the shares over the assessed performances (a few country-years, less than 3 %, were excluded from the calculation due to lack of data), while Figure 6 displays the shares over the overall number of country-years, including the share of unassessed performances.

<sup>559</sup> Besides, the aggregate proportion around 25% of “not good” performance seems strongly influenced by a high number of country-years shown in El Salvador and Mexico - which suggests that there’s a potential for even greater performance in minority settings that might be overshadowed by idiosyncratic factors in only two cases.

10%). All in all, minority governments seem to govern in a regular fashion and deliver diversified outcomes - outcomes that cannot be associated with particularly good or bad circumstances emerging from this minority condition<sup>560</sup>.

### 7.3 Answering the research question: which factors enhance policy performance under minority governments in Latin American presidential systems ?

Here, we recollect the main research question: which sets of political and institutional determinant factors can account for better-than-average policy outcomes in minority governments across Latin America ?

#### *The causal model*

To answer that question, we built a causal model joining in a configurational mode several potential conditions brought from different strands of the literature on minority governments and aligned them to the contemporary and lagged policy outcomes (as proxied by the macroeconomic results according to the logic explained in section 3.1). Results are formally assessed both in the sense of positive outcomes (“good policy results”, as theoretically built), but also in their logical negation<sup>561</sup>.

This configurational comparison is now performed not along country-years, but with conditions and outcomes distributed along time in potentially larger periods or “mandates”, being those segments of a presidential full term during which the officeholder remained the same and the causal conditions remained substantially so<sup>562</sup>. This grouping of country-years in variable-length segments, fully described in section 5.1.4, considers the essential fact that policy results in any given year are affected not

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<sup>560</sup> There’s a caveat to this positive contrast in the particular case of Mexico: for this country, the theoretical expectations by the literature developed just after the democratic transition in the early 2000’s (section 2.3.1, last tranche) claimed an upswing in government quality emerging precisely from newly acquired minority conditions for the presidency. Nevertheless, Mexico concentrated (together with El Salvador) the most numerous instances of years with bad economic outcomes. That suggests the need for reevaluating such optimism with Mexican politics, at least in its macroeconomic effects (although that do not necessarily affect other expected positive features of minority Mexican governments, such as political openness and inclusiveness).

<sup>561</sup> In section 3.1 the substantive meaning of “not good policy results” is theoretically built as any result that does not correspond empirically to the definition accrued to “good policy results”.

<sup>562</sup> The criteria for evaluating the “substantial” nature of a change in causal conditions are extended in section 5.1.4, consisting in their stability above or below the set membership threshold of 0,5.

only by governments' contemporary actions, but much more so by the compounded actions during the whole government tenure. So, country-years were clustered into segments, as extended as possible, to reflect the continuity of government action under the same political-institutional conditions.

The causal configuration is structured by two composite macro-conditions, decisiveness and accountability, whose interaction will shape the hypotheses to be tested in a QCA model. In section 3.2.1, we explain why those main factors must be searched for in the domain of executive-legislative relations: besides minority conditions (as defined here) being a feature of nothing else than such relations, the main thrust of governmental action in democracy is supported precisely by lawmaking procedures (thus becoming embedded in law), and that action is expected to be most frequently and stringently scrutinized by congresses in their oversight activities. Section 3.2.2 recalls the received wisdom regarding how presidents can reach policy effectiveness: the inherited answer to that is by creating decisiveness (meaning the ability to authoritatively make decisions), and by doing that by means of building a majority coalition in parliament. Indeed, in the most authoritative arguments so far, stable majority coalitions by presidents are necessary and sufficient conditions for reaching decisiveness, and that would supposedly mean good policymaking results.

We counter this straightforward, automatic causal argument by way of two alternative lines of reasoning among scholars of presidentialism. The first one is the somewhat naïve observation that coalition-building is an instrument to reach some decisionmaking capacity, an intermediate step which has itself to be understood in terms of the attributes that allow for presidential decision capacity (and that are themselves the factors that enable presidents to build and maintain coalitions in the first place). Indeed, regardless of the floor arithmetics in the chambers, what will actually drive government results is the capacity to enact and implement policy change, avoiding the inability to come to decisions, the lack of resolution to enforce them when reached, and the “balkanized” pursuit of different decisions by different actors inserted in governmental lines of authority – an achievement that we'll conceptualize as “decisiveness”.

The second counterargument involves clear theoretical claims by another stream of authors on behalf of another twin dimension for good policymaking:

accountability (discussed in section 3.2.3). Those scholars<sup>563</sup> warn of the potential for abuses in an excessive concentration of powers in the hands of only one actor (the president) and sketch the dire trajectory of “delegative democracy” policymaking, where unilateral and unchecked actions by the president lead most often to policy failures and loss of legitimacy that can reach the democratic system itself. The answer to that is the notion of “horizontal accountability”, a network of state agencies who, being legally and materially empowered, coordinate their actions to intervene (either by routine supervision or by enforcing sanctions) against other unlawful or wrongful actions or omissions by others (namely the concentrated powerholder such as the president). By providing such countervailing incentives and restrictions, that web of institutions ensures incremental, safer policymaking (due to both informational and consensus-building reasons), as well as strong brakes for abuses of executive power<sup>564</sup>.

To the effect of operationalizing accountability, although it’s conceptualized as a network of institutions, we build our appraisal entirely on the workings of parliaments as the main *loci* to assess this causal dimension in the real world. As shown in section 3.2.4, legislatures are the centerpiece in the web of accountability, and are almost universally entitled to that role: their legitimacy stems primarily from the fact that, in most polities, parliaments are the only institution on the accountability web that is also periodically subject to direct accountability to voters. Besides, open legislative debates and negotiation in lawmaking stabilize major decision processes<sup>565</sup> and input societal stakeholders into them; congressional oversight activities such as inquiries and public hearings are the main resonance box to whatever findings any supervisory agency may produce; finally, their prominence among government institutions tends to endow parliaments with the required institutional and material resources to perform all those tasks.

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<sup>563</sup> Spearheaded by O’Donnell’s (1994, 1998, 2003) seminal ideas, with remarkable follow-ups by Mainwaring (2003), Nacif (2003, 2006), or Melo (2009), to quote the most important among them.

<sup>564</sup> This layer of accountability is posited as needed even if formal polyarchic institutions are in place to ensure electoral competition for the executive leadership (“vertical accountability”). In fact, under that approach, horizontal accountability is posited as an indispensable requirement for the information flows and institutional levers without which government responsiveness to voters won’t probably exist in practice.

<sup>565</sup> Most notably in the delicate circumstances of power sharing by multiple major players in governmental coalitions, where the possibility of double-checking in parliament mitigates otherwise very serious transaction costs that might jeopardize intra-coalition coordination within executive cabinets themselves..

Finally, the model includes another feature that might act as a confounding factor and must be dealt with separately. This singular factor, of a contingent nature, is not specific to the scope condition nor to the theoretical sources: some exceptional circumstances – even of a political nature – might jeopardize policymaking efforts and override all the other causal conditions, for they compromise the executive decisional capacity for their own sake. Namely, those are emergency moments where regularly elected presidents are replaced by caretaker authorities due to impeachments, resignation or other involuntary pressures, as well as the specific condition of presidents in the last year of their full electoral term. Under any of those circumstances, as explained in section 3.4, any president would have his actions directly impaired, regardless of being minoritarian or not, and regardless of any causal configuration related to decisiveness or accountability. The very isolated working of this factor made for the inclusion of such exceptionalisms in our QCA model as another causal condition, albeit with a very modest causal claim<sup>566</sup>.

The general outline of the causal reasoning is shown in Figure 11 below. The two macro-conditions (decisiveness and accountability) are composites made out of several component conditions (each one brought from one important theoretical approach either from presidential or minority parliamentary studies), whose features shape the deliberative interaction within, and presidential bargaining with, legislatures that is at the core of the policymaking process.

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<sup>566</sup> It's been included as an INUS condition to the good policy outcome, with little elaboration on its mechanistic interactions with the other components.

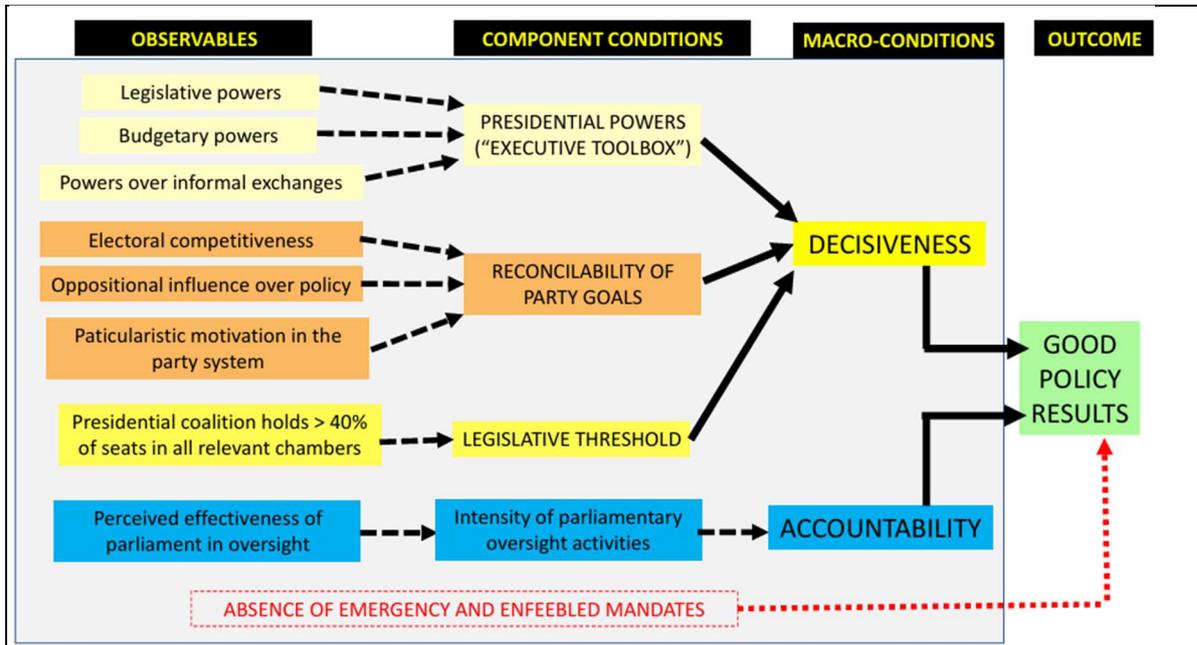


Figure 11 – Blueprint for causal reasoning

Source: The author

Those component conditions are still of a conceptual nature; they will be unfolded into empirically observable phenomena that embody their operationalization<sup>567</sup>. This logical process encompasses the core causal model (depicted over a light gray background in Figure 11), and its full development is demonstrated in sections 3.3.1 for decisiveness, and 3.3.2 for accountability. The isolated condition of emergency mandates is also portrayed within the model, but as an independent causal component (that interacts directly with the macro-conditions).

Decisiveness capacity is then decomposed into three components. The first one is the “executive toolbox” of presidential powers, the set of instruments available to presidents to negotiate support for their policies (which, by the way, is the same set of tools that the literature finds necessary for presidents to build majority coalitions). Here, that toolbox encompasses three “observables” or empirical dimensions, all of which are prerogatives that presidents are endowed with: (i) formal legislative powers; (ii) formal and material powers over the allocation of budgetary funds; and (iii) material powers over the granting of other potential favors stemming from state powers (“informal exchanges”). The second component is the reconcilability of party goals, that is, the potential for reconciling parties’ heterogeneous goals in bargains that allow presidents (crucially, but not exclusively,

<sup>567</sup> Here, accountability has only one component condition, so the macro-condition has a direct link with an observable.

minority presidents) to rally legislative support not only by handing out ministries, but also by putting on the table every other possible factor who might entice the interest of potential partners in legislative coalitions. The observables for that condition involve the degree of electoral competitiveness, the potential policy influence for those parties outside the presidential cabinet, and the particularistic motivation observed in the party system at large<sup>568</sup>. Finally, the third component condition is the straightforward numerical seat share of 40% to be reached by the cabinet coalition parties in the relevant chambers of parliament<sup>569</sup>, which provides presidents with specific incentives and leverage expected to materially change their negotiating stance towards congress.

As for accountability, the theoretical build-up to the concept is completely centered on the oversight role of legislatures, which allows for just one component condition, the intensity of oversight activity by parliament’s initiative. This concept is appraised through the perception of relevant societal stakeholders on the effectiveness of their parliaments in oversight<sup>570</sup>.

The abovementioned conditions are theoretical pieces to the causal model, who are reflected in the hypotheses. The empirical processing of cases, however,

Table 20 below summarizes the empirical sources used for operationalizing the observables that materialize all causal conditions. The values emerging from those sources were then converted into logical fuzzy values according to specific procedures for each condition (full details on sources and methods are available in sections A.2.2 to A.2.8 in Appendix 2).

*Table 20 – Causal conditions – operationalization features*

COMPONENT CONDITION	OBSERVABLE	SOURCES	A.2
PRESIDENTIAL POWERS	Legislative powers	Institutional legislative power index by Montero (2009), rearranged using its raw component variables	A.2.2
	Budgetary powers	Budgetary power index built from primary data collection using the conceptual structure laid down by Wehner (2010) and Kim (2015a)	A.2.3

<sup>568</sup> Basically, all those variables influence the parties’ demand for different payoffs from the executive, which can be traded from legislative support (by way of parliamentary votes) regardless of the concerned parties being awarded with cabinet posts (in fact, for minority governments, this outside support from non-cabinet parties is the key to decisiveness outputs).

<sup>569</sup> In our sample, those are both chambers in every country with a bicameral parliament.

<sup>570</sup> The most intuitive observation strategy (compiling quantitative records of such activities) is unfeasible due to unsurmountable data availability shortcomings discussed in section A.2.7 in Appendix 2. So, given that societal perceptions of parliaments are considered in the literature as relevant measures of their institutionalization and broader political effect (as exposed in section 3.3.2), we turn to assessments of public perceptions specifically on the oversight dimensions of congressional activities.

	Powers over informal exchanges	Combined answers from V-Dem survey questions regarding the engagement of legislators in corrupt practices, the pervasiveness of illicit transactions in the administration and the degree of patronage (as opposed to meritocratic criteria) for personnel appointments in the civil service	A.2.4
	Electoral competitiveness	Index of electoral volatility by Mainwaring and Su (2021)	A.2.5
RECONCILABILITY OF PARTY GOALS	Oppositional influence over policy	Combined answers from V-Dem survey questions regarding the extent and depth of elite consultation for important policy changes and the degree of acknowledgement and respect for counterarguments by political elites in debates over major policy changes	A.2.5
	Paticularistic motivation in the party system	Combined answers from V-Dem survey questions regarding the “particularistic” versus “public goods” nature of social and infrastructural government spending and the parties’ clientelistic versus programmatic linkage to constituents	A.2.5
LEGISLATIVE THRESHOLD	Presidential coalition holds > 40% of seats in all relevant chambers	Direct primary data collection	A.2.6
ACCOUNTABILITY	Perceived intensity of parliamentary oversight activity	IDEA composite index of “Effective parliament”, joining answers from V-Dem survey questions regarding the ability of non-ruling parties to exercise independent oversight functions in parliament; the frequency of questioning of executive officials by the legislature; the likelihood of independent investigations being performed on illicit activities in the executive branch both by the legislature or by other non-executive state agencies; to another survey question from Polity-V on the overall constraints imposed on executive discretion by the whole political system	A.2.7
ABSENCE OF EMERGENCY AND ENFEEBLED MANDATES	Presidential mandate not exceptional in origin, nor in the last year of formal tenure	Direct primary data collection	A.2.8

*Source: The author*

*OBS: Column “A.2” points to the specific section in Appendix 2 where data and methods are reported for each source*

The macro-conditions are inserted into a model according to a specific causal logic deployed in formal terms in chapter 4. Following the theoretical reasoning already outlined in section 3.1, decisiveness and accountability together are posited as being sufficient conditions for good policy performance (outcome). Then, the several component conditions of decisiveness are presented as necessary conditions (when at least one of them is present) to the macro-condition, individually making them INUS conditions to good outcomes. Finally, the “non-emergency” condition (absence of interim or enfeebled mandates) is posited also as an INUS condition to the good outcome. The resulting three formalized hypotheses are summarized in Table 21 below.

Table 21 - Hypotheses

**H1: f {PWRP; RECP; 40PC} AND ACCT → GOOD POLICY RESULTS**

Decisiveness and accountability, together, are sufficient conditions for a minority government to reach good policy results.

**H2: PWRP; RECP; 40PC are INUS conditions to good policy outcomes**

Powerful presidents holding significant presidential powers (PWRP), reconcilable goals among the parties involved in the legislature (RECP), and the holding of at least 40% of the chamber seats by the cabinet coalition (40PC) all are INUS conditions to the outcome .

**H3: LONG is an INUS condition to good policy outcomes**

The absence of emergency moments where regularly elected presidents are replaced by caretaker authorities due to impeachments, resignation or other involuntary pressures, as well as the specific condition of presidents in the last year of their full mandate (LONG) is an INUS condition for a minority government to reach good policy results.

*Source: The author*

*PWRP: Powerful President (condition regarding Presidential Powers); RECP: Reconcilable Party Goals (condition regarding Reconcilability of Party Goals); 40PC: Government holds 40 pct or more of relevant houses (condition regarding Legislative Thresholds); ACCT: Accountability (condition); LONG: Excludes one-year mandates: in election years; or headed by vice-presidents in lieu of the elected president; or headed by nominees chosen by any method to replace an elected slate who didn't finish its full term;*

Those propositions are to be tested having minority presidential governments as a scope condition, or the boundaries outside which theory is not assumed valid. Choosing this universe of analysis, as explained in section 4.2, illuminates less examined cases where decisiveness is subject to a harsher benchmark (due to the theoretically expected increase in the legislative barriers stemming from the absence of a formal legislative majority on behalf of a president or cabinet) and, inversely, stronger parliamentary accountability is expected to be more frequent<sup>571</sup>. So, minority governments present a very favorable testing ground for theories involving decisiveness and accountability (and their determinants) as causal conditions to the results achieved by the political system.

*Results from causal analysis*

The end results for the causal analysis are shown in full detail in section 6.2, unfolded in four quadrants: contemporary and lagged results, both for the outcome (good policy results) and its negation.

First, no necessary conditions were found for any of those combinations, in spite of a non-negligible coverage<sup>572</sup> – which means that decisiveness and

<sup>571</sup> While under majority coalitions the literature predicts the relative weakness of parliamentary oversight, jeopardizing the possibility of observing this political feature in action.

<sup>572</sup> More than half of the mandates for positive outcomes.

accountability factors assessed do exist in a significant part of successful policy instances, but they're not indispensable to reach them. In fact, other societal factors may instead be present that override the need for full decisiveness and accountability presence to generate good policy results.

As far as sufficiency is concerned, the results (described in sections 6.2.3, 6.2.4 and 6.2.5 and discussed in section 6.3) show important features of causal mechanisms for positive outcomes (good policy results)<sup>573</sup>. For positive outcome in contemporary results, two alternatives were found: one which featured all decisiveness factors together (PWRP, RECP, 40PC), irrespective of accountability considerations, and a second one where only two were present (RECP and 40PC) but accountability was conspicuously absent ( $\sim$ ACCT)<sup>574</sup>. Those two paths together produced a 0,272 coverage, a somehow limited empirical relevance. That suggests that swift, immediate action may happen either by the president having all tools to deal with congress (be it a powerful one who provides accountability or not), or with a weak parliament (unable to generate accountability) with whom policy-based or other kinds of negotiation are possible for the president provided it needs less than 10% of the remaining chambers to get majorities. Here, quick unilateral action is made possible either by the president having unilateral levers to decision-making or by the parliament being less able to articulate itself as a countervailing power (consequently, giving full leeway for presidential steering), or both<sup>575</sup>. No hint of crisis pattern comes from the cases displayed (in Table 16); on the other hand, the relatively low coverage suggests that this one-sided policymaking (presidential decisions in the void of parliamentary interference or even follow-up) is just one of the several mechanisms that can bring good policy results, one that entails quick responses from the economy. This single possibility among many unchecked attempts of mostly unilateral presidential decision has some chances to generate good policy, but not on most occasions (in fact, even good results “by chance” seem compatible with this degree of coverage).

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<sup>573</sup> Theoretical analysis concentrated on QCA “intermediate” solutions, on methodological grounds; nevertheless, for positive outcomes (contemporary and lagged) intermediate and conservative solutions almost fully overlap, due to the extreme parsimony of the “directional expectations” presented to the automated package (which corresponded strictly to the substantive assumptions embedded in the hypotheses).

<sup>574</sup> In formal Boolean terms, the minimized solution was:

$$\text{PWRP} * \text{RECP} * 40\text{PC} * \text{LONG} + \text{RECP} * 40\text{PC} * \sim \text{ACCT} * \text{LONG} \rightarrow \text{OUTCOME}$$

<sup>575</sup> Indeed, most cases overlap: the president does have significant powers, but also congress is not active in oversight.

For lagged results, different causal mechanisms emerge, through three consistent minimized solutions<sup>576</sup>. Two of them have a diversified base of cases. The first shows a weak president (~PWRP) facing an equally disinterested parliament (~ACCT), in a context where transactions are possible (RECP) – regardless of the coalition size in seats<sup>577</sup>. Here, some kind of consensus appears to be possible, consolidating policies that will be fruitful in a longer time perspective. The second configuration, besides occurring in several and heterogeneous cases<sup>578</sup>, is also a forcibly cooperative one: an active parliament, strong on oversight (ACCT) faces a highly minoritarian president (~40PC) but the party system allows for negotiation (RECP); presidential powers are logically irrelevant, that is, substantive negotiation comes front and center (with or without high presidential leverage in the negotiation table). The last causal path is very inimic to Chile<sup>579</sup>: powerful presidents (PWRP) face an activist parliament (ACCT) who shows a strong cleavage into two similarly powerful blocs (~RECP and 40PC). Here, negotiation of a certain kind seems the only way to prevent acute stalemate: centralized discussion of policy agreements (not comprehensive formal agreements, very unlikely due to the electoral and legislative bipolarity between two clearly opposed coalitions; instead, in the form of muddling through along several isolated but relevant decisions negotiated on a case-by-case basis).

Lagged results show heterogeneity across non-overlapping cases that reach a remarkably high joint consistency and coverage when compared to any other quadrant: 0,527 (more than half) of the cases. This numerical pattern clearly indicates that this brand of policymaking strategies, anchored basically in congressional negotiations, may in fact be a diversifiable menu of sustainable strategies to pursue government goals by minority presidential governments, adaptable to different challenges that they may be confronted with.

In sum, good policy results seem to be produced in the short term for a limited share of cases (around 27%) basically under unilateral conditions that favor the

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<sup>576</sup> Formally, the solution goes as follows:

$$\sim\text{PWRP}*\text{RECP}*\sim\text{ACCT}*\text{LONG} \quad + \quad \text{RECP}*\sim\text{40PC}*\text{ACCT}*\text{LONG} \quad + \\ \text{PWRP}*\sim\text{RECP}*\text{40PC}*\text{ACCT}*\text{LONG} \rightarrow \text{OUTCOME\_LAGGED}$$

<sup>577</sup> Is low unique coverage (covU) of 0,118 might also mirror the path discussed in the contemporary results: unchecked negotiated actions, made possible either by a policy-oriented, content-based open environment or by intense pork-based enticements buying out unilateral presidential decisions, may occasionally generate good decisions – but not very often.

<sup>578</sup> Here, the unique coverage (covU) is 0,200, almost twice that of the first solution.

<sup>579</sup> Besides one Uruguayan case with very idiosyncratic historical circumstances that happen to be very similar to the Chilean outlook.

executive in its decisiveness - this is still coherent with accountability postulates discussed in sections 3.2.3 and 3.3.2, since presidents that choose unilateral decisionism may get good results by happenstance, but that happens just in a minority of cases. A far more significant result shows up the lagged outcomes – the results of policy measures that had more time to settle down and produce impacts on the ground. Here, everything revolves around negotiation and consensus-seeking: weaker presidents (either deprived of influencing tools or being supported by less than 40 % of the chambers) may face congresses and fruitfully negotiate policy packages that yield lasting good results, provided the political landscape offers bargaining leeway to reach deals across the several dimensions of party goals. Absent such favorable environment for interparty agreements, good results are also within reach of presidents, provided they concentrate strong powers to leverage their negotiating positions (both institutionally and in their share of congressional votes, although minoritarian), and congresses do act on oversight to check on those powers. That's another breed of bargain entirely: multiple and pragmatically case-oriented deals (instead of grand, formalized blanket agreements), negotiated in a centralized way by two equally powerful and disciplined players. This new creature cannot be envisaged as a credible mechanism, however, without assuming other key aspects that seem present in the Chilean historical experience: centralized, structured decision making by parties in parliament, and a relatively bipolar configuration of the policy space. So, without undermining its internal validity as one more policymaking style able to produce good results, generalizing this last mechanism is not recommended outside the empirical boundaries (unless those additional features are found in the target cases<sup>580</sup>).

So, the difference between contemporary and lagged positive results is not alien to the simple fact that negotiations take time: when this time is made available and actually used for consensus-building, good results may show up in a much more consistent way. Indeed, good performance indicators are more frequent in the year after the minority government has been in charge<sup>581</sup> and the combined coverage value for the negotiated solutions in lagged performance (0,527) almost doubles the coverage for more unilateral strategies aiming at immediate results in the same year (0,272). Bargaining or consensus-seeking strategies, then, appear to be the way

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<sup>580</sup> As it has happened in the single Uruguayan case found in our empirical analysis.

<sup>581</sup> Table 14 indicates that good lagged results appear in 28,26 % (fuzzy values 1), and 53,26% (fuzzy values 0,66) of the cases, as compared to 26,80% and 45,36 %, respectively, for contemporary values.

forward *par excellence* in minority presidentialism – and, more than that, they appear to have reasonable odds for success.

On the other hand, the negation of the outcome (that is, consistent causal configurations leading to lower-than-average policy performance) produced extremely limited explanatory results - only three cases in 21<sup>st</sup> century El Salvador, with very low numerical parameters of fit. This scarce empirical relevance, whose few cases display a staggering denial of every postulated policymaking device (simultaneously,  $\sim$ PWPR,  $\sim$ RECP,  $\sim$ 40PC and  $\sim$ ACCT), means a somewhat trivial conclusion: countries devoid of every policymaking tool for the administration ( $\sim$ PWPR), and whose branches show little in the way of engaging in negotiations ( $\sim$ RECP) and legislative attention to oversight ( $\sim$ ACCT) will probably harvest few beneficial consequences anyway. The fact that only El Salvador, who historically shows drastic shortcomings for democratic governance, appears in the solution brings this case closer to the “logically irrelevant” cases (cases in which the causal conditions might probably have no or little impact on the outcome, due to obstacles coming from other contextual factors). So, although formally some logical-numerical solutions to the truth table were found for negative outcomes, we do not claim any finding regarding the causal conditions to negative outcomes.

So, what does the results say about our research question, formalized in the hypotheses<sup>582</sup> ?

H2 seems corroborated: in every causal pathway for positive outcomes, both contemporary and lagged, there appear one, two or even three of the expected INUS conditions (PWPR, RECP and 40PC). They are, then, necessary conditions (in several different combinations) for causal configurations who are sufficient for the outcome in some (but not all) of the instances in which it shows up<sup>583</sup>. Decisiveness is then a result of different components that substitute themselves (with the caveat that the numerical threshold of forty percent of both chambers - 40PC - is not present alone in any configuration<sup>584</sup>).

As for H1, it's refuted in its universal sufficiency claims. Several instances of decisiveness and accountability generate good results in empirical reality, but some other cases were found where decisiveness conditions appear while accountability is

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<sup>582</sup> The answer for that question is exhaustively discussed in section 6.3.3.

<sup>583</sup> That is, those configurations are unnecessary but sufficient conditions for decisiveness.

<sup>584</sup> Having a “less minoritarian” status adds to a president's negotiating stakes, but doesn't ensure successful results per se. In other words, a legislative threshold is then a facilitator, not a substitute for other policymaking tools.

negated, both in contemporary and in lagged settings (which is the logical refutation of the hypotheses as formulated). So, it can't be said that strategies without active congressional oversight cannot engender positive results. The results show, however, an important insight: whenever accountability is absent, the reconcilability of party goals (RECP) is always present. Substantively, two possible causal pathways can be envisaged as consistent with extant theories: one is the "random" choice of good policies by executives who, facing a bought-up congress, remained entirely unchecked (something that is found empirically in a small share of the cases); the other is that negotiations among parties in parliament include a significant degree of policy-based bargaining that "chisels out" decisions during the deliberation process. Under this last mechanism, debating and negotiating policies in parliament may function similarly as strong oversight as a fine-tuning device for executive decisions.

Finally, the exceptional circumstances hypotheses (H3) is corroborated: for positive outcomes, strictly all solutions feature the condition LONG, that is, no consistent positive outcome showed up by including the exceptional mandates (although the condition is not mathematically recorded as necessary under the required parameters of fit). So, LONG appears (jointly with other factors) in several sufficient configurations to the good outcome, making it a suitable INUS condition to it (although, theoretically at least, there may be other instances of good outcomes where it's not present).

Those apparently "weak" results from the causal hypothesis H1 do not deprive this study of strong causal findings: as discussed in in large-N QCA designs, minimization results mean the empirical corroboration of verified configurations that are consistent with theory through plausible causal mechanisms – that is, we found some causal pathways to good policymaking that may be empirically discerned as cross-case patterns reflecting expected conceptual relationships.

That reflects directly on the appraisal of theoretical claims regarding the several possible causal components for decisiveness (section 3.3.1). The "executive toolbox" approach to presidential powers was found as a key component only in specific, stringent conditions almost limited to Chilean cases (minority cabinets facing an activist congress under a strong cleavage in the policy spectrum) – here, presidential powers do play a specific role in a specific negotiating strategy that has been successfully deployed for longer-term policymaking (with no suggestion of a unilateral or decisionist role). What's more, even for the few cases of short-term impacts (contemporary results), power tools could not consistently ensure good

results without the simultaneous existence of a party system engaged in legislative trade-offs. Under minority conditions, this clearly refutes any decisionist argument on behalf of presidential rule by *diktat* when his coalition's minority legislative status shows the absence of broad consensus in the political system. Our scope condition of minority governments must be clearly acknowledged here: if a legislative majority is reached (and a great share of the "toolbox" causal argument in the literature is that presidential powers are useful for building and sustaining reliable majority coalitions), it may mean a broader alignment between the two decisionmaking powers (which might, in turn, be the sign of a broader societal alignment); this, in turn, could offer different circumstances for policymaking that are substantially different from the minority cabinet environment. As for the often mentioned "quasi-majoritarian" thresholds in legislative seats, our findings highlight their status strictly as a reinforcement for negotiating strategies: contemporary good results were consistently found only when the 40% share of seats was held by the presidential supporters (that is, no set of other decisiveness attributes might prevail under "hiperminoritarian" conditions), but never as a standalone condition. Here, lagged results showed a more nuanced pattern: Chilean-style centralized negotiations with an activist parliament does not dispense with that minimal support, but it's absent for the other solutions.

Among decisiveness conditions, reconcilability of party goals clearly stands out as the most significant finding: it's present in all contemporary and lagged solutions, but for the very specific Chilean case of centralized bargaining among two equally powerful coalitions in parliament. So, the empirical findings are strongly suggesting that the most consequential presidential strategy in minority settings is to explore the bargaining space available among parties, to reach agreements in parliament on behalf of a given policy agenda. One instance involves exploring presidential powers (potentially offering pork and other benefits)<sup>585</sup>; however, most strategies found did not require such powers, potentially relying on policy-based or electoral-support bargaining<sup>586</sup>. Given that most scholars writing on this specific feature have examined parliamentary systems, this finding highlights the importance of deepening the study of those negotiating scenarios specifically under presidentialism.

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<sup>585</sup> That's the first solution for contemporary results.

<sup>586</sup> Indeed, in one of the solutions (presidents who face a strong and activist congress, who aggressively oversees the administration, and have less than 40% in the chambers), vote-buying is hardly conceivable (it's unlikely to be effective by itself, or even to be affordable at such large scale as to bend a sizeable share of votes in parliament).

Finally, the harshest impact from the empirical findings fell on the accountability (through parliamentary oversight) argument. It's conspicuously absent from contemporary solutions (indeed, one of the solutions requires it not to be present); in lagged results, it's required by two of the solutions, one where parties are amenable to negotiate as well as the president (who has less than 40% of the chamber), and the other where a divided congress must face a powerful president with a clearly opposed agenda and little space for negotiation along other dimensions. The contemporary findings do not openly refute O'Donnel's (1994, 1998, 2003) rationale: unaccountable policymaking can yield quick but random results, sometimes ending up well, but not always – in our sample, only in 27% of the cases. However, we could not find extreme cases for the “delegative democracy” model<sup>587</sup>. That absence prevents us from fully discarding the accountability claims: if the assembly is open to negotiation, as happens in every solution, and presidents require legislative assent to policymaking, some sort of *ex ante* accountability may be extracted through lawmaking rather than through oversight. Under those circumstances, the accountability mechanism would not be the one posited by O'Donnel, or by Kriner and Schickler (a strong *ex post* scrutiny of presidential decisions), but rather the muddling through decision process negotiated bit by bit as pointed out in Nacif (2006), involving congress in the decision before it happens. So, the conceptualization of legislative accountability by means of oversight activities (inspired by Kriner and Schickler's modelling of US Congress in action) is clearly rebuffed in the absolutely majority of cases found. Of course, the scope condition is always to be remembered: given the weaker grip by minority presidents on congress, accountability as oversight might be more crucial as a deterrent against majoritarian presidents, whose proposals are less likely to be scrutinized and negotiated beforehand – most particularly for short-term or emergency measures. The lagged perspective is more generous to the accountability claims: one causal mechanism resembles the dynamic of majoritarian presidencies (a powerful president with more than 40% of the chamber and very distant from the opposition in the policy space), while another stands for the biggest share of parliamentary scrutiny (hiperminoritarian presidents facing an activist congress who, regardless, is open to negotiation). In both cases, oversight seems to have precisely the pre-emptive and corrective effects posited by O' Donnel and Kriner and Schickler (although in the latter some previous joint negotiation may have

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<sup>587</sup> When a purely unilateral president uses his powers to roll over an opposed, irreconcilable assembly, which in turn is unable to articulate effective oversight activities.

occurred) – something that is compounded by the larger time span for decisions to take effect, which allows for the actual workings of oversight procedures to be deployed. The third causal path relies entirely on *ex ante* scrutiny by parliament: presidents with limited powers finding negotiating space with a lenient parliament who is not interested in engaging in oversight (accountability here, if any, could only be found on the “Nacif model” of incremental, shared decision processes). Here, two pathways may emerge: either negotiation is limited to logrolling, exchanging votes by pork and other targeted benefits without any policy scrutiny, or the negotiating space involves actual parliamentary scrutinizing of policy decisions at this earlier stage. In sum, theoretical calls for horizontal accountability at large are not fully refuted, although they must be taken with a grain of salt: any model equating horizontal accountability to *ex post* legislative oversight has only partial empirical relevance to minority presidential governments; instead, the *ex ante* pattern of decision sharing leading to negotiated muddling through (embedded in the potential for negotiating support in parliament based on the reconciliation of parties’ main goals) seems to be the dominating pathway by which congress may exert its countervailing power. This preliminary finding, however, requires empirical testing by way of developing oversight models centered in lawmaking instead of oversight.

#### 7.4 Ways ahead - new possible avenues of research on the subject.

*Todo pasa y todo queda,  
pero lo nuestro es pasar,  
pasar haciendo caminos,  
caminos sobre la mar. (Antonio Machado)<sup>588</sup>*

Those relatively modest results in establishing precise causal relationships do offer useful “infrastructural” inputs for scholars on the field. First, the empirical survey provides open, wide-ranging databases on minority cabinets in contemporary Latin American presidentialism, readily available to further research. Second, we disclose some promising causal configurations for further development through focused studies that might refine their theoretical specification, reduce the property spaces by choosing cases with similar values in some conditions (thus potentializing the effects variance in the remaining ones) or explore more of their causal

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<sup>588</sup> Machado (1975, p. 227)

mechanisms by choosing some of the historical experiences already signaled here for deeper case studies<sup>589</sup>.

To pursue those prospective improvements, some possibilities emerge from directly flexing out the logical elements already inserted in our causal modelling. “Good policy performance” may be measured by observable phenomena located further upstream in the long causal leap between government overall decision-making features and macroeconomic results. “Accountability” may be operationalized by some indicator that manages to capture both the oversight and the lawmaking dimensions in legislative work (provided it can discriminate between legislative scrutiny and mere decisional blockade in lawmaking procedures). Both enhancements would require theoretical refinements that we couldn’t locate in extant scholarship.

Another possible enhancement is suggested by the heterogeneity in the illustrative depictions of actual configurations on the ground (in section 6.3.2), in which the macro-conditions of presidential powers and reconcilability of party goals show very different internal features. Choosing a subset of cases where those conditions are present might open the way for systematically exploring the different ways in which those features are disaggregated, building more fine-grained typologies for successful minority presidential strategies.

Moreover, some other political phenomena might impact the logical and empirical footprint generated by our causal conditions. The key explaining variable of “Reconcilability of party goals” merits the improvement of exploring “affective polarization” (Schedler, 2023, p. 358; McCoy & Somer, 2019) as one of its component parts, since this kind of political cleavage might jeopardize or even eliminate the baseline trust (both in parties as legitimate counterparts and in democratic procedures as effective channels for political bargaining) required for any kind of parliamentary dealmaking, even in the presence of other enabling factors for goal reconciliation between presidents and legislative parties<sup>590</sup>. By its turn, assessing

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<sup>589</sup> That is, by the way, one of the expected applications of large-N QCA designs such as ours: *Additionally, large-N QCA can also be complemented by either small-N QCA or qualitative exploration of cases. That is, the results of large-N QCA studies could be used to identify cases of certain configurations as vital for understanding causal relations and to guide selection of cases for more indepth study of the causal mechanisms underlying patterns of relationships. For example, researchers studying the determinants of organizational performance could choose (a sample of) cases representing a configuration that is linked to the outcome of interest with high consistency, and conduct in-depth qualitative case studies to explore why combinations of attributes representing the configuration may lead to the outcome of interest.* (Greckhamer & Misangyi & Fiss, 2013, p. 72)

<sup>590</sup> “Affective polarization” as a potential causal factor is in itself a finding from this study: it was absent from all causal mechanisms in the surveyed theories on presidential government (and

congress/cabinet congruence may provide a useful categorization for the strategies followed by presidents in this bargain-centered game of minority government (to be tested against the policy results). Federalism and bicameralism, as constitutive elements of a polity, also show the strong potential to affect the reconcilability of party goals (since they multiply the instances where presidents and parties may trade payoffs for votes across all dimensions) and the presidential powers (given that a devolved structure can reduce the president's capacity to dispose of policy and resources, and the need to negotiate in two independent negotiating arenas may raise the costs for presidents to offer political goods in exchange for votes)<sup>591</sup>.

In highlighting the causal conditions found empirically relevant for good performance, we also lay grounds for the inclusion of other social and political phenomena not directly related to executive-legislative relations that, nevertheless, will probably interact with them as drivers to policymaking effectiveness<sup>592</sup>. Those include the concepts more frequently associated in the literature with the term "governance", such as fiscal capacity; the state's ability to effectively use it; the compliance of societal actors with government decisions that go against their interests, and even the availability of international support (or non-opposition) to the stated policy goals (Fernandes & Fernandes, 2025).

To close those general remarks, some words must be said about the overall relevance of conclusions reached under a clear scope condition of minority cabinets in Latin America. The geographical boundaries impose the inevitable need for close consideration of differential features when extending them to other polities, but they do not render the conclusions useless: Latin America is the multiparty presidential landscape that includes more countries, for longer time periods, than any other cluster of countries, which suggests that what is found for the region should be carefully thought after when studying institutionally similar cases.

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minority parliamentary government), so it was not included in our own causal model; its relevance goes hand in hand with the specific finding regarding the strong empirical presence of the potential for president-legislative parties bargain embedded in the "Reconcilability of party goals" causal condition.

<sup>591</sup> Some impacts of bicameralism have already been considered indirectly through other causal conditions (higher costs in reaching the minimum legislative threshold in two chambers instead of one; greater procedural hurdles for dealing with two stakeholders in lawmaking). However, using bicameralism as a condition per se might illuminate further specific effects.

<sup>592</sup> Since conditions associated with executive-legislative relations have been mapped out here, their outlook offers strong leverage for sampling the cases that maximize explanatory potential of research designs centered on those additional causal drivers.

The minority condition is also an important side to presidentialism studies: first and foremost, this study shows that minority governments do happen in a very significant (and growing) proportion across Latin America, and their performance is at least as positive as any other kind of presidential cabinet. So, studying their dynamics means studying an important part of the mainstream governance issues for the region, liberating political theory from the straitjacket of majority coalitions as the only available pathway for presidential effectiveness. Besides, any president that heads a minority cabinet operates under very harsh political obstacles: any hint on how he can successfully manage his policymaking in such dire straits comes in handy for any other president with or without a majority coalition.

But what could be the empirical and theoretical value of conclusions about coalitional presidentialism in times of widespread democratic backsliding, growth of extremist, “illiberal” and anti-system parties and identity-based voting across the democratic world?

We clearly and forcefully state that they remain extremely relevant beyond mere historical interest, since minority governments tend to be even more important under the contemporary challenges than before. First, the electoral growth of extremist wedges has precisely the effect of reducing the likelihood of majorities emerging from the full-fledged democratic parties. That, in turn, means narrowing the possibility spaces for democratic actors, for they are growingly faced with the trilemma of forming “grand coalitions” (which reduces the range of choices for voters and risks tying the legitimacy of all democratic parties over the results of a single opportunity in government<sup>593</sup>), bringing non-democratic partners into power as coalition partners (thus risking democratic erosion from the inside) or running minority governments. So, any subsidies for improving the results of minority government empowers an additional - and potentially healthier – strategy to form *cordons sanitaires* to protect democracy while simultaneously preserving the policy effectiveness of democratic regimes. There’s no doubt that all those causal conditions developed here will be strongly affected by the new societal and electoral realities. However, our study shows them at work for a very long period, facing extreme challenges (the “labor pains” from overcoming past dictatorships, the severe economic crises in the 80’s and 90’s, the early impacts of authoritarians’ rise to power in the late years): so, there’s at least a reasonable expectation that those mechanisms

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<sup>593</sup> The failure of a grand coalition risks dragging together the electoral fate of the main democratic alternatives, instead of leaving electoral alternatives within the democratic field.

may still push in the same direction even under present day constraints. In a broader sense, the study of actual historical processes also provides insights and conceptual instruments that may be adapted to better address contemporaneous issues on their own terms.

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