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**Bicameral Oversized Coalitions –
Unnecessarily Large Coalitions?**

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1. Introduction

Today most democracies on earth are of a representative type. This is due to the fact that in modern territorial states the organization of a direct democracy with popular ballots on every single proposed bill is almost impossible. The areas to be organized, the size of the population and the huge amount of time needed for citizens to gather information on the bills in a complex world would be to great an obstacle for that. So "under representative democracy, the people rule directly only on election day" (Müller, Bergman, Strøm 2008: 2) and thus government formation is the next step towards producing policy-outcomes. Additionally, in many parliaments it is no single party which controls a majority, and in parliamentary democracies coalitions must be built to form a government.[1] Therefore one can say that "coalition governance is the norm in contemporary representative democracies" and for example "in Europe alone, roughly 70% of cabinets formed between 1945 and 2010 were comprised of more than one party." (Martin/Vanberg 2014: 436). As coalition formation is the starting point of politics and policies for the time span between elections, this process is of great interest to political scientists.

In the past, various researchers have developed a vast set of theories to explain how and why particular types of government form. Beginning with Riker, game theory approaches have been applied and they concluded that usually governments should form which comprise only the minimal number of parties necessary to gain a majority in parliament. Unfortunately, reality provided minority coalitions (MinCs) and governmental alliances with "too many" partners, too. This has led to ample literature on the importance of policy and ideology as causes for coalition formation. Finally the 1990s brought an "institutional turn" (Müller, Bergman, Strøm 2008: 24) that emphasized constraints and chances of (in-) formal institutions on this process.

However, bicameralism has been included in these analyses for a long time. At first glance this seems to be consequent, as government inauguration and survival normally only depend on the first chamber in bicameral systems. Nevertheless second chambers may have a particular impact in legislative processes and therefore matter in the considerations about which and how many parties are to be included in the new government. According to some authors, coalitions, which hold a majority in both houses, are three times more likely to form (e.g. Druckman/Martin/Thies 2005: 540). And Lijphart, for instance, argued that coalitions may be created as oversized ones – i.e. there are "super-

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[1] Note that parliament means both chambers together in a bicameral system and is identically with the only existing house in unicameral systems.

fluous" parties in the coalition – to reach a majority in the second chamber to be able to get the government agenda through both houses of parliament (Carrubba/Volden 2004: 526, Mitchell/Nyblade 2008: 218-219). Despite this plausible assumption it is puzzling that there are coalitions, which are oversized in both chambers of a bicameral system. This is what this paper is going to examine.

But why does this constellation matter? Simply put, it is a quite frequent observation: 38% of all formed governments in the analysis of Druckman and Thies, including ten Western European bicameral systems, were bicameral oversized (2002: 764) and one third of all countries have a bicameral system (Branduse/Heller 2014: 332). This is why one should consider the status a governmental alliance has in a second chamber, when trying to predict possible outcomes. But still there is no explicit examination why this type of coalition exists. This paper will argue that they occur especially when there are major reforms to be done in political systems with unreliable parliamentary majorities that will be defined in more detail below. Other institutional influences will be controlled for. For the examination the paper uses a comparative design in a most different cases approach. Belgium and Romania serve this matter in the time span from 1990 to November 2014. The procedure will be as follows: First a deeper review of the existing literature and theories in general and in particular will be carried out. Afterwards the case comparison provides a brief overview over the recent history in both countries followed by an examination of the institutional environment before going deeper into the analysis of parliamentary organization. The linkage of major reforms, unreliable parliamentary majorities and bicameral oversized coalitions will be shown in the end.

2. The Framework: Coalition Theory

2.1. General approaches

2.1.1. Office-Seeking and Policy-Seeking Parties

Coalition theory has a long tradition. Although "birth, life, and death of political coalitions" (Müller, Bergman, Strøm 2008: 3) are interdependent events, the formation of coalitions is the starting point of a government, what makes it particularly interesting. However, governing and duration prospects may be considered when forming a cabinet as will be discussed later. Firstly, the paper presents an overview over general approaches on coalition formation, before turning to the research that explicitly tries to understand oversized winning coalitions (OWCs).[2] In contrast, coalition in general means the partisan alliance in parliament that – directly or indirectly through the chosen head of government – allocates cabinet posts.

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[2] Note that the words "cabinet" and "government" are used interchangeably because this paper is only interested in the governments "head" and not in the administration "body".

The first attempt to explain, which coalitions will form, originates from game theory and has been undertaken by Riker. He assumes that the "players" behave rational and have perfect information about the other players' preferences and in a game with n players (with $n > 2$) strategies and partners must be chosen to reach one's goals (Riker 1962: 15, 35). He explains the acceptance of compromises in a coalition with his rationality premise: "The rejection of an optimal payoff in favor of a subjectively certain payoff may be regarded as a rational act of maximization in an uncertain world" (Riker 1962: 48). Furthermore, Riker allows for side-payments, i.e. positive effects of being in office (usually measured in cabinet posts), and refers to the "size principle", which means a majority in parliament (or the first chamber in bicameral systems) equals 50% of the seats plus one seat. As the side-payments are limited (his premise is a zero-sum-game in which one's gain is another one's loss) he suggests that coalitions consist only of parties that are minimally necessary to fit the size principle and therefore calls them "minimal winning coalitions" (MWCs) (Riker 1962: 15, 32). If the condition is taken strictly, they are expected to be "minimum" and hold at best just 50% plus one seat in parliament or the first chamber (Lijphart 2012: 82-83).

But empirically MWCs make up only 33% of all formed governments, MinCs 25% and OWCs over 25% (Stykow 2007: 232-233). Also, this approach is "policy blind" (Stykow 2007: 231) so that the inherent premise has been that all parties are able to coalesce with each other (Kropp/Sturm 1998: 14). To disprove this assumption a look at the frequent general suspension of extremist parties from coalition formation in Western Europe is enough, for example in Italy (Ismayr 2009: 46; Ullrich 2009: 689). As a result, concepts came up, which put the characterization of actors as policy-seeking at center. This time, so called minimal range coalitions have been predicted. This means an addition of ideologically neighbored parties (on a classical left-right dimension) until they form a majority in parliament (Kropp/Sturm 1998: 37). This explains MinCs and OWCs, too. Partners that do not participate in actual cabinet formation – but tolerate or support the MinC – are thought as being paid off in policy instead of Riker's side-payments (Kropp/Sturm 1998: 18). OWCs come to office because these coalitions can also be "minimal range connected coalitions", i.e. there are no gaps in the left-right spectrum of the government formed, as Axelrod suggested (Corrubba/Volden 2004: 523; Mitchell/Nyblade 2008: 204). For the MinCs one could also add, that the abstinent parties try to avoid the costs of governing – which means vote losses in the next election and is caused by harmful decisions – and therefore can be described as "vote-seeking" (Kropp/Schüttermeyer/Sturm 2002: 13). A vote-seeking behavior may follow from the assumption that "voters typically do not know much about politics and are reluctant to learn more. To decide how to vote they use a combination of party-based and candidate-based information shortcuts" (André/Depauw/Shugart 2014: 231) and thus particular governmental action may be perceived as negative to electoral success.

2.1.2. Institutionalist Approaches

In general, more recent theories combine these basic points of view and are able to extend the range of their reasoning from 30% to 50% of the cases (Kropp/Schüttermeyer/Sturm 2002: 10). It is logical to do so, as both principles are one side of a coin: One who acts policy-seeking needs power to enforce his agenda; one who seeks power must "sell" policy to gain support and thereby power (Müller/Bergman/Strøm 2008: 23). In the 1990s institutions have been reintroduced to many fields of political science and for the first time, they were actively used to explain the formation of coalitions. The argument basically work like this: Institutions form a framework that influences the possible outcomes of the choices that political actors make. However, they are not necessarily stable, because they can be influenced by the actors (Kropp 2001: 39). But anyway, as coalitions are set up under uncertainty (that will at least prolong negotiations) and institutions reduce uncertainty through established rules, actors are likely to consider them in bargaining processes (De Winter/Dumont 2008: 133; Diermeier 2014: 42; Kropp 2001: 40). An example for a powerful institution is the presence or absence of investiture votes in a given country that has a significant influence on MinCs (Stykow 2007: 234) and if there is one, it is important, whether abstentions work for or against the government (Strøm 1995: 75). Others have shown that there is also an impact of factors like the inclusion of the former head of government, the re-winning of a majority for the incumbent parties, the inclusion of the largest and median parties, the ideological tension within opposition and government, and the presence of antisystem parties in parliament (Nadenickek Golder 2006: 107). Another influential framework is the design of parliament as a transformative institution or rather a stage for presentation and speeches, the first type making necessary majorities more flexible (Kreppel 2014: 89).

Within the institutional approaches, Tsebelis' concept of veto-players has been one of the most influential. He is basically interested in why policy changes occur, i.e. when a policy proposal credibly threatens a given status quo. He argues there would be a need for policy changes, as high policy stability would challenge government or even regime stability (Tsebelis 1995: 293). He proposes that a raising number of veto-players (political actors whose agreement is necessary to enforce a certain policy) does not decrease policy stability, and that, the greater the policy distance between two actors on one dimension, the smaller is the win-set against the status quo (the intersection of indifference curves of acceptable policy proposals of veto-players). Lastly the greater the "yolk" (the "win-set" within a multi-member actor, e.g. a party) is, the greater is the overall win-set (Tsebelis 1995: 297-301). This matters for coalition formation because partisan chamber congruency diminishes the number of veto-player in a bicameral system (or congruency of the president's membership in a party and the partisan majority in parliament). Thus he distinguishes institutional and partisan veto-players: While formal institutions are by law always there, parties may constitute additional veto-

players or take an institutional one out of the arena because of congruence, but particular thresholds or the necessity for referenda may add further veto-players (Tsebelis 1995: 302, 307, 310). In the end, "policy change can occur when there are policies preferred to the status quo by all the veto players" (Diermeier 2014: 46). This converges to the explanation of OWCs, and some explicit concepts on these are implicitly or *expressis verbis* based on Tsebelis' approach.

2.2. Theories on Oversized Winning Coalitions

2.2.1. Single Chamber Research

So which explanations exist for OWCs that can be derived from literature? Bicameralism is not taken into account at first. An early guess has already been made by Riker himself: Given imperfect information on how much "weight" a coalition partner adds to the alliance, e.g. because of a low discipline in that party or frequent changes in party membership throughout members of parliament, may constitute an incentive to add additional partners (Riker 1962: 88, Lijphart 2012: 89). Even a great number of parties in parliament may foster this problem as there are many possibilities to form other coalitions and a formateur (the party invested with the opportunity to propose a coalition) may therefore not trust the smallest possible one, so another party added can be a valid "insurance" surplus (Mitchell/Nyblade 2008: 2012). This may then be regarded as rational in the sense of Riker. It is a related approach when Laver and Shepsle suggest that an OWC fosters the "credibility" of a policy proposal (1990: 885).

Additionally, they say a particular party is striving for a policy as close as possible to its own ideas (Laver/Shepsle 1990: 874), which is why a formateur could add similar strong partners to both ideological sides, although then the coalition gets oversized (Lijphart 2012: 89). Following an akin argument, some authors claim that communist successor parties are likely to be "tamed" in an OWC because the smaller parties want to avoid a policy too extremist (Druckman/Roberts 2007: 11), or that OWCs are to be expected when connected winning coalitions appear. Then the partner at one ideological end might be necessary for the majority, but at least one partner in between cannot be expelled for connectedness' sake while being numerically superfluous (Carrubba/Volden 2004: 523).

Another policy related point is: If the status quo is relatively extreme to the ideal win-set of a new winning coalition, superfluous parties are invited into cabinet to resolve this status quo. This might for instance happen if there is a shift from a far left to a conservative majority in parliament. This is due a formateur's possible choice for further reaching policy changes instead of additional offices (Baron/Diermeier 2001: 936, 945, 948). This and the foregoing argument also fit the prediction, that, the more seats the largest party holds and the extremer its policy demands are, OWS get more likely

(Carrubba/Volden 2004: 524). As these circumstances exist more frequently in polarized countries, more OWCs might come to office in such states being pluralist, too (Kropp/Schüttermeyer/Sturm 2002: 27, 29).

Besides these partially policy-driven and institutional attempts to explain OWCs, there are some fully institutional arguments, foremost that special thresholds in legislation foster this type of coalition. For example, if there are constitutional amendments to be enforced, many countries demand special majorities like a two-thirds majority in parliament (Lijphart 2012: 91-92; Stykow 2007: 232). Also if future coalitionists care not just about the present formation process, but about the "shadow of the past" (experiences previously made with other parties) and the "shadow of the future" (the likely duration and re-election prospects of a coalition) as they want to "minimize uncertainty and risk" (Müller, Bergman, Strøm 2008: 14-15), parties will take into account strong factions within the coalescing parties and tendencies towards party divisions and low discipline within parliamentary groups (Voßkamp 2001: 117). As a final reason for an OWC some also list crisis situations in which an external (e.g. war) or internal (e.g. antisystem parties) threat to the system occurs (Lijphart 2012: 89-90; Nadenickek Golder 2006: 107; Stykow 2007: 232).

2.2.2. Approaches for Bicameral Systems

The outlined approaches do not include bicameralism and are therefore insufficient. Second chambers are perceived by the political actors as an institution that matters in cabinet formation. This can be seen at the examples of Japan, where the LDP (Liberal-Democratic Party) explicitly formed a coalition after losing its majority in the upper house to regain this majority (Druckman/Martin/Thies 2005: 531-532; Klein/Winter 2012: 46), or Italy, where the senate brought down a government that lacked a majority in it (Druckman/Thies 2002: 760). And although Italy is a special case as the senate may start a motion of no-confidence on its own (Hornig 2010: 267, 269; Ullrich 2009: 649), this example shows as well that upper houses matter for coalition formation. This is because even if they do not always have absolute veto powers, they are usually in the position to at least delay legislation (Druckman/Martin/Thies 2005: 531; Heller 2001: 37), which can bring down governments, too, because the government may be considered weak and a failure in policy. Then there might be demonstrations or even riots to which a government may surrender and step back. As Branduse and Heller put it:

"From the perspective of a government in a parliamentary system, a second chamber is an obstacle. [...] [G]overnments last longer where upper-chamber majorities coincide with parties in government. If duration is desirable [...], then formateurs should seek to ensure that their government encompasses majorities in the upper as well as the lower chamber" (2014: 337).

Politicians obviously do perceive this problem, as can be seen in the observations of Druckman, Martin and Thies. In their dataset of eight Western European countries including 15.590 potential coalitions they originally expect 97% of the governments to have a congruent majority status in both chambers. In fact it is only 82% of the governments, but one must note that actually the double minority status is decreasing, when cabinets are actually formed in favor of solutions that have a majority in at least one chamber. More eminently, a double majority status is observed in 63% instead of 46% of the cases and a majority just in the upper house rises from 2% to 12% while lower house only majorities are just established in 6% instead of 1% of the cases (Druckman/Martin/Thies 2005: 536). They also controlled for the strength of the second chambers and found no evidence that power would matter (Druckman/Martin/Thies 2005: 541-542). Those shifts do also question a mere correlation of the houses' status in favor of a concept of conscious choice.

As it seems, upper houses do actually have an impact on government formation. But in which way does it work? Lijphart suggested that surplus coalitions in the first chamber are built to gain a minimal winning coalition in the second chamber (Carrubba/Volden 2004: 526; Mitchell/Nyblade 2008: 218-219). Neither Carrubba and Volden, who have not found a significant correlation, nor Druckman and Thies found evidence for this theory, who have found it to be a very rare phenomenon (Carrubba/Volden 2004: 531; Druckman/Thies 2002: 765).

According to the veto-player concept second chambers split the ideal policy point of parliament into two with separate indifference curves. As a reform is only possible if all veto-players agree to it, the win-set is reduced to the intersection of those curves (Diermeier 2014: 46; Money/Tsebelis 1997: 74). As a result, parties are induced to form bicameral majorities to "absorb" the institutional veto-player (Tsebelis 1995: 311). Normally there would be partisan veto-players instead, but coalition agreements may bargain away this veto power through establishing shared interests (Müller/Strøm 2008: 163, Strøm 1995: 61), so overall, there is one veto-player less. And as only the Norwegian-Icelandic method of dividing parliament into two chambers after the election guaranties congruency this may be an incentive for OWCs, as incongruence produces relatively large distances between chambers (Tsebelis/Rasch 1995: 368). Another observation is made by Heller, who suggests higher spending in parliamentary bicameral democracies when the chambers are composed congruently: Both majorities like to grant success to the other chamber because in parliamentary systems normally the individual candidates have to rely on the party label to be re-elected. Differing majorities would then decelerate spending because the opposition in the other chamber tries to reduce the government's payoffs (Heller 2001: 36, 40).

Another position is the one of Carrubba and Volden. In their logrolling theory they leave out general side-payments and instead suggest that every single bill provides "payoffs" for one single party. Because of that a party has an incentive to defect from the coalition once its policies are passed. The price would be to not be included in future coalitions or logrolls. An OWC may now occur to put this defector into a prisoner's dilemma, as another party is needed to bring down the government: To prevent unfavorable policies, if the "rest" of the government survived, because just one minor party defected, this party would stay in the coalition. They predict also that a bigger number of decisive actors as well as hardened bill-passing and more costly policies (in terms of polarization) would foster the incentives for logrolls and OWCs (Carrubba/Volden 2004: 525-526). So if there is a second chamber, the number of partisan actors is doubled and there is an additional threshold to pass (a bill needs a majority in the second chamber, too), which provides an even greater incentive for OWCs (Carrubba/Volden 2004: 528).

2.3. A Concept for Bicameral Oversized Coalitions

As we have seen, there are plenty of attempts to explain why OWCs form. Unfortunately, not a single one of them explicitly addresses why parties set up parliamentary alliances that are oversized in both chambers. To solve this puzzle is the goal of this paper.

But which concept is able to perform this task? If one compares the existing theories, it appears that there are four basic principles to coalition formation: (1) Parties strive for sufficient majorities (which might, under some circumstances, be flexible and result in MinCs) to enforce their policy agenda, (2) the implemented policy should be close to their own ideal points, (3) parties act in an environment of uncertainty (about reliability of partners, future events etc.), and (4) institutions form a framework for actual coalition formation. To explain why parties manufacture OWC majorities in both chambers, one must ask the question: What is this majority good for? Altogether, the previously described approaches propose: If politicians are uncertain about the reliability of their partners – which they want to avoid (Müller/Bergman/Strøm 2008: 14)– , they enlarge their alliance to ensure majorities, so they try to reduce the number of veto-players through greater coalitions (Müller/Strøm 2008: 163) that exceed the necessary thresholds – for example additionally needed majorities in a second chamber or higher thresholds for constitutional amendments (Mitchell/Nyblade 2008: 232; Tsebelis 1995: 307) – and to make sure their coalition lasts (Branduse/Heller 2014: 337).

As a result, the occurrence of bicameral OWCs should be observed, (1) if the majorities in a bicameral country's parliament are unstable or hard to form (which means an environment of increased uncertainty) and (2) if there is a need for special majorities due to necessary reforms on the schedule (which produces more veto-players).

2.4. Operationalization

Before actually going into the comparison, the expectations of this paper have to be presented in more detail. At first sight it is not clear what an "unstable" majority is. Total stability in parliamentary majorities can be seen as a state in which bills are passed by the same number of legislators from the same parties throughout a complete legislative period. Thus instability increases the more frequent (1) changes of party membership by single legislators, (2) undisciplined voting behavior in parliament, or (3) party divisions or new foundations of parties occur. A parliament's state can also be considered unstable, if (4) there is a high number of effective parties in parliament, because this augments uncertainty about who is about to govern the country after elections and it enhances the chances of defection and alternative coalitions. It is clear that the number of effective parties, measured by the ratio of Laakso and Taagepera (Lijphart 2012: 66), and the frequency of party divisions weigh more, because the scale in which they affect coalitions is way larger: Single changes of membership or single abstentions or disaffirmations in ballots may not have a real impact, if the majority a coalition controls is not a very narrow one. Thus these aspects have to occur in greater extent to reach the same influence as party number or divisions. This is to be portrayed in the next sections.

An unstable state of parliament is supposed as given, if firstly the effective number of parties in parliament is larger than the mean value of effective parties that Lijphart found out for his sample of thirty-six democracies between 1945 and 2010, which was 3.19 (Lijphart 2012: 73). Although this sample includes Belgium but not Romania, its generalized approach and extended timeline are a good ground for an approximation to a realistic value. Secondly, over the whole period under examination, there has to be at least one new party in every second period (in average) to contest in the elections, which actually wins seats. The paper only accounts for every second period, because to look for a new party in every single one would display too rapid a change of the party system for it to work properly. It is also supposed to be a "new" party if it just regains seats in parliament after having fallen out of it in an earlier election. Alternatively, a party already gains seats because of a party division without winning this mandate in an election. Undisciplined voting behavior and frequent partisan membership changes are derived from the literature as it exceeds the scope of this paper to analyze those two arguments in detail on its own. If the two more important variables are given or if one of them is replaced with the two less striking variables, the hypotheses could count as supported.

But when is a major reform "scheduled"? This paper will take into account at what time the reform has been passed by parliament. For the sake of simplicity and shortness the reforms will be presumed as planned before the cabinet formation process, although it is clear that this is not sufficient

for a prediction. Therefore one could account for explicit statements of party leaders before the elections or prior to a government reshuffle. To examine the accuracy of these hypotheses, the next part of the paper is dedicated to a case comparison of Belgium and Romania as a most different cases approach.

3. Case Comparison

3.1. Case Selection

As a next step, the arising question has to be remarked upon, why Romania and Belgium have been chosen as cases. The object of this paper is bicameral OWCs. Firstly, this necessarily limits the pool of cases to systems with two chambers. But this might not be a clear cut variable as there are nominally bicameral systems in which the second chamber is almost powerless. Some might then treat these systems as unicameral. But, as has been laid out earlier, even if bicameralism is "asymmetrical" (Lijphart 2012: 187, 193) and the upper house thus is weak, it almost always matters to policy and government formation (Druckman/Martin/Thies 2005: 531; Money/Tsebelis 1997: 211). This is due to the power to delay legislation, which almost all upper houses are capable of (Heller 2001: 37). Second chambers can be weakened by a low legitimation as well, for instance if they are not generally elected but composed of appointed members or if they do not have a federal legitimation base (Branduse/Heller 2014: 333; Riescher/Ruß 2010: 514). Still this does in no case dismiss a system from being bicameral according to the values for the strength of bicameralism that Branduse and Heller established (2014: 342-344). As of this, no further limitation has been chosen because of the bicameralism criterion and all countries in which a second chamber exists and does not just have a consultation role, i.e. is able to at least delay legislation, have been defined as bicameral (Branduse/Heller 2014: 334).

Another restraint for case selection in this regard is the type of system in which coalitions actually matter. Government formation naturally only depends on parliament in parliamentary democracies. Only in these systems, the head of government is elected or at least tolerated by parliament. In presidential systems he is elected by the people and has a fixed office period. Only an impeachment could possibly cause the president to step back from power, while in parliamentary systems the government as a whole or represented by its head is accountable to the legislative body all the time. It is the essential difference between both types of democracy (Strøm 1995: 52-53; Stykow 2007: 196). Due to this accountability problem, a sufficient majority must be under control in parliament. Sufficiency under these circumstances means, that against the governments support there is no other majority formable, be it through ideological division of the opposition (e.g. in the case of a MinC),

actually holding an effective majority of seats in parliament or other more particular majorities necessary to uphold office. In a presidential system coalitions thus can be more flexible. For this reason, this paper only considers democracies for the analysis, which work primarily in a parliamentary way. Furthermore, the countries should use a pluralist party system instead of a two party system so there is a chance for minority parliaments, i.e. parliaments in which not a single party holds the majority of seats.

When one has a look on the remaining cases, there is an amazing variance in the countries with respect to institutional designs, history and cultural embedding. For instance, there is Japan with its Eastern background and a very strong prime minister (Klein/Winter 2012: 37) and Italy with two equally strong chambers, that make it impossible for the government to fully control parliament, and a Western background (Hornig 2010: 269); there is Germany with its very special second chamber composed of state executive representatives (Lijphart 2012: 193, Watts 2004: 205) and the direct election in the Indian federal chamber (Lijphart 2012: 196). This list could easily be continued. Anyhow, bicameral OWCs occur across these differences. The interesting aspect now is to find out, what the systems have in common despite all differences. This paper thus takes a most different cases approach. The two countries chosen for this project are Romania and Belgium.

Both countries show a variance at basic institutional and cultural arrangements: Both countries are parliamentary democracies, but Romania is sometimes labeled as semi-presidential (Ismayr 2010: 23); Belgium is organized in a federal way and its senate is composed rather indirectly, while Romania is a unitary state with directly elected senators (Haas 2010: 16-17); there are two almost equally spread languages in Belgium and a long democratic tradition and one dominant language in Romania with a communist regime heritage. Those differences serve as examples and will be examined in more detail below. There are more to follow. For practical reasons, the time span in which the countries are under investigation will be the period from the first government formation after the fall of Romania's communist regime in each country until the last coalition formation in 2014. The comparison will show that the origin of the same coalitional outcome is unstable parliamentary conditions and a need for major reforms. The next paragraph is going to outline a brief historical overview followed by an examination of several surrounding institutional factors in both countries and the ones inside parliament.

3.2. Brief Historical Overview

Belgium has been a democracy for its entire existence except the occupations during the world wars. Its first constitution has been a role model and has been found a desirable framework for politics. Afterwards, amendments usually used to be an addition of further institutions (Zink 2010: 211-212).

Since the Second World War, coalitions in Belgium have usually been built around a broad, integrative Christian-democratic party until 1993/1994. There has been an environment that has been characterized by equilibrium of the three classical party families (Christian Democrats, Social Democrats, and Liberals) (Ismayr 2009: 31, 48-49). Green and nationalist parties have joined these since then; the classical parties have split up along linguistic frontiers (Ismayr 2009: 50-52, Lijphart 2012: 35). There has been a steady flow of constitutional amendments aiming at a federalization of the formerly unitary state. This has finally been reached in 1993/1994, including a reform of the senate (Zink 2010: 219). This change to a federal system has been described as the only way of holding this country together because of the diverging regions of Wallonia and Flanders (Ismayr 2009: 53). These regions significantly differ in economic output as Flanders' economy share is twice as large as Wallonia's and has to supply for adjustment payments (Zink 2010: 223). Though there has not been an end of institutional reforms, and the so called fifth and sixth state reform have taken place in 2001 and 2011 and resulted in more competences for the regions and communities that Belgium consists of since 1980. The last one also included a reform of the senate again and had a lengthy foreplay under several governments. These constitutional reforms and their attempts will be the major reforms to be considered in this paper's analysis. Additionally the election law reform of 2003 will be included.

Romania differs in many ways from this said history. Although the country had a short democratic interplay before World War II, it has had a communist regime after the war until 1989. What followed was the only forceful and bloody revolution in the Eastern European countries (Gabanyi 2010:630). The "National Salvation Front" (FSN) led the transition process, other parties were registered and FSN won the first elections by a two-thirds margin and in 1991 a new constitution was installed (Gabanyi 2010: 631). The transition had an impact on the economy, too, as until 1999 there was a heavy economic crisis that turned into annual growth rates around 5% in average until the 2008 crisis (Gabanyi 2010: 629). The political system has been linked with a pretty unsteady partisan landscape but basically there has been a rather bipolar system with communist successor parties and liberal-conservative parties and some nationalist parties (Gabanyi 2010: 658-659). The constitution has been amended once in 2003 to prepare NATO and EU memberships and to make legislative processes more comprehensive (Ismayr 2010: 44). Still institutional reforms have been on schedule, e.g. an election law reform in 2007 and a referendum on the existence of the senate, which achieved a "yes" but yet is to be implemented. Another constitutional reform has been planned for 2015 (Butu 2014).

3.3. The Institutional Embedding

3.3.1. Constitution and Constitutional Court

For the discussion of this concept, the first step is to check for possible influences of the institutional environment which parties and parliament find in their specific country. The most important imprint on the institutional surrounding is made by of the constitution. This is what the section will start with, in particular the amendment thresholds. Because the constitutional court is the protector of these supreme laws, it is taken into account jointly with its object.

Both constitutions provide a broad range of basic rights. In Romania those also include many social basic rights in addition to the classical civil rights (Gabanyi 2010: 634). The country also knows an institution, which many countries in Central and Eastern Europe copied from Sweden: An ombudsman is elected by parliament for a five years term to protect the citizens' basic rights against the government. In order to do that, he employs about a hundred people and since 2003 he is allowed to initiate proceedings at the constitutional court (Gabanyi 2010: 642; Ismayr 2010: 39). But this provision has no influence on government formation as its task is formulated narrowly and not decisive for legislative activities as a whole.

Furthermore, the constitutions define a particular kind of political system through the definition of institutional relations. Belgium clearly is a parliamentary monarchy in which laws are initiated formally by the monarch – who is acting for the government in this respect – and the two chambers of parliament (Woyke 209: 465). The monarch is the executive by constitution, but those powers are restricted to times of crises (Ismayr 2009: 18). The government is dependent on a majority in the lower house only since the formal federalization and both chambers are not equally powered anymore (Zink 2010: 237). This is examined in more detail under the respective sections below. For now the amendment rules shall be in the focus: A proposed constitutional amendment needs a two-thirds majority in each chamber and in each chamber a simple majority of both linguistic groups, if the competences of the federal states are affected. Afterwards, a newly elected parliament has to approve the amendment again and this approval is hold in a common meeting of the two chambers (Ismayr 2009: 13; Lijphart 2012: 39; Woyke 2009: 465; Zink 2010: 221). This is quite a high threshold as it needs multiple majorities and even an obligatory dissolution of parliament, which could make the legislators lose their mandates. Thus, this institutional design may be an incentive for governments to form OWCs in both chambers to ensure the double and multiple majorities being available for reforms.

Romania is a less clear-cut case with respect to the classification of its political system. Here the head of state, the president, is elected popularly. This and the fact that the president is commander-in-chief and commands a large administration of his own, have led to the conclusion that Romania constitutes a semi-presidential system (Ismayr 2010: 23). Others claim it still fits a parliamentary republic because he has no real influence on government formation, although it is the head of state, who suggests a new cabinet to parliament, and his other powers are weak, too (Ismayr 2010: 24, 29; Kropp/Schüttermeyer/Sturm 2002: 19). Instead, the cabinet is dependent on both chambers in a common meeting (Ismayr 2010: 32) and for all these reasons one can possibly say it is a parliamentary-presidential system (Gabanyi 2010: 635). The powers of the parliament's houses are distributed asymmetrically since 2003 (Ismayr 2010: 44-45). When it comes to amendments, Romania also shows high thresholds, but less multiple majorities are needed: Again a two-thirds majority in each chamber is necessary and if they do not agree a mediation process has to be released, in which a three-quarters majority is needed in a common meeting. This time approval takes place in the form of a referendum. The only exception is the transferal of competences to the EU, which only needs the two-thirds rule (Gabanyi 2010: 634-635). As in Belgium, the high thresholds may have an impact on cabinet formation.

Constitutional courts are known in both countries and designed in an "Austrian" way, i.e. the constitutional court is established separate from the other highest courts (Ismayr 2009: 14, Ismayr 2010: 19). Note that Belgium established its "Court of Arbitration" in the 1980s and had no such juridical protection of the constitution before (Lijphart 2012: 39-40). Their task is to mediate in conflicts, but in Romania the court's veto could be overridden by a two-thirds majority in parliament until 2003 (Ismayr 2009: 16, Ismayr 2010: 19). The strengthening of the court in Romania, the addition of a court in Belgium and an argumentation parallel to the ombudsman show that the jurisdictional aspects of the constitution are not a big deal for cabinet formation. Else, such additional institutions would rather not be founded or strengthened as politicians do not want to complicate this process. However, amendment rules for the constitution obviously do matter.

3.3.2. The Head of State

The two cases furthermore show two different types of a head of state. Belgium in a monarchy, i.e. the head of state rules for lifetime and successors are chosen through genetic relationships to the incumbent. The Romanian president is instead elected popularly. Both are considered to stay out of partisan conflict, which is dealt with in Belgium through the appointment of an "informateur", who is asked to find out who has the best chances to form a government and thus should become "for-

mateur" (Ismayr 2009: 22; Woyke 2009: 460). Romania's presidents abandon their partisan membership for the time they hold office (Ismayr 2010: 28).

The Belgian head of state also appoints the prime minister, the ministers and the minister presidents of the federal states and he is commander-in-chief, formally initiates legislation in parliament for the cabinet and may dissolve the parliament after consultation with the prime minister and has some emergency competences (Ismayr 2009: 18; Woyke 2009: 453-454, 465). But as all those power is restricted to formalities or the consent of the prime minister and because the monarch stays out of partisan conflicts, his real power is more of a representative nature and does not matter to government formation.

The case of the Romanian president is a little more complicated: The head of state suggests the prime minister to the parliament, but according to the constitution he has to refer to the majorities in parliament. Additionally the president's veto is just suspending, i.e. parliament can override it by a simple majority (Ismayr 2010: 24, 29). As the Belgian monarch, he is commander-in-chief and is supposed to be a political mediator. But his powers reach further: The president may initiate referenda after consultation with parliament or initiate proceeding at the constitutional court. Also he may participate in cabinet meetings and then lead the meeting (Gabanyi 2010: 636-637) or dissolve parliament, which might not be an option shortly after elections (Kropp/Schüttermeyer/Sturm 2002: 19). However, as the president's power in government formation is clearly restricted by constitution, his influence on the formation of OWCs is supposed to be clearly reduced to one constellation: If his former party is not to be included in the coming government, he might threaten to use his powers to bring down the government. But there has been found no support for this in the literature for the two cases.

3.3.3. Governmental Relations

3.3.3.1. Fusion of Offices

The third important string of institutional influences on cabinet formation is the design of the government and of parliament-government relations itself. This is evident, because it is the object of the whole process and thus should matter somehow to it. To be able to approximate government formation outcomes and duration, it is important to have a look on which dependencies exist related to the parliament: In presidential systems it is usually prohibited for ministers to keep their parliamentary mandates if they previously had one. This fosters independence as well as the fact, that the president is not responsible to the parliament either. Because of this it is relatively easy to form a government and to establish it for the whole legislative period.

Romania and Belgium deal quite differently with this topic. In Romania, where even judges, policemen and members of the military are not allowed to join a party (Ismayr 2010: 13) and until 2000 no prime minister was leader of his party (Gabanyi 2010: 636), it is a normal situation and legally allowed for ministers to be a member of parliament as well – according to Art 105 of the Romanian Constitution. On the contrary Belgian ministers rest their parliamentary membership as long as they stay in office, but they keep the option to rejoin the parliament and they cannot be dismissed as a single minister (Ismayr 2009: 23). This allows ministers to act relatively independently from the prime minister who is by law a "primus inter pares", but regains power through several other competences (Ismayr 2009: 28). The prime minister is fenced in again by the leaders of the parties, who normally stay out of cabinet to maintain an independent position. In the end, cabinet in Belgium dominates the parliament for as long as there is consent with the party leaders (Ismayr 2009: 30; Woyke 2009: 456). In the Romanian case, for other reasons, the possible control of parliament is less distinct. But those reasons lie within parliament and are therefore examined later.

3.3.3.2. Checks and Balances

Another matter is the institutional design of investiture votes and parliament dissolution. These are very important for government survival to an extent that science has focused on this aspect for a long time, thus neglecting policy and other aspects (Druckman/Thies 2002: 762). But they definitely affect coalition formation. That is why this aspect is examined here for influences on the formation of OWCs.

In Romania, investiture votes are designed positive, i.e. there must be a vote in favor of the government, and absolute, so that the government has to be approved by a majority of the elected members of parliament (Gabanyi 2010: 643; Ismayr 2010: 29). According to Art 103 of the Romanian Constitution, both chambers approve the government in a joint session (Ismayr 2010: 32). Belgium has had a double responsibility until the fourth state reform, but since then the government is only dependent on the lower house (Woyke 2009: 453-455; Zink 2010: 237). The vote of confidence just needs a relative majority to be successful, i.e. a majority of the legislators who take part in the ballot must approve the government (De Winter 1995: 134). According to the premises of this paper the Romanian design should augment the formation of OWCs, because the cabinet really is dependent on both chambers and thus there are more actors on the political stage to be included into the formation process, as well as there is an inflexible threshold for the approval. Indeed, Belgium shows the opposite picture: A flexible threshold and a dependency on one chamber only make coalition formation easier in theory. But Belgium shows OWCs frequently, coalition agreements are very long in comparison and the duration of formation processes even grows, both displaying a rather hard

process of agreement (Müller/Strøm 2008: 172; Woyke 2009: 469). Because of the opposing effects of both designs one cannot say the investiture votes were decisive for the formation of OWCs.

Investiture is not the only opportunity when control over the government may be exercised by parliament. The last one may withdraw its confidence and schedule a vote of mistrust. In Belgium this is designed as a constructive vote of mistrust since 1994 (Ismayr 2009: 24). According to the German model, parliament must elect an alternative government to replace the old one, which usually strengthens the position of the government as there must be an active majority for a new one not just one against the old one. This matters especially in the case of ideologically separate opposition parties, who could easily agree to bring down a government, but might not have enough in common to inaugurate another one. This time Romania provides the minor threshold as its conditions for success are only "destructive" (Art 113 of the Romanian Constitution), i.e. a new government is established separately from the vote of mistrust. On the other side this again constitutes an incentive to build larger coalitions. All in all, Romania's politicians have enough reason to build large coalitions because of the control mechanisms alone, while there must be other causes for Belgian politicians. Minor control mechanisms do not really affect coalition bargaining, as they are typically not majority dependent but a means of minority or opposition control of the government in each chamber. However this establishes a "passive responsibility" of government that cannot be whipped out easily (Zink 2010: 237).

On the other side there is the control of the parliament, which governments exercise. Governments are able to do that through fusion of personnel (see above) or through parliament dissolution. This can be a credible threat, if the government is in charge of party leadership and therefore may control the chances of the members of parliament to be re-elected, depending on the election type (Strøm 1995: 68). This is true for the case countries (prevailing list proportional representation (PR)) as will be further examined below. But the Belgian parliament can only be self-dissolved since 1993 according to the constitution (Ismayr 2009: 27) and the Romanian parliament may only be dissolved by the president after consultation with the parliament and within several restrictions on the frequency and point of time (Art 89 Romanian Constitution). Moreover it may not be a possible solution for a crisis shortly after elections take place (Kropp/Schüttermeyer/Sturm 2002: 19). These two different designs create a common incentive to build a majority that is capable to sustain itself beyond the necessary parliamentary thresholds and to avoid dead end situations, which can only be solved that way. OWCs may provide such a solution, if smaller coalitions are not stable enough to guarantee this on their own. But again this shows the importance of partisan discipline to the impact of institutional arrangements.

3.4. The Inner Parliamentary Organization

3.4.1. The Role of Upper Houses

As the sections above have shown, the institutional environment of parliament is very diverging in both countries. Each may have an arrangement that fosters OWCs in a specific way, but the other country shows a constellation pointing to the opposite direction. And sometimes, not even those "directions" have been straightforward. This is why it is now time for a look into parliament, i.e. firstly on the relation between both chambers in the two bicameral countries and then on the rules that determine parliamentary processes.

When analyzing bicameral systems, one must recognize the different basic function that second chambers fulfill in federal and unitary systems: In a federalization its task is to represent the lower levels of the state and in unitary states it divides power beyond the threefold executive-legislative-judiciary scheme. They still have a common feature in structuring the bargaining environment in favor of compromises (Riescher/Ruß 2010: 507-508). This difference matters in our cases because Belgium is a federal state and Romania is not. As a result the Belgian senate has been composed in different ways to ensure the equal representation of both linguistic groups (Zink 2010: 221). Since the beginning of the devolution, the country had known a "double mandate" in which the directly elected federal legislators (plus 26 coopted senators; this means the elected senators choose 26 colleagues on their own) had been active as members of parliament in the regions and communities, too. This has been changed by the forth state reform of 1994/1995, when the composition of the senate has been designed in a mixed way: 40 have been elected, 21 have been appointed by the communities and ten have been coopted. In the new system passed by parliament in 2011 and effective since 2014, the "double mandate" has been inversed, i.e. now the communities' assemblies elect 50 senators and ten are coopted. For the elected senators there has always been a split into two linguistically defined constituencies (Hanf 1999: 120; Zink 2010: 219, 225), which has resulted in a federal representation that works through linguistically split parties rather than through the chamber (Ismayr 2009: 54). On the opposite side, Romania is satisfied with elections on the national level with approximately same size constituencies for each senator (Gabanyi 2010: 651; Ismayr 2010: 44).

Another important point is the power relation of the two chambers. Besides which house may legislate or participate in legislation on which matters, it is important to analyze the way of conflict solution between the chambers (so called navette systems). Both countries originally vested their second chambers with the same powers as the first chambers. In both countries, there has been a shift towards asymmetrical powers afterwards. Prior to the state reform of 2003, Romania's senate has been able to redirect every bill to the chamber of deputies until an agreement was reached in a con-

ference committee and enacted in a joint session. The reform then changed the system, so that now consequently every bill is firstly introduced to and discussed in one house and later on in the other house that finally decides on its own. In most cases the senate is addressed first. The only exception is the navette system on constitutional amendments, which are still enacted through joint sessions (Gabanyi 2010: 649; Ismayr 2010: 44-45). As the senate is taking part in government formation proceedings and votes of no-confidence, it has a particular influence, although its consent is not necessary separately but in a joint session (Ismayr 2010: 32). Joint sessions are also required for special occasions like declaration of war or peace, budget and social insurance budget bills, and intelligence control (Gabanyi 2010: 641). According to Branduse and Heller this constitutes a bicameral strength of 0.9918 on a scale from 0 to 1, with 1 indicating chambers of equal strength and 0 indicating unicameralism (Branduse/Heller 2014: 343).

In Belgium, there is no stopping rule for navettes in matters where no chamber is precedent (Tsebelis/Rasch 1995: 388). This has been every law until the fourth state reform. Nowadays, the lower house clearly is the center of legislation with lone decision power on the budget, confidence and mistrust votes, the size of the armed forces, and granting of citizenship. For all other legislation it has the final word (Woyke 2009: 455). The only exception is constitutional amendments, laws affecting the federal states competences, state organization, and international treaties, where the senate's consent is obligatory (Woyke 2009: 465-466; Zink 2010: 221). As the senate is also composed congruently to the lower house very often (Zink 2010: 224), Heller and Branduse classify the Belgian senate right in the midst of their scale with a power index of 0.5000 (Branduse/Heller 2014: 342). This fits the purpose and goal of the reforms, which considered the new role of the senate rather as a "chambre de réflexion" and now a mediator between federal levels (Zink 2010: 223-224).

What impact does this have on coalition formation? Both countries have had bicameral OWCs before and after the reforms.[3] So although it is interesting to see these developments, they obviously do not matter to this process as long as they have at least delaying powers and merely exist. It approves the assumption: second chambers matter with or without a strong position in a veto-player network (Heller 2001: 37; Riescher/Ruß 2010: 514). They still have an influence, as both systems need the approval of constitutional reforms in the upper house. This means a threshold that is important to prospects of success of a given government that undertakes an attempt to amend the constitution.

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[3] In the case of Belgium, there have not been bicameral OWCs before the reform and within the period under examination here, but before that. For instance, the cabinets Tindemans II and Martens III were bicameral OWCs, too.

3.4.2. The "Character" of Parliament

A parliament can be designed in two ways: it is "transformative", i.e. the policy bargaining and legislation are in the focus of its work, or it is "parleying", i.e. the control of government through speeches and commissions of inquiry and presentation of government and opposition as alternative government is central (Kropp/Sturm 1998: 19). Research has proven, that transformative design shorten and facilitate coalition formation processes – especially with MinCs as possible outcome – as majorities are still needed, but can be flexible (Kreppel 2014: 89; Stykow 2007: 234). This may also have an influence on the constitutional amendment threshold. If there is a parleying parliament, there is an incentive to form a bicameral OWC because this takes away an institutional veto-player and in the coalition agreement the constitutional amendment can be part of logroll and bargain away the partisan veto-player for this object (Müller/Strøm 2008: 163; Tsebelis 1995: 310). If it is otherwise transformative, there may be no need for a bicameral OWC if there are opposition parties consenting to the plans. This is to be checked in the last section of this paper, which brings together the incidence of major reforms and bicameral OWCs in the two cases. Romania as well as Belgium or most of the other Eastern Central European countries have chosen a transformative design (Ismayr 2009: 36-37; Olsen 1997: 408).

3.4.3. The Mode of Representation

3.4.3.1. Electoral System

Before this paper turns to the way that parliament actually work, the composition of parliament must be analyzed. Thus, the focus now is on the Romanian and Belgian electoral systems and the resulting party systems of the countries. Both countries use a variation of PR systems. In Romania it has been a pure list PR in multi-member constituencies until the election reform that has come into force in 2008, turning into a mixed system with single member constituencies. Now a single competitor wins his constituency if he gets more than 50% of the votes, the remaining seats are distributed in a proportional way including supplementary seats until a proportional distribution is reached. The number of legislators therefore rises (Ismayr 2010: 44). An electoral reform changing the system to a British styled majoritarian electoral system has been revoked by the constitutional court in 2012. Belgium has a PR system in 20 electoral districts of varying size from 3 to 22 mandates in the lower house (Woyke 2009: 466).

To stabilize their party systems, both countries introduced election thresholds. These are meant to reduce the number of parties in parliament. This threshold lays at 5% in Belgium and exists since 2003 (Ismayr 2009: 43). Romania originally had a threshold of 3% for single parties and 8% for elec-

toral alliances and since 2000 these threshold have been raised to 5% and 8-10%, depending on several other regulations. Additionally, a party failing to cross the threshold has been allowed to participate in the seat distribution, if it wins more than 50% of the votes in six (for the lower house) respectively three (for the upper house) constituencies (Gabanyi 2010: 651-652). The electoral mode is the same for both chambers, at least for the part that is elected directly in Belgium's senate. Despite the thresholds the PR system produced a variety of parties in parliament.

Table I: Electoral Outcomes for the Belgian Senate

Belgian Senate	2014	2010	2007	2003	1999	1995	1991	
PS	9	13	8	12	10	11	18	
sp.a/SP	5	7	7	12	6	9	14	
MR/PRL FDF MCC	9	8	11	10	9	9	9	
Open VLD/PVV	4	6	9	12	11	10	13	
Ecolo	3	5	5	2	6	3	6	
Groen/Agalev	3	2	2	0	5	2	5	
Vlaams Belang/VL. Blok	2	5	8	8	6	5	5	
NV-A	12	14	2	0	0	0	0	
cdh/PSC	5	4	5	4	5	7	9	
CD&V/CVP	8	7	12	9	10	12	20	
LDD	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	
FN	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	
VU-ID	0	0	0	0	3	3	5	
Independents & Others	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	
Sum	60	71	71	71	71	71	106	Average
Effective number of parties	7,86	7,96	8,65	7,19	8,86	8,09	8,23	8,12

Table II: Electoral Outcomes for the Belgian House of Representatives

Belgian House of Representatives	2014	2010	2007	2003	1999	1995	1991	
PS	23	26	20	25	19	22	35	
sp.a/SP	13	13	14	23	14	20	27	
MR/PRL FDF MCC	20	18	23	24	18	19	20	
Open VLD/PVV	14	13	18	25	23	21	30	
Ecolo	6	8	8	4	11	5	10	
Groen/Agalev	6	5	4	0	9	5	7	
Vlaams Belang/VL. Blok	3	12	17	18	15	11	12	
NV-A	33	27	5	1	0	0	0	
cdh/PSC	9	9	10	8	10	11	18	
CD&V/CVP	18	17	25	21	22	29	39	
LDD	0	1	5	0	0	0	0	
FN	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	
VU-ID	0	0	0	0	8	5	7	
Independents & Others	5	1	0	0	0	1	6	
Sum	150	150	150	150	150	150	212	Average
Effective number of parties	7,77	8,42	8,67	7,03	9,05	7,91	8,2	8,15

Table III: Electoral Outcomes for the Romanian Senate

Romanian Senate	2012 (2014)	2012	2008 (2012)	2008 (2009)	2008	2004 (2007)	2004	2000	1996 (1999)	1996	1992	1990 (1991)	1990	
PSD/PDSR/FDSN/FSN	65	65	40	40	40	45	45	61	36	36	50	79	79	
PNL	43	43	27	27	27	23	23	13	19	19	5	14	14	
PDL/PD	20	20	35	35	35	29	29	7	18	18	16	0	0	
PC-PLR	15	15	1	1	1	10	10	4	0	0	0	0	0	
UDMR	8	8	7	7	7	10	10	12	11	11	11	11	11	
Minorities	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
PP-DD	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Progressives	0	0	12	12	12	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
PRM	0	0	0	0	0	13	13	36	7	7	0	0	0	
PUNR/UNPR (since 2009)	13	13	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	6	13	0	0	
PNTCD	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	16	16	22	0	0	
PL'93/PAC	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	0	0	
PDAR	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	
Independents & Others	7	7	2	2	2	5	5	11	29	29	2	0	0	
Sum	171	171	124	124	124	135	135	144	142	142	132	104	104	Average
Effective number of parties	4,19	4,19	4,1	4,1	4,1	4,81	4,81	3,76	6,14	6,14	4,78	1,65	1,65	4,2

Romanian Chamber of Deputies	2012 (2014)	2012	2008 (2012)	2008 (2009)	2008	2004 (2007)	2004	2000	1996 (1999)	1996	1992	1990 (1991)	1990	
PSD/PDSR/FDSN/FSN	152	152	89	89	89	105	105	158	82	82	106	245	245	
PNL	73	73	57	57	57	60	60	27	37	37	4	29	29	
PDL/PD	36	36	95	95	95	67	67	27	36	36	41	0	0	
PC-PLR	35	35	3	3	3	19	19	10	0	0	0	0	0	
UDMR	18	18	20	20	20	22	22	26	25	25	27	29	29	
Minorities	17	17	16	16	16	18	18	18	0	0	13	12	12	
PP-DD	13	13	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Progressives	0	0	12	12	12	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
PRM	0	0	0	0	0	21	21	70	20	20	14	0	0	
PUNR/UNPR (since 2009)	35	35	0	0	0	0	0	0	12	12	27	12	12	
PNTCD	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	70	70	42	13	13	
PL'93/PAC	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	13	22	22	
PDAR	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	17	17	
Independents & Others	22	22	13	13	13	13	13	15	38	38	25	1	1	
Sum	379	379	292	292	292	312	312	336	282	282	287	379	379	Average
Effective number of parties	4,29	4,29	4,03	4,03	4,03	4,66	4,66	3,46	4,71	4,71	4,76	2,28	2,28	4,03

3.4.3.2. Party System

To analyze a party system, several problems must be solved. Firstly, to determine the number of parties is not always easy. Some parties may be very small so they could be negligible. But sometimes they are decisive for government formation and really do matter, so they must be counted. On the other side, a party like the Italian communists may attract a quite large number of voters and there-fore gain many mandates in parliament, but may be excluded from policy making and so lose importance. There may be parties that are allied so closely that they must be counted as one party or the other way round: A party may have strong inner factions that do not simply allow counting it as one party (Lijphart 2012: 63-64, 67-72). These problems especially occur in our two cases. This paper therefore uses the Laakso/Taagepera ratio[5] that counts parties with respect to their parliamentary weight (Lijphart 2012: 66).

In Belgium, parties have split along linguistic lines, but though they have kept forming their parliamentary groups together for a long time. They also do not compete with each other as every party sticks with its linguistic community. This favors regarding them as one party. But on the other side,

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[4] The results for the different chambers come from: Belgian House of Deputies 2014, Belgian Senate 2014, Inter-Parliamentary Union 1991, and Romanian Chamber of Deputies 2014.

[5] $\frac{1}{\sum_i^n s_i^2}$, with "n" being the number of parties in parliament and "s" being the share of seats it holds.

the joint groups in parliament are not formed anymore and there has even been government partici-pation of the Walloon (PS) but not the Flemish social democrats (sp.a) between 2007 and 2010 or of the Flemish Christian democrats (CD&V) without their Walloon counterpart since 2014.[6] Further-more, the parties insist on their independence (Woyke 2009: 462). That is why for the purpose of this paper, they will be held separate.

In Romania there is a similar problem. It derives from the possibility of parties to group together as an alliance for electoral purposes. They then do not compete against each other anymore. But as the case of the conservatives (PC, former PUR) shows, they do not necessarily behave loyal afterwards. The PC has been allied with the PSD until 2004. After the election, the party switched sides to sup-port the PNL-led coalition to form a government. But in the elections of 2008, it again stood side-by-side with the PSD. As the collaboration with the respective parties is only of short duration, the PC and other parties must be addressed as a separate party following Lijphart's time criterion, which says the collaboration must steadily last for a long time, e.g. several legislative periods (2012: 69). This is exemplified through a look on the Democratic Party (PD): First it has been part of the "Social-democratic Union" together with the predecessor of the PSD in 1996 and then joining the opposi-tional alliance "DA" in 2000. Additionally, because of the frequent membership changes of legisla-tors, the parties are not very coherent (Gabanyi 2010: 658). Again the parties are counted as sepa-rate.

Since the linguistic split of the three large parties in the 1970s, the Belgian party landscape has fanned out. The classical parties of the liberals, the socialists and the Christian democrats have divid-ed themselves into each a French and a Dutch speaking party and they have been joined by green and nationalist parties in both chambers so there is a huge variety of parties in parliament (Lijphart 2012: 35-36). For the time under consideration in this paper there have been average effective num-bers of parties of 8.12 in the senate and of 8.15 in the chamber of deputies (8.14 in total). The lowest number has been 7.03 parties from 2003 to 2007 and the highest a 9.05 in the previous legislative period, both measured in the chamber of deputies. These numbers clearly exceed the long term av-erage of 3.19 that Lijphart has observed (2012: 73) and serve as reference for this paper's hypothesis. Even if the linguistic siblings were counted as one party, this value has been exceeded even in the period from 2003 to 2007 in the lower house, when the ratio would have been a 3.82. This means, the most important criterion of this approach is constantly met in Belgium. The second most im-portant regarding new partisan actors is also met: With the re-introduction of the Flemish Greens,

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[6] Note that for simplicity's sake throughout this paper the parties are named with their current name and ab-breviation despite the possibility, that there have been changes in name over time. If it is necessary, the old names are used explicitly.

the surprise seat of the Walloon "Front National" in 1991, the separation of the NV-A and LDD show-ing up in parliament in 2007, Belgium has seen four new parties in seven legislative periods.

In Romania the party system is still on the move. There is a high fluctuation and parties are re-named often. For example, the original National Salvation Front (FSN) has split up into several parties, in-cluding a social-democratic branch (FDSN) that changed its name to PDSR and later merged with the PSDR into the PSD (all abbreviations are some variation of "Social-Democratic Party of Romania"), and a branch that has become a liberal-conservative party later, called Democratic Party (PD) and nowadays Democratic Liberal Party (PDL). In addition to these changes, the partisan landscape nor-mally contracts between the elections, making it difficult to determine in which state the parliament is at a given point of time (Gabanyi 2010: 658-659). Thus this paper relies on the data provided for the beginning of each period by the official parliamentary website. There one can find that in the seven legislative periods under examination in this paper, Romania has seen six new parties over time (PDL, PC, PP-DD, Progressives, PRM, and UNPR). Therefore it is clearly fitting the hypothesis about new parliamentary actors.

The difficulties are further illustrated by the data used in literature: Gabanyi herself uses strongly diverging numbers for the seat shares, especially for the largest parties. The PSD has had lower house 106 seats in 1992 according to parliamentary data and 117 according to her, for instance (Gabanyi 2010: 653). Her numbers so make it difficult to follow the parliamentary status after government reshuffles, which took place without elections, because her data-set only displays alliances' successes in case there has been one. This has been the case in the legislative period beginning in 2004. The DA-alliance (PNL and PD) set up a coalition with the UDMR and PC under prime minister Popescu-Tariceanu, who later lost the PD as coalition partner. The government then became a MinC.

As will be shown below, loyalty is not a very wide spread attitude among Romanian legislators. How-ever it is totally normal to stay in one party but join another parliamentary group. For this reason, the seat shares of parties are measured through their respective parliamentary groups and not the actual number of party members as this is decisive for their ballot behavior. In the end, Romania's party system has had an average effective number of parties of 4.12 in the considered period of time taken both houses together (4.20 in the senate and 4.03 in the chamber of deputies). The lowest value has been 1.65 and the highest has been 6.14, both observed in the senate. Except for the first legislative period Lijpharts mean has been exceeded constantly. The relatively low values in the first period can be explained by the high shares of the FSN, which had won over two-thirds of the votes in both chambers (Gabanyi 2010: 653).

3.5.4. The Importance of Parties in Parliament

The next step is to have a look on the behavior of parties in parliament. In the relatively new democracies there is a trend to have unstable voting behaviors as parties still have to learn how to discipline their members and there is also a "high rate of party switching among members of parliament" (Druckman/Roberts 2007: 19). In Romania this may fit as the joint parliamentary groups often split later on in the legislative period or many single legislators leave their original group, possibly due to a low threshold for group foundation, which needs either ten deputies or 5 senators (Gabanyi 2010: 641; Ismayr 2010: 30). That party changes are a usual procedure is shown by two examples: Firstly, the PSD's seat share rose from 38.2% to 57% after winning the election in 2000, another source speaks of 50 deputies. Likewise, the PD won 366 town halls in the 2004 local elections. During the period, this number rose to 786 biasing the electoral outcome (Ciobanu 2007: 1436; Gabanyi 2010: 643). The turnover rate could perhaps be explained with low re-election expectations in the first elections (Olsen 1997: 402-403). These circumstances caused action by the parties that resulted in a prohibition of party changes for mayors and the installation of high barriers for party foundations instead of the previously low ones (Ciobanu 2007: 1437; Gabanyi 2010: 643, 657). But for the parliamentary ballot behavior, Coman found out that the discipline within a parliamentary group has been quite high before as well as after the electoral reform that led towards a rather majoritarian system in 2007/2008 (Coman 2012: 199). So regarding Romania, one of the two remaining hypotheses fits.

In Belgium, the situation is slightly different. The country is used to high partisan discipline grace to strictly organized parties, too (Ismayr 2009: 23; Woyke 2009: 472). Additionally, the parliamentary groups are almost neglected when it comes to the distribution of cabinet posts and coalition formation as a whole. There clearly is a party dominance over the parliament (Woyke 2009: 456, 460-461). This is partly recouped by the formalized weekly justifications that ministers have to take part in in front of their parliamentary groups (Ismayr 2009: 31). But all in all, discipline is high and neither in the literature or the data there has been a single hint that partisan switches have ever been a major problem in Belgian history except for the breakaway of the NV-A from the CD&V and the LDD from the NV-A. But these have not been overwhelming events, so that neither of the two hypotheses is adopted as confirmed.

3.5. Linkage of Major Reforms and Unstable Parliaments

In the end, Romania and Belgium can both be regarded as countries with unstable parliaments. They both have constantly had a large number of effective parties and frequently occurring new parties. In addition Romanian legislators do not stick very loyally to their parties, although in both countries they behave disciplined at ballots. But this alone has not been claimed as the sole cause of bicameral

OWCs in both countries. Those have been predicted to be formed when this parliamentary environment incidents with major reforms that need special thresholds by prescription of the constitution or political culture (as it is the case in most countries for electoral laws). Which cabinets have had a bicameral OWC as parliamentary base can be seen in Table V, where they are marked green. Tables I-IV display the partisan composition in blue backgrounds. The proposed reforms that are to be referred to here have been enumerated above in the historical overview. Those are the state reforms in Belgium of 1993/1994, 2001, 2011, and its electoral reform in 2003, as well as the establishment of a new constitution in Romania in 1991, its revision in 2003, the major economic reforms in the late 1990s, the attempt to abolish the senate in 2009, and the electoral reform of 2007/2008.

To start with Belgium, there is a disappointment to the expectations right at the beginning: The federalization process has been finalized by the Martens IX and Dehaene I-II cabinets. All three governments have been MWCs. However, the other reforms fit the schedule. The electoral reform has been enacted for the 2003 elections by the previous legislature under the Verhofstadt I government that also put on the fifth state reform in 2001. The Verhofstadt III government and its three successors have been explicitly designed to install an institutional reform (Pinzler 2008), although it did not succeed and it finally has become the task of the Di Rupo cabinet to accomplish the sixth state reform.

In Romania the image seems to be quite parallel: The introduction of the new constitution has been done by the Roman I-III cabinets that have been composed of FSN members only thanks to the FSN's overwhelming majority. But the actual adoption in parliament on 21st November 1991 and the referendum a month later fall into the Stolojan cabinet. One can argue his cabinet should ensure a broad support of the former opposition for the constitution and overcoming of communism. The originally "slow and cautious reforms" (Ciobanu 2007: 1433) for the economy since 1990 have been accelerated later under the Ciorbea and Vasile governments that ensured their support as well through an OWC. Then there is the non-fitting 2003 constitutional revision of the Nastase cabinet and the electoral reform passed in parliament 2007 by the Tariceanu I-II cabinets. Boc's cabinets have tried a reform of bicameralism in conflict with president Basescu reaching its pitch in the 2009 non-binding referendum. The Romanians voted for the abolition of the senate and the fact that this still has to be implemented can be counted as the reason for Ponta's cabinets II and III. Additionally the role and powers of the presidency are at stake since the frequent conflicts with the government in the past decade.

Table V: Governmental Status in Belgium and Romania

Belgian Governments				
Cabinets	**Senate**		**House of Representatives**	
	Gov.Seats	*Gov. Status*	*Gov.Seats*	*Gov. Status*
Michel	33	MWC	85	MWC
Di Rupo	45	OWC	96	OWC
Verhofstadt III, Leterme I, Van Rompuy, Leterme II	45	OWC	96	OWC
Verhofstadt II	46	OWC	97	MWC
Verhofstadt I	47	OWC	94	OWC
Dehaene II	39	MWC	82	MWC
Martens IX, Dehaene I	61	MWC	119	MWC
Romanian Governments				
Cabinets	**Senate**		**House of Deputies**	
	Gov.Seats	*Gov. Status*	*Gov.Seats*	*Gov. Status*
Ponta III	101	OWC	240	OWC
Ponta II	136	OWC	295	OWC
Ponta I	68	OWC	149	MWC
Boc II, Ungureanu	42	MinC	115	MinC
Boc I	76	OWC	187	OWC
Tariceanu II	62	MinC	82	MinC
Tariceanu I	72	MWC	168	MWC
Nastase	65	MinC	168	MinC
Isarescu	64	MinC	168	OWC
Ciorbea, Vasile	100	OWC	250	OWC
Vacaroiu	76	MWC	150	MWC
Stolojan	93	OWC	313	OWC
Roman I-III	79	MWC	245	MWC
Interim Governments are not listed. Cabinets are grouped together if they are formed by the same parties within the same legislative period.				

But how can the exceptions be explained? This paper argued above that a transformative parliamentary design may have a significant impact. Both the Belgian exception concerning the fourth state reform and the Romanian exception of 2003 can be explained by this phenomenon. Neither the federalization in Belgium nor the preparation for NATO and EU memberships in Romania have been object of conflict at the time the reforms have been discussed and enacted. There has rather been a dispute on details. So in the end the incumbent governments did not have to fear oppositional attacks on the reform. Instead the opposition could play a constructive role in the process. Only the electoral reform in Romania stays out of explication. Perhaps this problem is even too controversial for OWC logrolls in Romania as the vehement reaction to Ponta's attempt to reform the electoral law shows, which has been overthrown by the constitutional court shortly after being passed in parliament on the demand of the opposition. But looking at the big picture reveals an exceptional role for this situation.

4. Conclusion

Altogether, this paper shows a correlation of unstable parliaments and the event of major reforms. The two cases display: Parliaments that have a large number of effective parties and frequent party divisions augment the formation of bicameral OWCs. Additionally partisan membership changes might matter as well, but find no full support within this comparison. The discipline of the legislators does not seem to affect government formation processes as political entrepreneurs are obviously able to secure their fellowship.

The paper also checked for exterior influences. The Belgian and Romanian cases diverge in almost every aspect of constitutional design, be it the monarchy-republic dichotomy or different juridical, bicameral, and governmental arrangements. All of these aspects rise different expectations of which government is about to form. The two systems just meet in the interior characteristics of parliament, especially the party system that it is composed of. They also show high thresholds for major reforms, be they formal or informal. This constitutes a great incentive to form bicameral OWCs, although there is the possibility to abstain from that, if there is a cross-partisan consent on the overall reform and a transformative environment in parliament allowing for compromises and deals between opposition and government.

Of course, this is just a two case comparison. The approach needs further research of a quantitative design to provide stronger empirical support. Italy, Japan and other countries can be valid cases; perhaps Germany could be an example for the absence of bicameral OWCs. Especially Romania calls for another type of research, too. During the inquiry for this paper it has become clear that researchers have focused on the transition process, corruption, and political culture so far. For the "new democracies" to be included in comparative institutional approaches, there is a need for deeper case studies of those countries and their political and institutional functioning. Only then political science will be able to gain a deeper understanding of those countries.

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Declaration of Originality

Hiermit erkläre ich, dass ich die Arbeit selbstständig und ohne Benutzung anderer als der angegebenen Quellen und Hilfsmittel angefertigt habe.

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