

UACES 44th Annual Conference

Cork, 1-3 September 2014

Conference papers are works-in-progress - they should not be cited without the author's permission. The views and opinions expressed in this paper are those of the author(s).

www.uaces.org

Why have technocrats been appointed to govern European democracies?

Giulia Pastorella¹

Draft Paper – please do not cite or quote without the author’s permission

ABSTRACT

In the context of the Eurocrisis, technocratic governments have come to the fore of public and academic debates alike. The present paper sets out to understand the underlying conditions leading to the appointment of such unusual cabinets. Adopting a rational choice institutionalist framework, the paper develops a series of hypotheses as to what element or situation, during the government formation phase, increase the chances of a technocratic government appointment. Such variables are categorized as either institutional conditions that remain stable in political systems, or as contingent conditions that change over time. The analysis, limited to 27 European democracies, identifies, beyond countries’ peculiarities, the common roots for these cabinets. By applying a binary logistic analysis, it demonstrates that in countries that are not monarchies, when there is an economic crisis and a political scandal in a situation of fragmentation of the party system, a technocratic government is more likely to be appointed. It concludes that technocratic governments are therefore to be interpreted as warning signs for democracies, and as such, treated as the symptoms, rather than the cause, of the diminishing qualities of European democracies.

Keywords: technocratic government, Eurocrisis, party system, scandal, economic crisis, semi-presidentialism

Technocratic governments are a very particular kind of government that happens in exceptional circumstances. What precisely are those circumstances remains very vague and, to the author’s knowledge, no academic work has systematically looked into such causes. The present article sets about precisely to enquire into what might bring a partisan political system to adopt a solution that is the very opposite, of the partisan way of government (McDonnell and Valbruzzi 2014). It is a particularly good moment to enquire into such phenomenon as there have been a

¹ European Institute

London School of Economics and Political Science

Email: g.pastorella@lse.ac.uk

surprisingly high number of technocratic governments appointed since the beginning of the economic and financial crisis - in Hungary and Czech Republic in 2009, in Italy and Greece in 2011, in Greece again in 2012, and most recently in Bulgaria and Czech Republic in 2013. But technocratic governments are not a recent political phenomenon, as there have been 32 cases of technocratic governments since 1945 in 9 of the so-called advanced democracies². Given their supposedly non-party nature, technocratic governments present a puzzling case in the context of European party democracies, and as such require investigation.

The paper will proceed as follows: it will first briefly define technocratic governments, then it will explore which actors are involved and their motivations, and then outline when, in terms of situation in the cabinet appointment process, are technocratic governments ‘allowed’ to happen. Then it will develop some hypotheses as to the conditions, which might influence the appointment of a technocratic government. The hypotheses are based on the assumption that politicians are rational decision makers. In theoretical terms, the reasons for the appointment of technocratic governments are best explained from a principal-agent perspective, which views the delegation of authority from voters to elected politicians to the cabinet. While choices and behaviour of actors will therefore be central, any explanation is incomplete without taking into account institutions and rules that constrain the behaviour of those actors, and that is particularly the case in the cabinet appointment game. Such hypotheses will be tested with Firth’s logistic regression. Conclusions and suggestions for further research will follow.

What governments? Actors, motivations and processes

Technocratic government is a vague and debated concept. Academics have defined technocratic governments in diverse ways (Fabbrini 2000, Tucker and et al. 2000, Neto and Lobo 2009, Morlino 2012, Halleberg and Wehner 2013, McDonnell and Valbruzzi 2014). Elsewhere I have analysed various definitions and conceptualizations, and their shortcomings³. For the purpose of the present enquiry, a technocratic government will mean a cabinet:

- Whose Prime Minister is not a career politician and is not affiliated to a political party
- Whose ministers are experts in their assigned portfolios and independent (– or say to be⁴)
- Which is neutral vis-à-vis political parties (– or says to be)
- Which has a value-neutral agenda (– or says to have)
- Which is not directly the expression of the result of elections or voters’ preferences
- Which is recognised by the media as technocratic

With these elements in mind, we can identify 32 technocratic governments in within the 27 members of the European Union (i.e. not including Croatia), in the time span that goes from the 1945 to January 2014, and only considering governments in the democratic period of the country⁵:

² 27 EU members states minus Croatia

³ Draft paper: ‘Expertise, Neutrality and Efficiency: Towards a Conceptualization of Technocratic Governments’

⁴ The importance attributed to claims in the relationship between politics and voters, and in the context of technocratic government, distinguishes my definition from McDonnell and Valbruzzi’s (2014) and explains the discrepancies between their list of technocratic governments and the present one.

⁵ Hence Spain, Portugal and Greece will only be considered from the 70s onwards, and Central and Eastern European countries from 1989 onwards.

	Country	Prime Minister	Start Date	End Date
1	Bulgaria	Popov	1990/12/07	1991/11/08
2	Bulgaria	Berov	1992/12/30	1994/09/02
3	Bulgaria	Indzhova	1994/10/17	1994/12/18
4	Bulgaria	Raykov	2013/03/13	2013/05/12
5	Czech Republic	Tosovsky	1998/01/02	1998/06/20
6	Czech Republic	Fischer	2009/05/08	2010/05/29
7	Czech Republic	Rusnok	2013/07/10	2014/01/29
8	Finland	Tuomioja	1953/11/17	1954/03/08
9	Finland	von Fieandt	1957/11/29	1958/04/18
10	Finland	Kuuskoski	1958/04/26	1958/07/07
11	Finland	Lehto	1963/12/18	1964/09/12
12	Finland	Aura I	1970/05/14	1970/07/15
13	Finland	Aura II	1971/10/29	1972/01/03
14	Finland	Liinamaa	1975/06/13	1975/09/22
15	Greece	Grivas	1989/10/12	1989/11/05
16	Greece	Zolotas I	1989/11/23	1990/02/13
17	Greece	Zolotas II	1990/02/13	1990/04/11
18	Greece	Papademos	2011/11/11	2012/05/17
19	Greece	Pikrammenos	2012/05/17	2012/06/17
20	Hungary	Bajnai	2009/04/14	2010/04/25
21	Italy	Ciampi	1993/04/29	1994/01/13
22	Italy	Dini	1995/01/17	1996/01/07
23	Italy	Monti	2011/11/16	2013/02/14
24	Latvia	Skele	1995/12/21	1997/08/06
25	Poland	Belka		
26	Portugal	Nobre de Costa	1978/08/29	1978/09/15

27	Portugal	Mota Pinto	1978/11/22	1979/06/11
28	Portugal	Pintassilgo	1979/07/31	1979/12/02
29	Poland	Belka	2004/06/11	2005/03/31
30	Romania	Văcăroiu I ⁶	1992/11/19	1994/03/06
31	Romania	Văcăroiu II	1994/08/19	1996/09/01
32	Romania	Văcăroiu III	1996/09/02	1996/11/03

Table 1: Technocratic Governments, 1945-2014.

Sources: Morlino (1998), Protsyk (2005), Neto and Strøm (2006), Neto and Lobo (2009), Bergman and Strøm (2011), McDonnell and Valbruzzi (2014), Sonntag (2014) parlgov.org; national parliaments and governments websites, country experts.

When thinking about technocratic governments, therefore, it is appropriate to give as a starting point a *problematic situation* in the political system, and develop hypotheses as to why such *problematic situation* gave way to a technocratic government. The model that follows in Figure 1 sees the appointment of technocratic cabinet as an interaction between two principals, parliament and the Head of State, and an agent, the technocratic prime minister (PM). The literature on the process of cabinet formation is ample, therefore the present analysis will only concentrate on those aspects that are relevant for the desired outcome of cabinet appointment game, namely a technocratic PM with either a technocratic cabinet or a non-technocratic cabinet (boxes in red in Figure 1). The starting points for the appointment game are either the dissolution of a cabinet not followed by elections, or a deadlock in cabinet formation.

Case 1: Cabinet dissolution

It can happen because of cabinet resignation, a vote of no confidence by parliament, or because of Presidents who have the exclusive right to dissolve on their own initiative (Bergman, Müller et al. 2003). It has been explained in the literature either as a function of measured explanatory variables or as a result of stochastic processes such as a shock to the system that was not fully anticipated at the time when the government was formed (Laver and Shepsle 1995: 45). For instance ‘government scandal, intra-government disagreement, or death of a prime minister’

⁶ Was consistently backed by one political force in Parliament (first by the Democratic National Salvation Front (DNSF) and later by the Party of Social Democracy of Romania (PSDR), but these political forces stressed the nonparty or technocratic nature of the cabinet - Protsyk, O. (2005). "Politics of Intraexecutive Conflict in Semipresidential Regimes in Eastern Europe." *East European Politics & Societies* 19(2): 135-160..

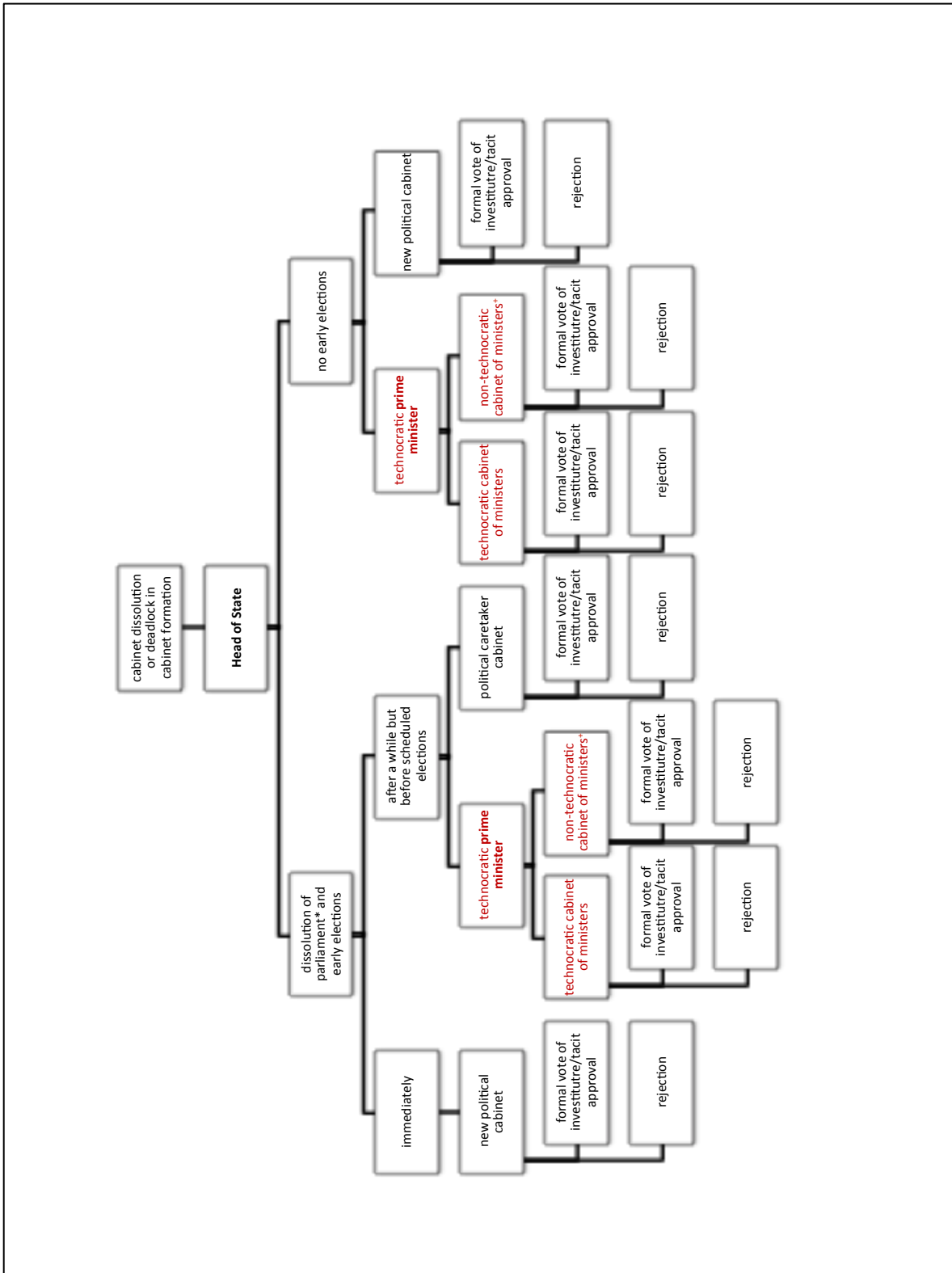


Figure 17: appointment of a technocratic government following cabinet dissolution

⁷ *= can only happen by constitution in certain countries: France, Iceland, Italy and, until 1991, in Finland and Austria (art.29)- Strøm, K. and S. M. Swindle (2002). "Strategic Parliamentary Dissolution." *American Political Science Review* 96(3): 575-591.

⁺= these are cases such as the two Greek governments of Zolotas and Papademos, who had independent Prime Ministers but Partisan ministers.

(King, Alt et al. 1990: :849) or an economic critical condition or a defeat over a major bill (Döring 1995: 136). Both those sets of explanations can therefore lead to a resignation or vote of no confidence, which in turn can lead to a technocratic government. While the purpose of this paper is not to explain why a cabinet is dissolved, it is necessary to bear in mind these potential explanations as some of them will be more likely to lead to the appointment of a technocratic cabinet than others.

Another option leading to cabinet dissolution is resignation. The PM and his cabinet can resign in a strategic way. Although strategic dissolution is mostly linked to parliament dissolution (Strøm and Swindle 2002), rather than simple cabinet dissolution, a cabinet can also resign in a strategic way to prevent a no-confidence vote (Mitchell 2003). A vote of no confidence also leads to cabinet resignation, and is ‘the ultimate ‘weapon’ that Members of Parliament can use against the sitting cabinet’ (Bergman, Müller et al. 2003: 152). When a cabinet is dissolved in a non-strategic way following a vote of no confidence, the parliamentary majority is weakened. The hypotheses on technocratic governments appointments will take into consideration potential reasons why cabinets resign.

Case 2: deadlock in cabinet formation

The appointment of a technocratic government is possible when there is a deadlock in cabinet formation. The deadlock can happen for lack of support in the Parliament, or failure to form appropriate coalitions to gain such support, or a combination of social as well as economic disagreements, such as was the case in Belgium. Occasionally constitutions specify what needs to be done in that situation⁸, but mostly there is a discretionary margin of manoeuvre as to next steps in the appointment process.

As shown in the model, in both Case 1 and Case 2 (grouped in the central top box), there are two choices: early elections or non-electoral replacement of the cabinet (Schleiter and Morgan-Jones 2009). Once a cabinet is dissolved, it falls to the Head of State to decide whether to call for elections or not (in some countries), and to decide who to appoint at the head of the new government. While in most cases, the role of the Head of State in government formation is supposed to be largely formal and symbolic, this does not mean that he or she does not influence coalition bargaining (Bogdanor 1983, Döring 1995, Kang 2009), nor that all Heads of States interpret their prerogatives in the same way. Firstly, being a proposer in a bargaining game has well argued advantages (Thomas and Howard 1978). Secondly, in the case of unelected Presidents, some presidents played historically a greater role in cabinet appointment than, others (Kang 2009, Dini 2014, Monti 2014). And as far as directly elected presidents go, the Presidents of France and Finland (until March 2000) ‘have or have had a discretionary role in government formation that clearly exceeds that of their counterparts elsewhere’.

If the president decides not to dissolve parliament, normal designation of the PM, or of a *formateur*, should proceed according to relatively clear, if only informal, conventions (Hermeren 1976). If the president decides to depart from those conventions to appoint a technocratic PM and, potentially, following that, a technocratic cabinet, he must be following other logics. These may vary depending to the political system. In parliamentary regimes, the appointment of a technocratic

⁸ e.g. the Greek constitution mandates the appointment of the President of the Supreme Administrative Court or of the Supreme Civil and Criminal Court or of the Court of Auditors to form a Cabinet, so almost suggests the appointment of a technocratic government!

PM means that political parties have clearly expressed the lack of willingness to follow other, more traditional routes (Marone 2012) identified as the other outcomes of the political game illustrated above in Figure 1 (caretaker political cabinet or new political cabinet). Partisan forces retain nonetheless control, so if they decide that it is worth retaining certain ministerial posts for their representatives, the Head of State, who is mostly *super partes* in parliamentary systems, will have no incentives to prevent them from doing so. Hence the result would be a cabinet where the PM is a technocrat, but not the rest of the cabinet, such was the case in Greece with PM Papademos. While, as ex-technocratic prime minister Mario Monti explained, parties might, and have in his case, refused to provide the PM with ministerial names, so that the cabinet was necessarily composed fully by technocrats (Monti 2014).

In semi-presidential systems, the choices of the Head of State are not necessarily made in order to facilitate party government. On the contrary, Heads of State often have their own agenda and their own party affiliation, which might be the opposite of the one of the majority that won the elections. It has therefore been observed that only when parties are weakened, either as a result of slow institutionalization of the party system (Protsyk 2005: 141) or as a result of a political crisis, they might be more prone to allow the appointment of a technocratic government. Moreover, the academic literature on government formation has given for granted that the appointment of a non-partisan minister is a ‘victory’ of the Head of State, especially in situations of cohabitation (Neto and Strøm 2006).

Institutional and Contingent hypotheses on the appointment of technocratic governments

The previous section has explored which actors are involved in the appointment of a technocratic government, their potential motivations and the institutional constraints they face, as well as the general conditions for the appointment of technocratic governments. There remains the fundamental question as to what were the conditions that made those actors more inclined to chose to appoint technocratic governments.

Hypotheses on institutional variables

The institutional variables hypothesised here can be defined as relatively stable over time, so they can also be called ‘structural’ and provide the context in which actors act without really being able to change them in the short run. All those variables, therefore, will be dichotomous and will be measured by looking at countries’ constitutions.

Heads of State can be elected or unelected presidents, but they can also be monarchs. Out of these three categories, we expect monarchs to be the least powerful and the least partisan of all Heads of State, so we would expect their incentives to nominate a cabinet of their own liking, such as a technocratic one, to be negligible. There is already some literature that identifies a link between the presence of a monarch and the absence of a technocratic government. Morlino for instance explains that a monarchy will never exert more than its formal powers of appointment of cabinet. If it tried to push for some preferences more, for instance the preference of a technocratic government over a political one, it could be seen as an attempt to revert back to absolute monarchy (Morlino 2012). Hence:

Hypothesis 1 The presence of a monarch as the Head of State reduces the likelihood of the appointment of a technocratic cabinet

As shown by the framework, the dissolution of cabinet is an important part of the pathway to technocratic government, as it is the starting point for the appointment game. Therefore, the more restrictive the conditions for cabinet dissolution, the less likely it will be that elected governments will be substituted in a non-electoral way with a technocratic government. The literature tells us that ‘parliamentary actors are rarely instrumental in the downfall of a cabinet’ (De Winter 1995:147) and that their likelihood to be so depends on the requirements for the vote of no confidence. Those vary across countries. The constructive vote of no confidence is the most stringent method the legislature can use because, at the same time as causing the cabinet to fall, parliament must find a majority to agree on a new PM. The difficulties of achieving such result favour executive leadership, and make the cabinet less subject to the whim of the Parliament (Schiemann 2004), thus making it less prone to being a technocratic one. Moreover, it is very unlikely that MPs, after a constructive vote of no-confidence, would propose spontaneously a technocratic candidate for PM. For MPs, it would be a much stronger move to propose a technocrat than to accept one. In other words, it is easier to justify the appointment of a technocratic government as a ‘necessity’ and/or as the consequences of external constraints, than the direct proposal of a technocratic prime minister as a substitute for a political prime minister that has been made to resign. Therefore:

Hypothesis 2 If the constitution of a country provides for a constructive vote of no-confidence, a technocratic government is less likely.

Hypotheses on contingent variables

Contingent determinants, contrary to institutional ones, can vary over time and are subject to changes introduced by actors.

In normal cabinet appointments, concerns for redistributive gains (in terms of assigning cabinet positions to members of a certain party) will win over concerns for efficiency. However, if the country is in a crisis, it seems logical to think that concerns for efficiency will be predominant (Neto and Strøm 2006). This is particularly the case in situation of economic crisis, where negative economic conditions and fear on behalf of the markets might increase the likelihood of technocrats/independents entering the cabinet because having ‘technocrats’ as central bankers, finance ministers and prime ministers reassures both markets and voters (Halleberg and Wehner 2013). Analysis of available data up to 2000 already shows significant correlation between economic problems and the appointment of non-partisans members of the executive (Neto and Strøm 2006, Neto and Samuels 2010) as party politicians would want to prioritise technical expertise over partisanship.

Moreover in the case of economic crises, there will be the need to enact unpopular reforms. In some countries, lack of reforms has been the main drivers for the appointment of technocratic governments (Fabbrini 2013). Political parties, who might already be under pressure if considered responsible for the dire economic situation, might prefer to leave such tasks to others. The Head of State, will also prefer to ensure that such reforms are carried out rapidly, so he might be more inclined to overstep parties’ wishes and to appoint a technocratic government. Finally, and related

to the previous point, good economic performance can be seen as fostering legitimization of democratic regimes (Anderson 1995), so conversely, bad economic performance in the case of a crisis might cause legitimacy crisis that will bring about a change in the relationship between civil society, parties and governments and will leave more political room for the appointment of a technocratic government. The expectation would therefore be the following:

Hypothesis 3 Economic crises are positively associated with appointment of technocratic cabinets

To measure economic crises, the paper will use the database Babecký, J., Havránek, T., Matějů, J., Rusnák, M., Smídková, K. and Vašíček, B. (2012) *Banking, Debt, and Currency Crises. Early Warning Indicators for Developed Countries*, ECB Working Paper No 1485, ECB: Frankfurt a.M. The database code for three types of crises, banking, debt and currency, so the variable will have values comprised between 1-3.

There are different possible shocks that could lead to the situation which, as we can recall from the last chapter, lead to potential cabinet instability (i.e. cabinet resignation or deadlock in cabinet formation). Laver and Shepsle (1998) describe critical events as falling under 4 categories: policy shock (e.g. fall of Berlin Wall), agenda shock (e.g. a new law on abortion), decision rule shock, public opinion shock (event that affects ‘commonly held expectations concerning the outcome of a potential election’). The latter, which is often due to politicians’ misconduct (corruption, dishonesty, immoral behaviour, clientelism etc) has been already singled out as one of the potential explanations of the weakening of the political class as such, and some scholars have already pointed out that the appointment of technocratic governments is occasionally used as a remedy to prevent that distrust from becoming too rooted (Tucker and et al. 2000, Cotta and Verzichelli 2002, Kysela and Kuhn 2007). Corruption in particular is seen as one of the main cause of the failure of politics and rise of anti-politics feelings (Schedler 1997: 37). There is a growing literature on scandals and their effects on political systems, (Markovits and Silverstein 1988, Garrard and Newell 2006, Berlinski, Dewan et al. 2012) according to which political crises of this kind can therefore be expected to have an effect of *elite damage* which in turn will bring about ‘disruption of societal routines and expectations [which will] open up political space for actors inside and outside government’ (Boin, Hart et al. 2009: 82). In the present case such space could be occupied by a technocratic cabinet. It can also creating disorder in voting patterns, and by decreasing the number of votes given to the party that was involved in the scandal, it might lead to a hung parliament and then to a technocratic government. Finally, it might also make the population of a country more prone to accepting a technocratic government as a better alternative to corrupted political government, and while this is not a direct cause of the appointment, it will make it a more viable alternative if it is accepted more easily by the population.

Hypothesis 4 Out of the various kinds of critical events that could lead to cabinet dissolution, public opinion shocks due to politicians’ personal misconduct are the most likely to bring about the appointment of a technocratic cabinet⁹

⁹ For a full list of scandals, see appendix 1

Information on whether a scandal is present or absent in the period immediately preceding the fall (or end) of the previous government has been found by manual research. The scandal, while it must happen in the period before the appointment of a technocratic government, does not necessarily have to be the direct cause of the fall of the preceding government. Proving such causal link would require a completely different analysis, and hypothesis 6 should hold also if the scandal has discredited, though not annihilated, the previous government.

As we have seen above, most literature on cabinet formation in parliamentary regimes with indirectly elected presidents assumes that the presidential role in nominating the prime minister is not strategic. However, ‘as Heads of State gain autonomy from the legislatures, they tend to possess relatively greater autonomous powers, as well as to appoint and dismiss cabinet ministers’ (Neto and Samuels 2010: 11). Hence scholarship on semi-presidential regimes describes presidential participation in cabinet formation as highly significant (Baylis 1996, Elgie 1999, Metcalf 2000, Blondel and Müller-Rommel 2001, Protsyk 2005, Schleiter and Morgan-Jones 2010) and ‘cabinet appointments should be viewed as a matter of maximizing a president’s ability to implement policy-making strategy’ (Neto 2006: 423). Interestingly, technocratic governments are often also called Presidential governments: cabinets formed by the president and relying primarily on the presidential support. Such cabinets happened in Portugal (Bergman, Müller et al. 2003: 559, Neto and Lobo) and Finland, (Kuusisto 1958, Metcalf 2000, Raunio 2004). Both of those sets of technocratic governments are characterized by two features: ‘they are formed without active participation by assembly or parties, or are composed of more than 50% nonpartisan ministers’ (Schleiter and Morgan-Jones 2010: :1424). This clearly overlaps with parts of the definition of a technocratic government and points out at the fact that the role of the Head of State is important in the appointment of technocratic government seems to be in line with previous literature.

A body of literature gives us the expectation that technocratic governments will be more likely to happen in semi-presidential regimes or, in other words, in those regimes where the Head of State has more power. In particular Neto and Strøm (2006) conclude that there is strong evidence that presidential and semi-presidential systems are the most likely to appoint non partisan-ministers, and confirmed by Schleiter and Morgan-Jones (2009) who calculated that in semi-presidential regimes the average of non-partisan ministers is 17%, against the 4% of parliamentary democracies. However, it would be wrong to formulate the hypothesis as simply: technocratic governments are more likely to be appointed in semi-presidential systems. As Robert Elgie has rightly objected, semi-presidentialism is a very broad category which includes extremely different political system, so that ‘semi-presidentialism, should not be used as a single explanatory variable’ (Elgie 2009: 261)¹⁰. That does not mean that semi-presidentialism cannot be operationalized, but it is more appropriate, in this context to look at presidential powers, rather than find a correlation between semi-presidentialism and technocratic governments.

Hypothesis 5 the more powerful the Head of State, the higher the likelihood of the appointment of a technocratic cabinet

¹⁰ Also see - Kang, S.-G. (2009). "The influence of presidential heads of state on government formation in European democracies: Empirical evidence." *European Journal of Political Research* 48(4): 543. who illustrates very well the fact that ‘popularly elected presidents do not necessarily have a stronger constitutional power over government formation than parliament selected presidents’

There are several ways in which, in the academic literature, presidential powers have been measured. For reasons of completeness of database, Alan Siaroff's categorization of 9 presidential powers (Siaroff 2003). His dataset is the most complete in terms of geographical scope and time-frame, but it does not include monarchies. Given the ceremonial role of monarchs, in countries where there is a monarchy, I will code the powers of the head of state as 0.

Academic literature on coalition formation suggests that the bargaining complexity in the legislature increases the probability of collective action problems (Martin and Stevenson 2001), thus leading to more instable governments, more likely cabinet dissolutions, and longer cabinet formation periods. It has moreover been associated with an 'ambiguity about where ultimate executive authority resides' (Protsyk 2005: 155), thus creating a right environment for the appointment of technocratic governments. Neto and Samuels (2010) have indeed shown that proportion of non-partisan ministers in the cabinet tends to increase as legislative fragmentation increases. National-specific literature on technocratic governments seems to point out this link too. In Finland, for instance, it was especially the breakdown of interparty cooperation, as well as of unstable coalitions, that the literature has identified as one of the conditions of technocratic governments (Kuusisto 1958).

When party fragmentation is high, the Head of State can use a *divide et impera* tactics to appoint ministers of his own choice, often of non-partisan description. Protzky found that in post-communist semi-presidential regimes political fragmentation combined with *clientelism* enables the president to secure the post of prime minister for his preferred candidate (Protsyk 2005), which can be a technocrat. Schleiter and Morgan-Jones (2010) have shown in semi-presidential systems the presidential influence on the cabinet rises with the complexity of the bargaining environment in the legislature. In parliamentary system, the President's influence will also be higher when legislative fragmentation is higher, but, as explained above, his motivation for appointing a technocratic government could be the stability of the system, rather than partisan gains. Finally, legislative fragmentation also often implies that 'younger' parties are in parliament, and this is seen as another explanation for technocratic government appointments when legislative fragmentation is high. In countries where 'traditional parties, representing ideologies deeply rooted in history and experience of successive governments, do not give up as easily [as in Italy] – or rather, at all – their institutional role to give it to a group of "state's servants" or to other officials of various kinds expert in administrative tasks'¹¹ (Martelli 2012: 228). Younger parties, whose electorate struggle to support them purely on the basis of well-rooted traditional identification, will be more prone to accept a solution that, to more established parties, would seem deeply contrary to their logic. Therefore:

Hypothesis 6 High legislative fragmentation makes the appointment of a technocratic government more likely

Parliamentary fragmentation can either be measured according to the effective number of parties at the parliamentary or legislative level. It has already been shown by Schleiter and Morgan-Jones (2010) that parliamentary fragmentation has a positive effect on the share of nonpartisan ministers

¹¹ My translation

in government and that an increase of parliamentary fragmentation by one effective party raises the odds of nonpartisan cabinet formation in semi-presidential systems by 39%. It is hence interesting to look at parliamentary fragmentation in this respect to see whether it also has an impact on the probability of appointing a technocratic government. Effective number of parliamentary parties will be taken from Gallagher (2013) *Election indices dataset*.

Technocratic governments as rare events

Technocratic governments correspond to the definition of rare events provided by King and Zeng (2001): ‘rare events data are binary dependent variables with dozens to thousands of times fewer events, such as wars, coups, etc., than nonevents’. In the present case, there have been only 32 technocratic governments since 1945 compared to the 607 normal cabinets present in the same timespan. As coding accurately for all 607 cabinets would require more resources than are available at present, endogenous stratified sampling is the strategy used to select on Y. Having collected all available observations for which Y=1 (the “technocratic government cases”) a random selection of 10% of all observations for which Y=0 (the “controls or non-technocratic governments”) is added¹². Additionally, cabinets preceding and following technocratic governments are also included, because they are the most likely to display similar values for the variables than the technocratic governments, thus making the analysis even more robust and relevant. Cabinets were moreover coded by year, with a resulting number of 283 cases, of which 44 years of technocratic governments. A year is coded as having a technocratic government if it had more than a month of technocratic rule. Firth logit. has been shown to be appropriate for rare events (King and Zeng 2001) as well as for logistic analysis where there is the perfect prediction problems (Zorn 2005), which is the case using normal logistic analysis. It is thus the perfect methodology for the case at hand. The results of the analysis are as follows, for 283 observations:

¹² selected using the online software www.random.org/list

Technocratic Government	
Scandal	1.630*** (0.486)
Economic Crisis	0.729*** (0.256)
Head of State powers	0.0685 (0.093)
Party System Fragmentation	0.243** (0.121)
Monarch	-3.216** (1.530)
Constructive Vote of no confidence	-0.754 (0.758)
Constant	-3.020*** (0.604)

*Table 2: Firth logit or penalized-likelihood.
Standard errors in parentheses.
*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$*

The results confirm most the hypotheses. As expected the institutional hypotheses ‘Monarch’ and ‘Constructive vote of no confidence’ have a negative coefficient, that is, they diminish the chances of having a technocratic government, while the contingent variables ‘Scandal’, ‘Economic crisis’, ‘Party system fragmentation’ and ‘Head of State powers’ have a positive one, so they increase the likelihood of a technocratic government. In particular, Scandal has the highest coefficient. This is an interesting addition to the growing literature on scandals (Markovits and Silverstein 1988, Dobratz and Whitfield 1992, Garrard and Newell 2006, Berlinski, Dewan et al. 2012) and could potentially be developed further, by distinguishing more specific types of scandals, and by expanding the database in Annex 1 to include more governments and more details for each scandal. The Economic crisis coefficient is also very high, and this is very much in line with expectations from the Eurocrisis. In fact the two variables scandal and economic crisis might be correlated in a fundamental way, because as Garrard and Newell rightly noticed, ‘the strains produced by economic and financial pressures upon business, politics, the judiciary and the media explain an increasing number of scandals’ (Garrard and Newell 2006: 35). There is much scope for research, as crises is a family of concepts that includes many different kinds of crises. It might be relevant to distinguish between the types of economic crisis, and see whether, say, banking crisis is more likely to influence the appointment of a technocratic government than a debt crisis. It might also be worth considering expanding to other types of non-economic crises, such as environmental emergencies or humanitarian crisis. These latter two might not be particularly relevant for European democracies, but if in the future researchers will be interested in widening the sample to non-European countries, that might be a fruitful vein for research. In general it seems that there is something meaningful

when commentators argue that technocratic governments are crisis governments, so there is potentially the scope to develop this correlation further by exploring different ‘crises’ that could affect the political system.

What tells a different story, however, is the fragmentation of the party system. Wichi is also statistically significant. This gives a different impression, and one whereby a technocratic government is more likely if the system is unstable in general. There is here too scope for further work in terms of other characteristics of the party system that go beyond the fragmentation and that could be equally interesting. For instance whether a party system with a high degree of clientelistic structuring (Protsyk 2005), or whether there is high electoral volatility, or the level of corruption. Another potentially interesting attempt would be to look at variation in effective number of parties for each preceding and following government, to check whether it is not so much the numbers of parties in general, but rather the discrepancy between pre and post election numbers. This would be more consistent for cases like Greece, which has always had a rather stable two party system, and yet which experienced technocratic governments precisely at those moments where the party system fragmented.

The variable accounting for the powers of the Head of State is not statistically significant, which is even more surprising given that the ‘monarch’ variable is, and the two are different expressions of similar hypotheses. The reason might be due to a discrepancy between variable measurement and actual political practice. As explained above, often the Head of State has, or uses, informal powers and his or her influence in cabinet appointment situations, which is obviously not captured by Siaroff’ albeit very accurate classification. While formal rules are important, what is arguably equally important is the interpretation given to them by the actors and usual political practice which becomes unsaid conventions (Bogdanor 1983). In some multi-party parliamentary systems, where the process of government formation is long and difficult, such as the Netherlands, Belgium, or Italy, the President exerts more power than what is formally expected from him (Blondel and Müller-Rommel 1997: 6-7). Ex-technocratic minister Franco Frattini in an interview to the author confirmed that President Scalfaro actively pushed for the appointment of Dini’s technocratic government, as he preferred that to a landslide victory of Berlusconi, thus exercising further and more partisan influence than what is formally on paper (Frattini 2014). Other authors remark that in Belgium and Denmark the ‘behind the scene’ influence of the monarch is also not negligible (Döring 1995: 123). So it would be interesting to run another analysis using a different coding for this variable, which might take into account all of these informal aspects and unsaid agreements.

Conclusions

Technocratic governments have been either accepted or opposed, but mainly considered as a transitional anomaly of some political systems. This might explain why there has been very little comparative research looking for common roots of such anomalies across different countries and political systems. The paper, using mainly literature on government formation, has developed some original hypotheses as to why these governments have been appointed in European democracies. Using new data, and running a logistic analysis, it has shown the statistical relevance of the presence of scandal, economic crisis and the fragmentation of the party system. This means that there are situations in which technocratic governments become *political needs* of actors and such appointments happen more frequently when the political system is unstable, deadlocked or unable

to face a situation of crisis (be it economic or political) and to implement the reforms needed. Read in a broader way, this points out at the fact that the presence of a technocratic government should be seen as a warning sign of a problematic situation of a political system, and often those governments have happened at 'turning points' in national political histories. These conclusions are well in line with recent evidence during the Eurocrisis, but the timeframe and geographical scope of the analysis give these results a wider significance. This remains, however, a very preliminary analysis, which will benefit from the growing attention paid in the academic world to these kinds of extraordinary governments.

Appendix 1: Scandals

Country	Government (under which happened)	Government (post-scandal)	Brief description of the scandal
Belgium	Dehaene	Verhofstadt	Dioxin Affair and Dutroux affair
Bulgaria	Lukanov	Popov	His years in office were marked by corruption and civil unrest. Lukanov was charged with embezzlement in 1992.
Bulgaria	Stanishev	Borisov	Sergei Stanishev's brother, Georgi Stanishev, developed a controversial project of real estate in area under EU environmental protection.
Bulgaria	Borisov	Raykov	Borisov's former Agriculture minister Miroslav Naydenov revealed that the government has spied on several cabinet ministers, business figures and the opposition.
Bulgaria	Raykov	Oresharski	Controversial Peevski appointment
CZ	Klaus	Tosovsky	Towards the end of 1997 Klaus was forced to step down as Prime Minister by several opponents in his party in connection with accusations of funding irregularities in the ODS.
CZ	Paroubek	Topolánek	Paroubek accused of contacts with criminal figures, participating in a murder cover-up (Murder of Václav Kočka), attempts to derail police investigations and attempting to criminalize investigating officers.
CZ	Nečas	Rusnok	Police investigation in which his chief of staff and alleged mistress Jana Nagyová were arrested.
DK	Schlüter	Nyrup Rasmussen	Misinformation about the Tamil case.
Greece	Papandreu	Tzannetakis	A series of government scandals, especially the Bank of Crete one, or Koskotas. See (Featherstone 1990) for more details.
Greece	Tzannetakis	Grivas	The same scandals as below, for Papandreu.
Hungary	Gyúresány	Bajnai	Audio recording in which Gyúresány admitted "we have obviously been lying for the last one and a half to two years."
Italy	Andreotti	Amato	In 1993 Andreotti stood trial in Palermo, charged with membership in a Mafia association.
Italy	Amato	Ciampi	Tangentopoli.
Poland	Miller	Belka	Rywingate scandal.

References

- Anderson, C. (1995). Blaming the government: citizens and the economy in five European democracies, Sharpe.
- Baylis, T. A. (1996). "Presidents versus Prime Ministers: Shaping Executive Authority in Eastern Europe." World Politics **48**(3): 297-323.
- Bergman, T. r., W. C. Müller and K. Strøm (2003). Delegation and accountability in parliamentary democracies. Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Bergman, T. r. and K. Strøm (2011). The Madisonian turn: political parties and parliamentary democracy in Nordic Europe. Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press.
- Berlinski, S., T. Dewan and K. Dowding (2012). Accounting for ministers: scandal and survival in British government 1945–2007, Cambridge University Press
- Blondel, J. and F. Müller-Rommel (1997). Cabinets in Western Europe. Basingstoke, Macmillan.
- Blondel, J. and F. Müller-Rommel (2001). Cabinets in Eastern Europe. New York, Palgrave.
- Bogdanor, V. (1983). Coalition government in Western Europe. London, Heinemann Educational Books.
- Boin, A., P. Hart and A. McConnell (2009). "Crisis exploitation: political and policy impacts of framing contests." Journal of European Public Policy **16**(1): 81-106.
- Cotta, M. and L. Verzichelli (2002). "Ministers in Italy: Notables, Party Men, Technocrats and Media Men." South European Society and Politics **7**(2): 117-152.
- Dini, L. (2014). Interview - 20 May 2014.
- Dobratz, B. A. and S. Whitfield (1992). "Does Scandal Influence Voters' Party Preference? The Case of Greece during the Papandreu Era." European Sociological Review **8**(2): 167-180.
- Döring, H. e. (1995). Parliaments and majority rule in Western Europe. New York, St. Martin's Press.
- Elgie, R. (1999). Semi-presidentialism in Europe. New York, Oxford University Press.
- Elgie, R. (2009). "Duverger, Semi-presidentialism and the Supposed French Archetype." West European Politics **32**(2): 248-267.
- Fabbrini, S. (2000). Tra pressioni e veti - il cambiamento politico in Italia. Rome, Laterza.
- Fabbrini, S. (2013). "Political and Institutional Constraints on Structural Reforms: Interpreting the Italian Experience." Forthcoming.
- Featherstone, K. (1990). "The 'party-state' in Greece and the fall of Papandreu."
- Frattini, F. (2014). Interview - 23 May 2014.

- Gallagher, M. (2013). Election indices dataset
- Garrard, J. and J. Newell (2006). Scandals in past and contemporary politics. Manchester, Manchester University Press.
- Halleberg, M. and J. Wehner (2013). The Technical Competence of Economic Policy-Makers in Developed Democracies. SSRN Working Papers.
- Hermeren, H. (1976). "Government Formation in Multiparty Systems." Scandinavian Political Studies **11**(A11): 131-146.
- Kang, S.-G. (2009). "The influence of presidential heads of state on government formation in European democracies: Empirical evidence." European Journal of Political Research **48**(4): 543.
- King, G., J. E. Alt, N. E. Burns and M. Laver (1990). "A Unified Model of Cabinet Dissolution in Parliamentary Democracies." American Journal of Political Science **34**(3): 846-871.
- King, G. and L. Zeng (2001). "Explaining Rare Events in International Relations." International Organization **55**(3): 693-715.
- Kuusisto, A. A. (1958). "Parliamentary Crises and Presidial Government in Finland." Parliamentary Affairs **11**(3): 341.
- Kysela, J. and Z. Kuhn (2007). "Presidential elements in government - The Czech Republic." EUROPEAN CONSTITUTIONAL LAW REVIEW **3**(1): 91-113.
- Laver, M. and K. A. Shepsle (1995). Making and breaking governments: cabinets and legislatures in parliamentary democracies. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Laver, M. and K. A. Shepsle (1998). "Events, Equilibria, and Government Survival." American Journal of Political Science **42**(1): 28-54.
- Markovits, A. S. and M. Silverstein (1988). The politics of scandal: power and process in liberal democracies. New York, Holmes and Meier.
- Marone, F. (2012). "Prime riflessioni sul governo tecnico nella democrazia maggioritaria italiana."
- Martelli, P. (2012). "Governo tecnico: un passo verso il presidenzialismo? ." Il Mulino(2/12).
- Martin, L. W. and R. T. Stevenson (2001). "Government Formation in Parliamentary Democracies." American Journal of Political Science **45**(1): 33-50.
- McDonnell, D. and M. Valbruzzi (2014). "Defining and classifying technocrat-led and technocratic governments." European Journal of Political Research.
- Metcalf, L. K. (2000). "Measuring Presidential Power." Comparative Political Studies **33**(5): 660-685.
- Mitchell, P. (2003). 13. Ireland: 'O What a Tangled Web. . .'—Delegation, Accountability, and Executive Power, Oxford University Press.
- Monti, M. (2014). Interview - 13 March 2014.

- Morlino, L. (1998). Democracy Between Consolidation and Crisis: Parties, Groups, and Citizens in Southern Europe. Oxford Oxford University Press.
- Morlino, L. (2012). "Governo tecnico e cittadini in Italia " Fondazione Bruno Visentini.
- Neto, O. A. (2006). "The Presidential Calculus: Executive Policy Making and Cabinet Formation in the Americas." Comparative Political Studies **39**(4): 415-440.
- Neto, O. A. and M. C. Lobo (2009). "Portugal's semi-presidentialism (re)considered: An assessment of the president's role in the policy process, 1976-2006." European Journal of Political Research **48**(2): 234-255.
- Neto, O. A. and D. Samuels (2010). "Democratic Regimes and Cabinet Politics: a Global Perspective." REIL - Revista Ibero-Americana de Estudos Legislativos **1**(1): 10-23.
- Neto, O. A. and K. Strøm (2006). "Breaking the Parliamentary Chain of Delegation: Presidents and Non-Partisan Cabinet Members in European Democracies." British Journal of Political Science **36**(4): 619-643.
- Protsyk, O. (2005). "Politics of Intraexecutive Conflict in Semipresidential Regimes in Eastern Europe." East European Politics & Societies **19**(2): 135-160.
- Protsyk, O. (2005). "Prime ministers' identity in semi-presidential regimes: Constitutional norms and cabinet formation outcomes." European Journal of Political Research **44**(5): 721-748.
- Raunio, T. (2004). "The Changing Finnish Democracy: Stronger Parliamentary Accountability, Coalescing Political Parties and Weaker External Constraints." Scandinavian Political Studies **27**(2): 133-152.
- Schedler, A. (1997). The end of politics?: explorations into modern antipolitics. New York, Macmillan.
- Schiemann, J. W. (2004). "Hungary: the emergence of chancellor democracy." The Journal of Legislative Studies **10**(2-3): 128-141.
- Schleiter, P. and E. Morgan-Jones (2009). "Constitutional Power and Competing Risks: Monarchs, Presidents, Prime Ministers, and the Termination of East and West European Cabinets." The American Political Science Review **103**(3): 496-512.
- Schleiter, P. and E. Morgan-Jones (2009). "Party government in Europe? Parliamentary and semi-presidential democracies compared." European Journal of Political Research **48**(5): 665.
- Schleiter, P. and E. Morgan-Jones (2010). "Who's in Charge? Presidents, Assemblies, and the Political Control of Semipresidential Cabinets." Comparative Political Studies **43**(11): 1415-1441.
- Siaroff, A. (2003). "Comparative presidencies: The inadequacy of the presidential, semi-presidential and parliamentary distinction." European Journal of Political Research **42**(3): 287-312.
- Sonntag, L. (2014). Kolumbus Data.
- Strøm, K. and S. M. Swindle (2002). "Strategic Parliamentary Dissolution." American Political Science Review **96**(3): 575-591.

- Thomas, R. and R. Howard (1978). Political resource allocation, controlled agendas, and the status quo: Introduction. Leiden, Springer Science & Business Media. **33**: 29.
- Tucker and et al. (2000). "From republican virtue to technology of political power: three episodes of Czech nonpolitical politics." Political Science Quarterly **115**(3): 421-445.
- Zorn, C. (2005). "A Solution to Separation in Binary Response Models." Political Analysis **13**(2): 157-170.