

Finland: Forming and Managing Ideologically Heterogeneous

Oversized Coalitions

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The Finnish political system has experienced quite a radical transformation since the late 1980s. The new constitution, which entered into force in 2000,¹ completed a period of far-reaching constitutional change that curtailed presidential powers and brought the Finnish regime closer to a classical form of parliamentary democracy. The president is today almost completely excluded from the policy process in domestic matters, and leadership by presidents has been replaced with leadership by strong majority governments.

The strengthening of parliamentary democracy also means that political parties are in a much more central position. Political parties and their leaders form governments that are accountable to the Eduskunta, the unicameral national legislature, and not to the president as was the case until the 1980s. The prime minister (PM) is now the political leader of the country, but the PM is strongly constrained by the types of cabinet formed in Finland. Heading oversized, ideologically heterogeneous governments, PMs must strike a balance between active leadership and accommodating the preferences of the coalition partners. As essentially all of the politicians interviewed for this chapter underlined, the key to managing such broad coalitions is building and maintaining trust

¹ The Constitution of Finland, 11 June 1999 (731/1999). An English version is found at

<https://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/kaannokset/1999/en19990731.pdf>, accessed 17 March 2021.

among the governing parties. Hence coalition governance in Finland certainly falls in the category of *coalition compromise model* outlined in Chapter 2 of this volume.

Examining coalition governance in Finland, this chapter argues that due to the ideological heterogeneity of cabinets, PMs and governments emphasize the importance of *ex ante* mechanisms.² Government programmes have become very detailed and there are both established written rules and informal conventions for cabinet decision-making and for solving conflicts inside the government. Coalition governance in Finland is also characterized by stability: the existing practices have remained basically unaltered at least since the mid-1990s, and the rise of populism has not changed how cabinets are formed or work. PMs, the coalition partners, and their parliamentary groups know and mainly respect the rules of the game, and this contributes to the survival of Finnish broad cabinets.

² In addition to the data compiled in this project, the chapter draws on various official documents such as the constitution, laws, government's rules of procedure, coalition agreements, and 11 interviews with individuals who have served as both ministers and MPs and have considerable experience of government formation processes. Left Alliance, 14 March 2018; SDP, 13 March 2018; Green League, 12 March 2018; SDP, 10 March 2018; National Coalition, 29 March 2018; SDP, 18 March 2018; Green League, 25 April 2018; National Coalition, 15 March 2018; SDP, 9 March 2018; Centre Party, 13 March 2018; and the Swedish People's Party, 9 March 2018. Petra Kantola and Anna-Riikka Aarnio provided valuable research assistance. I am also grateful to Heikki Paloheimo for sharing his knowledge of Finnish governments.

The institutional setting

Before the constitutional reform in 2000, the comparative literature traditionally categorized the Finnish political system as semi-presidential, with the executive functions divided between an elected president and a cabinet that is accountable to the parliament. In fact, Finland is the oldest semi-presidential country in Europe, with the semi-presidential form of government adopted in 1919, two years after the country achieved independence. Under the old constitution, the president was recognized as the supreme executive power, particularly so in foreign affairs. For example, Duverger (1980) ranked Finland highest among the West European semi-presidential systems in terms of the formal powers of the head of state and second only to France with respect to the actual exercise of presidential power. The peak of presidential powers was reached during the long reign of President Urho Kekkonen (1956–1981), who made full use of his powers and arguably even overstepped the constitutional prerogatives of the presidency. During the Cold War, the balance between cabinet and president was therefore strongly in favour of the president until the constitutional reforms enacted from the late 1980s onwards, which were in part a response to the excesses of the Kekkonen era.

The Constitution Act of 1919 was virtually silent on cabinet formation. In practice, the process was strongly dominated by the president from the 1950s to the late 1980s. After the outgoing cabinet had submitted its resignation, the president invited the Speaker of Eduskunta and the representatives of the parliamentary parties to bilateral discussions. The fragmented party system, with no clearly dominant party, strengthened the president's hand in steering the negotiations. The president then appointed a *formateur*, but this person knew that the government needed the approval of the

president. It was also common for the president to influence the selection of individual ministers. The process ended with the president appointing the new cabinet in the last full plenary meeting of the resigning cabinet. The president also appointed caretaker cabinets consisting of civil servants: since 1945 Finland has had six caretaker governments, most recently the Liinamaa cabinet in 1975.³ The last case of presidential intervention in cabinet formation occurred in 1987 when President Mauno Koivisto overruled a coalition between the Centre Party and the National Coalition, indicating that a coalition between the National Coalition and the Social Democrats was preferable.

The role of the president is now limited to formally appointing the PM and the cabinet chosen by Eduskunta.⁴ Hence cabinet formation is based on bargaining between

³ In addition, about two-thirds of the remaining post-war cabinets have included non-partisan ministers.

⁴ Section 61 of the constitution: 'The Parliament elects the Prime Minister, who is thereafter appointed to the office by the President of the Republic. The President appoints the other Ministers in accordance with a proposal made by the Prime Minister. Before the Prime Minister is elected, the groups represented in the Parliament negotiate on the political program and composition of the Government. On the basis of the outcome of these negotiations, and after having heard the Speaker of the Parliament and the parliamentary groups, the President informs the Parliament of the nominee for Prime Minister. The nominee is elected Prime Minister if his or her election has been supported by more than half of the votes cast in an open vote in the Parliament. If the nominee does not receive the necessary majority, another nominee shall be put forward in accordance with the same procedure. If the second nominee fails to receive the support of more than half of the votes cast, the election of

political parties, with the understanding that the largest party (in terms of Eduskunta seats) will lead the negotiations. The Eduskunta then selects the PM and later votes on the entire cabinet through the investiture vote, which was first used in 1995 when the rainbow coalition headed by Paavo Lipponen (SDP) took office. Under the new constitution, the cabinet shall without delay submit its programme to the parliament in the form of a statement, which is then followed by a debate and a mandatory investiture vote. The decision rule is simple majority. There are no constitutional regulations about the number of ministers or how they are to be selected. Compared with the era of the old constitution, government formation is thus nowadays completely in the hands of the political parties (Karvonen 2016).

The president can no longer dissolve the Eduskunta or force the government or an individual minister to resign.⁵ Until the 1990s the president alone had the right to dissolve the Eduskunta and order new elections, and he was not obliged to consult the cabinet or parliament before doing so. The president exercised this right four times during the post-war era (1953, 1962, 1971, and 1975). A constitutional amendment in 1991 altered the situation in favour of the cabinet, by requiring the explicit consent of the PM for parliamentary dissolution. Section 26 of the new constitution consolidated

the Prime Minister shall be held in the Parliament by open vote. In this event, the person receiving the most votes is elected.’

⁵ According to Section 64 of the constitution: ‘The President of the Republic grants, upon request, the resignation of the Government or a Minister. The President may also grant the resignation of a Minister on the proposal of the Prime Minister. The President shall in any event dismiss the Government or a Minister, if either no longer enjoys the confidence of Parliament, even if no request is made.’

this practice: ‘The President of the Republic, in response to a reasoned proposal by the Prime Minister, and after having heard the parliamentary groups, and while the Parliament is in session, may order that extraordinary parliamentary elections shall be held. Thereafter, the Parliament shall decide the time when it concludes its work before the elections.’

Governments are thus now accountable to the Eduskunta and not to the president, as effectively was the case before. The president has only an ineffective delaying power in legislation, and even the appointment powers of the president have been drastically reduced. Overall, the president is almost completely excluded from the policy process in domestic matters. The government is responsible for European Union (EU) affairs, with foreign policy leadership shared between the president and the government. While jurisdictional disputes can emerge, a division of labour seems to have emerged: the government is responsible for those foreign and security policy issues handled through the EU, whereas the president focuses on bilateral ties with non-EU countries, especially those led by presidents, notably Russia. (Raunio and Sedelius 2020) Foreign and defence policy excluded, Finland is now thus effectively a parliamentary regime. The end of the Cold War removed the shadow of the Soviet Union from Finnish policy-making, but particularly through EU membership Finland has become much more involved in global and regional integration.

A peculiar instrument of deferment rule also used to influence government formation and legislature–executive relations. It explained the propensity to form oversized coalitions and contributed to the practice of inclusive, consensual decision-making that reduced the gap between the government and opposition. Until 1987, one-third of the members of parliament (MPs) (67/200) could postpone the final adoption of

an ordinary law over the next election, with the proposal adopted if a majority in the new parliament supported it. In 1987 the period of postponement was shortened to until the next annual parliamentary session, with the mechanism finally abolished in 1992. The rationale behind the deferment rule was that it would prevent tyranny by a simple parliamentary majority, offering in particular protection against potential radical socialist reforms (Forestiére 2008).

Turning to other domestic constraints, Finland remains a strongly corporatist country. Corporatism was particularly prevalent in the 1970s and 1980s, and trade unions and employers' confederations still wield considerable influence through collective wage bargaining and decision-making in a broad range of labour market issues. The changing nature of industrial relations is also related to changes in party political cooperation. Until the 1970s the Finnish labour market was characterized by frequent strikes and work stoppages, but following the first comprehensive incomes policy agreement (1968) this conflictual style was gradually replaced with a more conciliatory approach to labour market issues. Such consensual practices spread also to the party system, with more pragmatic cooperation between parties of the right and the left. A broad consensus also emerged in favour of the welfare state. These changes contributed to the increased potential for different kinds of coalition cabinets and also paved the way for the subsequent cabinets formed between the Social Democrats and the National Coalition.

National referendums, which are consultative, have been used only twice: on the prohibition of alcohol in 1931 and on EU membership in 1994. A new constitutional amendment (2012) strengthened direct democracy by introducing the citizens' initiative. At least 50,000 signatures are needed to submit an initiative for a new law to the

Eduskunta. The mechanism has proved popular and it has facilitated debates about issues that might otherwise not rise to the political agenda—such as same-sex marriages, ban on fur farming, and the status of Swedish as a compulsory school subject. The popularity of the citizens’ initiative has also resulted in debates about how to combine electoral democracy and ‘between-elections’ democracy.

To sum up, through the constitutional reforms outlined here, Finland has become a strongly government-driven polity. Finnish cabinets obviously operate in the context of EU membership and other international rules and commitments, but with the exception of corporatism, the cabinets do not face major domestic constraints. Presidential leadership has been replaced with leadership by strong oversized coalitions, which have ruled without much effective opposition since the 1980s. However, as argued in the next sections, the fragmented party system and the ensuing need to build and maintain heterogeneous coalitions act as important moderating factors on the powers of the PM (Nousiainen [2001](#); Raunio [2011](#); Karvonen [2014](#); Karvonen et al. [2016](#)).

The party system and the actors

In a comparative perspective, there are five intertwined features—high degree of party system fragmentation, increased weakness of the left, the strength of the Centre Party, waves of populist protest, and changing cleavage structure—that appear characteristic of the Finnish party system and which are also relevant for understanding government formation and coalition governance (Table 6.1a) (Paloheimo and Raunio [2008](#); Arter [2009](#); Bengtsson et al. [2014](#); Karvonen [2014](#)).

<COMP: INSERT TABLE 6.1a ABOUT HERE>

A high degree of party system fragmentation

Since the declaration of independence in 1917 no party has even come close to winning a majority of parliamentary seats (the post-Second World War high is 28.3 per cent won by SDP in the 1995 elections), and this fragmentation contributes to cooperation between the main parties. It also means that there is no party that would be decisively larger than its competitors. Forming majority cabinets is simply not possible unless the government has at least three parties.

In terms of party system development, the years after the Second World War can be roughly divided into two periods. First, until about 1970 the party system remained stable: class voting was high, electoral volatility was low, and practically no new parties entered the Eduskunta. As the class cleavage was crucial in the emergence of Finnish parties, it is not surprising that class dealignment has contributed to increasing electoral instability, in terms of both party system fragmentation and electoral volatility.

However, despite the entry into the Eduskunta of new party families such as green, Christian, and populist parties, the party system has remained rather stable, with the three core parties—the Social Democrats, the liberal/agrarian Centre Party, and the conservative National Coalition—remaining dominant. The rise of the populist Finns Party has produced in the two latest Eduskunta elections (2011 and 2015) a situation where the party system has four about equally sized large parties. As a result, the Finnish party system is even more fragmented than previously.

An increased weakness of the parties on the left

Whereas Social Democrats and the predecessor of Left Alliance, the Finnish People's Democratic Union, won over 45 per cent of the vote between them in all but one

election between 1945 and 1966 (when they won 48.3 per cent of the vote together), by 2015 the electoral strength of the left had decreased to 23.6 per cent. The prospect of a government consisting of only left-wing parties has not been realistic for several decades, and all cabinets formed after the 2003 elections have been led by centre-right parties. Social democracy has not been as strong in Finland as in the other Nordic countries, but SDP was the largest party in all Eduskunta elections held from 1907 to 1954, and since the 1966 elections it has finished first in all elections, apart from those held in 1991, 2003, 2007, 2011, and 2015. The Left Alliance, founded in 1990, was in government from 1995 to 2003 and again from 2011 to 2014, when after an uneasy three years it left the National Coalition-led cabinet due to differences over economic policy. The decline of the traditional left parties is to a certain extent compensated by the rise of the Green League, even though it refuses to be categorized as a left-wing party. It served in the government from 1995 to 2002, when it left the cabinet due to disagreements over nuclear energy, from 2007 to 2011, and from 2011 to 2014, when it again exited the cabinet over nuclear energy policy.

Persistent strength of the Centre Party

The persistent strong support for the Centre Party, until 1965 the Agrarian Union, is a rare case of a survival of what is basically agrarian politics in the twenty-first century. Aided by the lateness of the urbanization process and supported by a strong grassroots organizational network, the Centre remains by far the largest party in the overwhelming majority of rural municipalities. Located ideologically between the Social Democrats and the National Coalition on the left–right dimension, the Centre has formed coalitions

with both left-wing and right-wing parties. The party has thus traditionally been a flexible bridge-builder in government formation.

Recurrent waves of populist protest

The rise of populism has shaken party systems across Europe, and Finland is no exception. Already in 1970 and 1983 the populist Rural Party won a couple of spectacular victories in Eduskunta elections. Its successor, the Finns Party (originally known as the True Finns), achieved a major electoral breakthrough in the 2011 elections, winning 19.1 per cent of the votes, a staggering increase of 15 per cent from the 2007 elections and the largest ever increase in support achieved by a single party in Eduskunta elections. Many had predicted the Finns Party to fade away quickly, but in the 2015 elections it finished second with 38 seats and 17.7 per cent of the votes—a much better result than the polls had suggested, just like four years earlier. After the 2011 elections Timo Soini, the long-standing party chair, had opted to stay in the opposition, but in 2015 he guided his party to the centre-right cabinet that also included the Centre and National Coalition.

There was clearly a demand for a party with a more critical view of European integration—and more broadly speaking for a party that would represent those sections of the citizenry with more traditional or socially conservative and nationalist preferences (Kestilä 2006). The party performed both in the 2011 and 2015 elections remarkably evenly across the country. According to surveys voters were drawn to the party mainly because they wanted to shake established patterns of power distribution and to change the direction of public policies, especially concerning immigration and European integration. Hence it is fair to claim that the phenomenal rise of the Finns

Party is explained by both protest and issue voting (Borg 2012; Westinen 2014, Grönlund and Wass 2016).

The future of the populists is currently difficult to predict. Having chaired the party since 1997, Soini decided to resign as the party leader, but in June 2017 the Finns Party split into two after the party congress had elected Member of the European Parliament Jussi Halla-aho as the new party chair. Halla-aho, who has been convicted in court for disrupting religious worship and of ethnic agitation, and the new party leadership look set to take the party economically further to the right whilst engaging in hard-line attacks on immigration and multiculturalism. Immediately following the election of Halla-aho, the more moderate or populist wing of the party left the Finns Party and established a new party, the Blue Reform. The Centre and the National Coalition refused to work with Halla-aho-led Finns Party in the cabinet. This enabled Soini and his Blue Reform ministerial colleagues to remain in the government, but the future of Blue Reform is very uncertain.

A changing cleavage structure

The dominant cleavage has traditionally been the left–right dimension, but since the early 1990s the sociocultural dimension, which is linked to the rural-urban/centre-periphery divide, has become the second main cleavage, partly because the European Union and the opening of borders have emerged on the political agenda (Westinen 2015). Parties tend to be internally divided in such issues, for example over European integration, immigration, or gay rights, and this has impacted coalition governance. Party positions on European integration have constituted an important element of government formation since the start of EU membership in 1995, and in 2011 the Finns

Party's decision to continue in the opposition was explained by the impossibility of joining a cabinet that was committed to further Eurozone bailout measures. In 2011 the parties forming the Katainen I 'six pack' government agreed not to introduce law proposals allowing same-sex marriages (as discussed later in the chapter), but following a citizens' initiative, the Eduskunta voted in late 2014 in favour of same-sex marriages.

Given the fragmented party system and the tradition of forming large multiparty cabinets, political parties and their leaders are engaged in an almost constant process of negotiation, and the art of making compromises and logrolls is an essential feature of daily politics. In order not to exclude themselves from cabinet formation negotiations, parties do not present voters with pre-election alliances nor do they make public statements ruling out sharing power with particular parties.⁶ This has so far applied also to working together with the Finns Party, but following the election of Halla-aho and the change in party image, at least the Greens have signalled their unwillingness to join a coalition that includes the Finns. Finnish parties are thus highly office-seeking in their behaviour. While partisan cooperation in multiparty governments and in the Eduskunta may enhance parties' ability to defend the interests of their constituents, it simultaneously makes it harder for the voters to assess the performance of their

⁶ Parties can, however, form electoral alliances inside individual electoral districts. Within electoral alliances, the distribution of seats is determined by the plurality principle regardless of the total number of votes won by the respective parties forming the alliance. Smaller parties such as Christian Democrats have tended to enter electoral alliances with larger parties. These district-level alliances are typically presented to the voters as 'technical', not ideologically motivated, pacts.

representatives, particularly when considering the lack of transparency that characterizes coalition government decision-making.

Government formation

Bargaining and portfolio allocation

Government formation processes have been relatively straightforward since the early 1990s (Table 6.2). The only real exception was the bargaining following the 2011 elections. The electoral triumph of the Finns Party complicated the situation, and the negotiations leading to the formation of the ideologically highly heterogeneous Katainen I cabinet were marked by significant confusion about government composition, including the possibility of the Finns entering the cabinet and of Katainen being replaced as the *formateur*.⁷ In other cases the election result has played a bigger role, not least through a party or parties suffering a major loss and thus preferring to stay in the opposition—for example the Centre following the 1995 and 2011 elections and SDP following the 1991, 2007, and 2015 elections.

<COMP: INSERT TABLE 6.2 ABOUT HERE>

⁷ Essentially all Eduskunta parties were at various points included in the talks, with formation attempts led by Katainen complemented with informal negotiations between the other parties. The exact sequencing of events is difficult to establish with certainty, and this was also confirmed by several of the interviewees.

The negotiations centre around the government programme. In some instances, the leader of the largest Eduskunta party can start the process by publicly requesting answers from all parties regarding specific issues. For example, after the 2015 elections the future PM Juha Sipilä sent the parties a list of 15 questions, with most of them dealing with economy. This way the *formateur* can establish which parties could be potential coalition partners and thus worth starting actual government formation talks with.⁸ Even when such an initial round takes place, the *formateur* nonetheless normally has a basic idea of government composition immediately after the election, particularly if the election result has been favourable to the governing coalition or the PM's party, as happened in the 1999 and 2007 elections.

According to the interviews even as much as up to 95 or 98 per cent of the time is spent on policy issues. Typically a number of working groups are established to examine various topics (such as economy, EU and foreign affairs, environment and energy), and this increases the number of people per party present in the negotiations. Ministries and perhaps public sector agencies as well as various interest groups are also involved in the negotiations, either directly or through political parties (Paloheimo 2003: 228). Nonetheless, there is definitely an 'inner core' of persons, consisting primarily of party leaders and their closest aides. Bargaining over policy can be time-

8 'Tässä ovat Sipilän 15 kysymystä eduskuntaryhmille', Yle, 28 April 2015. Retrieved from: <https://yle.fi/uutiset/3-7960159>, accessed 17 March 2021. Some parties may deliberately rule themselves out from government formation by not answering the questions at all or by providing replies that they know will not please the *formateur*. On the other hand, the future PM can perhaps use the (public) replies later to his advantage, for example by reminding the opposition of their post-election positions on key issues.

consuming and difficult, and given the importance of the government programme it is understandable that political parties take the negotiations very seriously.

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The remainder of the time parties negotiate about portfolio distribution and the ‘rules of the game’, with the latter category taking up just around one per cent of the talks. Parties agree on the distribution of portfolios between the coalition partners, with the understanding that the second largest coalition party gets to pick the second ministerial portfolio (Table 6.3). Since the late 1970s this has undoubtedly been the minister for finance, although in 2015 the Finns Party chose the post of the foreign minister. The post of the foreign minister has become less important over time, not least due to the internationalization of other policy areas, with for example the minister of interior responsible for representing Finland in EU meetings dealing with immigration and asylum-seekers. Questions related to law and order and immigration have overall become more salient, thus increasing the weight of the minister of interior. The prestige of the minister for social affairs is in turn explained by the Nordic-style welfare state regime and the large budget associated with the portfolio.

Since the 1980s leaders of coalition parties have as a rule been ministers as well. Considering the prominent role of the Ministry of Finance as a kind of ‘super ministry’ (Murto [2014](#)), the fact that the leader of the second largest coalition party is the finance minister emphasizes cooperation between the two largest cabinet parties (Paloheimo [2002](#): 213). Naturally the whole government and individual parties pay attention to gender balance and perhaps the representation of various regions in the cabinet, but only seldom do the names of potential individual ministers come up in the negotiations. Should that occur, it usually happens in the form of coalition partner(s) informing the

leader of another coalition party that a certain politician from her party should not be included in the cabinet. Otherwise, coalition partners are responsible for choosing their own ministers, with the *formateur* having only limited opportunities to influence the choices made by the parties.

The procedures are largely similar in all parties, with the parliamentary group, perhaps together with the party council/executive, taking the decisions. Naturally the party leaders are influential as well, but much depends on their support within the parties. In any case, neither the PM nor the leaders of other cabinet parties can reshuffle ministerial posts or replace ministers without legitimate reasons (Paloheimo 2003: 236–7). In such cases, the party bodies are involved exactly as they are when ministers are selected to the new government.⁹

The parties do not negotiate about other, non-cabinet, positions. There is a general rule according to which the Speaker of Eduskunta has to represent a different party than the PM. Otherwise the expectation is that once the government has entered into office, various positions, such as heads of public sector agencies or the highest-ranking civil servants in the ministries, are appointed on the basis of a recommendation by the respective line minister. Several of the interviewees suggested that the mid-1990s were a turning point, with the formation of the Lipponen I cabinet witnessing much less agreements about such non-cabinet positions than before. Exceptions to this are certain individual appointments such as that of the Finnish EU Commissioner and perhaps

⁹ Examining decision-making in the National Coalition, the Social Democrats, and the Green League about joining governments after the 1983, 1987, 1991, 1995, and 2011 elections, Koskimaa (2016) detected a clear move towards a stronger influence of the party leaders.

other international positions, but even then the agreements between the parties may only be provisional and may involve only the largest two parties in the cabinet.

Finally, coalition parties need hardly discuss the ‘rules of the game’ at all, either during the government formation process or right after the cabinet has entered into office. Typically the cabinet, or at least the PM together with the leaders of other coalition parties, briefly agree verbally about conflict management mechanisms and other such rules. Most of the interviewed politicians underlined that coalition governance mechanisms, from the key role of the government programme to ministerial committees and informal meetings of party leaders, are so institutionalized that everybody knows them. Continuity is reinforced by the inclusion in the new government of at least one of the parties from the outgoing coalition.

Composition and size of cabinets

When compared with other European countries, Finnish cabinets are outliers in three respects: their parliamentary support, level of fragmentation, and ideological diversity (see Table 6.1a). Finland used to be characterized by short-lived and unstable governments living under the shadow of the president. As reported in the introductory chapters of this volume, among the West European countries, only Italy had more cabinets between 1945 and 2016 than Finland. Of the 48 cabinets (excluding caretaker governments) as high a share as 60.4 per cent were surplus majority coalitions, 18.8 per cent were minimal winning coalitions, 12.5 per cent were minority coalitions, and 8.3 per cent were single-party minority cabinets. The governments appointed after the era of President Kekkonen have basically stayed in office for the whole four-year electoral period—a period Nousiainen (2006) has labelled ‘stable majority parliamentarism’.

Since 1983, the broad, mainly oversized coalitions have controlled safe majorities in the Eduskunta. The centre-right cabinet led by Aho (1991–1994) had the narrowest majority with 57.5 per cent of the seats (although the National Coalition-led cabinet was down to 50.5 per cent in 2014 after the Left Alliance and the Greens had left the government), while the first rainbow coalition led by Lipponen in 1995–1999 controlled as many as 72.5 per cent of the seats. The Sipilä I coalition formed after the 2015 election controlled 62 per cent of seats, but following the split of the Finns Party it was down to 53 per cent of the seats. Not surprisingly, these broad coalitions have ruled without much effective parliamentary opposition. Particularly important has been the fragmented nature of the opposition. As the cabinets have, with the exception of the Sipilä governments formed after the 2015 elections and the centre-right cabinet of 1991–1995, brought together parties from both the left and the right, the opposition has been both numerically weak and ideologically fragmented.

The overwhelming majority of Finnish governments have been cross-bloc coalitions, bringing together parties from the left and the right. The first ‘red-ochre’ coalition between Social Democrats and the Agrarian Union was formed in 1937, while the Holkeri I cabinet formed in 1987 was the first government based on cooperation between the National Coalition and the Social Democrats. Recent governments have as a rule included two of the three main parties, the Social Democrats, the Centre, and the National Coalition. The Swedish People’s Party has participated in most governments, including all cabinets formed between 1979 and 2015. The near-permanent government status of the party can be interpreted as a mechanism for protecting minority rights, but it is also explained by the centrist and flexible ideology of the party. Clearly the ‘rainbow’ coalitions led by Lipponen from 1995 to 2003 and the ‘six pack’ Katainen I

cabinet (2011–2014) stand out in international comparison due to their strong ideological heterogeneity. Particularly the formation of the Lipponen I cabinet in 1995 was important. Bringing together five parties, including the most right-wing (National Coalition) and left-wing (Left Alliance) parties in the Eduskunta, it enabled PM Lipponen and his government to push through the necessary budgetary and economic measures needed to take Finland into the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) (Jungar 2002).

Several factors have contributed to the prevailing practice of forming oversized coalitions or at least governments that enjoy strong parliamentary majorities: the fragmented party system and the ensuing need to build workable coalitions with ‘safe’ majorities; the role of the Centre Party as a bridge-builder, forming coalitions with both parties to its left and its right; and the deferment rule that until the early 1990s allowed one-third of the MPs to postpone the adoption of laws. Furthermore during the Cold War the external factor of the Soviet Union played a role. With the National Coalition excluded from government formation between 1966 and 1987 due to the need to anticipate reactions from Moscow, parties under the watchful eye of President Kekkonen formed broad and ideologically centrist cross-bloc coalitions. Here one needs to remember that already behind the formation of the first cross-bloc coalition before the Second World War was the goal of building broader societal consensus and marginalizing more radical ideological alternatives.¹⁰

¹⁰ Formation of the Vanhanen II cabinet after the 2007 elections is a good example of how numerically large coalitions have become the dominant pattern. Immediately after the election result became clear, it seemed that the likeliest coalition alternative was a centre-right cabinet between the Centre, the National Coalition, and the Swedish People's Party.

Coalition agreements

Considering the ideological and numerical breadth of Finnish cabinets, it is not surprising that the government programme has become such an important document.¹¹ The high number of parties forming the cabinet and the need to commit them and their party groups to established rules and policies primarily explain the length of the programmes. Ministers and their parties also know that ‘it is difficult to introduce new initiatives once the government has started to work’, and hence they have an interest in including a large number of items in the programme (Nousiainen 1996: 117). The programmes have become longer and more detailed over the decades (especially since the early 1980s), with the coalition partners investing a lot of resources in bargaining over the programme. There was a major leap at the turn of the millennium: while the programme of the Lipponen II cabinet from 1999 had 6,698 words, the governments appointed since then have drafted programmes in excess of 12,000 words. The programme of the Katainen I ‘six pack’ government, formed after the 2011 elections,

However, Vanhanen announced that his new cabinet should control around 120 of the 200 seats. He justified this by referring to the need to ensure the smooth functioning of the cabinet. Soon afterwards Vanhanen declared that the government would bring together the Centre, the National Coalition, the Swedish People’s Party, and the Green League, commanding a comfortable majority in the Eduskunta with 126 seats (63 per cent). Jari Laurikko, ‘Vanhasen tavoite neljän puolueen ja 120 kansanedustajan hallitus’, *Turun Sanomat*, 20 March 2007. Retrieved from:

<http://www.ts.fi/uutiset/kotimaa/1074188456/Vanhasen+tavoite+neljan+puolueen+ja+120+kansanedustajan+hallitus>, accessed 17 March 2021.

¹¹ The programmes are available at <http://valtioneuvosto.fi/tietoa/historiaa/hallitusohjelmat>.

had 90 pages and 26,654 words, while the ‘strategic’ programme of the Sipilä I government formed in 2015 had 17,709 words.

<COMP: INSERT TABLE 6.4 ABOUT HERE>

The programmes focus 100 per cent on policy and do not say anything about portfolio allocation, appointment to non-cabinet positions, or about how the government will conduct its business or resolve its internal disputes (Table 6.4). Economic policy, including the role of corporatist actors, remains the most important issue, although the sociocultural dimension and especially attitudes towards the European Union have become more salient. The level of detail depends very much on the ability of the coalition partners to agree on common goals. If no such agreement is found, the programme can state more vaguely that the government will ‘look into’ certain issues (meaning that there is no commitment to necessarily do anything related to the matter). The programme can also explicitly bind the coalition partners to status quo—for example that Finland will not seek NATO membership or that certain social security benefits or taxes will not be raised or lowered, and in 2011 the six parties forming the Katainen I government agreed at the insistence of the Christian Democrats not to introduce law proposals allowing same-sex marriages (the coalition leaders at the same time agreed that individual MPs could be active in the issue, for example through tabling private members’ bills). Coalition partners can also make verbal, essentially non-public, agreements about various policy issues, but in such cases they are probably not as binding as when the issues are explicitly mentioned in the government programme.

There are no other public documents about coalition governance. As stated earlier, the ‘rules of the game’ seem so institutionalized and accepted by the parties that they

are not written down anywhere (although the constitution and other laws regulate more formal aspects of government work such as ministerial committees and plenaries). This applies to the entire post-Second World War period (see also Nousiainen 2000: 278–80). However, the government or at least the leaders of the coalition parties can reach informal, behind-the-scenes understandings about the ‘rules of the game’ or some policy issues.

Coalition governance

The PM and the individual ministers

Recent constitutional and political developments have undoubtedly strengthened the position of the PM. With the partial exception of the finance minister, the PM is the only person in the government whose jurisdiction covers all policy areas. According to Section 66 of the constitution, ‘The Prime Minister directs the activities of the Government and oversees the preparation and consideration of matters that come within the mandate of the Government.’ And, as stated earlier, this leadership applies now also to EU matters and to external relations where leadership is shared with the president. The PM’s office has risen in stature and in size in recent decades. It coordinates decision-making in the ministries, operates as a broker in the case of disputes within or between ministries, and monitors the implementation of the government programme. The PM thus is the key actor in resolving conflicts inside the cabinet, whereas under the old constitution this task was often carried out by the president. Increased cabinet duration has also provided the PM with a more stable environment to exercise

leadership. Furthermore, government communication is increasingly centralized to the PM's office (Niemikari et al. [2019](#)). The PM is thus stronger both in the whole national political system and inside the government (Paloheimo [2002](#), [2003](#), [2005](#), [2016](#)).

However, the bargaining involved in forming coalition cabinets and keeping them together act as significant constraints on the executive powers of the PM. It must be remembered that apart from ministers from her or his own party, the PM has little influence on the selection or sacking of ministers, with the coalition partners being responsible for such decisions. As essentially all interviewees strongly emphasized, Finnish PMs are first and foremost 'managers' of coalitions for whom building and maintaining trust is a prerequisite for policy success and cabinet survival. This is already evident in Eduskunta election campaigns where the parties seek to present their leaders as the most suitable next PM. This constrains party leaders from adopting strong political stances or engaging in confrontational discourse, privileging instead the quality of 'statesmanship' and the (perceived) ability to manage a coalition cabinet.

As was discussed in the previous section, government formation is based on bargaining about policies between the coalition partners, with the *formateur* responsible for managing and overseeing the process. Similar logic guides the behaviour of PMs once the government has entered into office, as the PM needs to strike a balance between effective leadership and accommodating the preferences of the coalition parties. Leadership refers primarily to organizational matters—making sure that schedules are adhered to, that necessary decisions are taken, and that in general the 'house is kept in order'. In terms of policy leadership, there was again broad consensus

among the interviewees that the PM does not have much freedom of manoeuvre.¹² Apart from the government programme, the rather legalistic or formal nature of government work plays a role here: the ministerial committees and full plenaries are based on agendas prepared by civil servants and distributed beforehand to all participants, and it is not considered appropriate for the PM—who chairs all these meetings—to introduce new issues to the meetings or indeed to the broader government agenda without careful consultation with at least the leaders of the coalition parties. ‘Nothing should come as a surprise’, stated one of the interviewees. Moreover when interviewed by the media, Finnish PMs as well as line ministers by and large stick to the government agenda and do not express support for objectives not agreed upon by the cabinet. As a result, Finnish coalition governance operates very much along the lines of the *coalition compromise model* outlined in Chapter 2 of this volume.

Turning to individual ministers, their number has stayed fairly constant since the Second World War, but there has been a slight increase over the decades. The Vanhanen II government formed after the 2007 elections had an all-time high of 20 ministers. The Sipilä I cabinet appointed in 2015 had only 14 ministers, the lowest number since the 1950s and 5 less than in the cabinet appointed after the 2011 elections, but in the Sipilä II government there are 17 ministers. The number of ministries has also stayed about the same, with the current number being 12.

¹² Sometimes the PM can exercise significant policy leadership in individual policy domains but again much depends on the cohesion of the cabinet. A good example was PM Lipponen, who had a specific interest in European affairs and played a major role in shaping national EU policy.

Individual ministers have arguably become more autonomous actors in recent decades, and they wield stronger influence in their fields of competence than previously. This delegation of authority from the PM and the entire cabinet to the individual ministers has been necessitated by the gradually increasing workload of the cabinet since the 1960s and the resulting need to divide labour and delegate power to the line ministries. Two laws enacted in the mid-1990s specifically transferred authority to the individual ministries in matters not requiring decision-making by the plenary session of the cabinet. Since 1970 all ministers have had their own special political advisors, distinct from civil servants in the ministries, and since 2005 ministers may also have their own state secretaries. Both the special advisors and the state secretaries are political appointees whose terms coincide with those of the respective ministers. They are thus normally from the same party as the minister, and their job is to assist the minister in her or his duties. Most ministers have state secretaries, while the number of special advisors has varied both between cabinets and between individual ministers, with on average two to five advisors per minister. The basic rule is that ministers do not intervene in questions falling under the jurisdiction of their colleagues, thus respecting each other's autonomy.¹³ Nevertheless, ministerial autonomy is strongly kept in check by the government programme and the agreements between the leaders of the coalition parties, at least in politically significant matters. In fact, it has been argued that Finnish

¹³ For example, when discussing its 'rules of the game', the Vanhanen I cabinet agreed that 'the fields of other ministers are not to be fiddled with'. Ilkka Ahtiainen, 'Rkp otti aikalisän kansliapäällikkönimitykseen: Enestam ei halunnut erotuomariksi keskustan ja Sdp:n kiistaan', *Helsingin Sanomat*, 5 September 2003. Retrieved from: <https://www.hs.fi/kotimaa/art-2000004165197.html>, accessed 17 March 2021.

line ministers have little autonomy compared to their European counterparts (Nousiainen 2000: 270; see also Nousiainen 1994).

Conflict management mechanisms

There are various levels or forums for solving disputes between coalition parties (Table 6.5). The government programmes contain nothing about such conflict management mechanisms. But before discussing them individually, it is worth stating the obvious: not all disagreements take place between coalition partners. In fact, several of the interviewees underlined that most conflicts occur inside individual cabinet parties, with the understanding that the party in question and particularly its ministerial group or the party leader is responsible for solving the matter.

<COMP: INSERT TABLE 6.5 ABOUT HERE>

When there is a conflict between coalition parties or typically between two line ministers, the special advisors of those ministers are normally the first actors entrusted with looking into the issue. In a lot of instances such behind-the-scenes discussions between the ministers and advisors are sufficient. There are no ‘watchdog’ junior ministers in Finland. Yet the governing parties operate a kind of a shadow minister or ‘overcoat’ (the word used by some of the interviewees was *päälystakki* in Finnish) system, whereby each minister is responsible for keeping an eye on her or his cabinet colleagues from the other parties. In case of disagreement between the responsible line minister and an individual cabinet party, the ‘overcoat’ can negotiate with the minister in charge of the issue. Such a system is more demanding for small coalition parties: for

example, the Left Alliance had 2 ministers in the Katainen I cabinet, meaning that these 2 were responsible for monitoring the other 17 ministers.¹⁴

The next stage is the four statutory ministerial committees: Ministerial Committee on Foreign and Security Policy, Ministerial Finance Committee, Ministerial Committee on Economic Policy, and Ministerial Committee on European Union Affairs. The first two have existed throughout Finland's independence, the third became a permanent body in 1977, while the last was established upon Finland joining the EU in 1995. All committees are chaired by the PM and bring together ministers from all coalition parties. If no agreement is found in the ministerial committee, a typical strategy is to continue the preparatory work under the guidance of the respective line minister, with the issue then reintroduced in the ministerial committee when a solution has been found. As shown earlier, one of the key tasks of the PM is indeed to ensure that matters are not delayed too much and that decisions are taken.

Governments can also set up various ad hoc or issue-specific ministerial working groups. Their heyday was probably in the 1970s, and subsequent cabinets have on average established much less such committees. However, according to Paloheimo (2003: 233) the Lipponen II cabinet had 'nine ministerial working groups for special policy areas', whereas the Katainen I cabinet had over ten such working groups (Valtioneuvoston kanslia 2015: 32). The Sipilä II cabinet utilized nine working groups: on employment and competitiveness; knowledge and education; health and wellbeing;

¹⁴ This 'overcoat' system existed already before the 1990s, with Nousiainen (1994: 94)

reporting that 'it is habitual in large coalitions that a ministerial group assigns its members to monitor ministries led by other parties'.

bioeconomy and clean solutions; reforming operating practices; reforms; internal security and administration of justice; migration; and Russia.¹⁵ The minister responsible for the issue area in question normally chairs these ministerial groups and again all cabinet parties are usually represented in the working groups. Both the ministerial committees and the working groups perform important roles in conflict-solving, not least through their ‘watchdog’ function, with coalition parties having the opportunity to monitor developments inside individual ministries (Paloheimo 2016: 78).

The full plenary of the government in turn is responsible for final, formal decisions, but its meetings, held on Thursday afternoons, are essentially without exception very short, with the plenary just rubber-stamping decisions taken in the ministerial committees or by individual ministers. The formal decision rule in the government plenary is majority, with the vote of the PM decisive if there is a tie.¹⁶ Yet all of the interviewees noted that there is a ‘culture of consensus’, with votes avoided and a desire to reach unanimity. This is also achieved most of the time, with each interviewed minister remembering that voting was resorted to only exceptionally in a very small number of cases per government. According to Nousiainen (2000: 281–2; see also Paloheimo 2002: 212) there was a change from the late 1970s onwards (Sorsa II cabinet), with the PMs starting to pay more attention to the internal solidarity of the government, with subsequent cabinets avoiding votes and aiming at unanimous

¹⁵ <https://valtioneuvosto.fi/en/sipila/ministerial-working-groups>.

¹⁶ There are also presidential sessions of the government chaired by the president, the agenda of which covers those issues still in the competence of the head of state. In these sessions there is no voting and the president’s decisions do not have to follow the opinion of the government.

decisions. If no agreement is reached, the PM can postpone the matter to forthcoming meetings. The PM could force votes to be held, but according to the interviewees this would almost certainly undermine trust among the coalition partners. There is also an informal veto-player rule in the sense that each coalition partner can request that decisions are not taken or that the issue is postponed until the next meeting. Given that Finnish cabinets are usually oversized coalitions, smaller parties or individual ministers from larger cabinet parties can sometimes vote against the majority or enter dissenting opinions into the minutes of the meetings as they will not prevent decision-making.

However, at least since the early 1990s the most important decisions are often taken in discussions between the leaders of the coalition parties. The name of the meeting depends on the number of cabinet parties: in the Lipponen I and II governments they were referred to as ‘quintet’, in the Katainen I cabinet as ‘sextet’, and in a three-party cabinet as ‘trio’. These are informal gatherings without any actual written agendas or rules, with typically only the party leaders (and perhaps their advisors) present. All interviewees agreed that they are held ‘when the need arises’. Often short talks will suffice, but in case of serious conflicts, the meetings can last long into the night or even consume much of the weekend. Party size clearly matters here, with several of the interviewed persons, both from smaller and larger parties, reporting that often the crucial discussions are held between the PM and the leader of the second largest cabinet party. On the one hand, these meetings ensure that also the smaller parties take part in decisions, but, on the other hand, a key role is performed by the leaders of the two biggest parties, especially in budgetary matters as the chair of the second largest party typically is the finance minister. As aptly summarized by Paloheimo (2005: 256): ‘These are the two “biggest hitters” in Finnish government, and any informal

understandings they might reach can seriously restrict the bargaining power of smaller coalition parties.’ This applies also to other aspects of cabinet’s work, including bargaining over the government programme. Overall, the interviewees recognize the necessity and importance of these informal discussions, but at the same time accusations of a ‘closed inner circle’ are understandable.

The governing parties are also in constant dialogue with their Eduskunta party groups. It is commonly accepted among the coalition partners that the government programme forms the backbone of the cabinet and that it is binding on all the parties. The government parties also monitor that their party groups support the programme. The cooperation rules between the governing parties’ parliamentary groups that have been in use since the early 1980s effectively prevent any disagreements or public conflicts between the government and the party groups (Wiberg 2011). Dissenting MPs can expect tough sanctions, including expulsion from their parliamentary group. The only exceptions are matters that are clearly ‘local’ by nature and certain questions of conscience.

Should government bills encounter unexpected problems in the party groups or a committee of the Eduskunta, the government approaches their MPs and particularly the chairs of their parliamentary groups about the matter. Usually this exchange occurs inside individual governing parties between the party leader or another minister and the chair of the parliamentary group. In other instances, the committee chair and party spokespersons in the committee can be involved. Such exchanges are fairly routine, and the problems are more difficult to solve when the cabinet is not cohesive and/or the issue is not included in the government programme. If the issue at hand concerns the implementation of the cabinet programme, the PM or other ministers typically remind

(on occasions publicly) the MPs about their duty to respect the programme. Moreover, even though there is variation between parties, the chair of the parliamentary group normally takes part in the meeting of the party's ministerial group, and this again can be seen as a way to pre-empt potential conflicts between the cabinet and the legislature. These ministerial groups of cabinet parties convene essentially on a weekly basis and perform, when needed, an important role in resolving disputes inside the party and thus inside the entire cabinet.

Previously Finnish governments had more time for discussions. This applies especially to the 'evening school' (*iltakoulu*), which has since the late 1930s brought together ministers and perhaps some other individuals, particularly leaders of the parliamentary groups of the cabinet parties, to sit down informally in the evenings to discuss various topical matters, mainly larger items on the cabinet agenda. The presence of the leaders of parliamentary groups of cabinet parties in these meetings facilitates the processing of government bills in the Eduskunta. The PM chairs the meetings. The importance of the 'evening school' has declined, with cabinets formed since the 1990s convening such sessions much more infrequently. The Sipilä cabinets formed after the 2015 elections have held 'strategy meetings' instead of evening school sessions that focus on the key priorities of the government (Virtanen et al. [2016](#): 10). Various reasons have been given for this decline: busier timetables of ministers, EU meetings and other international activities of the ministers, the increase in particularly younger (female) ministers that has resulted in the cabinet trying to work 'normal hours', the increased rigidity and formality of the sessions whereby they started to resemble official government meetings, and perhaps especially the fact that most issues have already been agreed in other forums, for example in the informal meetings of the coalition party

leaders (Paloheimo [2002](#): 212; Tiili [2003](#)).¹⁷ Naturally the PM can always organize additional ad hoc meetings with ministers to work out disagreements, for example immediately after the formal meetings of ministerial committees.

Instead of informal discussions, recent Finnish governments have invested resources in improving coordination and strategic planning inside the cabinet and the entire executive branch, not least to encounter the decentralization of policy-making to the line ministries described earlier. Hence the governments appointed since 2003 have tried to improve horizontal coordination inside the cabinet, mainly through government's intersectoral policy programmes (which were used from 2003 to 2011) and other coordination instruments such as various government strategy documents (Tiili [2008](#); Kekkonen and Raunio [2011](#); Virtanen et al. [2016](#)). Another important tool is the 'mid-term review' session first utilized by the Vanhanen I cabinet, whereby the entire cabinet comes together halfway through the four-year electoral period to talk

¹⁷ The binding nature of the government programme and the resulting lack of discussion or genuinely collective decision-making inside the cabinet have attracted criticism from many leading politicians and civil servants (Tiili [2003](#)). Paavo Väyrynen from the Centre Party, who served in the government during every decade from the 1970s until the 2010s, commented in an interview that 'the most important change concerns the detailed nature of the government programme. The real bargaining occurs during the government formation process. When the cabinet begins its work on the basis of the programme, there is not much room for discussion'. Jaakko Hautamäki, 'Paavo Väyrynen: Hallitus käy varsin vähän sisäisiä keskusteluja', *Helsingin Sanomat*, 11 June 2007. Retrieved from <https://www.hs.fi/kotimaa/art-2000004489903.html>, accessed 17 March 2021.

more freely about what the government has achieved, where it has failed, and whether its targets should be readjusted for the remaining two years.

Cabinet duration and termination

The constitutional reforms impact on cabinet termination (Table 6.6). With the president and the Kremlin no longer intervening in government work, recent cabinets have either stayed in office for the whole four-year period or changes in government composition have been explained by disputes between the cabinet parties (as opposed to disputes between the government and the president). It was customary for the government to resign when a presidential election was held, but the last time this happened was in 1982. In fact, one can argue that under the old constitution, and particularly during the reign of President Kekkonen, governments were more accountable to the president than to the parliament. During the Cold War a crisis in relations with the Soviet Union brought the government down twice—in 1959 and in 1962. The last time a cabinet lost office after a vote of no-confidence in the Eduskunta was in 1958.

<COMP: INSERT TABLE 6.6 ABOUT HERE>

Cabinet duration has increased quite substantially over the decades, especially since the early 1980s. Out of the PMs appointed to office immediately after the elections since 1983, Sorsa, Holkeri, Aho, and Lipponen (twice) have survived in office for the whole electoral term, while Vanhanen (who had already served as the PM from the summer of 2003 to the 2007 elections) and Katainen left their posts voluntarily, Katainen to become an EU Commissioner. If the PM resigns, the whole cabinet is dissolved. Hence the resignations of Vanhanen in 2010 and Katainen in 2014 and the

appointments of Kiviniemi and Stubb (the respective new leaders of the Centre and the National Coalition) as the PM required both the resignation of the government and the appointment by the president of the new cabinet.

A rare piece of major government drama occurred in 2003, when PM Jäätteenmäki had to resign in June after allegations concerning her use of secret foreign ministry documents during the election campaign. The rift occurred mainly between the two largest cabinet parties, the Centre and the Social Democrats. The same three coalition parties formed a new cabinet immediately after Jäätteenmäki had resigned (Arter [2006](#): 217–37). In addition, small coalition partners have left the governments: the Rural Party in 1990 over budgetary disagreements, the Christian Democrats in 1994 owing to the government's pro-EU stance, the Green League in 2002 and in 2014 over disputes concerning nuclear energy, and the Left Alliance in 2014 over disagreements about economic policy. However, these defections, all of which took place the year before the next scheduled elections, did not threaten the survival of the surplus coalition cabinets. Finally, in June 2017 the government survived the split in the Finns Party when the Blue Reform continued in the cabinet.

Conclusions

Coalition governance in Finland displays considerable stability. Many of the features discussed in this chapter were already present during the era of strong presidency, especially the large ideologically heterogeneous cabinets, the limited autonomy of both the PM and the line ministers, the ministerial committees, and the informal 'evening school' sessions. Nonetheless, the period of major constitutional reform from the late 1980s onwards and especially the 1990s can be seen as a watershed. Until then the

cabinets were primarily short-lived and based largely on the premise that each coalition party was responsible for its own turf, resembling thus the *ministerial government model* outlined in Chapter 2 of this volume, whereas since the 1980s it is expected that cabinets will serve the whole four-year electoral term. As the government became the main executive and with the president no longer expected to intervene, the political parties simply needed to agree on rules about the formation and work of coalition cabinets.¹⁸

Government formation is led by the largest party in terms of Eduskunta seats, and the bargaining environment is definitely different from the Cold War era when the president dominated the process and also the Soviet Union cast its shadow over cabinet formation. But while such external factors have disappeared, the changing cleavage structure and the emergence of populism have complicated the situation. The left–right dimension continues to be the main axis of contestation in the party system, with questions about state finances and the welfare state still in a central role in government formation talks. Such questions also continue to be the ones producing most conflict among the coalition partners. At the same time the sociocultural dimension has emerged as the second cleavage, especially since the mid-1990s through EU membership and the broader internationalization of Finnish society. When putting together governments, the *formateurs* have needed particularly to take into account party positions regarding European integration. Yet the impact of populism should not be exaggerated. The Finns

¹⁸ Elements of continuity and change can be best captured by comparing this chapter with earlier research on Finnish governments. Nousiainen (1994, 1996, 2000) covers the post-Second World War period until the mid-1990s, whereas Paloheimo (2002, 2003, 2005, 2016) extends the coverage up to the very first years of the twenty-first century.

Party achieved an electoral breakthrough in the 2011 elections and first entered the government in 2015. The party effectively split into two camps in 2017, and in the run-up to the Eduskunta elections scheduled for spring 2019 some parties ruled out sharing power with the more hard-line version of the Finns Party—the first time in decades Finnish parties were making such pre-election promises.

Finnish cabinets continue to be broad coalitions, in most cases including parties from both the left and the right. The fragmented party system, with no party winning more than around a quarter of the votes in the elections, contributes to the formation of ideologically quite heterogeneous coalitions that contain at least three and, in most cases, more parties. This internal heterogeneity also in large part explains the importance attached to the government programme and to the *ex ante* coalition management mechanisms. The government programmes have become considerably longer and more detailed since the late 1990s and it is expected that the cabinet parties and their parliamentary groups respect them. Furthermore once the cabinet has entered into office, there are institutionalized procedures for solving disputes among coalition partners. Apart from ministerial committees, the most salient issues are discussed informally between the leaders of coalition parties. Such informal talks are held when needed and they are essential for cabinet survival. While over time comparisons are difficult to make, it appears that the ministerial committees and particularly the informal talks between leaders of coalition parties are more important as conflict management mechanisms than before the 1990s.

The PM has emerged from the shadow of the president as the undisputed political leader of the country. Yet the PM and the individual line ministers are strongly constrained by the very procedures discussed in this chapter—the government

programme and the firmly entrenched practices of cabinet decision-making. In line with the *coalition compromise model* (Chapter 2), PMs are obviously expected to provide leadership, but they must respect the established rules while paying close attention to the preferences of the coalition partners. Managing multiparty coalitions is first and foremost a matter of trust: trust between the coalition parties and trust between the PM and individual cabinet parties.

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Table 6.1a Finnish cabinets since 1945

Cabinet number	Cabinet	Date in	Election date	Party composition of cabinet	Type of cabinet	Cabinet strength in seats (%)	Number of seats in parliament	Number of parties in parliament
1	Paasikivi III ^a	1945-04-17	1945-03-18	NN, SDP, SKDL, KESK, LKP	sur	85.5	200	6
2	Pekkala	1946-03-26		SKDL, KESK, SDP, RKP	sur	81	200	6
3	<i>Fagerholm</i>	1948-07-29	1948-07-02	<i>SDP</i>	<i>min</i>	27	200	6
4	<i>Kekkonen I</i>	1950-03-17		<i>KESK, LKP, RKP</i>	<i>min</i>	37.5	200	6
5	Kekkonen II	1951-01-17		KESK, SDP, LKP, RKP	sur	64.5	200	6
6	Kekkonen III	1951-09-20	1951-07-03	KESK, SDP, RKP	sur	59	200	6
7	<i>Kekkonen IV</i>	1953-07-09		<i>KESK, RKP</i>	<i>min</i>	33	200	6

8	Tuomioja ^{abc}	1953- 11-17		NN	non	0	200	6
9	Törngren	1954- 05-05	1954- 03-08	RKP, SDP, KESK	sur	60	200	6
10	Kekkonen V	1954- 10-20		KESK, SDP	mwc	53.5	200	6
11	Fagerholm II	1956- 03-03		SDP, KESK, RKP, LKP	sur	66.5	200	6
12	Fagerholm III	1957- 05-17		SDP, KESK, RKP	sur	60	200	6
13	<i>Sukselainen I</i>	<i>1957- 05-27</i>		<i>KESK, RKP, Suomen Kansanpuolue (LKP), Liberaalinen Kansanpuolue (LKP)</i>	<i>min</i>	<i>39.5</i>	<i>200</i>	<i>6</i>
14	<i>Sukselainen II</i>	<i>1957- 07-02</i>		<i>KESK, LKP</i>	<i>min</i>	<i>33</i>	<i>200</i>	<i>6</i>
15	<i>Sukselainen III</i>	<i>1957- 09-02</i>		<i>KESK, TPSL, LKP, SDP</i>	<i>min</i>	<i>42.5</i>	<i>200</i>	<i>7</i>
16	von Fieandt ^{abc}	1957- 11-29		NN	non	0	200	7

17	Kuuskoski ^{abc}	1958- 04-26		NN	non	0	200	7
18	Fagerholm IV	1958- 08-29	1958- 07-07	SDP, KESK, KOK, RKP, LKP	sur	66.5	200	7
19	<i>Sukselainen IV</i>	<i>1959- 01-13</i>		<i>KESK, RKP</i>	<i>min</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>200</i>	<i>7</i>
20	<i>Miettunen I</i>	<i>1961- 07-14</i>		<i>KESK</i>	<i>min</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>200</i>	<i>7</i>
21	Karjalainen I	1962- 04-13	1962- 02-05	KESK, KOK, TPSL, RKP, LKP	mwc	56.5	200	7
22	Karjalainen II	1963- 10-18		KESK, KOK, RKP, LKP	mwc	55.5	200	7
23	Lehto ^{abc}	1963- 12-18		NN	non	0	200	7
24	Violainen	1964- 09-12		KESK, KOK, RKP, LKP	mwc	56	200	7
25	Paasio I	1966- 05-27	1966- 03-21	SDP, KESK, SKDL, TPSL	sur	76	200	8
26	Koivisto I	1968- 03-22		SDP, KESK, SKDL, RKP, TPSL	sur	82	200	8

27	Aura I ^{abc}	1970- 05-14	1970- 03-16	NN	non	0	200	8
28	Karjalainen III	1970- 07-15		KESK, SDP, SKDL, LKP, RKP	sur	72	200	8
29	Karjalainen IV	1971- 03-26		KESK, SDP, LKP, RKP	mwc	54	200	8
30	Aura II ^{abc}	1971- 10-29		NN	non	0	200	8
31	<i>Paasio II</i>	<i>1972- 02-23</i>	<i>1972- 01-03</i>	<i>SDP</i>	<i>min</i>	<i>27.5</i>	<i>200</i>	<i>8</i>
32	Sorsa I	1972- 09-04		SDP, KESK, RKP, LKP	mwc	53.5	200	8
33	Liinamaa ^{abc}	1975- 06-13		NN	non	0	200	8
34	Miettunen II	1975- 11-30	1975- 09-22	KESK, SDP, SKDL, RKP, LKP	sur	75.5	200	8
35	<i>Miettunen III</i>	<i>1976- 09-29</i>		<i>KESK, LKP, RKP</i>	<i>min</i>	<i>29</i>	<i>200</i>	<i>8</i>
36	Sorsa II	1977- 05-15		SDP, KESK, SKDL, LKP, RKP	sur	76	200	8

37	Sorsa III	1978- 03-02		SDP, KESK, SKDL, LKP	sur	71	200	8
38	Koivisto II	1979- 05-26	1979- 03-19	SDP, KESK, SKDL, RKP	sur	66	200	8
39	Sorsa IV	1982- 02-19		SDP, KESK, SKDL, RKP	sur	66.5	200	8
40	Sorsa V	1982- 12-31		SDP, KESK, RKP, LKP	mwc	51	200	8
41	Sorsa VI	1983- 05-06	1983- 03-21	SDP, KESK, SMP, RKP	sur	61	200	8
42	Holkeri I	1987- 04-30	1987- 03-16	KOK, SDP, RKP, SMP	sur	65	200	8
43	Holkeri II	1990- 08-28		KOK, SDP, RKP	sur	60.5	200	8
44	Aho I	1991- 04-26	1991- 03-17	KESK, KOK, RKP, SKL	sur	57	200	9
45	Aho II	1994- 06-28		KESK, KOK, RKP	mwc	53	200	9
46	Lipponen I	1995- 04-13	1995- 03-19	SDP, KOK, RKP, SKDL, VIHR	sur	72	200	8
47	Lipponen II	1999- 04-15	1999- 03-21	SDP, KOK, RKP, SKDL, VIHR	sur	69.5	200	8

48	Lipponen III	2002- 05-31		SDP, KOK, RKP, SKDL	sur	64.5	200	8
49	Jätteenmäki	2003- 04-17	2003- 03-16	KESK, SDP, RKP	sur	58	200	8
50	Vanhanen I	2003- 06-24		KESK, SDP, RKP	sur	58	200	8
51	Vanhanen II	2007- 04-19	2007- 03-18	KESK, KOK, VIHR, RKP	sur	62.5	200	8
52	Mari Kiviniemi	2010- 06-22		KESK, KOK, VIHR, RKP	sur	62.5	200	8
53	Katainen I	2011- 06-22	2011- 04-17	KOK, SDP, RKP, SKDL, VIHR, SKL	sur	62.5	200	8
54	Katainen II	2014- 03-25		KOK, SDP, RKP, VIHR, SKL	sur	55.5	200	8
55	Stubb I	2014- 06-24		KOK, SDP, RKP, VIHR, SKL	sur	56	200	8
56	Stubb II	2014- 09-20		KOK, SDP, RKP, SKL	mwc	51	200	8
57	Sipilä I	2015- 05-29	2015- 04-19	KESK, KOK, SMP	mwc	62	200	8

58	Sipilä II	2017- 06-13	KESK, KOK, SIN	mwc	53	200	9
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Table 6.1a cont.

Notes:

For a list of parties, consult the chapter appendix.

a: Technocrat minister majority, b: Technocrat prime minister; c: Limited policy remit

The number of parties in parliament does not include parties that have never held more than two seats when a cabinet has formed.

Median parties are retrieved from the Comparative Parliamentary Democracy Data Archive (<http://www.erdda.se>), gathered for Müller and Strøm (2003), 1945–1998 period. The subsequent period is based on Polk et al. (2017) and Bakker et al. (2015).

Müller and Strøm (2003), 1945–1998 period. The subsequent period is based on Polk et al. (2017) and Bakker et al. (2015).

The first policy dimension is economic left–right.

Cabinet types: maj = Single-party majority cabinet; min = Minority cabinet (both single-party and coalition cabinets); mwc = Minimal winning coalition; non = Non-partisan. Minority cabinets are also indicated by *italics*.

Note: Table legends and variables are further defined in the measurement and operationalization chapter (Chapter 3).

Table 6.2 Cabinet formation in Finland, 1987–2018

Cabinet	Year in	Number of inconclusive bargaining rounds	Parties involved in the previous bargaining rounds	Bargaining duration of individual formation attempt (in days)	Number of days required in government formation	Total bargaining duration	Result of investiture vote	
							Pro	Abstention
Holkeri I	1987	1	KOK, SDP, SMP, RKP (1) SKDL, SDP, VIHR, KESK,		45			

			SMP,				
			SKL, RKP,				
			KOK				
Holkeri II	1990	0			4		
Aho I	1991	1	KESK,	11	40	15	
			KOK,				
			RKP, SKL				
			(1) KESK,	4			
			KOK,				
			RKP, SKL,				
			VIHR				
Aho II	1994	0			8		
Lipponen I	1995	0	SDP,	7	25	7	139
			KOK,				
			SKDL,				
			VIHR,				
			RKP				
Lipponen II	1999	0	SDP,	5		5	129
			KOK,				
			SKDL,				
			VIHR,				
			RKP				
Lipponen III	2002						

Jätteenmäki	2003	0	KESK,	12	32	12	107	
			SDP, RKP					
Vanhanen I	2003	0	KESK,				95	
			SDP, RKP					
Vanhanen II	2007	0	KESK,	12	6	12	115	
			RKP,					
			KOK,					
			VIHR					
Mari	2010				4		118	
Kiviniemi								
Katainen I	2011	2	KOK,	8		37	111	33
			SDP,					
			VIHR,					
			RKP, SKL,					
			SKDL					
			(1) KOK,	7				
			SDP,					
			VIHR,					
			RKP, SKL					
			(2) KOK,	15				
			SDP,					
			VIHR,					
			RKP, SKL,					
			SKDL					

Katainen II	2014								
Stubb I	2014							99	
Stubb II	2014								
Sipilä I	2015	0	KESK, SMP, KOK	18	40	18	114	13	
Sipilä II	2017								

Note:

The data on investiture votes concern the vote on the government programme.

Table 6.3 Distribution of cabinet ministerships in Finnish coalitions, 1987–2018

Cabinet	Year	Number of ministers in per party (in descending order)	Total number of ministers	Number of ministries	1 Prime minister	2 Finance	3 Foreign affairs	4 Social affairs	5 In charge
Holkeri I	1987	8 SDP, 7 KOK, 2 RKP, 1 SMP	18	13	KOK	SDP	SDP	KOK	SDP
Holkeri II	1990	9 SDP, 6 KOK, 2 RKP	17	13	KOK	SDP	SDP	KOK	SDP
Aho I	1991	8 KESK, 6 KOK, 2 RKP, 1 SKL	17	13	KESK	KOK	KESK	KESK	KE
Aho II	1994	8 KESK, 6 KOK, 2 RKP	16	13	KESK	KOK	KESK	KESK	KE

Lipponen I	1995	7 SDP, 5 KOK, 2 RKP, 2 SKDL, 1 VIHR, 1 Ind.	18	13	SDP	KOK	SDP	SDP	RK
Lipponen II	1999	6 SDP, 6 KOK, 2 RKP, 2 SKDL, 1 VIHR, 1 Ind.	18	13	SDP	KOK	SDP	KOK, RKP	KO
Lipponen III	2002	7 SDP, 7 KOK, 2 RKP, 2 SKDL	18	13	SDP	KOK	SDP	KOK, RKP	KO
Jätteenmäki	2003	8 KESK, 8 SDP, 2 RKP	18	13	KESK	SDP, RKP	SDP	SDP, KESK	SD
Vanhanen I	2003	8 KESK, 8 SDP, 2 RKP	18	13	KESK	SDP, RKP	SDP	SDP, KESK	SD
Vanhanen II	2007	8 KESK, 8 KOK, 2 RKP, 2 VIHR	20	13	KESK	KOK	KOK	KESK, KOK	KO
Mari	2010	8 KESK, 8 KOK, 2 RKP, 2 VIHR	20	12	KESK	KOK	KOK	KESK, KOK	KO
Katainen I	2011	6 KOK, 6 SDP, 2 RKP, 2 SKDL, 2 VIHR, 1 SKL	19	12	KOK	SDP	SDP	KOK, SDP	SK
Katainen II	2014	6 KOK, 6 SDP, 2 RKP, 2 VIHR, 1 SKL	17	12	KOK	SDP	SDP	KOK, SDP	SK

Stubb I	2014	6 KOK, 6 SDP, 2 RKP, 2 VIHR, 1 SKL	17	12	KOK	SDP	SDP	KOK, SDP	SKL
Stubb II	2014	7 KOK, 7 SDP, 2 RKP, 1 SKL	17	12	KOK	SDP	SDP	KOK, SDP	SKL
Sipilä I	2015	6 KESK, 4 KOK, 4 SMP	14	12	KESK	KOK	SMP	SMP, KESK	KOK
Sipilä II	2017	7 KESK, 5 KOK, 5 SIN	17	12	KEKS	KOK	SIN	SIN, KESK	KOK

Table 6.4 Size and content of coalition agreements in Finland, 1945–2018

Coalition	Year	Size	General rules (in %)	Policy-specific procedural rules (in %)	Distribution of offices (in %)	Distribution of competences (in %)	Policies (in %)
Paasikivi III	1945	448	0	0	0	0	100
Pekkala	1946	418	0	0	0	0	100
Fagerholm I	1948	571	0	0	0	0	100
Kekkonen I	1950	248	0	0	0	0	100
Kekkonen II	1951	268	0	0	0	0	100
Kekkonen III	1951	413	0	0	0	0	100
Kekkonen IV	1953	224	0	0	0	0	100
Törngren	1954	354	0	0	0	0	100
Kekkonen V	1954	561	0	0	0	0	100

Fagerholm II	1956	225	0	0	0	0	100
Fagerholm		225	0	0	0	0	100
III	1957						
Sukselainen I	1957	242	0	0	0	0	100
Sukselainen	1957						
II		242	0	0	0	0	100
Sukselainen	1957						
III		751	0	0	0	0	100
Fagerholm	1958						
IV		1,415	0	0	0	0	100
Sukselainen	1959						
IV		391	0	0	0	0	100
Miettunen I	1961	158	0	0	0	0	100
Karjalainen I	1962	1,103	0	0	0	0	100
Karjalainen	1963						
II		1,103	0	0	0	0	100
Virolainen	1964	404	0	0	0	0	100
Paasio I	1966	777	0	0	0	0	100
Koivisto I	1968	841	0	0	0	0	100
Karjalainen	1970						
III		1,723	0	0	0	0	100
Karjalainen	1971						
IV		1,723	0	0	0	0	100
Paasio II	1972	783	0	0	0	0	100

Sorsa I	1972	1,936	0	0	0	0	100
Miettunen II	1975	204	0	0	0	0	100
Miettunen III	1976	2,222	0	0	0	0	100
Sorsa II	1977	512	0	0	0	0	100
Sorsa III	1978	512	0	0	0	0	100
Koivisto II	1979	1,118	0	0	0	0	100
Sorsa IV	1982	1,025	0	0	0	0	100
Sorsa V	1982	1,025	0	0	0	0	100
Sorsa VI	1983	1,788	1	0	0	0	99
Holkeri I	1987	2,861	0	0	0	0	100
Holkeri II	1990	2,861	0	0	0	0	100
Aho I	1991	2,697	0	0	0	0	100
Aho II	1994	2,697	0	0	0	0	100
Lipponen I	1995	4,541	0	0	0	0	100
Lipponen II	1999	6,698	0	0	0	0	100
Lipponen III	2002	6,698	0	0	0	0	100
Jätteenmäki	2003	12,211	0	0	0	0	100
Vanhanen I	2003	12,061	0	0	0	0	100
Vanhanen II	2007	15,399	0	0	0	0	100
Mari	2010						
Kiviniemi		1,067	0	0	0	0	100
Katainen I	2011	26,654	0	0	0	0	100
Katainen II	2014	26,654	0	0	0	0	100
Stubb I	2014	1,916	0	0	0	0	100

Stubb II	2014	1,916	0	0	0	0	100
Sipilä I	2015	17,709	0	0	0	0	100
Sipilä II	2017	17,709	0	0	0	0	100

Table 6.5 Coalition governance mechanisms in Finnish coalitions, 1945–2018

Coalition	Year	Coalition in agreement	Agreement public	Election rule	Conflict management mechanisms			Personal union	Issues excluded from agenda	C di in le ot be
					All used	Most common	For most serious conflicts			
Paasikivi III	1945	PRE, POST	Y	N	CaC	CaC	CaC	-	-	Fe
Pekkala	1946	IE	Y	N	CaC	CaC	CaC	-	-	Fe
Fagerholm I	1948	POST	Y	N	-	-	-	-	-	Fe
Kekkonen I	1950	IE	Y	N	CaC	CaC	CaC	-	-	Fe
Kekkonen II	1951	IE	Y	N	CaC	CaC	CaC	-	-	Fe
Kekkonen III	1951	POST	Y	N	CaC	CaC	CaC	-	-	Fe

Kekkonen IV	1953	IE	Y	N	IC, CaC	CaC	IC	-	-	Fe
Törngren	1954	POST	Y	N	CaC	CaC	CaC	-	-	Fe
Kekkonen V	1954	IE	Y	N	CaC	CaC	CaC	-	-	Fe
Fagerholm II	1956	IE	Y	N	CaC	CaC	CaC	-	-	Fe
Fagerholm III	1957	IE	Y	N	CaC	CaC	CaC	-	-	Fe
Sukselainen I	1957	IE	Y	N	IC, CaC	CaC	CaC	-	-	Fe
Sukselainen II	1957	IE	Y	N	IC	IC	IC	-	-	Fe
Sukselainen III	1957	IE	Y	N	IC, CaC	CaC	CaC	-	-	Fe
Fagerholm IV	1958	POST	Y	N	CaC	CaC	CaC	-	-	Fe
Sukselainen IV	1959	IE	Y	N	-	-	-	-	-	Fe
Miettunen I	1961	IE	Y	N	-	-	-	-	-	Fe
Karjalainen I	1962	POST	Y	N	CaC	CaC	CaC	-	-	Fe
Karjalainen II	1963	POST	Y	N	-	-	-	-	-	Fe
Virolainen	1964	IE	Y	N	CaC	CaC	CaC	-	-	Fe

Paasio I	1966	POST	Y	N	CaC	CaC	CaC	-	-	Fe
Koivisto I	1968	IE	Y	N	CaC	CaC	CaC	-	-	Fe
Karjalainen	1970	IE	Y	N	CaC	CaC	CaC	-	-	M
III										
Karjalainen	1971	IE	Y	N	CaC	CaC	CaC	-	-	M
IV										
Paasio II	1972	POST	Y	N	-	-	-	-	-	M
Sorsa I	1972	IE	Y	N	CaC,	CaC	Pca	-	-	M
					IC, Pca					
Miettunen II	1975	POST	Y	N	CaC,	Pca	Pca	-	-	M
					Pca					
Miettunen	1976	IE	Y	N	IC,	CaC	Pca	-	-	M
III					CaC,					
					Pca					
Sorsa II	1977	IE	Y	N	IC,	CaC	Pca	-	-	M
					CaC,					
					Pca					
Sorsa III	1978	IE	Y	N	IC,	CaC	Pca	-	-	M
					CaC,					
					Pca					
Koivisto II	1979	POST	Y	N	IC,	CaC	Pca	-	-	M
					CaC,					
					Pca					

Sorsa IV	1982	IE	Y	N	IC, CaC, Pca	CaC	Pca	-	-	M
Sorsa V	1982	IE	Y	N	IC, CaC, Pca	CaC	Pca	-	-	M
Sorsa VI	1983	POST	Y	N	IC, CaC, Pca	CaC	Pca	-	-	M
Holkeri I	1987	POST	Y	N	IC, CaC, Pca	CaC	Pca	N (SMP, SDP)	N	M
Holkeri II	1990	POST	Y	N	IC, CaC, Pca	CaC	Pca	Y	N	M
Aho I	1991	POST	Y	N	IC, CaC, Pca	CaC	Pca	Y	N	M
Aho II	1994	POST	Y	N	IC, CaC, Pca	CaC	Pca	N (KOK)	N	M
Lipponen I	1995	POST	Y	N	IC, CaC, Pca	CaC	Pca	N (VIHR)	N	M

Lipponen II	1999	POST	Y	N	IC, CaC, Pca	CaC	Pca	Y	N	M
Lipponen III	2002	POST	Y	N	IC, CaC, Pca	CaC	Pca	Y	N	M
Jätteenmäki	2003	POST	Y	N	IC, CaC, Pca	CaC	Pca	N (SDP)	N	M
Vanhanen I	2003	IE	Y	N	IC, CaC, Pca	CaC	Pca	N (SDP)	N	M
Vanhanen II	2007	POST	Y	N	IC, CaC, Pca	CaC	Pca	Y	N	M
Mari Kiviniemi	2010	IE	Y	N	IC, CaC, Pca	CaC	Pca	Y	N	M
Katainen I	2011	POST	Y	N	IC, CaC, Pca	CaC	Pca	Y	N	M
Katainen II	2014	POST	Y	N	IC, CaC, Pca	CaC	Pca	Y	N	M

Stubb I	2014	IE	Y	N	IC, CaC, Pca	CaC	Pca	Y	N	M
Stubb II	2014	POST	Y	N	IC, CaC, Pca	CaC	Pca	Y	N	M
Sipilä I	2015	POST	Y	N	IC, CaC, Pca	CaC	Pca	Y	N	M
Sipilä II	2017	POST	Y	N	IC, CaC, Pca	CaC	Pca	Y	N	M

Notes:

Coalition agreement: IE = inter-election; POST = post-election

Conflict management mechanisms: IC = Inner cabinet; CaC = Cabinet committee; Pca = Combination of cabinet members and parliamentarians; O =

Coalition discipline: All = Discipline always expected

Policy agreement: Few = Policy agreement on a few selected policies; Varied = Policy agreement on a non-comprehensive variety of policies; Comp =

Table 6.6 Cabinet termination in Finland, 1987–2018

Cabinet	Date in	Date out	Relative duration (%)	Mechanisms of cabinet termination	Terminal events	Parties (when conflict between or within)	Policy area(s)
Holkeri I	1987-04-30	1990-08-24	85.5	7a		SMP, KOK	Finance, So affairs
Holkeri II	1990-08-28	1991-03-17	100	1			

Aho I	1991-04- 26	1994-06- 20	80.9	7a	SKL, KESK	Foreign affa
Aho II	1994-06- 28	1995-03- 19	100	1		
Lipponen I	1995-04- 13	1999-03- 21	100	1		
Lipponen II	1999-04- 15	2002-05- 31	79.8	7a	SDP, KOK, RKP, VIHR, SKDL	Environmen
Lipponen III	2002-05- 31	2003-03- 16	100	1		
Jätteenmäki	2003-04- 17	2003-06- 18	4.3	7b	SDP, KESK	
Vanhanen I	2003-06- 24	2007-03- 18	100	1		
Vanhanen II	2007-04- 19	2010-06- 18	79.2	9		
Mari	2010-06- 22	2011-04- 17	100	1		
Kiviniemi						
Katainen I	2011-06- 22	2014-03- 25	72.1	7a	KOK, SDP, RKP, SKL, VIHR, SKDL	Foreign affa Social affai
Katainen II	2014-03- 25	2014-06- 24	23.3	9		

Stubb I	2014-06- 24	2014-09- 20	29.3	7a	KOK, SDP, RKP, SKL, VIHR	Environmen
Stubb II	2014-09- 20	2015-04- 19	100	1		
Sipilä I	2015-05- 29	2017-06- 13	52.7	8	SMP	

Table 6.6. *cont.*

Technical terminations

1: Regular parliamentary election; 2: Other constitutional reason; 3: Death of PM

Discretionary terminations

4: Early parliamentary election; 5: Voluntary enlargement of coalition; 6: Cabinet defeated by opposition in parliament;

7a/b: Conflict between coalition parties: policy (a) and/or personnel (b); 8: Intra-party conflict in coalition party or parties;

9: Other voluntary reason

Terminal events

10: Elections, non-parliamentary; 11: Popular opinion shocks; 12: International or national security event; 13: Economic event;

14: Personal event

Note: Relative duration: share of constitutionally allowed duration for this cabinet.

Appendix. List of political parties

Abbreviation Name

SKDL Left Alliance (Vasemmistoliitto), 1990–

Finnish People's Democratic League (Suomen Kansan Demokraattinen Liitto), before
1990

TPSL	Social Democratic Union of Workers and Smallholders (Työväen ja Pienviljelijäin Sosialidemokraattinen Liitto)
SDP	Social Democratic Party of Finland (Suomen sosialidemokraattinen puolue)
VIHR	Green League (Vihreä liitto)
KESK	Centre Party of Finland (Suomen Keskusta)
SIN	Blue Reform (Sininen tulevaisuus)
SMP	Finns Party (Perussuomalaiset), 1995– Finnish Rural Party (Suomen maaseudun puolue), before 1995
LKP	Liberal People's Party (Liberaalinen kansanpuolue), 1965–2011 People's Party of Finland (Suomen Kansanpuolue), 1951–1965
SKL	Christian Democrats (Kristillisdemokraatit, before 2001 Suomen Kristillinen Liitto)
RKP	Swedish People's Party of Finland (Suomen ruotsalainen kansanpuolue)
KOK	National Coalition Party (Kansallinen Kokoomus)

Note:

Party names are given in English, followed by the party name in Finnish in parentheses. If several parties have been coded under the same abbreviation (successor parties), or if the party has changed its name, these are listed in reverse chronological order followed by the period during which a specific party or name was in use.
