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The Presidency and the Political Roles of Cabinets in the Western CIS Countries

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The institutionalisation of central executives in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) has received a substantial amount of attention in the literature (Blondel & Muller-Rommel 2001; Goetz & Margetts 1999; Goetz & Wollmann 2001). The scholarly work on this topic was encouraged by the attention paid to the issue by leading international organisations which sponsored a number of comparative research projects (EU-sponsored SIGMA initiative; UNDP-supported NISPAcee program; etc.), and by the growing Europeanisation of CEE executive institutions (Brusis 2004; Grabbe 2001; Lippert, Umbach, & Wessels 2001). The transformation of the central executive governments in the former Soviet Union received, with the exception of the Baltic countries, a much smaller amount of attention in the literature. This paper attempts to fill this gap by examining the features of the cabinet decision-making process in the Western republics of the former Soviet Union and by reviewing the obstacles to the efforts to, in Goetz and Wollmann's (2001) term, 'governmentalise' post-Soviet cabinets, i.e. to build up their policy-making and coordinating capacities.

Despite the high profile that presidential involvement in major policy matters receives in literature on Russia, Ukraine, and Moldova (so-called Western CIS countries), neither the constitutional set-up nor political practices in any of these countries can be described in terms of a presidential form of government. Cabinets headed by prime ministers constitute an important part of what can be termed a 'dual executive' constitutional arrangement that has been in place for most of the post 1991 – period in these countries. Local scholarship on government organisations in these countries as exemplified, for example, by the recent book on the role of cabinet in the legislative process in Russia (Shuvalov 2004), which was written by one of the key advisors to the Russian president. He is paying an increasing amount of attention to the role cabinets play in the governance structures of transition countries.

The structural and procedural design of the first post-communist cabinets was heavily influenced by the legacies of their institutional predecessors, national and republican Councils of Ministers in the late Soviet period. Since the fall of communism, each of the former republics experienced a number of cabinet restructuring reforms. One important result of these reforms was that cumbersome sectorally-based ministerial organisations, which were inherited from Soviet times and were preserved through a significant part of the 1990s (Parison 2000; World Bank 1997), slowly but surely gave way to cabinets with a more streamlined functional organisation of ministries. The departmental restructuring was coupled with a reorganisa-

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tion of cabinet secretariats and prime ministerial offices. These changes led to situation by the mid-2000s in which the Western CIS cabinets were structurall quite similar to CEE central executives.

The functions performed by the cabinet in these two groups of countries, how ever, remain substantially different. Although there is a considerable variation i cabinet performance across individual countries, cabinets in the Western CIS coun tries did not become the dominant force in policy formation. The balance betwee the administrative and policy components in the functioning of these cabinets re mains skewed: administrative tasks continue to dominate over political and policy related tasks of policy initiation, coordination, and arbitration.

This chapter reviews some of the most problematic features of the decision making process in the Western CIS cabinets and traces the roots of these problems to the general challenges of institutionalising the executive government in these countries. It argues that the functioning of these countries' cabinets is characterised by a diffusion of executive decision-making authority and a lack of collegiality and collective participation in the cabinet decision-making processes. These problems are, in turn, a product of the type of relationship that the Western CIS cabinets have developed with presidents and political parties. Each of the following sections of the paper examines in detail how the variation in severity of the above mentioned prob lems in cabinet decision-making is linked to the variation in success of establishing the centrality of the cabinet in the political system of individual countries.

Diffusion of executive decision-making authority

While discussing government policymaking across a number of different issue areas in Russia, Okun'kov (1996) refers to different strategies that various interest group representatives and regional officials employed to deal with the issues that required approval at the central government level. They would opt for either lobbying presi-dential administration officials or cabinet secretariat staff. The choice of an institu-tion to contact depended on the lobbyists' expectations regarding the preferences that officials in these two different institutions were likely to hold with respect to the specific issue at hand, and on the strength of the lobbyists' personal connections in the presidential administration or in the cabinet. The required executive decisions, according to the author of the study, could be secured either through the presiden-tial administration or through the cabinet. A somewhat similar logic is described by Luchin and Mazurov (2000) who claim that officials and societal actors have to deal with situations in which alternative regulations on the same issue are produced by different state actors, leaving it to the former to choose which state agency's in-structions to follow. While the degree of concentration of decision-making power in the hands of the presidency increased substantially during Putin's period, these Russian examples illustrate what is a common phenomenon across the Western CIS countries – the existence of multiple centres of executive government.

The persistence of diffusion of executive decision-making authority periodi-*cally* produces competing claims on executive authority, leads to the establishment of parallel chains of command, encourages the proliferation of contradictory and conflicting executive orders and regulations, and imposes a high burden of coordination on top echelons of civil servants. It also institutionalises a system where informal reporting lines cut across formal reporting lines, further adding to the administrative confusion created by the conflict of overlapping and cross-cutting executive responsibilities.

The existence of multiple centres of executive governance is not compatible with what in the literature is often described as basic prerequisites for effective executive governance: executive policy-making initiatives must come from the cabinet; leadership in cabinet matters is exercised from the office of the prime minister; all major policy decisions are the results of collegial deliberation and ratification and all major outcomes of decision-making are presented in the form of cabinet resolutions and laws passed by parliament (Manning et al. 1999).

Central government policymaking in Russia is affected by overlapping claims for the control of executive authority on the part of cabinet and presidential administrations across a wide spectrum of policy areas. Some recent examples come from areas as diverse as science and technology reform, privatisation, and gas price regulations. With regards to the first issue, in 2005, the presidential administration issued a call for science and technology reform proposals. At the same time, the cabinet of the Russian Federation, after a long process of deliberations, consultations and elaboration of reform programme documents, was about to hold a cabinet meeting to approve a detailed plan of science and technology reform in Russia. The Ministry of Education and Science officials expressed surprise at the presidential administration's initiative and claimed to have no prior knowledge of the presidential administration's plans to initiate the elaboration of plans for a reform whose design, in the view of ministry officials, was already elaborated in detail in the Cabinet. This incident was interpreted by analysts as evidence of a serious lack of coordination and communication between the cabinet and presidential administrations on an important policy matter (Petukhov 2005).

Similar tensions exist in central government decision-making in Ukraine after the Orange revolution. For several months following the December 2004 presidential elections, a number of conflicting statements about the re-privatisation plans of the Ukrainian government were issued by the Ukrainian president, Yushchenko and prime minister, Tymoshenko. While the former advocated a policy involving a comprehensive review of privatisation results, the latter stressed that only a very limited number of privatisation outcomes would be questioned by the new Ukrainian authorities (Malynsky 2005). Another example of tensions over decision-making authority comes from prime minister Tymoshenko's attempt to impose administrative controls on the rise of gas prices in spring 2005. President

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Yushchenko intervened by publicly criticising cabinet policy and by issuing a decree that banned the imposition of administrative controls on gas prices (Mostova 2005). In both instances, neither the government bureaucracy nor the economic actors involved, were sure where to look for guidance on what government's actual policy would be.
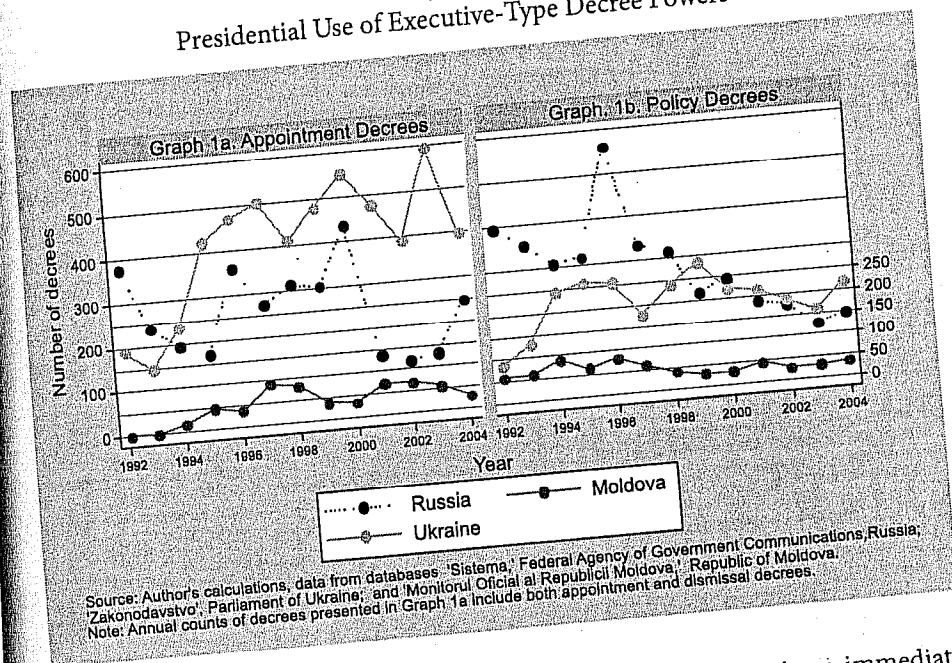
Sources of presidents' executive power. Presidential ability to intervene in cabinet matters in the Western CIS countries is derived from a number of sources. Presidents' control of significant constitutional powers is of primary importance in this respect. Two types of powers granted to presidents by the constitution are of immediate relevance in executive matters. The first one has become known in literature as "executive decree authority" (Carey & Shugart 1998), which is the power to issue decrees on a wide range of executive matters. Constitutional provisions regulating executive decree authority can grant presidents power to create and reorganise central government agencies, to make decisions on issues of public administration, to issue decrees on economic and social matters, and to decide on matters of state secret. The other distinct type of presidential power is the power to make appointments across a wide range of positions in the executive government, judicial system, independent regulatory agencies, etc. Deciding upon whom to appoint can represent an important policy move, thus making presidential appointment powers of immediate relevance for understanding executive politics.

To illustrate the degree of presidential intervention in executive matters, Figure 1 below provides data on the annual number of appointment and policy-related decrees in three countries[1].

Throughout the post communist period, presidents in Russia and Ukraine issued annually several hundred appointment decrees. On average there were also more than two hundred policy decrees issued in Russia and Ukraine each year. In Moldova, on the other hand, the presidents used decrees much less frequently. The differences in the use of decree powers reflect the underlying variation in the strength of presidential constitutional powers. The constitutional powers of the Moldovan president are much weaker than his Russian and Ukrainian counterparts, which in turn, reflect the varying ability of post-communist presidents to dominate political processes during the pre-constitution period (Frye 1997).

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1   Annual numbers for appointment decrees include both appointments and dismissals made by the president. The count of policy-related decrees included decrees that dealt with issues related to the broadly defined policy areas of government, economy and society. All decrees dealing with issues in the specific policy area were included in the count, regardless of the scope and nature of the actions required by the decree. So-called ceremonial decrees used by presidents to establish events, commemorations and to award medals, honorary titles and pardons, etc. were not included in the count of policy-related decrees. So-called secret or "not for a publication" presidential decrees were also excluded from the count.

Figure 1
Presidential Use of Executive-Type Decree Powers

Source: Author's calculations, data from databases 'Sistema', Federal Agency of Government Communications, Russia; 'Zakonodavstvo', Parliament of Ukraine; and 'Monitorul Oficial al Republicii Moldova', Republic of Moldova.
Note: Annual counts of decrees presented in Graph 1a include both appointment and dismissal decrees.

One important finding that Figure 1 illustrates is that there is no immediate link between the size of the country and the number of appointments presidents make. As both graphs indicate, Ukrainian president Kuchma, during his 1994 – 2004 office term, routinely issued more decrees than his Russian counterparts, although the latter enjoyed a similar set of constitutional appointment powers and presided over a numerically much larger state apparatus. This phenomenon is largely due to president Kuchma's success in gaining control over the appointment of some additional categories of top government officials. The Ukrainian president's strategy was either to secure the inclusion of specific provisions that granted him additional appointment powers into statutory documents during their passage, or simply to usurp a power to make appointment decisions in areas that were not regulated by statutes. The use of these strategies was the Ukrainian president's response to the perceived need of securing the loyalty of government officials in a political environment that was consistently more competitive than the one that his Russian counterparts faced (Protsyk 2004).

The prominent features of the Russian graph are the spikes in the number of appointment decrees during presidential election years and a substantial decline in the number of appointment decrees during Putin's term in office. The latter reflects Putin's emphasis on prioritising stability of the political system in general and the stability of cadres in particular (Shevtsova 2004). When put into a comparative perspective, the number of Russian presidential appointment decisions is similar to

the number of presidential appointments for top government officials recorded for the post-war US presidents (King & Ragsdale 1988). Unlike the US case, however, only a small percentage of presidential decisions related to appointing or dismissing government officials in Russia and in Ukraine require legislative confirmation or are constrained in some other way through constitutional or statutory norms.

Table 1 summarises the cabinet appointment rules that guided the process of cabinet formation in each of the countries.[2]

Table 1
Presidential Powers over Cabinet Appointment

Cabinet Positions	Cases	Nominate	Confirm Nomination	Dismiss	Confirm Dismissal	Total
Prime Minister	Russia 1993 – present	+	0	++	0	3
	Ukraine 1996 – 2005	+	0	++	0	3
	Moldova 1994 – 2001	+	0	0	0	1
Cabinet Minister	Russia 1993 – present	0	+	0	+	2
	Ukraine 1996 – 2005	0	+	++	0	3
	Moldova 1994 – 2001	0	+	0	+	2

Source: Author's coding of constitutions from http://confinder.richmond.edu

The Russian and Ukrainian presidents controlled the ultimate power with respect to the destiny of the cabinet, that is, the power to dismiss the prime minister unilaterally. The dismissal of the prime minister automatically led to cabinet resignations in both countries. The prime minister and cabinet's survival in Moldova, on the other hand, did not depend on the president. The 1994 Moldovan constitution put cabinet survival entirely in the hands of parliament. This dramatically shaped the incentives of cabinet office-holders. In contrast, prime ministers in Russia and Ukraine considered the president as their main principal, even if the parliament controlled a symmetrical power of cabinet dismissal.

Formal rules for appointing and dismissing prime ministers were guarded jealously by presidents and parliaments who had stakes in the procedures and deterred each other from violating these procedures. Rules for the appointment and dismissal of individual ministers, however, were often ignored. Both the Russian

2   To focus attention on the most important differences, Table 2 summarises appointment rules only for the constitutional regimes that lasted the longest in each individual country.

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and Ukrainian constitutions require the prime minister to submit candidates for ministerial posts for subsequent presidential approval. This requirement was often ignored by the presidents who repeatedly chose to make unilateral *decisions about* ministerial appointments. The Prime ministers' dependency on presidents for survival in office, as well as the former's weaker political legitimacy, allowed presidents to use non-transparent procedures for nominating individuals. How many ministers close to his/her ideal choice the prime minister could have in the cabinet depended on the results of individual bargaining between the prime minister and president. Unlike the constitutional rules in Moldova, where not only the prime minister, but also the line-up of individual ministers, had to be approved by parliament, cabinet formation norms in Russia and Ukraine only required a parliamentary confirmation for the candidacy of the prime minister. The weak political stature of individual ministers led to a high dependence on the president.

The Russian and Ukrainian presidents also used their power to create and reorganise executive government agencies in order to put key agencies directly under the president's control (Protsyk 2004; Remington, Smith, & Haspel 1998). In contrast, when the Moldovan president Luchinschi proposed the creation of a Department for Organised Crime and Corruption Prevention directly subordinate to the president, this move was strongly opposed by Parliament as an usurpation of parliamentary authority and an effort to create an agency to collect information on Luchinschi's enemies. The dispute was taken to the Constitutional Court, which ruled that such an agency could only be created under the subordination of existing government agencies, over which some parliamentary oversight existed (Way 2003). The proposed department was finally created under the Ministry of the Interior. Although president Lucinschi was still able to influence investigations conducted by the department, his ability to fully control its work was much more limited than the presidential control of executive agencies in the Russian or Ukrainian cases.

President Kuchma also fought the battle for controlling the appointment of deputy ministers and deputy heads of central government agencies. Although the 1996 constitution contains no clauses relating to the appointment of deputy ministers, president Kuchma effectively usurped the power to appoint *all deputy ministers* and a large number of deputy heads of central government agencies. Facing more institutional constraints on his power, including a constitutionally stronger parliament than his Russian counterpart, president Kuchma sought to enhance his stand *vis-à-vis* other government institutions by using his decree powers to secure control of the stay in office of as large a number of high level government officials as possible (Protsyk 2005).

Presidential decrees can be conceptualised as a direct form of intervention in executive matters. Political practice in post-communist countries is also characterised by the presence of many indirect forms of presidential interventions. Presidents frequently charge cabinet, individual ministers, or heads of other central govern-

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ment agencies with taking some specific actions in their respective areas of responsibility. The constitutionality of these presidential instructions is often questioned by observers of presidential politics. The presidential ability to use these forms of intervention, however, is rooted, not in constitutional norms, but in established political practice that is based on the acceptance of presidential leadership over the executive.

As the co-existence of presidents with a number of different cabinets indicates, these claims are not always accepted by prime ministers. Political competition between the president and the prime minister over control of the executive was most frequent in Ukraine, although instances of confrontation between these two institutional actors also took place both in Russia and Moldova (Protsyk 2006). The coherence of government decision-making suffered during these periods of confrontation, and the negative consequences of multiple centres of executive government were also the most pronounced during these periods.

Another important source of presidential ability to claim leadership in executive matters is the continually growing sophistication of the presidential administrative apparatus, including agencies charged with providing logistical support for presidential activity, such as the special directorate of affairs, directorate of property management, etc. Countries' constitutions either do not mention presidential administrations at all or only mention them in passing as a body created to assist in organising the work of the president. Presidents in all three countries, however, used their decree powers to boost the resources and prerogatives of the presidential administrations and transform what was envisioned by many of the constitutional drafters to be merely presidential secretariats into independent centres of policy analysis and coordination.[3]

Many departments of presidential administrations duplicate functions of individual ministries or try to coordinate the work of a group of related ministries. For example, it was widely acknowledged among analysts that the major initiatives in the Ukrainian foreign policy during Kuchma's 10 year presidency were generated, processed, and elaborated not in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but in the respective department of the presidential administration (Protsyk 2003). Luchin and Ma-

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3   The staff of the presidential administration in Russia consists of approximately 2,000 people (Degtev 2005). The overall budget of the presidential administration, presidential directorate of affairs and offices of presidential representatives in federal districts was almost 6 billion rubles (about 240 million dollars) in 2006. For the same year, the budget of cabinet was 841 million rubles (about 33 million US dollars). The staff size of the presidential administration in Ukraine during Kuchma's presidency was reported to be 619 (Tomenko 2003). The staff grid of the presidential apparatus in Moldova lists 84 staff members (Decree N 716-III, 10.06.2002). Only the figure on the size of the Moldovan presidential apparatus was available from the original sources. Overall, the data on the size of presidential administration staff is not very reliable and might not be fully comparable across countries. A number of analytical centres, commissions, and presidential representatives, along with their apparatus might be missing from the numbers reported.

zurov (2000) rely on interviews of presidential administration officials, which they use to analyse the officials' perception of the role that the presidential administration should play in the work of government, to report the officials' conviction that presidential administration staff should, among other things, coordinate the work of so-called "enforcement" ministries (ministries of defence, internal affairs, justice, and emergencies). These authors also claim that there is evidence that prior to 1998, the drafts of virtually all cabinet decisions had to be approved by presidential administration officials. This screening procedure, according to the authors, also remained in place after 1998, although it began to cover fewer issues.

Presidential administrations were not the only government bodies that exhibited ambitions to serve as alternatives to the cabinet centre of executive decision-making. At various stages of post-communist evolution in both Russia and Ukraine, constitutional bodies such as security councils, which were intended to deal with matters of national security and consisted of a number of the highest ranking government officials, were successful in extending their mandate beyond traditional security issues and encroached on cabinet responsibilities in various policy areas. The ability of security councils to intervene in some of the traditional domains of cabinet authority grew at times when presidents, for a variety of reasons, were looking for alternatives to the cabinet as a decision-making venue. This underscores the fact that irrespective of the types of challenges facing cabinet authority or the institution mounting those challenges, ultimately it was the president who was behind them.

Lack of collegiality in the cabinet decision-making process

Cabinets in the Western CIS countries also suffer from a lack of collective participation in the cabinet decision-making process. The concept of 'cabinet government,' which is often taken to imply an arrangement where the prime minister is 'the first among equals' and cabinet meetings are arenas where all major cabinet decisions are jointly debated and ratified by all ministers, might be an elusive ideal (Weller 2003). There is, however, a broad consensus in the literature that levels of collegiality vary and that higher levels of collegiality contribute to a higher quality decision-making process (Blondel & Manning 2002; Manning et al. 1999). Collegiality here is understood, not only as a collective ratification of cabinet decisions, but also a collective responsibility by cabinet members for all cabinet decisions.

The technocratic nature of the cabinet formation process is the single most important challenge for collegiality of cabinet decision-making in the Western CIS countries. Forming a cabinet along technocratic, rather than party lines, is sometimes perceived as advantageous for the effectiveness of decision-making in the cabinet. Technocratic cabinet members usually have a deep knowledge of the sector of government they manage. They are expected to make their judgments on the basis of sectoral expediency and not electoral concerns. They might also be perceived as more capable of withstanding the pressure of special interests and more willing

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to initiate unpopular economic and social reforms. The empirical research on the subject, however, finds mixed support for such expectations. The evidence showing a better performance of technocratic cabinets when compared with party-based cabinets is only related to the initiation of reforms and not to reform implementation and consolidation (Haggard & Kaufman 1995).

In terms of their role in countries' political systems, technocratic ministers can be best described as individual political entrepreneurs. Conceptualising technocratic ministers in this way points to the lack of partisan constraints on the behaviour of ministers and highlights the personal, rather than the political, nature of the ministers' commitments. In the context of the post-communist transition in the Western CIS countries, the technocratic character of cabinets posed a number of challenges for government decision-making. The idea of having cabinets staffed with technocrats rather than politicians sounded very appealing to many at the beginning of the 1990s in a society inexperienced in the operations of a modern democracy. The problems associated with the prevalence of technocrats in post-communist cabinets have become increasingly salient over time. These problems include fragmentation of cabinet policymaking, parochialism of ministerial interests, and weakness of political mandates for governance.

Fragmentation of cabinet policymaking and a lack of co-operation between individual ministries are reported in a number of studies of post-Soviet central governments (Parison 2000; Sundakov 1997). While these authors point to the deficiencies of internal cabinet organisation and poor coordination on the part of centres of government, fragmentation of cabinet policy making also has important political roots. This fragmentation is, to a very significant extent, due to a situation in which individual politicians appointed to cabinet positions do not comprise a team bound together by shared political beliefs and programmatic goals. Ministers who were given their portfolios, not because of their membership in political organisations, but because of their individual merits and technical expertise, tend to be more preoccupied with their department's performance and individual political careers than with the collective image or performance of cabinet.

Technocratic ministerial selection also leads to parochialism in policymaking on the level of individual ministries. Ministers, whose professional roots are in the industries they are currently in charge of, have a tendency to associate themselves with the interests of that sector and not the cabinet as a whole. They view themselves as representatives of their specific industries in the cabinet. They are oriented to satisfy the demands of their sectoral constituencies rather than the needs of the citizens who consume their goods or services. For example, the minister of transportation is more preoccupied with the well-being of transport-related bureaucratic structures and enterprises than with the quality of transportation services that consumers receive. A minister of interior who was a former high level bureaucrat in a

law enforcement agency can allow the concerns and preferences of this constituency to dominate his/her decision making process.

Unlike ministers who are party agents, technocratic ministers often find it very difficult to sustain the course of policies that is required to ensure effective governance in their policy area. They lack legitimacy that party affiliated ministers enjoy due to the fact that the electorate grants parties an explicit mandate to exercise governance functions. The weakness of political mandates often contributes to ministers' inability to overcome numerous obstacles to unpopular, but needed, reforms in internal ministerial organisation and in the execution of regulatory functions that ministries are expected to perform in their respective policy areas. Frequent references to the 'lack of political will' in the post-Soviet context are often related to the weakness of the political mandate of ministers brought from the top layer of the bureaucratic apparatus.

Causes of the persistence of technocratic types of cabinets

The presidential ability to intervene selectively in the process of cabinet formation and dismissal, as discussed earlier, is one factor explaining the persistence of technocratic cabinets, especially in Russia and Ukraine. The low level of party system institutionalisation across all three countries is the other. The maturity of the party system, however, has been growing substantially in recent years, which is likely to have major implications on how cabinets and individual ministries are organised and function.

For most of the post-communist period, parties played a rather limited role in cabinet formation. Presidents who had a preference for appointing technocratic cabinets were able to influence the cabinet formation process, first of all, through their constitutional power of prime-ministerial nomination. Their decision to nominate technocratic candidates for the post of prime minister tended to result in only limited protest from political parties whose organisational and programmatic weaknesses undermined their ability to insist on partisan principles of cabinet formation. Similarly, ministerial candidates tended to be selected on the basis of possessing some sort of technical expertise in a specific area of government operations. Having strong party ties was perceived as a liability, especially for candidates for key economic and "enforcement" portfolios.

The prevalence of technocrats in ministerial positions was in contrast to some radical changes in other aspects of cabinet functioning. For example, technocrats dominated cabinets throughout the entire 1994 – 2004 period of Kuchma's presidency. At the same time, the Apparat of Cabinet of Ministers, whose obsolete structure and functions had been a significant obstacle to streamlining the organisation of cabinet and for empowering the individual ministries (Krawchenko 1997), underwent substantial restructuring. These changes were laid down in the Interim Rules of Procedure of the Cabinet (Cabinet Resolution N. 915, 05.06.00). Now the

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reformed Apparatus ensures that ministerial initiatives and legal acts are in line with the policy priorities and strategic goals of cabinet.

With political parties asserting their central role in the political process and acknowledging the advantages of partisan political composition of cabinet, the situation has begun to change. These developments, however, have been unequal across individual countries. Table 2 below provides data on the share of partisan appointments in countries' incumbent cabinets at the time of writing.

Table 2
Ministerial Partisanship in Europe

Regime Type/Country	Share of Non-Partisan Cabinet Members
Parliamentary regimes*	0.09
Semi-presidential regimes*	0.15
Moldova**	0.78
Russia**	0.81
Ukraine**	0.32

*   Mean share of non-partisan ministers for European cabinets formed during the 1990 – 2000 period (includes observations from the Baltic republics of the former Soviet Union), adopted from Octavio Amorim Neto and Kaare Strøm (2006)

** Share of non-partisan ministers for incumbent cabinet (May 2007) only, author's calculations

To put the experience of the Western CIS countries into perspective, the table provides data on a mean share of non-partisan ministers for European cabinets formed under parliamentary or semi-presidential rules (Neto & Strom 2006). As the table indicates, shares of technocrats in the cabinets of each of the three Western CIS countries were substantially larger than corresponding shares in either parliamentary or semi-presidential European cabinets. The table also points to a very substantial difference between Ukraine on the one hand and Russia and Moldova on the other. Only about a third of cabinet members in Ukraine can be qualified as technocrats lacking partisan political experience whereas the share of technocrats in both Russian and Moldovan cabinets was more than three quarters.

The Ukrainian cabinet's composition reflects the dramatic political changes that followed the end of president Kuchma's rule. The introduction of a proportional representation, instead of a mixed electoral system for the 2006 parliamentary elections and the enactment of the 2006 constitutional reform, which limited the president's involvement in cabinet formation, radically increased the role of parties in the political system in general and in cabinet formation in particular. Even prior to the enactment of these institutional changes, the Orange Revolution events signalled a change in patterns of ministerial elections.

The first post-Orange Revolution cabinet, which was formed in early 2005 by Yulia Tymoshenko, brought into the cabinet a number of politicians who had very limited or even no prior experience in the policy sectors they were assigned to. Yet these ministers had a clear political mandate to bring about a radical change in the quality of policies and services produced or delivered by specific ministries. For example, a new minister of interior, who, for the first time in the history of the ministry, had no prior experience in law enforcement, was able to implement difficult changes such as a substantial reduction in the number of high level positions: limiting the number of ministry officials at the rank of police general or an official launching of an internal investigation into claims of high level corruption in the ministry.

High levels of both ministerial and bureaucratic turnover in Ukraine are in a stark contrast to recent developments in Russia, where political and bureaucratic stability, which are a product of restrictions on political competition under Putin, leads, in the view of many observers, to a growing lack of responsiveness, especially on the part of bureaucratic structures. Policy failures rarely result in the dismissal of ministers or high ranking bureaucrats. These individuals tend to circulate from one position to another without leaving the cohort of the so-called "managerial cadres" (Huskey 2004; Kryshtanovskaya & White 2005). Yeltsin's period, on the other hand, was characterised by much higher levels of ministerial turnover, although ministerial appointments were also made primarily on the basis of technocratic competence and personal loyalty to the president, rather than on the basis of distinguished careers in public politics (Shevchenko 2004).

Table 2 also indicates the presence of a large number of technocrats in the incumbent Moldovan cabinet. This finding is an apparent contradiction to the logic suggested by the trajectory of political developments in this country. The institutional framework, which provided for a constitutionally weak president and empowered parties through the adoption of a proportional electoral system from the very beginning of the post-communist transition, could have been expected to produce political, rather than technocratic, cabinets. The persistence of technocratic cabinets in the Moldovan case, however, is a result of a combination of factors that are not likely to persist. The Moldovan party system is currently living a period of one-party dominance, which is highly unlikely to be maintained over a long period of time under the conditions of a fully competitive proportional electoral system.

Under the influences of semi-presidential political practices, the ruling communist party made a highly unusual decision to vest political power in an indirectly elected president rather than a prime minister. With the election of party leader Vladimir Voronin to the presidential office in 2001, political power became concentrated in the hands of the president. The party and its leader at that time made the choice of forming a technocratic cabinet. This practice was preserved after the communist's repeat, albeit substantially less convincing, victory in the 2005 parliamentary elections. The decline of communist party hegemony, providing that the consti-

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tutional framework is left intact, is likely to lead to a change in the current patterns of governance and a reallocation of executive powers from the president into the hands of the partisan cabinet headed by a politically powerful prime minister.

Conclusion

This chapter analysed how the functioning of the cabinet in the Western CIS countries has been shaped by the existence of constitutionally and/or politically powerful presidencies and by the character of political parties' involvement in the cabinet formation process. It argued that one of the main consequences of presidential dominance in all three countries has been a delay in establishing cabinets as a centre of executive decision-making. The low level of political parties' participation in cabinet formation for most of the period analysed has also denied cabinets political legitimacy in asserting their central role in executive policy-making. As a result, the Western CIS cabinets continue to lag behind their counterparts in most of the CEE countries in terms of their institutionalisation and centrality in the policy process.

The diffusion of policymaking authority at the top of the government, as well as fragmentation of cabinets' internal decision-making processes, were identified as some of the major issues that negatively influence the capacity of governmental leadership to lead effectively. The origins of these problems were traced back to the choices made with regard to the constitutional setup of the executive, cabinet formation procedures, and the role of parties in the overall design of the political system. These choices themselves, however, are far from being immune to changes and developments.

Recent constitutional amendments in Ukraine and Moldova, which, among other things, had the effect of weakening presidents vis-à-vis cabinets, constitute one type of development with very significant implications for how the centre of government is organised and functions in these countries. Transformation of parties from small elitist political groupings into genuinely strong political organisations with professional staff and a mass following is another important development in each of the three countries. The assertion of party control over the cabinet formation process will gradually change the patterns of ministerial recruitment, cabinet's internal organisation, and cabinet's relations with the presidency.

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