

# **Cabinet Durability within Parliamentary Democracies: The Italian Model**

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## **Abstract**

An analysis of Italy's First and Second Republic, 1946-2008, reveals significant variation among the lengths of the governments' tenures as well as the high frequency of failure to sustain power throughout the length of their constituted five year term. The lack of a stable executive power deters Italy from reaching its full governing power and prompts the importance of finding the factors that are most significantly related to a sustainable government. Despite the political differences, my research shows that the prime minister's party representation in parliament is a significant variable in predicting tenure length for both republics alike.

## **Introduction**

Although there has been extensive research into the longevity and stability of governments in parliamentary democracies, there is still little known to answer why certain Italian governments have had such a high tendency to dissolve before the end of term. The estimated term for an Italian administration is only 47.7 weeks, far below the constituted five year maximum (See the list of cabinets from the end of World War II to the present administration in appendix). Closer study into the beginning and end dates of the cabinets' tenures shows that the majority of administrations ended before their five year term was over.

Parliamentary democracies are structured so the government is dependent on parliamentary support. This increases the probability of a frequent turnover of power and curtails tenures. France, Israel, and Portugal, like Italy, all experience short government tenure and low turnover of the party in power. Other parliamentary democracies experience a reverse pattern of long tenure with a higher frequency of power turnover (Mershon 2002). The second group of parliamentary democracies is much more conducive to established theory of how parliamentary governments should experience turnover, the first group, including Italy, challenges these theories.

What is unique about the case of Italy, exemplified in the First Republic, is Italy's portrayal of being both stable and unstable. This is due to the paradox of Italy having an exceptionally high cabinet turnover rate, while at the same time demonstrating a low turnover of the party in executive power. This phenomenon of a high rate of cabinet turnover is not

characteristic exclusively to the First Republic but continues to be an enduring feature of Italian government.

What then explains the reasons for the high rate of turnover in the First and Second Republics? Can the same conditions be the root cause of this phenomenon in both republics alike, or are there variables that cause this to occur independently in either the First or Second Republic? Investigation of the prior research conducted is essential to creating a foundation of the discovered variables and conditions specific to each republic. This will provide data to compare the findings for both republics to try and establish possible correlations. Research, however, has neglected to examine the possibility of variables internal to the Italian system, which may be the condition that causes high turnover rate in both the First and Second Republic alike. My research will attempt to fill this gap, and find the answer to why certain Italian governments, regardless of the condition of the republic, are so short lived. The focus of this paper will be an examination of the institutional variables and their effect on the stability of government.

### **Political Spectrum**

The political spectrum is a spatial model of party ideology. Coalitions are formed based on the relative distance of the party from potential partners. The First Republic's party system was most clearly defined by Giovanni Sartori as a polarized pluralism system. He based this definition on the characteristic of the system being both a multi-party system and one of extreme pluralism (Pasquino 2004). After World War II until the pivotal election of 1994, Italy's system was comprised of three poles represented by three political parties: the Communists (PCI), the Christian Democrats (DC), and the Socialists (MSI). Gianfranco Pasquino (2004) contends that because of the extremity of the ideological distance between the three poles, especially between

the MSI and PCI, which occupied the far right and far left, respectively, the role of governing was left to the Christian Democrats. In fact, it was imperative that the DC retain the position as the dominant and center party, for both MSI and PCI were anti-system and their leadership would surely have resulted in a regime crisis (Pasquino 2004).

The three factors that transitioned Italy into the Second Republic fostered the conditions for a bipolar system. These factors include the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, tangentopoli, and a new electoral system. The fall of the Berlin Wall symbolized the dissolution of the threat of communism and the end of extreme ideologies in Italian political parties. As a consequence, the parties within the political space were beginning to converge in the center, creating a model more representative of a bipolar system. Tangentopoli was the investigation of the political corruption of the First Republic that affected almost every relevant party. The fallout was most prevalent for the Christian Democrats causing the party to splinter and end their reign of power and influence (Lodici 1999). After tangentopoli, many new parties emerged as a consequence of the fragmentation of the old republic's parties. All parties are now considered relevant political parties and occupy the central space of the policy spectrum, creating a strong left and right pole. Coalitions are now based on the centre left or centre right, with 85% of Italians associating with one or the other (Pasquino 2004).

The Second Republic has conditioned the party system to be controlled by the two dominant poles, left and right. However many scholars argue that the majority support of two broad based coalitions is not sufficient to label the Italian system as bipolar. Claudio Lodici argues that Italy's "extreme multi-partism," a term used to describe the forty-four parties represented in parliament, is the cause of the increased factions and instability (Lodici 1999).

Many small parties, some with only one elected official, obtain power through their ability to run for representation in parliament under the centre-right or centre-left's broad umbrella.

The makeup of the political spectrum and number of relevant parties greatly differs from the First to Second Republic. It is argued that with an increase of relevant parties the Second Republic coalitions are more representative of the voting population's behavior, but is the overwhelming number of parties creating factions within the coalitions? If the DC held the power of the core party throughout the First Republic, why was there such a high frequency of government turnover?

The structure of the political spectrum and the number of relevant parties all contribute to the costs and benefits parties seek in coalition formation. Parliamentary democracies emphasize a balance of power dependent on legislative support, making the executive more vulnerable within parliamentary democracies than other democratic systems. The basic rationalization of coalition formation is to align with the fewest number of parties necessary to capture the majority vote, in order to maximize the individual party's cabinet power (Riker 1962). Established theory holds that coalition formation and success is based on cost and benefits analysis accounting for the political institutional structure, the spectrum of parties' ideologies, and the voter makeup (Mershon 2002).

### **Coalition Formation**

The Institution Free and Institution Focused Theory argue that a coalition's tenure is correlated with its power to create policy. The Institution Free theory contends that when a core party exists, its policy is the foundation of the coalition's comprehensive policy, as was the case of the DC's policy influence within coalitions. However, this theory further asserts that a core party's recognized policy power is positively correlated with a stable government. This fails to

explain why the DC's governments were so quickly dismantled if they retained this power of policy (Mershon 2002).

The Institution Focused Theory, in turn, rationalizes the reasoning behind the constant pattern of dissolving cabinets but fails to identify the source of the DC's policy power. This theory argues that full policy power is conditioned on the existence of no other party within parliament that has the power of veto. The DC did not have this exclusive power of veto and, therefore, did not have the strength to implement any policy independent of the coalitions (Vassallo 2007). When there is an absence of a strong party, one which is free of the threat of veto, the Institution Focused Theory accurately predicts government will become chaotic (Mershon 2002).

In addition to the importance of coalition parties to align policy, the structure of the ideal number of included parties must be determined. Scholar Lawrence Dodd's research created an exponential model aimed at predicting and calculating the duration of parliamentary governments. He found that only 10-25% of an administration's permanence is predicted by a difference of the coalition's ideological differences (important to note that the DC only formed coalitions with pro system parties), and only 30% was explained by the size of the coalition (Dodd 1974). That leaves the question of durability only half answered.

Ared Lijphart's (1999) examination of coalition formation breaks coalitions into two categories, oversized minority cabinets and minimal winning cabinets. Most established theories behind the rational formation of coalitions is based on the minimal winning coalitions because they seek to form alliances with the minimal number of parties to gain the maximum cabinet power, in short the ideal formation. However, this coalition model is not always possible.

Lijphart asserts that an oversized minority cabinet can become necessary within certain political climates and political institutional provisions. In the case of Italy, the DC would seek to form an oversized minority cabinet, according to the “information effect.” This theory contends that an oversized minority coalition is formed superfluously so as to safeguard from potential party defections, which may threaten majority power in parliament (Lijphart 1999).

Lijphart’s “information effect” theoretically explains why the Christian Democrats structured their coalitions in this way, to ensure majority rule by forming an oversized coalition. Further investigation shows that the real source of the DC’s reassurance of alliance loyalty came from the *sottogoverno*, an Italian term meaning a sub-government. In exchange for the DC’s power to run the coalition as they saw fit, the DC gave coalition partners titles and positions in the *sottogoverno*, which in reality held no actual power or meaning. But they guaranteed political kick backs and clientele privileges. If the coalition came into a disagreement, or there was the potential threat of a parliament motion of no confidence, the leaders quickly resigned and were replaced by a new prime minister.

Italy’s constitution does not require parliament to dissolve when a prime minister is replaced (Campus and Pasquino 2006). This constitutional provision has a major effect on the bargaining process of coalition partners. A prime minister, and his party, must bargain over policy with the partners of the coalition. Italy requires a collective agreement of the coalition parties to initiate a vote of no confidence. This is a tactical maneuver to help push a piece of legislation through to parliament and is a common bargaining tactic within coalitions. A party will introduce a piece of legislation, which the prime minister can accept or put to a vote of confidence on his own proposal. The ruling coalition must then decide whether to approve or reject this motion. This is advantageous for a prime minister whose party makes up a majority of

the coalition. However, if the party is not in the majority, then the partners can either accept the prime minister's vote, strengthening his bargaining powers, or reject the motion, forcing him to resign (Huber and McCarty 2001). If the prime minister resigns, a new minister is chosen and parties within the coalition are reshuffled. Rarely are early elections called in these cases. This allows for either the prime minister or the partners to receive increased policy and portfolio power within the coalition (Pasquino 2004).

Coalition formation is determined upon a cost-benefit analysis. The Christian Democrats held an advantage when analyzing costs and benefits of coalition formation and dissolution because they were the 'core party,' the member of all possible coalitions. This was made possible by Italy's multi polar political space, which positioned the DC party as the central ideological pole. The Italian electorate, at this time, voted on the basis of ideology above all else. Because of this and the use of a proportional representation voting system, which is structured to benefit incumbent powers, the DC had far reaching permanence power (Mershon 2002). With the guaranteed support of central ideological voters, the Christian Democrats faced lower electoral costs of dissolving a government early and more flexibility in choosing coalition partners, because as a core party they were assured involvement in the next majority coalition (Mershon 2002).

### **Electoral Law**

The 1994 election is commonly referred to as the "Big Bang." It was the formal end of the First Republic that brought about change to the parties, coalitions, and the overall accountability of the government. Proportional representation was replaced by a mixed system. The Christian Democrats failed under this new law because they were a national party with no specific concentration of voters. The proportional representation model supports the reproduction

of power and is slow to reflect shifts in electoral behavior. The new electoral law was a mix of 25 percent proportional representation and 75 percent single member district (Pasquino 2004). The new electoral law, along with the convergence of the political spectrum, created a new style of electoral competition. It supported the emergence and election of new parties to reflect the shifts in voting behavior (Pasquino 2004). It facilitated a more bipolar structure, along with the rise of the personalization of the prime minister. Power and stability became a reflection of the prime minister in the Second Republic, changing the power dynamic from the party to the position of prime minister.

### **Power of Prime Minister**

The power and role of the prime minister were strengthened in the Second Republic, as the power of the party declined. The First Republic was characterized by the power of the party, which resumed full control and loyalty of its members, making the coalition vulnerable to factions. This was increased by the tradition of party leaders to remain outside of the cabinet, rarely occupying a ministerial position. This served as both a symbolic and figurative representation of the distance between coalition partners (Campus and Pasquino 2006). Positions within the coalition were negotiated based on electoral outcomes, often disproportionately distributed. Small pivotal parties, who were essential to capturing majority, often received more benefits than their electoral contribution (Bull and Pasquino 2007).

The stability of government in the Second Republic is based on the perception of the Prime Ministers and their ability to control the coalition. The Right selects the leader of the majority party as the prime minister, but the Left still uses the same method as the First Republic, allowing the parties to choose a leader. This causes the leader of the Left to be less powerful than the leader of the Right as a prime minister. A leader of the majority party and

coalition is more stable and in a better position during the bargaining process. The leader is also perceived as more stable to the voters, because he will remain the dominant figure of the party even if the coalition fails to win the election (Campus and Pasquino 2006).

Prime ministers serve a critical part of keeping the government intact. They must mediate and negotiate between all of the partner parties. Creating a compromise between actors with specific interests while maintaining an image of strength and power is not always an easy task. The failure to properly mediate and compromise can result in internal fractionalization and potential splintering of the coalition.

### **New Republic**

The winning coalition of the 1994 election, Forza Italia, was a new model of coalition based on heterogeneous alliances designed by Silvio Berlusconi. For the first time in Italian politics, politicians were marketing their coalitions. With this method, Forza Italia specifically marketed to different sets of people and parties to garner their support. Areed Lijphart's "information effect," as discussed within the First Republic, is more suitably applied to the reasoning behind the creation of oversized minority coalitions in this election (Lijphart 1999). Forza Italia was created as a catch all party to ensure a parliamentary majority but proved inadequate at governing. Within a year one of the key alliances in the coalition, the Northern League broke from the party, and in effect the cabinet dissolved (Diamanti 2007). It is this model that many scholars contend is one of the main causes for premature end of tenure in the beginning governments of the Second Republic.

In 1996 the electorate was equally divided between the centre left and centre right, with Prodi's left-centre Olive Tree Coalition coming to power. It represented the first time in Italy's history that the electorate was equally split between two parties. This seemingly important

signal of the emergence of a bipolar system is argued by Ilvo Diamanti (2007) as representing new problems for government stability. He argues that the first three governments of the Second Republic (all of which modeled coalitions after the Berlusconi approach) were in fact fragmented, ineffective at governing and more important to the image of the leaders than to maintaining the balance between the parties within the coalition. The Olive Tree Coalition suffered the same fate as Forza Italia and dissolved within a year of gaining power due to the Communist Refoundation party withdrawing support (Diamanti 2007).

Despite the creation of a more bipolar system, there is continued instability among the majority of coalitions. Within the coalitions there is little unity or commonality between the parties. In the case of the centre-left there is no sufficient party to lead the coalition creating a very vulnerable government and heightening the conditions for the administration to prematurely dissolve. Arguably, the most successful coalition has been Berlusconi's second government. As the leader of the majority party, Berlusconi retained his image as leader of the right. After his coalition's victory, Berlusconi assigned the top four party leaders to minister positions. By appointing the party leaders to important positions within the cabinet, they became more invested in its stability and have less opportunity to renegotiate another coalition to challenge Berlusconi (Pasquino 2004).

The Second Republic was named such to symbolize the dramatic change of governance style and electorate structure. Table 2 is Pasquino's (2004) brief comparison of the First and Second Republic's party systems' major features.

**Table 2. Major Features of the Italian Party System pre and post 1993:**

	1948-1992	1994--
Political polarization and ideological distance	strong and great	weak/limited
Anti-System Parties	MSI and PCI	disappeared
Centre of the Party system occupied	yes, by the DC	no
Opposition/s	bipolar	unipolar
Drives	centrifugal	centripetal
Ideological patterning	rigidity	mentalities
Alternation	impossible	implemented

As the table shows, many changes did occur and, arguably, created a sounder or at least more accountable government. These changes should have theoretically created an environment more conducive to allowing a coalition and prime minister to retain majority power and leadership throughout the five year term period. But as Table 1 shows, there has been only one administration within the Second Republic that was able to stay in power for the full length of his constituted tenure.

Bull and Pasquino (2007) speculate that the extension of this pattern into the Second Republic is caused by two factors: the inadequacy of the electoral reform and the absence of constitutional provisions designed at creating a more stable government. Most discussion of

institutional reform has been to strengthen the prime ministers' powers to control ministers, and dissolve parliament. This theory is strongly supported by the centre-right party. Berlusconi contended that a stable government could emerge if there was no threat of *ribaltone*. A *ribaltone* was the cause of his first government to dissolve and occurs when a party breaks from the majority coalition causing an overturn of parliamentary majority. Expanding on these ideas, the centre-right further theorized that the prime minister should not be subject to a vote of confidence by parliament as a whole but by the majority party only (Bull and Pasquino 2007).

The structure and formation of the bicameral Italian Parliament has created a tradition of ineffective governance perpetuating the problem of an unstable executive. Lodici (1999) contends, "the sternest criticisms of bicameralism have stemmed from its having come to be identified as one of the major causes of the malfunctioning of the whole institutional system." Without a strong legislation or strong party support, the cabinet will never be able to sustain power long enough to be effective. Conditions within the two houses of parliament must reform, so as to create a responsible government that is able to efficiently and successfully carry out responsibilities (Lodici 1999.)

Other scholars examining the Second Republic's governments point at the failure of coalitions and majority support as the main reason for frequent and early cabinet dissolution. These theories mirror many of the arguments made for the First Republic but without the complication of a consistent party in power. Unlike the homogeneous coalitions of the First Republic, coalitions in the Second Republic were characterized by their heterogeneous makeup.

The coalitions of the new republic are not as unified as those of the First Republic, although arguably, the unity of coalitions in the First Republic was based on political gain and

corruption. The failure of a coalition to create a stable majority has been the downfall of many of the new cabinets. Further investigation into what causes individual coalition parties to break away from the majority is crucial, and will continue to be an attributing problem of cabinet stability if not corrected.

After analyzing the institutional factors of the First Republic and Second Republic, variables and conditions emerged showing influential causality that may support a high turnover rate in the cabinets of the respected republics. Scholars found causalities for the individual republics, but failed to discover a comprehensive variable or condition that is relevant in explaining the variation in Italian cabinets' tenures from post World War II to present. Such a problem is a critical gap in research which must be studied.

What is overwhelmingly agreed upon is the dire need for reform and change in the government. Since the fall of Fascism, Italy has made significant progress in rebuilding public efficacy and initiating conditions to protect Italian democracy. The country emerged damaged after the loss of World War II but proved its resilience with a remarkably quick rebuilding of its government and economy. Today, Italy is an industrialized, democracy that has crucial roles economically and politically to Europe as well as the rest of the World. Without a more efficient government, Italy will not be able to reach its governing potential.

## **Hypothesis**

The objective of this research is to find the institutional variables that influence the length of government tenure in both republics alike. I argue that the institutional variables that affect government tenure rests on the strength of the prime minister and the electoral system. I predict that a prime minister and his government are more likely to enjoy sustained tenure when the Prime Minister is the leader of the majority party within a surplus coalition.

The power of the prime minister is dependent on his position within the bargaining process. Campus and Pasquino (2006) argue that a prime minister who is the leader of the strongest party within the coalition is more likely to hold the advantage in the bargaining process, as well as establish recognition from the electorate. The support of the electorate raises the advantages of the prime minister in bargaining with partner parties and increases the invested interest of the partners to stay in a coalition with a popular leader. As leader of the coalition's majority party, the prime minister receives more support from parliament decreasing the need for risking a vote of no confidence to proposed legislation, thus, limiting the chance for a partner party to splinter over policy disagreement (Campus and Pasquino 2006).

Multi-party democracies foster interdependence between the prime minister and the partner parties. The prime minister, in order to be successful, must mediate and compromise with the coalition partners while simultaneously keeping order and control. This makes the initial coalition formation critical. The type of government is a label designed by Scholar Carol Mershon, to describe the government based upon the makeup of its coalition. The three types of governments found in Italy's administrations are surplus coalitions, minority governments and minimal winning coalitions. Surplus coalitions are coalitions that include one or more party that is unnecessary for capturing the majority in parliament. Minority governments are coalitions without majority support. This effect is caused by the withdrawal of a party from the coalition, resulting in a loss of a parliament majority. The third type of government is a minimal winning coalition. This coalition's makeup is vulnerable to losing its parliamentary majority, if one party were to withdraw from the coalition (Mershon 2002).

I assume that each of these three types of government has either a positive or negative effect on the sustainability of a government in power. Arguably, a surplus coalition government could serve as a safe guard to premature dissolution, or if designed to be a catch all coalition could prove inadequate at governing prompting a vote of no confidence. Minimal winning coalition sustainability is preconditioned on every party staying in the coalition. If one party leaves then the government becomes a minority government. If a coalition in power within a parliamentary democracy is unable to sustain the confidence of the parliament, it is inevitable that the coalition will dissolve and be forced to resign. The conditions that are caused by a minority government enhance this likelihood and expedite the process. Based on Mershon's theories of coalition formation, a minority government produces an internally unstable coalition. This will demonstrate weakness to parliament and other parties pursuing power. A surplus government, however, decreases the bargaining advantages of the partner parties and the potential threat of ribaltone, thus awarding the Prime Minister the power to regulate the coalition.

The electoral method is another variable that may affect the length of government tenure. Research has found that a proportional representation model supports the re-election of leaders and is less representative of the voting behavior, while a single member district model does the opposite. In theory, a single member district or mixed model would be more advantageous for a sustained tenure because it is more reflective of the electorate. From 1945 to 1994 the electoral system was a proportional representation method, which supports the reproduction of the incumbent party. After 1994, the electoral system was based on a mixed system from which 75% of the parliamentary seats were based on single member district and 25% on proportional representation. This model promotes the election of new parties into power and is more reflective

of shifts in voting behavior (Pasquino 2004). In 2005 Italy reinstated the use of the proportional representation model with a majority prize given to the party which receives the most votes.

Governments in each of the three electoral systems have varying lengths of tenure, leading me to suspect that the power of the prime minister, based on type of government and position within the party, is more significant to the cause of tenure.

The three hypotheses I will be testing are:

**H1: A prime minister who is also the leader of the largest party in the coalition will be associated with an increase in length of tenure.**

**H2: A surplus coalition will be associated with an increase in tenure greater than minimal winning and minority coalitions.**

**H3: A minimal winning coalition will be associated with an increased tenure, less than surplus tenure but more than minority coalitions.**

## **Methodology**

My unit of analysis is individual Italian administrations. The first test will use 62 governments in the First and Second Republics, and the second test will run only the 54 governments of the First Republic exclusively. I have omitted the current Berlusconi administration as well as the tenures of Carlo Azeglio Ciampi, who retained power from April 1993 to May 1994, and Lamberto Dini, who serves as prime minister from January 1995 to May 1996. The latter two administrations came to power as a result of the previous minister resigning from power. My decision to exclude them was based on their type of government, a technocratic government. Without a cabinet compiled by recognized parties, they could not be represented in many of the independent variables being tested. There was also no information available on their technocratic governments that would allow me to accurately use their tenures as a units of analysis. More importantly, these two unique cases would not significantly contribute to answering the question of what explains the variance in cabinet tenure.

My dependent variable is the length of tenure for each of the Italian cabinets, measured in months. To determine what causes the variance between the different lengths of cabinet tenures, I compiled nine independent variables. First I ran a correlation test to determine which variables would create the best model to test without the interference of competing variables. The correlation matrix revealed several highly correlated variables. Any variables with a correlation above the .7 necessitated the exclusion of one variable over the other.<sup>i</sup>

After the correlation tests, I ran Model 1 through a linear regression test. Model 1 included the administrations of the First and Second Republic alike.

**Model 1: Length of tenure= type of government + percentage of prime minister's party representation in the Chamber of Deputies + prime minister leader of main coalition party**

The second linear regression test run was modeled after Model 1. Type of government, however, was recoded to test the individuality of each of the three governments. Surplus government and minimal winning government were run as individual variables, with minority government serving as dummy variable.

**Model 2: Length of tenure= percentage of prime minister's party representation in the Chamber of Deputies + prime minister leader of main coalition party + minimal winning coalition + surplus coalition**

The variables representing different types of government were labels created by Carol Mershon (Mershon 2002). These ordinal variables represent the three types of government that appeared in Italy post World War II to present. Each government label is based on the type of

coalition that made up the government. The relative difference between these governments is their amount of parliamentary support, caused by the coalition makeup. A surplus government, because of the high number of parties in the coalition, has a higher support in parliament, while a minimal winning government has only a bare majority of support, and a minority government does not have majority support. Mershon labeled government type for the majority of the different administrations but did not account for the most recent governments. In order to complete my data set, I studied Mershon's guide for labeling each administration as a certain type of government. I then looked at the unlabeled administrations and their coalition makeup, and was able to identify these governments according to the framework provided by Mershon.

Information for the percentage of the coalitions' representation in the Chamber of Deputies, and the percentage of the seats held by the prime ministers' party in the Chamber of Deputies was discovered in texts used for the literature review, in particular from Carol Mershon's book *The Cost of Coalitions*. However, Mershon's book did not provide data on the most recent administrations. This information was found on NationMaster.com. This website is a compilation of information from the CIA World Fact Book and the United Nations. It provided election results, the percentage of seats obtained by the winning coalition, and a breakdown of each party's representation in the Chamber of Deputies. This allowed me to determine the percentage of seats held by the prime minister's party.

An important note is the use of the variables representation in the Chamber of Deputies. The Chamber of Deputies is the lower house of parliament in Italy and is comprised of 630 elected members. I excluded the results from the Senate because not all of the members are elected officials. The Italian Senate allows the current president to select five citizens to be members of the Senate for life. Former presidents are also given the privilege of retaining a

Senate position for life. With exclusive use of the results found in the Chamber of Deputies, I would have an acceptable amount of data for compiling the variables which account for coalition and prime minister party representation. Data from the Senate could also prompt skewed results.

After I recoded my ordinal variables into interval variables, I created my data set for the percentages of the coalitions' representation in the Chamber of Deputies, as well as the prime ministers' representation in the lower house. The compilation of this information, as previously stated, came from *The Cost of Coalitions* and NationMaster.com. The only complication came in determining the percentage of the prime ministers' representation. If a prime minister had not come to power during an election year, but as a consequence of filling the position of a resigned prime minister, the information had to be inferred from the election data. Fortunately the intricate data compiled by NationMaster.com provided the information for all parties that won seats in the election, and I was able to locate the appropriate party to find the data I needed.

## **Analysis**

My hypothesis predicted that the strength of the prime minister, represented by the type of government and the position of the prime minister as party leader, would be the most indicative of a sustained tenure. I further expected that minority governments would be more likely to prematurely dissolve and condition a shorter tenure, and surplus governments would be more likely to enjoy sustained government tenure. If the hypothesis were true, surplus governments would have the strongest association with length of tenure. This would be a positive relationship, where the existence of a surplus government would coincide with an increase in the length of tenure. On the other hand, a minority government would also have a strong association with tenure, but this would be a negative correlation. Thus, the existence of a minority government would correspond with a decrease in tenure length. If the hypothesis is

true the percentage of the prime ministers' representation in the chamber, would positively correlate with an increase in government tenure.

I further hypothesized that type the electoral system would be a significant factor in predicting length of tenure. However, after running the initial correlation matrix, I found that type of electoral method was perfectly correlated with republics. The exclusive use of the proportional representation method in the First Republic, and the use of mixed methods in the Second Republic caused levels of correlation to high to include as an independent variable. To test this hypothesis would require the electoral methods to be used in both republics alike.

The results of the regression test show some surprising results. Table 2 shows the key results for Model 1 and Model 2.

**Table 2:**

**Influences on Length of Government Tenure**

Variable	1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> Republic Length of Tenure (DV1)	1 <sup>st</sup> Republic Length of Tenure (DV1)
Constant	27.684*	19.758*
Type of Government	-1.917 (1.340)	
Prime Minister Party % Representation in Chamber	-.311** (.148)	-.273*** (.155)
Prime Minister Leader of Main Party	-2.183 (3.871)	-1.956 (3.892)
Minimal Winning Coalition		5.357 (4.401)
Surplus Winning Coalition		4.179 (2.720)
N	62	54
R Square	0.156	0.166
Adjusted R Square	0.111	0.106
P.<.01; * p.<.05; **p<.1***		
Note: Standard Error In Parentheses		

Model 1's independent variables were found to explain 15.6% of the variation in cabinet tenure, indicated by the R square value of .156. With all independent variables held constant the predicted tenure in this model is only 27.6 months. The only statistically significant variable is the percentage of the prime minister's party in the Chamber of Deputies. With all independent variables held constant, a percentage increase in the representation of the prime minister's party

in the Chamber would cause a .3 month decrease in tenure. This negative correlation with the dependent variable goes against expectations and my original hypothesis. Although not statistically significant, type of government and the position of prime minister as party leader, were also negatively correlated with length of government tenure.

These results negate previous expectations and raise many new questions into what influences a sustained government. It also puts into question whether these results are exclusive to one republic more than the other or if they are explanatory for the Italian system as a whole.

Model 2 tested these variables for the First Republic exclusively. The only change made from Model 1 to Model 2 was the independent variable, type of government. As previously mentioned in the methodology section, type of government was recoded to represent each individual type of government individually.

Model 2's independent variables were found to explain 16.6% of the variation in cabinet tenure, indicated by the R square value of .166. The linear regression test found that with all independent variables held constant the predicted tenure of government is 19.7 months. This is an eight month decrease from the results found in Model 1. Once again the only statistically significant variable was the percentage of the prime minister's party in the Chamber of Deputies. With all independent variables held constant this variable with a percentage increase in representation in Chamber of Deputies would cause a .2 month decline in tenure. Just as in Model 1, this variable is negatively correlated. This variable is proven to be significant in explaining the tenure of government in both tests, but in an unexpected way. Is the representation of the prime minister's party in the Chamber only a deterrent in the First Republic? Or as the

literature has led us to believe, an unimportant factor in the disassembling of primarily controlled Christian Democratic coalitions in the First Republic?

Model 2 upheld the original hypothesis' prediction that surplus coalition and minimal winning coalition would be positively correlated with length of tenure. However, both minimal winning and surplus coalitions were not statistically significant, only surplus coalition at the .130 level of significance, leads us to believe that there may be a suggested correlation in some instances.

As a whole, the independent variables tested explained 15% of the variation in government tenure. Only minimal variation was found in the results between the test of both republics and the test done exclusively with the First Republic. This may be due to the high percentage of overall data originating from the First Republic. The most statistically significant variable was the percentage of the prime minister's party in the Chamber of Deputies, which was found to be negatively correlated with length of government.

## **Conclusion**

Throughout my studies into Italian government, I have been surprised by their unusual coalition makeup, frequent turnover of power, and the overall rationality of who retains power of the executive. This research paper has sought to discover what causes the variation between the lengths of tenure of the different Italian governments post World War II. Through extensive research into previous studies by different scholars, I found many variables that were found to cause this phenomenon in each of the republics, respectively. However, my research was aimed at finding a variable that transcended the republics and that could be contributed to the high frequency of government turnover for the last sixty three years.

My independent variables were found to explain only a small percentage in the variation of government tenure. This leads me to believe that many of the factors which influence length of tenure may be beyond the institutional variables in my model and may be more subject to economic trends, international positioning, and the effects of events outside the political arena. Future research needs to be done to test the vulnerability of government tenure to these variables. Their inclusion with my institutional variables may be found to have a high influence on variability of government tenure.

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i Independent variables omitted because of collinearity; the coalition's percentage of seats in Chamber of Deputies, the electoral method, number of parties in coalition, left or right ideology of coalition. Important to note is the perfect correlation between electoral system and republic. Republic also highly correlated with ideology with more Right governments represented in the First Republic and more Left leaning governments in the Second Republic.

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## Appendix

**Table 1: Italian Cabinets post WWII to present:**

NAME	TERM START	TERM END	PARTY
Alcide De Gasperi	12 June 1946	2 August 1953	Christian Democrat
Giuseppe Pella	17 August 1953	12 January 1954	Christian Democrat
Amintore Fanfani	18 January 1954	8 February 1954	Christian Democrat
Mario Scelba	10 February 1954	2 July 1955	Christian Democrat
Antonio Segni	6 July 1955	15 May 1957	Christian Democrat
Adone Zoli	19 may 1957	1 July 1958	Christian Democrat
Amintore Fanfani	1 July 1958	15 February 1959	Christian Democrat
Antonio Segni	15 February 1959	23 March 1960	Christian Democrat
Fernando Tambroni	25 March 1960	26 July 1960	Christian Democrat
Amintore Fanfani	26 July 1960	21 June 1963	Christian Democrat
Giovanni Leone	21 June 1963	4 December 1963	Christian Democrat
Aldo Moro	4 December 1963	24 June 1968	Christian Democrat
Giovanni Leone	24 June 1968	12 December 1968	Christian Democrat
Mariano Rumor	12 December 1968	6 August 1970	Christian Democrat
Emilio Colombo	6 August 1970	17 February 1972	Christian Democrat
Giulio Andreotti	17 February 1972	7 July 1973	Christian Democrat
Mariano Rumor	26 July 1973	23 November 1974	Christian Democrat
Aldo Moro	23 November 1974	29 July 1976	Christian Democrat

Giulio Andreotti	29 July 1976	4 August 1979	Christian Democrat
Francesco Cossiga	4 August 1979	18 October 1980	Christian Democrat
Arnaldo Forlani	18 October 1980	28 June 1981	Christian Democrat
Giovanni Spadolini	28 June 1981	1 December 1982	Italian Republic Party
Amintore Fanfani	1 December 1982	2 August 1983	Christian Democrat
Bettino Craxi	4 August 1983	17 April 1987	Italian Socialist Party
Amintore Fanfani	17 April 1987	28 July 1987	Christian Democrat
Giovanni Goria	28 July 1987	13 April 1988	Christian Democrat
Ciriaco de Mita	13 April 1988	22 July 1989	Christian Democrat
Giulio Andreotti	22 July 1989	24 April 1992	Christian Democrat
Giuliano Amato	28 June 1992	28 April 1993	Italian Socialist Party
Carlo Azeglio Ciampi	28 April 1993	10 May 1994	Independent
Silvio Berlusconi	10 May 1994	17 January 1995	Forza Italia
Lamberto Dini	17 January 1995	17 May 1996	Independent
Romano Prodi	17 May 1996	21 October 1998	The Olive Tree
Massimo D'Alema	21 October 1998	25 April 2000	Democrats of the Left
Giuliano Amato	25 April 2000	11 June 2001	The Olive Tree
Silvio Berlusconi	11 June 2001	17 May 2006	Forza Italia
Romano Prodi	17 May 2006	8 May 2008	Democratic Party
Silvio Berlusconi	8 May 2008	Present	People of Freedom

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