

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Party systems and executive accountability: The politics of investigative committees in Central and Eastern Europe

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Abstract

Parliaments are equipped with accountability mechanisms to uncover and sanction executive misconduct, yet the variation in their use across countries and over time remains poorly understood. This article links the frequency with which various constellations of MPs initiate *ad hoc* parliamentary investigative committees (ICs) to the institutionalization of party systems. It argues that the closure of the party system in the governmental arena, and particularly the degree of alternation in government, fosters the use of ICs due to the enhanced clarity of responsibility and competitive pressures. This argument is tested using a novel dataset of IC proposals in 97 cabinets across 10 countries of Central and Eastern Europe from the early 2000s to 2024. The findings indicate that under closed party systems, these accountability mechanisms are initiated more frequently both by opposition parties and a portion of coalition parties without the support of the remaining coalition partners. The article adds to the comparative understanding of parliamentary accountability as exercised by both opposition and government parties.

Keywords: parliaments; executive; accountability; CEE; political parties

Introduction

The second cabinet of Donald Tusk in Poland (2011–2014) and his Civil Platform (PO) were the targets of multiple motions for accountability through parliamentary *ad hoc* investigative committees (ICs). Three of these motions originated from the opposition Law and Justice (PiS) party. The most prominent case was the Amber Gold, a Ponzi scheme with alleged links to the Tusk cabinet, incurring about €200 million financial losses to its investors.¹ All motions were initially rejected by the parliamentary majority. However, the PO could not ultimately avoid a parliamentary investigation into the Amber Gold case, as the PiS successfully initiated the respective IC shortly after securing an absolute majority in the 2015 Sejm election.² In addition to the opposition, the coalition partner, the Polish People's Party (PSL), initiated four ICs in collaboration with several smaller opposition parties, three of which directly addressed the misconduct by the incumbent government. These accountability initiatives coincide with the increasing consolidation of the Polish party system (Enyedi and Casal Bértoa 2018), with the two camps around

¹<https://www.sejm.gov.pl/sejm7.nsf/PrzebiegProc.xsp?id=95FF853099F2E2E2C1257A690025C2B5>.

²<https://www.sejm.gov.pl/sejm8.nsf/PrzebiegProc.xsp?id=4AAEF3FAC46A49D4C1257FE700269BFD>.

PO and PiS fiercely competing for the control of executive office. In such bipolar party constellations, parliamentary accountability initiatives can become instruments of party competition, provoking parliamentary and larger public debate on alleged government misconduct of the other side. While the study of parliamentary accountability instruments as a means of competition between political parties across the government-opposition divide and within the cabinet is highly mature (Höhm and Sieberer 2020; Poljak 2025), the impact of party system institutionalization on parliamentary accountability motions has largely been overlooked. Party system institutionalization provides clarity of responsibility and competitive pressures, which are known to foster electoral accountability (Schleiter and Voznaya 2018) and satisfaction with democracy (Jensenius and Suryanarayan 2022), but its effects on the accountability-related behavior of parliamentarians are rarely systematically tested.

Against this backdrop, this study examines the impact of party system institutionalization on the initiation of *ad hoc* ICs across 97 cabinets in ten Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries. Motions for ICs have two major analytical advantages over other parliamentary accountability instruments. They are cooperative instruments, as parties usually need to co-sponsor such motions to surpass a formal threshold in terms of the number of supporting MPs. Such inter-party cooperation is not usually necessary for (oral and written) questions and parliamentary debates. At the same time, these initiatives more fully capture inter-party competition, as both opposition and government parties proactively use them to target their political opponents. The article traces the roots of IC initiation back to the degree of closure of the party system in the governmental arena (Casal Bértoa and Enyedi 2016, 2021; Mair 1996). Closed party systems are characterized by predictable government alliances and clear segmentation between the government and opposition. In these systems, ‘the accountability is more easily exercised because responsibility can be assigned to few meaningful political units (parties or party alliances) with long time horizon’ (Casal Bértoa and Enyedi 2016: 266). Hence, I expect that, compared to open party systems, closed party systems motivate parliamentary actors to use ICs across the government-opposition divide and within the cabinet.

The CEE cabinets are interesting in their own right and for the general comparative study of party systems and parliamentary accountability. After the transformation, *ex post* parliamentary oversight mechanisms became an imperative for parliaments in post-communist CEE, as the executive-legislative relations swiftly evolved from parliamentary to executive primacy (Ilonszki 2007; Kopecký 2004; Nalepa 2016). As Andrews asserts, the quality of governance in CEE countries ‘reflects the effectiveness of both the parliamentary majority in its ability to articulate a coherent policy program for its government to implement, and of the opposition in holding the government accountable’ (Andrews 2018). At the same time, party system closure and the number of IC initiatives vary considerably across the CEE cabinets (Emanuele, Chiamonte and Soare 2020; Enyedi and Casal Bértoa 2018), providing an appropriate context for the systematic analysis of their interrelationship.

The study makes two key contributions to existing literature. The empirical analysis is based on a novel dataset encompassing IC proposals initiated in 97 cabinets across ten CEE countries between the early 2000s and 2024. As the instrument is inherently open to any group of MPs, the study transcends the conventional government-opposition dynamics of IC initiation. Although opposition parties have most commonly used this instrument in CEE (in 71 percent of cabinets), ICs have also been initiated by cabinet parties, either jointly (15 percent of cabinets) or only by a fraction of them (32 percent of cabinets). This comparative approach adds to the growing number of case studies examining the functioning and impact of ICs in specific countries (Friedberg and Shapira 2025; Ilonszki and Vajda 2021; Keppel 2023). However, these studies have yet to produce a systematic overview of the extent and the purposes of IC use across countries and over time.

The frequency of different types of IC motions is theoretically linked to prevailing patterns of party system closure. The effect is tested in the series of multivariate models linking the three components of party system closure to the occurrence of specific IC proposals during a cabinet.

The key findings are illustrated by typical cases of partisan efforts to initiate parliamentary investigations in more closed party systems. Of the three components of closure, the alternation in government has a direct bearing on the clarity of executive responsibility and lines of political competition. The empirical analysis confirms that in systems with closed alternation patterns, proposals by opposition parties and those explicitly targeting incumbents are more frequent. Closed government alternation patterns also motivate coalition parties to initiate ICs without the support of their coalition partners, particularly those directly targeting other coalition partners. This study contributes to the extant scholarship at the intersection of party systems and executive accountability. While the existing literature has predominantly focused on electoral accountability, it has devoted less attention to the behavior of political elites within diverse party system configurations (Jensenius and Suryanarayan 2022; Otjes and Willumsen 2019).

Initiating ICs by opposition and government parties

Ad hoc ICs fall into the broader category of institutional mechanisms that parliaments can use to hold the executive branch accountable for misconduct (Strøm, Müller and Smith 2010). This implies some commonalities with other accountability mechanisms. ICs typically originate from the opposition benches (Friedberg and Shapira 2025; Keppel 2023), with the intention of inflicting reputational damage on the government parties. ICs usually address political scandals, crisis management, and inadequate policy initiatives by the members of the executive, in a manner similar to oral and written questions (Whitaker and Martin 2022). As with the other publicly visible and time-consuming accountability mechanisms, such as oral questions and parliamentary debates, the establishment of ICs is controlled by political parties. Intra-party coordination is necessary to surpass the formal threshold for initiating ICs (the signatures of a certain proportion of MPs), which makes the instrument a collective rather than an individual right of MPs.

Beyond these commonalities, two characteristics of ICs underscore their added value in the study of executive accountability. First, the relatively high threshold for initiating ICs, coupled with the prevalence of multi-party systems in many parliamentary democracies, means that a certain number of MPs (or parliamentary party groups) are required for the initiation. This stands in contrast to oral and written parliamentary questions, which MPs can pose individually, and which parliamentary party groups usually coordinate only within their own ranks (Rasch 2011). The initiation of ICs hence provides unique insights into cross-party cooperation in exercising executive accountability, beyond the motivation of individual parties to do so.

Second, ICs enable incumbent parties to play a more proactive role in the politics of executive accountability. The initiation of ICs is not the exclusive privilege of the parliamentary minority. The illustrative case in the introduction demonstrates that government parties use this accountability instrument to discredit opposition parties as a credible alternative to the incumbent government. This aligns with the growing body of evidence on the interactive use of accountability instruments between government and opposition parties, whereby ‘the study of parliamentary questions cannot be separated from the study of executive answers [...]’ (Maricut-Akbik 2021: 543). For instance, MPs affiliated with government parties ask positive, pre-ordained questions of their co-partisan cabinet members during Question Hour in the Croatian parliament. Conversely, the ministers’ responses to opposition MPs frequently convey negative sentiment (Kukec 2024). A similar phenomenon has been observed in the United Kingdom, where British PMs use the Prime Minister’s Questions to criticize the previous governments (Shephard and Braby 2020). As groups of MPs can initiate ICs for both historical and contemporary cases of executive misconduct, incumbent government parties can directly target previous governments. This enables incumbents not only to respond to attacks by the opposition but also to actively seek accountability from former governing parties.

Exploring IC initiatives also sheds light on intra-coalition dynamics of executive accountability. It is common for some cabinet parties to initiate ICs without the support of remaining cabinet

parties to investigate their political opponents. However, it is not theoretically obvious who the target of the intended investigation would be. In certain instances, a government party might initiate an IC against an opposition party. A lack of full cabinet endorsement for a proposal may either be unnecessary at the initiation stage or the other coalition partners may be reluctant to support the proposal. In any case, a proposal directed at opposition parties is unlikely to cause significant tension within the coalition. In other cases, coalition parties might propose ICs directed at their coalition partners. The strategy of ‘shadowing’ coalition partners’ ministers is employed to ensure the implementation of a shared policy agenda while maintaining distinct political identity. To this end, political actors have been known to employ various instruments, including appointing junior ministers (Lipsmeyer and Pierce 2011; Thies 2001) and parliamentary committee chairs (Carroll and Cox 2012; Chiru and De Winter 2023), as well as legislative amendments (Martin and Vanberg 2005; Zubek 2008) and parliamentary questions (Höhmman and Sieberer 2020; Martin and Whitaker 2019). Admittedly, the motion to establish an IC is a rather blunt instrument of intra-coalition competition, risking broader intra-coalition conflict and eventual termination. Nevertheless, ICs offer several advantages to coalition parties over other monitoring instruments. ICs rarely address policy drift by ministers, instead dealing with other forms of misconduct not covered by coalition agreements. As coalition parties are interested in cooperating within the policy-making process, ICs can help them to resume political competition and profiling outside of the policy process.

The use of ICs by various parliamentary actors is examined at the initiation stage of IC proposals rather than at the establishment/voting stage, as the latter is profoundly influenced by the government-opposition dynamic. ICs do not squarely fall into the category of institutionalized minority rights (Sieberer, Dutkowski, Meißner et al. 2020). In certain countries, such as Germany, Latvia, and Slovenia, an IC is automatically established if it is supported by one-third of MPs. In many other countries, however, parliamentary minorities can only initiate ICs, which are then subject to approval by the parliamentary majority. In these cases, proposed ICs may never be established, since ‘members of the parliamentary majority have no meaningful incentive to scrutinize the behavior of their fellow party members in the executive branch [. . .]’ (Strøm 2003: 73). By focusing on the initiation stage, the article goes beyond the pure government-opposition dynamic.

The competitive logic behind ICs assumes that parties explicitly target their political opponents when initiating proposals. This mechanism is examined by considering the theme of the IC proposals, that is, whether they target incumbent parties, parties that have held executive power in the past, or neither. The latter scenario reflects the use of ICs as informational tools for the entire parliament (Gilligan and Krehbiel 1987). The exploration of targets of IC proposals not only clarifies the mechanism behind the government and opposition use of these accountability instruments but also detects coalition parties’ ‘shadowing’ behavior toward their cabinet partners more precisely.

Theoretical assumptions on the effect of party system closure

The core theoretical contribution of the article traces the exercise of executive accountability through IC proposals back to the institutionalization of the party system. The stability of party interactions is considered a key precondition for the consolidation and performance of new democracies in Latin America and CEE (Lewis 2006; Mainwaring 2018). Emerging literature confirms that predictable patterns of party cooperation and competition stabilize public policy (Mainwaring 2018), reduce corruption (Schleiter and Voznaya 2018), increase electoral accountability (Jensenius and Suryanarayan 2022), and motivate higher satisfaction with democracy and electoral participation (Otjes and Willumsen 2019; Ridge 2023; Robbins and Hunter 2012). This is achieved by providing elites with long-term horizons in electoral competition and policy-making, and giving voters clarity regarding executive responsibility and the

choice of a challenger party. However, the extant literature has yet to provide a systematic analysis of the consequences of party system institutionalization for the behavior of parliamentary parties in holding the executives accountable. Meanwhile, literature on parliamentary accountability instruments has predominantly focused on issue divergence between political parties (Höhmnn and Sieberer 2020; Whitaker and Martin 2022), the strength of parliamentary committees (Zubek 2015), and electoral pressures faced by individual MPs (Kellermann 2016). As these studies commonly focus on a single or a few parliaments, they are rarely in a position to comparatively analyze the effects of party competition structures on the use of accountability instruments in parliaments.

I argue that the clarity of responsibility and stable inter-party relations that characterize institutionalized party systems motivate parliamentarians to use ICs as an instrument of executive accountability. The predictable sorting of parties into incumbents and opposition enables parliamentary actors to clearly attribute accountability for executive misconduct to the parties that held executive office during a specific period. This enables the clear targeting of specific parties by their political rivals. Moreover, the costs of attacking political rivals are lower when partisan alliances are predictable, as actors on both sides do not expect future government cooperation with each other. In contexts where parties usually cooperate in shifting constellations, it is less credible to attribute blame to other parties, while at the same time insulating oneself from responsibility for a particular case of executive misconduct.

The institutionalization of party systems has been conceptualized in various ways, depending on the theoretical interest, data availability, and regional focus of a particular study. Initial comparative studies focused on party systems in electoral and parliamentary arenas and estimated their institutionalization using measures of party age and electoral volatility (eg Robbins and Hunter 2012). More recent work expands the theoretical scope of the concept to include the governmental arena (Casal Bértoa and Enyedi 2016, 2021; Mair 1996) as well as its latency (Chiaramonte and Emanuele 2022; Kim 2025). As the theoretical argument of this article is tied to political accountability in the executive arena, the independent variable ought to capture the extent to which parties cooperate or compete in that arena. Hence, this article makes use of the party system closure concept developed by Mair and operationalized by Casal Bértoa and Enyedi.

The concept of party system closure subsumes three distinct dimensions of party cooperation and competition within the governmental arena (Casal Bértoa and Enyedi 2016; Mair 1996). First, full alternation in government occurs when all incumbent ministers leave their executive positions and are replaced by politicians from different parties. Partial alternation occurs when only ministers from certain parties leave the cabinet, while others continue to serve in the subsequent government. Another option is non-alternation, whereby partisan affiliation of ministers remains constant between the outgoing and incoming governments. Second, a familiar government formula occurs when the government coalition includes parties that typically govern together and is innovative when a coalition brings together parties in a previously unseen constellation. Third, access to government is closed if only parties that have governed in the past take up ministerial positions. In contrast, open access to government involves the participation of previously excluded or new political parties.

Of the three components of closure, I expect alternation in government to most systematically motivate the accountability measures of parties against their political opponents. The alternation is directly related to the degree of segmentation of the party system into government alternatives. Theoretically, this segmentation is expected to drive accountability-related initiatives by both government and opposition parties. The familiarity of government formula and restricted government access do not capture segmentation to the same extent, as theoretically, a group of a few established parties could create a government ‘cartel’ coalescing in familiar constellations, but without segmentation along clearly defined lines. The latter two components may even unfold the opposite effect on initiation of parliamentary investigations, particularly when the entry of successful new parties results in a new governing formula or more permissive access to

government. As new parties are likely to adopt a critical stance toward established parties, their entry into parliament and cabinet could lead to more IC initiatives than under a closed formula and access to government (Mölder, Enyedi and Casal Bértoa 2023).

The first hypothesis considers the dynamic between government and opposition in terms of the frequency and targeting of IC proposals. In contexts where (an alliance of) government parties tend to be completely replaced by an alternative party or alliance, or where no replacement occurs, executive misconduct can be unambiguously attributed to particular parties. This is expected to increase the frequency of IC proposals in general, and of those targeting the incumbent/opposition in particular, as they potentially incur reputational damage to the opposing bloc of parties. This motivation applies equally to opposition parties, who may propose investigations into incumbent parties, and to government parties, who may initiate ICs targeting a past government led by current opposition parties. Hence, I expect a higher overall frequency of IC proposals and the level of targeting across the government-opposition divide in more closed party systems.

Hypothesis 1: The higher the typical party system closure, the more often government and opposition parties initiate ICs, particularly those targeting each other.

The second hypothesis relates to proposals made by a fraction of coalition parties. In multi-party governments, coalition parties employ various legislative initiatives to maintain a distinct political profile, as they are forced to delegate decision-making authority to their coalition partners (Martin and Vanberg 2005). The pressure for emancipation may be particularly strong in closed party systems, where parties are locked into long-term government cooperation due to pronounced segmentation between blocs of parties. IC proposals are one tool that coalition parties can use to appeal to their distinct electorate. These proposals might target not only an opposition party but also a coalition partner. Proposals targeting an opposition party would probably not cause significant irritation to the remaining coalition partners. Proposals specifically targeting a coalition partner would fulfill the general purpose of emancipation more obviously but would incur higher costs for coalition governance and stability. In some cases, coalition parties expecting future cooperation under a closed party system may refrain from targeting each other altogether. Hence, the overall frequency with which coalition parties submit IC proposals is expected to be higher in cabinets operating under a closed party system. However, the effect on the mutual targeting of coalition parties remains ambiguous.

Hypothesis 2: The higher the typical party system closure, the higher is the frequency of IC proposals from a portion of coalition parties.

Data and operationalization

The hypotheses are tested on the basis of an original cabinet-level dataset of IC proposals from 10 countries of CEE that are members of the European Union (Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, and Slovenia) from the early 2000s to 2024. The rules of procedure of the Slovak National Council from 1989 and subsequent amendments initially codified the mechanism of ICs. However, in November 1995, the Slovak Constitutional Court ruled the provision unconstitutional, arguing that the authority to summon witnesses restricts their constitutional rights and liberties.³

In all 10 countries, parliamentary minorities can initiate ICs, although the required number of MPs' signatures varies (see Table A1 in Appendix A). The regulations are most permissive in Croatia and Poland, where motions require the support of one-tenth of MPs. In Latvia and Slovenia, the threshold is one-third of MPs, but ICs are automatically established when this is

³<https://www.ustavnysud.sk/docDownload/a659c7ac-719d-498e-a837-348edb049507>.

Table 1. Overview of ICs in 10 CEE democracies

Country	Name of IC in native language	Time frame	Number of IC proposals
Bulgaria	Временна анкетна комисија (Vremenna anketna komisiya)	2005–2017	63
Croatia	Istražno povjerenstvo	2003–2024	27
Czech Republic	Vyšetřovací komise	2002–2021	27
Estonia	Uurimiskomisjon	1999–2023	22
Hungary	Vizsgálóbizottság	2002–2022	93
Latvia	Parlamentārās izmeklēšanas komisijas	2002–2022	12
Lithuania	Tyrimo komisija	2008–2024	31
Poland	Komisja śledcza	2001–2023	43
Romania	Comisie de anchetă	2004–2024	31
Slovenia	Preiskovalna komisija	2008–2022	21

surpassed. In the remaining countries, adoption of the relevant motion requires the support of the parliamentary majority (*de jure* or *de facto*).

The analysis observes proposal activity at cabinet level ($n = 97$). Proposals are aggregated at cabinet level because individual IC proposals do not have an obvious negative case. In other words, individual-level analysis would have to observe IC proposals that might have been initiated but were eventually not. These latent IC proposals cannot be precisely identified by observing salient cases of executive misconduct during a specific time frame, since proposed ICs sometimes address historical cases. *Ad hoc* parliamentary committees established for the purpose of discussing constitutional amendments, electoral legislation, or lifting of MP's immunity were excluded from the analysis. Furthermore, caretaker cabinets were excluded from the analysis due to the ambiguity surrounding government-opposition relations during such cabinets.⁴ Finally, only IC proposals by MPs were retained for analysis. The observations start in early 2000s, since information on ICs in the online archives of the respective parliaments and media is incomplete for the 1990s. Table 1 provides an overview of the included countries and legislative periods.

There are two groups of dependent variables. The first group focuses on the initiating actor, capturing the frequency with which IC proposals were initiated by *the opposition and all cabinet parties*, as well as a *portion of cabinet parties*, during a particular cabinet. The second group focuses on the targets of IC proposals, particularly the frequency with which proposals targeting *the incumbent government* and *past government* were initiated during the observed cabinets. An additional binary variable indicates the occurrence of 'shadowing' IC proposals *initiated by a portion of cabinet parties that target incumbents*. Targeting is indicated by assigning responsibility for executive misconduct to a specific cabinet, party, or individual politician in the proposal. The exact target is coded based on the IC proposal itself, as well as the parliamentary debate and media reports on a particular proposal. The complete material and the codes are available in the MaxQDA database in the Online Appendix. As the frequency of IC proposals initiated by cabinet parties and those targeting past governments is relatively low, the respective variables are dichotomized (ie indicating whether or not any of such proposals have been initiated during a particular cabinet). The frequency of opposition-initiated proposals and those targeting incumbents is operationalized on a continuous scale. Due to the varying duration of cabinets, the variables are standardized by counting the number of IC proposals per 200 days of a cabinet (number of IC proposals * 200/cabinet duration).

⁴The only caretaker cabinet with IC proposals was that of Czech PM Jan Fischer (June 2009–June 2010). The cabinet was supported by Civic Democratic Party (ODS), Social Democratic Party (ČSSD), and Green Party (SZ) with the mandate to complete the Czech EU presidency and propose the 2010 budget. The two proposals were submitted by ČSSD without targeting any specific executive actor.

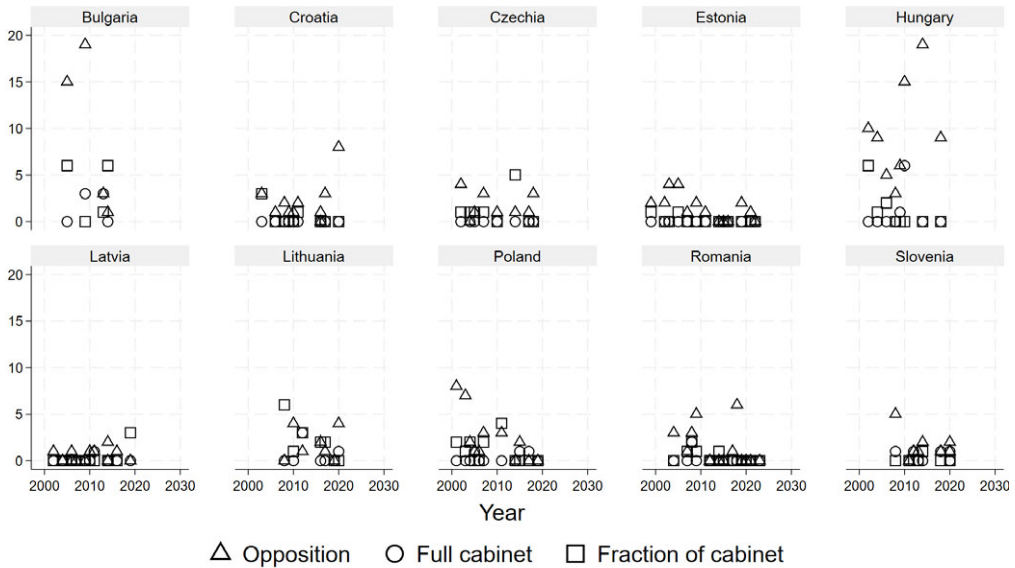
Table 2. Descriptive statistics of main dependent and independent variables

	N	Mean	SD	Min.	Max.	Coding
Identity of proposer						
Proposals across government-opposition divide	97	0.88	1.22	0	8.33	# per 200 days
Opposition-initiated IC proposals	97	0.78	1.14	0	8.33	# per 200 days
IC proposals by all cabinet parties	97	0.16	0.36	0	1	0 – no; 1 – yes
IC proposals by a portion of cabinet parties	97	0.32	0.47	0	1	0 – no; 1 – yes
Targets of proposals						
IC proposals targeting incumbents	97	0.53	0.64	0	2.83	# per 200 days
IC proposals targeting past government	97	0.30	0.46	0	1	0 – no; 1 – yes
‘Shadowing’ IC proposals	97	0.14	0.35	0	1	0 – no; 1 – yes
Party system closure						
Composite index	97	84.32	4.72	67.00	92.39	0–100 scale, 100 = most closed
Government alternation	97	82.88	8.45	66.08	96.76	0–100 scale, 100 = most closed
Government formula	97	80.77	5.30	60.00	91.62	0–100 scale, 100 = most closed
Access to government	97	89.32	5.75	61.67	97.33	0–100 scale, 100 = most closed

The overall distribution of motions for IC reveals considerable variation, particularly regarding opposition-initiated proposals (see Table 2). On average, MPs initiate about 0.88 IC proposals across the government-opposition divide per 200 days, amounting to around six proposals over the course of a four-year cabinet. Most of these proposals originate from the opposition benches. MPs from all cabinet parties initiated an IC in about 16 percent of cabinets, while proposals sponsored by some cabinet parties appeared in about a third of cabinets. Frequencies for IC proposals targeting a specific executive actor are lower as some proposals do not attribute responsibility to a specific party or politician. Figure 1 displays the non-standardized frequencies of the three types of IC proposals in each country. Proposals are initiated most frequently in Hungary and Bulgaria, and least frequently in Latvia and Slovenia. Figure 1 reveals considerable intra-country variation between different cabinets, particularly when observing the opposition-initiated ICs and those initiated by a portion of cabinet parties.

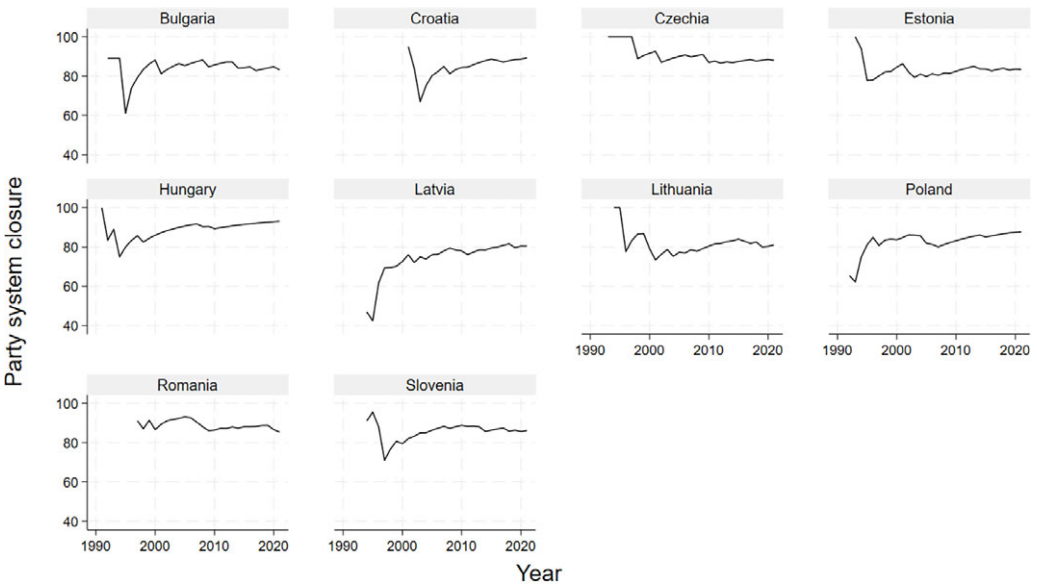
To operationalize *party system closure*, I draw on the work of Casal Bértoa and Enyedi (2016). They code the subcomponents of closure – the extent of government alternation, government formula, and access to government – according to the familiarity of ministerial composition of the incoming governments. The degree of *government alternation* is based on the ministerial volatility between an outgoing and incoming government. The score is 100 if all ministers are replaced or all ministers remain in their positions. The alternation score is standardized on a scale of 0–100, to match the scales of the other two components. Familiarity of *government formula* indicates whether a similar constellation of parties has coalesced in any previous government. This is indicated by the proportion of ministers in an incoming government who belong to parties that have governed in the most similar constellation in the past. The scale ranges from 0 to 100, whereby minimum entails a completely unfamiliar constellation of parties (ie full openness of government formula), while maximum indicates that the incoming government includes parties that have previously governed in the same constellation. The *access to government* indicates whether any party without previous government experience has entered the incoming government. The value on the 0–100 scale reflects the proportion of ministers belonging to parties with previous governing experience. I use the cumulative average of party system closure and its subcomponents from democratization to the year of cabinet investiture. Such operationalization has two advantages: it captures only the historical degree of closure, and it is updated dynamically based on shifts in the degree of closure. The relevant data were collected within the framework of the WHO GOVERNS project (Casal Bértoa 2024).

Table 1 shows the overall variation in the cumulative index of party system closure, while Figure 2 presents disaggregated trends in individual countries. At the regional level, the average closure in the observed period is 84.32. The subcomponents of closure exhibit greater variation



Graphs by country

Figure 1. Non-standardized frequency of opposition-initiated, full cabinet proposals, and proposals initiated by a fraction of cabinet parties, by country.



Graphs by country

Figure 2. Party system closure index, by country.

around their means, particularly the degree of government alternation. This contrasts with Western European countries, where party system closure rarely falls below 90 (Casal Bértoa and Enyedi 2022). At the country level, Hungary and Romania have relatively closed party systems across the entire observation period, while they are most open in the Baltic states. A trend of increasing closure is visible in Poland and Croatia, and neither country consistently moves in the opposite direction.

The models include a range of control variables. Parliamentary actors may respond to the party system in place during a specific cabinet's tenure, rather than to long-term patterns of government competition and cooperation. To isolate the effect of the typical degree of closure over a longer period of time, I control for the fragmentation and polarization of the party system, as well as the share of genuinely new parties (GNPs). Observations of party system characteristics are specific to the arena in which the relevant IC proposals originate – parliamentary arena for opposition-initiated and proposals targeting incumbents, and governmental arena for proposals by cabinet parties and those targeting past governments. The fragmentation of the parliamentary party system is measured using the *effective number of parliamentary parties* (ENPPs) and that of the cabinet party system using the *absolute number of cabinet parties*. The degree of party system polarization in parliament is measured using the index of party polarization developed by Dalton (2008) and available in the ParlGov dataset (Döring and Manow 2024). Ideological polarization in the cabinet is operationalized as the *ideological range between left- and right-most party on the general left-right dimension* based on the Chapel Hill Expert Survey, but robustness checks are carried out using separate economic and sociocultural (GAL-TAN) dimensions (Rovny, Bakker, Hooghe et al. 2025). GNPs are parties that gain entry to national parliaments for the first time and lack any affiliation with established parties or politicians (Emanuele and Chiamonte 2018; Sikk 2005). The two relevant variables in question are the seat share of *GNPs in parliament and in the cabinet*.

The remaining control variables are included in all models. The analysis accounts for the *majority status of the cabinet*, since the fact that cabinet parties hold parliamentary majority might affect the strategic use of IC proposals among cabinet parties and opposition parties. Furthermore, IC proposals might be most frequent during the cabinets formed immediately after a parliamentary election (*post-electoral cabinets*). Since ICs typically conclude their work at the end of the parliamentary term, parliaments begin the next term without active ICs. Parties may advocate for ICs early in the parliamentary term to shape the parliamentary agenda for the forthcoming period, given that ICs typically require a significant amount of time to complete their work. At the same time, literature on the effect of electoral cycles on parliamentary behavior shows that parties and MPs increasingly adopt competitive strategies as elections approach (Bräuninger and Debus 2009; Schwalbach 2022). To account for the possibility that motions for ICs are used as a campaigning strategy, the regression models also include a binary indicator for *pre-electoral cabinets*. The models also incorporate the *political corruption index* by V-Dem (Coppedge, Gerring, Knutsen et al. 2024), as political corruption may be more prevalent in less institutionalized party systems (Schleiter and Voznaya 2018), and simultaneously trigger the initiation of ICs. Finally, a high *formal threshold* of MPs needed to initiate an IC is the institutional hurdle that the proposing parties need to surpass. As noted in the country description, this threshold varies from 0.1 to 0.33 percent of signatory MPs.

Testing the relationship between party system closure and IC proposals across government-opposition divide

Figure 3 displays the effects of party system closure index, alternation in government, government formula, and access to government on the overall number of IC proposals by government and opposition, those initiated by opposition parties, and proposals targeting incumbents. The detailed findings are reported in Tables A2, A3, and A4 in Appendix A. Beginning with the total number of IC proposals submitted by government and opposition, the party system closure index has a positive effect, driven by the closure of government alternation. The effects of the other sub-components are not statistically significantly different from zero. This finding lends support to the theoretical underpinnings of Hypothesis 1, as the degree of segmentation between government and opposition parties is linked to the volume of IC proposals as a means of political competition between the two.

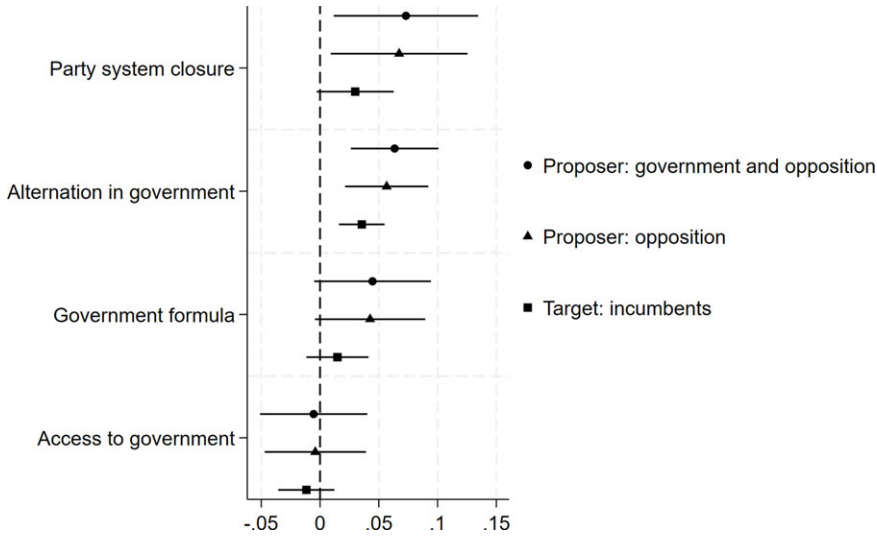


Figure 3. The effects of closure and its subcomponents on the frequency of IC proposals across government-opposition divide, opposition-initiated proposals, and proposals targeting incumbents.

The countries with the highest and lowest closure of government alternation clearly illustrate the main finding. In Hungary and Bulgaria, which have traditionally had the highest level of government alternation closure across CEE (with average scores of approximately 96 and 95, respectively), parties propose between one and a half and three ICs per 200 days of cabinet. In Latvia and Estonia, where partial government alternation is the norm (with average scores of about 70 and 74, respectively), the maximum frequency is approximately one IC per 200 days. Furthermore, during a significant proportion of these cabinets, no ICs have been initiated by either the opposition or the governing parties. The case of Poland illustrates the dynamic patterns of the main result. When the instrument of IC was first introduced to the Sejm in 1999, the score of government alternation closure was relatively high at about 87. This level of closure was reflected in the large number of IC proposals tabled during the two Leszek Miller cabinets (2001–2005), at the rate of approximately 3.2 proposals per 200 days. The several subsequent governments were characterized by partial alternation, with the running score dropping to 84 for the first Tusk cabinet (2007–2011) and the frequency of IC proposals during this cabinet amounting to 0.42 per 200 days. Following the 2011 parliamentary election and the formation of the second Tusk cabinet (2011–2014), a pattern of comprehensive government alternation emerged, accompanied by an increase in IC proposals during the Tusk II and particularly during the PiS-led cabinet of Beata Szydło (2015–2017).

Figure 3 additionally plots the coefficients of the effect of party system closure and its sub-components on the frequency of opposition-sponsored proposals and the frequency of proposals that specifically target the incumbent parties. The overall index is positively associated with the frequency of opposition-initiated proposals. This positive effect is driven by the subcomponent of alternation in government, since the effects of government formula and access to government are not statistically significant. The predicted frequencies of opposition-initiated ICs for the first, second, and third quartiles of government alternation scores (76.66, 82.82, and 89.6) are 0.43, 0.78, and 1.17 proposals, respectively, per 200 days of cabinet. In a cabinet of average duration (673 days), the difference between the first and third quartile of government alternation scores translates into an increase from approximately 1.5 to approximately 4 opposition-initiated proposals. Alternation in government also has the expected positive effect on the frequency of IC proposals targeting the sitting government. The predicted frequencies of such IC proposals in the

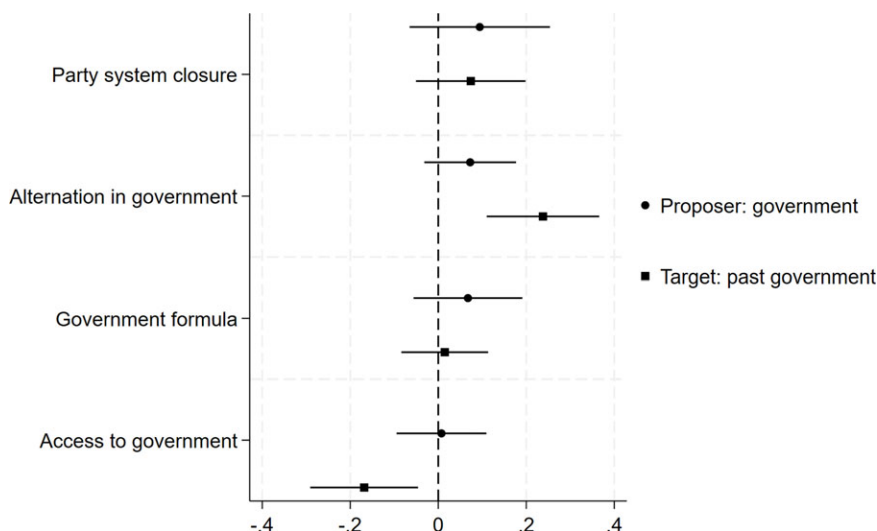


Figure 4. The effects of closure and its subcomponents on the occurrence of IC proposals by all government parties and those targeting past governments.

first, second, and third quartiles of the government alternation score are 0.31, 0.52, and 0.76, respectively, which also indicates a substantive increase. This result is consistent with the normative perspective on executive accountability, which ought to be primarily exercised by a parliamentary minority targeting the sitting government.

Figure 4 shows the coefficients for party system closure and its subcomponents from the binary logistic regression models predicting the likelihood of full cabinet IC proposals and those that specifically target a past government led by opposition parties (see Tables A5 and A6 in Appendix A for complete results). Neither the overall index nor its subcomponents have a statistically significant effect on the occurrence of full-cabinet IC proposals. Hence, cabinet parties are not compelled to initiate such proposals in the more competitive context of closed party systems. Nevertheless, higher alternation in government increases the likelihood of past governments being targeted by motions for IC, either by a portion of cabinet parties or by other opposition parties. The predicted likelihood of targeting past government increases from 10 percent in the first quartile of government alternation (89.6) to approximately 50 percent in the third (89.6). Hence, the clarity of responsibility and heightened competition in systems with higher alternation ensure that former cabinet parties are held accountable even after leaving office, albeit not necessarily by all cabinet parties. This is due to the potential perception of proposing ICs with excessive frequency as an abuse of power, which distracts the government from implementing its policy agenda.

However, the likelihood of targeting former government parties with IC proposals is lower when access to government is more closed. This finding is not surprising, as ‘easy access to government can open the doors of executive power to political outsiders and populist, irresponsible, and illiberal parties, lead[ing] to a *carpe diem* syndrome’ (Mölder, Enyedi and Casal Bértoa 2023: 107). In this instance, parties that have never held executive office and have little prospect of doing so in the future tend to use IC proposals excessively to attack mainstream parties, in the hope of solidifying their electoral appeal.

Turning to the control variables, none of them consistently exhibit a statistically significant effect. The effects of two variables reach conventional levels of statistical significance in some models. First, a higher ENPP is associated with a lower number of IC proposals across the government-opposition divide, likely because a high ENPP impedes the coordination of

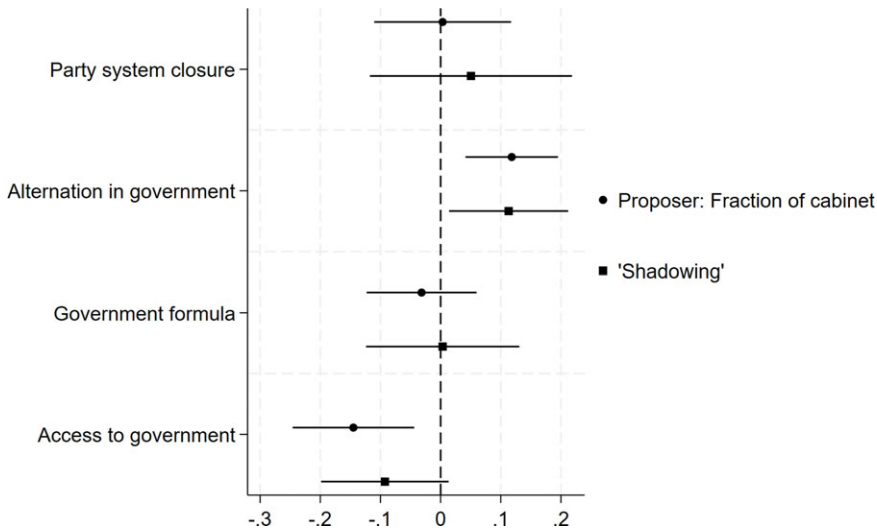


Figure 5. The effects of closure and its subcomponents on the occurrence of IC proposals by a fraction of cabinet parties and those that particularly target the incumbent government.

parliamentary parties around an IC proposal. This mechanism is well documented in extant literature, which reports the negative impact of party system fragmentation on the pace of cabinet formation and cabinet stability (Bergman, Ersson and Hellström 2015; Golder 2010). Given the established correlation between the number of parliamentary parties and the degree of alternation in government, with concentrated party systems tending to result in closed government alternation, the effect of ENPP becomes statistically insignificant once alternation is incorporated into the model. Second, the frequency of IC proposals across the government-opposition divide is higher during cabinets that were formed immediately after a parliamentary election. It has been observed that parties tend to set the agenda of ICs at the onset of the term, to allow adequate time for prospective committees to complete their work. The observation that this effect ceases to exist once alternation is incorporated into the model again suggests the presence of a complex interrelationship between the independent variables.

Testing the relationship between party system closure and IC proposals by a fraction of coalition parties

Turning to intra-cabinet dynamics, the first dependent variable indicates whether any IC proposals with divided support from coalition parties were initiated during a specific cabinet or not. The second dependent variable focuses on coalition 'shadowing', that is, the occurrence of proposals by a fraction of coalition parties that specifically target an incumbent party. Figure 5 displays the effects of the party system closure index and its subcomponents on the two dependent variables (full results are reported in Tables A7 and A8 in Appendix A). The results show that the higher the closure of government alternation, the more likely such proposals emerge during a particular cabinet. This finding is consistent with Hypothesis 2, which posited that coalition partners 'locked' into long-standing cooperation in closed alternation systems utilize IC proposals to maintain a distinct political profile.

Even more strikingly, they do so by targeting their coalition partners with motions for parliamentary investigation, a high-risk strategy given the public visibility of such proposals. The latter effect drops below the standard level of statistical significance when cabinet polarization is measured on the GAL-TAN dimension rather than the general left-right dimension. This implies

that the effect of alternation may be partially mediated by the policy differences between cabinet parties where long-term coalition partners are locked into government cooperation despite programmatic differences on sociocultural issues. Regarding effect sizes, the likelihood of IC proposals initiated by a portion of cabinet parties increases by 30 percentage points (from 17.5 percent to 47.3 percent) between the first and third quartiles of the government alternation score, while the increase in the likelihood of ‘shadowing’ proposals is 16 percentage points (from 7.7 to 23.7).

The four IC proposals initiated by PSL and smaller opposition parties during the second cabinet of Polish PM Tusk (see Introduction) illustrate the tightrope that the party walked between cooperating in various centrist governments and maintaining its own political profile. The consolidation of the Polish party system in the 2000s resulted in a shift in the government alternation patterns, with centrist and right-wing blocs alternating in power. While the centrist coalitions were initially led by the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD) and more recently by PO, PSL has been a constant presence in these coalitions since the early 1990s. Against this background, the accountability initiatives targeting other executive actors through ICs emerge as a compelling instrument through which a party can shed its reputation for being entrenched in executive power. Indeed, PSL has initiated ICs without the endorsement of their senior coalition partners in all cabinets since 2001, except for the first cabinet of PM Tusk. The highest number of such proposals was initiated during the second cabinet of Polish PM Tusk. Of the three proposals co-sponsored by PSL, two of them addressed the involvement of PO ministers Grzegorz Schetyna and Jerzy Miller in a scandal concerning the procurement of telecommunications software for the Ministry of Internal Affairs.⁵ Another proposal addressed the potentially detrimental contract for the construction of the LNG terminal in Świnoujście in northwestern Poland.⁶

Similar incentives for political emancipation emerged between the Social Democratic Party (PSD), the Democratic Liberal Party (PDL), and the National Liberal Party (PNL) in Romania. These parties have governed together in various constellations since the democratic transformation. The use of ICs for this purpose escalated during the first cabinet of PM Boc, which included the PSD and the PDL. A few ICs initiated by the opposition PNL were established with the support of either the PSD or the PDL. On one occasion of direct ‘shadowing’, the PDL joined the PNL in initiating a parliamentary investigation into PSD environment minister Nicolae Nemirschi to shed light on the €500,000 contract that the minister had signed with an advertising agency.⁷

The effect of closure of access to government runs in the opposite direction, as coalition partners are more inclined to submit their separate IC proposals when the access to government is relatively open. This replicates the finding concerning proposals targeting past governments, as new parties may be compelled to initiate investigations into their established counterparts.

The remainder of the empirical analysis explores whether the results can be generalized to the established ICs and the possible endogeneity between these accountability initiatives and party system closure. The main empirical analysis focuses on the initiation stage of ICs rather than their establishment for analytical reasons, as initiation is principally open to both government and opposition parties. Nevertheless, established ICs carry more political weight and are interesting in their own right. To examine the generalizability of the mechanisms to established ICs, I restrict the dependent variables to ICs that were eventually established and rerun the models with the subcomponents of closure that had a statistically significant effect in the main analysis (alternation and access to government). The results replicate the main analysis to some extent but also display notable differences. In particular, the coefficients reported in Figure B1 and Table B1 in

⁵<https://www.sejm.gov.pl/sejm7.nsf/PrzebiegProc.xsp?id=37AB8F4EBB018BE6C1257CC4004BF1F4>; <https://www.sejm.gov.pl/sejm7.nsf/PrzebiegProc.xsp?id=E6A182EBA10A6717C1257CC4004BF1FA>.

⁶<https://www.sejm.gov.pl/sejm7.nsf/PrzebiegProc.xsp?id=BA7FA2F902265029C1257D780046A200>.

⁷<https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocument/109025>.

Appendix B imply that alternation in government is not systematically related to the number of established ICs initiated by opposition or those that target the incumbent government. This discrepancy is explained by the fact that many such proposals are rejected by the parliamentary majority. Turning to the established proposals initiated by all cabinet parties and those targeting a former government, the results mirror the initiation stage (Figure B2 and Table B2): cabinet parties are no more likely to establish ICs under higher levels of government alternation, but alternation drives the number of established ICs targeting a former government. Concerning the ICs initiated by only some cabinet parties, these committees are more likely to be established under closed alternation patterns and open access to government, thus replicating previous findings (see Figure B3 and Table B3 in Appendix B). The generalizability of this mechanism may be related to the fact that non-sponsoring cabinet parties have less control over such proposals, increasing the likelihood of being accepted by the (alternative) parliamentary majority. Finally, the establishment of ‘shadowing’ proposals is not systematically related to party system closure.

Arguably, the accountability initiatives of parties may trigger a subsequent reconfiguration of party competition and cooperation. Besides specifying the correct temporal order of the independent and dependent variables and providing illustrative examples, it is worthwhile directly probing the possible endogeneity of the effect. In a simple quantitative test of reversed causality, I calculate the change in alternation closure between the starting year of a cabinet and the following four years. I then regress the respective changes on the frequency or occurrence of different types of IC proposals. The coefficients plotted in Figure B4 imply no correlation between accountability initiatives and subsequent shifts in the degree of government alternation closure. A more stringent quantitative test would require (1) the specification of a more elaborate theoretical model of party system change and (2) the disentangling of the effect of individual cabinets on changes in party system closure. Both strategies fall outside the scope of this article. Shifts in party alliances are particularly likely to be triggered by ‘shadowing’ IC proposals, but the empirical evidence is mixed at best. Examining the aftermath of 14 cabinets with ‘shadowing’ IC proposals reveals that in only two cases (the second cabinet of Hungarian PM Gyurcsany and the first cabinet of Polish PM Miller), the involved parties discontinued their cooperation in future cabinets (SzDSz and MSzP in the Hungarian case, and SLD and PSL in the Polish case). More common are cases where coalition parties siding with the opposition to initiate an IC nevertheless retain their coalition potential, even in familiar constellations (KDU-ČSL in the cabinet of the Czech PM Gross, LVZS in the first cabinet of the Lithuanian PM Skvernelis, PSL in the first two cabinets of the Polish PM Tusk, and PDL in the first cabinet of the Romanian PM Boc).

Conclusion

Party system institutionalization enhances electoral accountability and popular satisfaction with democracy, but its implications for executive accountability in parliaments are rarely examined. This study focuses on how executive accountability is exercised through the initiation of *ad hoc* parliamentary ICs by opposition and government parties. It provides systematic, empirical evidence on the frequency of various types of IC proposals, based on an original comparative dataset covering 10 new CEE democracies. The results reveal that parliamentary investigations are initiated more frequently when party systems in the governmental arena are closed. The degree of alternation in government is decisive because it indicates the segmentation of the party system into blocks of parties competing for executive power, with clear lines of government responsibility. Alternation in government is linked to a higher frequency of IC proposals by both opposition and government-affiliated MPs.

The descriptive results display the prevalence of opposition-initiated IC proposals and those targeting the incumbent government. Both types of proposals are more frequent under typically closed government alternation patterns. This suggests that opposition parties in CEE respond to the structure of party competition as expected, by increasing their efforts to hold the executive

accountable. This finding is consistent with the normative understanding of the relationship between the parliamentary majority and minority in parliamentary democracies, in which the minority sets the executive accountability agenda, while the majority controls the legislative agenda. However, further analysis reveals that a higher alternation in government does not translate into a greater number of established opposition-initiated IC proposals. This is due to the gatekeeping prerogatives of parliamentary majorities in all CEE parliaments except Latvian and Slovenian ones. For parliamentary minorities to fully exercise executive accountability as intended by the competitive model of democracy, the establishment of ICs would need to be a minority right.

Another set of findings relates to proposals initiated by all cabinet parties and those that particularly target opposition parties that formerly held executive posts. These proposals also appear with some regularity, but only the explicit targeting of opposition parties is systematically linked to the patterns of government alternation. This suggests that under more segmented majority–minority relations, parliamentary actors (though not necessarily cabinet parties) exercise ‘delayed accountability’ by invoking historical instances of misconduct by past governments. This mechanism enhances the accountability of executive agents, as incumbent governments cannot avoid future investigations into their misconduct, even if they have effectively blocked relevant parliamentary investigation initiatives during their tenure. While these proposals may be perceived as putting pressure on the parliamentary minority, they provide a rare parliamentary accountability instrument that can thematically transcend individual legislative periods, ensuring that responsibility for misconduct does not end with the change of executive.

The findings also reveal notable intra-cabinet dynamics in the sponsorship of IC proposals. In quite a few cabinets, some coalition parties initiate ICs without the support of the other coalition partners. In 14 of the 97 cabinets, such proposals specifically target an actor within the incumbent executive. This is another instance of coalition ‘shadowing’, in addition to appointing junior ministers and committee chairs, and posing parliamentary questions. Both kinds of initiatives become more likely with increasing alternation in government, as coalition partners in long-standing government alliances may seek to establish a distinct political profile without provoking policy conflicts. The likelihood of an initiative by a fraction of coalition parties also increases with greater access to government, potentially due to smaller parties entering into governments and initiating IC proposals to increase their visibility. An in-depth qualitative analysis of cabinets with ‘shadowing’ IC proposals shows that the parties involved often resume their cooperation in the future or at least do not jeopardize their coalition potential. These kinds of proposals enable parliaments to react more swiftly to cases of misconduct by a sitting government, thus contributing to executive accountability.

The findings linking party system closure to the initiation of ICs may be applicable to democracies beyond the CEE region, where *ad hoc* parliamentary investigations are institutionalized and multi-party competition is the norm. The generalizability of the findings is nevertheless limited by several scope conditions of CEE countries. These include relatively high variation in party system closure, frequent scandals due to recent privatization and politicization of public service and enterprises, and underdeveloped norms of executive accountability compared to Western European democracies. In addition to extending the analysis to other democracies, future studies could examine the political impact of ICs by looking at how their recommendations are adopted and whether parliamentary debates systematically influence public opinion.

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Data availability statement. Replication data is available on the publisher’s website.

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Appendix A

Table A1. The requirements for initiation and establishment of investigative committees across 10 CEE countries

Country	Legal act	Proposal	Decision
Bulgaria	Standing orders of parliament (ĎB No. 69, 23.08.2005)	Speaker; 1/5 of MPs (Art. 31, Par. 2)	Voting on resolution (majority vote <i>de facto</i> ; Art. 31, Par. 2)
	Standing orders of parliament (ĎB No. 58, 27.07.2009)	Speaker; 1/5 of MPs (Art. 34, Par. 2)	Voting on resolution (majority vote <i>de facto</i> ; Art. 34, Par. 2)
	Standing orders of parliament (ĎB No. 53, 18.06.2013)	Speaker; 1/5 of MPs (Art. 34, Par. 2)	Voting on resolution (majority vote <i>de facto</i> ; Art. 34, Par. 2)
	Standing orders of parliament (ĎB No. 97, 25.11.2014)	Speaker; 1/5 of MPs (Art. 35, Par. 2)	Voting on resolution (majority vote <i>de facto</i> ; Art. 35, Par. 2)
Croatia	Law on investigative committees (NN 24/1996, 26.03.1996)	Committees; 1/10 of MPs (Art 5, Par. 1)	Vote on proposal (majority vote <i>de iure</i> , Art. 6, Par. 2)
Czech Republic	Standing orders of parliament (Sb. 90/1995, 01.08.1995)	1/5 of MPs (Art. 48, Par. 1)	Vote on resolution (majority vote <i>de facto</i> , Art. 48, Par. 2)
Estonia	Standing orders of parliament (RT I 1994, 90, 1517, as amended by RT I 1999, 10, 148)	–	Vote on resolution (majority vote <i>de facto</i> , Art. 17, Par. 2)
	Standing orders of parliament (RT I 2003, 24, 148)	–	Vote on resolution (majority vote <i>de facto</i> , Art. 20, Par. 2)
Hungary	Standing orders of parliament (46/1994. IX. 30.)	1/5 of MPs (Art. 36, Par. 2)	Accepted without vote (Art. 36, Par. 2), but <i>de facto</i> majority decision
	Standing orders of parliament (2012. évi XXXVI. törvény)	1/5 of MPs (Art. 24, Par. 2)	Accepted without vote (Art. 24, Par. 2), but <i>de facto</i> majority decision
	Standing orders of parliament (10/2014. II. 24.)	1/5 of MPs (Art. 24, Par. 2)	Vote on proposal (majority vote <i>de facto</i> Art. 24, Par. 2)
Latvia	Constitution of Latvia	1/3 of MPs (Art. 26)	Accepted without vote (Art. 26)
	Standing orders of parliament (LV 96, 18.08.1994)	1/3 of MPs (Art. 150)	Accepted without vote (Art. 150)
Lithuania	Standing orders of parliament (Žin, 1994, Nr. 15–249, as amended by Žin, 1999, Nr. 5–97)	Seimas Board, committees, PPGs, 1/4 of MPs (Art. 73, Par. 1)	If 1/4 MPs proposed, accepted without vote (Art. 73, Par. 3), but <i>de facto</i> majority decision)
	Standing orders of parliament (Žin, 1994, Nr. 15–249, as amended by TAR Nr. 26850)	Seimas Board, committees, PPGs, 1/4 of MPs (Art. 73, Par. 1)	Vote on resolution (majority vote <i>de facto</i> Art. 73, Par. 3)
Poland	Law on investigative committees (Dz. U. Nr. 35, poz. 321)	Sejm Presidency, committees, 15 MPs (Art. 3, Par. 1)	Vote on resolution (majority vote <i>de iure</i> Art. 2, Par. 1)
	Law on Investigative Committees (Dz. U. Nr. 35, poz. 321, as amended by Dz. U. Nr. 122, poz. 1023)	–	Vote on resolution (majority vote <i>de iure</i> Art. 2, Par. 1)
	Standing orders of parliament (M.P. z 1992, Nr. 26, poz. 185, as amended by M.P. z 2005, Nr. 42, poz. 556)	Sejm Presidency, 46 MPs (Art. 136a, Par. 1)	–
Romania	Standing orders of parliament (Monitorul Oficial al României, Partea I, nr. 1.030 din 8 noiembrie 2004)	1/3 of MPs (Art. 72)	Vote on decision (majority vote <i>de facto</i> Art. 72)
	Standing orders of parliament (Monitorul Oficial al României, Partea I, nr. 35 din 16 ianuarie 2006, following the amendment in Monitorul Oficial al României, Partea I, nr. 950 din 26 octombrie 2005)	50 MPs from at least two PPGs (Art. 75)	Vote on decision (majority vote <i>de facto</i> Art. 75)
	Standing orders of parliament (Monitorul Oficial al României, Partea I, nr. 919 din 14 noiembrie 2019)	50 MPs from at least two PPGs (Art. 74)	Vote on decision (majority vote <i>de facto</i> Art. 74)
Slovenia	Law on investigative committees (Uradni list št. 63/1993)	MPs (Art. 1, Par. 2)	If 1/3 of MPs or National Council proposes, accepted without vote (Art. 1, Par. 2)

Table A2. Linear regression of party system closure on the frequency of IC proposals across government and opposition

	Closure	Alternation	Formula	Access
Party system closure	0.073*(0.031)			
Effective number of parliamentary parties	-0.252(0.142)	-0.108(0.150)	-0.306*(0.140)	-0.352*(0.141)
Index of party polarization in parliament	0.421(1.861)	-0.431(1.822)	0.724(1.893)	0.385(1.926)
Seat share of genuinely new parties in parliament	-0.196(0.906)	-0.024(0.876)	-0.325(0.917)	-0.723(0.908)
Majority cabinet	-0.474(0.263)	-0.328(0.259)	-0.495(0.267)	-0.477(0.274)
Post-electoral cabinet	0.509*(0.250)	0.226(0.257)	0.572*(0.254)	0.505(0.266)
Pre-electoral cabinet	-0.328(0.253)	-0.458(0.252)	-0.257(0.253)	-0.224(0.257)
Political corruption index	-0.882(0.841)	-1.028(0.805)	-0.490(0.818)	-0.181(0.842)
IC proposal threshold	1.527(1.459)	1.288(1.418)	1.244(1.497)	1.626(1.528)
Alternation in government		0.063**(0.019)		
Government formula			0.045(0.025)	
Access to government				-0.005(0.023)
Constant	-4.245(2.936)	-3.429(1.975)	-1.663(2.427)	2.667(2.363)
Observations	97	97	97	97
R ²	0.217	0.264	0.196	0.167
AIC	309.591	303.598	312.136	315.569

Standard errors are in parentheses.

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.**Table A3.** Linear regression of party system closure on the frequency of IC proposals by opposition parties

	Closure	Alternation	Formula	Access
Party system closure	0.067*(0.029)			
Effective number of parliamentary parties	-0.220(0.135)	-0.095(0.143)	-0.268*(0.132)	-0.313*(0.133)
Index of party polarization in parliament	1.097(1.761)	0.336(1.734)	1.386(1.788)	1.071(1.821)
Seat share of genuinely new parties in parliament	-0.189(0.858)	-0.050(0.834)	-0.295(0.866)	-0.672(0.859)
Majority cabinet	-0.402(0.249)	-0.272(0.247)	-0.421(0.252)	-0.406(0.259)
Post-electoral cabinet	0.404(0.236)	0.151(0.245)	0.464(0.240)	0.403(0.251)
Pre-electoral cabinet	-0.279(0.240)	-0.393(0.240)	-0.215(0.240)	-0.184(0.243)
Political corruption index	-0.813(0.796)	-0.925(0.766)	-0.461(0.772)	-0.176(0.796)
IC proposal threshold	1.023(1.381)	0.814(1.349)	0.748(1.415)	1.126(1.444)
Alternation in government		0.057**(0.018)		
Government formula			0.043(0.024)	
Access to government				-0.004(0.022)
Constant	-4.201(2.780)	-3.295(1.880)	-1.951(2.293)	2.075(2.233)
Observations	97	97	97	97
R ²	0.193	0.233	0.175	0.144
AIC	298.961	294.008	301.120	304.648

Standard errors are in parentheses.

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Table A4. Linear regression of party system closure on the frequency of IC proposals targeting incumbents

	Closure	Alternation	Formula	Access
Party system closure	0.030(0.016)			
Effective number of parliamentary parties	-0.141(0.076)	-0.045(0.078)	-0.167*(0.075)	-0.175*(0.074)
Index of party polarization in parliament	-0.241(0.993)	-0.718(0.951)	-0.140(1.008)	-0.324(1.010)
Seat share of genuinely new parties in parliament	-0.068(0.483)	0.107(0.458)	-0.150(0.488)	-0.304(0.476)
Majority cabinet	0.199(0.140)	0.283*(0.135)	0.191(0.142)	0.214(0.144)
Post-electoral cabinet	0.089(0.133)	-0.071(0.134)	0.111(0.135)	0.059(0.139)
Pre-electoral cabinet	-0.201(0.135)	-0.289*(0.131)	-0.169(0.135)	-0.159(0.135)
Political corruption index	0.156(0.448)	-0.024(0.420)	0.337(0.435)	0.523(0.441)
IC proposal threshold	0.663(0.778)	0.504(0.741)	0.582(0.798)	0.590(0.801)
Alternation in government		0.036*** (0.010)		
Government formula			0.015(0.013)	
Access to government				-0.012(0.012)
Constant	-1.538(1.566)	-2.049(1.032)	-0.184(1.293)	2.135(1.239)
Observations	97	97	97	97
R^2	0.191	0.271	0.172	0.169
AIC	187.704	177.598	189.931	190.263

Standard errors are in parentheses.

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.**Table A5.** Logistic regression of party system closure on the occurrence of IC proposals by all cabinet parties

	Closure	Alternation	Formula	Access
Party system closure	0.094(0.081)			
Number of cabinet parties	0.434(0.380)	0.534(0.397)	0.375(0.377)	0.374(0.370)
Ideological range in cabinet (L-R)	-0.547(0.322)	-0.487(0.320)	-0.557(0.325)	-0.557(0.322)
Seat share of genuinely new parties in cabinet	-2.851(4.487)	-2.355(4.542)	-3.062(4.449)	-3.362(4.524)
Majority cabinet	-0.742(0.720)	-0.712(0.728)	-0.704(0.715)	-0.646(0.717)
Post-electoral cabinet	1.467(0.782)	1.256(0.782)	1.527(0.789)	1.442(0.796)
Pre-electoral cabinet	-0.277(0.679)	-0.339(0.687)	-0.197(0.678)	-0.200(0.679)
Political corruption index	-3.065(2.231)	-3.578(2.512)	-2.500(2.023)	-1.914(1.957)
Alternation in government		0.073(0.053)		
Government formula			0.067(0.063)	
Access to government				0.007(0.052)
Constant	-9.541(6.883)	-7.801(4.669)	-7.074(5.153)	-2.358(4.631)
Observations	97	97	97	97
R^2				
AIC	87.999	87.520	88.277	89.507

Standard errors are in parentheses.

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Table A6. Logistic regression of party system closure on the frequency of IC proposals targeting past governments

	Closure	Alternation	Formula	Access
Party system closure	0.074(0.064)			
Number of cabinet parties	0.222(0.347)	0.761(0.480)	0.167(0.338)	0.169(0.355)
Ideological range in cabinet (L-R)	-0.682**(0.256)	-0.602*(0.271)	-0.691**(0.256)	-0.653*(0.264)
Seat share of genuinely new parties in cabinet	-1.097(3.099)	0.928(3.493)	-1.267(3.041)	-1.312(2.937)
Majority cabinet	-0.603(0.607)	-1.183(0.760)	-0.524(0.602)	-0.466(0.637)
Post-electoral cabinet	1.041(0.583)	0.907(0.672)	1.039(0.585)	0.883(0.620)
Pre-electoral cabinet	0.088(0.558)	-0.088(0.623)	0.160(0.554)	0.268(0.588)
Political corruption index	-4.434*(1.947)	-11.193**(3.614)	-3.622*(1.790)	-3.201(2.017)
IC proposal threshold	1.579(3.041)	1.764(3.909)	1.476(3.017)	0.251(3.204)
Alternation in government		0.238*** (0.065)		
Government formula			0.015(0.050)	
Access to government				-0.168** (0.063)
Constant	-6.046(5.372)	-19.769*** (5.630)	-1.082(4.098)	15.086** (5.715)
Observations	97	97	97	97
AIC	115.857	94.718	117.185	108.400

Standard errors are in parentheses.

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.**Table A7.** Logistic regression of party system closure on the occurrence of IC proposals by a portion of cabinet parties

	Closure	Alternation	Formula	Access
Party system closure	0.003(0.058)			
Number of cabinet parties	0.258(0.297)	0.475(0.320)	0.233(0.297)	0.241(0.316)
Ideological range in cabinet	-0.156(0.207)	-0.038(0.215)	-0.162(0.208)	-0.069(0.221)
Seat share of genuinely new parties in cabinet	-2.190(2.933)	-0.667(3.073)	-2.571(2.959)	-2.884(3.094)
Majority cabinet	0.420(0.543)	0.447(0.567)	0.464(0.547)	0.653(0.596)
Post-electoral cabinet	0.478(0.503)	0.111(0.536)	0.436(0.510)	0.156(0.545)
Pre-electoral cabinet	0.009(0.493)	-0.301(0.524)	0.024(0.492)	-0.026(0.522)
IC proposal threshold	-0.945(2.773)	-1.257(3.150)	-0.751(2.787)	-2.558(3.081)
Political corruption index	1.293(1.506)	-0.547(1.594)	1.623(1.421)	2.726(1.544)
Alternation in government		0.118** (0.039)		
Government formula			-0.032(0.047)	
Access to government				-0.145*** (0.052)
Constant	-2.067(4.935)	-11.747*** (3.508)	0.729(3.824)	10.996* (4.651)
Observations	97	97	97	97
AIC	136.788	126.338	136.331	127.122

Standard errors are in parentheses.

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Table A8. Logistic regression of party system closure on the occurrence of ‘shadowing’ IC proposals

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Closure	Alternation	Formula	Access
Party system closure	0.050(0.086)			
Number of cabinet parties	0.099(0.402)	0.255(0.433)	0.070(0.400)	0.017(0.417)
Ideological polarization in cabinet	0.054(0.284)	0.172(0.287)	0.029(0.282)	0.089(0.288)
Seat share of genuinely new parties in cabinet	−2.360(3.938)	−1.528(4.157)	−2.713(3.941)	−3.476(4.006)
Majority cabinet	1.242(0.856)	1.336(0.876)	1.262(0.861)	1.618(0.968)
Post-electoral cabinet	0.808(0.713)	0.594(0.740)	0.797(0.719)	0.577(0.741)
Pre-electoral cabinet	−0.259(0.667)	−0.545(0.695)	−0.220(0.666)	−0.267(0.686)
IC proposal threshold	1.574(3.657)	1.670(4.147)	1.433(3.616)	0.856(3.771)
Political corruption index	0.373(2.069)	−1.199(2.290)	0.929(1.889)	1.802(2.036)
Alternation in government		0.113*(0.051)		
Government formula			0.003(0.065)	
Access to government				−0.093(0.054)
Constant	−8.054(7.451)	−13.502**(4.707)	−4.056(5.471)	4.232(4.760)
Observations	97	97	97	97
AIC	93.375	88.080	93.732	90.871

Standard errors are in parentheses.

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Appendix B

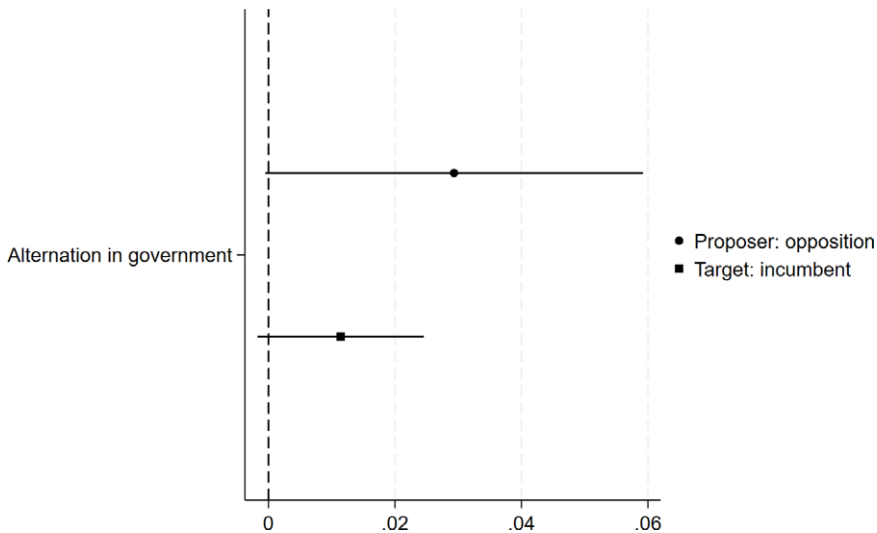


Figure B1. The effects of alternation in government on the frequency of established IC proposals and established proposals targeting incumbents.

Table B1. Linear regression of alternation in government on the frequency of established opposition IC proposals and established proposals targeting incumbents

	Established opposition proposals	Established proposals targeting incumbents
Alternation in government	0.029(0.015)	0.011(0.007)
Effective number of parliamentary parties	0.035(0.121)	0.000(0.053)
Index of party polarization in parliament	−0.541(1.462)	0.176(0.643)
Seat share of genuinely new parties in parliament	−0.139(0.704)	−0.181(0.310)
Majority cabinet	−0.329(0.208)	0.133(0.092)
Post-electoral cabinet	0.158(0.206)	−0.015(0.091)
Pre-electoral cabinet	−0.358(0.202)	−0.174(0.089)
IC proposal threshold	0.972(1.138)	0.587(0.501)
Political corruption index	−0.935(0.646)	0.008(0.284)
Constant	−1.661(1.586)	−0.914(0.698)
Observations	97	97
AIC	260.980	101.720

Standard errors are in parentheses.
* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

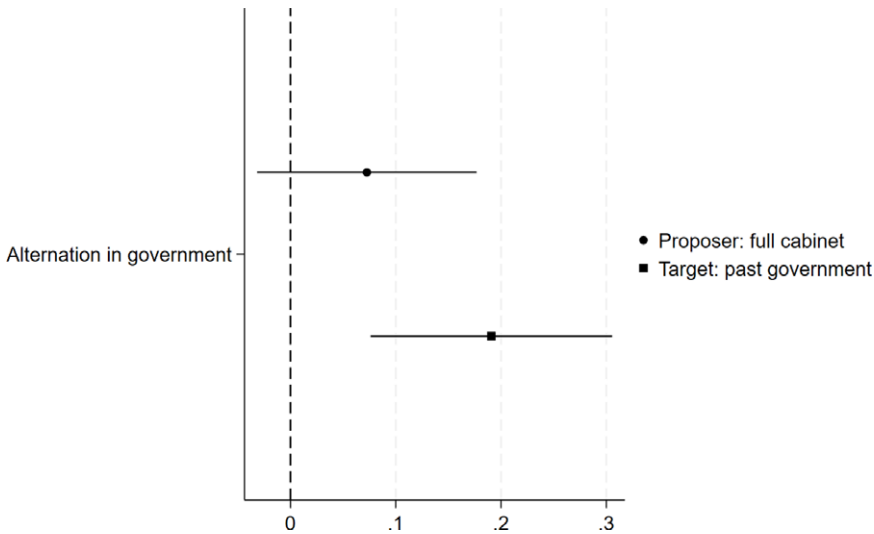


Figure B2. The effects of alternation in government on the occurrence of established IC proposals by all cabinet parties and established proposals targeting past government.

Table B2. Logistic regression of alternation in government on the occurrence of established IC proposals by all cabinet parties and established proposals targeting past government

	Established full-cabinet proposals	Established proposals targeting past governments
Alternation in government	0.073(0.053)	0.191**(0.059)
Number of cabinet parties	0.534(0.397)	0.381(0.381)
Ideological range in cabinet	-0.487(0.320)	-0.481(0.264)
Seat share of genuinely new parties in cabinet	-2.355(4.542)	2.204(3.295)
Majority cabinet	-0.712(0.728)	-0.931(0.688)
Post-electoral cabinet	1.256(0.782)	0.738(0.651)
Pre-electoral cabinet	-0.339(0.687)	0.148(0.615)
Political corruption index	-3.578(2.512)	-7.516*(2.959)
Constant	-7.801(4.669)	-15.856**(5.076)
Observations	97	97
AIC	87.520	96.679

Standard errors are in parentheses.

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

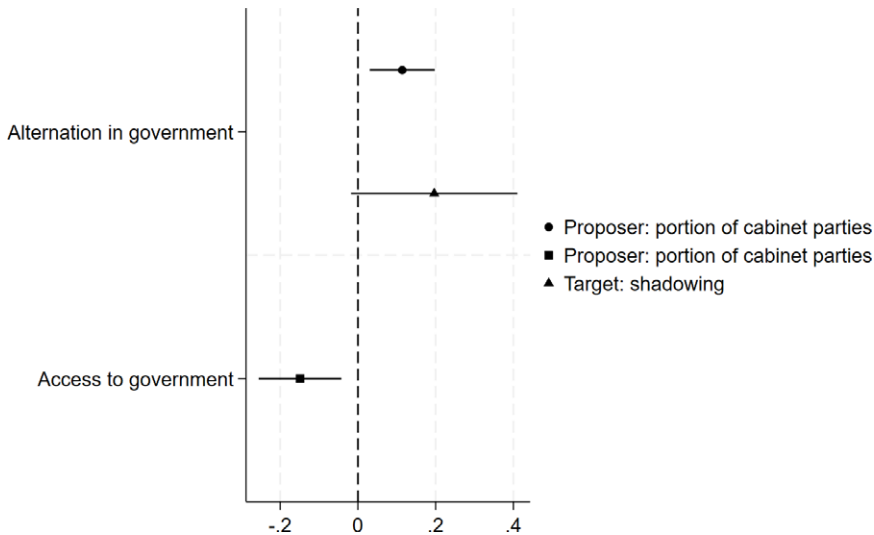


Figure B3. The effects of alternation in government and access to government on the occurrence of established IC proposals by a portion of cabinet parties and established 'shadowing' proposals.

Table B3. Logistic regression of alternation in government and access to government on the occurrence of established IC proposals by a portion of cabinet parties and established ‘shadowing’ proposals

	Established proposals initiated by portion of cabinet	Established proposals initiated by portion of cabinet	Established shadowing proposals
Alternation in government	0.114**(0.043)		0.196(0.109)
Number of cabinet parties	0.391(0.350)	0.130(0.349)	−0.103(0.773)
Ideological range in cabinet	0.079(0.228)	0.071(0.236)	0.329(0.442)
Seat share of genuinely new parties in cabinet	−0.235(3.130)	−1.962(3.147)	6.676(6.709)
Majority cabinet	0.565(0.623)	0.843(0.673)	1.362(1.280)
Post-electoral cabinet	1.026(0.595)	1.101(0.613)	1.019(1.259)
Pre-electoral cabinet	0.367(0.567)	0.754(0.581)	−0.847(1.037)
IC proposal threshold	−0.482(3.383)	−1.723(3.314)	−8.870(9.613)
Political corruption index	−0.587(1.797)	2.816(1.718)	−0.031(3.408)
Access to government		−0.149**(0.054)	
Constant	−12.814**(3.922)	9.756*(4.792)	−20.260*(9.619)
Observations	97	97	97
A/C	113.382	112.031	54.956

Standard errors are in parentheses.
* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

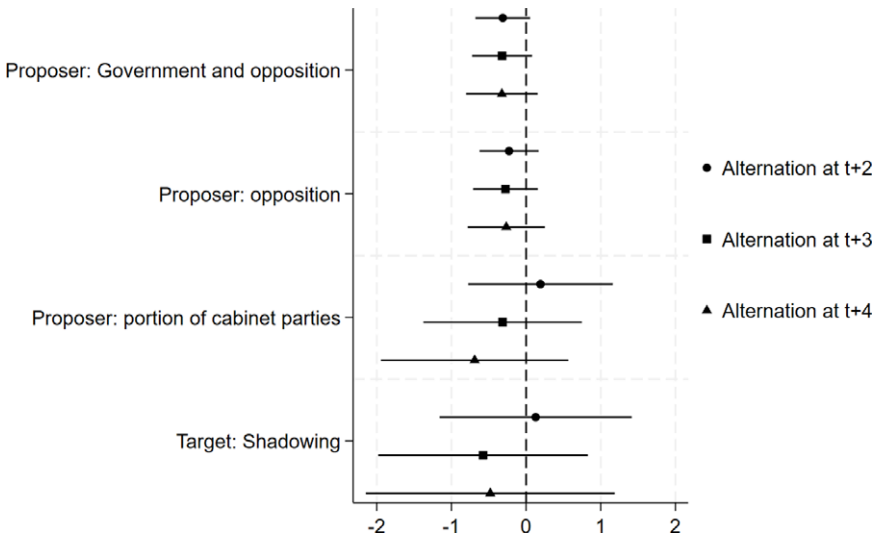


Figure B4. The effect of various types of IC proposals on the change in government alternation.